The Effects of Reconstructive Oral Repetition Tasks and Decontextualized Presentation of Target Forms on the Acquisition of Lexical Phrases

OGAWA, Yoshimasa
Showa Women’s University

Abstract
This study explored a way to incorporate reconstructive oral repetition tasks and the decontextualized presentation of target forms into a communicative EFL course at a Japanese university. The effects of focus-on-form oral repetition tasks on the acquisition of lexical phrases were evaluated by administering repeated-measured ANOVAs. Furthermore, at every other class session, the target lexical phrases were displayed in the decontextualized form prior to the communicative and language-enhancement activities, and the extent to which this explicit presentation of target forms might reinforce the effectiveness of oral repetition tasks was evaluated. The results showed that the reconstructive oral repetition contributed to participants’ acquisition of lexical phrases, and the explicit display of target phrases at the beginning of a class session further improved their memory of the phrases.

Keywords: focus-on-form, oral repetition, lexical phrase, decontextualized presentation

Introduction
This study explored a way to incorporate focus-on-form language-enhancement tasks into an EFL course for English majors at a Japanese university. The pertinent EFL course had officially been set up as a reading comprehension course, intended to improve the students’ reading skills and enrich their vocabulary, but the teacher engaged the participants in communicative activities in English as well. Furthermore, at the end of each lesson, reconstructive oral repetition tasks for language enhancement were administered to draw the participants’ attention to useful lexical phrases (i.e., prefabricated multiple-word strings).

The first research purpose was to investigate the extent to which the reconstructive oral repetition tasks might facilitate participants’ acquisition of lexical phrases in a semi-communicative language teaching context. The second purpose was to determine whether or not the explicit, decontextualized presentation of target linguistic forms might reinforce the effectiveness of the focus-on-form language-enhancement tasks. When the phrases to be learned during the class were declaratively presented at the beginning, the participants might be familiarized with novel forms and swiftly find the necessary forms to complete the language tasks that followed. On the other hand, when they were not, the participants were more likely to make extra efforts to find them during the reading or communicative activities, which, in turn, might facilitate their long-term retention of target lexical phrases (Swain, 1985,

It is common practice for EFL or ESL instructors to present unfamiliar words and phrases before meaning-focused or communicative activities in order to reduce the demands on attentional resources. However, such a warm-up activity can be regarded as a focus-on-forms treatment (as opposed to focus-on-form) that runs counter to the major principle of communicative or task-based language teaching in that it deprives learners of opportunities to discover new structures or exemplars. On the other hand, there has been no research evidence that it is ineffective—particularly when used in tandem with, not in place of, communicative tasks—and there is some indirect evidence for its usefulness (Lopes, 2004; Alish, 2004; Saito-Abott, 2004; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2013). This study probes into any supporting role that the decontextualized presentation of target forms may be playing in a particular EFL context at a Japanese university.

**Literature Review**

This section briefly reviews (1) formulaic language, the target linguistic forms in the present study, (2) the purposes and characteristics of focus-on-form instruction, (3) and studies related to a decontextualized display of target forms before communicative tasks.

**Formulaic Language**

Native speakers have a large stock of idiomatic phrases, collocations, or formulaic utterances and retrieve and use them as unanalyzed wholes routinely and ritualistically in their creative speech and writing (Wray, 2002; Ellis, 2005). Using formulaic phrases and sentences, speakers or writers can save their attentional resources for pragmatic- or discourse-level language production. Mastery of formulaic linguistic structures facilitates not only their fluency in speech or writing but also their swift and accurate understanding of spoken and written messages. The acquisition of such multi-word strings can also help L2 learners acquire native-like use of the target language (Wray, 2000, 2002, 2008).

Different EFL/ESL researchers use different terms to refer to formulaic language. Some of the widely-known terms are: *lexical phrase* (Nattinger, 1980; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Lewis, 1993, 1997); *lexicalized sentence stem* (Pawley & Syder, 1983), *multi-word item* (Moon, 1997), *formulaic sequence* (Wray, 2000, 2002), and *morpheme equivalent unit* (Wray, 2008). Whatever the terms used, they are useful formulaic phrases and sentence structures that are memorized and retrieved as chunks for fluent and accurate verbal communication. For the purpose of consistency, the present study refers to this target linguistic form as *lexical phrase*.

The meanings of some lexical phrases cannot be deduced from the meanings of individual components (e.g., *kick the bucket*, *raining cats and dogs*), but it is not necessarily the case with all lexical phrases. In fact, some proponents of the language instruction involving lexical phrases propose that the strings of words that can be flexibly expanded or reformulated are more useful because it contributes to L2 speakers’ and writers’ creative language use. Nattinger (1980) and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) theorized that lexical phrases include not only idioms and firmly fixed collocations (e.g., *for the most part, all in all, the public seldom forgives twice*) but also such basic phrases or sentence structures as *a ___ ago, if it were ____, my point is that __*, and the ___-er, the ___-er, which have slots to be filled with diverse lexical items.
That is, lexical phrases include all phrasal units or sentences that are remembered and retrieved as unanalyzed wholes regardless of the degree to which the structures are fixed and whether or not their meanings can be deduced from the meanings of individual components. The phrases and sentences that can be freely modified or combined with other words or phrases are useful for expressing complex ideas creatively.

Supporting the same pedagogical role of lexical phrases, Willis (1990) developed his lexical approach in the hope to compensate for the weaknesses of grammar-based syllabi. Willis organized a meaning-focused syllabus that helps learners manipulate commonly or frequently used lexical phrases, instead of investing a huge amount of time and effort to explain complex sets of grammatical rules (e.g., verb system, reported speech, hypothetical conditional). It is more economical to use the limited class time to teach functional structures in communicative contexts (e.g., presenting participles as adjectives, not as part of a difficult verb tense and aspect system). It is also important not to confuse learners with time-consuming tasks of learning complex syntactic rules. That is to say, showing how to use useful phrases and clauses is more meaningful and productive than explaining how they are syntactically formed.

Focus on Form and Focus on Forms Instruction

Form-focused instruction was originally contrasted with meaning-focused instruction in which learners were not guided to attend to any particular linguistic form. The target units for form-focused learning can either be the grammatical system (e.g., syntactic or morphological rules) or exemplars (e.g., pronunciations, vocabulary items, and collocations). The major assumption is that they are problematic items that present a challenge to language learners. Normally, form-focused instruction is dichotomously divided into focus on form and focus on forms (Long, 1991; Doughty & Williams, 1998), but definitions vary depending on research or teaching contexts. Ellis (2001) categorized form-focused instruction into three types: focus on forms, planned focus on form (targeted for prescribed forms), and incidental focus on form (not focused on any particular form). There also exists a continuum between the focus on form-oriented and focus on forms-oriented activities, and the two activity types can be combined in various ways.

The present study follows the definitions of focus on form and focus on forms proposed by Doughty and Williams (1998). Focus on forms instruction is directed only at formal accuracy in the form of traditional, controlled exercises, and focus on form instruction is designed to help learners establish form-meaning mappings in communicative tasks. Whereas Long (1991) stated that learners are not aware that they are learning a specific structure, Doughty and Williams proposed that, even in focus on form instruction, learners may be informed of what grammatical structures they are learning. Focus on form activities or tasks are not primarily meaning-focused; instead, form and meaning are equally emphasized.

Some of the past studies investigated how and to what extent learners might generate focus on form voluntarily. For example, Williams (1999) and Moore (2012) investigated learners' voluntary, self-initiated attention to form by extracting and analyzing language-related episodes from ESL learners' interactions. However, the results showed that participants did not voluntarily engage in focus on form negotiations (for reviewing and
reformulating the linguistic forms they had used) as frequently as anticipated. The implication is that it is more desirable for the teacher to intervene and direct learners' attention to target grammatical rules or exemplars.

As the simplest way to draw attention, White (1998) enhanced the target forms typographically (i.e., making them more salient by means of bolding, italicizing, or underlining). However, no decisive evidence for the effectiveness of orthographic enhancement was produced. In order to draw learners' attention more strongly to target forms, Williams and Evans (1998) and Murano (2000) administered multi-level focus-on-form instruction. Murano investigated the extent to which the language-focused debriefing reinforced the effects of focus-on-form corrective feedback that he orally gave to Japanese EFL students during communicative tasks. The participants' accurate use of indefinite and definite articles was analyzed. The results indicated that the communicative focus-on-form activity was generally effective, and its effectiveness further improved when a focus-on-forms debriefing was conducted afterward.

Williams and Evans (1998) administered multiple form-focused treatments to 33 ESL students enrolled in writing courses at an American university. The target grammatical rules were participle adjectives (e.g., *He is interesting*) and passive adjectives (e.g., *He is interested*). They provided the first experimental group with a flood of input and provided the second experimental group with explicit grammar-rule explanations as well as the same materials given to the flood group. The second experimental group further engaged in activities for using the target forms, and feedback was offered on their performance. The control group received no focus-on-form treatment at all. The results suggested that both the provision of input and the task-based focus-on-form treatments were instrumental in guiding learners to attend to, and use, useful grammatical rules or expressions. However, a combination of several form-focused approaches, particularly those that involved both focus-on-form and focus-ons, turned out to be the most effective.

**Effects of Decontextualized Presentation of Phrases**

One possible way that the decontextualized presentation of target forms can interfere with EFL/ESL language acquisition is that it deters learners' efforts to find the forms they need for communicative purposes on their own. Swain (1985, 1991) and Swain and Lapkin (1995) proposed that the process of paying attention to target-language forms plays an important role in language acquisition. Swain (1985) emphasized that language production or comprehensible output provides learners with opportunities to recognize the gaps in their interlanguage, analyze their own linguistic problems, and search for relevant input to modify their output; these three cognitive processes underlie second language acquisition.

Qi and Lapkin (2001) and Sachs and Polio (2007) concurred with Swain's output hypothesis and stated that the struggling experiences that learners go through when searching for mismatches between their existing knowledge and the native-like forms facilitate their noticing (Schmidt, 1990), which, in turn, might lead to greater uptake than automatic or mechanical noting and copying of the presented items. Qi and Lapkin investigated the process in which two Chinese ESL learners composed a text in English and processed written corrective feedback by analyzing think-aloud protocols. The participants
first wrote an L2 text in response to a picture prompt and, then, compared their own drafts with a reformulated version prepared by a native speaker, verbalizing their noticing in both stages. At the third stage, the participants were asked to revise their drafts, a task of which they had not been informed beforehand. The collected think-aloud protocols showed that the participants deepened their noticing in the process of struggling to recognize, and find solutions to, the linguistic problems in their writing.

Sachs and Polio investigated ESL students’ ability to revise their writings accurately in three different conditions of corrective feedback. The participants, 54 EFL students at an American university, were divided into three experimental groups and one control group. After writing a story based on a series of pictures, the first experimental group received direct corrections on their errors, the second experimental group received a reformulated version and compared it with their own drafts, and the third experimental group received the same reformulated CF treatment as the second group and thought aloud during the process. Reformulation was intended to induce participants to make greater efforts in feedback processing, and think-aloud was believed to deepen their noticing. The results showed, however, that the error correction group revised their drafts more accurately than the reformulation group, and the effectiveness of think-aloud for noticing was marginal.

Studies that focused on the positive effects of decontextualized presentation of target words and phrases are scarce, but there are some that lend partial support to the direct or explicit provision of phrases or sentences. Sonbul and Schmitt's (2013) study on native and non-native speakers' learning of collocations in medical contexts showed that direct, decontextualized presentation of collocations improved the participants' explicit knowledge of the target forms more significantly than the control treatment. As for the native speakers' performance, decontextualized input was as effective as enhanced input (input with the target linguistic feature typographically highlighted) and more effective than enriched input (input seeded with many instances of the target structure).

Lopes (2004), Alish (2004), and Saito-Abbott (2004) reported on studies in which target lexical items or phrases were explicitly presented at the beginning of the instructional cycle of a task-based, communicative language course. Lopes strove to convert the traditional PPP (presentation-practice-production) approach to a task-based-instruction program at a Brazilian EFL school but, nonetheless, exposed the participants to useful words and phrases by writing them on the board before communicative tasks. Alish presented new lexical items before engaging American learners of Arabic in meaning-focused communicative tasks, the latter tasks providing the learners with opportunities to practice using functional phrases and grammatical forms. Saito-Abbott, who organized a Japanese-as-a-foreign-language course at California State University, Monterey Bay, presented new lexical items, phrases, and kanji characters at the beginning, which was followed by receptive and productive tasks that facilitated learners' acquisition of targets forms. It is noteworthy that all of the three research teams were advocates of task-based instruction, who endeavored to reform the PPP procedure derived from the Audiolingual Method by providing the opportunities for production before presentation. Nonetheless, they displayed target forms at the beginning of a lesson in hopes of familiarizing learners with novel or unfamiliar lexical items. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the treatment in these studies was not statistically analyzed.

OGAWA, Y.

The Effects of Reconstructive Oral Repetition Tasks
These studies may only partially support the idea of displaying target forms declaratively prior to communicative lessons. However, it is important to note that there has been no empirical evidence that the decontextualized presentation of vocabulary items or lexical phrases is detrimental to language acquisition. There is a possibility that the explicit display of target forms can play a supporting role in language acquisition.

Research Questions
The following two research questions were put forward.

Research Question 1: Do focus-on-form oral repetition tasks facilitate the participants’ learning of lexical phrases in an EFL course that involves reading comprehension and communicative activities?

Research Question 2: Do the participants learn more lexical phrases when unknown or unfamiliar lexical phrases are presented explicitly in the decontextualized form prior to the oral repetition tasks as well as reading and communicative tasks?

Method
Participants
Participants were 26 first-year female students enrolled in the English department of a Japanese university in Tokyo. The reading comprehension course in which they enrolled was part of the intensive EFL skills program for lower-division English majors. Before entering the university, the participants had studied English at Japanese junior-high schools and high schools for six years. The EFL instruction that they had received in middle schools was mostly made up of bottom-up reading comprehension, grammar analysis, and sentence-level composition activities, although some had received a varying length and intensity of listening comprehension practice. Some had an experience of traveling or staying in a foreign country for a short period of time. However, there was no one who had spent a year or longer in an English-speaking country. Their TOEIC scores ranged from 295 to 520 ($M = 416.04$, $SD = 52.02$).

Instructional Procedure
The course was primarily a meaning-focused reading comprehension course, using the textbook tilted Reading Explorer 1 (Douglas, 2009), but the classroom activities involved listening and speaking tasks as well. About 70 or 80% of teaching was conducted in English whereas difficult parts of the reading materials were explained in Japanese. Before the reading of each unit, the teacher (the researcher himself) engaged the participants in a small-group discussion on a relevant topic and subsequently asked the discussion leader of each group to orally report the generated ideas back to the class. (Students in each group took turns to serve as the discussion leader and speaker.) They were encouraged to conduct group discussions in English but were allowed to switch to Japanese if they could not fully express their ideas. The priority was to gather substantial ideas so that group representatives could make informative speeches. The speakers were advised to rehearse their speeches in English within their groups before speaking in front of the entire class.
Then, after listening to the recorded model reading by a native speaker, the participants answered several comprehension questions. The reading comprehension activity itself was oriented toward the top-down approach, instead of the bottom-up approach that involved analysis of each and every phrase or sentence.

After all activities related to the assigned reading, the participants engaged in two types of reconstructive oral repetition tasks (see the following section), which elicited retrieval of target lexical phrases that were intentionally deleted. In contrast with mechanical—or controlled—repetition, participants had to understand the meaning of each sentence displayed on the PowerPoint screen and reconstruct and orally repeat the target sentence. This task was believed to induce low-level cognitive processing.

The oral repetition tasks were administered toward the end of every class session, but, at the odd-numbered classes, the target lexical phrases were displayed on the large screen at the beginning of the class, i.e., before all activities described above. This treatment, hereafter referred to as explicit decontextualized presentation of target forms and focus-on-form language enhancement or simply explicit-F onF, was more likely to help participants identify the prescribed target forms with greater facility during the focus-on-form tasks, easing the demands on attentional resources. At even-numbered sessions, the target lexical phrases were not explicitly displayed at the beginning, hereafter referred to as focus-on-form-only or FonF-only. The absence of explicit presentation was likely to force them to make extra efforts to discover the necessary forms.

Each unit in the reading comprehension textbook was divided into Sections A and B, which were believed to include the texts and vocabulary items of equivalent difficulty. Section A of each unit was used for explicit-F onF treatment, and Section B was used for FonF-only treatment.

**Oral Repetition Tasks**

Two types of oral repetition tasks were administered for language enhancement. The first oral repetition task, in the form of oral cloze activities, was modeled on a task referred to as blackboard reproduction (Nation, 1974) or progressive deletion (Willis & Willis, 2007). The teacher writes a sentence on the blackboard and starts erasing some of the words, and students will recall the missing words and read the original sentence out loud. Although it looks like a mechanical exercise, learners reflect on the structure of a sentence very carefully and strive to restore the original form. In the present study, PowerPoint was utilized, instead of the blackboard, and only the target lexical phrases and a few other content words were erased, not the entire sentence. A small group of participants were called on to read the target sentence out loud in chorus while the others tried to reconstruct the sentence in their minds.

For the oral cloze task, a set of four PowerPoint slides was prepared to present each target sentence. The first slide contained a sentence extracted from a textbook unit, which involved one of the major ideas from the reading and was embedded with at least one useful lexical phrase (e.g., A man ties tree vines to his legs and jumps head-first from a high tower). On the second slide, parts of the target lexical phrase were deleted (e.g., A man ties tree vines to his legs and jumps (h-)-(f- ) from a high tower). For difficult lexical phrases, the initial letters of missing words were provided as hints. The third and fourth slides were missing an

*OGAWA, Y.*

*The Effects of Reconstructive Oral Repetition Tasks*
increasingly greater number of words. For each lesson, three or four such sentences were chosen, and the same task was repeated for each sentence.

The second task was modeled on Erlam's (2009) elicited oral imitation test, which she used to measure L2 learners' implicit knowledge. Instead of simply making learners repeat provided spoken statements, Erlam orally presented grammatical and ungrammatical sentences and instructed them to repeat the grammatical sentences and produce the repaired forms of ungrammatical sentences. Moreover, learners were directed to indicate whether they believed the given statement was true or false before repeating the sentence, which prevented them from repeating the sentences verbatim. The learners decoded and interpreted the stimuli before reproducing the target forms. In the present study, the target sentences for repetition were visually displayed on the large screen in order to make the task easier. All sentences contained a grammatical mistake. For each target sentence, the teacher randomly chose one participant and asked her to read the repaired form out loud while the rest of the class tried to find an error and reconstruct the sentence in their minds. For example, a sentence on the large screen read: Orangutans use a strategy to stay dryly when it rains; then, the participant called upon was expected to change stay dryly to stay dry and read out the entire sentence.

The oral repetition tasks for language enhancement used in the present study had features of both focus-on-form and focus-on-forms treatments. However, the term focus-on-form task is used throughout this paper. Although the activity of orally repeating target forms involved an element of focus-on-forms treatment, the participants were guided to reconstruct the lexical phrases that they had been exposed to in the reading or communicative activities. They were not forced to mechanically repeat the target forms taken out of semantic context.

The oral repetition activities used in this study can also be regarded as tasks. Skehan (1998), Leaver and Willis (2004), and Willis and Willis (2007) all define a language-learning task as an activity that is connected to real-life communication, has a goal or outcome for learners to work for, and is primarily meaning-focused, although Nunan (2004) has proposed that meaning and form are closely interrelated. Nunan and Leaver and Willis further explain that tasks guide learners to use linguistic forms of their own choice, instead of prescribed structures. It is acknowledged that the two oral repetition tasks did not, in a strict sense, have a non-linguistic goal that was independent of language learning. The forms for participants to use were prescribed, and the tasks were not directly related to real-life communicative interactions. However, the oral repetition activities met another important criterion for a pedagogical task, i.e., the inducement of cognitive processing (Ellis, 2003), which was the most important for the educational and research purposes of this study. On the other hand, the small-group discussion and oral presentation in English, to which the oral repetition tasks were closely connected, met all the criteria for communicative language tasks.

**Assessment**

A pretest on the target lexical phrases was conducted at the beginning of the semester in order to determine the participants' prior knowledge of lexical phrases. The test consisted of two sections. The first section was a multiple-choice test, which comprised 21 questions. Each question item required participants to choose one appropriate lexical item out of three
alternatives (e.g., What ( ) them so special? They are not humans; they are elephants: a. turns, b. gives, c. makes). The test was a matching type and intended to be the easier set of questions. The second section was a sentence completion (or partial translation) test that included 10 questions; this part was designed to discriminate the more proficient students from the less proficient. An example question item is: Please put the magazines (i- ) the (c- ) (o- ) from the oldest to the newest issues. The Japanese translation for in the correct order was provided as a hint.

Then, in order to assess the effects of reconstructive oral repetition tasks on the participants' memory of target lexical phrases, mid-term quizzes and a final test were administered. These follow-up tests also comprised multiple-choice and sentence completion sections. In the process of data analysis, the mid-term tests were combined, and analyzed, in place of an immediate posttest. The final test was administered in place of a delayed posttest, although the lapse of time after the last language-enhancement treatment was rather short. At the end of the semester, an informal questionnaire survey was conducted, asking the participants to indicate their personal preference for either explicit-FoF or FoF-only treatment.

Two-way repeated-measures ANOVAs were performed to evaluate the participants' acquisition of target items through either FoF-only or explicit-FoF treatment. The independent variables were test and treatment; the dependent variables were the participants' scores at each test after each treatment. As the questionnaire survey, the numbers of participants who indicated their preference for either treatment were counted, and a chi-square test was conducted to determine the level of statistical significance. The alpha level for all statistical analyses was set at 0.05.

Results

Multiple-choice Test Results

Prior to the administration of a repeated-measures ANOVA, the participants' multiple-choice scores on the pretest, the mid-term quizzes, and the final test were transformed into Rasch measures, using the dichotomous Rasch model (Bond & Fox, 2007). Rasch measures are more useful for accurate statistical measurement than raw scores because they are equal-interval measures that are derived from the probabilistic relationships between person abilities and item difficulties.

The Rasch analyses indicated that the person separation was 0.72, and the person reliability was 0.34; both were rather low, which could be attributable to the fact that the participants, classified into the same skill-level group, were similar in English proficiency. The item separation was 2.45, which was higher than the criterion point of 2.0, and the item reliability was 0.86, close to the criterion point of 0.90. The Rasch person measures were converted to response probability units (CHIPS). This linear transformation meant that the average person measure was set at 50, and the highest and lowest possible scores were respectively 80 and 20. The descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 1.

The original number of participants was 26, but the N-size was reduced to 25 because one participant, whose z-score was higher than the criterion point of 3.29, was eliminated as an outlier. The skewness and kurtosis values for every test were within the acceptable range of
Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Multiple-choice Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Explicit-FonF Treatment</th>
<th>FonF-only Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>47.89</td>
<td>51.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-0.96</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term</td>
<td>57.52</td>
<td>58.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Test</td>
<td>63.96</td>
<td>64.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>-1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 25.

< ±1.96. The explicit-FonF and FonF-only means for the final test were higher than those for the mid-term quizzes, which were higher than those for the pretest. The mean for the FonF-only treatment was higher than that for the explicit-FonF treatment at the pretest. The FonF-only means at the mid-term and final tests were also higher than the explicit-FonF means, but the differences between the two treatments were smaller than at the pretest.

A two-way within-subject analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the effects of treatment and test on the acquisition of target lexical phrases. The within-subjects factors were treatment with two levels (FonF with or without decontextualized presentation of target phrases) and test with three levels (pretest, mid-term quizzes, and final test). The dependent variables were the participants’ scores on the three tests for each of the two treatments.

Mauchly’s Sphericity Test results showed that the assumption of sphericity was met for the test factor (W = 0.99, p = 0.93) but was not met for the treatment x test interaction (W = 0.75, p = 0.04). Thus, as for the interaction effect, the Greenhouse-Geisser adjustment was used to solve this problem.

The multivariate test results showed that the test main effect was significant, Λ = 0.04, F(2, 23) = 276.55, p = 0.001, η² = 0.96, as well as the test x treatment interaction effect, Λ = 0.69, F(2, 23) = 5.23, p = 0.013, η² = 0.31. The partial eta square values indicated that the test and test x treatment interaction factors accounted for 96% and 31% of the variance, respectively.

The results of the univariate test (see Table 2) showed that the treatment main effect was significant, F(1, 24) = 6.40, p = 0.018, η² = 0.21, indicating that the FonF-only treatment was more effective than the explicit-FonF treatment. The test main effect was significant, F(2, 48) = 306.94, p = 0.001, η² = 0.93; the test x treatment interaction effect was also significant, F(1.60, 38.49) = 3.96, p = 0.035, η² = 0.14.

To follow up the significant treatment main effect, the means of the two treatment scores were computed, and a paired-samples t-test was conducted. The mean of the FonF-only treatment scores (M = 58.07, SD = 1.77) was significantly higher than the mean of the Explicit-
Table 2

Univariate Test Results of the Two-way Repeated-measures ANOVA (Multiple-choice Tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>(\eta^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96.80</td>
<td>96.80</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>363.20</td>
<td>15.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5418.06</td>
<td>2709.03</td>
<td>306.94</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>423.65</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment x Test</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>71.03</td>
<td>44.29</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>38.49</td>
<td>430.06</td>
<td>11.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(\alpha = .05\)

FonF scores \((M = 56.46, SD = 2.32), t(24) = 2.53, p = 0.02\).

Then, to follow up the significant test main effect, the means for the three tests were computed, and three paired-samples \(t\)-tests were conducted. Holm's sequential Bonferroni approach was used to control for familywise error rate across these tests. The mean for Test 3 \((M = 64.36, SD = 2.25)\) was significantly higher than the mean for Test 1 \((M = 49.66, SD = 1.75), t(24) = 3.18, p = 0.004 (\alpha = 0.017\) after the Bonferroni adjustment). The mean for Test 2 was \((M = 57.76, SD = 2.43)\) not significantly higher than the mean for Test 1, \(t(24) = 2.21, p = 0.037 (> 0.025)\), narrowly missing the criterion point. The mean for Test 3 was not significantly higher than the mean for Test 2, \(t(24) = 0.25, p = 0.80 (> 0.05)\). That is, the participants' scores improved to a statistically significant degree between pretest and final test.

In order to follow up the significant interaction effect, the difference between the explicit-FonF and FonF-only means at each test was computed, and three paired-samples \(t\)-tests were conducted. Holm's sequential Bonferroni adjustment was used to control for familywise error rate across the three tests. Again, the FonF-only mean was higher than the Explicit-FonF mean at each test, but the difference between the explicit-FonF and FonF-only means at Test 3 \((M = -0.8, SD = 0.84)\) was significantly smaller than the difference mean at Test 1 \((M = -3.54, SD = 0.84), t(24) = -3.18, p = 0.004 (> 0.017)\). There was no significant difference between the difference means at Test 2 \((M = -0.48, SD = 1.11)\) and Test 1, \(t(24) = -2.21, p = 0.037 (> 0.025)\), missing the criterion point narrowly. There was no significant difference between the difference means at Test 2 and Test 3, \(t(24) = 0.25, p = 0.801 (> 0.05)\). That is, the difference between the participants' scores for the Explicit-FonF and FonF-only treatments became increasingly smaller, and insignificant, over the four-month treatment period.

Sentence Completion Test Results

The participants' scores on the translation pretest, mid-term quizzes, and final test were transformed into Rasch measures, using the partial credit Rasch model. The person separation was 1.44, and the person reliability was 0.67; both were rather low, probably attributable to the fact that the participants were similar in language proficiency. The item separation was 5.07, which was much higher than the criterion point of 2.0, and the item reliability was 0.96, which was above the criterion point of 0.90. The Rasch digits were further converted to response probability units. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics.

OGAWA, Y. The Effects of Reconstructive Oral Repetition Tasks
Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Sentence Completion Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Explicit-FonF Treatment</th>
<th>FonF-only Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>44.49</td>
<td>43.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>54.06</td>
<td>50.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>68.21</td>
<td>63.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>5.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>-0.58</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 25.

The N-size was reduced to 25 because one student, whose z-score was higher than 3.29, was eliminated as an outlier. (The outlier eliminated here is different from the outlier in the multiple-choice test section.) The skewness and kurtosis values were all less than +1.0. The explicit-FonF and FonF-only means for the final test were higher than those for the mid-term quizzes, which were higher than those for the pretest. In contrast with the multiple-choice test results, the sentence completion test results indicated that the explicit-FonF mean was higher than the FonF-only mean at every test.

A two-way within-subject analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the effects of treatment and test on the acquisition of target lexical phrases. The same statistical analysis procedure for the multiple-choice tests was followed. Mauchly’s Sphericity Test results showed that the assumption of sphericity was met for both the test factor (W =0.99, p = 0.91) and the treatment x test interaction (W = 0.87, p = 0.21).

Table 4
Univariate Test Results of the Two-way Repeated-measures ANOVA (Sentence Completion Tests)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>(\eta^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>382.72</td>
<td>382.72</td>
<td>18.57</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>494.67</td>
<td>20.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12031.67</td>
<td>6015.83</td>
<td>161.24</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1790.92</td>
<td>37.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat x Test</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>112.68</td>
<td>56.34</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>723.62</td>
<td>15.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(\alpha = .05\)
The multivariate test results showed that test main effect was significant, \( \Lambda = 0.06, F(2, 23) = 170.16, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.94 \), the test factor accounting for 94% of the variance. The test x treatment interaction effect was also significant, \( \Lambda = 0.68, F(2, 23) = 5.47, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.32 \), accounting for 32% of the variance.

The results of the univariate test (see Table 4) showed that the treatment main effect was significant, \( F(1, 24) = 18.57, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.44 \). Likewise, the test main effect was significant, \( F(2, 48) = 161.24, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.87 \); the test x treatment interaction effect was also significant, \( F(2, 48) = 3.74, p = 0.031, \eta^2 = 0.14 \).

In order to follow up the significant treatment main effect, the means of the two treatment scores were computed, and a paired-samples t-test was conducted. The explicit-FonF mean (\( M = 55.58, SD = 3.77 \)) was significantly higher than the FonF-only mean (\( M = 52.39, SD = 2.69 \)), \( t(24) = 4.31, p = 0.001 \).

Then, in order to follow up the significant test main effect, the means for the three tests were computed, and the pairwise comparisons were performed. Holm’s sequential Bonferroni adjustment was used to control for Type One errors. The mean for Test 3 (\( M = 65.78, SD = 4.37 \)) was significantly higher than the mean for Test 1 (\( M = 44.09, SD = 4.34 \)), \( t(24) = 18.64, p = 0.001 (< 0.017) \), the mean for Test 2 (\( M = 52.10, SD = 4.61 \)) was significantly higher than the mean for Test 1, \( t(24) = 6.38, p = 0.001 (< 0.05) \), the mean for Test 3 was significantly higher than the mean for Test 2, \( t(24) = 11.00, p = 0.001 (< 0.025) \).

In order to follow up the significant interaction effect, the difference between the explicit-FonF and FonF-only means at each test was computed, and three paired-samples t-tests were conducted. Again, Holm’s sequential Bonferroni adjustment was used. The difference between the explicit-FonF and FonF-only means at Test 3 (\( M = 4.86, SD = 1.29 \)) was significantly higher than the difference mean at Test 1 (\( M = 0.80, SD = 0.91 \)), \( t(24) = 2.92, p = 0.008 (< 0.017) \). The difference mean at Test 2 (\( M = 3.92, SD = 1.25 \)) was not significantly higher than the one at Test 1, \( t(24) = 2.19, p = 0.039 (> 0.025) \), narrowly missing the significant level. The difference mean at Test 3 was not significantly higher than the one at Test 2, \( t(24) = 0.52, p = 0.608 (> 0.05) \).

**Chi-square Test on the Participants’ Preference**

A one-sample chi-square test was conducted to determine whether the participants preferred to have the target phrases displayed at the beginning of a lesson or whether they preferred not to (i.e., implying their desire for opportunities to find them in the process of reading or communicative activities). Out of the 26 participants, 15 answered that they preferred to have the phrases declaratively presented at the beginning, one preferred not to, and 10 indicated no preference. The result of the chi-square test was statistically significant, \( \chi^2(2, N = 26) = 11.62, p = 0.003 \). Follow-up pairwise comparisons indicated that the difference between the portions of the students who preferred the decontextualized presentation of target phrases and those who did not was significant, \( \chi^2(1, N = 26) = 11.25, p = 0.001 \), the difference between the people who had no preference and those who did not prefer explicit provision was significant, \( \chi^2(1, N = 26) = 7.36, p = 0.007 \). On the other hand, the difference between those who preferred the decontextualized presentation of target phrases and those who had no preference was not significant, \( \chi^2(1, N = 26) = 1.00, p = 0.317 \). Overall, these
results suggested that the majority of participants in this study preferred to have the target lexical phrases explicitly presented prior to the reading and communicative activities and language-enhancement tasks, but there were also many students who could not make a decision.

Discussion

The first research question concerned whether or not focus-on-form oral repetition tasks could facilitate the participants' learning of lexical phrases in an EFL course that involved reading comprehension and communicative activities. The results of multiple-choice tests and sentence completion tests both showed that the participants' scores became progressively higher from the pretest to the mid-term quizzes to the final test, providing evidence that the focus-on-form tasks enhanced their memory of lexical phrases. Particularly, the sentence completion tests, which included somewhat more difficult question items, produced more clear-cut evidence than the multiple-choice tests. The ANOVA and post-hoc test results for the multiple-choice tests indicated that the difference between the final test and the pretest was significant, but that there was no significant difference between the mid-term quizzes and the pretest. Thus, it must be acknowledged that there is a possibility that the repeated tests, as well as the focus-on-form treatment, might have partially contributed to improvement in the participants' scores. On the other hand, the sentence completion tests—designed to be somewhat more difficult than the multiple-choice tests—indicated that the mean for the mid-term quizzes was significantly higher than the pretest mean.

The present study did not involve a control treatment that administered no focus-on-form oral repetition tasks. However, the author's earlier project (Ogawa, 2011) engaged a group of 71 Japanese students in the same type of oral repetition task modeled on progressive deletion only at odd-numbered class sessions, not at even-numbered sessions. The participants, enrolled in a task-based communicative EFL course, were exposed to lexical phrases during communicative activities at every class session. The within-subjects ANOVA results showed that the participants learned more lexical phrases when they engaged in oral repetition tasks than when they did not. The present study has followed up the pertinent findings, strengthening the position that reconstructive oral repetition serves an important role for language acquisition in communicative language-learning contexts.

The second research question was related to whether or not participants would learn more lexical phrases when the unknown or unfamiliar lexical phrases were presented explicitly in the decontextualized form prior to the oral repetition tasks as well as reading and communicative tasks. Overall, the explicit display of target forms resulted in gains in the participants' test scores. Regarding the multiple-choice test results, the significant test main effect in favor of the FonF-only treatment seemed, on the surface, to indicate that the decontextualized presentation of target forms had a negative effect. However, the participants' FonF-only mean was significantly higher than their explicit-FonF mean at pretest (i.e., before receiving any treatment), and the difference between the two groups' means became significantly smaller over the semester. That is, the target forms chosen for the explicit-FonF treatment might have been more difficult than those for the FonF-only treatment, and the explicit-FonF treatment helped to reduce the difference to a significant degree over the
experimental period. Consequently, the explicit presentation of target forms had a positive effect on the acquisition of lexical phrases.

On the other hand, regarding the sentence completion tests, the participants' explicit-FonF mean was slightly higher than their FonF-only mean at pretest. Then, the difference mean at final test was significantly higher than the difference mean at pretest, and the difference mean at the mid-term quizzes was also higher than the difference mean at pretest although the p-value of 0.039 narrowly missed the new alpha level of 0.025 after the Bonferroni adjustment. To sum up, the decontextualized presentation of target forms contributed to the participants' acquisition of lexical phrases in the course that involved communicative and language-enhancement oral repetition tasks.

No earlier studies had provided evidence that the decontextualized presentation of target forms was counterproductive, and the findings from this study supported the policy of displaying target forms before communicative and language-enhancement activities. Explicit provision of a few target forms does not require much time or effort, and, consequently, teachers may be advised to implement this minor but effective treatment in the EFL classroom.

Another reason for displaying the target forms before other language tasks is that, as shown by the chi-square test results, many participants indicated their desire to have the target forms displayed in the decontextualized form. The test results were based on an informal questionnaire survey, and the sample size was small; therefore, more research is needed to confirm this tendency. However, learners' expectations concerning the way target linguistic forms are provided should always be taken into consideration for the preparation of effective lesson plans or syllabus design.

There are many other interesting research issues that may be explored based on the results of the present study. In this project, the oral repetition tasks for language enhancement were administered at the end of a class session. However, another major question is whether the language-enhancement tasks should be administered before or after communicative tasks. As explained above, the oral repetition tasks involved both focus-on-form and focus-on-forms elements, and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) proposed that even the focus-on-forms instruction (e.g., controlled oral repetition activities) can facilitate language acquisition by kinesthetically familiarizing learners with new grammatical forms. In their perspective, controlled repetition drills, for example, can be effectively utilized to prepare learners for communicative or meaning-focused tasks involving the target forms. On the other hand, Nunan (2004) and Willis and Willis (2007) argued that focus-on-forms tasks should be utilized for learners to polish the forms with which they have already been familiarized through repeated exposure during meaning-focused activities. The present study followed the latter policy by administering oral repetition tasks (although designed to be reconstructive) at the end of a lesson, but the administration of the same tasks at the beginning should also be implemented and evaluated. Likewise, it has yet to be determined whether the decontextualized presentation of target forms can be better utilized before or after communicative tasks. In this respect, the present study is an important step toward the exploration of diverse sequencing of form-focused instructional techniques.

Finally, the overall study results strengthened the position that a combination of several
form-focused treatments is useful and effective (Williams & Evans, 1998; Muranoi, 2000). The explicit display of target forms in the decontextualized form is a minor treatment, but the major purpose of this study was to produce evidence that even a small task or activity can play a role in language acquisition when optimally utilized in tandem with other form-focused tasks.

**Conclusion**

The present study investigated the effects of reconstructive oral repetition tasks on Japanese EFL students' acquisition of lexical phrases and the extent to which the decontextualized presentation of target phrases might reinforce the function of the focus-on-form tasks. The results showed that the oral repetition tasks for language enhancement contributed to their learning of lexical phrases, and the decontextualized provision of target forms at the beginning of a lesson further improved their memory of target phrases. The pedagogical implication is that spending a few minutes to explicitly present the target forms at the beginning of each EFL lesson will be more beneficial than harmful. EFL teachers are also advised to administer multiple form-focused instructional treatments in task-based courses.

The present study had several limitations. The first limitation was that the sample size was very small, and it is difficult to extrapolate the revealed tendencies to other groups of EFL learners or other EFL courses with different contents. Replication studies with greater numbers of participants are needed to generalize the findings. Second, as for the multiple-choice tests, the participants' pretest scores showed that the question items for the *explicit-FonF* treatment might have been more difficult than the items for *FonF-only*. For replication studies, the question items should be reviewed and revised carefully so that linguistic items of approximately the same degree of difficulty would be included in the tests for the two instructional treatments. Third, the delayed posttest was administered soon after the last midterm quiz due to the class administration constraints. In order to measure the carryover effects accurately, it is necessary to administer the last test after the lapse of a much longer time.

It is acknowledged that oral repetition tasks can be best utilized in tandem with communicative, task-based activities that induce higher cognitive processing. The decontextualized presentation of target forms constitutes only a minor part of any EFL or ESL lesson plan, and its functions must be reevaluated in various language teaching contexts. However, communicative language instruction is a complex mechanism, and even minor cogs in the machine should be carefully examined and utilized to the fullest. In this regard, the present study might have added to the body of knowledge for efficient focus-on-form and task-based language instruction.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my appreciation to the anonymous reviewers who offered insightful comments and suggestions.

**References**


OGAWA, Y. (2011). *The Effects of Reconstructive Oral Repetition Tasks*


