

Teaching Grammar through FormS Focused and Form Focused Instruction: The Case of Teaching Conditional Sentences to Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

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Abstract

The current study aimed at examining the effectiveness of Focus-on- Form (FonF) and Focus-on-FormS (FonFS) techniques of teaching conditional sentences. For this purpose, 90 female students from Kaspian institute in Shiraz were selected. An oxford placement test (OPT) was run to homogenize participants in terms of their English proficiency. Then, a pretest was administered to determine the learners' level of knowledge with regard to the target structures. Participants were assigned to three groups; two experimental groups (FonF group and FonFS group), and a control group. Then, conditional sentences were taught to group one through FonF instruction whereas group two received FonFS instruction on conditional sentences. Control group received a placebo task. After the treatment, a posttest was administered to measure the effectiveness of the instruction employed for each group. The results revealed that using FonFS technique was significantly more effective than using FonF technique in teaching and subsequent learning of conditionals.

Key words: Teaching grammar, Focus-on-Form, Focus-on-FormS, Conditional sentences

INTRODUCTION

There has always been a dispute about whether and how to teach grammar in a second/foreign language (Doughty & Williams, 1988). Therefore, with the advent of form focused instruction (FFI), as a change of communicative language teaching, a shift occurred from incidental and implicit grammar teaching instruction to formal and meaningful grammar teaching syllabus. Long (1988) proposed two types of FFI: Focus-

on-Form, and Focus-on-FormS. Long (1991) defined Focus-on-Form as "an instruction that draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (p. 45-46). On the contrary, Focus-on-FormS instruction involves teaching isolated linguistic forms in separate lessons base on a structural syllabus.

Moreover, Ellis (2001) used FFI to refer to any planned or incidental instructional activity that is aimed to direct language learners to linguistic form. Unlike Long's classifications of FFI, Ellis (2001) defines it in terms of three types including "Focus-on-FormS", "planned Focus-on-Form", and "incidental Focus-on-Form". Therefore, it includes both traditional approaches to teaching forms and more communicative approaches.

In FonFS instruction, the primary attention is on form. In planned FonF, however, the teacher decides in advance what forms should be focused on, but the primary attention is on meaning rather than on form. In incidental FonF, attention is divided among a wide range of forms that have not been preselected, but the primary of attention is on meaning (Ellis, 2001).

The difficulty of conditionals in English can be related to the structures themselves. Mindt (1996) also argued that conditionals complexity and particular tense uses in comparison with other sentential patterns turn them into fairly problematic constructions, both in first and second language acquisition. In addition, conditionals consist of main clauses and subordinate clauses which are difficult for students to comprehend because of their syntactic complexity (Lord, 2002). Therefore, the present study compared FonF and FonFS methods of teaching grammar and used conditional sentences as the target structures because of the syntactic and semantic complexities in conditional constructions.

Although there has been a lot of research in the literature regarding the comparative examination of the effect of different types and techniques of FonF, few researchers have directly compared the effectiveness of FonF and FonFS approach (Ellis, 2002). The interest in FonF is partly due to the suggestion that it can enable learners to develop linguistic accuracy because it provides the conditions for interlanguage restructuring to take place (Doughty, 2001; Long & Robinson, 1998). For instance, Loewen (2003) argues that FonF enables learners to take time out from a focus on meaning to notice linguistic items in the input, thereby overcoming a potential obstacle of purely meaning-focused lessons in which linguistic forms may go unnoticed. Schmidt (1990, 1995, and 2001) asserts that such noticing is necessary for L2 learning. Not only does FonF provide learners with an opportunity to notice linguistic items, but it may also help them to notice the gap (Schmidt & Frota, 1986) between models of the target language and their own language production. Furthermore, FonF provides opportunities for pushed output which increase learners' competence through the need to express themselves in language that is accurate and appropriate (Swain, 1995, 2000; Swain &

Lapkin, 1995). For these reasons, FonF is considered as potentially beneficial for L2 learners.

The need for FonF becomes even more significant when learners have acquired some communicative ability and when they run the risk of fossilizing (Ellis, 2003). The nature of FonF as learner-centered method of instruction allows for a non-linear learning process to take place in the L2 classroom, and for individual learners to progress according to a developmental sequence that is not necessarily in step with explicit instruction. Williams (1999) indicates that findings of a wide range of immersion and naturalistic acquisition studies suggest that when second language learning is merely experiential and focused on communicative success, some linguistic features do not develop to target like accuracy. This occurs in spite of years of meaningful, comprehensible input and opportunities for interaction. Long (1996) claimed that instruction that includes FonF has at least two advantages over completely meaning-focused instruction: It can increase the significance of positive evidence, and it can provide often essential negative evidence in the form of direct or indirect negative feedback. These theoretical explanations provide an urgent rationale for the inclusion of FFI in second/foreign language syllabus.

This study indicated that the type of instruction plays an important role in the acquisition of conditional sentences. In the context of the teaching and learning of English conditional sentences, L2 learners' attention to detailed analysis of grammar structures facilitates comprehension and production of conditional sentences. Findings of this study will be significant for language learning and teaching in general and teaching grammar in particular. Moreover, conclusions of this study may have theoretical and practical implications for TEFL syllabus designers and material developers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The assumption is that meaning focused instruction devoid of any attention to form is unlikely to create ideal conditions for effective L2 learning. In recent years, various solutions have been offered to compensate for the inadequacies observed in meaning-focused instruction, which have caused the coinage of specific terms in the literature of L2 teaching. Terms such as consciousness-raising (Cook, 2008; Ellis, 2003; Rutherford, 1987), input enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1993), and Focus on Form (Long, 1991; Fotos & Nassaji, 2007) confirm this claim thoroughly. Among the three mentioned terms, it is the last one; however, which has received both theoretical and empirical support in recent years. In the early 1990's, Long drew the attention of language teaching scholars to the distinction between FonFS and FonF. In Long's viewpoint, FonFS is nothing but the traditional structural syllabus, whose shortcomings have been discussed in the literature (Wilkins, 1976; Yalden, 1983). On the other hand, FonF is a term that he uses to refer to instruction that draws learners' attention to form in the context of meaningful communication. Long (1991) defines FonF as follows:

FonF instruction overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication. According to the above definition, FonF is reasonable in terms of psycholinguistics in that it encourages learners to pay conscious attention to certain forms in the input, which they are likely to ignore. Schmidt (1990) believes that such attention is necessary for acquisition to take place. Hence, FonF instruction is a helpful device which facilitates the process of interlanguage development.

Due to the general appeal, the term FonF has been extended beyond Long's original definition cited above. As Doughty & Williams (1998, p.5) observe "there is considerable variation in how the term Focus-on-Form is understood and used." In many of their studies, FonF is not treated as something occurring incidentally (contrary to Long's original definition of the term); rather, it is assumed as a proactive attempt to teach certain linguistic forms communicatively. This concept was illustrated in the study conducted by Williams & Evans (1998). In this research, Williams & Evans had preselected two forms, one simple (participial adjectives) and the other complex (the passive), and then provided their learners with intensive Form-Focused instruction. Obviously this kind of FonF was preplanned and not accidental.

Current Approaches to Grammar Teaching

Due to the problems presented by traditional structure-based grammar teaching, Long (1991) offered an approach that he termed "Focus-on-Form," distinguishing it from a "Focus-on-FormS" approach to teaching grammar (Long & Robinson, 1998). Whereas FonFS involves discrete grammatical forms selected and presented in an isolated manner, FonF includes the teacher's attempts to draw the student's attention to grammatical forms in the context of communication (DeKeyser, 1998; Doughty & Varela, 1998; Long, 2000). Using a psycholinguistic perspective, Doughty (2001) has recently described cognitive processes that take place when learners become aware of forms in input. However, Long (2000) suggest that this approach is effective for teaching grammar since it is learner-centered and adjusted to the learner's internal syllabus.

Even though few researchers have directly compared the effectiveness of a FonF and a FonFS approach, and the difference between them is difficult to operationalize (Ellis, 2002b), the idea of FonF has been widely supported in the literature. Pedagogically, FonF can be achieved in many different ways. For instance, Nassaji (1999, 2000) suggested that FonF can be achieved through process or through design. FonF through process occurs in the context of natural communication when both the teacher and the learner's primary focus is on meaning. FonF through design is deliberate and is achieved through designing tasks which have deliberate explicit focus. FonF can also be achieved reactively through providing reactional feedback on learners' errors or preemptively through discussing grammatical forms regardless of whether an error has occurred or not (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001a, 2001b; Long & Robinson, 1998).

A group of researchers (e.g., Doughty & Varela, 1998; Ellis, 1994, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Robinson, 2001) have argued that if the goal of second language learning is the development of communicative competence, enabling learners to use language for communicative purposes, then grammar and communication must be integrated. However, the problem is to identify the best ways of doing so in L2 classrooms (Nassaji, 1999; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000) and to increase the opportunity for a focus on grammar without sacrificing the focus on meaning and communication. Several proposals have been made during the last 10 years on ways to integrate some form of grammar instruction with the provision of opportunities for communicative input and output, and a number of studies have researched their effectiveness.

Previous studies on FonF and FonFS instruction

Various models and strategies have been designed for conducting a Form-Focused study. Lee (2007) examined the effects of input enhancement on learners' reading comprehension and learning of passive forms. The results of this study revealed that in the form correction task, participants with enhanced texts performed better than those with unenhanced texts. The findings also showed that manipulation of printing in bold had positive effects on Korean students' acquisition of passive voice in English. In another study, Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, & Doughty (1995, cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2011) confirmed that the learners of enhancement group performed better than those in unenhanced group in both noticing and subsequent production of target forms.

Mayo (2002) examined the effect of two FonF tasks (a dictogloss and a text reconstruction) in advanced EFL learners. Although the two tasks were effective and encouraging learners to produce language and reflect on its form (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain, 1998), the quantitative analysis of data revealed that text-reconstruction task was a suitable Form-Focused task for this group of learners.

Sheen (2001) conducted a comparative research for the last school year in an elementary school in Quebec. In order to perform this study, two sixth grade classes were taught, one of which was considered as control group with the usual FonF instruction. The experimental group was taught as usual except that the researcher was allowed to provide a FonFS for approximately one hour a week. Both groups achieved very similar results on pretest. After two months, they took a posttest in the form of oral interviews which were broadly similar to the pretest. The result of this study showed that a FonFS approach helped students in the experimental group to make solid progress in the two targeted grammar areas, while the control group, which was taught based on a FonF, continued producing largely incorrect forms, thus allowing fossilization to continue to develop.

A number of studies have also been conducted in Iran to examine the effectiveness of FonF & FonFS instruction on learning some target forms. Jafarigohar, Nourbakhsh & Hemmati (2013) compared the effectiveness of FonF instruction with FonFS instruction on conditional sentence instruction to Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners. To this

end, six intact classes involving 97 participants who had gained pre-intermediate level scores on the proficiency test and showed relative unfamiliarity with the target structures on the pretest were assigned into three groups. The study employed a pretest, posttest, delayed posttest design and multiple choice type achievement tests were used to measure the effects of treatment. FonF group received textual enhancement, contextualized explicit teaching, and dictogloss; FonFS group received explicit deductive grammar instruction. Moreover, the control group was taught reading passages containing conditional structures. The findings indicated a significant difference among the performance of the three groups on both immediate and delayed posttests with FonF group outperforming FonFS and control groups. The findings also showed a significant difference between the mean scores of the two posttests of each group. Finally, this study suggests that a FonF instruction can lead to higher accuracy in learning grammatical knowledge in comparison to FonFS.

Marzban & Mokhberi (2013) investigated three groups of EFL learners who completed the same task and compared the two types of approaches to FonF that is reactive FonF and pre-emptive FonF. The results of the study showed that reactive FonF in comparison with pre-emptive FonF develops the ability to use grammatical knowledge of the target structure in context.

Abdolmanafi (2012) explored the effects of Form-Focused instruction on the learning of relative clauses by Persian learners. In this study the differential effects of three types of treatment (i.e., FonFS, Focus on Meaning, FonF) on the learning of English relativization was investigated. In this study, intact university classes of English learners were divided into three groups receiving different forms of instruction. Accuracy of the target form was measured by two distinct tasks of sentence combining test and grammaticality judgment test. The results of the two tests showed improvement of all three groups, FonF treatment group outperformed the other two on both tests, however. This study also suggests that learners' attention to detailed analysis of form facilitates learning of relative clauses in this context.

Balieghizadeh (2010) examined the nature of FonF in an EFL communicative classroom in Iran. The study found that in 10 hours of meaning-focused instruction there were only 41 FonF episodes (one in every 15 minutes), which is a much lower rate compared to a similar study reported in the literature. Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that there were very few instances of preemptive FonF in the observed instructional setting. The study suggested that teacher training courses should play a more active role in informing trainee teachers of the instructional value of FonF.

Hashemian (2013) explored the efficacy of FonF and FonFS instructions on learning metaphorical language by Iranian intermediate learners of English. For this research, 60 participants were assigned to three groups, two experimental groups and one control group. One of the experimental groups was exposed to explicit teaching of metaphors (i.e. FonFS) included in 20 reading passages. The second group was taught the target

metaphorical expressions through implicit instruction (i.e. FonF). And, the control group went through the usual classroom instruction; they took the same pretest and posttest as both experimental groups did. The findings of this study revealed that FonFS taught group gained better results on posttest. The results seem to indicate a positive correlation between FonFS and metaphorical competence. It could be claimed that it is possible to enhance L2 learners' metaphorical competence through FonFS instruction of metaphors.

THIS STUDY

The present study aims at examining the effectiveness Focus-on-Form (FonF) and Focus-on-FormS (FonFS) techniques of teaching conditional sentences in Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were examined:

1. Does Focus-on-Form instruction have a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences?
2. Does Focus-on-FormS instruction have a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences?
3. Is there any significant difference between FonF and FonFS instruction with regard to their effects on EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences?

METHOD

Participants

90 intermediate L2 learners were selected from intermediate classes of Kaspian institute in Shiraz, Iran. Experimental and control groups constitute female native speakers of Persian, aged 17-30. None of the participants had the experience of residence in English speaking countries.

In order to make sure that the learners were truly homogeneous with regard to their English proficiency level, grammar section of Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was given to them. Having obtained the proficiency test results, the researchers decided to choose those participants whose score range fell one standard deviation above and below the mean (i.e. $\text{mean} \pm 1$). This being so, 90 students who met this homogeneity criterion were selected to serve as the participants of this study. Later, they were assigned to three groups (two experimental and one control) involved in the study (30 students each).

- Experimental group 1: participants in this group learned conditional sentences through Focus-on-Form instruction.
- Experimental group 2: participants in this group learned conditional sentences through Focus-on-Forms instruction.

- Control group: participants in this group received a placebo task. In fact, they received neither FonF instruction, nor FonFS instruction for learning conditional sentences.

Materials

In order to conduct the study, the following instruments were used:

Oxford Placement Test (OPT): 100 questions of the grammar section of the OPT were administered to ensure the homogeneity of learners.

Pretest: a researcher-made pre-test was administered to determine the participants' level of knowledge with regard to the target structures.

Posttest: a researcher-made post-test was administered to measure the effectiveness of the type of instruction employed for each group.

Textbooks: Conditional sentences (type1, 2, 3) were selected from the "New Interchange" (Richards, 1997) and "Four Corners" (Richards & Bohlke, 2011) English teaching series.

The reliability of the tests was calculated using an alpha Cronbach method. In order to determine the content validity of the tests, experts' views were obtained and applied.

Procedure

This study was conducted at Kaspian language institute in Shiraz, Iran. Each instructional session lasted 90 minutes and the classes met two times a week. One type of conditional sentences was focused on every session. The instruction for all the three groups was done by the same instructor, who was also one of the researchers in this study. Two tests were administered before the treatment. An OPT test was conducted to guarantee the homogeneity of the participants with regard to their general English proficiency. Also, a pretest was run to make sure that the participants in the three groups did not differ significantly at the outset of the study in terms of their knowledge of conditional sentences. One session after the pretest, learners received the treatment.

In FonF group, grammar instruction and communicative language use were combined. The researcher focused learner's attention on conditional sentences while accomplishing communicative activities such as reading passages selected from the books in focus. The researcher used an indirect, context-based presentation of grammar forms, rather than overt, teacher-led instruction in order to enable learners to recognize the properties of conditional sentences in context. Each session one reading passage which contained one type of conditional structure was given to the participants. Conditional sentences were made salient through bolding, italicizing and underling. After reading the passages, the participants were asked to practice the conditional sentences in different contexts while concentrating on meaning. In FonFS group, the

instructor deductively and explicitly presented the rules for making conditional sentences to learners based on the grammar focus boxes in the “New Interchange” and “Four Corners” books. In fact, instructor provided learners in this group with explicit explanations on the rules and patterns of conditional sentences. Then, communicative activities such as reading passages containing many instances of the instructed form were given to the participants.

The control group received neither FonF instruction nor FonFS instruction. The learners were given a placebo task. In this group, the learners were provided with two reading passages, containing conditional structures and they engaged in reading comprehension. It should be noted, however, that they were not taught the target structures explicitly. The reading passages used for control group in this study were taken from the books “New Interchange” and “Four Corners”. After the treatment, all the participants received a post test on the three types of conditional sentences.

RESULTS

Pre-test of the study

A pretest was run to assess participants’ knowledge of conditional sentences in focus. The descriptive statistics of participants’ mean scores on the pretest of the three groups is displayed in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of pretest

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
group1(focus on form)	30	13.6000	2.32824	.42508
group2(focus on forms)	30	13.5667	2.16051	.39445
group3(control group)	30	13.4333	2.26949	.41435
Total	90	13.5333	2.22953	.23501

This table shows that the mean scores for the three groups are statistically very close (group one: 13.60, group two: 13.56, group three: 13.43). Consequently, it can be inferred that the learners in the three groups did not differ notably from one another in terms of their knowledge of conditional sentences

Research Question 1

In order to answer the first research question, a paired-samples t-test was run. The aim of the t-test was to compare the obtained mean scores of the participants in FonF group on the pretest and posttest to demonstrate the effectiveness of the treatment. Tables 2 and 3 show the descriptive statistics and the results of Paired samples t-test for FonF group, respectively.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the FonF group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pretest scores	13.6000	30	2.32824	.42508
	posttest scores	13.8333	30	2.19848	.40139

Table 3. Paired-samples t-test results for the FonF group

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	pretest scores - posttest scores	-.23333	1.79431	.32759	-.712	29	.482

Table 2 indicates that the mean score obtained on the posttest (13.83) is slightly higher than the one obtained on the pretest (13.60). Table 3 shows that there is not a significant difference between the scores obtained from the pretest and posttest ($p=.48$). Therefore, we can conclude that FonF instruction does not have a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences.

Research Question 2

Another paired-samples t-test was carried out to answer the second question in focus. The results of the descriptive statistics and second paired samples t-test are presented in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the FonFS group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pretest scores	13.5667	30	2.16051	.39445
	posttest scores	17.1167	30	1.60110	.29232

Table 5. Paired-samples t-test results for the FonFS group

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Min	Max
group1 (focus on form)	30	13.8333	2.19848	.40139	13.0124	14.6543	10.00	18.00
group2 (focus on forms)	30	17.1000	1.63158	.29789	16.4908	17.7092	14.00	20.00
group3 (control group)	30	14.6333	1.82857	.33385	13.9505	15.3161	12.00	19.00
Total	90	15.1889	2.34230	.24690	14.6983	15.6795	10.00	20.00

Table 4 reveals that the participants in FonFS group obtained a higher mean score on the posttest after receiving the treatment (Posttest= 17.11>Pretest=13.56). Moreover, Table 5 shows the results of the paired samples t-test which indicate that there is a significant difference between the performance of the participants on the pre-test and

post-test ($.000 < 0.05$). Consequently, the FonFS technique was found to exert a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences.

Research Question 3

Regarding the third research question, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was carried out. Table 6 and 7 present the results of the ANOVA.

Table 6. Descriptive results of one-way between-groups ANOVA on the posttest

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pair 1	pretest scores – posttest scores	-3.55000	2.29448	.41891	-8.474	29	.000

Table 7. The results of one-way between-groups ANOVA on the post-test

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	173.956	2	86.978	24.073	.000
Within Groups	314.333	87	3.613		
Total	488.289	89			

The statistical analyses presented in tables 6 and 7 reveal that the three groups differed significantly concerning their mean scores on the post-test ($.000 < 0.05$). However, in order to know where the differences among the three groups lie, a post hoc test was run. Table 8 shows the results of Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD.

Table 8. The results of the Post-hoc test

(I) students	(J) students	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
group1(focus on form)	group2(focus on forms)	-3.26667*	.49078	.000	-4.4369	-2.0964
	group3(control group)	-.80000	.49078	.239	-1.9703	.3703
group2(focus on forms)	group1(focus on form)	3.26667*	.49078	.000	2.0964	4.4369
	group3(control group)	2.46667*	.49078	.000	1.2964	3.6369
group3(control group)	group1(focus on form)	.80000	.49078	.239	-.3703	1.9703
	group2(focus on forms)	-2.46667*	.49078	.000	-3.6369	-1.2964

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Multiple comparisons among groups were performed to determine which groups were significantly different from each other. When FonF and control group were compared

with each other, the results showed that there was not a significant difference between them ($\text{sig} = .000$). However, by comparing FonFS group with control group or comparing FonFS group with FonF group we can conclude that FonFS was notably different from control group and FonF group.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of two instructional methods (i.e. FonF and FonFS) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences. Concerning the first research question "Does Focus on Form instruction have a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences?" it was found that learners receiving FonF instruction did not perform significantly better on the posttest. One justification for the above finding can be that exposure to comprehensible input which arises from natural interaction is not sufficient to enable learners to acquire conditional sentences (Sheen, 2002). With regard to the second research question "Does Focus on FormS instruction have a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences?" the analysis of data revealed that FonFS instruction exerted a significantly positive effect on the learner's acquisition of the conditional sentences in focus. The explanation can be that in FonFS instruction teacher directs learners' attention to grammatical rules which is sufficient in order to learn them. With respect to the third research question "Is there any significant difference between FonF and FonFS instruction with regard to their effects on EFL learners' acquisition of conditional sentences?", the results demonstrated that FonFS instruction is significantly more effective than FonF instruction in learning conditional sentences since the learners who were taught through FonFS outperformed those who received FonF instruction.

In spite the fact that there has been a wide range of research on the effects of different kinds and techniques of FonF instruction, a small amount of research has compared the effectiveness of FonF and FonFS technique (Ellis, 2002). As well as that, comparing the results of this study with the results of other studies which examine FFI is not easy since different studies use different grammatical structures, different types and techniques of FonF instruction, and use different methods to assess learning. However, in agreement with the results reported by Hashemian, (2013), this study showed that those learners who received FonFS instruction outperformed those in the FonF group. Hence, the present study could be considered as further support for FonFS instruction than FonF instruction.

Other studies on the effectiveness of different forms of grammar instruction (e.g. Doughty & Williams, 1998; Lightbown, 2000; Norris & Ortega, 2000), show that FonFS has been a key concept in many research studies. The results of the present study support explicit instruction of conditional sentences. These results are in accordance with several studies which propose that formal instruction is advantageous (e.g. Long, 1983; Norris & Ortega, 2000). In agreement with the above conclusion is the argument

that meaning-focused instruction alone is not sufficient for learning a language (Swain, 2001). Over-reliance on the communicative and naturalistic methods of L2 learning can cause problem in SLA instruction, as it has apparently done. Considering the beneficial impact drawing L2 learners' attention to certain L2 forms can have on L2 learning, L2 teachers are expected to spend more in enhancing L2 learners' awareness of relevant input. Such awareness can be achieved through FonFS.

Therefore, this study can conclude that FonFS instruction is more effective than FonF instruction. All in all, it should be noted that of the two techniques applied for teaching conditional sentences to Iranian intermediate EFL learners, FonFS was found to be more effective than FonF.

The findings of this study brought about some pedagogical implications for EFL curriculum developers, teachers, learners, and those preparing grammar textbooks. Given the benefits of FonFS reported in the present study, the findings showed that focusing learners' attention on the formal characteristics of the target structures boosts the rate of EFL learning. Moreover, the findings indicated that explicit grammar instruction was beneficial in making the learners in the instructional groups notice the target structures' recognition and use in L2.

The present findings should be interpreted by taking into account the limitations of the study. The first limitation is related to the sample size. It should be noted that the number of participants is not large enough to generalize the conclusions to all English language learners. Second, this study only focused on teaching three grammatical structures through some techniques of FonF and FonFS instructions by the English language learners; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole grammar or other structures in English. Hence, future research needs to analyze the effects of different techniques of FonF and FonFS instructions in learning of various grammatical structures on learners with different proficiency levels.

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