

The Reading Matrix  
Vol. 5, No. 1, April 2005

## **FOCUS ON FORM INSTRUCTION: FOUNDATIONS, APPLICATIONS, AND CRITICISMS**

Alex Poole

Email: [alex.poole@wku.edu](mailto:alex.poole@wku.edu)

### **Abstract**

---

Focus on form instruction makes up an important part of the literature on second language acquisition research. However, few works have both summarized and critically evaluated focus on form instruction. This article seeks to fill this gap. More precisely, it reviews its main principles, and points out the difficulties of implementing this relatively new pedagogical innovation in all but a limited number of instructional settings. It concludes by proposing conditions under which focus on form instruction could effectively function.

---

### **Introduction**

By glancing at the table of contents in major English language teaching journals, one will quickly realize that focus on form instruction is a key theme in many empirical and descriptive research articles. Clearly, this innovation, which was put forth by Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998), has been a source of great enthusiasm for English language teachers and researchers, so much so that many have praised it as if it were the miracle method they had always been searching for. However, this enthusiasm needs to be curbed, since studies of focus on form instruction present a mixed picture of its ability to promote L2 grammatical acquisition. In addition, the empirical, curricular, practical, linguistic, and cultural realities of many English language teaching settings make it unlikely that focus on form will become widely adopted.

In this critical analysis, my purpose is threefold: (1) to highlight the central aspects of focus on form instruction; (2) to review some of the major research studies examining focus on form instruction; (3) and to show the barriers of implementing focus on form instruction in many English language teaching contexts. However, my point is not to actively discourage teachers and curricula designers from incorporating focus on form instruction into their instructional schema. Instead, my intention is to help teachers and curricula designers decipher whether or not focus on form instruction is appropriate for their pedagogical realities, and furthermore, to help teacher trainers put focus on form instruction into a critical perspective when presenting it future teachers, so that they, in turn, might make informed curricular and classroom choices regarding its use.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Focus on Form Instruction: Foundations and Applications**

In short, focus on form instruction is a type of instruction that, on the one hand, holds up the importance of communicative language teaching principles such as authentic communication and student-centeredness, and, on the other hand, maintains the value of the occasional and overt study of problematic L2 grammatical forms, which is more reminiscent of noncommunicative

teaching (Long, 1991). Furthermore, Long and Robinson (1998) argue that the responsibility of helping learners attend to and understand problematic L2 grammatical forms falls not only on their teachers, but also on their peers. In other words, Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998) claim that formal L2 instruction should give most of its attention to exposing students to oral and written discourse that mirrors real-life, such as doing job interviews, writing letter to friends, and engaging in classroom debates; nonetheless, when it is observed that learners are experiencing difficulties in the comprehension and/or production of certain L2 grammatical forms, teachers and their peers are obligated to assist them notice their erroneous use and/or comprehension of these forms and supply them with the proper explanations and models of them. Moreover, teachers can help their students and learners can help their peers notice the forms that they currently lack, yet should know in order to further their overall L2 grammatical development.

Thus, Long and Robinson (1998) assert that teachers and curricula designers are not to focus instruction on the teaching/learning of specific L2 grammatical items. Instead, they should aim to help students learn how to use language in a way that emulates realistic communicative scenarios. More to the point, teacher-student/student-student classroom interaction, via both oral and written modes, should consume the majority of class time. Likewise, evaluation should center on students' abilities to actively engage in authentic communication, using the forms they have learned during interaction.

For Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998), focus on form instruction is different from modes of instruction that, in general, are aimed at teaching specific L2 grammatical forms, rather than presenting language as an mechanism for communication. This type of instruction, which Long and Robinson call *focus on forms instruction*, has been featured in the syllabi of methods such as the Situational Language Teaching and the Audiolingual Method. In these methods, instruction progresses as learners exhibit mastery of the sequentially- presented grammatical structures, and thus are generally non-communicative in the sense that they do not foster L2 development that enables learners to engage in real-life communication. In addition, such methods focus on the prescribed L2 grammatical forms that the teacher can transmit to his/her students; in this way, they are *teacher-centered*. Focus on form instruction, in contrast, is *learner-centered* due to its aim of responding to learners' perceived needs in a spontaneous manner.

Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998) also argue that focus on form instruction is different from the purely communicative instruction, or what they call *focus on meaning instruction*. For them, focus on meaning instruction is paramount to spending little or no time on the discrete parts of language; instead, the interest is on the use of language in real-life situations. Such a mode of instruction is apparent in the Natural Approach (Terrell and Krashen, 1983), which, in theory, prohibits direct grammar teaching. In contrast, Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998) assert that the occasional focus on the discrete-forms of the L2 via correction, negative feedback, direct explanations, recasts, etc., can help students become aware of, understand, and ultimately acquire difficult forms.

In sum, both focus on forms and focus on meaning instruction are valuable, according to Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998), and should complement rather than exclude each other. Focus on form instruction, in their view, maintains a balance between the two by calling on teachers and learners to attend to form when necessary, yet within a communicative classroom environment. However, Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998) do not guarantee that focus on form instruction will lead to a specific level of L2 grammatical development within

a certain time frame, presumably because of factors related to quality of instruction, intensity of instruction, and the stages of morphosyntactic development through which L2 learners must pass (Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

### **Focus on Form Instruction: Selected Studies**

A look at recent research in the area of second language acquisition reveals that focus on form instruction has been empirically evaluated using a variety of methodologies. Leeman, Arteagoitia, Fridman, and Doughty (1995), for example, compared focus on form instruction and focus on meaning instruction. The participants consisted of two groups of US college students in advanced Spanish classes, one of which received focus on form instruction, the other of which received focus on meaning instruction. Post-tests revealed that those students who received focus on form instruction were more accurate in their production of Spanish verbs than were those who received focus on meaning instruction. Doughty and Verela (1998) examined the differences in the acquisition of English tense between junior high US ESL science students who received corrective recasts and those who received teacher-led instruction, mostly in the form of lectures. Regardless of the type of instruction they were exposed to, learners took pre-tests and post-tests. Those students who received corrective recasts performed significantly better on post-tests than did those who received teacher-led instruction. Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, and Doughty (1995) studied the concept of textual enhancement, which involves highlighting forms with the idea that students will attend to them more frequently. In one second- semester college Spanish class, they established two groups, one of which was exposed to Spanish verbs using enhanced texts, and a control group, which did not receive enhanced texts. Think-aloud protocols revealed that those in the experimental group attended to Spanish verb forms more frequently than the control groups. Williams and Evans (1998) studied the precision with which intermediate-level ESL learners used the passive voice and adjectival participles. Two groups were established, one which received input flooding, and one which acted as a control group. The results demonstrated that the experimental group showed more accurate use of the passive than did the control group, yet no significant differences were seen between the groups in terms of their use of adjectival participles. Van Patten and Oikkenon (1996) investigated the effects of processing instruction on a group of secondary students studying Spanish at the intermediate level. Processing instruction involves an explicit explanation of a certain grammatical rule, followed by contextualized practice activities. Participants were divided into three groups, one which received explicit explanations of rules, one which received contextualized practice activities, and one which received both explicit explanations of rules and contextualized practice activities. They found that those who only received explicit explanations retained the fewest grammatical rules; the other two groups, on the other hand, achieved significantly higher scores on post-treatment tests. Roberts (1995) analyzed the effectiveness of error correction in beginning-level students of Japanese at the University of Hawaii. While his study was largely descriptive and contained small numbers of participants, it showed that focusing on learners' written grammatical errors was more successful when errors were contextualized and understood by learners.

Perhaps the most interesting studies of focus on form instruction are those that have sought to describe what happens in its student-generated variety, particularly those by Williams (1999) and Poole (2003a). In the case of the former, eight students of various proficiency levels studying in an intensive English institute in the United States were tape-recorded daily during 45-minute class period for eight weeks. During this time, they were involved in group activities. Williams sought out to describe the types of forms that they attended to. Overall, the results

revealed that, among other things, students infrequently attended to grammar (20%) in favor of vocabulary (80%). In the latter, Poole (2003a) replicated Williams' (1999) study using 19 ESL students in an advanced writing class in a large US university. Students were tape-recorded for 10 weeks for a total of nine hours, during which time they were engaged in a variety of communicative group activities. As in Williams' (1999) study, the majority of students attended to vocabulary (89.8%) instead of grammar (10.2%). Although more research needs to be done on student-generated focus on form instruction in order to find out more about how learners themselves attend to form, the results from these studies suggest that learners are not able and/or willing to attend to L2 grammatical forms, thus calling into question the efficacy of focus on form instruction in fostering L2 grammatical development, at least in its student-generated variety.

### **Criticisms of Focus on Form Instruction: Empirical, Curricular, Practical, Linguistic, and Cultural**

While these studies and others provide insight into the efficacy of focus on form instruction (See Byrnes, 2000 and Lee, 2000 for further summaries of focus on form-related research), they all have taken place in settings that appear to be well-funded, adequately supplied with teaching and learning materials, and generally free of classroom discipline problems. Moreover, most studies of focus on form instruction have taken place in a few countries, notably the United States, New Zealand, and Japan (Poole and Sheorey, 2002). In fact, not a single empirical study can be found that took place in a setting in which classes were overcrowded, up-to-date materials were generally not available, and teachers received less than adequate training in language skills and pedagogy. Unfortunately, much public school ESL instruction in the United States takes place under circumstances in which teachers are not adequately trained, proper funds are not provided for appropriate pedagogical materials, and learners have a number of educational needs, beyond language (Klinger and Vaughn, 2000; Mora, 2000). In fact, according to Baker and Markham (2002), eight US states provide no special funding for ESL students, in spite of growing numbers of students nationwide, and the continuing poor academic performance of this group of school-aged children. Likewise, no study supporting focus on form instruction appears to have taken place in a developing country, where the socioeconomic, political, and pedagogical realities may differ significantly from those in more developed countries. Thus, instructors and curricula designers in many settings have little information on which to judge whether or not focus on form instruction would be appropriate in their programs. However, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students in the United States comprise a large portion of global English learners.

Even though focus on form instruction has yet to be investigated in many settings, it appears to be currently undoable in many circumstances due to curricular constraints. In particular, in many secondary and university language programs, teachers are obligated to teach certain forms in a specific order by using government-mandated materials. Sheorey and Nayar (2002), for instance, point out that such "top-down" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) curricula planning is frequently seen in India: "Teachers have little say in designing the curriculum, choosing the materials and textbooks, or developing assessment techniques, all of which are controlled by Boards of Studies composed of senior members of the English faculty" (p. 18). If the textbooks and materials provided focus on the explicit learning of L2 grammatical forms and marginalize authentic oral and written communication, or, on the opposite end of the spectrum, make no allowance for occasional grammar study, teachers will be left without resources with

which they can both promote real-life interaction and, when the need arises, attend to learners' forms, as focus on form instruction calls for. Even if teachers can find the means to occasionally incorporate focus on form instruction, they may feel pressure not to do so for two reasons: (1) They may be risking their own job security by not following the mandated curriculum. Especially in competitive markets where there are few opportunities for employment, it is a lot to ask teachers to sacrifice their livelihood in order to disobey mandated curricula norms in order to use methods and techniques that *may* be beneficial to their students. McGuire (1996), for instance, supports this notion with her analysis of EFL instruction in Central America where, she says, many teachers feel bound by 'strong' (Howatt, 1984) versions of CLT, even though they may feel it is appropriate to occasionally integrate noncommunicative techniques:

For example, more than one teacher described having "discovered" elements of audiolingual or other "noncommunicative" methodologies that were helpful with beginning and remedial classes, but because their institutions advertise "communicative" approaches, these teachers feel that their jobs depend on being perceived as purely communicative and that they must be very cautious—even secretive—about straying from what they understand to be the official curriculum (p. 607).

(2) The pre-packaged classroom textbooks and materials will most likely form the basis for important evaluations, such as second/university entrance/exit exams, the development of which teachers frequently have very little, if any, influence; however, they will most likely feel obligated to spend the majority of their time helping students prepare for such exams, leaving little energy for focus on form instruction. Often times, such tests focus on discrete grammatical points and minimize real-life communicative abilities. In fact, Gorsuch (2000) found that Japanese high school English teachers' decisions regarding classroom content and delivery are significantly influenced by university entry exams, which are, by and large, noncommunicative, even though communicative materials are widely available. Furthermore, Wu (2001) shows that in China, a country with large amounts of EFL learners, such large-scale noncommunicative testing continues to be the norm, in spite of calls for change.

Another problem with focus on form instruction is practical; specifically, it involves class size (Poole, 2003b). Focus on form instruction, in Long (1991) and Long and Robinson's (1998) conception, seems optimally suited to classrooms that are small enough to enable instructors to verbally address their students' problematic forms, presumably via classroom discussion, Q/A sessions, and impromptu and planned public speaking events. As far as writing is concerned, such a classroom would need to allow teachers to frequently evaluate students' writing, presumably in the form of essays, in-class writing tasks, and journals/diaries. Likewise, small classes would be needed for students to have significant amounts of peer interaction both orally and in written form. In many settings, however, classes are large, and individual attention and student-student interaction is not possible. While crowded classes are sometimes caused by a lack of qualified teachers (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Zafar, 2003), they are more than likely because of the lack of funds available to hire more than a handful of teachers, as in the case of many community-based adult ESL programs for immigrants in the United States. Judy Pierre, coordinator of such a program at the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association in Brooklyn, New York, explains that the facilities for instruction are available, yet the funds for hiring

teachers are not: “They’re kicking our doors down, they want to come in. We have the space, but we can’t hire the teachers—we just don’t have the money” (Bernstein, 2004, para.7).

In addition to curricular problems, Long (1991) and Long and Robinson’s (1998) conception of focus on form instruction obliges teachers to have native-like or near native-like competence fluency; more specifically, in oral situations, they would need to be able to spontaneously recognize students’ form-based errors and provide them with the correct ones. Yet, many English language teachers lack a high level of L2 oral proficiency and do not have opportunities for developing it. Butler (2004), for example, reports that elementary school EFL teachers in Japan had low self-ratings of their own L2 proficiency, particularly in the area of oral grammar. Yu (2001) reports that similar levels of low-proficiency are prevalent among Chinese EFL teachers who feel that their only option is the grammar-translation method: “Quite a number of teachers know only some basic English grammar and vocabulary. For them the grammar-translation method is the most acceptable because they can basically teach English in Chinese” (p. 197). Teaching English through the native language is commonplace in many settings not because of any objections against using English, but simply because of low L2 proficiency on the part of teachers. Vavrus (2002) demonstrated this in a study of English teachers in Tanzania in which teachers mostly used Swahili, even though the medium of instruction was officially English: “In several classes at Njema and at other secondary schools I visited, Swahili, rather than English, was the necessary medium of instruction because the students or the teacher—or both—did not have the requisite proficiency in English” (p. 383).

Another linguistic problem with focus on form instruction is the language spoken English learners and their teachers. As Poole (2003b) has pointed out, in many settings, the students and the teacher often share a common first (or second, or third) language and culture, and thus can easily code-switch in order to overcome communicative difficulties or fill communicative gaps. Adendorff (1998), for example, shows that in Zulu-speaking areas of South Africa, teachers and students frequently speak Zulu during English instruction in order to overcome communication barriers: “In concluding my analysis, it is clear that if this interpretation is correct, the Zulu code switches facilitate the teacher’s accomplishment of his academic and social agendas by enabling him, implicitly, to clarify information and to encourage, provoke, and involve his students” (p. 394). Indeed, Cleghorn and Rollnick (2002) demonstrate that code-switching is a common phenomenon in Africa, in addition to many other parts of the world, such as India (Ramanathan, 1999; Sridhar, 2002). However, if problematic grammatical forms can be addressed using another language, then focus on form instruction could be seen by teachers and learners as either unnecessary or impractical. Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998) do not address how the issue of code-switching should be approached.

A final problem with focus on form instruction is cultural. Focus on form is highly individualistic in that errors are frequently, although not exclusively, addressed on an individual basis. Hofstede (1986) suggests that individualistic societies tend to produce more individualistic teaching approaches; however, collectivist societies, which tend to focus more on the general good of all students, may find focus on form at odds with their cultural values. More to the point, successful focus on form instruction would need to take place in a cultural atmosphere that allows students to actively participate in daily activities. Thus, administrators, teachers, parents, and students would need to feel some degree of comfort with letting students be active participants—and sometimes leaders—in the content and manner in which they study. In many cultures, however, such student-centeredness might be considered disrespectful and/or a breach of tradition (Poole, 2003b). Li (1998) reports of this suspicion of student participation in Korea,

where many teachers feel that communicative approaches to teaching--which focus on form instruction would be part of—threaten to overturn long-held Korean customs and values regarding student-teacher roles. Similar concerns can be seen in China, where educational practices have been formed by Confucian thought, which places a high premium on teachers' knowledge: "teachers are viewed as knowledge holders. If teachers do not display their knowledge in lectures, or if they play games with students or ask students to role-play in class, then they are not doing their job!" (Hui, 1997, p. 38; Cited in Yu, 2001, pp. 196-197).

### **Conclusion**

Even though further research will be needed to determine the effectiveness of focus on form instruction within a variety of instructional circumstances, it seems most likely to meet its instructional objectives in settings in which the following elements are present: principles of CLT are accepted in activities and assessments; classes are sufficiently small enough for teachers to be able to work individually with students and learners individually with their peers; and teachers—and students, for that matter—are proficient enough in English in order to conduct classes in English and not code-switch when communicative difficulties are encountered.

However, one cannot stress enough that future research does need to take place in more diverse cultural and socioeconomic circumstances in order to determine whether or not focus on form instruction is appropriate for different groups of learners. If research on focus on form instruction—and in the field of second language acquisition, overall—does not take into consideration the realities of classrooms, then it will have little relevance to a large number of teachers and learners. In the interim, however, teachers, teacher trainers, and administrators should continue to read the literature on focus on form instruction; yet, they should not decide on its merits solely on the basis of what professional journals say, but rather should give equal attention to their perceptions of their local instructional needs and realities.

## REFERENCES

- Adendroff, R. (1996). The functions of code switching among high school teachers and students in KwaZulu-Natal and implications for teacher education. In K. Bailey and D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom* (pp. 388-407). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Al-Hazmi, S. (2003). EFL teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia: Trends and challenges. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37 (2), 341-344.
- Baker, B., & Markham, P. (2002). State school funding policies and limited English proficiency students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26 (3), 659-680.
- Bernstein, N. (2004, July 29). Lingua franca? Yes, it's English. *The New York Times*. Retrieved July 30, 2004 from <https://news.yahoo.com>
- Byrnes, H. (1999). Meaning and form in classroom-based SLA research: Reflections from a college foreign language perspective. (pp. 125-179). In J. F. Lee & A. Valdman (Eds.), *Meaning and Form: Multiple Perspectives*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Butler, Y. (2004). What level of English proficiency do elementary school teachers need to attain to teach EFL? Case studies from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38 (2), 245-278.
- Cleghorn, A., & Rollnick, M. (2002). The role of English in individual and societal development: A view from African classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36 (3), 347-372.
- Doughty, C., & Verela, E. (1998). Communicative focus on form. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 114-138). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gorsuch, G. (2000). EFL educational policies and educational cultures: Influences on teachers' approval of communicative activities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34 (4), 675-710.
- Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10, 301-320.
- Howatt, A.P.R. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hui, C. (1997). New bottles, old wine: Communicative language teaching in China. *Forum*, 35 (4), p. 38.
- Jourdenais, R., Mitsuhiro, O., Stauffer, S., Boyson, B., & Doughty, C. (1995). Does textual enhancement promote noticing? A think-aloud protocol analysis. In R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Attention*



- and awareness in foreign language learning* (pp. 183-216). Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Klingner, J., & Vaughn, S. (2000). The helping behaviors of fifth graders while using collaborative strategic reading during ESL content classes. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34 (1), 69-98.
- Lee, J. (2000). Five types of input and the various relationships between form and meaning. In J.F. Lee & A. Valdman (Eds.), *Form and meaning: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 25-42). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Leeman, J., Arteoitia, I., Fridman, B., & Doughty, C. (1995). Integrating attention to form with meaning: Focus on form in content-based Spanish instruction. In R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Attention and awareness in foreign language learning* (pp. 217-258). Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Li, D. (1998). It's always more difficult than you plan and imagine: Teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26 (1), 27-56.
- Lightbown, P., & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Long, M. (1991). Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology. In K. de Bot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.), *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 39-52). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Long, M., & Robinson, P. (1998). Focus on form: Theory, research, and practice. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp. 15-63). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McGuire, P. (1996). Language planning and policy and the ELT profession in selected Central American countries. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30 (3), 606-610.
- Mora, M (2000). English-language assistance programs, English-skill acquisition, and the academic progress of...*Policy Studies Journal*, 28 (4), 721-739.
- Poole, A. (2003a). The Kinds of Forms Learners Attend to During Focus on Form Instruction: A Description of an Advanced ESL Writing Class. Submitted for Publication.
- Poole, A. (2003b). New Labels for Old Problems: Grammar in Communicative Language Teaching. *Profile*, 4, 18-24.
- Poole, A., & Sheorey, R. (2002). Sophisticated *noticing*: Examination of an Indian professional's use of English. *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 28 (2), 121-136.
- Ramanathan, V. (1999). "English is here to stay": A critical look at institutional and educational practices in India. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33 (2), 211-221.

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, M. (1995). Awareness and the efficacy of error correction. In R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Attention and awareness in foreign language teaching* (pp. 163-182). Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.

Sheorey, R., & Nayar, P.B. (2002). Learning and teaching English in India: Looking in from outside. *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 28 (2), 13-24.

Sridhar, K. (2002). Societal multilingualism and world Englishes: Their implications for teaching ESL. *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 28 (2), 83-100.

Terrell, T., & Krashen, S. (1983). *Natural approach: Language in the classroom*. Oxford: Alemany Press.

Van Patten, B. & Oikkenon, S. (1996). Explanation versus structured input in processing instruction. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18 (4), 495-510.

Vavrus, F. (2002). Postcoloniality and English: Exploring language policy and the politics of development in Tanzania. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36 (3), 373-398.

Williams, J. (1999). Learner-generated attention to form. *Language Learning*, 49 (4), 583-625.

Williams, J., & Evans, J. (1998). What kind of focus and on which forms? In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition* (pp.139-155). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wu, Y. (2001). English language teaching in China: Trends and challenges. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35 (1), 191-194.

Yu, L. (2001). Communicative language teaching in China: progress and resistance. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35 (1), 194-198.

Zafar, S. (2003). The sociocultural context of English language teaching in the Gulf. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37 (2), 337-341.

<p>Alex Poole is an Assistant Professor of English at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA. His interests include focus on form instruction, metacognitive reading strategies, and Spanish-English bilingualism. Mailing address: Western Kentucky University, Department of English, 1 Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------