

# FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION: EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING TASKS AND DIRECT GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION IN EFL LEARNING

Enriketa Sogutlu<sup>1\*</sup>, Miranda Veliaj-Ostrosi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Candidate, European University of Tirana, ALBANIA, senriketas@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Dr., University of Tirana, ALBANIA, mveliaj@gmail.com

\*Corresponding author

## Abstract

Research has already made a strong case for the undisputable role of grammar knowledge and grammar instruction in EFL teaching and learning. The ongoing debate now is when and how to utilize grammar knowledge and most of the controversy is over the extent to which form-focused instruction contributes to L2 acquisition and its explicit knowledge. Dependent on variables such as learners' level of L2 knowledge, age, L1 literacy, cultural background and many others, research findings have reached both favorable and unfavorable conclusions regarding the efficacy of explicit knowledge in L2 proficiency.

This study aims to compare the effectiveness of direct grammar instruction and indirect consciousness-raising activities in the development of the learners' explicit knowledge of L2, based on Ellis' conceptualization of form-focused instruction in terms of concrete instructional activities. A brief overview of literature on form-focused instruction and its various types will be given in the introduction, which will be followed by research findings and suggestions that have been made on the topic. Three groups of 20 high school learners each (aged 14-16), 2 experimental and one control, will participate in the study. Results of the pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test will be discussed and suggestions on the (in) effectiveness of the above-mentioned activities in EFL learners' explicit knowledge development of L2 will be made.

**Keywords:** Form-focused instruction, consciousness-raising tasks, grammar instruction, explicit/implicit knowledge, EFL learning

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term form-focused was originally used by Long (1991) to distinguish between "focus on forms" and "focus on form". The main distinction lies on the kind of syllabus they are based on and the type of exercises they use. *Focus on forms* is founded on a structural syllabus and uses traditional types of exercises, through which explicit instruction of previously planned grammar structures is done. Language features for each lesson are determined according to the syllabus and usually taught not more than one at a time (Long, 1991). According to Ellis (2002a) this kind of instruction involves "teaching of specific grammatical features in a structure-of-the-day approach". He argues that in this type of instruction the learning is intentional because the language is treated as something to be mastered in order for the communication to happen.

*Focus on form* is based on a task-based syllabus and comprises communicative exercises which aim at drawing the learners' attention to linguistic structures while they are focused on communicative activities. In *focus on form* lessons learners are engaged in communicative activities and are provided with explicit instruction of language forms only when necessary (Long, 1991). It combines formal instruction and communicative language use in a way that enables learners to recognize the properties of L2 (Hinkel, E.&

Fotos, S., 2002) (. In Ellis's view this approach means "incidental attention to form in the context of communicative activity" (2002a), and it is very useful if it involves learners in communicative tasks (Ellis, 2006). On the one hand, because they consider language forms as a means of communication, learners are mainly focused on understanding and conveying meaning. On the other hand, if they want the message to be transmitted correctly they will to some extent be attentive to some linguistic structures (Ellis, 2012).

One distinction that Ellis points out between the two types is the organization of teaching. While in *focus on forms* linguistic targets must be pre-determined, in *focus on form* they are chosen according to mistakes that learners make during tasks (2012). He adds that corrective feedback is employed in both forms of instruction..

## **2. AN OVERVIEW OF GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

### **2.1. Accuracy without communication**

Concerning the position given to grammar knowledge and grammar instruction in textbooks, language classrooms and methodology, the history of EFL teaching has gone through different phases. The grammar age and grammar-based approaches produced methods which consisted in teaching rules, concepts and structures of grammar which aided understanding the target language (Sogutlu, 2014). The aim of EFL teaching was for the learners to acquire ability to read and write in the target language. Language learning was viewed as hypothesis formation and rule acquisition rather than habit formation (Celce-Murcia, 1991), which resulted in learners being unable to communicate fluently. The learner was viewed as a passive entity waiting to be programmed thus little or no attention at all was paid to the possibility that learners might contribute to the programming process (Griffiths, C.& Par, J.M., 2001).

Inadequacies of grammar-based methods in offering learners communication gains paved the way to communication-based approaches. Although intended to make a contribution to enhancing learners' communicative competence some of them, such as PPP (presentation-practice-production) method, were not successful and remained very grammatical. Thornbury (1997) emphasized that attempting to move from accuracy to fluency this method only pretended to engage learners in freer practice activities because it required learners to imitate model texts or pre-selected structures.

In traditional EFL textbooks, grammar was treated separately with explicit explanations of language forms, accompanied with various types of exercises (gap-filling, sentence-completion, etc), which required immediate (usually written) practice of the rule. This was done with the assumption that explicit knowledge would later turn into communicative competence (Millard, 2000). However, research has shown that this knowledge does not always lead to the assumed result.

### **2.2. Communication without accuracy**

According to researchers like Howat (1997) and Nassaji (2000) the introduction of communicative language teaching pedagogy led teachers and researchers towards developing tasks and activities based on communication and interaction, which usually meant paying little or no attention to language forms and patterns.

Other approaches with a focus on communication such as content-based instruction or task-based instruction also disregard accuracy of linguistic forms. These approaches' tendency not to focus on linguistic forms leads to downplaying of grammar teaching as well (Nassaji, 2000). Various studies have shown that lack of or insufficient instruction of language forms and grammar structures do not help development of learners' accurate knowledge of and fluency in L2 (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Nazary, 2008). Although in these approaches, as Swan (1985) puts it, "students are exposed to appropriate samples of language and given relevant and motivating activities to help them learn", this "theoretical confusion might lead to practical inefficiency", with students knowing what they want to say but not knowing how to say it (Swan, 1985, p. 11).

A lot of research has also been conducted in immersion contexts, which offer a theoretically optimal context for language learning due to their sustained exposure to and authentic communication in the target language. Although the prevailing focus on meaning in these classrooms encourages the overall development of communicative ability, there are linguistic gaps regarding grammatical accuracy (Lyster, 2004b).

### 3. FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION (FFI)

#### 3.1. What is form-focused instruction?

All these findings and results show that neither communicative approaches nor grammar instruction alone can contribute to high levels of second language competence and proficiency as well as accuracy and fluency. So the question that arises is how to incorporate introduction of linguistic structures in communicative language teaching approaches so that learners attain communicative and linguistic competence.

The form-focused instruction can be considered as the one that meets both needs. It developed as an approach that combines form and meaning (Spada *et al*, 2014; Ellis, 2012; Barrot, 2014;), and which doesn't downplay either traditional or communicative approaches (Nassaji, 2000; Ellis, 2012; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). As a term it was first introduced by Spada (1997) as an alternative of but not identical to Long's *focus on form* (Long, 1991). The main distinction is that in *focus on form*, grammatical presentations are provided "as a perceived need arises" (Spada, 1997, p. 73), while in FFI they can be "in either spontaneous or predetermined ways" (Spada, 1997, p. 73). Ellis (2001) defines form-focused instruction as "any planned instructional activity that is designed to induce intentional language learning" using the term "instructional activity" to "refer to materials and procedures to use these materials" (Ellis, 2012, p. 16). According to him form-focused instruction entails traditional approaches and communicative approaches to teaching grammar features. It can be said that FFI is a way of teaching grammatical features directly, i.e. through explicit explanation at times considered appropriate by the teacher, or indirectly, i.e. through meaning-focused or communicative activities by just drawing the learners' attention to or helping them to notice these structures.

Various definitions and perceptions of FFI have been provided by researchers of the field. Although meaning is the main focus of a FFI lesson, learners are encouraged to pay attention to and identify language structures as well (Fayyaz & Omar, 2014). Authors like Laufer & Ginai (2008) have regarded FFI as a modification of communicative language teaching, whose proponents believed that comprehensible input and meaning-oriented tasks were necessary and sufficient for language acquisition. Instead of treating focus on form and focus on communication as isolated activities Nassaji (2000) believes that it would be more effective to conduct "activities that result in attention to form while maintaining meaningful communication and using form for communication". He justifies his position by integrating insights from interactive and cognitive theories of language learning.

Although the most appropriate time for the learners' attention to be drawn towards form in communicative language teaching is a controversial issue, there is agreement that if attention to both form and meaning is involved instruction produces more desirable results (Spada *et al*, 2009, p. 71).

#### 3.2. Types of FFI

Various types of FFI have been identified and researched dependant on particular variables. In terms of *what* to teach *when* and *how*, either separately or combined, I shall go briefly over two main types.

##### 3.2.1 Implicit and explicit FFI

In his review of studies that have examined the effect of FFI on learners' free production Ellis (2002a) suggests that FFI can contribute to acquisition of implicit knowledge. He also emphasizes that choice of the target structures and structures extent of the instruction are two very influential variables on the success (p. 223). Hayashi (1995) argues that formal instruction is needed to assist learners in acquiring not only different features between L1 and L2 but also structures and meanings of L2 and highlights that the learners' level of L2 development is a very important variable. It is easier for intermediate and advanced learners to convert explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge because they are more attentive to instruction and correct use of linguistic features in communication (p. 5).

According to Ellis (2008), the aim of explicit instruction is to encourage learners to develop an understanding of the rule being learnt. This rule can be given to the learner either directly- or deductively as he calls it- or inductively, which means the learners are expected to use the given information to work out the rule (p.17). While in explicit instruction meta-language is used for rule explanation, in implicit instruction lack of rule explanation leads to nonuse of meta-language.

In my view, it is almost impossible to employ each of the types separately because they are interrelated.

##### 3.2.2 Integrated and isolated FFI

Two other approaches of FFI are isolated and integrated instruction. Isolated FFI is mostly employed before or after the communicative task and no kind of instruction on form is provided during the communicative activity (Spada *et al*, 2009; Spada, & Lightbown, 2008). In these lessons a specific language feature is explicitly explained by the teacher so that the learners are able to use it in the upcoming communicative activity. Spada & Lightbown's (2008, p. 193) definition of *isolated* FFI is "attention to form is provided in separate lessons" within a communication-oriented program. In integrated FFI, instead, the learners are provided with very little attention to language form during the communicative activity (Spada *et al* 2009; Barrot, 2014). Attention to these forms is paid when necessary but they may also be predetermined by the teacher in the form of explanations or feedback (Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

In some researchers' view, the two forms are complimentary parts of the language process (Spada & Lightbown, 2008), and the issue is not whether to choose between isolated or integrated FFI but to explore conditions when each of them provides the expected results (p. 185), which also constitutes the main distinction between the two types (Spada *et al* 2014, p. 3).

### 3.3. Review of Research Findings

#### 3.3.1 Form-focused instruction and its effects on learners' explicit knowledge

Being a theoretically controversial issue grammar and its types of instruction have been largely researched. Form-focused instruction and its effects on learners' explicit knowledge has also been investigated. Below I give a quick overview of research findings.

1) Hayashi conducted a study with 50 Japanese university students who were studying English as an L2 and had received grammar instruction at high school. Each student had to give an oral presentation in the form of discussions and answers using a grammar textbook. The other students studied the grammar feature in advance using other reference books and asked the presenter various questions about the right answer to the questions. They also required explanations about the right answers so that they were sure of the rules. The students took a 100-question-test about the grammar points discussed in the lessons and a TOEFL test after they finished the book. The results showed a relatively high correlation between grammar knowledge and proficiency concluding that grammar knowledge has a positive effect on L2 proficiency, on the grounds that although students who study grammar may not always concentrate on form they try to employ rules they know in order to understand complex and lengthy structures (Hayashi, 1995).

2) In his study conducted at grade 8 level students of French immersion classrooms Lyster's aim was to evaluate how form-focused instruction influenced the learners' sociolinguistic competence, in particular the use of second-person pronouns in formal and informal contexts. Some of the activities employed involved explicit comparison of various speech acts, structural exercises emphasizing the target feature, comparison and creation of written work, etc. The test results showed that the learners made indicative progress in their use of the target feature both in oral and written production. The multiple choice test results demonstrated that there were significant gains in the learners' apprehension of sociolinguistic propriety (Lyster 1994 as cited by Lyster, 2004b, p. 329).

3) Another study of Lyster (2004a) aimed to investigate if FFI enhanced the immersion learners' ability to assign grammatical gender (in French) correctly. The results showed students who did not receive FF instruction which was planned to make them notice the target linguistic form (here gender attribution with particular endings), were unable to even infer the patterns from the input. The study concludes that FFI definitely improves the learners' ability to properly assign grammatical features (gender) and enables them to develop abstract rule-based knowledge of the grammatical feature (gender) (Lyster, 2004a, p. 426).

4) A most recent study conducted by Spada *et al* (2014) aimed to explore if there is a difference between the effects of isolated and integrated FFI on L2 learning and whether they contribute separately on different types of L2 knowledge. The findings showed indicative improvement for both groups. They concluded that they both contribute positively to L2 learning as long as there is a combination of form- and meaning-based practice. Results regarding their contribution on different types of L2 knowledge evidenced that differential timing of grammar instruction can improve advancement of particular types of L2 knowledge (p. 14).

5) Authors like Chan & Li (2002) obtained encouraging findings in their empirical study of form-focused remedial instruction using the consciousness-raising approach. The results showed that use of explicit form-focused negative feedback in CR approach can significantly help learners in their acquisition of target lexico-grammatical forms.

6) Authors like Barrot (2014) have tried to investigate the effects of combined isolated and integrated form-focused instruction. Their findings suggest that a combination of these two types of FFI can significantly

improve the learners' speaking and writing skills.

7) Nguyen *et al* (2012) investigated the relative effectiveness of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction on the acquisition and development of the speech act set of constructive criticism and L2 pragmatic development of Vietnamese learners of English. The results suggest that both types of FFI have positive effects in developing learners' pragmatic performance. However, explicit instruction seemed to effectuate more performance gains.

8) Motivated by the students' reluctance to communicate in oral classes, and on the contrary, their willingness to speak freely in grammar instructional activities, Tomita & Spada (2013) have examined the role of FFI in learner investment in L2 communication. The results showed that FFI encouraged learners to invest in L2 communication. The role of grammar in the language socialization process of L2 learners was also supported by the findings (p. 606).

In his review of research in the role of FFI in acquisition of implicit knowledge Ellis (2002a) concludes that FFI can affect explicit knowledge and that explicit knowledge is much easier to teach when using FFI (p. 234).

*FFI in vocabulary lessons* Although it developed in the context of grammar learning, form-focused instruction has also been extended to vocabulary learning by, as Laufer & Ginai put it, "drawing learners' attention to lexical items within a communicative task environment" (2008, p. 695). Employment of FFI for vocabulary teaching has been the object of very few studies, which have investigated either the role of FFI on classroom L2 vocabulary acquisition (Maria, 2006) or the effects of isolated and integrated types on L2 vocabulary acquisition (Laufer & Ginai, 2008; Elgün-Gündüz *et al*, 2012).

### 3.3.2 Research in Learners' views of FFI

Learners' views and preferences for the type of instruction have not been researched as much as other topics related with foreign/second language learning. More research, though has been conducted on the learners' perceptions of grammar instruction in general (Söğütü, 2015; Hawkey, 2006) and of deductive versus inductive teaching in particular (Schulz, 2001). Spada *et al* prepared a questionnaire on learners' preferences of the isolated or integrated types of FFI on the grounds that, to their knowledge, no empirical research had been conducted on the topic at least until then. (2009, p. 71). Later on, Ansarin *et al* (2014) used this questionnaire with 454 Turkish learners of EFL, advanced and beginner levels by adjusting it for the context and purpose of their study. The results demonstrated that while advanced learners showed a significant preference for integrated FFI, the beginner level learners were not concerned whether grammar instruction was provided in isolated from or integrated in communicative activities. The researchers came to the conclusion that different instructional types should be given to fit different learner types. So isolated and integrated FFI can be effective dependant on variables such as linguistic domain of learners' L1 and learners' preferences. They also point to the examination of teachers' preferences for FFI types and the compatibility between learner and teacher preferences (p.305). Other research (Elgün-Gündüz *et al*, 2012) has also demonstrated learners' preference for integrated FFI to isolated FFI.

Research results show that FFI enables learners to develop abstract rule-based knowledge of grammatical features, which they try to employ in order to understand complex and lengthy structures. Types of FFI, whether separately or combined, have resulted to be effective in developing learners' explicit knowledge of L2, their writing and speaking skills and their pragmatic competence. Positive suggestions have also been made about the effects of FFI on vocabulary learning. It is suggested that learners' views and their preferences should be more largely researched.

## 4. THE STUDY

### 4.1 Methodology

The present study will employ the alternative approach that Ellis (2012) suggests for investigating FFI, which in his view involves "major methodological options available to teachers" (p. 275) (see **Figure 1**). Proposing that FFI is "best conceptualized in terms of instructional activities" (p. 277), Ellis identifies two major divisions of these activities: performance options as in "proactive FFI", and feedback options as in "reactive FFI". Feedback options involve strategies that teachers use to provide learners with corrective feedback. Strategies can be input-providing, in which the learner is given the correct form; or output-prompting, in which the learner is encouraged to correct his own mistake/s<sup>1</sup> (p. 142). Performance options consist of two main categories, consciousness-raising options and language performance options. The latter consists in learners' usage of language features either to comprehend a text (input-based) or to produce one (output-

based). Although the consciousness-raising options can be direct and indirect, they both involve explicit instruction of linguistic forms. They differ in the way this instruction is presented: in the direct option the teacher explicitly explains the language form either by describing it or by giving instructional materials; in the indirect option the learners' explicit knowledge is developed through consciousness-raising tasks.

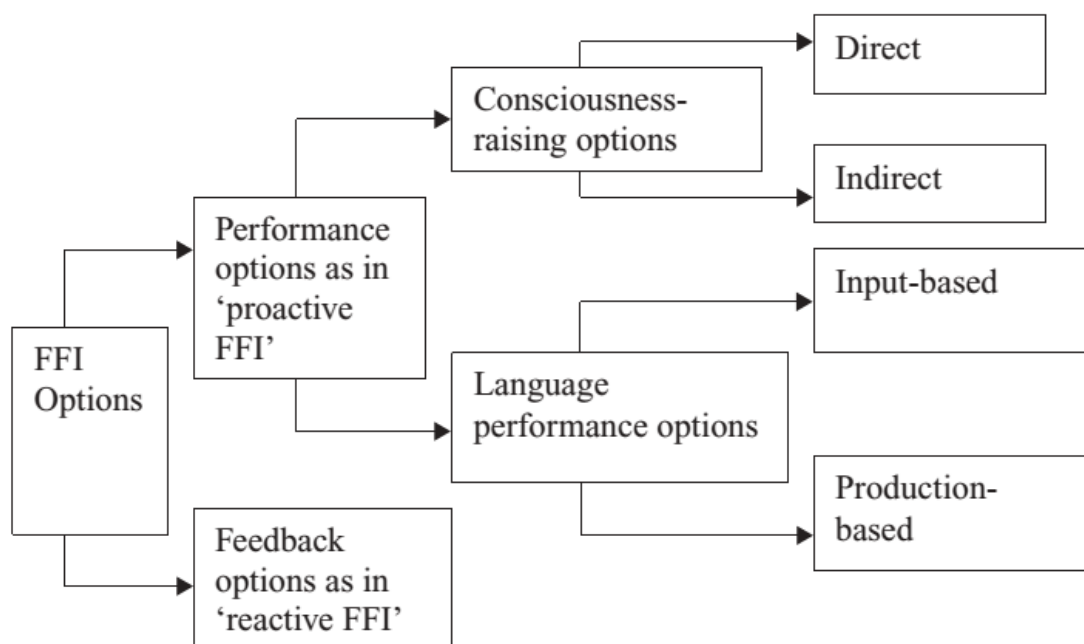
As our study focuses on two types of CR tasks (direct and indirect) we shall first have a brief overlook at what has been defined as CR and what research findings suggest about its contribution to the development of explicit knowledge.

#### 4.1.1 What are Consciousness-Raising Tasks?

In direct grammar instruction type learners are introduced to language forms through the teacher's explicit instruction of this form. In indirect CR tasks the learners are expected to discover the linguistic feature through exposure to materials that contain this feature. As it is shown in Figure 1, Ellis' description of CR goes as follows:

"Consciousness-raising as a methodological option seeks to develop learners' explicit knowledge on the grounds that, although this may not be available for immediate use in communication, it will facilitate noticing and noticing-the-gap and so lead to the development of the implicit knowledge needed for communication". (p281)

In earlier research Ellis (2002b) argues that the aim of CR tasks is to provide learners with an understanding of the grammatical feature so that they develop explicit knowledge of grammar (p. 168). Despite the fact that explicit knowledge is not always transformed into implicit knowledge, it has a role to play in the course of its development.



**Figure 1 Key FFI Methodological Options**

According to Fotos (1994), there are two types of CR tasks: grammar CR tasks, in which learners are expected to pay attention to the grammatical feature so that their awareness is raised while they are engaged in a communicative task; and CR communicative tasks, in which the learner is expected to recognize the grammatical feature in such a task. The aim of CR tasks is to develop learners' explicit knowledge of L2 grammar (Mcnicoll & Lee, 2011) and to also guide the learners to explore the grammar features for themselves (Mohamed, 2004; Crivos, 2012).

Research results have shown that CR tasks have positive effects in teaching form (Mohamed, 2004; Amirian & Sadeghi, 2012; Sugiharto, 2006), in improving learners' knowledge of grammar (Moradkhan & Sohrabian, 2009) and in developing their pragmatic competence in ESL contexts (Rose, 1994). Studies investigating collaborative CR tasks have also been conducted demonstrating that they can result in valuable learning gains for students (Mcnicoll, J., & Lee, J. H., 2011).

## 4.2. Context and Participants

The study was conducted in a private school in Chisinau, Moldova and three 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes with 53 EFL learners and one teacher participated. One class (15 learners) was the control group and followed the normal flow of teaching as shown in the coursebook (Close-up by Angela Healan and Katrina Gormley, a publication of National Geographic and Cengage Learning). One class (18 learners) received the indirect CR tasks and the other class (18 learners) received the direct instruction.

In Moldovan schools the languages of instruction are Romanian and Russian and students are placed in either Romanian or Russian classes according to their ethnicity and native language. They start studying the other language, Russian or Romanian, as a foreign language in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and due to prior knowledge and use of the language most of them gain native or near native speaker fluency. It should be pointed out that the subjects in our study were two Romanian classes (the experimental groups) and one Russian class (the control group); the decision about the type of instruction each group would receive was random.

### 4.2.1 Target features and instructional treatment

Two target features were covered in the treatment: two past forms *would* and *used to* and two familiarity forms *be used to* and *get used to*. The selection was due to the annual plan with a distribution of topics based on the above mentioned course book. First, all the three classes took the pretest which consisted of two exercises with questions about the four structures. The following week the direct and indirect forms of instruction were provided in the experimental groups in 2 classes of 45 minutes per each group and they were all observed by the researcher herself. The control group, meanwhile, received the usual instruction in the same period of time as the treatment groups. The immediate post-test was taken the same day soon after the preplanned activities were all covered. The delayed post-test was applied three weeks later.

## 4.3. Class observations and language measures

Discussion of the aim, importance and procedure of the treatment were held with the teacher prior to the study. Every step was explicitly written down and handed to the teacher.

### 4.3.1 The Indirect Group

The teacher begins the lesson by asking students about the things that change/might change in your life when you move to another city or country. Students give various answers. Then they read the handouts with a passage about someone who has recently moved from Rome to London and answer comprehension questions about the text, which contains lots of examples of the target linguistic feature. When the answers to the questions require use of the target structures/forms the teacher recasts by providing the correct use of the structures but without providing instruction. After that students are asked to complete a chart about the character's old life in Rome and his new life in London; use of the target features is required. Students are divided in two groups, Rome and London, and are asked to read out loud sentences that belong to their city only. In cases of incorrect answers the teacher provides feedback by prompting, i.e. eliciting the right answer or through recasts, i.e. by reformulating the correct utterance herself. As a last activity students are expected to work out and complete the rules about the use and form of each feature and then they check together with the teacher monitoring so that they get the right form for each structure. In the end, there is a multiple choice activity which includes all the target forms of the lesson. It should be pointed out that while checking the answers corrective feedback is always provided, and besides recasts and prompts, metalinguistic terms are also made use of. Students' knowledge and eager use of metalanguage is really surprising. After all the planned steps and activities are covered the students take the immediate post-test.

### 4.3.2 The Direct Group

The lesson starts with students reading the handouts with rules about the target features; the teacher writes the rules on the board and provides explicit instruction for each by using metalanguage as well. The teacher hands out the same reading text as in the indirect group and asks the students to read and underline the target forms. Then they are asked to work in teams and elicit examples containing the target features and write them under each heading. Each team is responsible for one form. They read taking turns when the structure they are responsible for appears. They are so quick and have fun. The teacher asks students to say the rules for each structure again and then they read the examples from the text. The teacher asks some comprehension questions about the text. Students do the multiple choice exercise and then check together. The teacher asks some students to say what each structure is used for and its correct form and then she sums up the uses of all target features. Students have to account for their choice through rule explanation and metalanguage terms. In the end they take the immediate post-test.

#### 4.3.3 The Control Group

The teacher provides explicit instruction about the use and form of each target feature and asks students to give examples. Then she hands out a circle-the-correct-answer exercise and they check as a class after some individual work. After that they read a text which also contains the target feature and they have to find the correct answer and explain their choice. Students open their course books and do a correct-the-mistakes exercise. They have to explain their answers again. Students work in pairs to do a multiple choice exercise in the book. They check with the class and have to provide a reason for their answer by using metalanguage. Teacher gives explicit instruction about each target feature again. Students take the immediate post-test. Even in this group a surprising knowledge and use of metalanguage terms is dominant. Students are always on the alert to answer the teacher's questions about rules and their application. It should be highlighted that the control group and the direct group were provided with the same kind of instruction

#### 4.4. Data analysis

Mean scores were calculated for each separate group and test which indicated their average knowledge, immediate gain and longer-term gain. As it can be seen from Table 1 the control group demonstrated the lowest prior knowledge and familiarity with the target features ( $M=39.428$ ) and the high standard deviation ( $SD=10.739$ ) denotes variability and dispersion from the average. Despite a much higher mean score ( $M=49.333$ ) almost the same variability from the average ( $SD=9.893$ ) was noticed in the indirect group. The direct group displayed a more average level with less dispersion from the average ( $M=43.555$ ,  $SD=6.564$ ). The immediate post-test results were very close to each other (see Table 2). The difference between the highest and lowest scores was only (-1.175), with the control group significantly improving its scores (+14,286).

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics for pre-test**

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Control group	15	39.428	10.739	2.772
Direct group	18	43.555	6.564	1.547
Indirect group	18	49.333	9.893	2.332

**Table 2 Descriptive statistics for immediate post-test results**

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Control group	15	53.714	4.358	1.125
Direct group	18	53.555	5.843	1.377
Indirect group	18	54.889	6.552	1.544

The delayed post-test was taken approximately three weeks (21-23) after the treatment (see Table 3). The order of mean scores is the same as in the immediate post-test with the indirect group scoring the highest ( $M=53.111$ ,  $SD=1.525$ ), the direct group the second ( $M=52.111$ ,  $SD=1.357$ ) and the control group scoring the lowest ( $M=51.141$ ,  $SD=1.157$ ). However, the control group had the highest gains (+11.714) and the indirect group the lowest (+3.778) (see Table 4). Although the difference in the mean scores between the direct and indirect groups is very low, the direct group posted a higher mean gain (+8.556) which is (+4.778) higher than the indirect one.

**Table 3 Descriptive statistics for delayed post-test**

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Control group	15	51.141	5.907	1.525
Direct group	18	52.111	5.759	1.357
Indirect group	18	53.111	4.909	1.157

**Table 4 Descriptive statistics of gains**

	Mean				SD		
	Pre-test	1.Post-test	2.Post-test	Gains	Pre-test	1.Post-test	2.Post-test
Control (n=15)	39.428	53.714	51.142	11.714	10.739	4.358	5.907
Direct (n=18)	43.555	53.555	52.111	8.556	3.043	5.843	5.759
Indirect (n=18)	49.333	54.889	53.111	3.778	9.893	6.552	4.909



## 5. DISCUSSION

This study sought to investigate the effects of direct grammar instruction and indirect consciousness-raising tasks on developing EFL learners' explicit knowledge of grammar. The findings suggest that they both can significantly improve learners' knowledge of grammar with slight differences. They are consistent with Moradkhan & Sohrabian (2009) who reported that CR tasks have positive effects in improving learners's knowledge of grammar, and with Mohamed, (2004), Amirian & Sadeghi, (2012) and Sugiharto, (2006), who reported about the positive effects of CR tasks on teaching form.

In order to graduate from a high school students in Moldova have to sit for compulsory exams. Since English is one of them and the exam comprises grammar questions, knowledge of grammar rules and their application makes it almost obligatory for English teachers to provide direct and explicit instruction of grammar rules, which accounts for almost the same kind of instruction given in the control and the direct group. Both groups received direct and explicit instruction of the target features by the teacher; only the activities and exercises were different. Activities and tasks in the direct group required more student-student interaction in pairs or groups and they also had more exposure to input containing the target feature (the reading part)..

Though the control group started with a lower mean score they showed significant improvement in the immediate post-test and posted the highest gains in the delayed post-test. The high variability from the average demonstrated in the pre-test was much lower in both post-tests, which means that students of this group profited the most from the instruction.

Although the indirect group achieved the highest mean scores in both post-tests the gains figures show they improved the least. The direct group, which received the explicit instruction and the interactive tasks, profited more than the indirect group. Many reasons could account for this. First, our subjects are used to always being provided with explicit instruction of grammar, and the work-out-the rule way might not have been as effective for them. Familiarity with deduction, reasoning from rules to observations, might have made our subjects grow a preference for deduction to induction. Second, the amount of input they were exposed to might not produce higher results than they demonstrated; the other group was exposed to the same amount, though. Put in another way, this amount of input cannot provide higher acquisition than our subjects demonstrated. Mode of input presentation is another factor. Students are supposed to learn more when information is presented in a variety of modes than in one (Felder, R. M. & Henriques, e. R., 1995) and our subjects in the direct group had more varieties than the ones in the indirect group.

These findings suggest the potential effect of explicit instruction and consciousness-raising tasks. This means that a combination of explicit instruction with consciousness-raising tasks might produce more effective results than their individual implementation for the above-mentioned reasons.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study revealed that both direct explicit instruction of grammar and indirect consciousness-raising tasks can contribute to the development of learners' explicit knowledge. The improvement in the learners' explicit knowledge can be attributed to both explicit instruction and consciousness-raising tasks. Although it was not the goal of this study, application of various tasks and activities that appeal to different learner styles and that require learners' use of the four skills may have contributed to the learners' improvement.

Despite the limitations this study has regarding the choice of target features and the small number of samples, both of which might have made it more difficult to draw more realistic and conclusive results, it makes suggestions for further study. Effects of direct instruction and indirect consciousness-raising tasks can be identified through choice of a different feature and with a combined treatment group. Another suggestion this study makes is the implementation of various tasks and activities that appeal to different learner styles and that require learners' use of the four skills.

## REFERENCE LIST

- Amirian, S. M. R., & Sadeghi, F. (2012). The Effect of Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks on EFL Learners' Performance. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 4(3) , 708-720.
- Ansarin, A.A., Abad, B.A.A. & Khojasteh, M.R.B. (2014). Isolated and integrated form-focused instruction from learners' perspective. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 24(2) , 299-307.

- Barrot, J. (2014). combining isolated and integrated form-focused instruction: effects on productive skills. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 27(3) , 278-293. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2014.973416>
- Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). Grammar Pedagogy in Second and Foreign Language teaching. *TESOL quarterly*, 25(3) , 453-480.
- Chan, A.Y.W.& Li, D.C.S. (2002). Form focused remedial instruction:an empirical study. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(1) , 24-53.
- Ellis, R. (2006). Current issues in the teaching of grammar: An SLA perspective. *Tesol quarterly*40(1) , 83-107.
- Ellis, R. (2002a). Does form-focused instruction affect the acquisition of implicit knowledge? *Studies in second language acquisition*, 24(02) , 223-236.
- Ellis, R. (2002b). Grammar teaching-practice or consciousness-raising. In J. C. Richards, *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 167-174). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2001). Investigating form-focused instruction. *Language learning* 51(s1) , 1-46.
- Ellis, R. (2012). *Language teaching research and language pedagogy*. Oxford: John Wiley&Sons .
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition, second edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Felder, R. M. & Henriques, e. R. (1995). Learning and Teaching Styles In Foreign and Second Language Education. *Foreign Language Annals*, 28(1) , 21-31.
- Fotos, S. (1994). Integrating Grammar Instruction and Communicative Language Use THrough Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks. *Tesol Quarterly*, 28(2) , 323-351.
- Griffiths, C.& Par, J.M. (2001). Language-learning strategies:theory and perception. *ELT Journal* , 247-254.
- Hayashi, K. (1995). Form-focused instruction and second language proficiency. *RELC Journal*, 26(1) , 95-117.
- Hinkel, E.& Fotos, S. (2002). *New perspectives on grammar teaching in second language classrooms*. Routledge.
- Howat, A. (1997). *A History of English Language Teaching, sixth impression*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Laufer,B.& Ginai,N. (2008). orm-focused Instruction in second language vocabulary learning: A case for contrastive analyses and translation. *Applied Linguistics* 29(4) , 694-716.
- Long, M. (1991). Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology. In K. De Boot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch, *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 39-52). Amsterdam: John Benjamin.
- Lyster, R. (2004a). Diffeential effects of prompts and recasts in form-focused instruction. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 26(03) , 399-432.
- Lyster, R. (2004b). Research on form-focused instruction in immersion classrooms: Implications for theory and practice. *Journal of French Language Studies*, 14 , 321-341.
- Maria, J. (2006). Classroom L2 vocabulary acquisitio: investigating the role of pedagogical tasks ans form-focused instruction. *Language Teaching Research*, 10(3) , 263-295.
- Mcnicoll, J., & Lee, J. H. . (2011). Collaborative consciousness-raising tasks in EAL classrooms. *English language: Practice and critique*, 10(4) , 127-138.
- Millard, D. (2000). Form-focused instruction in communicative language teaching. *TESL Canada Journal* 18(1) , 47-57.
- Mohamed, N. (2004). Consciousness-raising tasks: a learner perspective. *ELT Journal*, 58(3) , 228-237.
- Moradkhan, D., & Sohrabian, R. (2009). Grammatical Consciousness-Raising Tasks and the Improvement of Iranian Students'Knowledge of Grammar. *Journal of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and*

*Literature*, 1(4) , 54-71.

- Nassaji, H. (2000). Towards integrating form-focused instruction and Communicative Interaction in the Second Language Classroom:some Pedagogical Possibilities. *The modern Language Journal* 84 , 241-250.
- Nguyen, T.T.M., Pham, T.H., &Pham, M.T. (2012). The relative effects of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction on the development of L2 pragmatic competence. *Journal o pragmatics*, 44(4) , 416-434.
- Rose, K. (1994). Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising in an EFL Context. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 5 , 52-63.
- Schulz, R. A. (2001). Cultural differences in student and teacher perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback:US-Colombia. *The Modern Language Journal* 85(2) , 244-258.
- Sogutlu, E. (2014). Review on the changing role of grammar teaching in second language instruction. *BJES Beder Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(1) , 137-144.
- Spada, N. & Lightbown, P. (2008). Form-focused Instruction: Isolated or Integrated. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(2) , 181-207.
- Spada, N. (1997). Form-focused instruction and second language acquisition: A review of classroom and laboratory research. *Language teaching*, 30(02) , 73-87.
- Spada, N., Barkaoui, K., Peters, C., So, M. & Valeo, A. (2009). Developing a questionnaire to investigate second language learners'preferences for two types of form-focused instruction. *System*, 37 , 70-81.
- Spada, N., Jessop, L., Tomita, Y., Suzuki, W., &Valeo, A. (2014). Isolated and integrated form-focused instruction: Effects on different types of L2 knowledge. *Language Teaching Research*, 1362168813519883 .
- Sugiharto, S. (2006). Grammar Consciousness-raising: Research, Theory and Application. *Indonesian Journal of english Language Teaching*, 2(2) , 16-24.
- Swan, M. (1985). A critical look at the communicative approach (1). *ELT Journal* 39(1) , 2-12.
- Thornbury, S. (1997). Reformulation and reconstruction:tasks that promote "noticing". *ELT Journal* , 326-335.
- Tomita, J. & Spada, N. (2013). Form-focused Instruction and Learner Investment in L2 Communication. *Modern Language Journal* 97 , 591-610.