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**NEW ZEALAND STUDIES IN  
APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

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APPLIED LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION  
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# NEW ZEALAND STUDIES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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## NEW ZEALAND STUDIES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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**Fotos, S. and Nassaji, H. (2007). *Form-focused instruction and teacher education: Studies in honour of Rod Ellis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-442250-5.**

As the title suggests, this edited volume is in honour of Rod Ellis for his remarkable contributions to the field of SLA and different areas of teacher education, and for his unfailing commitment to teacher education through application of research in classroom practice and pedagogy. It provides an original and welcome addition to SLA by bringing together theoretical discussions and research reports on empirical studies of form-focused instruction (FFI), as well as the relevance of FFI to teacher education. It is a valuable resource for SLA researchers, teacher educators, classroom practitioners and graduate students alike who have an interest in, or have already engaged in focus on form (FoF) research.

The first section of the volume encompasses four chapters devoted to theoretical issues of focus on form. In Chapter 1 Nassaji and Fotos introduce the volume, the purpose of which is to address teacher education as the gap between SLA research and pedagogy. Bearing that in mind, authors discuss contributions of FFI theory and research to teacher education. Subsequently, Nick Ellis scrutinizes the interface between explicit and implicit knowledge. He argues that even though implicit learning is entailed in much of L1 acquisition, it is not able to account for SLA due to learnt attention and transfer from L1. Thus, he implies that contemporary cognitive theories on the role of consciousness are in line with the Rod Ellis' weak interface theory in SLA, in which explicit knowledge facilitates "the processes of 'noticing', of 'noticing the gap', and of consciously guided output practice form" (p. 18). In Chapter 3, James Lantolf discusses the implications of sociocultural theory to L2 instruction. He argues that both the weak and strong positions in SLA have not given enough consideration to the *quality* of explicit knowledge made available for learners. He suggests that instruction grounded in scientific concepts is more fruitful to development than traditional grammar approaches. Peter Skehan discusses (in Chapter 4) how research and pedagogy can reciprocally enlighten one another in the context of task-based instruction. Although the author acknowledges the uneasy relationship between researchers and pedagogues due to different purposes that they pursue, he claims that task-based research findings may provide avenues for applications, whereas form-focused language pedagogy may provide a range of research questions and hypotheses.

Section 2 features five chapters on FoF in classroom practices. In the first chapter, Merrill Swain and Sharon Lapkin present a study that exemplifies learning as a situated localized process. Informed by sociocultural theory (SCT), the study focuses on detailed analysis of a French immersion student's "languaging" in performing multi-task activities including FoF tasks. The authors argue that learning takes place in "languaging", a term coined by Swain (2006) to refer to "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (p. 98). Next, Rob Batstone questions the largely quantitative and decontextualized nature of the

majority of FoF studies. By re-examining data from a FoF study from a discourse perspective, he demonstrates the vital role that discourse frame plays in shaping FoF in class, and suggests that FoF is an essentially sociocognitive phenomenon. In Chapter 3, Shawn Loewen explores the effectiveness of incidental FoF occurring in L2 classroom interaction. Both prior and subsequent use of targeted linguistic forms occurred in form-focused episodes are examined. The study provides some evidence for immediate effects of incidental FoF. The author also suggests other measurements of learners' L2 knowledge. Unlike the previous chapters that concern FoF in oral communicative tasks, the final two chapters are related to FoF in writing classes, though with different focuses. In Chapter 4, Hossein Nassaji reports on a study that investigates the role of negotiation in corrective feedback for written errors in an ESL classroom. The results point to the importance of negotiation in the feedback process. Sandra Fotos and Eli Hinkel, in the final chapter, review current research to address the importance of FFI and output in the development of L2 writing proficiency in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity. They propose inclusion of FFI, output opportunities, corrective feedback and revisions in effective writing curricula.

Among the range of areas covered within the field of FFI, a whole section of the edited publication is devoted to teacher education and practice. What makes the assembled contributions specifically suited for teachers and renders the subject matter of the book ever more functional to their educational needs, is that they are all written from the viewpoint of researchers who have also experienced being language teachers. The articles thus give a central role to teachers, covering specific areas of interest and offering different insights into classroom use of FFI in communicative contexts. In the first paper of the section Jack Richards, moving from the consideration of the interaction between research and instructional materials design, which he claims to be weak, argues that good materials should be primarily based on teacher's needs, learner's needs and contextual variables, rather than research *stricto sensu*. Also Teresa Pica's contribution advocates the crucial role of teachers, especially those driven by the urgency of teaching content and language together. The decisional process of timing of FoF is highlighted in three decisive moments: during classroom discourse, throughout the L2 development and in intervention over time.

Brian Tomlinson draws on his own teaching experience, some of which was shared with Rod Ellis, to advocate the meaningfulness of form-focused discovery approaches (FFDAs) in promoting language awareness. On the basis of questionnaire responses on teachers' attitudes towards FFDAs, clarifications and recommendations are offered to teachers who limit their use of these approaches, despite being aware of their potential value. Extracts from teacher interviews are also presented in Pauline Rea-Dickins's study, which aims at elaborating the aspects considered in the decision making process involved in the assessment of EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners. In Tricia Hedge's study, 16 teachers in a Master's course are asked to react to recordings of the explicit reactive FFI on their writing given by the tutors of the course. The aim is to enhance awareness of the types of enquiry needed in classroom experience of learners' writing. Good inquiry is not achievable, as Catherine Elder, Rosemary Erlam and Jenefer Philp highlight through original data-

driven research on samples of tests given to teacher trainees, unless teachers possess sufficient metalinguistic knowledge and command of the metalanguage in addition to an adequate level of language proficiency.

One of the collection's key strengths lies in its combination of theoretical concerns, classroom practices and applications in teacher education of FFI. The editors must be commended for bringing together high-quality state-of-the-art research in this emerging subfield in SLA. Since Firth and Wagner's (1997) seminal article in which they called for a reconceptualization of SLA with a more socially and contextually situated view, the past decade has seen increasing attention shift to consider social dimensions of SLA, a shift that is reflected in this collection.

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