

Focus-on-form

Meaning-focused

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Table 2, however, shows that the interaction effect between approach and cognitive style is not statistically significant, $F(1, 54) = 0.41, p = .52$.

This finding of the study which is in fact the contribution to the literature on FOF is noteworthy in that it indicates that the cognitive style of FD/FI does not mediate the effect of FOF and meaning-focused instruction and FI learners are better at both FOF and MF instruction.

Concluding Remarks

Concerning the effectiveness of FOF and meaning-focused instruction in elementary EFL courses, according to the results of this study, there is a significant difference between the two, which conforms to the findings of previous studies which attested the effectiveness of FOF instruction. The reason may be the fact that the amount of exposure to comprehensible input for the learners in a foreign language settings is inadequate. Especially in elementary levels, this paucity of comprehensible input and the low proficiency level which make simultaneous attention to both meaning

and form difficult (Van Patten, 1990 cited in Basturkmen, Loewen, and Ellis, 2002) for learners may lead to a more promising role for FOF instruction.

As for the role of cognitive styles of field-dependence/-independence, the findings of the study are consistent with previous research in which FI learners outperformed FD learners in classroom learning; however, the findings show that cognitive styles of FI/FD does not mediate the effect of FOF/MF instruction and FOF instruction is more effective for both FI and FD learners. These findings are in line with interactionist and cognitive views of L2 development which emphasize the role of attention and may imply the necessity of more nurturing for FD learners. That is, the teachers should attempt to provide more catering for FD learners through more practice, positive evidence recasts or other forms of language support.

The final is a word of caution on the limited size of the sample, the limited amount of instruction and limited means of assessment.

accounted for by the independent variable is also a strong one i.e., $>.10$ (Dornyei, 2007).

This finding of the study is in line with the previous research which has shown that balanced attention to meaning and form through focus on form activities can help more to the development of L2 competence (Baleghizadeh, 2010; Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2002; Long, 1983, 1991; Lyster, 2014; Nassaji, 1999; Spada, 1997).

Table 2 also indicates that the main effect of cognitive style is statistically significant, $F(1, 54) = 6.04, p = 0.017$. In other words, the difference between the effectiveness of FD/FI cognitive style in learning relativization proves to be significant. Referring to Table 1, it is found that FI group ($M = 14.17, SD = 3.92$) had a better performance on the test than the FD group ($M = 12.21, SD = 4.02$). The effect size is also a strong one i.e., $>.10$.

The finding that FI learners performed better than FD learners in learning relativization in English is consistent with previous research (Brown, 2014; Ghonsooly & Eghtesadi, 2006) that support the relationship between field-independence and second language learning success.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the groups' performance on the total test

Approach	Style	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
experimental/FOF	FD	13.00	4.301	17
	FI	16.18	2.857	11
	Total	14.25	4.061	28
control/MF	FD	11.08	3.450	12
	FI	12.94	4.051	18
	Total	12.20	3.872	30
Total	FD	12.21	4.021	29
	FI	14.17	3.929	29
	Total	13.19	4.063	58

Table 2. The results of Two-way ANOVA for the total test

Dependent Variable: Total score						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Approach	92.038	1	92.038	6.311	.015*	.105
FD/FI Style	88.112	1	88.112	6.042	.017*	.101
Approach * Style	6.043	1	6.043	.414	.522	.008

a. R Squared = .163 (Adjusted R Squared = .117)

As the result of the two-way ANOVA for exploring the impact of teaching approach (FOF/MF) and cognitive style (FD/FI) on learning relativization in English indicates, the main effect of approach is statistically significant $F(1, 54) = 6.31, p = 0.015$. Therefore, it indicates a significant difference between the effectiveness of focus on form and focus on meaning

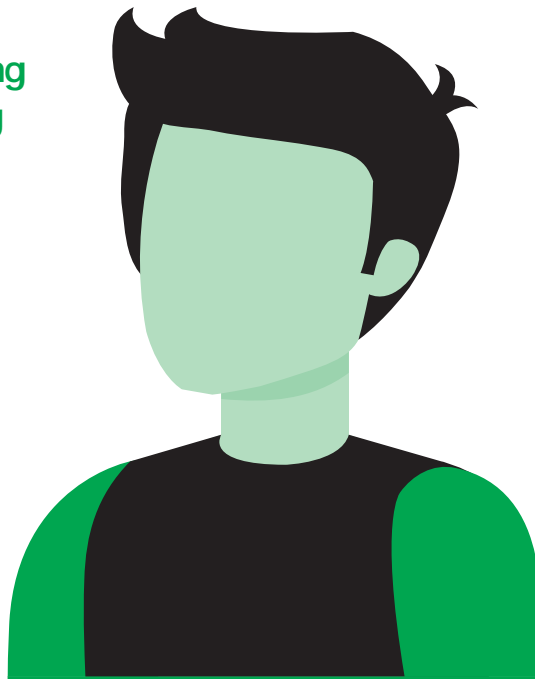
instruction in learning relativization (relative clauses) by elementary Iranian EFL students. The data in Table 1 also indicates that the focus on form group ($M = 14.25, SD = 4.06$) had a better performance on the test than the meaning-focused group ($M = 12.20, SD = 3.87$). The effect size (partial eta squared), which is the variance in the dependent variable



The materials used in the study include the GEFT test, four reading passages, and a test. The reading passages were selected from Hill (1980) and (1988)

The materials used in the study include the GEFT test, four reading passages, and a test. The reading passages were selected from Hill (1980) and (1988). The passages were further modified in order to simplify the structures which were not familiar to students and to enrich the texts with relative clauses. The test used in the study included two main parts which were composed of 20 items. The first section (8 items) was a recognition part in which students were required to underline the part which functioned as an adjective (the relative clause); the second section (12 items) was a production part that required students to produce relative clauses in response to questions.

The two classes in the study were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Of course, this assignment was arbitrary since both classes received specified instruction. The experimental group was taught through teacher-initiated preemptive focus on form activities and the control group was taught through focus on meaning activities for four weeks and each week included a 2-instructional-hour session. In the end, both groups received the test and the GEFT test. In the production part of the test, the teacher tried to clarify the instruction for learners and even provided examples in Persian to



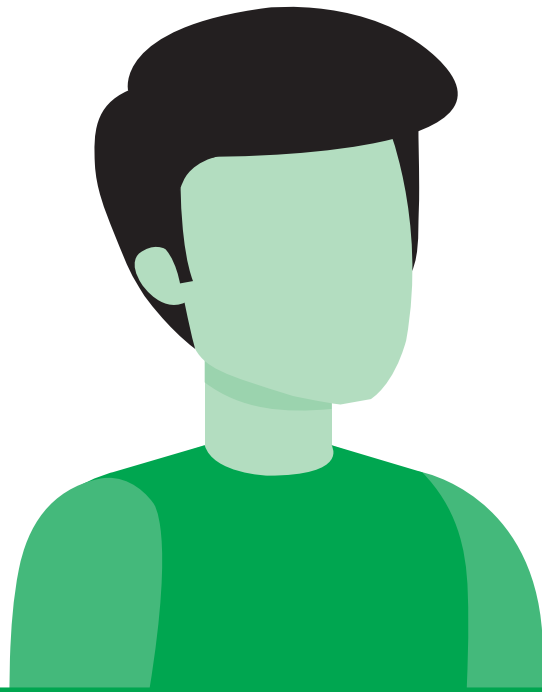
make sure that learners understand the task they are required to perform.

Data Analysis

To answer the questions of the study, a factorial two-way ANOVA was used in which the teaching approach (FOF/MF) and cognitive style (FD/FI) were the independent variables and grammar score was the dependent one. Before running the factorial ANOVA, the assumption of normality of the data for the four groups was checked through different procedures.

Results and discussion

Table 1 below shows descriptive statistics for different groups in the study and Table 2 shows the results of the two-way ANOVA.



(FD/FI) cognitive style of the learners on the efficacy of the meaning-focused and form-focused instruction, especially in a foreign language setting. This is while the cognitive style of FD/FD has been suggested potentially more significant for second language acquisition (Larsen Freeman & Long, 1991) and playing role in the effectiveness of deductive and inductive lesson designs (Johnson, Prior & Artuso, 2000). This study therefore aims to fill this gap and answer the following two questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in the effect of meaning-focused and focus on form activities on learning grammatical points in a reading course with elementary EFL students?

2. Is there any significant role for the cognitive style of FD/FI in the effectiveness of meaning-focused and focus on form activities in learning grammatical points in a reading course with elementary EFL students?

3. Can the cognitive style of FD/FI mediate the effect of FOF/MF instruction?

The Study

The participants in the study were 59 female ninth-graders who formed two intact groups and were selected through a convenience sampling procedure. Before initiating the study, the Oxford Placement Test was administered to the learners and the results of the placement test confirmed that the participants were at the elementary level. Since 'relative clause' has already been used in SLA studies, (e.g., Schachter, 1974; Schachter & Rurherford, 1978 studied relative clause formation by Farsi speakers of English, as cited in Schachter, 1996, and Doughty, 1991, as cited in Muranoi, 2000) and on the ground that learners participating in this study had not been taught the relative clause formation prior to this study, it was decided to choose this grammatical point for the study. Moreover, it was ensured that the participants had not had extracurricular language instruction and their linguistic background was limited to normal ninth-graders who were not familiar with relativization in English.

focused position (Krashen, 1985) which maintains all L2 learners need in order to acquire a second language is exposure to comprehensible input and motivation to acquire the second language. Later in a seminal paper, Long (1991) argued that instead of a mere focus on message-based activities, there should be some room for referring to the problems learners have with linguistic forms. Lyster (2014) supporting a balanced focus on both form and meaning believes while classroom learners, provided that they are exposed

to adequate rich input, can learn many L2 forms and functions implicitly, an exclusively incidental focus on the target language settings “has proven too brief and too perfunctory to convey sufficient information about certain grammatical subsystems” (p.2). Baleghizadeh (2010) also refers to three problems with pure meaning-focused approaches including learners’ poor language proficiency in meaning-focused classes, fossilization, and ignoring the role of negative evidence.

This position which is known as ‘focus on form’ position has been widely noticed by many researchers (e.g. Spada, 1997; Nassaji, 1999, 2000; Muranoi, 2000; Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis, 2002; Sheen, 2002; Loewen, 2003; Poole, 2005) and as Poole (2005) maintains it has been “a source of great enthusiasm for English language teachers and researchers so much so that many have praised it as if it were the miracle method they had always been searching for” (p. 47).



Some researchers such as Loewen (2003b) have surmised a role for personality factors in the variation and different frequencies of observed focus on form episodes (FFE)

Some researchers such as Loewen (2003b) have surmised a role for personality factors in the variation and different frequencies of observed focus on form episodes (FFE). However, to the best knowledge of the present researcher, no rigorous study has been done on the influence of personality factors such as field-dependence/ field-independence

Abstract

One of the topics which preoccupied the language teaching circles for a while is the Focus-on-form (FOF) instruction. Many English teachers and researchers praised it as if it were the miracle method they had always been searching for and many research projects have tried to prove it is more effective than meaning-focused (MF) instruction and some researches also attributed the effectiveness of FOF instruction to the way it is performed and the personality factors of learners and teachers. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of FOF and MF instruction in EFL settings and especially for elementary learners which are in a more crucial need of developing a grammatical competence in the foreign language and further to investigate the role of the cognitive style of field-dependence/independence in the effectiveness of both kinds of instruction. The results of the study confirm the previous research which has shown the effectiveness of FOF over MF instruction. The results further indicate that field-independent learners can benefit more from both FOF and meaning-focused instruction, and there is no interaction between the cognitive style of FD/FI and FOF/MF instruction.

Key Words: focus on form, focus on meaning, cognitive style of field-dependence/independence, elementary level

Introduction

Teaching and learning a second or foreign language is influenced by a plethora of factors. One of the major controversies in learning/acquiring especially the syntactic component of the language is over the explicit or implicit instruction of grammatical rules. In fact, the extent to which knowledge obtained from explicit instruction can over time become part of a second language learner's underlying system of implicit knowledge and therefore available for spontaneous language production is still an open question (Lyster, 2004).

While on the assumption that second language learning is like first language acquisition, experiential approaches to L2 acquisition maintain that language develops principally out of experience with real-life communication and pure meaningful activities, as Nassaji (1999) maintains, many second language acquisition researchers believe in the inadequacy of pure meaning-focused activities and exposure to language for developing L2 competence. Long (1983) put into question the meaning-



On the Effectiveness of Focus-on-form and Meaning-focused Instruction in an Elementary EFL Course:

Does Cognitive Style of Field-dependence/ Independence Play a Role?

Ahmadreza Eghtesadi Roudi
Assistant Professor of ELT Farhangian University
a.r.eghtesadi@cfu.ac.ir

چکیده

یکی از موضوعاتی که در محافل آموزش زبان مورد توجه قرار گرفته است تمرکز بر فرم است، تا آنجا که بسیاری از معلمان و محققان زبان انگلیسی آنچنان به تعریف و تمجید از این رویکرد پرداخته‌اند که گویی معجزه‌ای در آموزش زبان رخ داده است. در تحقیقات فراوانی نیز سعی شده است که تأثیرگذاری بیشتر تمرکز بر فرم نسبت به تمرکز بر معنا برجسته شود. برخی محققان هم تأثیرگذاری تمرکز بر فرم را به شیوه انجام آن و عوامل شخصیتی نسبت داده‌اند. هدف این مطالعه بررسی تأثیرگذاری تمرکز بر فرم و همچنین تمرکز بر معنا در محیط‌های آموزش زبان به عنوان زبان خارجی در سطوح مبتدی است که در آن‌ها فراگیران به‌ویژه نیازمند کسب توانش دستوری در زبان خارجی هستند. علاوه بر این، این مطالعه بر آن است تا نقش سبک شناختی وابسته به زمینه و ناوابسته به زمینه بر تأثیرگذاری تمرکز بر فرم و تمرکز بر معنا را بررسی نماید. نتایج مطالعه یافته‌های تحقیقات قبلی مبنی بر تأثیرگذاری بیشتر تمرکز بر فرم را تایید می‌کند. همچنین نتایج نشان می‌دهد که زبان‌آموزان با سبک شناختی ناوابسته، عملکرد بهتری در هر دو نوع آموزش داشته‌اند اما از طریق سبک شناختی وابسته و ناوابسته، به‌طور معنا داری اثربخشی آموزش با تمرکز بر فرم و تمرکز بر معنا را تحت تأثیر قرار نداده است.

کلید واژه‌ها: تمرکز بر فرم، تمرکز بر معنا، سبک شناختی وابسته به زمینه و ناوابسته به زمینه، سطح مبتدی