The Effect of Incidental Focus on Form on EFL Learners' Grammatical Accuracy

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Abstract

Focus on form instruction is a kind of instruction that draws students, attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in meaning based instruction. There are different types of focus on form instruction. The present study was designed to investigate the effect of incidental focus on form on grammatical accuracy among Iranian L2 learners. Eighty learners from Sahand language Institute in Miandoab after taking grammatical judgment test which was administered to homogenize them, were placed in two control and experimental groups. Learners in experimental group received feedback through recasting during retelling the reading passage according to principles of Jigsaw task. But learners in control group did not receive any feedback. After treatment, which lasted for eight sessions, post-test was given to both control and experimental groups to observe the difference resulted from the treatment. To be sure about the significance of the difference between post-test means of both groups, a t-test was used. The results at the end supported the hypotheses of the study and positive effect of incidental focus on form on grammatical accuracy of L2 learners. After that, for the purpose of analyzing the effect of incidental focus on form on accuracy of pronouns, tenses, articles and propositions separately, other tests (pronoun, article, tense, proposition tests) was given to the learners in both control and experimental groups. The data collected was computed through t-test which revealed that the effect of incidental focus on form on grammatical accuracy of articles is greater than pronouns and tenses but incidental focus on form didn't have any effect on accuracy of propositions. Pedagogical implications have been discussed.

Keywords: Focus on form, Incidental focus on form, recast, task, Accuracy

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In language teaching, there is a difference between meaning-focused and form-focused instruction (Doughty & Williams, 1998b). Meaning-focused instruction refers to instruction that engages learners in acts of communication where their focus is primarily directed at understanding and/or conveying message content. On the other hand form-focused instruction is a kind of instruction that focuses learner's attention on linguistic elements and the meanings they convey.

Results of the studies in immersion programs showed that focus on expressing and exchanging messages in communicative classes develops fluency (Genesee, 1987 as cited in Swain, 1998). But learners didn't achieve high levels of linguistic and sociolinguistic accuracy (Swain, 1985, as cited in Swain, 1998).

Learners with a low level of L2 proficiency have limited processing capacities, such that they cannot easily focus to both meaning and form at the same time, and thus select for whichever pays them the greater profit. (Swain, 1998).

Confirming the shortcomings of both form-focused and meaning-focused approaches, L2 researchers tried to find a new way, which can compensate for the problems evidenced in both approaches. They have finally tried to explore a new solution of helping learners improve their accuracy in a meaning-based instruction, and conducted many studies to verify the advantages of this new approach which is termed by Long (1991 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998) as Focus on Form.

According to Long (1981; 1983; 1996, p.22 as cited in Long and Robinson, 1998), " Focus on form is motivated by Interaction Hypothesis which holds that SLA is a process explicable by neither a purely linguistic nativist nor a purely environmentalist theory "(p.22).

According to Interaction Hypothesis, " an important site for language development is interaction between learners and other speakers, especially, but not only, between learners and more proficient speakers and between learners and certain types of written texts, especially elaborated ones " (Long, 1997b, p. 22 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998).

According to Long and Robinson (1998), focus on form instruction is discriminated from focus on forms instruction. Focus on forms instruction is a traditional method of language teaching and its purpose is to teach particular linguistic elements, rather than presenting language as a mechanism for communication.

For Long and Robinson (1998), focus on form instruction is different from focus on meaning instruction. For them, focus on meaning instruction is paramount to spending little or no time on the discrete parts of language; instead, the interest is on the use of language in real-life situations. Such a mode of instruction is apparent in the Natural Approach Terrell and Krashen (1983 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998), which, in theory, orders direct grammar teaching.

"Focus on form overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, p. 45-46 as cited in Hally & Rentz, 2002). "Focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features - by the teacher and/or one or more students - triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production" (Long & Robinson, 1998, p. 23).

There are Different methods for accomplishing focus on form instruction which have been discussed in the literature (Sharwood-Smith, 1993, 1994 as cited in White, 1998). Input enhancement may be oral or written; it may take the form of seeding the input with the linguistic element (the input flood), or of using typographical devices such as underlining or manipulating font size (White, 1998).

Recast is another common attention-focusing method. According to Morris (2005) recasts are immediate implicit reformulation of a student's non-target like utterance. A study of recasts of past tense forms on junior high school students of Spanish in an immersion classroom showed that experimental group, those who received recasts outperformed control group. (Doughty & Varela, 1998).

There are different ways for accomplishing focus on form instruction. One of the ways is by means of planned and incidental focus on form. Planned focus on form is pre-planned teachers with prior intention design focused tasks to elicit the use of specific linguistic items in the context of meaning-centered language use. In this case, then, the focus on form is pre-determined (Ellis; Basturkmen & Loewen, 2002). Incidental focus on form happens automatically, without prior purpose, during meaning-based instruction and targets a variety of linguistic forms (Ellis; et al; 2002).

The present study tries to describe the effect of incidental focus on form, with special focus on recasting, on L2 learners' grammatical accuracy. The researcher wants to know if using incidental focus on form would lead to a better chance of grammatical accuracy occurring.

1.2 Statement of the problem and purpose of the study

Considering the EFL situation in Iran, the researcher has found out that many teachers believe in a separation of form-focused activities from communicative activities in classroom settings. These teachers are worried that their attempts to emphasize form may cause negative reactions on the part of the learners who are engaged in expressing their meaning.

Therefore, to encourage meaningful interaction, they believe that focus on form and focus on communication should be treated as separate learning activities. One of the best ways of addressing this problem is to consider activities that result in attention to form while maintaining meaningful communication. Facing this problem the researcher set out this research to investigate the effect of incidental focus on form on EFL learners grammatical accuracy. The purpose of this study is to help learners improve their grammatical accuracy in a meaning-based instruction according to principles of focus on form instruction.

1.3 Significance and Justification for the study

Language learning and teaching is believed to depend not only on meaning focused instruction where the learner's attentions is primarily directed at understanding and conveying message content., but also on form-focused instruction where the learner's attentions focused on linguistic forms and the meanings they convey. Clearly this idea justifies the use of focus on form instruction. Focus on form instruction is a type of instruction that, on the one hand, holds up the importance of communicative language teaching principles such as authentic communication and student-centeredness, and, on the other hand, maintains the value of the occasional and overt study of problematic L2 grammatical forms. With considering different types of focus on form, it seems that incidental focus on form pushes learners to greater accuracy. It also allows learners, without interruption of communication, to focus on form.

1.4 Research questions and Hypotheses

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

Research question1: Does incidental focus on form have any effect on the grammatical accuracy of EFL learners?

Research question 2: Does incidental focus on form have any effect on the accuracy of article?

Research question 3: Does incidental focus on form have any effect on the accuracy of tense?

Research question 4: Does incidental focus on form have any effect on the accuracy of preposition?

Research question 5: Does incidental focus on form have any effect on the accuracy of pronoun?

Hypothesis1: There is a significant relationship between incidental focus on form and grammatical accuracy of EFL learners.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between incidental focus on form and accuracy of article.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between incidental focus on form and accuracy of tense.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between incidental focus on form and accuracy of preposition.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship between incidental focus on form and accuracy of pronoun

2. Review of the related literature

2.1 Task based language teaching

Task based language teaching is an approach in which the end is not a series of linguistic items, but a collection of task (Nunan, 1999). According to Harmer (2001), tasks are the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. The idea of task-based lesson was mostly developed by prabhu who thought that students were just likely to learn language if they were thinking about a non-linguistic problem than if they were concentrating on particular language forms.

Task-based language teaching was developed within the communicative approach. It has evolved in response to some limitations of traditional PPP approach represented by the procedure of presentation, practice and performance emphasizing language learning as a developmental process which promotes communication and social interaction (Ellis, 2003).

Ellis (2003) believes that task-based language teaching forms a strong version of CLT, and tasks provide the basis for an entire language curriculum.

Johnson and Johnson (1998) declared that in TBLT much interest is focused on the nature of classroom activities (tasks) learners are asked to undertake, and on the possibility of using these tasks as the basis for syllabus design. They refer to Prabhu's work in 1987 on the procedural syllabus as the major attempt at task-based teaching.

Tasks are everyday activities which require language, for example writing a letter. As well as activities that can be done without resorting to any language, e.g; painting a door (Long, 1985 as cited in Ellis, 2003).

Regarding composing elements of a task different researchers have suggested distinct models. According to Wright (1987, as cited in Nunan, 2003) tasks consist of two elements namely "input data" and "instructional questions" that require learners to implement the input. He claims that there is no room for "output" to be considered within the realm of tasks since they only have a "discourse potential" and are defined as a work plan.

Shavelson and Stern (1981, as cited in Nunan, 2003) suggested that task designers should consider the following elements for a task:

1. Content: the subject matter to be taught

2. Materials: the things that learners can see

3. Activities: the thing that learners and teachers will be doing during instruction

4. Goals: the teacher's general goals for the task

5. Students: Their needs and interests are central

Nunan (1989) proposed a model for a task. In this model, task includes goals, input and procedures that will be supported by roles and settings. Goals are the ambiguous, general purpose behind any learning task. Input can be a spoken, written or visual data that learners work within the course of completing a task. Teachers can provide a data or it can be provided by a textbook or some other sources. Input can come from a wide range of sources; letters, newspapers, picture stories, etc.

2.2 Task types

According to different scholars there are many different task types. Pattison (1987, as cited in Nunan, 2003) sets out seven task types:

- **Questions and answers**: Question and answer tasks let the learners make a personal choice from a list of linguistic forms and they are to discover their classmate's choice.

- **Dialogs and role play:** In theses kinds of activities if there is a clear aim to be achieved, learners will participate willingly and learn much better than that when they are told to repeat the dialog, because more repetition sometimes seems to be a tiring action.

- **Matching activities:** In these kinds of tasks the learners' task is to match the items or to

- complete pairs.

- **Communication strategies:** These are activities which help learners practice communication strategies like asking for feedback.

- **Picture stories:** They create communication activities through the use of pictures.

- **Puzzles and problems:** These kinds of tasks are of different kinds and require the learners to guess, based on their knowledge and personal experience, during which they use their idea and test their power of reasoning.

- **Discussions and decisions:** Require the learners cooperate each other to share their information in order to reach a decision.

- Richard (2001, as cited in Nunan, 2003) provided the following five task types:

- **Jigsaw tasks:** In these kinds of task, every learner or a group of learners has a piece of information. They combine the pieces to form a whole.

- **Information gap tasks**: In these kinds of tasks each group of learners has a set of information. They interact in order to understand the other group' information to complete an activity.

- **Problem solving tasks:** In these kinds of tasks students are given a problem and a set of information. They must find a solution to the problem, and there is generally a single outcome.

- **Decision making tasks**: In these kinds of activities there is a problem with a number of possible outcomes learners select one through negotiation and discussion.

- **Opinion exchange tasks**: Here learners through negotiation and discussion exchange their opinions.

2.3 Task goals

Task goals fall into three main categories : focus on forms, focus on meaning, and focus on form (Salaberry, 2001 as cited in Oxford, 2006). Theses are summarized below:

- **Focus on forms**

Focus on forms is different from focus on form. Focus on forms focuses on teaching language items in isolation from context or communicative activity.

The syllabus which is based on focus on form is different from focus on forms. In Focus on form syllabus is analytic. And the teacher doesn't know in advance what kind of grammatical point will be focused. Whereas in the focus on forms approach the teacher knows in advance what kind of grammatical point will be incorporated in his/her lesson plan or syllabus which is going to be taught (Long, 1997).

The advocate of focus on form hold that grammar should be addressed in the classroom only if it causes the problem of communication and the teacher doesn't determine these treatments in advance (Akbari, 2005).

In Focus on forms course design begins with the language to be taught. The teacher or textbook writer divides the language into different parts (phonemes, words, collocations, morphemes……. and so on), and presents these to the learner in models, initially one item at a time. Finally, it is the learner's job to synthesize the parts for use in communication, which Wilkins called the synthetic approach syllabus design (Wilkins, 1976 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998).

- **Focus on meaning**

The traditional synthetic syllabi was not successful, as it was supposed that familiarity with finding interlanguage development led some scholars to give up supporting focus on forms in L2 classroom in favor of focus on meaning. In fact, they believed that adult could learn second language by exposing to comprehensible target language samples. In other words, they can acquire incidentally (e.g; without intention, while doing something else) or implicitly (e.g; without awareness). The main claim is that adult learn language best by treating language as a medium of communication which is called analytic syllabus by Wilkins (1976 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998).

According to Wilkins (1976, p. 13, as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998), "analytic syllabus is Prior analysis of the total language system into a set of discrete pieces of language that is a necessary precondition for the adoption of a synthetic approach is largely superfluous. Analytic approaches are organized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes".

According to some scholars this option suffers from five problems.

- Adult no longer have the capacity of acquiring language as native like because there is maturation constrain on language learning and critical period (Long, 1997).

- Studies have shown that by long term natural exposure adult may become fluent, but not native like (Long, 1997).

- The third problem is that there are some grammatical rules that can not be learnt from positive evidence alone (Long, 1997).

- Finally, Focus on meaning alone is not enough to achieve full native-like proficiency. (Doughty & Long, 2003).

- **Focus on form**

Focus on form is a central part of language teaching and learning and is especially concerned with the internalisation of linguistic forms. It is also a major research area within the broader domain of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). It is different from focus on meaning which constitutes another fundamental component of SLA research. (Blin & Appel, 2003).

Three different claims about SLA for supporting focus on form

First, L2 learners acquire new linguistic items while attending to those forms in contexts where the primary goal is meaning and not the form.

Second, L2 learners may have difficulty in focusing to and producing linguistic structures in communication because they have a limited information-processing ability.

Third, L2 learners benefit from the chances that occur during interaction to give specific attention to form (Long, Inagaki & Ortega, 1998; Mackey & Philp, 1998 as cited in Morris, 2005).

It seems then that focus on form can direct learners' attention to linguistic elements within the context of meaning-based instruction, and such focus can happen in a variety of classroom activities, including when a learner provides corrective feedback in response to her conversational partner's L2 errors.

Every scholar has his/her own definition toward the focus on form. These definitions are almost the same. "Focus on form overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, pp. 45-46 as cited in Stephanie, 2000). "The term focus on form refers to the application of grammar in an unrehearsed communicative situation in an unplanned manner" (Sheen, 2003 as cited in Akbari, 2005, p.44). "Focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features by the teacher and/or one or more students - triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production" (Long & Robinson, 1998, p. 23 as cited in Levy & Kennedy, 2004). In the words of Doughty and Williams (1998b) "focus on form entails a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features" (p. 3).

2.4 Types of focus on form instruction

2.4.1 Planned vs. incidental focus on form

According to Nassaji and Fotos (2007, p. 13), "planned focus on form is defined as instruction that involves treatment of pre-selected forms with the difference that the treatment occurs while the learner's primary focus is on processing meaning (for example, communicative input containing the form, textual enhancement, or communicative task using the form) and " incidental focus on form differs occurs incidentally while the learner's primary focus is on meaning (for example, recasts and negotiation of meaning during communicative interaction)". Incidental focus on form happens spontaneously, without prior purpose, during meaning-based instruction and targets a variety of linguistic forms. While planned focus on form focuses frequently on the same linguistic structure, incidental focus on form has a more extensive focus, with many linguistic structures being targeted but on only one or two occasions (Ellis, 2001). Planned focus in form is effective because it focuses learners repeatedly on the same form while they are communicating. There is evidence to show that it promotes acquisition, even when this is measured in terms of spontaneous oral production (Doughty & Varela, 1998).

There are some drawbacks for both planned and incidental focus on form. Planned focus on form is time consuming in contrast, incidental focus on form can direct learner's attention on a whole range of linguistic items in a one session. Thus, it affords a broad coverage. But a concern is that each structure is focused to only very briefly, which may not led to acquisition (Ellis, et al; 2002).

2.4.2 Pre-emptive vs. reactive focus on form

 Pre-emptive focus on form consists of attempts by the students or the teacher to make a particular form the topic of the conversation even though no error in the use of that form has occurred. Pre-emptive focus on form is typically initiated by means of a query that the student addresses to the teacher (Ellis, et al; 2002).

In pre-emptive case, the teacher and the learner can take some time out of communicative task in order to focus on explicit questions about form. Reactive focus on form involves the treatment of learner errors. The reactive focus on form consisted of corrective recasting, where the teacher first repeated a learner utterance containing an error, highlighting the error through emphasis, and then, if this did not result in a learner self-correction, the teacher recast the utterance using a correct form (Prabhu, 1987 as cited in Ellis 2003).

Reactive focus on form has been known as error correction, corrective feedback, or negative evidence/feedback and occurs when, in the context of meaning-focused activities, learners' attention is drawn to errors in their production. Thus, the error is the trigger which begins the discourse targeting a specific linguistic item (Ellis, 2001).

According to Nassaji and Fotos (2007, pp. 13-14) "reactive focus on form involves the teachers reaction to an actual or perceived problem in the course of communication ". And pre-emptive focus on form involves "taking time out from communicative activity, either by teacher or by the student, to respond to a form that is anticipated to be problematic although no actual error has taken place (Nassaji and Fotos, 2007, p. 13-14).

According to Borg (1998 as cited in Farrokhi & Gholami, 2007), if a teacher takes a decision about a language point which has to be focused on the basis of problem that learners have during a lesson, so he/she utilizes pre-emptive focus on form approach rather than reactive. This approach involves asking students if they have grammatical problems regarding their L1, guiding metalingual terminology and eliciting rules from the students.

Lyster & Ranta (1997) investigated the different types of reactive focus on form that is provided by French immersion teachers when learners produce utterances that contain a linguistic error. They distinguished six types of feedback, namely **explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition**.

Explicit correction: clearly indicating that student's utterance was incorrect and the teacher provides the correct form.

Recast: without directly indicating that the student's utterance was incorrect, the teacher implicitly reformulates the student's error, or provides the correction.

Clarification: by using phrases like "excuse me" or "I don't understand" the teacher indicates that the message has not been understood or that the student's utterance contained some kind of mistake and that a repetition or a reformulation is required.

Metalinguistic Clues: Without providing the correct form, the teacher poses questions or provides comments or information related to the student's utterance.

Repetition: the teacher repeats the student's error and adjusts intonation to draw student's attention to it.

2.5 Recast as focus on form technique

Recasts have been deemed as one of the most useful ways to correct learners' errors because they are less likely to disrupt the flow of communication in meaning-based classrooms. However, in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study, it was found that recasts were the least effective to elicit the learners' uptake, notwithstanding the fact that the teachers most frequently used recasts with the intention of pointing out the learners' errors. In addition, it was cautioned that the learners often regarded the teachers' recasts with reformulated learners' utterances as the correction of their content, rather than the correction of their errors on specific linguistic features (Lyster & Ranta, 1997).

Recast, as a form of feedback for language learning has become the focus of investigation in the recent classroom studies of communicative L2 teachers and learners. Every scholar has his/her own definition toward the recast. These definitions are almost the same. Long and Robinson (1998) explained recasts as an effective way of providing learners with information about how their currenr interlanguage differs from the target language. Similarly, Lyster and Ranta (1997) specified recast as "teacher reformulation of all or part of students utterances minus error" (p.46). Mackey and Philip (1998 as cited in Rosalia, 2000) built on this definition by specifying that recasts (a) are a reformation of the ill formed utterance, (b) expand the utterance in some way (c) retain the central meaning of the utterance (d) follow the ill-formed utterance.

Long and Robinson (1998) placed recast as negative evidence in the category of implicit negative evidence. The way of providing negative evidence to learners' utterances is very important, in that it should be perceived by the learner as an utterance containing potential negative evidence as negative evidence (Carroll, 2001, as cited in Hauser, 2001). She hypothesized that in order to consider negative evidence as appropriate negative evidence; it should meet a criterion that is the learner must perceive the interlocutor who is qualified to provide the negative evidence. Carrol (2001 as cited in Hauser, 2001) argued that in order for negative feedback to play a role in reformulating or restructuring, it must be related to the area, which the learner doesn't know.

According to Doughty & Varela (1998 as cited in Pica, 2007) recasts provide learners with not only negative evidence, but also positive evidence on forms in the L2 grammar they are trying to master.

Ellis (1999a as cited in Pica, 2007) described that in studies where positive evidence did not make a difference for the learner, the evidence was supplied in the form of enhanced texts, pre-modified on the basis of interlocutor judgments about learner's ability and needs. In studies where positive evidence did make a difference, the evidence was supplied through immediate interlocutor responses, recast from the learners very own message.

2.6 Didactic vs. conversational focus on form

Conversational FOF involves the negotiation of meaning whereas didactic FOF refers to negotiation of form. Didactic FOF is established when there is a linguistic problem, which the participant deals with explicitly (Ellis, et al 2002).

Long & Robinson (1998) argued that learners can best attend to linguistic form through negotiation and clarifying uncertainties about meaning through so called negotiation of meaning (NFM).

According to (Ellis, et al; 2002) negotiation of meaning is an activity that occurs when the listener signals to a speaker that speaker's message is not clear and the listener and speaker work linguistically to resolve this problem.

Lyster & Ranta (1997 as cited in Batstone, 2007) argued that learners' ongoing preoccupation with meaning in negotiation of meaning (NFM) makes it difficult for them to see that linguistic deviations in their talk are being implicitly corrected. Scholars (for. e.g. Schmidt, 1990, 1992 as cited in Batstone, 2007) take this viewpoint to research in cognitive theory which suggested that learners may need to pay conscious attention to linguistic form as such in initial stages of learning. Consequently, they proposed a different kind of engagement with language that is called negotiation of form (NOF).

In negotiation of form, " the fact that a learner has made a linguistic error is made explicit, and ensuring negotiation encourages learners not only to notice the error but to do something about it by self-correcting " (Batstone, 2007, p. 88).

2.7 Reactive or Proactive Approach toward error correction

A major curricular choice involves whether to be proactive or reactive in focusing on form. That is to say, teachers can plan in advance to ensure that a focus on form will occur, or they can wait for a pressing learner need to arise and develop an on the spot FOF lesson in response. According to Long (1991, as cited in Doughty & Williams, 1998a) the reactive approach would seem to be most concurrent with the general aims of communicative language teaching. In other words, when in the course of communicating a message, a second language learner is frequently inaccurate, the teacher or another learner could draw attention to the problem.

In proactive approach, teachers plan in advance to produce obligatory contexts for a target form, but in reactive approach teachers react to learner errors when a need arises (Doughty & Williams, 1998a).

There are several additional advantages to adopting the reactive stance. "For instance, the burden of choosing which form to focus on is eased somewhat. The choice is restricted to classroom learner errors that are systematic and known to be remediable for learners at this stage of development "(Doughty & Williams, 1998a, p. 206). In addition, it appears that recasts of learner utterances are more effective than teacher models (Long, 1997 as cited Doughty & Williams, 1998a). Consequently, the proactive approach seems to give more chance to teachers to provide appropriate corrective feedback than does the reactive approach.

2.8 Noticing and the best ways to get learners to notice a form

The intended outcome of focus on form was called noticing (Schmidt, 1990 as cited in Harely, 1998)**.** Schmidt (1990 as cited in Harely, 1998) defined the conscious experience of noticing as the "registration of the occurrence of a stimulus event in conscious awareness and subsequent storage in long term memory" (p. 179). He also points out that it is now conventional wisdom that "target language forms will not be acquired unless they are noticed and that one important way that instruction works is by increasing the salience of target language forms in input so that they are more likely to be noticed by learners" (p. 195).

There are different kinds of classroom activities and according to the different learner styles; the teacher should probably try more than one. The implicit approaches such as input flooding, visual input enhancement, or intonational focus on learner errors have minimal effect. (White, 1998). Some studies, however, have shown that among implicit focus on form techniques input enhancement (such as using larger fonts or colors in text to highlight a form) could be an effective for adult learners (Doughty & Williams, 1998a).

While input is imperative for noticing, research has shown that output plays an important role. As reported by Swain (1998), "it is while attempting to produce the target language (vocally or subvocally) that learners may notice that they do not know how to say (or write) precisely the meaning they wish to convey" (p. 67). Some of the output techniques include using negotiation tasks, metatalking, and consciousness-raising.

2.9. Influences on noticing Instruction

Instruction provides structured input that helps noticing by focusing attention on and enhancing awareness of language features .Schmidt (1990) proposes that instruction may play an important role in priming learners to notice features by establishing expectations about language. In contrast, Ellis (1997) points out that instruction serves to draw attention to items that do not conform to expectations and may therefore not be noticed.

- **Frequency**

A language feature may become frequent due to repeated instruction or by way of teacher talk. When the item does appear more frequently in the input, it will be noticed and integrated into the interlanguage system. Schmidt (1990) suggested that the more frequent an item, the greater number of opportunities for noticing exist.

- **Perceptual salience**

According to Skehan (1998) the more prominent a language form at input, the greater number of opportunities for noticing exist.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the less salient a form, the less likely it is to be noticed and such forms include those morphemes that are bound, contracted, or unstressed.

- **Skill level**

According to Schmidt (1990), skill level includes how well individuals are able to routinize previously met structures. This processing ability in turn determines how ready learners are to notice new forms in the input. Another relevant factor Schmidt identifies is an individual's ability to attend to both form and meaning in L2 processing. Noticing ability varies; some learners are better input processors as they have a larger working memory capacity or due to their superior speed of analytical processing within working memory (Skehan, 1998).

- **Task demands**

According to Schmidt (1990) Task demands refers to the way in which an instructional task causes learners to notice particular features that are necessary in order to carry out that task. To achieve this, Skehan (1998) points out that noticing may be more or less likely depending on whether the level of processing that the task demands is low, such as in the exchange of familiar information, or high, as in a task that requires imaginative and abstract decision-making.

- **Comparing**

According to Ellis (1997) if learners recognize that new language features are at variance with their current interlanguage version, those features will become part of their developing interlanguage system. Similarly, Schmidt (1990) suggested that noticing alone is not enough for input to become intake. Rather, it requires learners to make a comparison between their observed input and typical output based on their existing interlanguage system, that is, they must consciously notice the gap.

2.10 Focus on form English teaching techniques based on Doughty and Williams (1998a)

- **Input enhancement**

Input enhancement is considered as one of the techniques of focus on form which can be broadly defined as any attempt that teachers do to make a particular linguistic form salient to students. (Sharwood Smith, 1991; 1993 as cited in Urano, 2000).

Doughty & Williams (1998a) argues that " the mechanism in which input enhancement draw learners' attention to a form which later turns to acquisition of the form is fairly complicated, and at least a few factors, such as salience, explicitness, and density of the target form, and learners' developmental framework, need to be considered to account for the effects of input enhancement " (pp. 101-106).

- **Input flood**

Flooding learners with specific forms or seeding the input with the linguistic item of interest.

- **Task-essential language**

Activities that elicit specific linguistic feature.

- **Recast**

A recast is a technique used in language teaching to correct learners, errors in such a way that communication is not obstructed. Long and Robinson (1998) explained recasts as ''"an effective way of providing learners with information about how their current interlanguage differs from the target language"(p.131).

According to Mackey and Philip (1998) recasts are a reformation of the ill formed sentence.

- **Output enhancemen**

Requesting clarification from a learner that leads to the production of a specific grammatical form.

- **Interaction enhancement**

One interaction technique is called interaction enhancement, where a teacher incites L2 learners to produce output and provides them with interactional modifications in order to lead them to notice a mismatch between their interlanguage grammar and that of the target language. They are then led to modify the incorrect output (Doughty & Williams, 1998a). Interactive problem-solving tasks guiding learners to use target forms in realistic discourse.

- **Dictoglass**

The dictoglass is a procedure that incites learners to hesitate on their own output Wajnryb (1990 as cited in Swain, 1998). With this procedure, a short passage is read to the students; while it is being read, students write familiar words and phrases; then the learners cooperate each other in small groups to reconstruct the passage from their shared resources; then the final versions are compared and analyzed (Swain, 1998).

- **Consciousness-raising**

The term consciousness raising refers to the directing learners' attention to the formal properties of language (Rutherford et al., 1985 as cited in Ellis, 2003).

 Input processing

In input processing instruction, after students receive explanation of grammatical rules, they practice applying the given rule to example sentences provided as input (Ellis, 2003).

- **Garden path**

Leading learners to make overgeneralization errors and then pointing out the errors at the time they are made.

2.10 The drawbacks of focus on form instruction

According to (DeKeyser, 1998; Doughty and Verela, 1998; Ellis, 2001; Lightbown, 1998), focus on form instruction contains several conceptual and practical limitations.

The greatest drawback of focus on form instruction is that learners typically do not achieve very high levels of linguistic proficiency from entirely meaning-based instruction. Another drawback of focus on form instruction is that, researchers have done little research in order to explain how learners focus on form (Ellis, et al; 2002).

2.11 Explicit and implicit learning

Over the last years, the impact of grammar instruction has been of great interest to professionals in the field of second language and foreign language acquisition. The issues concerning whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly are crucial to L2/FL learning in classroom because the types of instruction are likely to have effect on L2/FL learners' outcome. L2/FL teachers must recognize what kinds of grammar teaching strategies best facilitate learning in the classroom and choose the most beneficial ways to L2/FL learners (Gray, 2000).

According to Ellis (1994 as cited in Doughty & Williams, 1998a), implicit learning is "a nonconscious and automatic abstraction of the structural nature of the material arrived at from experience of instances". And explicit focus on form is" conscious searching, building then testing of hypothesis, assimilating a rule following explicit instruction" (p.232).

Hulstijn (2005, p. 131 as cited in Lantof, 2007) defined explicit learning as "input processing with the conscious intention to find out whether the input information contains regularities and, if so, to work out the concepts and rules with which these regularities can be captured ". While implicit learning is "input processing characterized by the absence of intention and consciousness (p.131). Hulstijn also suggests that explicit learning is most effective when the rules to be discovered are not too complex.

The aim of implicit learning is to focus learner's attention on grammatical forms without any interruption of communication and to avoid metalinguistic discussion. (Doughty &Williams, 1998a). The most controversial of all issues relating to implicit/explicit knowledge and learning is the nature of the relationship between the two. Ellis (2005b as cited in Lantolf, 2007) identified three distinct positions on the nature of implicit/explicit relationship represented in SLA research literature:

1) The non-interface position: sees no connection between two types of knowledge, with each controlled by distinct learning mechanisms. While implicit knowledge is responsible for spontaneous performance, explicit learning can serve to monitor this performance under the right conditions.

2) The strong interface position: contends that explicit knowledge can become implicit with the right kind of practice and without loss of the original explicit knowledge.

3) The weak interface position: allows for the transformation of implicit into explicit knowledge.

2.12 Feedback

Feedback is an essential part of the teaching and learning process. There are many types of feedback and many kinds of people. Since students are different in personality and trait, the type of feedback given will either positively or negatively affect that student and his/her state of mind. Thus, it is important to discuss the different kinds of feedback and their effects on students.

Feedback is an essential part for students in language learning. According to Vigil and Ollers (1976 as cited in Hwa, Soon Fook, Atan, Majid and Luan, 2007), feedback identifies the degree of internalization of linguistic items. Findings from several studies (Lightbrown and Spada 1990; White, 1991; Caroll and Swain, 1993 as cited in Hwa, et al, 2007) showed that the information provided in the feedback helps the learners to correct wrong form in their language learning.

The aim of feedback is to teach skills that help learners to improve their writing proficiency. (Williams, 2003).

While giving feedback the most important thing is adopting a positive attitude toward learner errors. If the student receives only negative feedback, he/she may easily be disappointed from trying to constitute complex structures. However, feedback sessions can be an important experience for the student if the teacher shows the strong points as well (Gulcat & Ozagac, 2004)

Kepner (1991 as cited in Grami, 2005) defined feedback in general as "any procedures used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong." (p. 141)

It is important to consider that, in most studies, the effectiveness of corrective feedback are only assessed in terms of learners' immediate response to the feedback (Ellis, et al; 2001).The learners' responses to feedback can not be equated with ultimate use of feedback in real life situation, that is, in artificial classroom context, learners may notice teacher's feedback and sometimes could produce the correct form of the first utterance, but it does not mean that learner will never commit that kind of error again. Therefore, more studies are needed to provide supportive evidence for effectiveness of feedback (Ahmad Shah, 2003).

2.13 Accuracy, Fluency and Complexity

According to Skehan (1996), three aspects of language, namely, fluency, accuracy and complexity are in competition for attentional resources. Fluency concerns the learners' ability to produce language fluently in real time without hesitation (Skehan, 1996, as cited in Ellis, 2003). Learners can be fluent speakers through memorized and integrated language elements. Accuracy is the ability to avoid errors in performing the target language. According to Skehan (1996 as cited in Willis & Willis, 1996), accuracy concerns "how well language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language" (p.22). And complexity concerns the elaboration of language produced that is the learners' preparedness to take risk and to expand their inter-languages. For example the number of clauses per T -unit or C-unit. And it is the ability to use more advanced language automatically. This aspect is correlated with restructuring, i.e. the development of interlanguage system. Complexity is achieved through tendency to take risks and make use of new forms even though incorrect ones

Different researchers have different opinions about how the accuracy is measured. Some examine how accurately some grammatical features (like tenses) are used; others have selected more generalized features or measures, such as percentage of error free clauses that don't contain any error. For instance, in the study done by Yuan and Ellis (2003) themselves, the same definition was made. They related all errors to syntax morphology and lexical choice.

A classification of measures of language production follows:

Wendel (1997, as cited in Ellis, 2003) argued that there should be some trade-off between accuracy and fluency. He suggested that it is the type of planning which determines whether learners attend to fluency or accuracy. He claimed that when learners have the opportunity to plan their utterances in advance, greater fluency would be achieved. In contrast, accuracy depends on the learner's moment-by-moment decisions while performing the task. In this respect, production would be more accurate since learners have access to their full linguistic repertoire but fluency would be threatened.

3. Research Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of the present study were 80 females EFL learners studying in one of the language institutes (Sahand institute) in Miandoab. Their ages ranged from 16 to 18. The course offered for the classes was eight-units from Reading Skillfully 2.

A pre-test consisting of 50 items grammatical judgment test was administered to 80 learners. The testees were divided into two groups according to their scores in pre-test. The instructor tried to have two linguistically homogeneous

groups, then one of the groups consisting of 40 students was randomly selected as experimental group and the other one selected as control group. Both groups received the same amount of instruction (about 8 sessions), using the same material taught by the same instructor. Finally students in both control group and experimental group were administered the same post-test.

3.2 Instrumentation

Grammatical judgment test is taken to be one of the important instruments which was used in the present study. Before administering the grammatical judgment test the reliability and validity of the test were estimated. For estimating reliability the researcher used test-retest reliability. In test-retest reliability according to Hatch and Farhady (1981, p. 246), "Reliability is obtained by administering the test to the same students twice and computing the correlation between the two administrations". The researcher administered the test twice to 20 EFL learners and then computed the correlation between the two administrations. And also validity of the test was computed through content validity. Hatch and Farhady (1981, p. 250) defined content validity as "the extent to which a test measures a representative sample of the subject matter content". The focus of content validity is on the adequacy of the sample and not simply on the appearance of the test. To assure content validity of this test, the content of whatever the researcher wish to measure carefully defined. Eight reading passages from Reading Skillfully 2 were another instrument that was used in this study.

3.3 Procedures

This part consisted of five phases. First, 80 students from one of the institutes (Sahand institute) were given a pre-test including 50 items grammatical judgment test adapted from Nelson English language tests (specially, article, tense, preposition and pronoun). The testees, then, were divided in two 40-member groups on the basis of their obtained scores. The instructor tried to put the same number of students who gained almost the same scores in both groups. Then, one of the groups was randomly chosen as experimental group to receive the treatment.

The second phase dealt with creating small teams among the experimental and control groups according to principles of jigsaw task. Here, too, regarding the students' pre-test scores, the instructor tried to make eight equal teams out of the 40 participants in the experimental group and make eight equal teams out of the 40 participants in the control group. That is, each small group included two weak students who received below 20, two average students who received between 20-30, and one strong student who had got from 30-40 in the pre-test. Consequently, the experimental and control groups were divided into eight teams, each with five members to work together for the purpose of retelling the part of the reading passage.

The third phase concerned with familizing the teams with the principles of the Jigsaw task. In these kinds of tasks, every learner or group of learners has a piece of information. They combine the pieces to form a whole (e.g. two or three groups of learners have different parts of the story and put the pieces together to complete the story) (Richards, 2001 as cited in Nunan, 2003). In the present study, according to principles of jigsaw task, first paragraph was given to group one for retelling, second paragraph was given to group two and third paragraph to group three and so on.

During the fourth phase which lasted for 8 sessions, the learners in the experimental group received feedback (through recasting) during retelling the passage. The instructor only corrected the errors related to article, tense, pronoun and preposition. In each session, they covered one reading passage from Reading Skillfully 2. Learners in control group didn't receive any feedback.

Both the experimental and control group lesson plans were based on the same reading selections. However, the experimental plans provided opportunities for receiving feedback through recasting. Conversely, students in the control group didn't receive any feedback. Finally, the fifth phase of the study was conducted after the treatment.

Students in both control and experimental groups were administered the   same post-test, grammatically judgment test.

After that, for the purpose of analyzing the effect of incidental focus on form on accuracy of pronoun, tense, article and preposition separately, other tests (pronoun, article, tense, preposition tests) were given to the learners in both control and experimental groups. The mean and standard deviation of both control and Experimental groups for pronoun, article, tense, preposition were computed. The data collected was computed through t-test

 3.4 Design

The research question proposed in the present study requires Quasi- experimental mehod of research. Accordingly, the study employed a pre-test and post-test, control group, experimental design while focusing on the variables of focus on form, with the specific emphasis on incidental focus on form as an independent variable and grammatical accuracy as a dependent variable which was hypothesized to be influenced by the independent variable.

3.5 Measures

To measure the grammatical accuracy, at the pre-test stage after gathering the learners' scores, the researcher computed the mean and standard deviation of both groups. To be confident that both groups were homogeneous and there was no significant difference among them before the treatment, their obtained mean scores were compared through t-test. At the post-test stage, to prove the efficiency of the given treatment, also the same test as a post-test was administered for both control and experimental groups to examine differences after 8 sessions.

After gathering both experimental and control groups' scores, the means, ranges, and standard deviation for both groups were computed. Then another t-test was run to check the significance of the difference between post-test means of groups.

After that, for the purpose of analyzing the effect of incidental focus on form on accuracy of pronouns, tenses, articles and propositions separately, other tests (pronoun, article, tense, proposition tests) was given to the learners in both control and experimental groups. The data collected was computed through t-test which revealed that the effect of incidental focus on form on grammatical accuracy of article is greater than pronoun and tense but incidental focus on form didn't have any effect on accuracy of preposition.

In this chapter attempts were made to present the steps which were taken to carry out the present study. The participants were introduced and the instrumentation, procedure, variables and accuracy measures were described. In the next chapter, the statistical analyses used in the study and the results of the analyses will be presented.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Analysis Result

As already explained, the pre-test including 50 items grammatically judgment test (including article, tense, preposition and pronoun) was given to clarify the actual linguistic condition of samples in both groups before treatment. Before administering the grammatical judgment test the reliability and validity of the test were estimated. For estimating reliability the researcher used test-retest reliability. And also validity of the test was computed through content validity. To assure content validity of this test, the content of whatever the researcher wish to measure carefully defined. After administering the test, learners' scores were gathered the mean and standard deviations of both groups were computed. After treatment, which lasted for eight sessions, post-test was given to both control and experimental groups to observe the difference resulted from the treatment. Again the mean of both groups was computed as well as their standard deviations. However, to be confident that both groups were homogeneous and there was no significant difference between them before the treatment, their obtained mean scores were compared through t-test. To be sure about the significance of the difference between post-test means of both groups, another t-test was run to check the significance of the difference between post-test means of groups. After that, for the purpose of analyzing the effect of incidental focus on form on accuracy of pronoun, tense, article and preposition separately, other tests (pronoun, article, tense, preposition tests) were given to the learners in both control and experimental groups. The mean and standard deviation of control and experimental groups for pronoun, article, tense, preposition were computed. The data collected was computed through t-test.
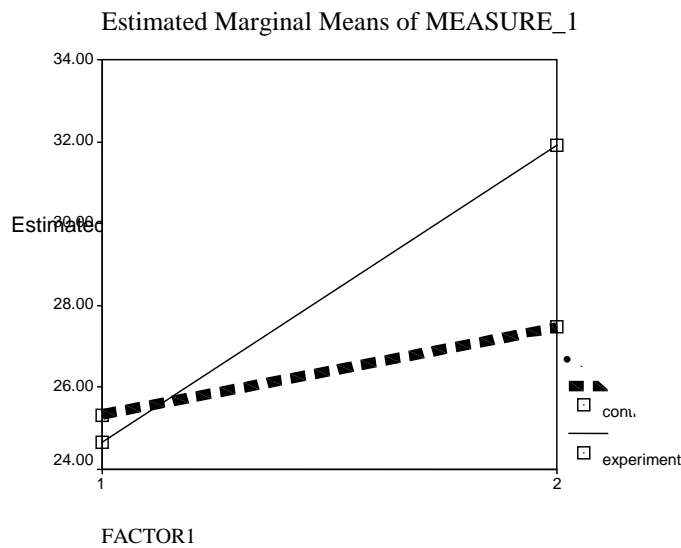

Figure. 4.1 Estimated reliability of the test

Figure 4.1 shows the correlation between pre-test and post-test. As it is obvious the correlation between pre and post is positive.

Table 4.1 Mean, standard deviation and Std. error mean in pre-test and post-test

	Group	N	Mea	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre - test	contro	40	25.3250	7.73068	1.22233
	experiment	40	24.6500	7.03672	1.11260
Post-test	contro	40	27.4750	9.52187	1.50554
	experiment	40	31.9000	9.78696	1.54745

Table 4.1 is the comparison of the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental and control groups. Table 4.1 shows that the pre-test mean score was 25 for control group and 24 for experimental group in pre-test stage. As it is obvious, the means of both experimental and control groups on the pre-test stage were homogeneous, while at the post-test stage the mean of control group is 27 and for experimental group is 31. It is concluded that the difference between the means of experimental group and control groups in the post-test is noticeable.

Table 4.2 T-test for equality of means in the pre-test and post-test stages

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PRE	Equal variances assumed	.426	.516	.408	78	.684
	Equal variances not assumed			.408	77.320	.684
POST	Equal variances assumed	.128	.721	-2.050	78	.044
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.050	77.941	.044

In this table mean difference, t value, degree of freedom and 2-tailed probably are shown. As it is obvious from Table 4.3 there was no significant differences between the means of two groups at the pre-test stage. (-t = .408, df = 78, P = .684 > .05). And we could claim that both groups to be equal before the treatment. While there does seem to be some differences between them on the post-test and this difference is statistically significant. (-t = 2.050, df = 78, P = .04 < .05).

Table 4.3 The mean, Std. Deviation in pre-test and post-test

	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PRE	control	25.3250	7.73068	40
	experiment	24.6500	7.03672	40
	Total	24.9875	7.35276	80
POST	control	27.4750	9.52187	40
	experiment	31.9000	9.78696	40
	Total	29.6875	9.84898	80

Table 4.3 explains the mean and standard deviation of both control and experimental groups at pre-test and post-test stages. As it is obvious, the mean scores of two groups at pre-test stage is homogeneous but at the post-test stage there was difference between means of two groups.
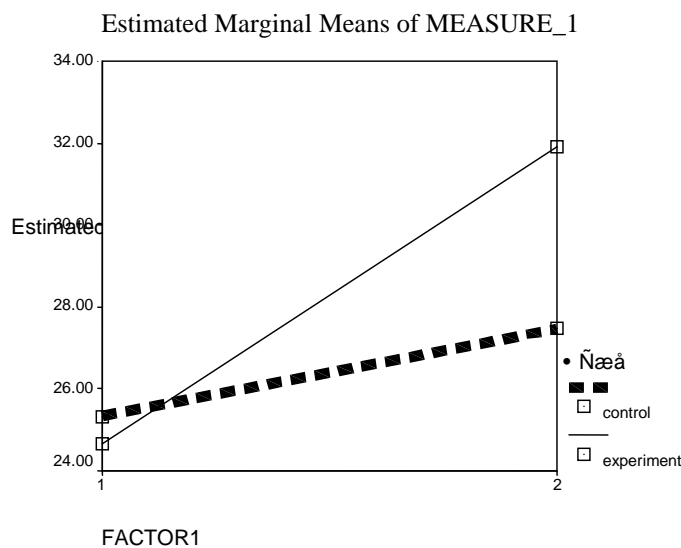

Figure 4.2 Estimated marginal means of measure

Figure 4.2 explains that at the post-test stage there were increase in both control and experimental groups but increase in experimental group is greater than control group.

Table 4.4 Mean and standard deviation of both control and experimental groups for article

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ARTICLE	control	40	10.6750	7.23023	1.14320
	experiment	40	18.1000	6.93856	1.09708

Table 4.4 explains the mean and standard deviation of control and experimental groups for article. The mean of control group is 10 and for the experimental group it is 18. Then it seems that the two groups are not equal.

Table 4.5 T-test for equality of means for article

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
ARTICLES	Equal variances assumed	.202	.654	-4.686	78	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.686	77.868	.000

Table 4.5 shows the t-value, degree of freedom and 2-tailed probability of the two groups for the article. The difference is statistically significant. (-t = 4.68, df = 78, P = 0 < .05).

Table 4.6 Mean, standard deviation and Std. error mean of both control and experimental groups for tense

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
TENSE	control	40	15.1000	5.90437	.93356
	experiment	40	22.4750	5.64318	.89227

Table 4.6 explains the mean and standard deviation of control and experimental groups for tense. The mean score for control group was 15.1000 and 22 for experimental group. And the standard deviations were respectively 15 and 22 for the groups. As it is obvious, the experimental group has higher mean in comparison to the control group.

Table 4.7 T-test for equality of means for tense

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
TENSE	Equal variances assumed	.068	.795	-5.711	78	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.711	77.841	.000

In this Table mean difference, t-value, degree of freedom and 2-tailed probably are shown. As Table 4.8 indicates there was significant difference between the means of two groups. (-t = 5.71, df = 78, P = 0 < .05).

Table 4.8 The mean and standard deviation of both control and experimental groups for pronoun

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PRONUN	control	40	13.6750	7.14820	1.13023
	experiment	40	17.9750	6.78795	1.07327

Table 4.8 explains the mean and standard deviation of control and experimental groups for pronoun. The mean of control group is 13.6750 and for the experimental group it is 17.9750. As it is obvious the difference between the means of experimental and control groups for pronoun is noticeable.

Table 4.9 T-test for equality of means for pronoun

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PRONUN	Equal variances assumed	.034	.853	-2.759	78	.007
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.759	77.792	.007

Table 4.9 shows the t-value, degree of freedom and 2-tailed probability of the two groups for pronoun. As it is obvious the difference is statistically significant. (-t = 2.75, df = 78, P = .007 < .05)

Table 4.10 The mean and standard deviation of both control and experimental groups for preposition

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Preposition	control	40	10.2500	5.58271	.88270
	experiment	40	12.1750	5.81284	.91909

According to the table 4.10 the participants' progress mean score is 10 for the control group and 12 for the experimental group. As it is shown in Table 4.10 there wasn't any mean differences between the performance of two groups with regard to preposition.

Table 4.11 T-test for equality of means for preposition

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PROPOSIT	Equal variances assumed	.331	.567	-1.511	78	.135
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.511	77.873	.135

Table 4.11 shows the means, t-value, degree of freedom and 2-tailed probably of the two groups for preposition. As Table 4.11 indicates there wasn't any significant differences between the means of two groups. (-t = 1, df = 78, P = .13 > .05).
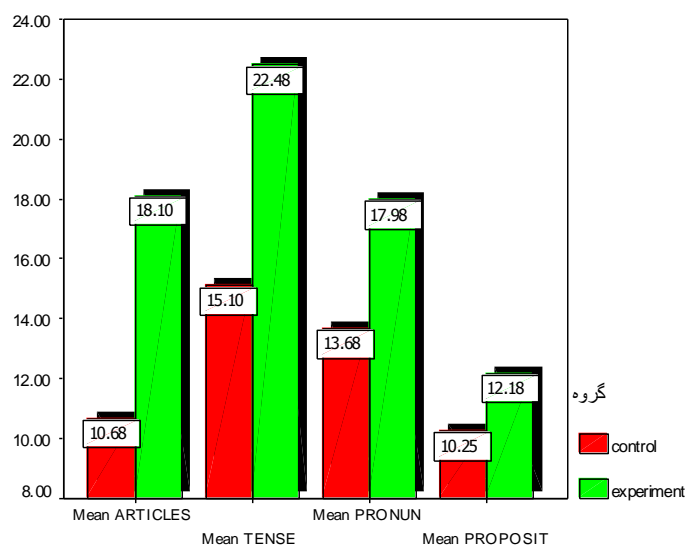

Figure 4.2 Mean differences of article, tense, preposition and pronoun

Figure 4.2 presents the mean difference of control and experimental groups for article, tense, pronoun and preposition.

4.2 Discussion

The first research question in the present study addressed the effect of incidental focus on form on learner's grammatical accuracy among Iranian EFL learners. The findings in this study indicated that incidental focus on form through recasting has a positive effect on grammatical accuracy of the learners. Simply, when the participants received feedback through recasting in the experimental group, there were higher mean differences between the two groups in the post-test.

So far a great deal of research has supported the efficacy of incidental focus on form instruction. Doughty and Varela (1998) indicated that corrective recasting in meaning-based output process has positive effect on the students' correct use of past time reference (simple past and conditional). Analysis of the results showed that corrective recasting played a positive role in improving the students' accuracy with past reference time.

As another example, we can name the study by (Lightbown and Spada, 1990 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998) who found that the students in experimental class who received more corrective feedback were able to produce more accurate forms of progressive –ing and possessive determiners compared to the other students. This observation showed the positive role of the learners' attention to certain linguistic features, caused by the corrective feedback in the meaning based instruction in order to enhance their accuracy.

In Lyster and Ranta's (1997) which is contrary to the findings of aforementioned studies, it was found that recasts were the least effective to elicit the learners' uptake, in spite of the fact that the teachers most frequently used recasts with the purpose of pointing out the learners' errors. And also in Mackey and Philp's (1998) study, the teachers' recasts failed to successfully induce the learners to respond to their recasts.

The second research question addressed the effect of incidental focus on form on accuracy of articles. The results indicated that the effect of incidental focus on form on accuracy of article is greater than tense and pronoun. As Muranoi's (2000 as cited in Ellis, 2002)) found similar results. According to Muranoi's (2000 as cited in Ellis, 2002) learners who receive explicit focus on form instruction of English articles, which do not exist in learners' L1, outperform the other learners who did not receive the explicit instruction.

The third research question was formulated to explore the effect of incidental focus on form on the accuracy of tense. The results indicated that the effect of incidental focus on form on grammatical accuracy of tense is greater than pronoun and smaller than article as Doughty and Varela (1998) found similar results. They examined the role of corrective recasting interwoven into meaning-based output process in order to improve the students' correct use of past time reference (simple past and conditional). Analysis of the outcomes showed that corrective recasting played a positive role in improving the students' accuracy with past reference time.

The fourth research question addressed the effect of incidental focus on form on the accuracy of pronoun. The results showed that the effect of incidental focus on form on grammatical accuracy of pronoun is smaller than article and tense but it is greater than preposition. It supports the findings of VanPatten and Cadierno (1993 as cited in Ellis, 2003) who compared the relative effects of focus on form on Spanish direct object pronoun, involving college students as subjects. The analysis of pretest and the first posttest taken immediately after the end of instruction revealed that students who received feedback statistically outperformed those in other instructional groups on both interpretation and written production tasks. The last research question was formulated to explore the effect of incidental focus on form on the accuracy of preposition. Findings showed that incidental focus on form didn't have any effect on the accuracy of preposition.

5. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

5.1 Conclusion

The current study sought to examine the effect of incidental focus on form, with special focus on recasting, on grammatical accuracy among Iranian EFL learners. And also the effect of incidental focus on form on accuracy of article, tense, pronoun, preposition separately. The researcher wanted to know if using incidental focus on form would led to a better chance of grammatical accuracy.

According to the results obtained from the experiment, the researcher's first, second, third and fourth hypothesis which were proved to be true justified the positive effects of incidental focus on form on the grammatical accuracy of EFL learners. But the results obtained for fifth hypothesis did not show any significant mean difference between control and experimental groups.

Overall, the results of the present study show that incidental focus on form had a positive effect on grammatical accuracy. Simply, when learners received feedback through recasting in experimental group, there were higher mean differences between the two groups in the post-test. Then our first hypothesis concerning the effect of incidental focus on form on grammatical accuracy of EFL learners were supported. Since learners in experimental group are instructed to receive feedback, their accuracy would be affected to some extent.

The findings of the study are supported by Long (1981; 1983; 1996, p.22 as cited in Long and Robinson, 1998). Interaction hypothesis which holds that SLA is a process explicable by neither a purely linguistic nativist nor a purely environmentalist" (p.22). according to interaction hypothesis, " a crucial site for language development is interaction between learners and other speakers, especially, but not only, between learners and more proficient speakers and between learners and certain types of written texts, especially elaborated ones " (Long, 1997b, P. 22 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998).

According to some scholars for example, (Lightbown and Spada), 1990 as cited in Long & Robinson, 1998a and Doughty and Varela (1998) among different types of focus on form instruction, incidental focus on form considered to be more effective and useful. Since not only it does provide learners with grammatical knowledge but also with communicative skill (Ellis, 2003).

On the basis of the criticism of some scholars such as Ellis (1997) who call for a more direct teaching of grammar within CLT, this study set out to investigate if incidental focus on form through recasting would be a valid option to CLT grammar teaching. As most learners have problems with grammar, the English tense, article, preposition and pronoun was chosen in this study as the targeted features to be influenced by the incidental focus on form for experimental group. The results were satisfactory and it can be concluded that incidental focus on form is a useful and effective technique to draw learners, attention to certain linguistic forms.

To summarize, incidental focus on form through recasting was used in this study as a technique of focus on form instruction to draw learner's attention to certain linguistic features and the result provided was completely satisfactory.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

This research was conducted to indicate the importance of incidental focus on form through recasting which proved to be very helpful in improving grammatical accuracy of the L2 learners.

The implications of this study can be helpful for the use of language teachers who can apply incidental focus on form in their classes for improving grammatical accuracy of the learners.

Teacher trainers can also instruct the teachers how to use focus on form in teaching process, of course after inferring them of the value and effectiveness of such methodology.

Material designers can prepare materials that encourage teachers and learners to use incidental focus on form in the classroom.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The present study did not take into account different types of focus on form instruction. Only incidental focus on form through recasting was done in the study. Research can be implemented to investigate the effect of incidental focus on form through clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition on grammatical accuracy of L2 learners. Another study can be done to show the effect of different types of planned focus on form on accuracy (grammatical, pronunciation, etc) of L2 learners.

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