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**The Incorporation of Grammar into Young Learner Classes:
Focus on Form or Focus on Forms?**

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Abstract

One of the current issues in the field of applied linguistics is the type of grammar instruction to be adopted in EFL classes; particularly, with young learners. The purpose of this paper is to revisit the place of grammar in language teaching from a contemporary window, to discuss the role and delivery of grammar focus in EFL settings, and to illustrate examples for classroom applications of this focus through an ITE course, which is based on teaching young learners. The elaboration of the type of focus and voices from the classroom as to its implementation are sure to introduce another dimension, whose central point is to propose a sample course procedure for the provision of the focus during the form-focused instruction.

Keywords: focus on form, grammar instruction, young learners, course procedure

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Introduction

Current practices and voices from the classroom pinpoint the emphasis on grammar in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) / ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, for this component of language is stated to be of utmost importance. Therefore, one of the current issues in the field of applied linguistics is the type of grammar instruction to be adopted in EFL classes; particularly, with young learners. In this respect, there has emerged a clash of heads as to which fashion of grammar instruction could produce effective communicative classrooms. Despite the general agreement on the inductive grammar teaching, as the major actors of such a procedure, the exact time, place and manner of this instruction is still under debate. The core of this controversy is centered in the extent to which practitioners should let their students focus on understanding grammar during the time when they keep the focus on the necessity for conversation (Sheen, 2002). This junction every language teacher comes sooner or later also requires the choice whether to introduce grammar as an underlying component of the language without the conscious knowledge of the learner as in the case of language acquisition, or to deal with it as an individual component of the language just as children learn L1 after they start their formal education. The purpose of this paper is to revisit the place of grammar in language teaching from a contemporary window, to discuss the role and delivery of grammar focus in EFL settings, and to illustrate examples for classroom applications of this focus through an ITE course, which is based on teaching young learners.

The Place of Grammar in Language Classrooms

The fact that communicative language teaching without grammar has turned out to produce inaccurate and fossilized language in various ESL/EFL contexts caused grammar to become the entity over which there is a lack of consensus. Some researchers argue that grammar is an indispensable element of language teaching, and that it should take place in the language as a concrete, discreet item to the conscious knowledge of the learner. For example, Fotos (1998) points out to the fact the failure of communicative ESL teaching on its own to increase a high level of accurate performance has become obvious (Williams, 1995 as cited in Fotos, 1998); moreover, as a further point of view, a study by Borg and Burns (2008) carried out on 176 English teachers of adults coming from 18 countries show that teachers stated firm views about the importance of grammar usage. Besides, it is also a fact that a great amount of the English in the globe is not based on ESL, but it is conducted in EFL contexts, in most cases with the nonnative speakers of English, and in such settings, grammar teaching has always existed in the learning-teaching contexts (Fotos, 1998).

With these issues on the agenda, an EFL /ESL teacher is expected to design a classroom procedure, which is comprised of the given linguistic concerns for an effective classroom, based on the learner communication. Hence, the onset assumption, followed by the adopted policy in terms of the role of grammar in teaching English serves as the cornerstone in the language instruction of these teachers. On the other hand, this approach also introduces the issue that although the curriculum determines the components of grammar in young learner classrooms, the classroom procedures and the integration of grammar into the instruction poses a challenge to the teacher competency both for PCK (Pedagogical Content Knowledge) (Shulman, 1986) and for KAG (Knowledge About Grammar) (Borg, 2001).

Thus, the language teachers are supposed to pinpoint the role of grammar in their classrooms taking such factors as age and language setting into consideration.

The Role and Nature of FFI (Form- Focused Instruction) in EFL Contexts

Although the vitality of grammar as the subject matter of language lessons has been identified in EFL/ESL contexts, the pedagogical attitude towards it still remains controversial, for it unfolds two debatable situations. The proponents of FFI claim that the teaching based on this type boosts learning a language, and that such meta-linguistic knowledge might play a part in L2 learning (Yee & Wagner, 1984; Faerch, 1985). As a supporting point, Williams (2005) emphasizes that when communicative language teaching was new, some approaches that focused on meaning avoided any attention to form at all, and teachers confronted many learners as good speakers with fossilized grammar mistakes, with most of the productions deprived of correctness. As a consequence, to Williams (2005), teachers began to look for means for the revival of grammar in the language learning settings. On the other hand, there are views that do not approve of the interference of grammar in language teaching, or some others that strike a balance between the two views. To illustrate, Spada and Lightbown (2008) underline the fact that some individuals, particularly young children, can learn a language without FFI, which can be interpreted as that it is not essential to instruct sentence structure in SLA. However, they also add that for the learners who begin to learn beyond their early childhood; particularly those who are exposed to the language in the target basically and solely in the classroom of the same L1 users, FFI seems to aid them to employ the language they are studying more efficiently (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, as cited in Spada & Lightbown, 2008). Another supporting remark comes from Borg and Burns (2008) who state that the mild inclination is for the the implicit grammar instruction with younger learners although an overt, explicit teaching is more efficient with older students. They further state that the research they conducted displays the fact that explicit knowledge of grammar was considered to be useful though this did not indicate an option for school teaching. Ellis (2015) also discusses the psycholinguistic rationale of this feedback.

As a result, the concerns that the revival of grammar calls for the traditional grammar teaching should be considered, because this kind of instruction requires a procedure in which grammar is revitalized in explicit or implicit forms. Nonetheless, in order to eradicate the problem of poor production deprived of grammar, a remedial transition from the grammar free classes to those into which grammar has been incorporated, Focus on Form (FonF), first coined by Long (Long, 1991, as cited in Sheen, 2002) is introduced to the EFL settings. It emphasizes the fact that forms (not necessarily grammatical, they could be lexical as well) can be included in the formal classroom instruction, the focus being applied in explicit and implicit ways: the former through teaching the form overtly; and the latter, covertly.

Therefore, FonF (Focus on Form) technique would aid to practice meaning and form (Doughty & Williams, 2004). In addition, Sheen (2002) compares the two approaches and states the difference between Focus on Form (Long, 1991, as cited in Sheen, 2002) and Focus on FormS (De Keyser, 1998, as cited in Sheen, 2002), and it is remarked that while the former can be derived from the supposed extent of resemblance between first and second language

acquisitions, with the two procedures relying on the contact with understandable input that comes out of the natural conversation; the latter is grounded on the assumption that formal instruction of a second or foreign language learning takes its roots in common mental procedures, thus demanding the learning of a skill, typified as the approach through skills-learning.

Obviously, for those who believe in the vitality of grammar in language teaching, this type of instruction offers an opportunity for grammatical accuracy without much emphasis on grammatical form. In this way, ESL researchers' attempts to tackle the hard task of incorporating grammar instruction in a communicative language teaching setting rely on FonF, and direct grammar teaching versus indirect ways (Byrd, 2005). Valeo and Spada (2015) point out that the total preference of integrated FFI imply that teachers and learners are comfortable with the instruction which requires switching between concentration on form and on meaning (p. 18).

Under the circumstances, there comes out the need for a revision in the syllabus design which combines the communicative language use with grammar instruction in a context, in a format bearing the characteristics of task-based language teaching (Long, 1988; as cited in Fotos, 1998). Moreover, it would be a wise policy to decide on the amount and the type of instruction to be applied in the course procedure. This raises the question whether to apply this focus explicitly or implicitly.

Implicit FFI in EFL Classrooms

For education systems, in which EFL is conducted in limited hours, teaching the language with the strong version of form focused instruction by exposing the learners to a target grammatical form by means of a modified communicative input is not appropriate (Fotos, 1998). In the Turkish context, where EFL is the language learning fashion, and the language learning involves the integration of grammar, there should be a compromise as to the transition from one focus to the other. Uysal and Bardakçı (2014) remarks that that "moving from focus-on-formS to a focus-on form rather than shifting radically to a "focus-on-meaning" may be more realistic and practical" (p. 11). Moreover, Fotos (1998) also suggests that, if FFI is modified to meet the needs of the learners as the formal instruction before the communicative activity followed by a feedback, this approach promises solutions. An approach consisting of implicit instruction with the form focused in implicit ways with the help of a context without the overt mention of grammar seems to be workable in the current education system in Turkey. As a consequence, the nature of the focus having been determined, what remains to be considered is the language teaching methodology accompanied by the materials and the pre-planned syllabus. In terms of the right methodology, Shak and Gardner (2008) states:

FonF tasks should be supplemented with ample contextual support and language scaffolding, as found here in amusing stories and in pair/group work, to ensure a sense of accomplishment in learners. Also of relevance to children's interlanguage development is the need to consider learner 'readiness' for pushed (not necessarily

immediate) output of the target form, i.e. the amount and explicitness of ‘noticing’ opportunities to be provided before oral and/or written production (p. 403).

Activities based on reading and listening skills are suitable for many EFL settings because of their conventional stress on the skills of translation and comprehension (Fotos, 1998). In this way, learners find the opportunity to use the rules of grammar and take corrective feedback if necessary. Through the tasks, it becomes possible for them to establish the form-meaning mapping (see TEYL Course Procedure). Having revisited the basic arguments in the field of grammar teaching, the rest of the study will sketch the possible ways of incorporating grammar into young learner classrooms by relying on the firsthand experience of the author.

TEYL Course Procedure

This section aims to describe a course procedure already conducted in TEYL Course at the ELT Department of Mersin University. The central point is the incorporation of grammar in young learner classrooms, with its limitations to fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh graders. The course runs in modules spread to the semester (Module 1: three weeks, Module 2: three weeks, Module 3: eight weeks) with each week including four course hours. Because this system gradually prepares the TEYL teacher for the profession, each module bears a different function.

Module One: Theoretical Background

TEYL Course begins with the issues in FLA (First Language Acquisition) such as morpheme order studies and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) as the central focus items, followed by the main arguments related to UG (Universal Grammar) and access to UG. Moreover, the nature of Input, the mechanisms of input provision such as Input flood, or Input modification are covered. The key issue of transfer as the source of errors and their treatment in TEYL classrooms form the core of the theoretical background of the study. In addition, the pedagogical issues in SLA classrooms such as scaffolding and providing comprehensible input in a context are briefly introduced before the onset of other methodological issues.

As the second step, a chronological overview of the linguistic, social and psychological developments that serve as the basis for the interaction related to language teaching methodology is covered, finalized with the current issues such as Task Based and Content Based Teaching. Besides, the course is shaped with the arguments related to the teaching styles and age as the determinant factor. As a further point of view, explicit and implicit instruction types are discussed through the examples as the basic modes of knowledge transfer, elaborated with inductive and deductive options. Finally, the issues of Consciousness Raising and Knowledge about Grammar as a metalinguistic approach are discussed through examples.

Module Two: The “What” And “How” of the Focus

In the second module, the instructor goes on to discuss the types of focus by means of examples. The aim of this module is to arouse interest in the nature of FFI through examples,

and to show the possible applications of FFI. In this module which lasts for four weeks, the theoretical background of this type of instruction is discussed with its main features. While conducting this module, Drama techniques and the materials needed to be designed for the procedure are discussed individually. Moreover, consciousness raising protocols are performed to illustrate how the focus will be provided. The key arguments as for the focus and the classroom scenarios for the delivery of the focus are given below.

Key Arguments Related to FFI

Focus on Form vs. Focus on Forms

To Ellis et al. (2002), a good example of a Focus on Forms lesson is the one conducted through PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production). On the contrary, in Focus on Form instruction, the main focus of consideration is on the meaning, the form arising from the activities centered on meaning as obtained from the performance of a task based communication. In this sense, it can be said that any communicative task assigned poses a challenge of grammar and vocabulary as form to the students, as a result of which emerges the need for a focus. This focus is not necessarily the form included in the syllabus of the teacher; it could well be an item encountered for the first time, but found appropriate to teach at that time.

Options of Focus on Form

Ellis et al. (2002) introduce principal focus-on-form options in two basic classifications as Reactive focus on form (Negotiation-Conversational, Didactic), (Feedback-Explicit, Implicit) and Pre-emptive focus on form (Teacher initiated, Student initiated). On the other hand, as an alternative classification, Long & Robinson (1998, as cited in Ellis et al., 2001) categorize the focus on form as proactive (planned), reactive and pre-emptive (incidental). Thus, it can be seen that reactive focus on form emerges in cases when an error is addressed by the teacher or by another student, providing learners with negative evidence in implicit or explicit ways. Furthermore, reactive focus on form deals with a performance problem while pre-emptive focus on form addresses a real or perceived gap in the knowledge of the student (Ellis et al., 2001).

As for the discourse of pre-emptive focus on form, it differs from that of the reactive focus on form in that the former one consists of exchanges including a query and response, and the latter one takes the form of series including a prompt, a sign of a problem and a solution (Varonis and Gass, 1985, as cited in Ellis et al., 2001). More specifically, Ellis et al. (2002) makes a basic division of FoF as planned and incidental; the former, being used for focused tasks, while the latter is used for the communicative tasks which have been formed to derive the usage of a particular language item in a meaning-centered context.

Sample Course Fragments

The fragments given below in the form of scenarios, for they do not take place in actual classrooms are introduced to teacher candidates by the instructor to raise their awareness in terms of the nature of the focus and how it could be applied in the classroom.

Scenario A: What is wrong with this exercise? Consciousness Raising

This scenario aims to raise the awareness of teacher candidates about the points given below.

EXERCISE: Match the animals and actions. Make sentences by using ‘can’ ‘can’t’

| | | | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----|--------------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| A dog | A bird | fly | run | eat grass | A cow | A cat |
| drink milk | An elephant | | climb a tree | | A giraffe | jump |

1. What is the linguistic outcome of the given exercise?
2. Which lesson does this exercise provide content for?
3. If the learner does not know about an animal, is it possible to make a sentence?
4. What is the student supposed to know to accomplish the exercise?
5. What is wrong with the given exercise? How can it be organized in a better way?
6. What is the main concern of this exercise? Form or meaning?
7. Does the exercise provide form- meaning mapping?
8. What could be changed in this exercise for the acquisition of form and meaning?
9. Do you think students will have learnt the accurate use of can/can’t when they have completed this exercise?
10. What kind of instruction can be used with this exercise?
Explicit or implicit? Inductive or deductive

Scenario B: How to establish form-meaning mapping through focus

Table1

Sample Exercise for a poor design for the form-meaning mapping

| | | | | |
|--------|------------------------------|---|---------------|-------------------------|
| If you | walk see break have | a mirror, a black cat, a horse shoe, a four leaf clover, | you will have | good luck. bad luck. |
|--------|------------------------------|---|---------------|-------------------------|

Table 2*Sample Exercise for an ideal design of form-meaning mapping*

| | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| if | I You He She It We You They | walk under a ladder, see a black cat, have a horse-shoe, break a mirror, have a four leaf clover | I You He She It We You They | have good luck. have bad luck. |
|----|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|

The tables above have been designed through the inspiration drawn from the micro-teaching class of a teacher candidate whose focus is If Clauses Type 1, introduced under the topic of superstitions.

The aim of this sample course is to let the teacher candidates notice how the form-meaning mapping is established. Table 1 has been designed and introduced by the teacher candidate as one of the activities for the practice, and Table 2 has been designed by the instructor. Upon closer examination of the activity, it can be seen that the components of the first table is given to the students, and the only task left is to put them together, even the challenge of word order as scrambled sentences is not presented. On the other hand, the confrontation the learner is subjected to is diverted from the main objective of the achievement of the form, the focus intensified on the two word verbs; namely, compounding.

However, Table 2 can be said to invite the learner to use additional fragments such as third person singular 's'- which does not take place through impersonal expressions, and the certainty modal auxiliary, 'will'. In this way, the learner is expected to acquire the form and the meaning although it is overshadowed by the form. In other words, the main concern of this study should be the form acquisition through the given phrases, but the meaning is also observed for the sake of linguistic accuracy.

Scenario C: A Sample task for the achievement of parametric forms

In the TEYL course the instructor presents to the teacher candidates the sample for a "pre-determined" type of focus (Ellis et.al, 2002) applied in different tasks, one of which could be as follows:

The instruction is based on a task which requires the use of articles that pose a challenge to Turkish EFL learners. The task takes place in a context of situation in which students are asked to make a list of the food in the fridge to prepare a breakfast. The key point is to have students practice the use of indefinite article, 'a', as a parameter across Turkish and English, and 'the' as the definite article as well as 'some' and 'any'. In this way, while preparing the breakfast table, they are expected to use sentences with 'an egg', '...eggs', 'some butter', 'the butter', 'a packet of butter', 'some olives', etc.

Scenario D: The application of the focus in the classroom

The examples given below have been designed parallel to the examples of Ellis et al. (2002), with the conversations based on the problematic forms in Turkish young learner EFL classrooms. The data used for these sample classroom conversations of form focused instruction have been drawn from the PhD dissertation of the researcher, which is comprised of the corpus data including the statements of the participant teachers as for grammar teaching (Dönük, 2012). The specification of this corpus to the young learner classrooms was fulfilled by language teachers currently working with young learners for MoNE. To be more precise, the participant teachers were asked to write self-reports on the problematic areas of the language teaching in the class. The account of the teachers having turned out to accumulate on morpho-syntax, the interface between syntax and morphology, the researcher designed the sample focus types based on this specific area.

The basic approach of the conversational focus of form adopted in this study is to focus on the major source of errors that can be traced back to the cross-linguistic variations. In this respect, while designing the sample focus examples, the study observed the errors and identified them with their possible sources (e.g. translation from Turkish to English as negative transfer, cross-linguistic parametric variations such as compounding, regular and irregular forms-verbs, plurals, comparatives, etc.) To Ellis et al., (2002), teachers can negotiate meaning conversationally through the use of either requests for confirmation or requests for clarification. When teachers request for confirmation, they simply repeat the problematic statement with or without the reformulation (Ellis et. al, 2002) to confirm the information. In conversational focus-on-form, the teacher uses a request of clarification through the formulaic expressions of ‘Sorry?’ ‘Could you say that again?’ to have a clear idea of what the student has uttered (Ellis et. al, 2002). The major distinction between these two strategies lie in the fashion of dealing with the focus item. While in the former type the student repeats the utterance without the need for a reformulation or any further interference once the teacher has confirmed the statement, and the communication proceeds, in the latter one the student is expected to deal with the problem quite possibly with a reformulation.

The following examples have been created to clarify the delivery of the focus for the candidate teachers to apply in their micro teaching practices.

Example 1: Conversational focus-on-form (Request for Confirmation)

T: (Thinking that negative transfer might take place, and that she should limit the options to elicit such answers, the teacher shows the pictures of some cheese, olives in a bowl, an egg, as well as a jar of honey and a packet of butter, and asks the students in the classroom)

T: What do you eat for breakfast?

S: I eat cheese, olives, and eggs for breakfast.

T: (Not catching what the student has said) What do you eat?

S: Cheese, olives, and eggs.

T: Oh, cheese and olives, okay.

S: Yes, I eat them.

T: Cheese and olives, not olive. That is very good.

Example 2: Conversational focus-on-form (Request for Clarification)

(The teacher, showing the photos of two cars, asks the students to compare them. The purpose here is to let them use irregular comparative forms and such parametric adjectives as small vs. short, big vs. large, tall vs. long, etc.)

T: Compare these two photos, please..

S: (Pointing to the cars in the photos, says) This car is smaller than that car.

T: .Yes, very good. And?

S: This car is older than that car.

T: Okay (She keeps looking and making gestures to elicit more sentences).

S: This car is badder than that car.

T: (The teacher cannot understand the utterance, and asks to clarify) Sorry? I could not understand?

S: This car is badder, because it is older and smaller.

T: What? Badder?

S: Yes, badder.

T: Sorry, badder or better?

S: Not better, badder

T: (Catching the confusion) badder or?

S: Oh, sorry, worse.

T: Okay.

Even when the student error does not pose a challenge to the teacher as for the communication, the teacher may choose to correct it. The aim here is to focus attention on the error by correcting it. This type of error treatment can be considered didactic, which involves the negotiation of form rather than that of meaning (Ellis et al, 2002).

Example 3: Didactic Focus on Form

In some cases, the teacher chooses to correct the form though there is no breakdown of communication. The teacher focuses attention on the error and corrects it. This type of treatment of errors is involves negotiation of form more than negotiation of meaning (Ellis et al., 2002).

T: What do you do after school?

S: I guitar (Obviously, the student thinks guitar is a verb)

T: Play the guitar?

S: Yeah, and I play football.

T: And?

S: I puzzle

T: Do puzzle?

S: Yeah, and watch TV.

It is clear that the student does not take the corrective, didactic feedback as assumed by the teacher and goes on to make the next sentence without much focus on the corrective feedback.

Example 4: Implicit focus on form by means of a recast

Implicit feedback can be given through a recast as the reformulation of the whole part of the students' utterance with the error.

(The teacher organizing a dialogue as pair work, listens to the students)

S1: Do you like apple?

S2: Yes, I do.

S1: Do you like orange?

S2: No, I don't.

T: (Having made sure the mistake has emerged once more)

T1: Do you like oranges? Do you like apples?

S1: Do you like oranges? Do you like apples?

Example 5: Explicit Focus on Form

To Ellis et al. (2002), explicit feedback can be provided in many ways, through saying 'no, not ', using metalanguage, providing a correction and giving the learner the chance to practice the correct form, or to intervene with a metalinguistic explanation of the correct form. The example below displays how a correction is provided for the learner.

S1: A giraffe is a long animal

S2: Pardon?

S1. A long animal.

T: Now listen (by using gestures, "tall, long "and "short"). A giraffe is a tall animal

S1: A giraffe is a tall animal

T: A giraffe is a tall animal, and a penguin is a short animal.

S1: A giraffe is a tall animal, and a penguin is a short animal.

T: Tall, yeah.

Example 6: Pre-emptive focus on form

This type of focus consists of attempts by the student or the teacher to make a specific form the topic of conversation despite the fact that no type of error for that form has occurred. This type of form can be didactic or conversational (Ellis et al., 2002). Soler & Mayo (2008) indicate the importance of pre-emptive focus on form in adolescent classes saying that successful uptake is higher in pre-emptive and reactive student- initiated FFEs (Focus on Form Episodes) which is parallel to the fact that these learners seemed confident asking about formal issues related to the language they are learning.

Example 7: Student- initiated pre-emptive focus on form

To Ellis et al. (2002), student initiated focus is typically initiated by a query the student addresses to the teacher.

S 1: (Talking about the biography of a famous actor)

He..... to New York in 1975. How do you say?

T: What?

S1: Goed?

T: Hmm. Anybody to help?

S2: He goed to New York in 1975.

T: Goed or any other word like come-came?

S1: Yeah, go-went. He went to New York in 1975.

T: Yes, play-played, dance-danced, walk-walked, but go-went, come-came, etc.

S1: Okay, go-went.

Example 8: Teacher- initiated focus on form (using a query)

This type of focus is generally centralized on lexical items, and teacher queries are generally aimed at the meaning of lexical items that emerge in an activity. The example below has been drawn from a class procedure in which the teacher is introducing body parts through a student at the board. While teaching plural forms of body parts, the teacher asks the plural form of 'foot' to elicit the answer 'foots' and correct it to raise the consciousness level of the learners for irregular plurals.

T: Ok, class, now let's say (pointing to one arm of the student) Arm, yes? Arms. Very good.

Hand, hands, leg-legs, finger, fingers, toe-toes, shoulder-shoulders, foot?

Student 1: Foots

Student 2: Fouts

Teacher: No, foot-feet. Repeat class, foot-feet. One foot, two feet.

Example 9: Teacher- initiated focus on form (using an advisory statement)

In the following example, the teacher initiates the focus by drawing the students' attention to different forms of 's' in English, underlining that one form could potentially represent different functions.

T: (Showing some pictures of clothes and belongings accompanied with them)

Class, look! (Pointing to the trousers) Trousers, trousers. (Touching the trousers of a student, repeats) trousers, trousers.

(The teacher, pointing to the sunglasses in the picture, says) sunglasses, sunglasses

(Then the teacher showing the pictures of two, three and four pullovers, says) Two pullovers, three pullovers, etc. The aim of this focus is to raise awareness that 's' is used both to name single items with two parts (e.g. scissors, pants, trousers, glasses, gloves, shorts, socks), and as an inflectional morpheme that is used for pluralization.

Module Three: Micro Teaching Procedures

Module two is followed by micro teaching presentations, during which time the lecturer and the peers follow each teaching fragment carefully. In line with the course model, the nature of the focus -focus on form or forms- is discussed, the type of the input lying in the center. The views of the teacher candidates gathered in the form of reflections (see Appendix 1) underline the value of these discussions, and they state that in this way, they have gained awareness of the nature of the focus and the pedagogy for the transfer of the grammatical content to their prospective students.

Stages of Module Three

1. Each candidate presents a lesson based on a unit in the course book approved by MoNE.
2. The lecturer and the peers follow and take notes about the teaching, and participate in the lesson when they are supposed to simulate the real classroom atmosphere.
3. The lecturer uses an evaluation sheet designed as the performance checklist.
4. While the presentation progresses, the lecturer attracts the attention to the type of the focus.
5. The type of input and its application in the course is mentioned by the lecturer (e.g. modified, flood, i+1, etc.)
6. Related activities, tasks, games, and other classroom procedures are discussed.

7. The nature of the focus and its applications are demonstrated through some examples.
8. Reflection sheets are handed out to the candidate teacher for an overall reflection report.

Conclusion

It is a fact that arguments about grammar will remain on the agenda of language teaching methodology for the years to come. Fotos & Ellis (1991) state that knowledge of grammar may contribute directly by supplying chances for the kind of communication which is assumed to stimulate the acquisition of covert knowledge, and they could also help in other ways by facilitating learners with the development of overt knowledge of L2 rules, which will later enable the acquisition of covert knowledge. However, on the other side of the medal lies the issue which arouses the concern that resuming grammar teaching should not bring about a renewal of ancient methods of language teaching as stated by Fotos (1998). For this reason, the notion of “focus” plays an important role, particularly in young learner classrooms, where grammar instruction is minimum or non-existent.

The focus and its implementation in such environments also calls for the right methodology and classroom procedures. The role of the form focused instruction as isolated activities or within the setting of communicative activities in combined forms can be advantageous in language teaching (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). However, in young learner classrooms; particularly with pre-schoolers and very young learners, acquisition like processes is sure to produce more fruitful results. This could take place through the CBT (Content Based Teaching), in which the new language is a tool for learning the subject matter and TBT (Task Based Teaching), in which the language item is introduced and reinforced through tasks and sequential activities incorporated in them. It is an undeniable fact that the latter serves better for the spirit of EFL teaching, which takes place independent of other classes, for the task based approach to language teaching can give opportunities for the types of communication that have been presented to develop acquisition.

To sum up, the aim of this paper is not to kindle the fire of heated arguments; on the contrary, it intends to suggest a clarification to the problem of ignoring grammar in EFL contexts, where limited contact hours of language learning necessitates this language component to be learnt in any way. The elaboration of the type of focus and voices from the classroom as to its implementation are sure to introduce another dimension to this paper, whose central point is to propose a sample course procedure, already conducted at Mersin University ELT Department.

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Appendix 1: Fragments from the Self Reports of teacher candidates

Self-Report 1: An Account for How It All Started

“...At the beginning of the course, we tended to design our lessons in a traditional way, for we attempted to transfer our language learning experiences at the secondary and high school unconsciously. Undoubtedly, our first presentations lacked the ties between form, meaning and use, and we didn’t know how to associate the grammar knowledge and the communicative aspect of the language. At this point, we discovered the practice of “focus on form”, and our instructor’s feedbacks created an awareness of grammar teaching. I began to understand how to draw the students’ attention to form in a given context without overshadowing meaning...”

Self-Report 2: The Onset of Another Experience

“...I have developed an awareness of language teaching while I was practising focus on form. I often found myself thinking, “How can I make language learning a permanent behavior?” A lesson based on focus on form surely raises learners’ consciousness of form, and it creates a meaningful context...”

Self-Report 3: The Rationale Behind

“...It is obvious that practicing focus on form keeps the information in short term memory, but meaning practice retains the knowledge in long term memory. In this sense, form, meaning and use are the integral parts of the language. Consequently, I have learnt in this course that each component of a lesson must be in harmony with the other, and every step of the lesson must serve for a purpose. The course was laden with efforts, which encouraged me a lot...”

Self-Report 4: The Importance of Material

“...Carefully designed or adopted visual materials relevant to the students’ ages and levels helped me accommodate meaning, which eased my teaching of the form. I created situations in which students could use the language. I think this made the language more comprehensible...”

Self-Report 5: The Core of Language Teaching: Form- Meaning-Use Triangle

“...Thanks to this course, I have learnt how to focus on form, meaning and use. Students should comprehend both the form and the context of this form as well as the purpose of it. So, the teachers are supposed to teach the form, meaning and use of the language....”

Self-Report 6: The Mismatch

“...My subject was ‘Planets’ through which I was supposed to teach Comparative and Superlative forms. In the presentation, I taught the comparative form of the adjective,

“close” by choosing two planets (e.g. Mercury and Uranus). However, our instructor reminded me that the meaning would not be relevant when we said “Mercury is closer to the Sun than Saturn”, which would accommodate Uranus as a close planet to the Sun, though it wasn’t”

“Therefore, when I revised my plan, I chose Mercury and Earth as the planets close to the Sun, rather than Uranus. Thus, I became aware of the lexical choice in the mapping of the form-and meaning. Without carefully chosen examples, it is impossible for you to let the learner attend to your focus as form-meaning interaction...”