CHAPTER – 3

Form Focused Instruction
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FORM FOCUSED INSTRUCTION

3.1 Introduction

Form-focused instruction (FFI) came into being as a result of the recognition of shortcomings of CLT which de-emphasized and neglected teaching of vocabulary and grammar in the belief that learners will acquire these while communicating in the L2 in real life-like situations in which the focus was on meaning. However, such an approach to teaching an L2 was found deficient since it became evident that learners could not achieve high levels of grammatical competence through entirely meaning-based instruction. The aim of this chapter is to study teaching vocabulary through focus on forms (FonFs), focus on meaning (FonM), and focus on form (FonF) instruction. In the following section the place of focus of form in TBLT is also explored.

3.2 Role of Form in Language Learning

According to Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001), in research on French immersion programmes in Canada, it was found that students did not acquire specified levels of language forms in language production from meaning-focused language classrooms. This happened in spite of years of study in the L2. Earlier reports of these programmes had exposed favourable evidence regarding foreign students in immersion programmes that they were really good in imparting knowledge of reading and writing skills in the target language, but still they were unable to meet the requirement of linguistic features, which an L2 learner needs in order to have native-like ability in listening and speaking. It was discovered that they needed to promote stress on grammar to increase the level of accuracy required. In other words, these studies propose that when classroom second language learning is fully meaning-focused, certain linguistic features are not eventually achieved to target like levels even with comprehensible input and opportunities for interaction (Ellis, Basturkmen, Loewen, 2001a). Therefore, second language acquisition researcher Swain (1995; cited in Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen, 2002) suggests that learners are not only required to get involved in communicative language use but a certain amount of
attention must also be paid to form also in order to improve second language acquisition. However, past experience with language teaching approaches that focused on discrete linguistic structures in the language lessons were regarded not very successful. The method which is considered to be highly beneficial at present is the one that could combine the linguistic features of language with focus on communication.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches “encourage the use and exchange of realistic messages in order to present language features (Grim, 2009). . . The development of CLT approaches was based on the necessity for exposure to comprehensible input as part of the acquisition process” (Sheen & O’ Neil, 2005; cited in Mayo, 2011: 13). Conversely, wide research has clearly shown that focus only on meaning and mere introduction to language forms is not adequate for learners for achieving proficiency in the language (Spada, 2011; cited in Mayo, 2011). Additionally, Pica (2002; cited in Mayo, 2011) points out that meaning-centered instruction is directed to low levels of linguistic accuracy (specifically leading to non-target morphology and syntax). As a result, the place of form in the L2 communicative language classroom has been reassessed in recent second language acquisition (SLA) research and it is found from research that some kind of attention to form is necessary for language learning (Ibid).

An information-processing model perspective (Garcia Mayo & Perales Haya, 2002; Van Patten, 2007; cited in Mayo, 2011) advocates that learners find difficulties while focusing on form and meaning simultaneously (particularly at beginner levels), and there is a need to employ activities that attract their attention to form. Different SLA researchers have the same opinion that some level of attention is essential for the learning process to take place more successfully (Dekeyser, 2007; Doughty, 2001; cited in Mayo, 2011). The question is how best to insert this attention to form to achieve proficiency in second /foreign language teaching process. When learners are exposed to prescribed forms, their knowledge of those forms might be enduring because advanced features are made prominent and their accuracy might also enhance (Spada, 1997; cited in Mayo, 2011). In these days most SLA researchers agreed upon the fact that learners need some sort of grammar instruction within a communicative approach and some opportunity to construct language which includes introduction of the grammatical points (Swain, 2005 et passim; cited in Mayo, 2011). Consequently,
growing number of research and methodological suggestions are concerned with the issue of incorporating form-focused activities in communicative contexts. But the increasing importance of grammar instruction is not supposed to retrieve conventional ways of language teaching such as traditional grammar-based programs of studies based on pattern drills, and so forth (Fotos, 1998).

The term form is commonly used to refer to grammar, however this form does not merely mean grammar, and it involves other aspects of language also. Ellis, et al. (2001a) remark that focus on form can be intended for phonology, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and even spelling.

3.3 Focus on Forms

Long (1991; cited in Mayo, 2011) has distinguished between focus on forms (FonFs) and focus on form (FonF). Focus on forms is the traditional, synthetic approach to grammar instruction where discrete language forms were taught and practiced without a meaningful environment (namely via traditional exercises or drills). It basically involved the pre-selection of specific items based on a linguistic syllabus and very thorough and organized presentation of those forms. Hence, in focus on forms instruction the main attention is on the targeted form. An example of a focus-on-forms lesson is one conducted by means of ‘PPP’ (i.e., a three stage lesson includes the presentation of a grammatical structure, its practice in controlled exercises and the provision of opportunities to produce it liberally).

Wilkins (1976) classifies syllabi into synthetic and analytic and he names Focus on Forms as synthetic, and Focus on Form as analytic (cited in Rashtchi and Keyvanfar, 2012). In synthetic syllabi, pedagogical material and accompanying classroom procedures are designed to present and practice a series of linguistic items, or forms. In this type of instruction, there is the requirement that the teacher or syllabus designer examine or split the L2 into its parts, that is to say, words, collocations, grammar rules, phonemes, intonation and stress patterns, structures, notions, or functions. However, it was regarded as a non-communicative approach since it does not promote L2 development which encourages learners to connect it with the authentic-world (Poole, 2005). Therefore, no connection is seen among the forms practiced and any sort of real-world meaning. Lack of growth of fluency is one
of the main issues of this kind of inflexible approach (Seedhouse, 1997; cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011).

Focus on forms instruction is a teacher- centered approach. The advocates of form-based and grammar-based instruction strongly argue that foreign language should be instructed on the basis of pieces of grammatical components, and learners are required to place each part jointly through deductive learning and then they should make an effort to implement rules in oral or written production (Nishimura, 2000; cited in Shang, 2007). Grammar- translation and audio- lingual methods are the examples. According to Larsen- Freeman (2001; cited in Shang, 2007), students have to learn grammatical rules and then go over the teacher's model as correctly as possible with substitution and transformation drills. According to Ellis (2001; cited in Batia, 2006), students in this approach look at themselves as learners of a language and the language as the item of study. Focus on Forms approach is not just associated to the teaching of grammar, but also to vocabulary learning and teaching. It teaches and practices isolated lexical items in non- communicative, non- authentic language tasks. Like Ellis's (2001) view of grammar, the FonFs approach takes the words too as objects of study (cited in Batia, 2006).

FonFs activities require learners to learn vocabulary with isolated words that are not linked to any meaning-based task. These activities include completion exercises, matching synonyms and word association tasks. With fonfs vocabulary instruction, the activities are not necessary for accomplishing reading comprehension, they are essential for word practice, exposure and in depth processing of word meanings. Within this approach, learners pay attention to the words as separate items, not related to communicative activity. Laufer and Girsai (2008) have given an example of this type of instruction in which learners are required to be familiar with 10 unfamiliar words. They are presented with 10 unknown words with their L1 translations in a decontextualised list, supplemented by two vocabulary exercises (a) matching words that were already taught are listed in Column A to their definitions in Column B, (b) filling in the these words in given sentences, one word in each sentence. In these two tasks, dealing with the words is not linked with performing a communicative or authentic language activity. In this way the words are used as the objects of study and not as the tools of language use (cited in Batia, 2006).
Despite the rationalization, the FonFs approach has been disapproved by most proponents of FonF as unfashionable, synthetic, unessential, and usually unproductive. Long (1988) states that teaching grammatical structures in segregation does not help learners in using these forms communicatively except if they are psycholinguistically prepared to attain them at any rate (cited in Pienemann, 1984). In addition, Seedhouse (1997) argues that highly form-focused classroom activity is not natural because such use of language is not found outside the classroom (cited in Shang, 2007). According to Astika (2000), many research findings have shown that learning new words or rules is not a one-time affair, and that learner’s go through different mental stages.

### 3.4 Focus on Meaning

Focus on meaning instruction is referred to simply as communicative instruction. It appeared as a reaction to the difficulties of teaching with the focus on forms. In this meaning-based approach, L1 and L2 acquisition are considered to be essentially the same. In short, the proponents of this approach propose the teaching of a second language (L2) incidentally or implicitly, just the same as first language (L1) learning. According to Long and Robinson’s (1998) meaning-based approach, they think that nearly all children can acquire their first language without being taught form. The theory further suggests that even adults are able to master their second/foreign language if they follow the natural principles of first language learning (cited in Shang, 2007). The natural approach and direct approach are some examples of this type of instruction. These approaches support focus on meaning and natural communication itself instead of grammatical structures. Moreover, teachers are able to be lenient towards learners’ linguistic errors and too much error correction is avoided in the teaching process (Nishimura, 2000; cited in Shang, 2007).

In Focus on meaning (FonM) instruction, classroom work is principally connected with communication of meaning, with little interest in the forms used in expressing the message. It is supposed that people of all ages learn languages excellently inside or outside classroom by using it as a means of communication, rather than considering the language as an object of study (Long and Robinson, 1998; cited in Saeidi; Zafaranieh; and Shatery, 2012). As already mentioned, Wilkins, 1976; cited in Rashtchi and Keyvanfar, 2012: 16) who has termed the language teaching syllabi of Focus on Meaning as analytic, “Analytic approaches are organized in terms
of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes”.

According to (Long 1991; and Long & Robinson, 1998; cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011) focus on meaning refers to a communicative approach to language teaching/learning which spends slight or no time on the discrete points of language. The principal concern of such an approach is to make use of language in real-life situations, to put emphasis on meaning rather than form, and comprehension and fluency more than production and accuracy. On the basis of the aforementioned statements, language instruction is categorized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the types of language performances that are needed to meet those functions. Though learners are able to gain linguistic structures to some extent without any direct teaching, they still do not ultimately reach very high levels of linguistic awareness from entirely meaning-focused instruction (Spada, 1997; cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011). They are found to have regular problems with the basic features of language because they are not collecting knowledge of language structures from the communicative activities they performed. This happens all the more because teachers allow every incorrect inter language form without any comment or alteration (Seedhouse, 1997; cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011).

According to Fotos (1998), purely communicative instruction is inadequate in the same way as grammatical instruction is insufficient. One thing is clear from the above discussion that teachers who place too much emphasis on form-based instruction may hinder the development of learners’ fluency. On the other hand, if teachers focus only on meaning-based instruction, in that case learners will not achieve accuracy in their FL production.

3.5 Focus on Form

When students confront difficulties in the production and comprehension of language, it is the liability of their teachers and peers to assist them in becoming aware of their mistaken forms and provide them with the accurate and suitable forms (Long, 1991; and Long & Robinson, 1998; cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011). But this should not make teachers focus on teaching particular grammatical items, leading to focus on forms instruction making learners master sequentially projected
grammatical forms. Their aim should be only to help students use language in a manner that promotes realistic communicative use.

At the same time it should also be different from the purely communicative instruction or focus on meaning instruction where the main focus is on the use of language communicatively with little or no focus paid to the study of isolated items of language (Poole, 2005). So, in terms of how to teach grammar and vocabulary, it is realized that the world of foreign/second language teaching methodology has found itself at two extreme points. To come out of this problem, Long (1991); and Long & Robinson (1998) provide an alternative, that is, the concept of focus on form instruction which, on one hand, emphasizes the importance of communicative language use and learner- centeredness, and on the other hand, underlines the overt study of challenging parts of L2 forms (cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011).

Likewise, Poole (2005) says that focus on form is a manner of instruction which draws attention to the significance of communicative language teaching (for example, real communication), as well as keeping the importance of sporadic and precise study of L2 grammatical formations. This can be done through engaging learners in a communicative activity within a task- based teaching (TBT). If any grammar problem occurs; the teachers are supposed to take care of it so that the learners’ attention is drawn only to that actual problem, and then they again continue with the communicative activity. For instance, learners may be asked to carry out an information-gap task and for the purpose of doing so, it might be found necessary for learners to pay attention to one or more linguistic forms in order to complete the activity (Ellis, et al. 2002). Fully message-centered approach is not enough for competent second language acquisition; therefore, some type of form-focused activity must be included into communicative classroom contexts as a substitute for this insufficiency.

Long (1991); and Long & Robinson (1998) thus advocate keeping an equilibrium between focus on forms and focus on meaning by motivating teachers and learners to give attention to form when required, however within a communicative classroom environment (cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011). It has a double, concurrent focus on form and accuracy, as well as meaning and fluency. “It is also seen as a psycholinguistically plausible approach as it emphasizes the kind of attention to form that occurs in real-world situation, as it addresses learners’ linguistic
problems and as it motivates noticing which is considered necessary for acquisition” (Seedhouse, 1997; cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011: 36).

This third type of instruction is called focus on form instruction. According to Long (1997), form-focused instruction “is an umbrella term which refers to any pedagogical technique, proactive or reactive, implicit or explicit and is used to draw students’ attention to language form” (cited in Rashtchi and Keyvanfar, 2012: 161). Moreover, Ellis (2001) views FFI as “[...] any planned or incidental activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (cited in Mayo, 2011: 17). It consists of Focus on Form processes, in addition to all those activities applied for Focus on Forms, such as exercises which are specially written to teach a grammatical structure proactively. Focus on Form, on the other hand, relates only to those form-focused activities that take place throughout and are surrounded in meaning-based lessons; they are not planned beforehand, but arise in an incidental manner as a result of the interaction of learners with the subject matter or tasks that form the learners’ and their teacher’s chief focus.

The main focus of attention is on meaning. Focus on Form has received immense attention in current times as theorists and researchers have focused on incorporation of meaning-focused and form-focused instruction together in the L2 instructive settings. As described by Richards and Schmidt (2002), “Focus on Form in a technical sense is a brief allocation of attention to linguistic form as the need for this arises incidentally in the context of communication” (cited in Rashtchi and Keyvanfar, 2012: 160).

Indeed, Focus on Form has made its appearance as a reaction to the strong version of the communicative approach and it recommends a restricted use of form-focused activities in a mainly communicative language classroom. As Nassaji (1991) points out, in fact, the introduction of the communicative approach in second language teaching and learning, showed a strong inclination not to give emphasis on linguistic forms and diminishing the place of grammar teaching (cited in Rashtchi and Keyvanfar, 2012). However, in recent years the viewpoints on language teaching and learning have altered considerably.

The significance of emphasizing form has arisen from three important principles regarding second language acquisition:
Learners acquire new linguistics forms as the result of communicating in situations where the primary concern is with the message rather than the language.

Learners often feel difficulty in paying attention to and producing linguistic forms in communication because they have a restricted information-processing capacity.

Learners gain from the opportunities that occur during communication by paying attention to language structure.

(cited in Ellis, Basturkmen, Loewen, 2001a).

A large number of researchers are now in favour of a merger of communicative use of FL with a focus on linguistic form. According to Ellis, et al. (2002: 422), their assertion is based on the following four ideas:

1. To acquire the ability to use new linguistic forms communicatively, learners need the opportunity to engage in meaning-focused language use (see Prabhu, 1987).

2. However, such opportunity will only guarantee full acquisition of the new linguistic forms if learners also have the opportunity to attend to form while engaged in meaning-focused language use. Long (1991) argues that only in this way can attention to form be made compatible with the immutable processes that characterize L2 acquisition and thereby overcome persistent developmental errors.

3. Given that learners have a limited capacity to process the second language (L2) and have difficulty in simultaneously attending to meaning and form they will prioritize meaning over form when performing a communicative activity (VanPatten, 1990).

4. For this reason, it is necessary to find ways of drawing learners’ attention to form during a communicative activity. As Doughty (2001) notes ‘the factor that distinguishes focus on form from other pedagogical approaches is the requirement that focus on form involves learners’ briefly and perhaps simultaneously attending to form, meaning and use during one cognitive event’ (p.211).
3.5.1 Vocabulary Teaching Through FonF:

The concept of Focus on Form instruction was primarily proposed for teaching grammar by researchers such as Doughty and Verala (1998), Williams and Evans (1998), and Van Patten and Oikkenon (1996) (cited in Saeidi; Zaferanieh; and Shatery, 2012). It has been asserted that such an instruction can also be used for teaching vocabulary (Doughty & Williams, 1998; cited in Saeidi, et al. 2012), and therefore, learning vocabulary when carrying out a communicative task is regarded as FonF. In terms of vocabulary teaching through FonF, students’ focus of attention is drawn to lexical items (single words and multi-words units) within a communicative task setting, as these lexical items are very important for the achievement of a communicative or an authentic language task. Similar to Ellis’s (2001; cited in Batia, 2006) notion of grammar, the FonF approach to vocabulary looks at words as tools for task execution. According to Laufer and Girsai (2008), when learners read a text or engage in a group discussion, they may encounter unknown words and look them up in a dictionary. This activity represents Focus on Form as these words are seen as the necessary tools for task accomplishment. Currently an immense bulk of research has appeared supporting both negotiation of form and meaning, as this combination enhances acquisition.

Ellis and He (1999) found that when learners negotiate and produce words, they comprehend better and acquire more words than when they have access to premodified input. Likewise, De la Fuente (2002), addressing Spanish as L2, showed that acquisition and retention were greater when learners had an opportunity to negotiate and produce than when they were exposed to manipulated input. These two studies were concerned with vocabulary

(cited in Baleghizadeh, 2010: 122).

Doughty and Williams (1998) remark “it is likely that focus on form can enhance lexical acquisition, and there is mounting evidence that, in the acquisition of lexical items, as with that of grammatical structures, some interaction is helpful” (cited in Saeidi, Zaferanieh, Shatery, 2012: 73).
3.5.2 Focus On Form Techniques:

1. **Input flooding** (providing 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. **Task-essential language** (the necessity of using specific forms to complete a task) (Doughty and Williams, 1998b)

3. **Input enhancement** (directing the learner's attention to a specific form in a text by highlighting, underlining, coloring, rule giving,...) (Long and Robinson, 1998)

4. **Negotiation** (asking and answering questions about how a special form is learnt and taught) (Lightbown, 1998)

5. **Recast** (corrective reformulation of children’s utterances that preserve the child’s intended meaning) (Long and Robinson, 1998)

6. **Output enhancement** (Promoting students to produce output coating specific forms) (Doughty and Williams, 1998a)

7. **Interaction enhancement** (an instructional treatment making students produce output by providing interactional modifications in order to help students notice a mismatch between their interlanguage and target language form) (Doughty and Williams, 1998b)

8. **Dictogloss** (a procedure encouraging students to reflect on their own output by reconstructing a text which is read to them) (Swain, 1998)

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

10. **Input processing** (interpreting input with the goal of incorporating the knowledge into one’s interlanguage) (Williams and Evans, 1998)
11. **Garden path** (a technique telling learners in advance about a linguistic regularity plus its exception by pointing out the error made at the moment of generality) (Doughty and Williams, 1998b)

(cited in Farrokhi and Talabari, 2011: 37)

3.5.3 **Types of Focus on Form Instruction**

Table 3.1: Types of Focus on Form Instruction (Ellis, 2001; and Ellis, Basturkmen, Loewen, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) Planned FonF</th>
<th>Use of focused communicative tasks with predetermined targets.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enriched input</td>
<td>Input flood or input enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Focused communicative tasks</td>
<td>Communicative tasks that have been designed to elicit the use of a specific linguistic form in the context of meaning-centered language use.</td>
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<tr>
<th>B) Incidental FonF</th>
<th>Unfocused communicative tasks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pre-emptive FonF</td>
<td>The teacher or a student makes a linguistic form the topic of the discourse even though no error has been committed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Student-initiated</td>
<td>A student asks a question about a linguistic form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Teacher-initiated</td>
<td>The teacher gives advice about a linguistic form she/he thinks might be problematic or asks the students a question about the form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reactive FonF</td>
<td>The teacher or another student responds to an error that a student makes in the context of a communicative activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Negotiation</td>
<td>A process of exchanging thoughts with another (or others) aimed at reaching an agreement about a particular issue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| a.1. Conversational | The response to the error is triggered by a failure to understand what the student meant. It involves ‘negotiation
of meaning’.

| a.2. Didactic | The response occurs even though no breakdown in communication has taken place; it constitutes a ‘time-out’ from communicating. It involves ‘negotiation of form’.
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<tr>
<td><strong>b. Feedback</strong></td>
<td>Means of informing the learners about their output.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.1. Implicit feedback</td>
<td>The teacher or another student responds to a student’s error without directly indicating an error has been made, e.g. by means of a recast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.2. Explicit feedback</td>
<td>The teacher or another student responds to a student’s error by directly indicating that an error has been made, e.g. by formally correcting the error or by using metalanguage to draw attention to it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Beltran, 2007: 127-128)

- **Planned (Proactive) focus on form:**

  This category of focus on form employs the use of focused tasks, specifically communicative tasks which aim to produce the use of a particular linguistic form in a meaning-based context. In this view, the focus-on-form is decided in advance. For example, a same-or-different task could be used to introduce couples of pictures in which learners are required to use ‘at’ and ‘in’ (the target forms) in an attempt to find out whether the pictures are the identical or dissimilar (Ellis, et al. 2002).

  The teacher plans what forms are needed to be focused on. The form chosen is based on the teacher’s awareness of the students’ problems and the common observations of the students’ inter language necessities.

- **Incidental focus on form**

  It involves the use of unfocused tasks, i.e. communicative tasks which are designed to draw general samples of the language more readily than specific forms. Such tasks can be carried out without any special consideration to form at all. In spite of that, it is also possible that the students and teacher will choose by chance to focus on different forms when doing the task. The forms become the focus in the course of
communication incidentally and then the attention returns to communicative activity again (*Ibid*). In this way, attention to form will be wider rather than intensive i.e. a large number of different forms can be dealt with within a short time rather than a particular form attended to for a long span. For example, when carrying out an opinion-gap task, students might make many different mistakes which the teacher rectifies or students may feel the need to ask the teacher about some particular form, for example the meaning of a key word they are not familiar with.

Both kinds of focus on form necessitate the use of a communicative task. In the planned focus-on-form, the teacher selects a task to attend to particular linguistic aspects and this influences how the task is carried out in the classroom. Whereas, in the incidental focus on form, the forms which are focused on are not pre-determined, however they occur naturally out of the performance of the task. Even though the focus on form is planned, incidental concern to a variety of forms besides the targeted form can take place.

Incidental focus on form has two main kinds, reactive and preemptive focus on form.

1. **Reactive focus on form:** It involves dealing with learners’ error in a communicative situation. It happens when a learner has uttered something that holds an actual error which is then corrected by the teacher and sometimes by another learner to correct this mistake. As a result, this type of focus on form is a useful source of providing learners with negative evidence. It attends to errors (specifically performance problems) that appear in the context of meaningful communication. Within communicative activities, the linguistic errors that students produce may or may not affect communication. When there is no misinterpretation of message, the course of conversation can follow on most occasions. But if there are difficulties in communication, the teacher or the other students can discuss the meaning of a word or expression using either requests for clarification or requests for confirmation.

2. **Preemptive focus on form:** It attempts to make a particular form the subject of discussion although there was no actual problem in the use of that form has found. It addresses an authentic gap in the learners’ information, and usually consists of exchanges involving a query and a response (*Ellis, Basturkmen, Loewen, 2001b,*
An extremely obvious example of preemptive focus on form arises when teachers or learners raise questions such as “How do you spell...?” or “How do you pronounce...?” to prevent possible blunders in a subsequent activity. Preemptive focus on form is absolutely directed to errors which are expected to occur and therefore block communication. It can be initiated by the student or the teacher. Student pre-emptive focus-on-form is typically instigated by question asking for the information which the teacher are addressed by the student. Teacher initiated focus-on-form is started either by a query pointed at the students or by an advice-giving statement.

3.6 A Task-based focus on form approach:

Tasks are considered as crucial according to both L2 research and pedagogy. According to García Mayo (2007), a range of task characteristics (task modality, task complexity, and so on) are the centre of recent research that aims to illustrate how task-based interaction plays a crucial role in language expansion (cited in Mayo, 2011). Tasks that create learners’ interest in certain aspects of language have also been constructed particularly for L2 classrooms. “Task-based instruction involving FonF serves as one way in which linguistic form can be addressed extensively (rather than intensively) and also helps learners develop confidence and fluency in communicating” (Ellis, Loewen, and Basturkmen, 2006; cited in Mayo, 2011: 20). The question arises which task design features may have an effect on the nature of learner’s language and on the development and learning of the L2. Particularly, how can L2 teachers develop characteristics in their instruction that direct learners’ attention to form.

3.6.1 The Place of Focus on Form in Task- Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-based language teaching does emphasize meaning but does not neglect a focus on form. According to Edwards and Willis (2005), the primary concern of task based language teaching is fluency. Nevertheless, the proponents of this approach aim to support form also; research shows that learners are required to be stimulated to give special consideration to different features of grammar to reach satisfactory levels of accuracy in the target language. It is broadly acknowledged that learning somewhat relies on a learner’s skill to give attention to significant aspects of the linguistic
system to recreate their existing awareness of the target language and to focus on form. Although an explicit focus on form nevertheless elicits much condemnation, the importance of it in a language teaching course cannot be refused. Recent trends emphasize on the amalgamation of form and meaning. According to (Skehan, 1998; Long and Norris, 2000), “the marriage of meaning and form constitutes one of the key features of TBLT” (cited in Branden, 2006: 9).

Since the meaningful use of language will necessarily imply the establishment of relevant form-meaning mappings, the learner will need to manipulate and thus pay at least some (conscious or unconscious) attention to form. According to some authors (Doughty and Williams, 1998; Ellis, 2003; Long, 1998; Long and Norris, 2000; Skehan, 1998), task designers should manipulate tasks in such a way as to enhance the probability that language learners will pay attention to particular aspects of the language code in the context of meaningful activity, because this is believed to strongly promote second language acquisition. . . . As a result, much of the recent literature on task-based language teaching explores how focus on form can optimally be integrated into task-based classroom work and discusses whether this should be accomplished implicitly or explicitly, during task performance, before or after it, and so on. (Ibid)

Many applied linguistics have claimed that form and meaning are equally important, and that they are probably the two sides of a single coin and not like the opposing issues. But, that does not imply returning the presentation of grammar from the context, nor of dealing learners with decontextualised sentence structures that are likely to learn by rote and internalize in the course of repetition and manipulation. In spite of the fact that large number of students learn a new language without much focus on language form (for example, in CLT class), “there is now some evidence that learners do better if, at some point, their attention is drawn to typical features of language form” (Skehan, 1994a; cited in Cheng-jun, 2006). This can happen by two ways:

- Through consciousness-raising exercises highlighting frequently used language items, to help learners perceive patterns (Schmidt, 1990), and systematize what they know (cited in Cheng-jun, 2006: 30).
• Learners are asked to check their abilities to interact in such kind of situations in which accuracy really matters (example, making a public presentation of their ideas or findings), consequently they consider that there is a requirement at a preceding planning stage, to arrange their thoughts or ideas correctly and to examine carefully the quality of their lexical choices, their grammar and pronunciation whether they are correct in all details because it is crucial.

According to Seedhouse (1997), most of the researchers have argued that if the focus is in one direction (i.e. meaning or form), then there are demerits. The best way to continue is to cover form and meaning both (accuracy and fluency). Both elements are essential for second language learning. Sanchez (2004: 52) remarks that “meaning is ‘contained in’ and ‘conditioned by’ the form in which it is inserted. Form alone is useless for communication if meaning is not attached to it”.

There are two major ways that make an effort to merge an accurate focus on form in task-based teaching. According to Ellis (2003), the tasks which are designed for drawing learners’ attention to specific linguistic elements of the language system, referred to as ‘focused tasks’ and secondly ‘unfocused tasks’ are tasks that draw common samples of language use instead of specific forms, it basically involves incidental focus to form. Regardless of which one is talked about, for a task-based syllabus that includes an actual attention to form is gained success for the completion of task and language development. In addition, Ellis also mentions two possible objectives for integrating a focus on form into a task-based program of study- the improvement of implicit and explicit knowledge. At this time, implicit knowledge deals with the knowledge regarding language that a speaker shows in performance but does not have information about that, whereas, explicit knowledge directed to knowledge of language that speakers are having familiar with, and when asked they can express in words (Ibid).

Various kinds of tasks work in a different way for the period of such an incorporation process. Ellis (2003) utters that the type of tasks considered essential to boost implicit knowledge will be either structure-based production tasks (tasks that are developed to embrace a certain target language aspect), or interpretation tasks (tasks which are based on the postulation that acquisition occurs as a consequence of input-processing). In the light of explicit knowledge, consciousness-raising tasks (tasks which are formed to accommodate mainly to explicit learning and create
language itself the content) are required. He wraps up where implicit knowledge is concerned, course designers cannot resolve beforehand exactly which forms, or range of forms, should be addressed nor can they specify when they should be talked about. All that can be done is a checklist of items and procedures for deciding when a particular item can usefully be dealt with. The checklist can be used by classroom teachers to assist them set up which forms their students have and have not acquired expertise and significantly, which forms they are in the process of recently mastering.

3.7 Conclusion:

For appropriate and successful communication, students need to gain fluency as well as linguistic accuracy in foreign language instruction. Putting too much emphasis on either approach can hamper students’ language acquisition. It is believed that grammar-based communicative approach which combines both form and meaning can “significantly increase learner awareness of the target structure and improve accuracy in its use, as well as providing opportunities for meaning-focused comprehension and production of the target language” (Fotos, 1998: 307). The aim of this chapter was to investigate the effectiveness of three kinds of vocabulary instruction: Focus on Forms, Focus on Meaning, and Focus on Form. It has been clarified that learners can acquire considerable vocabulary through FonF instruction inspite of FonF and FonM instruction. Focus on Form instruction would be more effectual in vocabulary learning. Finally, the place of form in task-based language teaching has been discussed briefly.