Investigating FonF Approach Effectiveness to Reinforce Grammar Accuracy And Writing Skill

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Abstract

The present study investigates the effectiveness of Focus on Form (FonF) Approach, the treatment of linguistic form in the context of performing a communicative task, in an EFL setting to improve grammar accuracy and writing skill. The sample size of the study were 90 EFL students assigned to two different sections by the registrar of the university. The sample of the study was divided into two groups; experimental and control group, 45 students in each. FonF approach was applied for the experimental group while FonFs approach was used for the control group over a period of two weeks, 20 hours for each group. Pretests were given to both groups to examine how homogeneous they were. Furthermore, posttests were conducted to complete the study and to compare students' level of achievement. To analyze data and research findings, the researcher used (SPSS) statistical program and t-tests. The findings of the study demonstrated that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the immediate post-testing. The mean score of the comparison group was 7.34 and that of the experimental group was 8.21, and the p-value was 0.103, however, these values still have no significance as (p-value > 0.05). Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. The control group students share

all other variables with the experimental group students save the FonF approach, however, the results indicated no significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, no significant difference can be ascribed to using the FonF approach. The researcher concluded that FonF needs a lot of adaptation to be more effective in an EFL setting and recommends that a training program should be given to teachers in order to train them how to adapt FonF. Finally, it is highly recommendable that more research on FonF is needed, particularly in Saudi/Arab EFL contexts to enhance or refute the findings and conclusions of this study.

Keywords: Grammar accuracy, writing skill, FonF approach, FonFs approach

المستخلص:

تهدف الدراسة إلي تحري مدي فعالية طريقة تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية بطريقة ال (FonF) –
والتي تعني تناول القاعدة اللغوية في سياق أداء مهام تواصليه – لتحسين الدقة النحوية ومهارة
الكتابة. اشتملت العينة تسعون طالبا مقسمون إلي شعبتين في كل شعبة ٤٥ طالبا تم توزيعهم
عشوائيا من خلال قسم القبول والتسجيل بالجامعة. ولكي يحقق الباحث الهدف من هذه الدراسة
استخدم طريقتين في تدريس بعض قواعد اللغة الانجليزية: طريقة ال (FonF) لتدريس المجموعة
التجريبية وطريقة ال (FonFs) التقليدية لتدريس المجموعة الضابطة علي مدار اسبوعين بمعدل
عشرون ساعة لكل مجموعة. خضع طلاب المجموعتين إلي اختبار قبلي بهدف قياس مدي التجانس
بين المجموعتين ثم خضع الطلاب بعد التجربة إلي اختبار لقياس مدي فعالية الطريقتين المستخدمتين
ومعدل انجاز الطلاب. من خلال التحليل الإحصائي للنتائج باستخدام برنامج ال (SPSS) وال
(t-tests)تبين أنه لم يكن هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في متوسط درجات الطلاب في الاختبار
الذي اجري مباشرة بعد التجربة. حيث كان متوسط درجات المجموعه الضابطة ٧,٣٤ والمجموعه
التجريبية ٨,٢١ والقيمة الاحتمالية كانت ٠,١٠٣ مما يعني ان النتائج لا تزال غير ذات دلالة بما ان
القيمة الاحتمالية اقل من ٠,٠٥ ومما يعني بقبول الفرضية المنعدمة. وبما ان المجموعتين الضابطة
والتجريبية يتشاركان في كل المتغيرات فيما عدا استخدام طريقة ال FonF ولما جاءت النتائج بلا
اختلاف ذو دلالة فلا يوجد اختلاف يمكن ايعازه الي استخدام طريقة ال FonF.و بناء علي نتائج
البحث فقد أوصي الباحث بمجموعة من التوصيات أهمها (أ) أن يتم تعديل مثل هذه الطرق في
تدريس قواعد اللغة بم يتناسب مع مجتمعات تكون اللغة الانجليزية فيها لغة أجنبية وليست لغة
ثانية. (ب) تدريب المعلمون علي أساليب تعديل مثل هذه الطرق في تدريس قواعد اللغة بم
يتناسب مع البيئة العربية. (ج) لابد من إجراء مزيد من البحث والدراسة حول هذا الموضوع سعيا
لتحقيق مستوي أفضل لطلابنا في تعلمهم للغة الانجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدقة النحوية، مهارة الكتابة، طريقة ال FonF وطريقة ال FonFs

Introduction

Background of Study

The concept of FonF instruction was one of the key structures in the field of guided second language acquisition (Ellis, 2016). It disputed the traditional Focus-on - form instruction (FonFS) in which there is a linear synthetic, based on behavioral and structuralist principles of language learning presentation of selected features through explicit instruction and decontextualized monitored exercises (Nassaji, 2015).

Since its original appearance in L2 methodology, the concept of FonF has developed (Ellis, 2016). Doughty and Williams (1998) reported that FonF could also specifically provide instructions followed by activities that focus the attention of learners on form in the communication process. And they contended that the principal difference of the two approaches is that FonF focuses on the formal characteristics of language and meaning whilst FonFs is limited to formal aspects only. Afterwards, some research building on the theory skills acquisition (e.g. DeKeyser, 1998) found good support for FonF approach instruction that lets learners automate their declarative (i.e., explicit knowledge) by thorough communicative experience in a systematic state (i.e., tacit knowledge) (Anderson, 2016). As Ellis (2003) argued, one form of such operation is the centered task that activates the use of different L2 goal features preplanned in context.

The approach of teaching grammar following a sequential model received a great deal of attention in the 1950s and 1960s as curricula and textbooks were organized around grammatical categories. Some language professionals were in favor of teaching grammar on a linear model of language acquisition. They thought that learners acquire one target language item at a time in a sequential, step-by-step fashion. However, Candlin, Mercer (2001) maintain that, When we observe learners as they go about the process of learning another language, we see that, by and large, they do not acquire language in the step-by-step building block fashion suggested by the linear model. It is simply not the case that language learners acquire target items

perfectly, one at a time.(p.191)

Fortunately, that limited and traditional view of grammar has now been replaced by a wider and more practical approach. It's quite important that teachers can modify their conventional methods of presenting grammar. Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009) argue that it is important to "Support and push learners to produce spoken and written output in a variety of appropriate genres. Use communication activities in a range of situations, use role plays, match writing and speaking tasks to learner needs." (p.12). This goal cannot be achieved without sufficient teacher training programs. Furthermore, Hawisher, & Soter (1990) assert that, English teachers need some training in discourse analysis to guide students in perceiving and identifying links in language use in the context of speaking, listening, reading, writing. Unless education programs recognize the urgent need to adequately equip English teachers with knowledge about social and cognitive aspects of language use, teacher candidates will continue to feel inadequately prepared in their academic specialization. (p.223)

Problem Statement

The issue of declining in writing scores of the students at the Preparatory Year Program, Taibah University, can be detected easily if we examine the statistics of these scores over the last three semesters prior to this study, namely, the first term 2017, the second term 2017 and the first term 2018. This decline is due to a number of reasons. Most importantly are grammar and the teaching methods used by teachers to help students acquire the skills they need to improve their writing. The students' scores and statistics can be highlighted through these tables and graphs. They clearly show the declining of students writing scores over three semesters, semester 1, 2017, semester 2, 2017, and semester 1, 2018.

Since the aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of FonF to improve students' writing skill and to improve their accuracy level in grammar, one can easily detect the points of weaknesses which caused this low level performance such as grammar accuracy, spelling, punctuation,

coherence and cohesion. On the other hand, being aware of the main reason behind this performance which is the inability of students to transfer their grammatical knowledge into reflecting on their work, specifically writing and accuracy, here the idea of using more effective ways to deal with this problem arises as a perfect solution and one good suggestion investigated by many theorists which is the use of FonF approach.

The problem we encounter with students at the Preparatory Year Program, Taibah University, is that although much effort is exerted by teachers, students still struggle tremendously to transfer their grammatical understanding and knowledge into reflecting on their own work or improving their writing, reading and speaking skills. Hewings and Hewings (2005) state that, "Whether or not we believe that grammar should drive the second-language syllabus, most teachers and students would accept that an understanding of a second-language grammar is a necessary part of successful learning at some stage." (p.14) More specifically, students may have the ability to achieve high scores on discrete-point grammar tests, however, they are unable to use these forms effectively in a communicative interaction.

Moreover, it has been clearly noticed that there is a big gap between students' understanding of grammatical rules and their ability to transfer their grammatical knowledge into appropriate communicative interaction. Teachers at Taibah University can help students get high scores on discrete-point grammar tests, however, students' performance in using their understanding of grammar in successful communicative interaction is far below the standard. This can be easily detected when teachers assess students' progress especially in productive skills such as writing and speaking. This problem is the main reason behind this study as the researcher aims at finding different techniques and approaches in order to enable learners to use their grammatical knowledge effectively in communication.

Research Questions

Some questions that can identify the focus of this study are:

1- Are there any statistical differences in the grammatical accuracy mean scores of the preparatory year students for the experimental group (receiving FonF approach) and their peers in the control group (receiving FonFs approach) in the achievement posttests?

2- Are there any statistical differences in the writing skill mean scores of the preparatory year students for the experimental group (receiving FonF approach) and their peers in the control group (receiving FonFs approach) in the achievement posttests?

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is, substantially, to analyze any statistically significant variations in:

1- The mean scores of the prep-year students' grammar accuracy for the control and experimental groups after introducing the FonF and the FonFs approaches.

2- The mean scores of the prep-year students' writing skill for the control and experimental groups after introducing the FonF and the FonFs approaches.

Research Delimitations

This study is confined to a focus group of the study (experimental group), one of the Preparatory Year Program, following the FonF approach based on teaching grammar in context. There is also a second group of students (control group) from the same university studying at the same program, but following the FonFs model approach. In this study, grammar teaching materials covering the same topics are used, but they are presented differently. Finally, this study is limited to evaluating the effectiveness of applying the FonF approach on students' progress in language acquisition and writing skill during the second term of the school year 2018/2019 AD.

In this study, participants were selected from one level of language experience. Therefore, findings should not be extrapolated to other levels of

language experience, although these are areas that hold promise for further investigation. In addition, because of gender segregation in the Saudi educational settings, the study was delimited to two male sections of students which means that any results cannot be generalized to the gender variable. This study comprised a two-week program in which two different approaches were used, FonF approach to teach the experimental group and FonFs to teach the control group over a period of two weeks, 20 hours for each group during the second semester of the school year 2018 - 2019. Due to students' irregular attendance and frequent absences, the number of participants was reduced from the original pool. Larger numbers of participants could only increase the statistical power of the results. Furthermore, the population of the study is limited to Taibah University students in Medinah city. Accordingly, the findings cannot be generalized to all Saudi students. In addition, it would have been better to conduct the study during a full semester and then investigate the results, however, this would not have been possible in a place where teachers have to stick to a syllabus, a pacing schedule and exam timetables.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

This section addresses the study's theoretical framework. Valeo, A., & Spada, N. (2015) points out that, "the timing of grammatical instruction, conceptualized as a distinction between isolated and integrated form-focused instruction (FFI) proposed by Spada and Lightbown (2008). Both types of FFI are described as taking place in primarily meaning-based communicative classrooms. They differ in that isolated FFI occurs separately from communicative activities, whereas integrated FFI occurs during communicative activities."

Long & Robinson, (1998) differentiate between FFI which focuses on how the form is used in communicative interaction and a "focus- on- forms" "FonFs" approach, which involves a step by step explicit grammar teaching. While FonFs involves separate grammatical forms, FFI entails the teachers' efforts to draw the students' attention to grammatical forms in the context of

communication (DeKeyser, 1998; Long, 2000). Long, (1991) as cited in Ellis, (1994) argues that FFI assists acquisition with "quicker learning and higher levels", while focus on forms (FonFs) is ineffective because, it:

a. does not use needs or means analysis (it works on a one size fits all approach).

b. leads to the use of unrealistic examples.

c. is based on a behaviourist view of learning.

d. encourages the view that what is taught is learned (a simplistic perspective).

e. produces boring lessons, thus raising the affective filter (i.e. a hidden psychological filter that can either assist or impede language production in an L2) and leading to low motivation, attention, and student enrolment.

f. generates false beginners rather than finishers.

Although FonFs is viewed as artificial, traditional and usually unproductive (Doughty and Varela, 1998; Sheen, 1996, 2005), cited in Laufer, (2006) refuse a total dismissal of this approach. In his comparison of both FFI and FonFs for specific grammatical rules, some remarkable evidence of benefit of FonFs over FFI, was noted. The distinction between the two, according to Ellis, (2001), has to do with "how students view themselves and the language: In a FonFs approach, students view themselves as learners of a language and the language as the object of study; in FonF, on the other hand, learners view themselves as language users and language is viewed as a tool for communication." Moreover, FonFs involves the well-known pitfall that; too much attention to form results in knowledge about the language rather than the knowledge of language use. Fotos, (1998) holds that FonF helps learners "to recognize the properties of target structures in context and develop their accuracy in their use." (p.302).

These views indicate that FonF can play a great role in providing learners of L2 with an understanding of the interdependence between grammar and communication. It seems reasonable to conclude that learners in FonF, while learning grammar, focus on three primary aspects of grammar/language:

form, meaning and use.

There has been always a controversial debate about whether FONF can play an important role in improving grammar accuracy, or it is only aimed at developing meaning and fluency. The audiolingualism opponents argue that grammar is the main focus of EFL teaching and that immediate error correction is important and should be avoided at all costs. However, some natural approach theorists such as Gxilishe, D. (2013) maintains that correcting errors is much better not considered as major components in EFL instruction. They believe that if too much emphasis is put on grammatical forms, this may lead to some conflict with the purposes of the communication. This means a teacher has to sacrifice students' fluency in case of giving much attention to forms and accuracy, and has to sacrifice accuracy in real contexts in case of overemphasizing on meaning without similar attention to accuracy. One can conclude that the two approaches have a great deal of disadvantages both of them fail to achieve all aspects required for learners such as accuracy and fluency at the same time.

Taking these two controversial theories into account, posed the necessity of balancing and combining both form and meaning through developing effective teaching strategies. This was the main reason why Long (1991) suggested FONF as kind of balance between focus on forms and those pure approaches to communication.

The definition of Focus-on-form (FonF) instruction has become one of the core frameworks in the field of instructed second language acquisition, Ellis (2016). FonF was originally a task-based language teaching method for drawing the attention of L2 learners to incidental problem forms without any kind of pre-planning instruction methods, Long (1988). It is different from the conventional focus-on-forms (FonFS) teaching, in which there is a sequential synthetic presentation of target features through explicit instruction and guided decontextualized exercises, based on behavioral and structuralist tenets of language learning (Nassaji, 2015).

After its initial form in L2 methodology, FonF's notion has evolved, however (Ellis, 2016). Doughty and Williams (1998) claimed that FonF could also provide explicit instruction in the communication phase, accompanied by activities that concentrate the attention of learners on form. Accordingly, they argued that the key difference between the two methods is that FonF requires an emphasis on both formal language features and context while FonFS is restricted to formal facets. Subsequently, some researchers, based on aptitude acquisition theory, found clear evidence in support of FonF guidance as a method that allows leaners to transform their semantic or explicit information into a functional state or implicit knowledge through intensive communicative training. One example of such procedure, as argued by Ellis (2003), is the centered task that induces the use of pre-planned particular L2 target features in context-oriented contexts.

Among other L2 languages the effects of FonFS and/or FonF instructions were also demonstrated. For examples, Sturm (2013) and Kissling (2013) study results showed that FonFS instruction has been successful in improving the segmental accuracy of L2 French students and L2 Spanish students, alike. Likewise, McKinnon (2016) found that FonF's teaching of L2 Spanish intonational patterns was substantially more successful than the FonFS tradition, concentrating on the prosody features. Finally, Lee, Jang, and Plonsky (2014) found major effects for FonF care, feedback, longer treatments, and guided measurement tasks in a systematic paradigm-analysis report. They also reported that limited studies in their large sample involved impact amounts in their papers (only 20%), based on the durability of effects in prolonged post-tests (only 14%).

Procedures for Implementing the FonF Approach

Phase 1: Advance Organizer

A video was watched as an orientation to the coming activity. Fotos, (1998) suggests the Advance Organizer as a teaching technique to draw the students' attention to notice the targeted form and the examples of its use in the following communicative activity. This technique can provide a good

opportunity to familiarize learners with the targeted structure. Short videos were shown as advance organizers at the beginning of each treatment. An example is the short video about present simple versus the present continuous in this video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzL6Ww7xUWc

Phase 2: Explicit Grammar Instruction

A contextualized presentation of the targeted structure was given through Touchstone 2 & 3 textbook activities, (Mccarthy, McCarten and Sandiford, 2010, pp. 22-23; 54-55; 89-99). An explicit grammatical instruction had been presented prior to the activities. It consists of explicit grammar instruction introduced within communicative activities. Usually, there are short grammar lessons followed by communicative input and numerous examples of the instructed form are given. Then, there will be a teacher-led review of the target grammatical form and also a feedback on errors is then conducted.

Phase 3: Consciousness Raising or Input Enhancement

The researcher followed this technique to draw the learners' attention to the targeted linguistic form. Selected reading materials from the textbook, "Interactions 1", (Kirn & Jack, 2009, pp. 12-13;45-46;77-78; 94-95) were used to raise consciousness about the target structures. Fotos, (1993) predicts that once consciousness of a particular feature has been raised through formal education, learners continue to remain aware of the feature and notice it. The researcher used a typographical convention such as underlining, highlighting and capitalizing the targeted grammatical feature, where the learner was merely asked to pay attention to everything that is underlined, highlighted or capitalized.

Phase4: Input Flooding

Input Flooding refers to the deliberate exposure of the learner to an artificially large number of instances of some target structure in the language on the assumption that the very high frequency of the structure in question, will attract the learner's attention to the relevant formal regularities. The researcher introduced a number of listening, reading and speaking activities to expose students to numerous usages of the target structure. The Materials

used were selected from New Headway Plus by (Soars, 2000, pp.20-21, 24-25,28-29,75,84, 90-91).

Research Design

This study employed a two group (treatment and control) quasi-experimental pre-and post-test design since randomization was not possible. The prefix *quasi* means "resembling." Thus quasi-experimental research is research that resembles experimental research but is not true experimental research. Although the independent variable is manipulated, participants are not randomly assigned to conditions or orders of conditions (Cook & Campbell, 1979). In a pretest-posttest design, the dependent variable is measured once before the treatment is implemented and once after it is implemented. The rationale behind choosing this approach for this study is that the pretest-posttest method is much like an experiment within-subjects, in which each participant is tested first under the condition of control and then under the treatment condition. However, it is unlike a within-subject experiment, because the order of conditions is not counterbalanced since it is not usually possible for a participant to be examined first and then in an untreated control condition. If the average post-test score is higher than the average pre-test score, then assuming that the treatment could be responsible for the change makes sense.

Quasi-experimental design is also used because researchers, due to ethics and device limitations, cannot always arbitrarily assign participants to groups in specific settings or control an activity. Usually, removing or applying an instructional technique to one group, then deliberately doing the opposite to a specific group is not acceptable. A quasi-experimental design may therefore be defined as a best experiment attempt when it is difficult or unrealistic to satisfy all the requirements of a true experiment. However, there is still an attempt to separate the treatment in order to best relate inferences to the treatment or intervention. Usually, a study integrating quasi-experimental design as its main purpose seeks to address questions such as "Does a treatment or a procedure have an impact?" and "What is the relationship

between program interventions and results?" (Dimsdale & Kutner 2004)

The study aims at examining the relationship between FONF teaching method and students' performance in the writing skill. Most specifically, it aims at testing the mediating effect of grammar teaching to achieve this goal. The researcher mainly tries to examine the effectiveness of Focus on Form (FonF) Approach; the treatment of linguistic form in the context of performing a communicative task, in an EFL setting. Moreover, it compares the Focus on Form (FonF) approach as opposed to the more traditional Focus on Forms (FonFs) in teaching grammar and investigates which of the two approaches is more successful to improve accuracy and improve the writing skill of the students in Saudi Arabia at the Preparatory Year Program, Taibah.

A quasi-experimental pre-and post-test approach was used to carry out this study. Moreover, an immediate post-testing experimental design was applied to achieve the purpose of this study; using a pretest, two different treatments for the experimental and the comparison groups and a posttest. The experimental and the control group comprised of 90 students, 45 participants each. Treatment 1 followed the FonF approach, while treatment 2 followed the FonFs approach.

Consequently, the researcher selected materials from "Touchstone textbook", supplemented with materials from other sources to teach three targeted structures namely present simple versus present continuous, comparative adjectives and future forms. The researcher used materials from Touchstone textbook, four-level course, as it was the course book being used at The Preparatory Year Program, Taibah University. The researcher was a member of the curriculum unit and also a committee of textbook selection to analyze and evaluate a big number of text books such as Step Forward, New Headway, Ventures, Touchstone, Challenges, Cutting Edge, Skills in English and Interactions. A checklist was designed to evaluate a textbook according to 6 main categories namely aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, skills, topics and methodology. The Selection Committee decided to choose Touchstone. In addition, supplementary materials were

also selected and adapted to carry out the main study. Those supplementary materials included selected activities from New Headway Plus, Interactions 1 and also videos.

Sampling Development

The population and original pool of the participants for this study was 100 EFL students enrolled in the Preparatory Year Program, Taibah University. Students study an intensive English course, computer science and other subjects for the purpose of preparing them for their further studies at the university. They had been studying English since the first year of the intermediate stage which means they had studied English for six years before they joined the University. They were randomly divided into two sections by the registrar of the university through chance drawings and the researcher got the list of the population from the university registrar. As this sample of students was supposed to be exposed to certain grammatical forms applying two different approaches namely FonF and FonFs, only students who always attended classes were chosen to carry out the study. Thus, 10 students, who exceeded the absenteeism criteria/regulation, were excluded from the sample of study because of their frequent absences. Therefore, the resultant final sample comprised 90 students streamed into two classes by the registrar of the university. This sample size of 90 students was decided according to an online calculator, raosoft, with a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error and a 50% response distribution, 45 students in each class. They were all Saudi male students and consequently no gender difference could have any effect on the consistency of the experimental and the control group. The students were mainly from Madinah, and the cultural background is almost the same.

The students' level of English could be classified as pre-intermediate level since they have finished "Touchstone 1 and 2" and passed the mid-term exam. However, classes can be considered multi-level as they all had to start from the same level, regardless of their actual level of English due to the university policy. The study was conducted during the second semester of the

school year 2018/2019. The sample of the study was divided into two groups; experimental and control group. FonF approach was applied for the experimental group while FonFs approach was used for the control group.

Sampling Technique

The two groups selected for the study were assigned to be taught by the ELC teachers (the English Language Center at Taibah University) for the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. They were randomly assigned by the ELC to the teachers and each teacher had to teach two sections/classes during a full term. The sample of the study was also chosen from students being taught at the Preparatoy Year Program at Taibah University. One of those two groups was selected as the experimental group and the other section was chosen as the control group. The experimental group was taught the targeted grammar structures applying the FonF approach while the control group was taught using the FonFs approach. The two groups were pretested and post-tested three grammar tests and three writing tests. The tests were designed and written by the researcher, but given and proctored by two other ELC teachers.

The researcher used convenience sampling technique which is also known as Haphazard Sampling or Accidental Sampling). It is a kind of non-probability or non-random sampling as subjects of the target population actually meet certain practical criteria such as ease of access, geographical proximity, availability at a given time or willingness to participate. It is also applied to the researching subjects of the population that are easily available to the researcher. Convenience samples are sometimes regarded as 'accidental samples' because elements may be selected in the sample simply as they just happen to be situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection.

It is most widely used in quantitative research. It is inexpensive, convenient and the subjects are readily accessible. The aim of this technique is to obtain knowledge from participants that are readily available to the

researcher. Also, the main assumption regarding convenience sampling is that the target population members are homogeneous.

Research Instrument

Since the aim of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of Focus on Form as opposed to the FonFs in teaching grammar, each of these three tests consisted of two main sections to measure grammatical knowledge, accuracy and the writing skill. The rationale behind this was that the aim of the study was not only to investigate the grammatical accuracy and knowledge of the students after being exposed to the two different approaches, FonF & FonFs, but rather to investigate the learners' ability to transfer their grammatical knowledge into reflecting on their own work and using appropriate communicative interaction.

The first section was designed of 3 questions:

Question A: 5 multiple choice questions

Question B: gap filling tasks using correct forms

Question C: some real life situations or dialogues

The researcher conducted three separate achievement tests, one after each treatment, so as to ensure that the results can be more reliable than testing students just one achievement test including all the targeted forms in one exam. The reason behind this procedure was to avoid any misleading scores when an achievement test relies mainly on one single occasion that might be affected by a host of factors which can result in unrealistic scores. This was also applied to the writing section as students were asked to write on three different topics on three different occasions.

To conduct these 3 achievement tests, the researcher first identified the three different grammatical forms to carry out this study, namely the present simple versus the present continuous, the comparative adjectives and the future forms. The tests consisted of a variety of question types including multiple choice format, fill-in-the-blank, rewrite sentences giving the same meaning, and writing responses to real life situations and dialogues. This variation of question types were used to assess students' progress of accuracy

acquisition and understanding of the target forms. The researcher adapted exercises from different sources such as "English Grammar In Use" for Murphy, (2004) and "Interactions Access, Focus on Grammar" for Broukal, (2007).

Moreover, section two which was the writing section, was mainly created to measure students' writing skill and how much they could transfer their grammatical understanding into reflecting on their own work. Each writing activity was a topic that could provide students with a good opportunity to use what they had learned through the grammar lessons as it was designed in correlation with the targeted forms. For example, after students were given the first treatment about the simple present and present continuous, they were asked to write about "daily routines" and after the second treatment about the comparative adjectives, they were asked to write about "a comparison between cars nowadays and cars 100 years ago", while the third topic was about "your predictions for a future holiday" following the third treatment about the future forms.

Validity and Reliability

The preliminary forms of the tests were submitted to a jury of TEFL specialists and professors at Saudi universities and also some instructors at Taibah University; The English Language Center. The aim was to judge tests' validity taking into consideration the appropriateness of the test to EFL, pre-intermediate level students at the Preparatory year program, clarity of test items and if they were easily understandable. Some recommendations and suggestions were given by the jury and consequently some changes were made on the blueprint of the tests and some items were amended, added or omitted from the final versions accordingly.

There are important differences between traditional validities viewed as various constructs: content validity, construct validity, criterion validity and the modern concept of validity viewed as a unified concept. Criterion-related validity evidence - seeks to demonstrate that test scores are systematically related to one or more outcome criteria. Content-related validity evidence -

refers to the extent to which the test questions represent the skills in the specified subject area. Construct-related validity evidence - refers to the extent to which the test measures the "right" psychological constructs. Intelligence, self-esteem and creativity are examples of such psychological traits. Messick (1989, 1996a, 1996b) argues that the traditional conception of validity is fragmented and incomplete especially because it fails to take into account both evidence of the value implications of score meaning as a basis for action and the social consequences of score use. His modern approach views validity as a unified concept which places a heavier emphasis on how a test is used.

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement, and a test is considered reliable if we get the same result repeatedly as long as there is no confounding factor during the intervening time interval. The researcher piloted the three tests to a group of 15 students who were excluded from the actual study for the purpose of testing reliability of the tests. A test-retest reliability was used. The same tests were administered twice to the same sample on two different occasions; one was conducted during the first week of the second term whilst the second was administered two weeks later.

The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) program and the Cronbach's Alpha were used to measure the tests' reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha Values for test reliability of the Posttests

Cronbach's Alpha	Posttest 1	Posttest 2	Posttest 3
	.845	.871	.832

Cronbach's Alpha results in the three tests were as follows:

.845 in posttest 1,.871 in posttest 2 and.832 in posttest 3. These results indicated that the tests were reliable enough for use in the current study. Internal consistency is usually measured with Cronbach's alpha, a statistic calculated from the pairwise correlations between items. Internal consistency ranges between zero and one. The standard/benchmark for an acceptable

Cronbach's Alpha is usually.$8 > \alpha \geq .7$ whilst the results of the Cronbach's Alpha in the three tests in the pre-tests were.$9 > \alpha \geq .8$ which means that the internal consistency of the tests were good. The tests were given to a second rater to recheck the grammar and the writing tests in order to avoid any discrepancies. If there was any, an average mark was given.

Pilot Study

The three grammar tests were piloted prior to carrying out the main study to ensure test reliability and measure the degree of homogeneity of the students studying at the same level. The tests were given to 15 students who were excluded from the study to verify reliability and face validity. Time allotted to the tests has been decided accordingly.

The study aims at investigating the effectiveness of Focus on Form (FonF), (the treatment of linguistic form in the context of performing a communicative task, in an EFL setting). Moreover, it compares the Focus on Form (FonF) approach as opposed to the more traditional Focus on Forms (FonFs) in improving accuracy in grammar and examines which of these is more effective to improve the writing skill.

FonF approach was used for teaching the experimental group and FonFs approach was used to teach the control group over a period of two weeks, 20 hours to each group. It would have been better to conduct the study during a full semester and then investigate the results, however, this wouldn't have been possible in a place where teachers have to stick to a syllabus, a pacing schedule and exam timetables.

The targeted grammar forms selected were the present simple versus the present continuous, the future forms and the comparative adjectives. The sample of study had been pretested before the researcher gave any instruction and also an immediate post-test was conducted after each instructional treatment. The students had a grammar test of three different sections to measure their accuracy and grammatical knowledge after each 5 hours of teaching on every targeted grammatical form.

Variables of the Study

This study consisted of two independent variables, i.e., two approaches of teaching grammar:

1- Teaching grammar following the FonF approach

2- Teaching grammar following the FonFs approach

And it has two dependent variables:

1- Students' linguistic accuracy and grammatical knowledge

2- Students' writing skill

Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical analysis of the data, results and interpretations are presented in this section. Results will be reported according to the study questions and hypotheses followed by a discussion of these results.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 25) was used to analyze the results of the study. T-test formula for independent samples was used for the purpose of testing the hypotheses of the study and analyzing the students' scores in the following achievement post-test:

1- T-test Results of the Immediate Post-Testing of the comparison/control and the experimental groups for the Present Simple vs. the Present Continuous

2- T-test Results of the Immediate Post-Testing of the comparison and the experimental groups for the writing section.

Topic: your daily routine (healthy and unhealthy habits)

Findings and Discussions

This study was an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of Focus on Form (FonF), the treatment of linguistic form in the context of performing a communicative task, in an EFL setting. Moreover, it compares the Focus on Form (FonF) approach with the more traditional Focus on Forms (FonFs) approach in teaching grammar and examines which of them is more successful to improve the writing skill of the students in Saudi Arabia at the Preparatory Year Program, Taibah University.

T-test Results of the Immediate Post-Testing of the comparison/control and the experimental groups for the Present Simple vs. the Present Continuous.

Group	Number of students	Mean score	Standard deviation	Tabular t-value	P-value
Control	45	7.34	3.02	0.98	0.103*
Experimental	45	8.21	2.89		

* Insignificant (P >.05)

The results presented in table (5) indicate clearly that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group in the immediate post-testing of their grammatical accuracy of the Present Simple vs. the Present continuous. The mean score of the comparison group was 7.34 and that of the experimental group was 8.21, however these values still have no significance as (p-value > 0.05). Thus the null hypothesis is accepted, i.e. the scores of the experimental group students who received FonF training were not significantly different from the scores of the comparison group who received FonFs training. The control group students share all other variables with the experimental group students except the FonF approach, however the results indicated no significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, no significant difference can be ascribed to using the FonF approach.

T-test Results of the Immediate Post-Testing of the comparison and the experimental groups for the writing section.

Topic: your daily routine (healthy and unhealthy habits)

Group	Number of students	Mean score	Standard deviation	Tabular t-value	P-value
Control	45	12.11	4.98	0.17	.0961*
Experimental	45	12.58	4.36		

* Insignificant (P >.05)

As shown in table (8), there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group in the immediate post-testing of their writing skill for the first topic "Your daily routine; healthy and unhealthy habits". The mean score of the comparison group was 12.11 and that of the experimental group was 12.58, however these values still have no significance as (p-value > 0.05). Thus the null hypothesis is accepted, i.e. the scores of the experimental group students who received training according to the FonF approach were not significantly different from the scores of the comparison group who received training according to the FonFs approach. The control group students share all other variables with the experimental group students save the FonF approach, however the results indicated no significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, no significant difference can be ascribed to using the FonF approach.

As results of this study indicate, there was mostly no significant difference between the mean scores of both the experimental group that received FonF approach and the comparison group which received FonFs approach. This can be ascribed and traced to a variety of factors. First, these findings go in line with Fotos, (1998) who argue that "Indeed, not only are there few opportunities for communicative use of the target language outside the classroom, but even within many EFL classrooms, target language use may be surprisingly low." (p. 304). In the context of this study, learners are exposed to very little English outside the classroom. Learners' main problem in this context is not the lack of instruction on grammatical feature, but the lack of chances for communicative language use.

There is a significant difference between the EFL settings and the communicative ESL classrooms in their relationship to the FonF approach. The assumption that there is a good role for instruction in the acquisition process is based on the fact that learners can use and encounter the target grammatical forms repeatedly in both their classrooms and their daily life. Such frequent encounters are essential to reinforce the focus-on-form

treatment. However, while the ESL situation sufficiently provides access to communicative language, the EFL settings still need some adaptations so that it can get the best potential of the FonF.

While opportunities to expose learners to English are really lacking, which is the case with most Arab students in an EFL language classroom, Rababah, (2003), a notable improvement in their language has been witnessed upon the introduction of FonF within communicative contexts. This is evident when we compare the accuracy gains attained by the experimental group to that of the comparison group. Findings of the study reveal that means of score of the experimental group are higher than that of the comparison groups in the three grammatical accuracy achievement tests. So, one can argue that these differences are not significant, however accuracy gains can be detected.

Another reason for problems that may hinder the progress of the FonF approach in an EFL setting is the large size classes. Although the final sample of the study was 90 students, 45 in each group, there were usually over 60 students in each group in every class, yet 45 of them were selected as the resultant sample due to the fact that some of those, who were excluded from the study, attended only some parts of the treatments and missed the rest. This factor of irregular attendance kept the class larger than needed, meanwhile did not allow the researcher to address students' problematic forms. This appears to be consistent with Long, (1991) and Long and Robinson's, (1998) conception of FonF as it seems optimally suited to classrooms that are small enough to allow teachers to verbally address students' problematic forms through verbal discussion and planned public speaking events. Moreover, such a class size would enable the instructors to evaluate students' writing in the form of essays, in-class writing tasks, and diaries. Additionally, these small classes are useful to students to have significant amount of peer interaction while in large classes, individual attention and student-student interaction opportunities are very often noticeably lacking.

In addition, the cultural aspect is also relevant and has a direct impact on the FonF approach. The FonF approach is more successful in atmospheres

which allow students to be active participants in daily activities; an atmosphere that is not easily provided in the Arab context. This is congruent with (Poole, 2003b) who points out that teachers, parents, administrators, and students would need to feel some degree of comfort with letting students be active participants and sometimes leaders in the content and manner in which they study. Yet, many cultures consider such student-centeredness as some kind of disrespect or a breach of tradition.

Furthermore, students' expectations and the traditional pedagogy they used to can really affect the FonF approach. Learners at the researcher's context expect a traditional method of teaching grammar which is a step by step grammar rule given followed by drills. They can not get familiar with the FonF communicative activities and techniques such as Consciousness Raising, input flooding and advance organizer. This can definitely has a direct impact on their performance and the progress of the FonF approach. This appears to be consistent with (Thornburry, 1991) as he maintains that since learners come to classes with fairly fixed expectations of what they will do there, regardless of where these expectations may be derived from, a teacher who ignores these expectations is likely to frustrate them. It is clear that learners of L2 want to ensure that the learning experience is made more efficient and systematic. Yet, it is not always possible to meet these expectations.

Recommendations of the Study

A number of recommendations seem pertinent according to the findings of this study:

1- It is crucial for the success of The FonF approach, which proved to be an effective approach in ESL settings, to try hard to adapt it to the EFL settings. These adaptations of the FonF approach offer a considerable promise to learners of English in EFL contexts. A number of theses adaptation strategies were mentioned in chapter 4, the Results, Analysis and Discussion.

2- Seeking ways of how to create atmospheres which allow students to practice English outside their classrooms, would be of great value in terms of

overcoming the problem of exposing learners to very little English outside their English classes in the EFL setting.

3- Since large classrooms would not permit teachers to verbally address students' problematic forms, and also don not provide a good and conducive environment for teachers to effectively evaluate students' writing, so small classrooms are highly recommended to overcome these problems and allow students to have a significant amount of peer interaction.

4- If EFL teachers have adequate training on the FonF strategies, and are acquainted with the techniques of adaptations of this approach to suit the EFL context, it will probably result in surprisingly better performance with regard to second language acquisition and promoting English language skills.

5- Teachers of English should participate effectively in designing syllabus/curriculum, choosing materials and textbooks, and developing assessment techniques. As in most Arab universities and institutes, practicing teachers in Taibah have very little say in these issues, which shouldn't be left entirely to senior faculty members.

6- Tests which focus on discrete grammatical points and minimize real-life communicative abilities should be changed and developed into assessment techniques which focus more on communicative abilities. They should include real life situations, questions to allow students to transfer their grammatical knowledge into reflecting on their own work and writing activities should reflect students' performance and understanding of the grammar lessons.

7- Universities and institutes teaching English in EFL settings should seek to recruit teachers with native-like or near native-like competence; fluency and a high level of L2 oral proficiency. These teachers are more likely to spontaneously recognize students' form-based errors and provide them with correct ones and not to code-switch when communicative problems are encountered. This does not mean that we should only recruit native teachers, but rather recruit highly qualified native-like teachers.

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