

EFL Learners' and Teachers' Preferences for Isolated and Integrated Focus on Form: The Effect of Learners' Proficiency

Sasan Baleghizadeh

Associate Professor, Shahid Beheshti
University

Email: sasanbaleghizadeh@yahoo.com

Ensieh Khodarahmi

Ph.D. Candidate, Allameh Tabataba'i
University

Email: enkhodarahmi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study investigates EFL learners' and teachers' beliefs and preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form and explores the relationship with learners' EFL proficiency level. A total number of 157 learners and 53 teachers completed the questionnaires on preferences for integrated and isolated focus on form. Participants' views were further explored based on their responses to the open-ended prompts at the end of the questionnaires. The results indicated that proficiency level influenced learners' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form. In addition, teachers and learners were found to hold divergent attitudes towards different types of focus on form instruction. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of considering students' preferences in planning classroom practices.

Keywords: Language learning beliefs, learners' and teachers' instructional preferences, grammar pedagogy, form-focused instruction, isolated focus on form, integrated focus on form

1. Introduction

A learner-centered approach to second language teaching advocates taking into account learners' preferences and attitudes in the process of decision-making in relation to curriculum development, syllabus design, and classroom practice (Spratt, 1999). A considerable amount of research has investigated learners' beliefs and preferences with regard to various aspects of language learning. This line of research has shown that there may be significant differences between language learners' and teachers' preferences and views about language learning and that such conflicts would likely exert a negative influence on learners' behavior and approach to the learning process (e.g. Fox, 1993; Horwitz, 1988; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; McCargar, 1993; Peacock, 1998; Spada, 1987). Therefore, as Schulz (2001) noted, it behooves teachers and researchers to explore learners' attitudes about different aspects of language learning and classroom practice and to resolve any possible discrepancies. Failure to handle these conflicts can lead to learners' mistrust (Peacock 1999; Richards & Lockhart, 1996), anxiety (Young, 1991), and ultimately unsuccessful language learning (Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Sawir, 2002).

Given the significance of grammar instruction in second language classroom, a number of studies have examined learners' and teachers' attitudes and preferences for various types of grammar pedagogy (e.g. Borg, 1999; Inceçay & Dollar, 2011; Loewen et al., 2009; Schulz, 1996, 2001; Spada et al., 2009). The general impression gleaned from these studies suggests that, on the whole, learners and teachers see grammar as an integral part of language learning and prefer it to be taught in a more communicative way. By way of illustration, in their study, Inceçay and Dollar (2011) reported that advanced and upper-intermediate adult EFL learners acknowledged the importance of grammar in foreign language learning and were in favor of a type of grammar instruction which was delivered using communicative and real world activities involving interaction. Empirical studies have also shown that grammar instruction is successful if attention to form is embedded in meaning-based activities (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Ellis, 2001; Long & Robinson, 1998; Lyster 1994; Lyster, 1998; Pica, 1997; Williams, 2001). This type of grammar instruction is commonly referred to as focus on form as opposed to focus on forms which involve systematic teaching of pre-determined grammatical features based on a structural syllabus (Long, 1991).

Focus on form instruction can be practiced in a number of ways. Ellis (2001) distinguished between planned and incidental focus on form. While in the former, a particular form is pre-determined for treatment, in the latter, teacher will select to incidentally draw

students' attention to various forms. In a more recent classification, Spada and Lightbown (2008) proposed isolated and integrated focus on form as two approaches to teaching grammar communicatively. While isolated focus on form involves drawing learners' attention to form *before* or *after* a communicative activity, integrated focus on form involves drawing learners' attention to form *during* a communicative activity.

Compared to the attention given to learners' general beliefs about grammar instruction and despite the fact that current literature values focus on form grammar instruction (Doughty, 2001; Ellis, 2008; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long, 1991; Van Patten, 1990), there has been little research specifically into learners' and teachers' attitudes and preferences for different types of focus on form instruction. To redress this imbalance, the present study sets out to explore Iranian EFL learners' and teachers' beliefs and preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form instruction.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Form-focused instruction

Form-focused instruction (FFI) refers to attempts to facilitate the process of L2 development by directing learners' attention to linguistic forms or providing them with the opportunity to practice them (Ellis, 2001). The importance of directing learners' attention to form has been supported on different grounds. Rejecting Krashen's zero grammar, Schmidt (1994), for example, highlighted the importance of FFI by asserting that no language acquisition takes place without learners' noticing L2 forms in the input. Studies of immersion programs in Canada (e.g. Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin 1995, 2002) also showed that although learners had been able to achieve acceptable fluency, they failed to use some grammatical features such as verb tense marking accurately even after years of study.

Long (1991) distinguishes between two types of FFI: *focus on forms* vs. *focus on form*. The former involves systematic teaching and practicing of pre-determined grammatical features based on a structural syllabus through approaches such as mimicry, translation and memorization. The latter, however, refers to lessons in which grammar is taught and practiced within a communicative context. Indeed, in *focus on form* instruction, the main emphasis is placed on meaning and communication and attention to form is derived out of meaning-centered activities (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2002). As regards the relative efficacy of each type, there is substantial evidence that although focus on forms instruction

improves learners' performance on discrete-point language tests, this type of grammar instruction does not enhance learners' ability to use language spontaneously in communication (Ellis et al., 2002; Norris & Ortega, 2000). Therefore, it can be argued that if FFI addresses language forms alone, it is beneficial only in marginal ways since it cannot significantly affect learners' implicit grammatical knowledge which underlies their ability to use language communicatively.

In instructed SLA literature, there is now a widespread consensus that attention to both form and meaning (i.e. focus on form) is required in order for instruction to be as effective as possible.

2.2. Focus on form instruction

Theoretically, focus on form is supported by Van Patten's (1990) information-processing theory. According to this theory, learners have a limited capacity for cognitive processing and can't attend to both form and meaning simultaneously. Therefore, in a communicative activity, they are more likely to attend to meaning. This indicates the need to draw their attention to form through intervention to facilitate noticing of linguistic forms.

Long's original definition of focus on form includes reactive and incidental feedbacks which learners receive as they engage in communicative activities. Ellis (2001) further divided focus on form into two types: planned focus on form and incidental focus on form. Planned focus on form involves employing focused tasks, i.e. communicative tasks that require the production or comprehension of a pre-determined linguistic form. Incidental focus on form, on the other hand, involves the use of unfocused tasks, i.e. communicative tasks which require learners to draw on their general language proficiency to complete the task. In this case, many language forms are likely to be addressed extensively rather than a single form treated intensively (Ellis, 2001).

2.3. Integrated and isolated focus on form

In addition to Long (1991) and Ellis's (2001) versions of focus on form, Spada and Lightbown (2008) proposed *isolated* and *integrated* focus on form. Isolated focus on form involves drawing learners' attention to form *before* a communicative activity or *after* a communicative activity in which learners have had difficulty using a particular language form. Isolated focus on form occurs as part of a communicative language program and differs from Long's (1991) focus on forms, which involves systematic teaching and practicing of

pre-determined language forms based on a structural syllabus that is not associated with true communicative practice (Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

Integrated focus on form involves drawing learners' attention to form *during* a communicative activity. It can be either planned or incidental. This definition is the same as Ellis' (2001) definition of focus on form. However, it differs from Long's original version of focus on form which is only reactive and incidental.

Isolated and integrated focus on form are supported both theoretically and empirically. Theoretical support for isolated focus on form comes from Dekeyser's (1998) skill-building theory (Spada et. al, 2009). He argues for a kind of explicit grammar instruction which is followed by some exercises to reinforce language forms in students' mind in declarative form, thus, making them easier to remember during communicative activities. Empirical studies have also shown that isolating language features in the input can be beneficial to learners (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; Barcroft, 2002; Trofimovich, 2005). These studies showed that communicative context is not helpful in initial perception and interpretation of certain formal features and that the learning task should provide learners with opportunity to give more conscious attention to form.

Theoretical support for integrated focus on form comes from Long's *interaction hypothesis*, Lyster's *negotiation of form* and Swain and Lapkin's *metatalk* which all argue that when learners' attention is directed to form within communicative activities, they can make form-meaning relations, hence, are more likely to acquire grammatical forms (Spada et al., 2009). Besides theoretical support, empirical studies have provided substantial evidence of the effectiveness of integrated focus on form (Day & Shapson, 1991; Lyster, 2004; Ellis, 2001; Williams & Evan, 1998). These studies provide support for the hypothesis that drawing learners' attention to formal features during a communicative activity benefits their L2 learning.

As Spada and Lightbown (2008) pointed out both isolated and integrated focus on form occur as part of a communicative language teaching program. They are not entirely distinct approaches to grammar instruction and are not in competition; rather, they are the ends of a continuum and are complementary.

In this study, Spada and Lightbown's (2008) conceptualization of focus on form instruction, namely isolated vs. integrated focus on form was selected as the main framework because, as indicated above, it is more comprehensive than both Long (1991) and Ellis's (2001) definitions of focus on form.

2.4. Beliefs about grammar instruction

Teachers' and learners' attitudes and preferences for grammar instruction and corrective feedback have been the focus of a number of studies in recent years (e.g. Schulz, 1996, 2001; Loewen et al., 2009; Borg, 1999; Inceciay & Dollar, 2011). Schulz (2001) investigated learners and teachers' attitude about implicit and explicit grammar instruction as well as inductive versus deductive grammar instruction in Colombia. He found that both learners and teachers believed in the positive role of grammar in foreign language learning but they agreed that, for being able to use grammar for communication, grammar study is not enough.

In a large scale study, Loewen et al. (2009) investigated learners' beliefs about grammar instruction and feedback. They found that learners' belief about grammar was underpinned by several constructs including efficacy of grammar, negative attitude toward error correction, and priority of communication. Furthermore, EFL and ESL learners were found to differ with respect to priority they accorded to either grammar instruction and communication. ESL students were more enthusiastic about their communication skills while EFL learners were keener on grammar instruction. Loewen et al. (2009) explained these differences by learners' different social context and the amount of grammar instruction they received in the past.

More recently, Inceciay and Dollar (2011) investigated 26 foreign language learners' attitude about grammar instruction. The result showed that, from learners' point of view, grammar was an important dimension of language learning which should be better taught in a communicative way.

Although learners and teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction have been investigated in previous research, their views and preferences for different types of focus on form have remained relatively unexplored. Research has also been scarce on how students' proficiency level may influence their attitudes and preferences for grammar instruction. This is in spite of the fact that learners' level of proficiency can be a source of variation in their beliefs about language learning (Asbjornson, 2000; Mori, 1999; Yang, 1999). In addition, there is a need to compare students' preferences for different types of focus on form with those of their teachers as discrepancies in their views can adversely influence the learning process (Fox, 1993; Horwitz, 1988; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; McCargar, 1993; Peacock, 1998; Spada, 1987). These are the focus of investigation in the present study.

3. Research questions

Given the preponderance of opinion from researchers and theorists about the effectiveness of different types of focus on form grammar instruction, this study reports EFL learners' and teachers' perspectives on this issue. The following three research questions guided the study:

- (1) Which type of focus on form do Iranian EFL learners prefer? Isolated or integrated?
- (2) Does learners' level of English language proficiency influence their attitudes and preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form?
- (3) Which type of focus on form do Iranian EFL teachers prefer? Isolated or integrated?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

As many as 157 Iranian EFL learners (66 males and 91 females) and 53 EFL teachers (19 males and 34 females) were recruited from a language teaching institute. Learners ranged in age from 15 to 26 ($M=19$; $SD=2.12$). Only one of them had lived in an English speaking country for more than 3 months. Data obtained from him was omitted in data analysis for the purpose of homogeneity.

Teachers' average age was 28 ($SD=3.41$). They had been teaching English for a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 14 years. They all had passed teacher education courses offered by the language teaching institute to qualify to teach.

4.2. Instruments

The following three instruments were used in the present study:

Oxford Placement Test (OPT) -To determine learners' level of English language proficiency, OPT was administered. This test measures test takers' level of English language proficiency on the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). It consists of 60 items with multiple-choice format and takes approximately 1 hour to complete.

Questionnaire for learners' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form-To explore learners' preferences and beliefs about isolated and integrated focus on form, a 26-item questionnaire developed by Spada et al. (2009) was used. A total of 13 items are associated with learners' preferences for isolated focus on form and 13 items address learners' preferences for integrated focus on form. The questionnaire is on a five-point Likert scale, with the answer options of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". To minimize the intervening effect of learners' English language proficiency on their responses, the questionnaire was translated into Persian, the native language of the learners. The Persian

version was then back-translated into English by a different translator. The differences between the two versions were subsequently discussed and resolved. The Persian version was pilot-tested with a subsample of 27 students from the same language institute. Based on the data obtained, internal consistency was estimated at 0.79 according to Cronbach's alpha. Some wording problems were also addressed to enhance comprehensibility of the items. To further elicit learners' beliefs about isolated and integrated focus on form and to validate the data obtained from the questionnaire, the researchers added an open-ended question to the questionnaire which asked participants why they preferred one type of focus on form to the other (see Appendix I).

Questionnaire for teachers' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form- A 22-item questionnaire developed by Spada, Valeo, and Tomita (in press) was used to investigate teachers' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form. As many as 11 items address teachers' preferences for isolated focus on form and a total of 11 items are related to their preferences for integrated focus on form. Respondents were supposed to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "*strongly agree*" to "*strongly disagree*". Three open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire by the researchers to find out whether teachers' preferences for applying isolated and integrated focus on form instruction differ according to learners' level of English language proficiency (see Appendix II).

Data obtained from both questionnaires were then scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1= "*strongly disagree*" to 5= "*strongly agree*" for items indicating a preference for integrated focus on form. The items addressing a preference for isolated focus on form were reverse-coded. Therefore, higher scores on the questionnaires showed a preference for integrated focus on form.

4.3. Procedures

After necessary permissions were granted by the institute authorities, the researchers went to the classrooms (6 male and 6 female classes) and gave the necessary instructions to the students. They were informed that their information would be kept confidential and be reported anonymously. Data were collected during normal class time. First, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered to determine learners' level of English language proficiency. To classify participants into advanced and lower intermediate proficiency levels, Oxford Placement Test interpretation table was drawn upon. Accordingly, participants who

scored between 30 to 39 were classified as lower intermediate and those with scores 48 and higher were classified as advanced learners. The number of participants in each group was 85 and 72, respectively. A number of 60 students scored between 39 to 48 or below 30 who were not included in the study as they did not belong to any of the two proficiency levels which were the main focus of the study. After doing the test, the questionnaire of learners' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form was distributed among those participants who had returned the OPT. Prior to completing the questionnaire, the researchers gave the learners some explanation about the differences between isolated and integrated focus on form by describing some sample activities and exercises.

At the same time, teachers' questionnaire was distributed among 78 teachers either in face-to-face visits or through emails. A total of 53 questionnaires were returned.

5. Results and discussions

As the first step of data analysis, reliability coefficients of the questionnaires for learners' and teachers' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form were estimated which were found to be 84% and 81%, respectively.

5.1. Learners' Overall views

To answer the first research question, that is the one dealing with students' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form, mean responses for the isolated and integrated sections of the learners' questionnaire were calculated. As illustrated in Table 1, the total mean score for integrated focus on form was only slightly higher than the mean score for isolated focus on form (44.96 and 43.81). Therefore, it can be concluded that, in general, learners did not show a clear preference for either type of focus on form. This result is parallel to the results obtained in Jean (2005) and Spada's (2006) studies. Jean (2005) found that high school students, in her study, valued both isolated and integrated focus on form and Spada (2006) reported that adult learners of English did not prefer one type of focus on form to the other.

Table1. Descriptive statistics for learners' views on isolated and integrated FFI

Preferences for isolated focus on form		Preferences for integrated focus on form	
M	SD	M	SD
43.81	0.23	44.96	0.20

5.1.1. The role of language proficiency in learners' preferences

To examine variations in preferences for the two types of focus on form (i.e. isolated vs. integrated) according to proficiency level, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was carried out. Proficiency level was considered as the independent variable with two levels (i.e. lower intermediate and advanced) and preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form instruction were entered into the analysis as two dependent variables. Prior to running the analysis, preliminary assumptions for MANOVA were examined through performing Box and Levene's tests (see Table 2). No serious violations were noted in homogeneity of covariance matrices and equality of error variances for the dependent variables (see Table 2).

In addition, skewness and kurtosis values for the distribution of both dependent variables in the two proficiency levels were examined to assess the normality of the distributions. These values were within the acceptable range of -1.96 to 1.926 at $p \leq .05$ for all the distributions (Field, 2005) (see Table 2). Therefore the assumption of normality was not violated, either.

Table2. Box's Test and Levene's Test

Box's test of equality of covariance matrices	Box's M	8.17	
	F	2.39	
	Sig.	.19	
		Preference for isolated focus on form	Preference for integrated focus on form
Levene's test of equality of error variance	F	3.27	1.96
	Sig.	.06	.28

* $p \leq .05$

The results of mean comparison between the two proficiency groups are presented in Table 3. The results disclosed a statistically significant difference between the two proficiency groups in their preferences for isolated focus on form ($F= 4.63$, $sig=.03$, $p \leq .05$). An inspection of the mean scores indicated that advanced level participants showed significantly stronger support for isolated focus on form ($M=58$, $SD=2.94$) than lower intermediate participants ($M=34$, $SD=.82$). Effect size value for this statistical difference was .06 which is moderate (Cohen, 1988).

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Although lower intermediate learners had more positive attitudes towards integrated focus on form, the difference between the two groups for this type of focus on form was not statistically significant ($F= 1.14$, $sig=.36$, $p \leq .05$).

Table3. MANOVA results for differences in preference for isolated and integrated focus on form according to proficiency level

Dependent variables	Proficiency level	N	Mean	SD	F value	Partial Eta Squared
Isolated focus on form	Lower intermediate	85	34	.82	4.63	.06
	Advanced	72	58	2.94		
Integrated focus on form	Lower intermediate	85	43	1.91	1.14	.00
	Advanced	72	31	3.12		

To help further explain differences between the two groups, their responses to the prompt at the end of the questionnaire were analyzed. The emerged themes from the comments made by the two groups were found to be in line with the results obtained from the questionnaire. Most of the lower intermediate learners reported that they prefer integrated focus on form. Common reasons put forward by them for such a preference were: a) Integrated grammar instruction allows to learn how to use grammatical structures in context. For example, one of them commented (*in Persian*):

"I learn grammar better when the teacher stops my speech to correct or explain grammatical structures which I have used erroneously. I think I remember that better in the future"

or another one said:

"I like my teacher to teach grammar rules when we encounter them in reading, listening, or speaking. It helps me see how that structure can be actually used".

b) It is more motivating to learn language rules during communicative activities. One of the participants, for example, noted (*in Persian*):

"I find myself more willing to learn grammar when the teacher draw our attention to grammar in writing or as we are reading, listening, and speaking in English".

Generally, this group considered isolated focus on form as being useful only when they were dealing with complex grammatical structures which need more time and explanation on the part of the teacher.

Advanced learners, on the other hand, reported that they prefer isolated focus on form because they like to do a communicative activity for the sake of communication and they see no point in teachers' drawing their attention to formal aspects during communicative activities, thereby spoiling the joy of using English to communicate. Many of them commented like (*in Persian*):

"I do not like it when the teacher stops me while I'm speaking, watching a movie or reading a text to teach grammar. It just distracts me my attention."

Or another one said:

"I'd rather the teacher explain grammar before or after my speaking, reading or listening. When we are using the language, I don't like to be preoccupied with grammatical forms that we are expected to learn."

It appears that lower intermediate and advanced learners' philosophy behind doing communicative activities is different. While lower intermediate learners consider communicative activities as good opportunities to get to know the use of grammatical structures, advanced learners like to do communicative activities to learn to communicate through English rather than learning new grammatical structures or receiving feedback on their errors. As more proficient learners should have developed the capacity to apply language rules in meaningful context even when they learn them in isolation, stronger support for isolated focus on form among advanced learners seems most likely to derive from such capacity. Unlike advanced learners, lower-intermediate learners had a greater concern for learning how to apply language rules in context. They believe that integrated focus on form can be more helpful to them because it allows them to see how grammatical structures should be used. These findings confirm the results of previous studies which have shown that EFL proficiency can lead to a divergence of opinion between learners in relation to their beliefs about language learning and their instructional preferences (Asbjornson, 2000; Haung & Tsai, 2003; Peacock, 2001).

5.2. Teachers' views

To investigate teachers' attitudes towards integrated and isolated focus on form, the total mean score for the two parts of the teachers' questionnaire were calculated. Table 3 summarizes descriptive statistics for their responses. As shown in the table, the total mean score for the isolated section was higher than the mean score for the integrated one (47.64 and 39.87). This shows teachers' more positive view towards isolated focus on form. To gain further insights into their views and to examine the effect of learners' language proficiency

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on the type of focus on form they opt for, their responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed. The prompts asked them whether they prefer different types of focus on form for learners at lower-intermediate and advanced levels.

Table4. Descriptive statistics for teachers' views on isolated and integrated focus on form

Preferences for isolated focus on form		Preferences for integrated focus on form	
M	SD	M	SD
47.64	0.30	39.87	0.39

The general consensus among them was that intermediate learners do not possess the required capabilities to attend to both form and meaning simultaneously during communicative activities; therefore, to ensure that they achieve a maximum understanding, grammatical structures should be taught prior to or after communicative activities. This is illustrated in the comments made by one of them:

"For intermediate learners, I think teaching grammar separately before or after communicative activities work better. They need to focus on structures in isolation; it is easier for both learner and teacher."

For advanced learners, on the other hand, they reported that they employ both integrated and isolated focus on form techniques. According to their comments, there are some grammatical rules that are too complex to be taught using integrated focus on form. One of them, for example, said:

"In my opinion, advanced learners can learn grammatical points during communicative activities and the teacher does not need to explain them in isolation. But there are some complex structures for which isolated instruction is more helpful."

While lower intermediate and advanced learners showed consistence preferences for integrated and isolated focus on form, respectively, teachers deemed isolated instruction to be more suitable for intermediate learners and a combination of integrated and isolated instruction more helpful to advanced learners. A plausible explanation for the popularity of isolated focus on form among teachers can be related to their concern about the effectiveness of integrated focus on form. In other words, their stronger support for isolated focus on form can be taken to mean that they see explicit instruction of grammatical rules before or after communicative activities more effective than teaching them during these activities.

Previous research has indicated that integrated focus on form is particularly effective with those aspects of grammar which hinder communication (Spada & Lightbown, 2008;

Spada, Lightbown, & White, 2005; Lightbown, 1998) and isolated instruction is better suited to those situations when the form in focus is not an important carrier of meaning (Spada et al., 2005). These findings seem to better resonate with learners' preferences than those of teachers in the present study. It is in less proficient learners' performance that global errors are more likely to occur (Hendrickson, 1976, 1981) and as was indicated above, research shows that integrated instruction is better suited to these types of errors. This is in line with the way lower-intermediate learners prefer grammar to be taught and is opposite to what their teachers considered to be more helpful to them. As regards advanced learners whose grammatical errors do not usually interfere with meaning, isolating grammatical instruction from communicative interaction seems more appropriate since it does not interrupt the flow of communication. This is what they reported to prefer, i.e. using English in communicative activities for the sake of communication rather than learning language rules.

These findings, however, should not be taken to mean that integrated focus on form is of no help to advanced learners or isolated focus on form should not be practiced for teaching grammar to less proficient learners. As a matter of fact, no hard and fast rules can be established for choosing between these two types of focus on form. Besides learners' preferences and level of English language proficiency, rule complexity, saliency of input, and age are also other important factors which teachers need to take into account while choosing between isolated and integrated focus on form.

6. Conclusion

This study was an attempt to provide an understanding of EFL learners and teachers' beliefs and preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data showed that learners and teachers' attitudes towards isolated and integrated focus on form were strongly related to EFL proficiency level of learners and that learners and teachers hold divergent views and preferences for different types of focus on form.

Mismatches between learners and teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction has also been reported by previous research (e.g. Cathcart & Olsen, 1976; Schulz, 1996, 2001; Yorio, 1986, cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1998) and there is some evidence that learners and teachers' divergent views is detrimental to learning (e.g., Fox, 1993; Horwitz, 1988; McCargar, 1993; Spada, 1987). Therefore, rather than simply being preoccupied with instructional techniques, teachers need to be well-aware of their own and their learners' preferences and beliefs about

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different types of focus on form instructional practices and try to modify either their own classroom practices or learners' beliefs and perceptions so as to avoid conflict between the two.

Finally, since it's not possible to make strong generalization about such a complex construct as one's beliefs in a single study (Bernat, 2006), future research needs to employ a variety of data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews and observation to better capture the complete picture of learners and teachers' views towards different types of focus on form. In addition, future studies might want to focus on other individual learner differences such as affective and cognitive variables which may affect learners' preferences for isolated and integrated focus on form. There is also a need for more qualitative studies to empirically investigate to what degree teachers' stated beliefs about focus on form are in line with their classroom practices and what are the learning outcomes when learners' preferences for isolated and integrated grammar instruction is or is not met.

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Appendix I

The open-ended prompts in learners' questionnaire:

How do you like your teacher to teach English grammar? Explaining the rules while you are doing a meaning-based activity or explain them separately (i.e. before or after the activity)? Why?

Appendix II

The open-ended prompts in teachers' questionnaire:

1. What kind of grammar instruction do you think is more helpful to intermediate learners? Explaining English grammar rules while they are doing a meaning-based activity or explain them separately (i.e. before or after the activity)? Why?
2. What kind of grammar instruction do you think is more helpful to advanced learners? Explaining English grammar rules while they are doing a meaning-based activity or explain them rules separately (i.e. before or after the activity)? Why?