Abstract

The last two decades have witnessed a growing body of research in the effectiveness of instruction on second language (L2) development from the perspectives of *Form-Focused Instruction* (FFI) (Block, 2003; Doughty, 2003; Ellis, 2008, 2012; De Graaf & Housen, 2009; Long & Robinson, 1998; Pawlak, 2006, 2007).   This line of inquiry has led to continuous modification of FFI, increasing its positive effects on L2 classroom instruction in the Japanese context and yielding strong support for the hypothesis that a timely combination of form-focused and communication-oriented instruction is necessary for successful L2 development (Muranoi, 1996; Takashima, 1995; Tomita, 2011). In the meantime, however, L2 pronunciation instruction has not kept pace with the insights gleaned from the development of FFI.

The impact of FFI on L2 pronunciation has been investigated in terms of learners' interaction and performance in several ESL and EFL settings in the last decade (Abe, 2010; Couper, 2009; Park, 2000; Saito, 2011; Sicola, 2008 among others).   However, there still remains the question of whether the *focus-on-form* approach is unambiguously effective in L2 pronunciation instruction (cf. Chang, 2006; Couper, 2009; Park, 2000; Yam, 2005).   The current study presents an attempt to remedy this situation by reporting the findings of an inquiry which examined the effect of FFI with *phonetic negotiation of form* as corrective feedback on the pronunciation of weak forms.

The study was conducted during a regularly scheduled classroom, in

which one experimental group (EG, n=30) and one control group (CG, n=31) participated in a quasi-experiment, taught by the present author. Two classes were devoted to perception instruction and production instruction, respectively. The perception instruction for the EG followed both explicit and implicit FFI, encouraging learners to observe a certain target feature and discover the underlying rule on their own initiative. In the production sessions, the instruction of the EG shifted to implicit FFI (FonF), based on the premise that not only input but also output-promoting tasks play a critical role in L2 learning experiences, enabling learners to modify their knowledge in meaningful communicative activities. For the CG, the perception sessions, like those for the EG, were devoted to explicitly presenting the target forms in context, as well as asking participants to identify the target forms in prepared dialogues, with the aim of helping them to comprehend the target weak forms. Unlike the EG, the production sessions for the CG used explicit FFI (FonFs) (Housen & Pierrard, 2005). The participants' ability to perceive and pronounce the weak form was assessed on a pre- and a post-test which included weak-form discrimination, dictation, a passage-reading, and a dialogue task.

The data demonstrated a significant change in the total (perception and production) scores. First, the between-group test results for the perception of weak forms did not completely demonstrate that 1) the EG outperformed the CG in total perception score due to the Bonferroni correction, and 2) the EG performed better than the CG in weak form dictation. Second, the between-group comparisons for production revealed a significant main effect of

instruction in the total score, suggesting that 1) the EG outperformed the CG in reading the passage, and 2) the EG significantly outperformed the CG in the picture description dialogue.   Third, the between-test data for the EG and CG indicated that the EG and CG alike made a significant difference in the development of perception, but a rather limited difference in the production data.

This study confirms the significance of the timely combination of form-focused and communication-oriented instruction for L2 development in pronunciation as previously indicated by Couper, 2009; Park, 2000; Saito, 2011. The data, demonstrating that the EG significantly outperformed the CG in perception and production at the post-test stage, clearly suggest that FFI, plus phonetic negotiation of form, was more beneficial for L2 learning of weak forms than the traditional approach.

This thesis is divided into five chapters.   Chapter 1 introduces the research and gives an overview of the thesis.   Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relevant to the current research. Several models of L2 speech perception and production are examined, a brief history of pronunciation instruction is presented, and the effects of FFI on the acquisition of L2 phonology are reviewed.   Chapter 3 outlines the method used in the present study.   Chapter 4 presents the data, the analysis, and the findings.   Chapter 5 would discuss the findings in relation to the relevant fields of research and practice, and present a conclusion.