Chapter-2
Review of Literature on Form-Focused Instruction
CHAPTER II
Review of Literature on Form-Focused Instruction (FFI)

2.1 Introduction

Form-focused instruction or FFI is relatively a recently used term in the field of language learning and teaching for any pedagogical endeavour that directly or indirectly focuses on form. Ellis (2001:1-2) defines FFI as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce learners to pay attention to linguistics form”. There are a variety of terms used for instructed language learning or teaching that includes: grammar instruction, formal instruction, form-focused instruction and code-focused instruction (Doughty & Williams, 1998). So, it must be made clear that form-focused-instruction (FFI) refers to both types of instructions: first, that exclusively focuses on teaching discrete units of language and second, that retains the principles of communicative language teaching. These two types of instructions have been termed by Long (1991) as focus-on-forms (FonFs) and focus-on-form (FonF). Here, form includes all linguistic elements such as phonology, grammar, vocabulary and paralinguistic features (stress, intonation etc). Before going to a detailed description of FFI, the researcher briefly presents below a historical overview of the relevance and the place of form which mainly implies grammar, in different approaches and methods of English language teaching.

2.2 Relevance of Grammar Teaching

The relevance and role of grammar teaching has been a debatable issue for linguists and language researchers over a period of time. As Celce-Murcia (2001a) remarks, language teaching was equated with grammar teaching and grammar was used as content as well as the organising principle for developing curriculum and language teaching materials (cited in Nasaji & Fotos, 2011:2). There are different approaches and methods for classroom language teaching and the role of grammar in each approach and method differs. So, I proceed, discussing various teaching methods in reference to grammar teaching specifically in ESL context.
2.2.1 Traditional Approach or the Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

English language was taught under the influence of Latin and Greek language in early 18th century. So, traditional linguists like Karl Plotz, H.S. Ollandrof, Johann Meidinger analysed it in terms of Latin and Greek. They thought that language learning and teaching means to learn or to teach its grammar. This approach is popularly known as Grammar translation method (GTM). During the period of 1840 to 1940 this method dominated foreign and second language teaching and learning. As the name suggests, grammar is the chief means to teach target language through this method.

The salient features of this method are as follows:

- Grammar is taught deductively through rote learning and mechanical drill.
- Grammar of target language is compared with that of mother tongue during teaching and learning.
- There is a great emphasis on grammatical terminologies than actual use.

Grammar Translation Method (GTM) helps learners to understand a good deal about how the target language was constructed but gives little idea of how it is pronounced and used in ordinary conversation. In other words, students are not provided the exposure for using language as in real life contexts, and so they are unable to use it in their spontaneous speech. Hence, it takes a very long time to master a new language. Despite all its shortcomings, it continues to be widely used in most parts of the world even today either in its original form or with certain modifications. Linguists attacked the effectiveness of GTM and argued in favour of stress on fluency, language use and other new aspects. Due to immense criticism of GTM, new language teaching methods emerged subsequently.

2.2.2 The Natural Approach or Direct Method

Gouin, Marcel, and Prendergast had become the pioneers of Natural Approach or the Direct Method as they advocated strongly an alternative approach to language teaching and started the Reform Movement. Later H. Sweet, W. Viëter, and P. Passy became the great supporters of these reformists that provided credibility and acceptance to these ideas. In the late 1860, Sauveur opened a language school and his
method was popularised as the Natural Method. It is premised on a principle that language could be taught without using learners’ first language through making direct association between form and meaning in the targeted language. Grammar of target language is taught here but without its comparison with that of first language.

Thus, the direct method or reform method was developed as a reaction against the traditional method, the basic features of which are listed below:

- The teaching of formal grammar is discarded in this method.
- Grammar is taught here inductively based on the premise that grammar is not an end itself but a means to an end.
- The study of grammar was kept at a functional level, being confined to those areas which were continually being used in speech.
- Grammar does not precede learning; rather it follows the learning process.
- Students are encouraged to deduce grammatical rules through the structure presented in the classroom on their own.
- Grammar is a guide to enable students to correct their errors that they commit in using language.

Hence, the grammar teaching plays a minor role in this method of language teaching as its proponents wanted to provide more opportunities of using language as well as establishing relationship between thought and expression.

### 2.2.3 Situational Language Teaching (SLT)

During 1930 to 1960 British applied linguists specially, Harold Palmer and A. S. Hornby developed situational language teaching. What they attempted was to develop a more scientific foundation for an oral approach to teaching English than was evidenced in Direct Method (Palmer 1917, 1921, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986:31). It involves systematic principles of selection for lexical and grammatical content, principles of gradation that govern the sequence of these selected content and principles of presentation that determine the techniques of presentation and practice of items in a course. Items are linearly graded from simple to complex. Like the Direct
Method it also uses inductive approach in classrooms following a structural syllabus. Here, the meaning of new words or sentence patterns is not taught through grammatical explanation but with the help of demonstration of objects pictures or actions. Unlike the Direct Method it is based on a sound theory of language – structuralism as well as theory of learning – behaviourist habit learning theory. Followings are some important features of this method.

- Vocabulary selections procedures are followed to ensure that an essential general service vocabulary is covered.
- Items of grammar are graded following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones.
- Reading and writing are introduced once a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established. (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:34)

2.2.4 The Audio-lingual Method (ALM)

This method is also based on the structural approach. The emergence of this method resulted from the increased attention given to spoken aspect of foreign language teaching in United States after World War II. It was argued that language is “primarily what is spoken and only secondarily what is written” (Brooks, 1964). Thus, it was assumed that speech had priority in language teaching. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986) audio-lingual method is the combination of the structural linguistic theory, contrastive analysis, aural-oral procedure and behaviouristic psychology. Lessons in Audio-Lingual teaching consisted mainly of grammatical structures sequenced in a linear manner, usually beginning with an easy structure and ending with more complex forms, with little attention to meaning and context. However, rules were taught inductively through examples and repetition of sentence-level patterns (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011:3). Some fundamental features are as follows.

- The audio-lingual method does not emphasize a presentation and explanation of grammatical knowledge as in GT method.
- Structural patterns are most systematically introduced and practiced.
• Grammatical items are memorised and practiced in drill through dialogues.

• Dialogues provide the means of contextualising key structures and illustrate situations in which structures might be used as well as some cultural aspects of the target language (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:53).

• Correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation are also emphasised.

• After enough practice students are allowed to produce new sentences of same structures but in a very controlled situation.

This method was used widely throughout united states in 1960s for teaching any foreign language or ESL/EFL. But it began to be criticised at its theoretical as well as practical front, as the practical results were not the same as it was expected or promised. There was still a gap between classroom and real life communication. Many learners complained that teaching procedure was boring and unsatisfying. Noam Chomsky rejected the linguistic theory – structuralist approach as well as the learning theory – behaviourist theory upon which ALM is based. Chomsky (1966:153) opines that “Language is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistic behaviour characteristically involves innovations, formations of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy”. On the contrary, he proposed an alternative linguistic theory of transformational grammar. He also talked about the learners’ underlying ‘competence’ or ‘cognitive code learning’ that helps learners to generate new sentences.

American linguistics was revolutionised by his theory that paved the way for adaptation, innovation and experimentation in language classrooms. It also led to the period of emerging new theories for second language acquisition such as Reading approach, Total physical response, Silent way, or Counselling-learning. More or less, all are grammar based approaches. In the words of Nassaji and Fotos (2011:3), “Although they somewhat differed in their underlying assumptions about how language is learned, in terms of syllabus, they all are grammar based. That is, classroom content was organised mainly based on analysis of language forms with little focus on language function or real life communication.”
The most popular model for all grammar based approaches is PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) which premised that “practice makes a man perfect”. But, Ellis (2003) and Pienemann (1998) point out that for language acquisition this is not an appropriate notion as this process is also governed by many psychological constrains. New research findings and current SLA theory also do not support this notion (Skehan 1996b). Ellis (2006, cited in Nassaji and Fotos, 2011:6) remarks that PPP is only one way of teaching grammar, it can be taught through many different ways as through discovering grammatical rules or through corrective feedback provided on learners errors during communicative tasks.

2.2.5 Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The origin and development of communicative approach or CLT is considered from late 1960s or early 1970s. Unlike ALM and SLT that were based on structuralism in linguistics and behaviourism in psychology, this approach was derived from Hymes’ proposal of communicative competence (1972) in linguistics and cognitive theory in psychology. In contrast to Chomsky’s view of competence (1965) which means having abstract knowledge to produce grammatically correct sentences, Hymes coined the term “communicative competence” which implies that a person who acquires communicative competence must possess both the knowledge about language and the ability to use it properly in social contexts. Further, Halliday built up an influential theory of the function of language-use in his distinct and successive works during 1970s to 1980s that posed a significant impact on communicative approach. In 1976 Wilkins’ Notional syllabus (containing notional and functional categories) also influenced the design of communicative language programmes and textbooks in Europe. Later, Widdowson, in his book “Teaching Language as communication” (1978) stated that the linguistic and communicative systems of a language are correlated. Moreover, Krashen’s monitor model of L2 learning had also a significant impact on the development of language acquisition theory. According to Krashen, formal grammar teaching had no role to play in the process because grammar lessons could improve explicit knowledge (also referred to as declarative or learned), but not implicit knowledge (procedural, acquired) necessary to use the language appropriately in spontaneous situations (cited in Mayo, 2011:12).
The communicative approach embraces the principle of “learning by doing,” encouraging the use of English from the beginning of instruction. Thus, language acquisition takes place as a result of using the second language in meaningful communication from the onset in the process. In other words, the fundamental goal of CLT is to develop learners’ communicative competence in L2 through communication and interaction with others (Canale & Swain, 1980). It is better to call it, an approach rather than a method as there are no established instructional procedures or methodology associated with it. However, a number of frameworks have been proposed for implementing the communicative approach in the classrooms, which differ from one another in terms of degree in focusing on grammatical forms. Classroom activities are varied and include interactive language games, information sharing activities, social interactions, and the use of authentic materials, such as the newspaper for oral discussions on current events. Howatt (1984) makes a distinction between strong and weak version of CLT. Strong version claims that if learners themselves experience how language is used in real life communication, they will acquire it automatically like first language acquisition. On the other hand, in the weak version, learners can learn language in a controlled communicative context.

### 2.2.6 Inadequacies of CLT

Communicative language teaching thus, advocated exclusively meaning-focused language learning with no due attention to grammar. But in recent years, language researchers and practitioners however, have felt the serious limitation and drawback of CLT. Researchers like Genesse, 1987; Harley, 1991; Harley & Swain, 1984; Lapkin & Swain, 1990, Lyster, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 1982 have found in their detailed study of French immersion programme in Canada that despite having six or seven years of opportunities of exposure to meaningful contents students are incapable to attain native like accuracy in their written as well as in oral production.Lightbown, (1992); Lightbown & Spada, (1990) remark that, It has also been found that although the fluency of students in the CLT programs differs significantly from that of their counterparts in more traditional programs, there is often a lack of grammatical accuracy. SLA researchers such as Swain (1995) also assert that to engage learners simply in communication is not enough as they are unable to acquire high level of linguistic competence or proficiency. Thus, they need some instruction and intervention to focus on form. It is also found that learners who receive no
instruction seem to be at risk of fossilizing sooner than those who do receive instruction. But it is also evident that instruction solely focusing on forms does not enable learners to use targeted structures spontaneously in communication or free oral production.

Canale and Swain (1980) identify four dimension of Communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. *Grammatical competence* - the knowledge of the language code (grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc.). *Sociolinguistic competence* - the mastery of the sociocultural code of language use (appropriate application of vocabulary, register, politeness and style in a given situation). *Discourse competence* – the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive texts (e.g., political speech, poetry). *Strategic competence* - the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication and enables learners to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur (cited in Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell 1995:7). Thus, Communicative competence involves knowing how to use the grammar and vocabulary of the language to achieve communicative goals, and knowing how to do this in a socially appropriate way. These findings suggested that some form of grammatical instruction needed to be included in CLT programs where primary focus was on meaning and this realization gave rise to an innovative way to teach or learn language termed as focus-on-form (FonF) by Long (1991), in contrast to traditional focus-on-forms (FonF).

### 2.3 Form-Focused-Instruction (FFI)

Form-focused instruction (FFI) is a blanket term that covers all the categories of language teaching where learners’ focus is drawn to form, either implicitly or explicitly (Spada, 1997). FFI thus, includes: Traditional approaches to teaching forms based on structural syllabi, and communicative approaches, which are purely meaning focused and the latest version of CLT, where attention to form arises out of activities that are primarily meaning-focused (Ellis, 2001:2). However, Long (1991) uses three distinctive terms for these instances Focus-on-forms (FonFs), Focus-on-meaning (FonM/MFI) and Focus-on-form (FonF). Moreover, Ellis’ FonF is somewhat different from Long’s FonF. While Long exclusively mentions incidental focus on form however, Ellis favours even planned focus-on-form along with the incidental FonF.

“…focus-on-form overtly draws students’ attention to linguistics elements as they arise incidentally in lesson whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication.” (Long 1991, p. 45-46)

“…focus-on-form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistics code features – by the teachers or/and one or more student – triggered by perceived problems in communication.” (Long and Robinson 1998, p. 23)

“…within meaning-based approaches contexts to L2 instruction [and] in which a focus on language is provided in either spontaneous or predetermined ways.” (Spada, 1997, cited in Spada 2011, p. 226)

**2.3.1 FFI in Contrast to MFI**

Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998) argue that form-focused instruction (FFI) is different from the purely communicative instruction, or what they call focus on meaning instruction or meaning-focused instruction (MFI). For them, focus on meaning instruction is tantamount to spending little or no time on the discrete parts of language; instead, the interest is in the use of language in real life situations. In other words, Focus-on-meaning instruction takes exclusive interest in the use of language in real life situations instead of spending time on teaching discrete parts of language. Thus, MFI is nothing but the strong version of CLT whereas FFI goes with either traditional language teaching or the weak version of CLT where attention is given on both meaning as well as form simultaneously. Krashen & Terrell (1983) also make a point that focus on meaning instruction is apparent in the natural approach that prohibits direct teaching of grammar.
Whereas in FFI based classrooms, activities are designed in such a way as to draw learners’ attention to linguistic form and in MFI activities require learners only to attend to how messages are conveyed or how communication takes place. Thus, Ellis (2001) viewed that FFI is similar to Stern’s (1990) “analytic strategy” and MFI to Stern’s “experiential strategy”. Here, analytic strategy refers such activities that are based on “some kind of analysis of the language, with an emphasis on grammar” (Stern, 1990:94), whereas experiential strategy belongs to those activities that focus on “some substantive theme or topic” (ibid p. 101) and that “creates conditions for real language use” (ibid p. 101) [cited in Ellis, 2001:36]. Widdowson (1998) criticizes this distinction asserting that without meaning form cannot be realized and in the same way without attention to form meaning cannot be understood completely. For him the difference lies in the kind of meaning learners must attend to – whether it is semantic meaning (infer directly from “form”) as in case of language exercises, or pragmatic meaning (deduce from “context”) as in the case of communicative tasks (cited in Ellis 2001:13).

It is very obvious that any classroom interaction will neither be purely meaning-focused nor be entirely form-focused. It must be a combination of both for enhancing a better acquisition and command over second language among the learners. As, Long and Robinson (1998) remark that they should complement rather exclude each other. However, achieving dual focus is not an easy and practical task (Seedhouse, 1997b).

2.3.2 Focus-on-Forms (FonFs) vs. Focus-on-Form (FonF)

Long (1988, 1991) introduced this binary distinction, asserting that focus-on-forms was manifested in the traditional way of language teaching where all focus is on discrete units of language form rather than the actual use of language. Whereas focus-on-form overtly draws students’ attention to linguistics elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication (Long 1991, p. 45-46). Since, focus-on-form on the one hand, holds up the importance of communicative language teaching principles such as authentic communication and student-centerededness and, on the other hand, maintains the value of occasional and overt study of problematic L2 grammatical forms. Thus, it is a means that enables and
reinforces learners to notice linguistic form and through that way increase L2 proficiency.

Focus-on forms was based on a synthetic syllabus which was premised on an assumption that language learning is a process of building up the distinct entities and practicing language as an “object” bit by bit. It thus, entails that language learning is nothing but to learn all its fragmented form attentively whether with explicit or implicit focus. On the other hand, as Ellis (2001) discussed, Long’s definition of focus-on-form which can be observed as one of the type of FFI identifies two fundamental features of it:

1. Attention to form occurs in a lesson where the overriding focus is meaning or communication, and

2. Attention to form arises incidentally in response to communicative need (Ellis, 2001 pg.15).

However, Long himself reconceptualised his explanation and later Long and Robinson (1998, pg. 25) provided three different ways of FonF for classroom teaching or for experimental studies. i) The very first involves “Seeding” a text with ergative verbs like fell, grew etc. ii) second involves the teacher taking time out from a communicative activity to briefly draw attention to a linguistic problem the students are experiencing. iii) The third consists of using the recasts in the context of task based conversations such as those children experience during first language acquisition (cited in Ellis 2001). Here, the last two of three ways fulfil the criteria of Long’s earlier definition. But the first way “seeding” resembles with what Doughty and Williams (1998c), Spada (1997), and Ellis (2001) called “planned FonF”. As “seeding” entails that a specific linguistic form must be preselected for treatment. Ellis (2001) further, mentions that argument whether attention is planned or incidental is irrelevant if this attention is arose naturally out of communicative activity. Moreover, they differ only in respect to degree: intensive or extensive. According to Ellis (2001), incidental FonF requires extensive instruction as particular linguistic problematic form may occur only once and along with other forms (grammatical, lexical, phonological, and pragmatic) may also arise for learners’ attention. Whereas, in case of planned FonF, the instruction will be intensive keeping in view that learners will have to attend the preselected problematic form many times.
Spada (1997) makes a distinction between form-focused instruction and focus-on-form.

Form-focused instruction is any pedagogical effort that is used to draw the learners’ attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly. This can include the direct teaching of language (e.g., corrective feedback). ... The essential difference [between form-focused instruction and focus on form] ... is that Long’s definition of focus on form is restricted to meaning-based pedagogical events in which attention is drawn to language as a perceived need arises rather than in predetermined ways. (Cited in Izumi & Bigelow, 2001)

Even Doghy & Williams’ (1998c) have presented a similar conception:

Focus on formS and focus on form are not Polar opposites in the way that ‘form’ and ‘meaning’ have often been considered to be. Rather, focus on form entails a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on formS is limited to such a focus, and focus on meaning excludes it. Most important, it should be kept in mind that the fundamental assumption of focus-on-form instruction is that meaning and use must already be evident to the learners at the time that attention is drawn to the linguistic apparatus needed to get the meaning across. (pg. 4)

Ellis et al (2002) have considered ‘PPP’, a three stage lesson that involves the presentation of grammatical structure, its practice through controlled exercises and provision of chances to produce it freely as an example of lesson of the focus-on-forms type. While lessons in Focus-on-form type have all the communicative quality where learners are made to engage in activities, aiming as learners themselves infer rules and acquire it. Sheen (2002) has also discussed how FonF and FonFs are different from each other in terms of their theoretical underpinnings.

Focus on form derives from an assumed degree of similarity between first and second language acquisition positing that the two processes are both based on an exposure to comprehensible input arising from natural instruction. However, it is also assumed that there are significant differences in the two processes: that exposure is insufficient to enable
learners to acquire much of the second-language grammar, and that this lack needs to be compensated for by focusing learners’ attention on grammatical features. Focus on forms on the other hand, is based on the assumption that classroom foreign or second language learning derives from general cognitive processes, and thus entails the learning of a skill—hence it is being characterised as a skill-learning approach (pg. 303).

To be brief, FonF differs from FonFs in that it entails a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can be expected to be effective (Doughty & Williams, 1998c).

2.4 Theoretical Backdrop

Due to the failure of getting expected results from CLT, second language researchers, theoreticians and language teachers have been experiencing a need for some modifications or alterations in language learning theory and teaching practice for last three decades. The early 1990s saw a plethora of research work regarding SLA theory. Schmidt’s “noticing hypothesis” (1990, 1995a) and VanPatten’s “input processing theory” (1990, 1996) has marked significant development in this regard. Noticing hypothesis claims that in order to acquire language, learners should first notice forms consciously in the input provided. However, Schmidt made clear that noticing is just “the necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input to intake for learning” (1994, quoted in Ellis 2001:8). This means noticing processes assist or enable learners to convert these forms into intake for language acquisition. Moreover, in this respect Schmidt’s view does not match with Krashen’s (1981) monitor model but suits what Long claims for FonF. Furthermore, VanPatten and his colleague (VanPatten, 1996, 2004) developed Input processing theory. As all researchers are agreed upon that beginners feel difficulties while focusing on form and meaning simultaneously so, there is a need to employ activities that attract their attention to form. In words of VanPatten, Input processing “attempts to explain how learners get form from input and how they parse sentences during the act of comprehension while their primary attention is on meaning” (quoted in Nassaji & Fotos 2011:21). Due to the explicit focus on form component of this approach, some researchers have equated it with Long’s focus on forms (e.g., Sheen, 2002). VanPatten (2002), however, argues that since the aim of this approach is—to assist
the learner in making form–meaning connections during input processing; it is more appropriate to view it as a type of focus on form (cited in Khatib & Derakhshan 2011:868). In a series of his studies (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Oikennon, 1996; VanPatten & Sanz, 1995) he compared the relative effects of input processing and production-based instruction on comprehension and production, finding that the former resulted in larger gains in comprehension and equivalent gains in production (cited in Ellis 2001:9).

Dekeyser (1998) and Johnson (1996) have favoured Anderson’s (1982) Skill building theory, suggesting that FFI can enable learners to proceduralize declarative knowledge through practice, especially if this is accompanied by negative feedback on learner’s attempts to produce a target structure under “real operating conditions” (cited in Ellis 2001, p.8). Long (1988, 1991) argues that attention to form will work most effectively for acquisition if it occurs within the context of meaning focused communication rather than in instruction that is specifically directed at linguistics forms. Long’s revised interaction hypothesis” (Long, 1996) has made this point that when learners are engaged in a meaning-focused negotiation, often face communication breakdown due to some problematic linguistic form. This helps them in noticing the gap between the input and their own inter language and provides opportunities for “pushed output”. Another string of underpinning theory is Sharwood Smith’s “Input enhancement” (1991) which he (1981) and Rutherford & Sharwood Smith (1985) originally have termed as “Consciousness-raising”. Though he later argued that the term consciousness-raising misleads as it implies that learners’ internal attentional mechanism can be controlled or manipulated by the input, which is not true (cited in Nassaji & Fotos 2011 p. 38). In the words of Nassaji & Fotos, “it limits the focus of intervention to draw learners’ attention to form through external operation carried out on input rather than to the manipulation of learner’s internal process” (2011:39). Despite this distinction, many SLA researchers like Fotos & Ellis (1991), Fotos (1993), R. Ellis (1993b) later used the term Consciousness-raising as similar to Sharwood Smith’s input enhancement. They advocated its usefulness in drawing learners’ attention to particular form in meaning-based classrooms.

Discourse based pedagogy is one of the recent approaches to language teaching that focuses on grammatical forms and their meaning and also considers how these forms are used in a larger piece of discourse. Crystal (1992) has defined discourse as “a
continuous stretch of ... language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit” (cited in Nassaji & Fotos, pg. 50). Thus, grammatical forms are taught through this approach by integrating the targeted forms in a larger meaningful and interactive context instead of teaching in isolation or at sentence level. According to Bachman (1990) and Canale & swain (1980), the aim of this approach is to develop discourse competence, defined as the ability to process and create coherent discourse, and to argue for the necessity of moving beyond a sentence level analysis of utterances to analyzing language as unified discourse (ibid). For teaching a particular “form” L2 discourse is designed in such a way as learners may attain multiple instances of the same “form” within the same discourse. A discoursed based FonF approach has been supported by many recent researchers like Long & Robinson (1998), N. Ellis (2002, 2007), Berry (2004).

2.5 Recent Empirical Research

Kormos (2000) studied the role of attention in monitoring second language speech production in both first and second language. The results showed that learners’ different stages of L2 competence would not influence the amount of attention paid to the linguistic form of an utterance. It was also found that the degree of the attention used in monitoring language speech differed markedly from first language to second language. Muranoi (2000) investigated the effect of interaction enhancement (IE) on the learning of English articles among three groups, IE plus formal debriefing group (IEF), IE plus meaning-focused debriefing group (IEM) and a non-enhanced interaction group. Two major outcomes were found; (1). The IEF treatment had a greater impact than IEM treatment and (2) IE had positive effects on the learning of English articles.

Ellis, Basturkmen, Loewen (2001a) examined the effectiveness of incidental and transitory focus on form on learners’ uptake in twelve hours of communicative ESL teaching. Results indicate that learners had more uptakes in reactive and student-initiated focus on form episodes. It was also found that the complexity of an episode and the nature of form being focused (whether meaning or grammar) would reflect the level of uptakes. Ellis, Basturkmen, Loewen (2001b) investigated the effectiveness of preemptive focus on form in a 12-hour meaning-focused instruction. Results indicated that the majority of the episodes containing preemptive focus on form were initiated.
by students. Learners were more likely to uptake a form (i.e. incorporate it into an utterance of their own,) when it is raised by one of their peers. It was also found that in these preemptive focuses on form episodes, learners dealt with form explicitly. Despite this, they didn’t appear to interfere with the communicative flow of the teaching.

Poole and Sheorey (2002), in their case study, examined the spontaneous spoken output of an advanced Indian user of English in order to explore the validity of Schmidt’s noticing hypothesis and also the value of focus on form instruction. The results indicated that the subject could notice and correct later all the errors he had committed during his spontaneous output, showing that his learned knowledge about the forms had not been fully internalized, casting doubts as to whether noticing could lead to acquisition of noticed language forms.

Burgess and Etherington (2002) investigated forty eight EAP teachers’ attitudes to grammar and its teaching and learning within an EAP context. Results indicate that the majority of teachers appreciated the value of grammar for their students and show favorable attitude to focus on form approaches.

Gass, Svetics and Lemelin (2003) studied the effect of attention on the learning of different parts of language and how this differential effect interacted with linguistic proficiency. The results showed that attention had the greatest effect on syntax and the least on lexis. It was also found that attention was most effective during the early stages and the least effective during the later stages.

Poole (2003) in his study described the types of forms learners attend to during form-focused instruction. Analysis of the data, gathered from nineteen international students studying in an advanced ESL writing class in a United States university, indicated that the majority of forms they attended to were lexical in nature. It was also found that focus on form instruction might not be valuable for second language grammatical learning. Park (2003) in his experimental study investigated if, and how, externally-created salience might lead to learners’ internally generated salience. The findings showed that increasing the perceptual salience of target forms did not lead to learners’ noticing of forms. It was also found that noticing was affected by several factors such as learner readiness, knowledge of first language, and second language learning experience. Lyster (2004a) in his article presents a comparative analysis of
five quasi-experimental studies, investigating the effects of form-focused instruction on four areas of French known to be difficult for Anglophone learners: perfect vs. imperfect past tense, conditional mood, second person pronouns, and grammatical gender. Findings suggested that effective form-focused instruction included a balanced distribution of opportunities for noticing, language awareness, and controlled practice with feedback. Lyster (2004b) in his quasi-experimental classroom study investigated the effects of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback on immersion students’ ability to accurately assign grammatical gender in French. Analyses of data showed a significant increase in the ability of students exposed to form-focused instruction to correctly assign grammatical gender. It was also found that form-focused instruction is more effective when combined with prompts than with recasts or no feedback. Farrokhi (2005) examined the possibility of integrating form-focused instruction and communicative interaction at the level of error correction. The database was drawn from transcripts of thirty one hours of classroom lessons including 752 error correction episodes.

Findings revealed that ‘marked recast’ was a good corrective feedback that combines focus on form and focus on meaning at the level of error correction. Loewen (2005) examined the effectiveness of incidental focus on form in promoting L2 learning. Analysis of seventeen hours of naturally occurring, meaning focused instruction in twelve adult classes in a private language school in New Zealand revealed that learners could remember the targeted form sixty percent of the time one day after the FFEs (form-focused episodes) and fifty percent of the time two weeks later. So, incidental focus on form might be beneficial to learners especially when they incorporated the targeted linguistic item into their own production.

Lee (2007) had done a research investigating the effect of textual enhancement. He concluded that it aided the learning of the target forms while having unfavourable meaning comprehension. Haung (2008) had done a research in which he used EFL learners’ analytical grammatical knowledge to design a post-task approach to foster learners’ self-initiated attention. Students were asked to transcribe their dialogues cooperatively and then to reflect on different aspects of their oral production individually. It was found that learners paid close attention to their mistakes according to their individual learning needs and proficiency levels. Farrokhi, Ansarin, and Mohamadnia (2008) investigated how five experienced EFL teachers initiated focus
on form episodes to raise attention to form in elementary and advanced levels, through observing seventy hours of communicatively-oriented instruction between the teachers and their students. They also examined the frequency and type of focus on form episodes, i.e. vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The results suggested that the proficiency of the learners did not affect the rate of learner-initiated focus on form episodes. This study also indicated that the overall distribution of the linguistic focus on form episodes varied across proficiencies.

The most recent study conducted by Marzban & Mokhberi (2012) investigated three groups of EFL learners who completed the same task and compared the two types of approaches to focus on form (FonF) that is ‘reactive focus on form’ and ‘preemptive focus on form’. The results of the study suggested that reactive FonF in comparison with preemptive FonF furnishes an excellent means for developing the ability to use the grammatical knowledge of the target structure in context. The results further indicated that the majority of the preemptive FFEs were initiated by the teacher rather than students and dealt with vocabulary whereas the linguistic focus of reactive FFEs was largely on grammar.

2.6 Pedagogical Classification of FFI

Long (1991) provided the well-known binary distinction of FFI namely focus-on-form and focus-on-forms. Subsequently, Ellis (2001) gave three category of FFI given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of FFI</th>
<th>Primary focus</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Focus-on-forms</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Intensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planned focus-on-form</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Intensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incidental focus-on-form</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ellis (2001:17)

2.6.1 Focus on forms: Ellis (2001) defines, “Focus-on forms implies that the teachers and students are aware that the primary purpose of the activity is to learn a preselected form and that learners are required to focus their attention on some specific form
intensively in order to learn it” (p.17). He considers some options in this regard that are mentioned below.

**Explicit vs. Implicit FonFs:** Explicit FonFs addresses rules either deductively or inductively. When rules are directly presented to the learners, it is a deductive explicit FonFs, whereas inductive explicit FonFs makes learners attempt to discover rule themselves out of sentences illustrated before them. In words of Robinson (1996) learners are asked to i) read through written accounts of rules and ii) identify the rules illustrated by a set of sentences (cited in Ellis 2001:18).

**Structured vs. Production practice:** This model posits three types of processes.i) Intake (noticing form in the input and storing them in a short term memory) ii) Acquisition (the incorporation of new forms in long term memory and restructuring of the interlanguage system) iii) Language production (the use of stored forms in speech and in writing). Structured input should be viewed as a focus on forms option because it is designed to enable learners’ to give primary attention repeatedly on a specific preselected form.

**Traditional production practice:** Mechanical as well as substitution drill are the significant feature of this model. Open ended communicative practice is also one of the means to achieve this.

**Functional language practice:** It provides opportunity to learners to produce target structures in a situational context. But, repetition of targeted forms in a controlled situation is emphasised more rather focussing on meaning.

**2.6.2 Planned focus-on-form:** This type of task involves the use of some specific forms which are often erroneously used by the learners. A task is designed in such a way as the specific targeted form may occur numerously, so that learners may encounter, practice and be well versed in its use. However, this type of FFI seems similar to traditional Focus on forms which preselects specific forms to teach. But it differs from this in two ways, as its prime focus is on meaning rather than form, and learners are totally unaware of this pre-selection. They use language naturally in a meaningful context and simultaneously they keep practicing the use of targeted form due to such nature of task. Thus, selected form is discussed thoroughly.
Ellis (2001) also claims that studies of Planned FonF have drawn extensively on the computational model of SLA that has two related dimensions: Input and production.

*Enriched input:* Lessons are designed in such a way as it has plentiful examples of a target forms, aiming that learners acquire those forms due to its repeated exposure with or without drawing a special attention to it. Ellis (2001) mentions two ways to make enriching input lessons: *input flood* and *input enhancement.* Lessons having ample occurrence of a target form in a meaningful context without having any device to emphasise the target form are an example of *input flood.* For example; stories and games, developed by Trahey & White (1993) that intends simply exposing learners to adverb, asking learners only to read or listen carefully. On the other hand, *input enhancement* lessons are followed by meaning-focused activities highlighting the target features before learners with which lessons are enriched (Ellis 2001).

*Focused communication tasks:* These are tasks that induce learners to produce particular target forms while they perform a meaningful communicative activity. Focused-communicative tasks have all the features of communicative tasks as meaning is primary, a goal that needs to be worked, outcome evaluated activity and real-world relationship (Skehan, 1998). But unlike communicative tasks, these tasks target a specific form that learners have to employ during tasks.

Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) have noted that focused communicative tasks can be designed so that the production of the target feature is useful, natural and essential (cited in Ellis, 2001:22). For example if teachers want to target the use of *simple present tense,* they ask learners to write their daily routine. Such task elicits production of specific target feature in a meaningful context.

### 2.6.3 Incidental focus-on-form:

Unlike planned FFI this type of tasks are designed without any pre-selection of specific form. While performing this task learners may focus numerous forms incidentally. In such case, attention to form is extensive rather intensive as in stead of discussing a single specific form in detail, many forms that learners encounter in during task are addressed briefly. For example, when learners perform ‘cloze test’ or ‘information gap activity’, they may make errors in using many different forms that the teacher corrects either directly or indirectly. It relates two kinds of incidental focus-on-form: *Pre-emptive* and *reactive.*
Pre-emptive focus-on-form: Pre-emptive focus on form involves an attempt by the teacher or a learner to initiate explicit attention to a linguistic point because it is (or is perceived to be) problematic at a particular moment in the discourse (Ellis, et al: 285). Thus, it is a problem-oriented incidental focus-on-form. It addresses the authentic gap in learner’s knowledge regarding particular form. It directly deals with the errors which likely to be occur due to little knowledge of the learner, which may block communication. For instance, when a word “receive” comes during task teacher intentionally draw learners’ attention towards its spelling that differs very slightly from that of the word “believe”. It prevents possible blunders in a subsequent activity. It is either initiated by the students or by the teachers. Students initiated pre-emptive focus-on-form involves asking query to the teacher regarding some confusion, while teacher initiated pre-emptive focus-on-form relates to draw learner’s attention towards features of a particular form.

Reactive focus-on-form: Long (1996) remarks that reactive focus on form has also been known as error correction, corrective feedback, or negative evidence/feedback (cited in Farrokhi et al, 2008). Ellis (2001:23) states that this feedback occurs in all types of FFI and involves the same set of option, although, there may be differences in frequency of choice of specific options according to FFI type. He further mentions two ways implicit and explicit negative feedback of such set of options. However, in views of Ellis et al. (2002), learners’ errors are addressed through conversational vs. didactic and implicit vs. explicit focus-on-form. Although, Lyster and Ranta (1997) have investigated six different choices for reactive focus on form, namely explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, meta-linguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition.

Implicit negative feedback: When learners’ response is erroneous, teachers implicitly reformulate all or part of their deviant utterance, avoiding direct or explicit correction. As Lyster and Ranta (1997) notices this type of FonF in immersion Classrooms where teachers mostly rely on recast. There many options available to the teachers for implicit negative feedback, e.g., prompt recast, clarification request, repetitions. Lyster’s (1998a) study further suggests that request is more helpful for acquisition than recast. Moreover, Seedhouse (1997a) has pointed out that this type of feedback has also been evident in tradition language teaching practice that is nothing but first
type of FFI i.e. focus-on-forms. He calls it “form and accuracy context” (cited in Ellis 2001:24).

**Explicit negative feedback:** Giving feedback explicitly is not preferred in any type of FFI as it has low impact on learners’ acquisition rate. However a number of explicit options are identified as *explicit correction, meta-linguistic feedback and elicitation* (Lyster and Ranta 1997). Teachers make direct comment on an incorrect response and they themselves provide the correct one.

The above discussed theoretical or pedagogical differences between planned and incidental FonF raise a question in teachers or practitioners mind which is more suitable option. Researcher like Nassaji & Fotos (2011) suggests that teachers should not restrict themselves to any of one option but they may opt many of them judiciously as per the need of teaching context. Thus, sometimes they rely on planned FonF to discuss few problematic linguistic forms intensively. Sometimes they may also use Incidental FonF where multitudinous problematic forms are treated randomly and cursorily but must be assured that Learners have acquired these forms. It should also be noted that even when the focus on form is planned, incidental attention to a range of forms in addition to the targeted form can occur. As in the case of planned focus-on-form the teacher elects to use a task to target a specific linguistic feature that influences how the task is performed in the classroom. But in all cases learners are totally unaware with it so, for them, forms are occurred incidentally which is later focused by the teacher or any learner. The pedagogical classifications of FFI have been summarised below in Table-1.2.
### Table – 2.2

**Types of Form Focused Instruction (FFI) adapted from Ellis (2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Focus-on-forms</th>
<th>Teaching language through focusing its discrete unit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a) Explicit vs. implicit</strong></td>
<td>Rules are addressed deductively or inductively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b) Structured input vs. Production practice</strong></td>
<td>Uses three process intake, acquisition and production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c) Traditional production practice</strong></td>
<td>Teaching through mechanical and substitution drill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d) Functional language practice</strong></td>
<td>Repetition of the production of targeted forms in a controlled situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Focus-on-form</th>
<th>Teaching language communicatively with due focus on form.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a) Planned FonF</strong></td>
<td>Specific form is predetermined to focus in meaningful context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>i) Enriched input</strong></td>
<td>Provide repeated exposure of target forms with plentiful examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii) Focused communication task</strong></td>
<td>Tasks that encourage learners to produce particular target form in a meaningful context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b) Incidental FonF</strong></td>
<td>Such forms are focused that comes incidentally during communicative activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>i) Pre-emptive FonF</strong></td>
<td>Initiate attention to a form that is perceived to be problematic, without any production error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Student initiated</strong></td>
<td>Attention, drawn by the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Teacher initiated</strong></td>
<td>Initiate drawing learners’ attention by the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii) Reactive FonF</strong></td>
<td>Teachers’ feedback in response to learners’ actual error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Implicit neg. Feedback</strong></td>
<td>Avoiding direct pointing out learners error.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Explicit neg. Feedback</strong></td>
<td>Remarks directly to learners’ erroneous utterances.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 Classrooms Techniques of FonF

1. **Input Flooding:** It provides a plethora of natural examples of the form in focus in a text on the assumption that the very high frequency of the structure in question will attract the learners’ attention to the relevant formal regularities (Doughty and Williams, 1998a).

2. **Input Enhancement:** directing the learner’s attention to a specific form in a text by highlighting, underlining, colouring, rule giving… (Long and Robinson, 1998)

3. **Recast:** Recast provide a reconstruction of all or part of learners’ erroneous utterance without changing its central meaning. (Long et al., 1998)

4. **Prompt:** Prompts encourage learners to correct their errors themselves having a hint from their teacher. (Lyster 2002)

5. **Meta-linguistic Clues:** Teachers provides direct comment in response to the learners’ mistake. For example by a statement such as ‘We don’t say this like that’.

6. **Clarification Request:** Teachers use a phrase or a word like ‘pardon’ after learners’ errors to indicate that their response needs reformulation.

7. **Repetition:** When teachers repeat the student’s ill formed utterance, highlighting error with rising tone.

8. **Elicitation:** Teachers directly elicit a reformulation from the learners by asking a question such as, ‘How do we say it in English?’

9. **Consciousness-raising:** Tasks that promote the occurrence of a stimulus event in conscious awareness and its subsequent storage in long term memory) (Harley, 1998)

10. **Dictogloss:** It is a kind of output task that encourages students to work together and produce language forms collaboratively by reconstructing a text presented to them orally. (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).
11. **Reconstruction Cloze Tasks:** It is somehow similar to Dictogloss but differs in point that learners get cloze version of the text also so that they may reproduce specific target form.

12. **Text-editing Tasks:** Learners are provided a text to improve its accuracy and expression of content.

13. **Garden Path Technique:** The garden path technique introduces a grammatical rule and then leads learners into situations in which they may over generalize.

2.8 **Teachers’ Role:**

Despite the rapid growth in theory driven experimental research in 1990s, an essential component– the teacher in FFI, has been ignored entirely (Borg, 1999a; cited in Ellis 2001:11). However, in recent studies (Borg, 1998, 1999a, 1999b), (Lyster & Ranta, 1997), (Ellis et al., 2001b) teachers and teaching behaviour is discussed intensively. Drawing on teacher cognition research, Borg (1998, 1999b) has used qualitative research methods (e.g. observation and interviews) to gain an understandings of teachers’ beliefs about grammar teaching and their actual practices (cited in Ellis, 2001). Farrell and Lim (2005) sought to examine two elementary school teachers’ beliefs of English grammar teaching in classroom in Singapore. He reported that teachers consider grammar instruction and providing grammar exercises for students necessary. However, Wang (2009) reported in her study that the teachers were agreed with not only the importance of grammar drills in language teaching and learning but also with the significant role of communicative activities to enhance learners’ speaking ability.

The challenge, then, is to develop teachers’ understanding of SLA process and how learners can acquire language through rich formative assessment opportunities and mainstream classroom discourse (for example, what features of a teacher’s FonF influence learner’s uptake). At the same time they need to develop their classroom pedagogy so that language learning does take place alongside subject learning in mainstream classroom (for example, to what extent do teachers’ provide corrective feedback directed at linguistic form subject in a mainstream lesson).
A teacher should have the necessary knowledge and skill to draw on the full range of FonF options, including the provision of explicit grammatical information when learners signal the need for it (Elder, Erlam and Philp 2007:237). Moreover, they also argue that language teachers need not only possess high levels of language proficiency to be able to provide rich and well-formed input for learners but also sufficient explicit knowledge about language to be able to plan FFI and respond appropriately to learner needs through judicious use of a range of FonF options (ibid, pg 237). So, if teachers are up to date with all the techniques of FonF for drawing learners’ attention towards specific form in meaningful communication, it will be easy to improve learners’ erroneous-language production.

The role of teacher, then, is to shape the learning opportunities and provide resources for learning (Swain and Lapkin 2007:83). The learner looks for help in the learning task to all the meditational means at his or her disposal; it is the teacher who must foresee the potential learning needs and structure the learning environment to ensure that learning can also take place without teaching (ibid, pg 84). As per the learners’ need teachers may also be ready to adapt some activities during class time.

Teachers should select instructional techniques for their classrooms in an eclectic way (Nassaji and Fotos 2011:138). Although it does not imply that random selection of different methods and techniques will work. To be effective, any combination of strategies needs to be conducted in a principled way so that it may fulfil the needs of both the curriculum and the learners. They further point out that the strong version of form-focused activities with the target structure embedded in communicative activities might be preferred by many second language teachers because learners would very likely receive reinforcement from target language use as it is naturally encountered outside the classrooms (ibid, 138). However, when the less frequently used structures have to be targeted, explicit FFI should be opted. Borg (2003) notes that successful teachers are reflective, constructing their own knowledge through an active process of thinking and exploring. As teachers work with a combination of different or various instructional options, they develop a vision of what works and what does not work for them as well as how to amend or modify practice to increase their effectiveness.
Moreover, there must be provision of a training programme for teachers time to time so that they may discuss their experiences and actual classroom problems. It may solve the issues to a great extent.

2.9 Conclusion

Focus-on-form (FonF) the third type of FFI thus, has attained a significant impact in second language learning and teaching. Since, it is comparatively a new pedagogical innovation that maintains communicative features, even drawing due attention to forms. This chapter first, discusses different pedagogies for teaching and learning second language and then argues that learners get more success when they are made to engage with FonF approach. For FonF enriches learners’ fluency as well as accuracy in their language production. All three types of FFI with their various dimensions and associated classrooms techniques, as well as the role of the teacher have also been discussed briefly.