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Acquisition of the English Article System through Form-Focused Instruction*

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The purpose of this study is to explore the effective teaching method of the English article system through Form-Focused Instruction (FFI). To this end, this study aims to investigate whether FFI is effective in acquiring the English article system in a Business English Composition class and how learners perceive FFI in the Business English Composition class. Participants in this study were 13 first-year college students who took the Business English Composition class. In the writing class, input enhancement, output enhancement, and corrective feedback of FFI were applied. As an input reinforcement activity, materials highlighted in colored bold fonts were provided for a visual attention activity, and question-and-answer activities with students were conducted for an output reinforcement activity. Corrective feedback was provided immediately during the class after the student's writing was completed. The pre- and post-test results of this study showed the application of FFI in the Business Composition class was effective in acquiring the English article system. Accuracy was improved overall, especially in the use of *the*. In addition, the survey revealed that the learners considered the FFI positively and preferred immediate corrective feedback the most among FFI activities. Therefore, it is suggested that FFI be applied to English writing classes to improve writing accuracy.

[Form-Focused Instruction/English articles/enhancement/corrective feedback]

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I. INTRODUCTION

English has become the universal language used in all fields around the world. As these times change, in recent years, English education in Korea has tended to emphasize only the fluency of using English, focusing on speaking-oriented communication. However, teaching methods that focus only on meaning through communication activities may result in many grammatical errors in writing classes such as Business English Composition classes (Kim, 2005).

As communication between companies belongs to the public domain, English users will need to express the contents of documents accurately and concisely. Particularly in business situations, accurate and effective communication in English is of utmost importance. Since the purpose of business-related documents is to accurately convey the meanings necessary for announcements, requirements, and improvements between organizations rather than individuals, conciseness and accuracy are required. According to these specific goals, the method of teaching should be different.

In the case of the English article system, it is difficult to learn in a classroom emphasizing only speaking-oriented communication. Krashen (1982) said that the English article system is complex and has little effect of explicit instruction, but we would like to investigate the effect of explicit grammar instruction on the acquisition of the English article system. In this study, we would like to investigate whether Form-Focused Instruction (FFI), which focuses on language forms, is effective in acquiring the English article system in Business English Composition classes and how learners perceive FFI. The research questions for these purposes are as follows:

1) Is FFI effective in acquiring the English article system in Business English Composition classes?
2) What is the learner´s perception of FFI in business English Composition classes?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Form-Focused Instruction

In the 1970s, widespread communication language education and second language acquisition pursued the development of languages that emphasized meaning-oriented activities rather than grammar rules. Krashen (1982) distinguished explicit learning from implicit acquisition, arguing that the learned knowledge cannot be acquired. He argued that explicit grammar education does not play an important role in language acquisition, but only

plays a peripheral role. However, as it was pointed out that the meaning-oriented language education lacks accuracy, the need for formal grammar education was raised (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Long, 1991). As a complementary method for this language teaching, Long (1991) proposed a form-focused instruction. He argued that attention should be paid to the form of language within the framework of communication teaching, as conscious attention to grammar promotes language learning. The term 'form-focused instruction' began to be used by Long (1991), but its necessity began to form in the 1980s. Johnson (1982) divided the positions of unificationists and separationists in language structure and language use. The separatist position is that language structures are first taught through a structural syllabus, then language use is taught, followed by a communicative phase in which the structures are 'activated' and 'recycled'. The unificationist view insists on a communication system from the very beginning of instruction, with the view that the separation of language form and language use is undesirable, and that linguistics and psychology do not support the separation of them (Johnson, 1982).

Johnson's (1982) concept of unificationist and separationist is similar to Spada and Lightbown's (2008) 'isolated FFI' and the 'integrated FFI'. Spada and Lightbown (2008) described two approaches in form-focused instruction to draw the learner's attention to language forms in L2 education. They are 'isolated FFI' and the 'integrated FFI'. However, their form-focused approach differs from Long's (1991) 'focus on forms'. Long's (1991) 'focus on forms' refers to language teaching and practice organized around predetermined grammatical points in a structured syllabus, that is, form-based education that is not directly linked to true communication practice. Thus, their form-focused instruction functions as part of a program that includes in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)[1] and Content Based Instruction (CBI)[2]. 'Isolated FFI' can be intervened in the preparation process for communicative activities or in the post-activity process of students who have experienced difficulties with certain language characteristics during communicative activities.

On the other hand, 'integrated FFI' of Spada and Lightbown (2008) is a way that attracts learners' attention to language forms during CLT or CBI. This definition is similar to 'the focus form' of Ellis (2002) and Doughty & Williams (1998). That is, although the focus on

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[1] Littlewood (1981) said CLT has had an influence in both second language and foreign language teaching since the early 1970's. CLT is an approach that encompasses language knowledge, language skills and communication skills (Canale & Swain, 1980; Widdowson, 1978). Canale and Swain (1980) and Savignon (1982) argued that communicative competence consists of four dimensions: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

[2] CBI is a content-language integration approach used to teach both content and language (Maming, Saleh, & Yassi, 2020). Grabe and Stoller (1997) argued that the activities of language classes in a CBI depend on the content of the subject being taught and are used to stimulate students to think and learn using the target language.

form occurs within a communicative activity, the focus language trait can be anticipated and planned by the teacher and it may occur incidentally in the course of an ongoing interaction. However, isolated FFI and integrated FFI are not in a competitive relationship with each other, but complementary relationships in language learning environments. Isolated FFI and integrated FFI commonly include explicit feedback on mistakes, metalinguistic terms, statements of rules, and explanations (Spada & Lightbown, 1993). According to Spada and Lightbown (2008), isolated FFI is necessary for intermediate language learners who have overcome problems associated with their mother tongue, and integrated FFI can be most helpful in improving learners' accuracy and autonomy (Lyster, 2004; Spada & Lightbown, 2008). In addition, the effects of FFI have been identified through many other studies (Day & Shapson, 1991; Harley, 1989; White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991).

In this study, from the perspective of the FFI of Spada and Lightbown (2008), we will utilize visual input enhancement, output enhancement, and corrective feedback for a business English writing class, and investigate whether these methods are effective in acquiring English articles *a* and *the*.

2. The English Article System

According to a series of research results, the acquisition of the English article system as a mother tongue usually takes place around the age of three and is acquired in the order of indefinite articles, definite articles, and zero articles (Brown, 1973; Maratsos, 1976; Scollen, 1976; Weisenberger, 1976). However, there is no common argument among scholars about the order of English article acquisition by EFL learners. It is one of the grammar items that Korean English learners have the most difficulty in acquiring compared to the small number of articles and the simple appearance. Particularly, it is a grammar form that is not recognized in the early stages of learning English but becomes more difficult as an advanced learner. According to Butler (1999), even advanced English learners were not confident in the selection of articles and showed about 70% accuracy in the selection experiment. This is because articles are influenced by semantic and pragmatic factors as well as linguistic factors in the situations in which the interlocutors use them, so more complex rules should be understood.

The most important and basic thing in using articles is to distinguish abstract nouns from common nouns and to classify common nouns into countable nouns and uncountable nouns again (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). However, the English article system may seem difficult to Korean English learners in EFL situations because of the variety of exceptional rules. For example, 'furniture' or 'information' is an uncountable noun in English, but a countable noun in French and Spanish, and 'chalk' is an uncountable noun in English but a countable noun in Japanese (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Also, in

English, many nouns are used both as countable nouns and as uncountable nouns, so English learners suffer a lot of confusion.

Even though it is necessary to use the article by grasping various situations, it is easy to overlook the English article in the teaching/learning situation where communication is important. Since it is not a content word, even if an article is omitted or misused, it does not produce an absolute error that affects communication relatively. However, it is also an essential element for accurate communication.

There are several studies on how effective it is to acquire the English article system in English classes using FFI. According to Bitchener (2008), corrective feedback, a method of FFI in writing and speaking activities, improved the correct use of articles. Master (1995) explained that the acquisition of them was not related to the period of English learning or residence in the English-speaking world and that systematic guidance of articles had an effect on the acquisition of them. Pica (1983) conducted a study on the acquisition of English morphemes and explained that there was a difference in language use between the group that received grammar training and the group that did not. However, it has been shown that the infinitive article *a* has not been affected by language use even after grammar education. In addition, Sheen (2010) found that meta-linguistic explanations and direct feedback improved the writing ability of the linguistic characteristics of the target language. Wong (2001) suggested that FFI was more needed, arguing that simultaneous reinforcement of learning content and definite articles resulted in reduced production of target language characteristics.

Let's take a look at domestic studies on the English article system. Seog (2018) studied the article use of Korean EFL learners by analyzing the data of the Kyungpook National University Student English Learner Corpus-Writing (KSELC-W). As a result of analyzing the corpus data, it was found that the English article use of Korean university students performed in a timed writing session that does not focus on grammar follows the Fluctuation Hypothesis (Ionin, Ko, & Wexler, 2004). Lee (2019) analyzed how the English article system was being learned for 4th to 6th graders in elementary school. Lee interviewed learners and found that article acquisition was not due to internalization of rules, but to the repetitive learning of the sentences in textbooks. Lee (2021) studied the effect of a cognitive-linguistic approach in teaching the English article system to Korean college students. In Lee's study, students took a fill-in-the-blank pre-test and then took a similar post-test after learning the unit developed as a brief pedagogical unit (1.5 weeks) for first-year college students. The post-test results showed that the students showed significant improvements in response accuracy, especially for the definite article and the zero article. According to Lee (2021), factors such as noun phrase types, lexical frequency, and semantic concreteness effects were found to affect student language use accuracy.

Hwang (2015), Park (2001) and Park (2018) studied the effectiveness of FFI in the acquisition of the English article system. Park (2001) investigated the effect of improving

grammatical awareness on article acquisition by using ‘explicit explanation’, ‘input enhancement’, and ‘feedback on output’ in the English composition class of Korean-speaking university students. According to the study of Park (2001), as in the study of Pica (1983), the article *a* did not show a significant change before and after teaching, whereas the case showed a significant improvement after teaching in the case of *the*. Hwang (2015) also investigated the learning effect and learner's perception of FFI and corrective feedback. According to the study by Hwang (2015), which analyzed perceptions and attitudes toward instruction, all three groups were found to improve students’ knowledge of specific grammatical forms, and learners positively responded to FFI and corrective feedback. Looking at these studies, it can be said that FFI has a positive effect on the acquisition of the English article system. Park (2018) experimented an effect of explicit teaching methods on the acquisition of articles in Korean middle school students in the acquisition of non-generic English definite articles. As a result, Park (2018) showed that when explicit instruction on the identifiability of the definite article was carried out, it was effective for Korean middle school students in EFL situations to acquire the definite article. Similarly, in this study, we will investigate whether the application of FFI using explicit instruction in English composition classes is effective in acquiring the English article system.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The learners who participated in this study were thirteen first-year students taking the Business English Composition class (three credits) at K University in Gyeonggi-do. The class was conducted using ZOOM. There were fifteen students in the class, but two were hearing-impaired and were excluded from the experiment. All thirteen students were majoring in public administration. Two of them were beginners who did not know the English word order, and the rest had a TOEIC score of less than 300.

2. Instruments

The pre-test was conducted at the first week and the post-test was conducted at the fifteenth week. Each of the pre- and post-test consisted of thirteen questions, and the question type was a cloze test. The learners did not remember the contents of the pre-test when they took the post-test. This is because the period between the pre- and post-test is fourteen weeks, but it seems that they do not particularly remember the language form of English articles because they learned different grammar items (e.g., conjunctions, infinitives, gerunds,

prepositions, etc.) every week during the Business English Composition class. The usage of the indefinite article *a* was evaluated in terms of the meaning of 'one', 'per', 'a certain', and 'introduction', and the test for the definite article *the* is as follows: use with modifiers, anaphoric use, use with the shared knowledge, immediate situational use: visible, logical use, use with predeterminers, associative use, use with geographical names, general cultural use: use with unique objects. The evaluation questions for the articles were used by editing the data of Kim (2000) and Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988).

Questionnaires were designed to compare any differences in perceptions of learners before and after the English writing class to which FFI was applied. The pre-questionnaire was conducted at the first week and the post-questionnaire was conducted at the fifteenth week. The pre-questionnaire consisted of six questions, and the post-questionnaire consisted of nine questions. The Likert scale and questionnaire method were used as survey methods. The questionnaires consisted of questions such as 'the perception of English grammar', 'the perception of English articles', 'the understanding of the type of articles', and 'the understanding of the rules for using articles'.

3. Teaching Procedures

The Business English Composition class was held for 3 hours every week and the article teaching was conducted in the fifth week. In the first period, the grammar related to the English article system was explained, in the second period, the sentence structure analysis and reading comprehension of the illustrated business English documents were conducted, and in the third period, English writing activities were conducted as the production activity. In both the first and second periods, the articles were visualized in color as typographical input enhancement materials. In the third period, the corrective feedback was immediately provided for the English composition after the production activity. The detailed class operation is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Class Operation

	Teaching Contents	Teaching Materials	Student Activities
1st period	Grammar explanation of English articles submitted as an assignment	Typographical enhancement materials marked in color on articles	Submit assignments in advance
2nd period	Business English document type explanation and reading comprehension	textbook, screen materials marked in color on articles	Analyzing and interpreting sentence structure one by one, Answer questions about articles
3rd period	English document writing	textbook	Writing business English document

1) Presenting Assignments

The task was to investigate the usage situation of the articles *a* and *the*, except for zero articles, and then write relevant example sentences about each article. The assignment was submitted to learning management system (LMS). The exclusion of 'zero articles' from the assignment was to relieve the burden of learning for beginners with a TOEIC score of less than 300.

2) The First Period

The usages of the articles presented as a task as an input activity were explained in the first period, illustrating the differences in the use of the indefinite article *a* and definite *the* with examples. The instructor explained the usage of *a* and *the* varies according to the noun countability, and that the article *a* has a number of specific meanings with various examples. Also, situations in which the articles *a* and *the* are used differently according to definiteness and identifiability have been described. Examples were extracted from Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), Hawkins (2015), and Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (2010) as follows.

TABLE 2
Use of the Articles with Countable and Noncountable Nouns

		Count	Noncount
Singular	definite	*the* book	*the* furniture
	indefinite	*a* book	furniture
Plural	definite	*the* books	
	indefinite	books	

(Quirk et al., 2010)

The article *a* is historically derived from 'one', and 'one' can be replaced by *a* in some sentences. Also, it was explained that the article *a* can be used with proper nouns, and in this case has the meaning of 'a certain'. In addition to grammatical features, the use of *a* and *the* in the pragmatic aspect in communication situations was explained. *a* is used with references unfamiliar to the speaker and listener or not mentioned in advance. On the other hand, *the* was illustrated with examples that it can be used with what is already known, identifiable, and limited between the speaker and the listener.

An intruder has stolen *a* vase. *The* intruder stole *the* vase from *a* locked case. *The* case was smashed open.

In addition, the following sentence was illustrated to explain how the use of the articles *a* and *the* can lead to great misunderstanding. In sentence a, Bill is wearing a new watch, but in sentence b, Bill is driven as a thief because Bill is wearing the same watch as Bob (Quirk et al., 2010).

a. Bob lost *a* gold watch yesterday, and Bill was wearing *a* gold watch this morning.
b. Bob lost *a* gold watch yesterday, and Bill was wearing *the* gold watch this morning.
(Quirk et al., 2010)

The learners were reminded that word order is important in English, unlike Korean, and the usage of *the* used with predeterminers was also explained as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Use of *the* with Predeterminers

Predeterminer	Core	Postdeterminer	Head Noun
all	the	other	boys
	the	first, three	cars

(Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999)

The examples below show various examples where *a* and *the* are used when used with Predeterminers.

All, both, and half: all (the) girls, both (the) cars, half an hour
The multipliers: double the sum, twice my salary
The fractions: One-third the time
Such, what: Such a surprise! What a fine day!
(Quirk et al., 2010)

In addition, the situation in which *the* is used was explained with examples of several sentences as follows.

a. General cultural use (the referent is unique for all members of the speech community): the sun, the moon, the earth
b. Immediate situational use (the referent is uniquely visible, audible, etc.): Don't go in there. The dog will bite you. Pass me the salt, please.
c. Local use (unique for members of the same family or village): the church, the pub
d. Logical use: the first flight, the only one
e. Use with modifiers:

f. Associative use: Mary gave me a cup yesterday and the handle broke because I dropped it.
g. Classes of names typically preceded by *the*:
- Place names of plural form (e.g., the Netherlands, the Midlands, etc.)
- Other geographical names (e.g., Rivers, Seas and oceans, Canals, etc.)

(Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Hawkins, 2015; Quirk et al., 2010)

3) The Second Period

In the second period, the types and formats of business English documents were explained, and one type was read and interpreted. At this time, the students were prompted to analyze the sentence structure focusing on lexical chunks by allocating the sentences one by one. In the Lexical Approach, Lewis (1993) presented the importance of lexical chunk learning in English learning, explaining that "languages consist of grammatical lexis, not lexicalized grammar, rather than lexical grammar." Since the lexical chunk is a continuum of vocabulary that is conventionally used as a 'formulaic sequence (Wray, 2000)', it was expected that learners' vocabulary would improve if conscious effort was put forth.

After the students' interpretation, the instructor used PPT to explain the articles in different colors (e.g., *a* is blue and *the* is red). This is the use of 'visual input reinforcement' to highlight learners' attention to the form and use situation of the articles. 'Visual input reinforcement' is a method of inserting visual elements into input materials to increase learners' attention even in grammatical language forms, as EFL learners tend to process input data based on meaning (Sharwood Smith, 1993). Instructor and students interacted by asking and answering questions about which of the usage situations of the articles *the* and *a* in the textbook.

4) The Third Period

In the third period, as an output activity, writing business English documents was conducted. The business English writing was completed within class time and immediate corrective feedback was provided. Students who did not finish writing within class uploaded them to the LMS and the instructor gave feedback on error correction before the next class began. Figure 1 is a PPT presenting the writing task. Some students' English writing activities for this material are as follows.

FIGURE 1
PPT Material for a Task

Task 2: Write an apology letter
1. Situation: The product sent by your company is defective so you have to apologize to the customer and give them an exchange or refund.
2. Contents to be included in English writing
   1) a sentence of apology
   2) Notification of refund or exchange
   3) A sentence to prevent recurrence
   4) More than 4 sentences
3. To: Mr. Thomson
4. Recipient company: The American Machinery Company
5. Sender company: The American Toy Company
6. Your Position: Sales Manager
7. Use your name

Student 1: We are very sorry that ( ) damaged product has been shipped. We apologize again for any inconvenience caused. Of course, we will exchange or refund. We promise to do our best to ensure that ( ) mistake never happens again.

Student 2: I'm very sorry that ( ) damaged product has been delivered. Once again, we apologize for ( ) inconvenience. Of course, I will give you ( ) exchange or refund. I promise I'll try not to make this mistake again.

Student 3: We apologize for ( ) defective product we ordered. I promise to exchange or refund immediately. I will try not to make this mistake again. Please continue to pay attention to our company.

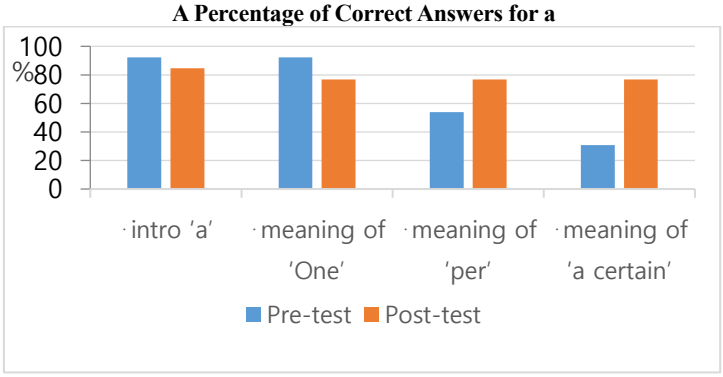
In the above student activity, students omitted an article in parentheses even though they were needed. Among the English writing activities, some students had many mistakes in the omission of articles and habitually tended to write *a*. When giving feedback on mistakes, we reviewed them and repeated the explanations.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Effect of FFI on Article Acquisition

To investigate whether grammar teaching through FFI is effective in acquiring learners' English articles, pre- and post-test were conducted and the results of them were as shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3. Figures show the percentage of correct answers for the pre- and post-tests.

FIGURE 2
A Percentage of Correct Answers for a



Questions No. 1 and No. 4 are about the indefinite *a*, and as shown in the example below, the answer rate was lower in the post-test than in the pre-test.

In the case of post-test No. 1, there were students who wrote *the* instead of the article *a*, conscious of the modifier clause that follows 'carpenter'. In the case of post-test No. 4, there were students who thought 'chance' as an abstract noun, misunderstood it as an uncountable noun, and wrote *the* instead of *a*.

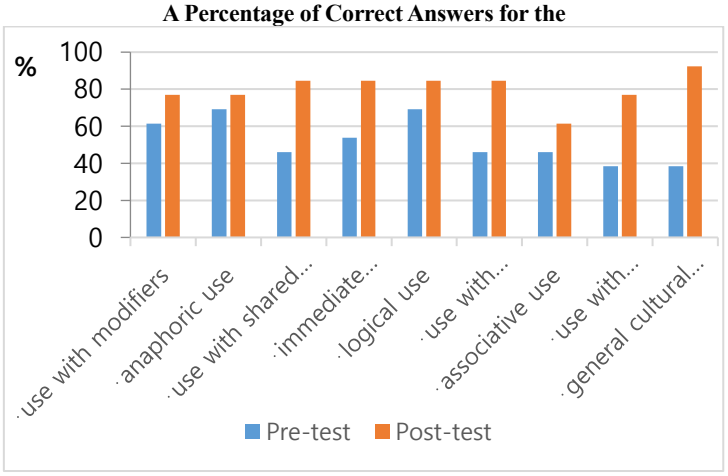
These results are similar to those of Park's (2001) study that the accuracy of the use of *the* after teaching for improving grammar consciousness showed meaningful improvements, while the accuracy of the use of *a* showed no meaningful changes. These errors were mainly seen in upper-ranking students.

Pre 1: I saw ( ) man in my office. The man had come to ask a favor of me.
Post 1: Once upon a time there was ( ) carpenter who had so much work to do that he decided he needed an assistant.

Pre 4: I have ( ) sister and two brothers.
Post 4: I'll give you ( ) chance.

In the pre-test related to the indefinite article *a*, the use of *a* in the meaning of 'a certain', which had the lowest answer rate, showed the greatest improvement in the post-test. Through the responses of the students, it was found that the infinitive article *a* used to mean 'a certain' or 'per' could be understood through simple memorization.

FIGURE 3
A Percentage of Correct Answers for the



As shown in Figure 3 above, the article *the* improved scores in all questions of the post-test. In the pre-test, 'anaphoric use' and 'logical use' were the questions with the highest correct answer rates for students.

'Use with predeterminers', 'use with geographical names', 'general cultural use: use with unique objects', corresponding to questions 8, 10, and 11 below, showed a low percentage of correct answers in the pre-test, but showed the greatest improvement after learning the grammar. This seems to be because it was a grammar item that could be used by simply memorizing after learning the situations in which *the* were used.

Pre 8: All ( ) boys were present.
Post 8: "All ( ) trees in the forest," Nasrudin replied.

Pre 10: ( ) Pacific Ocean lies between Korean and America.
Post 10: "There aren't any trees in ( ) Sahara Desert."

Pre 11: ( ) earth moves around sun.
Post 11: "At that time, ( ) moon was much larger than sun.

Also, in the case of 'use with shared referents', it is one of the items that showed the greatest improvement in the percentage of correct answers from 46.1% to 84.6%. This is consistent with the result of Park (2001), who studied article acquisition through the improvement of grammar awareness that learners showed a lot of improvement in article usage related to shared knowledge.

In the pre-test, the percentage of correct answers for 'associative use' of *the* was low (46.1%). This is because students were not aware that they should use *the* with nouns that are part of the already mentioned nouns, even though the same noun form is not used again. 'Associative use' of *the* was taught during the writing class but the percentage of correct answers in the post-test only slightly increased. This is because the questions used in the post-test were not a simple sentence test, but the correct answer could be grasped only by understanding the content beyond the distance between the six sentences.

Lastly, the peculiarity of the test is that among the thirteen students, two students who do not know the word order of English sentences mostly chose the definite article *the* as the answers in the pre-test, but alternately selected *a* and *the* in the post-test. This means that even novice English learners have recognized that at least articles *a* and *the* are used in different ways by focusing on grammar items through activities that enhance learners' attention after form-focusing classes.

2. Learners' Perception of FFI

Pre- and post-surveys were conducted to find out what the learners' perception of the FFI was like. In the survey, 'the perception of English grammar', 'the perception of English articles', 'the understanding of the type of articles', and 'the understanding of the rules for using articles' were investigated, and the results are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Results for Questions 1 to 5 (N = 13)

Question Number	Questionnaire content		Very easy	Easy	Normal	Difficult	Very difficult
1	Perception of English grammar	pre	0	0	4	6	3
		post	0	0	4	5	4
2	Perception of the English article system	pre	0	3	3	4	3
		post	0	4	3	4	2
3	Understanding of the types of English articles	pre	0	2	4	5	2
		post	0	4	5	2	2
4	Understanding of the rules for using articles	pre	0	1	3	6	3
		post	0	3	6	2	2

There was little change in pre- and post-questionnaires regarding 'perception of English grammar' or 'perception of English articles'. However, in response to the question of how much you understand the types of English 'articles' in the post-survey, the choice of 'easy' and 'normal' increased from 46% (pre) to 69.1% (post). Also, in terms of 'understanding of the rules for using articles', the selection of 'easy' and 'normal' increased from 30.6% (pre)

to 61.4% (post).

The answers to the question to explain the usage of the articles *a* and *the* are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Students' Responses to Questions 5 and 6

		Pre-test	Post-test
5	Usage of the article 'the'	·when using the preceding noun again ·with the modifiers ·in front of the superlative form	·when you reuse a word that has already appeared ·with the modifiers ·in front of the superlative form ·in front of the only one ·before nouns we know each other ·in front of the sea, desert, etc.
6	Usage of the article 'a'	·use before a noun when it appears for the first time ·meaning of 'one' ·when representing the species	·use before a noun when it appears for the first time ·meaning of 'one' ·available before a person's name ·meaning of 'per'

The responses to questions 7-9 are shown in Table 6. The most helpful activity for writing in English was immediate corrective feedback (53.8%). 69.1% of the respondents said that FFI helped them with English writing activities. Also, 76.8% of the students said they would recommend the Business English Composition class using FFI. This is similar to the response of the survey conducted by Hwang (2015). Hwang (2015) divided the students into 'the input-based group', 'the output-based group', and 'the control group' to study the relationship between FFI and learners' perception. 'The output-based group' showed 92.7% satisfaction with the class used FFI and 78% satisfaction with the 'corrective feedback'. This result was the same as the learners' response in this study, which most favored corrective feedback among several FFI activities.

TABLE 6
Students' Responses to Questions 7 to 9

			Responses	*N* = 13	%
7	What is the most helpful activity for writing in the Business English Composition class?	a	Submission of grammar assignments before class	2	15.3%
		b	PPT highlighted in colored bold fonts on grammar items	1	7.6%
		c	Corrective feedback	7	53.8%
		d	Sentence structure analysis practice focusing on vocabulary chunk	3	23%
8	How helpful was the FFI used in the Business English Composition class to your English writing skills?	a	Very helpful	3	23%
		b	Helpful	6	46.1%
		c	Normal	1	7.6%
		d	Not very helpful	1	7.6%
		e	Not helpful at all	1	7.6%
9	Are you willing to recommend the Business English Composition class using FFI to your juniors?	a	Highly recommended	3	23%
		b	Recommended	7	53.8%
		c	Normal	2	15.3%
		d	Not recommended	1	7.6%
		e	Not recommended at all	0	0%

V. CONCLUSION

This study sought to find out whether FFI is effective in acquiring English articles in the Business English Composition class, and to examine the learners' perception of the FFI. For this purpose, pre- and post-tests on the use of articles were conducted for thirteen students who participated in the Business English Composition class, and pre- and post-surveys were conducted on students' perceptions of the FFI-applied writing class. The main results and suggestions of this study are as follows.

First, from the results of pre- and post-tests, it could be said that the acquisition of the English article system through FFI was effective except for the two cases of the indefinite article *a*. Except for two students who did not know the word order of English sentences, the percentage of correct answers for most items improved overall as a result of the post-test except for the use of the article *a*, which has the meaning of 'one' or 'intro *a*.'

In particular, the test results for the definite article *the* showed a 52% correct answer rate in the pre-test, but 80% in the post-test. This is similar to the research result of Park (2018), which showed that explicit instruction on the identifiability of definite article *the* was

effective in acquiring definite article of Korean middle school students in EFL situations. Also, it is similar to the study result of Han (2000), who investigated the types and rates of errors in English articles through an English composition assignment after an hour of explicit grammar explanation about articles. According to the study by Han (2000), article omission errors, which were 67%, decreased to 3% after receiving explicit grammatical explanations. In this study, there was also an improvement in the correct answer rate of 26% between the pre-test and the post-test in the definite article *the* after conducting three hours of the English composition class applied FFI. These results show that explicit grammar explanation classes focusing on language forms are effective in acquiring articles.

Second, as a result of the post-survey, most of the students thought positively about FFI. In this study, four activities were used for FFI as follows: 1) explanations of grammatical items before communication activities as the input activity, 2) conscious and continuous attention to grammatical items during the communication activities as the attention activity, 3) writing in English as the output activity, 4) corrective feedback after the communication activities

Among these activities, particularly, learners preferred corrective feedback the most and answered that it was the most helpful for English writing. Also, 76.8% of the respondents were willing to recommend a business English writing class with FFI applied to juniors.

The results of this study also give the following implications. First, for proper use of articles, learning of nouns should be prioritized. The usage of 'intro *a*' and the meaning of 'one', which had a lower percentage of correct answers in the post-test, was rather confusing items for upper-level learners. Like the examples of students who misunderstood 'chance' as an uncountable noun and chose *the* instead of *a* in the post-test, countability of nouns is one of the difficult grammars for Korean English learners. This study did not cover the fact that countable nouns can be converted into uncountable nouns and uncountable nouns can be converted into countable nouns due to learners' low English proficiency. This part needs to be addressed in further research.

Second, it is suggested that form-focused teaching activities should be integrated with CLT, which emphasizes communicative competence, and CBI, which emphasizes content-language integration, in English writing classes that require more writing accuracy.

As this study shows, FFI was not only effective for article acquisition except for the two cases of the indefinite article *a* but also positive for learners' perceptions. In the pre-survey, 69.1% of learners thought that English grammar was difficult and about half of the learners (53.7%) thought that English articles were difficult. Also, in the selection of *the*, most understood only 'anaphoric use' and 'logical use'. In the post-survey, 69.1% of students still answered that English grammar was difficult. However, it is still difficult to choose an article accurately but some responded that they noticed the grammatical element of the English articles, and learned that they had to use the article *the* for a shared referent between the

listener and the speaker. These responses show that FFI is an effective way to pay attention to target language forms, even for low-level English speakers. In addition, it is necessary to design the most effective activities of FFI when planning a class according to learners' English proficiency level and characteristics.

However, the limitations of this study are as follows: First, no control group was created in this study. This is because the Business English Composition class was only conducted in one class. Second, 'zero articles' were excluded from the study to alleviate the learning burden of beginners. In order to conduct a comprehensive study on the acquisition of the English article system, it should be dealt with in future studies. Third, since the pre- and post-tests were conducted in a non-face-to-face class situation, it is impossible to know whether the learner submitted the answer by themselves without the help of an online search program such as an Internet dictionary. Finally, the number of subjects was thirteen, and the number of questions in the pre- and post-tests were fifteen. In this study, it may be difficult to generalize the results due to the small number of subjects and test questions. Therefore, as a follow-up study, it will be necessary to conduct FFI for large learners and plan an experimental group and a control group to secure the objectivity of numerical values.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-test

* Use the, *a/an* or ϕ in the blanks to complete a grammatically correct statement.

1. I saw _____ man in my office. The man had come to ask a favor of me.
2. _____ book which I bought yesterday was very interesting.
3. A train has arrived on platform 5. _____ train is crowded.
4. I have _____ sister and two brothers.
5. Did you watch _____ match yesterday?
6. In case of an emergency, press _____ red button.
7. I live in _____ largest city I Korea.
8. All _____ boys were present.
9. I went to a nice beach yesterday. _____ sea was very warm.
10. _____ Pacific Ocean lies between Korean and America.
11. ____ earth moves around _____ sun.
12. Take this medicine three times _____ day.
13. He is _____ Bill Gates of Korea.

*The test questions were edited using the data of Kim (2000).

Post-test

* In the story below, there are fourteen blanks. Use *the*, *a/an* or ϕ in the blanks to complete a grammatically correct statement.

NASRUDIN

Once upon a time there was 1.____ carpenter who had so much work to do that he decided he needed an assistant. He put an advertisement in a paper, and soon someone came to apply for the job. The carpenter was surprised and disappointed because 2. _____ man who was standing in front of the door was strange and weak-looking. His name was Nasrudin.

At first the carpenter didn't want to give Nasrudin the job because he didn't look very strong; however, since no one else had answered 3._____ advertisement, the carpenter said to

Nasrudin, “OK, I’ll give you 4.____ chance. Open 5._____ window, please. Do you see 6.___ forest over there? Take 7._____ largest axe here and chop as much wood as you can.”

At dusk Nasrudin returned, and the carpenter asked, “How many trees have you chopped down?”

“All 8.____ trees in the forest,” Nasrudin replied.

The carpenter ran to the window and looked out. There were no trees left standing on 9._____ hillside. Nasrudin had chopped down the whole forest. The carpenter asked Nasrudin, “Where did you learn to chop wood like that?”

“In 10.____ Sahara Desert,” Nasrudin answered.

“That’s ridiculous,” laughed the carpenter. “There aren’t any trees in 10.____ Sahara Desert.”

“There aren’t any now.” Nasrudin replied.

“At that time, 11._____ moon was much larger than 11._____ sun. There were two seasons in a year. While I was working there, I wrote my mother a letter once 12._____ week. I got paid a lot for the job and presented 13._____ Ford to mother.”

*The test questions were edited using the data of Celce-Murcia & Hilles (1988).

APPENDIX B

Pre-Questionnaire

1. What do you think about English grammar?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

2. What do you think of the English article system?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

3. How much do you understand about the types of English articles?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

4. How much do you understand the rules for using English articles?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

5. Explain the usage of the definite article *the* in English.

6. Explain the usage of the indefinite article *a* in English.

Post-Questionnaire

1. What do you think about English grammar?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

2. What do you think of the English article system?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

3. How much do you understand about the types of English articles?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

4. How much do you understand the rules for using English articles?
a. Very easy b. Easy c. Normal d. Difficult e. Very difficult

5. Explain the usage of the definite article *the* in English.

6. Explain the usage of the indefinite article *a* in English.

7. What is the most helpful activity for writing in Business English Composition class?
a. Submission of grammar assignments before class
b. PPT highlighted in colored bold fonts on grammar items
c. Corrective feedback
d. Sentence structure analysis practice focusing on vocabulary chunk

8. How helpful was the FFI used in the Business English Composition class to your English writing skills?
a. Very helpful b. Helpful c. Normal d. Not very helpful e. Not helpful at all

9. Are you willing to recommend the Business English Composition class using FFI to your juniors?
a. Highly recommended
b. Recommended
c. Normal
d. Not recommended
e. Not recommended at all

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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