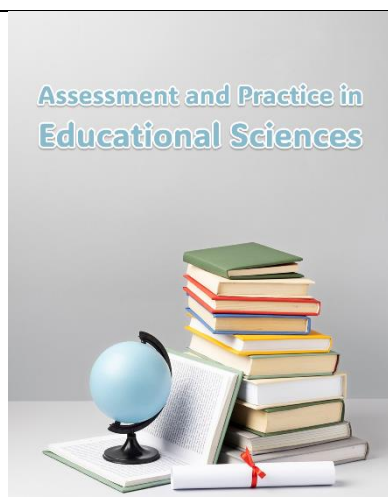




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Exploring Teacher and Student Perspectives on Form-Focused Instruction in Communicative EFL Classrooms: An Iranian Context Study

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the perspectives and experiences of Iranian EFL teachers and students regarding the implementation of form-focused instruction (FFI) within communicative language classrooms. This qualitative study was conducted in a private English language institute in Semnan, Iran. Participants included four EFL teachers and a group of upper-intermediate students aged 17–25 years who attended communicative English classes. Data were collected through semi-structured teacher interviews, classroom observations, reflective field notes, and follow-up validation interviews with selected students. Teachers implemented form-focused instruction techniques during communicative classroom activities over a two-week period. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's framework. Coding and categorization procedures were employed to identify recurring themes related to FFI approaches, uptake, corrective feedback, and communicative interaction. Trustworthiness of findings was enhanced through member checking, inter-coder agreement, and triangulation of interview and observation data. Ethical principles including informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation were maintained throughout the research process. The findings revealed that both teachers and students perceived form-focused instruction as a beneficial and necessary component of communicative EFL teaching. Teachers emphasized maintaining communicative fluency while selectively addressing grammatical forms and learner errors. Most participants favored reactive rather than preemptive form-focused practices because they considered them less disruptive to classroom interaction. Teachers also demonstrated preference for implicit instruction but acknowledged the importance of explicit metalinguistic explanations for adult learners when necessary. Students expressed positive attitudes toward integrating grammar instruction into meaning-focused communication and reported that corrective feedback contributed to language awareness and self-correction. Furthermore, the findings highlighted tensions between communicative goals and grammatical accuracy, showing that teachers continuously negotiated these priorities according to classroom context and learner needs. The study concluded that form-focused instruction can be effectively integrated into communicative EFL classrooms when implemented flexibly and contextually. Both teachers and learners recognized the pedagogical value of combining attention to linguistic forms with communicative interaction, particularly within EFL settings where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. The findings suggest that successful FFI implementation requires pedagogical sensitivity, strategic corrective feedback, and adaptation to learner characteristics and classroom dynamics. Overall, the study supports the view that communicative language teaching and form-focused instruction should be regarded as complementary rather than opposing approaches in foreign language education.

Keywords: Form-focused instruction; communicative language teaching; EFL context; teacher beliefs; student perceptions; grammatical consciousness.

Introduction

The growing international importance of English as a medium of communication, academic exchange, and professional interaction has significantly transformed the field of English language teaching during recent decades. Within English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, educational systems have increasingly shifted from traditional grammar-oriented methodologies toward communicative and learner-centered approaches emphasizing authentic interaction, meaningful communication, and pragmatic competence. This transformation reflects broader developments in second language acquisition theories that conceptualize language learning as a dynamic social, cognitive, and communicative process rather than merely the memorization of grammatical rules and vocabulary items (1, 2). Consequently, communicative language teaching (CLT) has become one of the dominant paradigms in contemporary EFL instruction across many educational contexts worldwide.

The communicative approach emphasizes meaningful interaction, learner participation, negotiation of meaning, and authentic language use in classroom settings. Rather than prioritizing isolated grammatical instruction, communicative methodologies encourage learners to develop fluency, interactional competence, and communicative confidence through engagement in purposeful tasks and collaborative discourse (1, 2). Within this perspective, language is viewed primarily as a tool for communication and social interaction. However, despite the widespread acceptance of communicative language teaching principles, scholars and practitioners continue to debate the extent to which grammatical accuracy and explicit attention to linguistic form should be integrated into communicative classrooms. This debate has become particularly important in EFL contexts where learners often experience limited exposure to authentic English interaction outside educational environments.

One of the most influential responses to this pedagogical debate has been the development of form-focused instruction (FFI), which attempts to integrate attention to linguistic form within communicative and meaning-oriented classroom activities. FFI does not reject communicative language teaching; rather, it seeks to complement communicative interaction by strategically drawing learners' attention to grammatical structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse markers, and other linguistic features during meaningful communication. The increasing recognition that communicative fluency alone may not guarantee grammatical accuracy has encouraged many researchers and educators to reconsider the role of form-focused pedagogical practices in second and foreign language education (3, 4).

Recent studies have demonstrated that learners in communicative EFL environments continue to require explicit and implicit support in order to notice linguistic gaps and develop greater grammatical awareness. Pragmatic competence, discourse management, interactional repair, and conversational appropriateness are all influenced by learners' ability to recognize and employ language forms effectively within communicative contexts (3, 5). Consequently, scholars have increasingly argued that communicative competence and grammatical competence should not be viewed as contradictory instructional objectives but rather as complementary dimensions of successful language learning. The integration of form-focused instruction into communicative teaching therefore represents an attempt to balance fluency and accuracy within EFL classrooms.

In many EFL educational settings, however, the implementation of communicative and form-focused approaches remains influenced by institutional constraints, teacher beliefs, learner expectations, and sociocultural factors. Research conducted in Saudi Arabian contexts, for example, identified numerous obstacles affecting the practical implementation of communicative methodologies, including overcrowded classrooms, examination-oriented systems, insufficient teacher preparation, and learner dependence on traditional grammar instruction (6). Such findings suggest that although communicative teaching has gained theoretical acceptance, its classroom realization often remains complex and inconsistent. Similarly, the philosophical orientations of TESOL programs and teacher education frameworks continue to shape how instructors conceptualize grammar instruction, learner interaction, and communicative pedagogy (7).

Teacher cognition and professional identity also play crucial roles in shaping instructional decisions regarding communicative and form-focused practices. Teachers' beliefs about language learning, error correction, learner participation, and classroom interaction significantly influence how pedagogical approaches are implemented in practice. Emotional

experiences, professional identity formation, and contextual pressures may further affect teachers' willingness to employ communicative methodologies or integrate form-focused interventions during classroom interaction (8). In addition, supervisory feedback and teacher education models can influence instructors' understanding of corrective feedback strategies and communicative teaching principles (9). As a result, examining teacher perspectives on FFI becomes essential for understanding how communicative pedagogies function within real classroom contexts.

Another important factor influencing communicative language classrooms is classroom discourse itself. Research on turn-taking patterns, interactional feedback, discourse moves, and conversational repair has shown that classroom communication constitutes a highly dynamic process shaped by teacher and learner participation (10, 11). Teachers constantly negotiate between maintaining communicative flow and providing corrective support to learners. Interactional features such as silence, hesitation, repair sequences, and feedback episodes may either facilitate or hinder language development depending on how they are managed within communicative contexts (5). Furthermore, code-switching practices frequently emerge in EFL classrooms as teachers and learners strategically shift between languages to clarify meaning, manage classroom interaction, or facilitate comprehension (12, 13). These findings illustrate the complexity of communicative classroom interaction and highlight the importance of examining how attention to form is negotiated during authentic communication.

Learner characteristics and perceptions similarly influence the effectiveness of communicative and form-focused instruction. Students often enter EFL classrooms with pre-existing beliefs about language learning, grammar instruction, and corrective feedback derived from previous educational experiences. In many educational systems, learners continue to associate successful language learning with explicit grammatical knowledge and teacher-centered instruction. Consequently, tensions may emerge between learner expectations and communicative methodologies emphasizing interaction and fluency (4). Learners' emotional experiences, anxiety, self-confidence, and attitudes toward feedback can also shape their willingness to participate in communicative activities and engage with corrective instruction (14). Negative emotional factors such as fear, hesitation, and frustration may reduce learner participation and impede communicative development if not carefully managed within classroom interaction.

Within communicative classrooms, speaking and listening skills occupy a particularly significant role because they directly involve real-time interaction and spontaneous language use. Studies examining communicative competence have emphasized the importance of discourse awareness, intonation, conversational repair strategies, and interactional fluency for effective oral communication (15, 16). Intonation patterns, for instance, contribute substantially to learners' ability to express meaning appropriately and interpret communicative intentions accurately. Similarly, conversational repair strategies enable learners to manage misunderstandings and maintain interactional continuity during communication (5). Such findings reinforce the argument that communicative competence extends beyond grammatical correctness and involves multiple interactional, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic dimensions.

Writing instruction within EFL contexts has also increasingly incorporated communicative and form-focused perspectives. Rather than treating writing solely as a product-oriented activity emphasizing grammatical correctness, contemporary approaches conceptualize writing as both a communicative practice and a means of language development (17). Digital tools and online feedback platforms have further expanded opportunities for collaborative writing, peer interaction, and communicative engagement within language learning environments (18). Research investigating EFL writing performance has additionally highlighted the importance of lexical sophistication, syntactic complexity, discourse markers, and genre awareness in successful written communication (19-21). These studies suggest that attention to linguistic form remains necessary even within communicative writing instruction.

Technological developments and multimodal learning environments have further transformed communicative language teaching practices. The incorporation of TED Talks, multimedia resources, multimodal composing tasks, and digital communication tools has created new opportunities for learner interaction and authentic language exposure within EFL classrooms (22, 23). Such innovations support learner-centered pedagogies and encourage communicative engagement while simultaneously exposing learners to diverse linguistic forms and discourse patterns. Nevertheless, these developments also require teachers to possess sophisticated pedagogical knowledge regarding how to balance communicative fluency with strategic form-focused support during instruction.

Sociocultural and institutional dimensions additionally shape communicative teaching practices within EFL contexts. Issues such as native-speakerism, teacher identity, classroom gender dynamics, and educational inequality can influence participation patterns, classroom interaction, and perceptions of communicative competence (24, 25). Gendered interactional patterns, for example, may affect learner participation opportunities and communicative confidence in classroom settings. Similarly, institutional expectations regarding examination performance and grammatical accuracy may create tensions between communicative methodologies and traditional instructional practices. Such contextual realities demonstrate that communicative language teaching and form-focused instruction cannot be understood independently from broader sociocultural and educational environments.

Despite the growing body of research examining communicative language teaching, classroom interaction, and form-focused instruction, relatively limited qualitative research has explored how teachers and students simultaneously perceive the integration of form-focused instruction within communicative EFL classrooms, particularly in Iranian educational contexts. Much of the existing literature has concentrated on theoretical discussions, experimental interventions, or quantitative evaluations of instructional effectiveness, while fewer studies have investigated the lived experiences, classroom perspectives, and interactional realities of both teachers and learners participating in communicative EFL instruction. Furthermore, because educational contexts differ substantially across countries and institutions, there remains a need for context-sensitive investigations examining how communicative and form-focused pedagogies are negotiated within specific EFL environments.

In Iranian EFL settings, learners frequently experience limited opportunities for authentic English interaction outside classrooms, increasing the pedagogical significance of classroom discourse and teacher feedback. Under such conditions, communicative classrooms may serve as the primary environment in which learners engage with English interaction, negotiate meaning, and receive corrective support. Understanding how teachers and learners perceive form-focused instruction within these communicative contexts may therefore contribute to more effective pedagogical practices and teacher education programs. In addition, investigating how teachers balance communicative fluency with grammatical attention can provide valuable insights into the practical realities of EFL instruction in contexts characterized by limited exposure to English outside educational institutions.

Therefore, the present study aimed to explore Iranian EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on the implementation and pedagogical value of form-focused instruction within communicative language classrooms.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a qualitative research design using a thematic analysis approach to explore teacher and student perspectives on the implementation of form-focused instruction (FFI) in communicative English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The study was conducted in a private English language institute in Semnan, Iran, where communicative language teaching constituted the primary instructional approach. The research focused on naturally occurring classroom practices and participant experiences in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how FFI was perceived and implemented in an authentic

EFL context. The qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study sought to examine beliefs, attitudes, classroom experiences, and pedagogical interpretations rather than to measure variables quantitatively.

The participants included four EFL teachers and a group of upper-intermediate students enrolled in communicative English courses at the institute. Among the teachers, three were male and one was female. In terms of educational background, one teacher was a doctoral candidate in TESOL, two held master's degrees in TESOL, and one possessed a bachelor's degree in the same field with more than twenty years of teaching experience. The teachers had diverse professional backgrounds, including experience in both private language institutes and formal educational settings. The student participants ranged in age from 17 to 25 years and consisted primarily of senior high school and university students who attended private language classes voluntarily to improve their English proficiency. The participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in communicative EFL classrooms where form-focused instruction was integrated into classroom interaction. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical principles including anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were maintained throughout the study.

Data were collected through multiple qualitative instruments in order to ensure depth, richness, and triangulation of findings. The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol administered to the participating teachers. The interviews were designed to explore teachers' beliefs, experiences, and classroom practices regarding form-focused instruction in communicative settings. The interview questions addressed several themes, including teaching methodology, attitudes toward grammatical instruction, corrective feedback practices, learner uptake, explicit and implicit instruction, and the role of communicative interaction in language learning. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted individually in English. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant permission and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

In addition to teacher interviews, classroom observations were conducted during communicative lessons in which teachers implemented form-focused instructional techniques. The observations enabled the researchers to examine naturally occurring teacher-student interactions, communicative tasks, corrective feedback episodes, and instances of learner uptake within authentic classroom contexts. During the observations, detailed field notes were recorded concerning classroom atmosphere, participant engagement, patterns of interaction, and instructional strategies related to form-focused instruction. These observational notes provided contextual support for interpreting interview data and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

To enhance trustworthiness and validate emerging interpretations, follow-up validation interviews were also conducted with selected students from the participating classes. These interviews provided additional insights into students' experiences and perceptions of grammatical feedback, communicative interaction, and language form instruction. The use of multiple data collection sources facilitated methodological triangulation and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Following data collection, all interview recordings and observational notes were carefully transcribed and reviewed multiple times in order to achieve familiarity with the data. During the initial stage of analysis, open coding procedures were employed to identify meaningful units, recurring ideas, and significant expressions related to participants' perspectives on form-focused instruction. The coding process remained closely connected to participants' actual language and experiences to preserve interpretive authenticity.

After initial coding, similar codes were grouped into broader conceptual categories and themes reflecting key dimensions of FFI implementation in communicative classrooms. These themes included teacher beliefs regarding fluency and accuracy, preferences for reactive and preemptive feedback, learner uptake, corrective feedback practices, explicit versus implicit

instruction, and selective attention to learner errors. The researchers continuously compared codes and themes throughout the analysis process in order to identify patterns, relationships, and contrasting viewpoints across participants. To enhance analytical rigor and credibility, a second researcher independently reviewed portions of the coded data, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus. Furthermore, member checking procedures were employed through follow-up participant interviews to ensure that interpretations accurately reflected participant perspectives and classroom realities. The final themes were interpreted in relation to the theoretical foundations of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching in EFL contexts.

Findings and Results

The findings of the present study are organized into two major sections corresponding to the perspectives of students and teachers regarding the implementation of form-focused instruction (FFI) in communicative EFL classrooms. Before presenting the thematic findings, demographic characteristics of the participants are briefly described to contextualize the data.

The student participants consisted of 63 upper-intermediate EFL learners ranging in age from 17 to 25 years. Most participants were university students, while others were senior high school students attending private language institute courses voluntarily to improve their communicative English proficiency. The sample included both male and female learners with relatively similar levels of English proficiency based on institutional placement procedures. The teacher participants included four EFL instructors with diverse educational and professional backgrounds. Three teachers were male and one was female. In terms of academic qualifications, one teacher was a doctoral candidate in TESOL, two held master's degrees in TESOL, and one possessed a bachelor's degree in TESOL with extensive teaching experience exceeding twenty years. All teachers were actively teaching in communicative classrooms and had prior familiarity with communicative language teaching principles and form-focused instructional practices.

Table 1. Students' Perspectives on Form-Focused Instruction in Communicative EFL Classrooms

Theme	Subtheme	Representative Student Perceptions	Frequency of Agreement	Interpretation
Perceived Importance of FFI	Necessity of grammatical attention	Students believed that grammatical forms and structures are essential for successful communication and language development.	58 out of 61 students	Learners perceived grammatical awareness as an indispensable component of communicative competence.
Integration of Form and Meaning	Grammar within communication	Students preferred grammar instruction to occur naturally during communicative interaction rather than through isolated drills.	52 out of 61 students	Learners valued contextualized and meaning-focused instruction integrating communicative fluency with structural awareness.
Reactive Corrective Feedback	Teacher response to errors	Students appreciated corrective feedback when errors interrupted meaning or caused misunderstanding.	49 out of 61 students	Learners considered reactive feedback helpful for noticing linguistic gaps and improving accuracy.
Preemptive Form-Focused Episodes	Teacher anticipation of errors	Many students supported teachers' explanation of difficult grammatical forms before communicative breakdowns occurred.	47 out of 61 students	Students viewed preemptive guidance as supportive in preventing recurring linguistic difficulties.
Explicit Instruction	Metalinguistic explanation	Adult learners expressed preference for direct explanations of grammatical rules when communicative activities became confusing.	55 out of 61 students	Learners demonstrated positive attitudes toward selective explicit instruction within communicative contexts.
Learner Uptake	Self-correction and repair	Students reported that teacher feedback frequently encouraged self-correction and reflection on language use.	51 out of 61 students	Feedback contributed to learners' awareness of errors and promoted active engagement with language forms.
Positive Emotional Response	Comfort with correction	Most students indicated that constructive corrective feedback did not negatively affect classroom confidence.	46 out of 61 students	Participants generally perceived feedback as pedagogically supportive rather than threatening.

Selective Error Correction	Teacher neglect of minor errors	Students accepted that some minor mistakes could be ignored to maintain communicative flow, although they preferred major errors to be corrected.	43 out of 61 students	Learners understood the communicative rationale behind selective corrective practices.
Classroom Communication	Balance between fluency and accuracy	Students emphasized the importance of balancing communicative fluency with grammatical precision.	57 out of 61 students	Participants viewed successful language instruction as requiring simultaneous attention to communication and form.
Overall Evaluation of FFI	Effectiveness in EFL learning	Students believed that FFI improved their confidence, grammatical awareness, and communicative ability in English.	56 out of 61 students	Learners perceived FFI as a highly effective instructional approach in EFL settings.

The findings presented in Table 1 demonstrate that the majority of students held highly positive perceptions regarding the integration of form-focused instruction within communicative EFL classrooms. Participants consistently emphasized that grammatical instruction remained necessary even in communicative learning environments and considered attention to linguistic forms essential for improving communicative competence. One of the most significant findings was that students preferred grammar instruction to occur within meaningful interaction rather than through isolated traditional exercises. This suggests that learners did not perceive communicative fluency and grammatical accuracy as opposing instructional goals; instead, they considered both dimensions complementary and mutually supportive.

The findings further revealed that students appreciated both reactive and preemptive corrective feedback. Many participants indicated that teacher responses to communicative errors helped them notice linguistic weaknesses and improve their language production. At the same time, learners valued teachers' anticipatory explanations of potentially difficult grammatical structures before communication breakdowns occurred. Another important finding concerned the strong preference for explicit metalinguistic explanation among adult learners. Although students supported communicative teaching practices, they also expressed the need for direct grammatical clarification in situations involving confusion or persistent errors. The findings additionally demonstrated that corrective feedback often facilitated learner uptake, self-repair, and increased grammatical awareness. Most students perceived teacher correction positively and reported that it enhanced rather than reduced their confidence during classroom interaction. Overall, the findings indicate that students strongly supported a balanced instructional approach integrating communicative interaction with strategic attention to linguistic form.

Table 2. Teachers' Perspectives on Form-Focused Instruction in Communicative EFL Classrooms

Theme	Subtheme	Representative Teacher Perspectives	Emergent Interpretation
Teaching Orientation	Communicative methodology	Teachers identified communicative language teaching as the dominant instructional approach in their classrooms.	Teachers prioritized meaningful interaction and communicative fluency as central instructional objectives.
Fluency versus Accuracy	Preference for fluency	Most teachers emphasized maintaining communicative flow over interrupting learners for frequent grammatical correction.	Teachers perceived excessive correction as potentially disruptive to learner confidence and classroom interaction.
Perceived Role of FFI	Necessity of grammatical focus	All teachers described form-focused instruction as necessary, beneficial, and pedagogically valuable.	Teachers believed communicative instruction alone was insufficient for complete language development.
Implicit versus Explicit Instruction	Preference for implicit feedback	Teachers generally preferred implicit corrective techniques such as recasts and indirect correction.	Implicit strategies were perceived as less threatening and more compatible with communicative teaching.
Explicit Explanation	Adult learner needs	Teachers acknowledged that adult learners often requested direct metalinguistic explanations.	Teachers adapted instructional practices according to learner maturity, proficiency, and classroom needs.
Reactive FFI	Error-triggered correction	Teachers reported greater use of reactive form-focused episodes during communicative activities.	Corrective attention was commonly triggered by actual communication problems or learner errors.
Preemptive FFI	Anticipatory form explanation	Teachers occasionally provided explanations before errors occurred, especially for difficult structures.	Preemptive strategies were used selectively and strategically.

Learner Uptake	Student response to correction	Teachers observed that successful uptake occurred inconsistently across learners and contexts.	Uptake was viewed as complex and dependent on learner attention, readiness, and communicative pressure.
Selective Attention to Errors	Ignoring minor mistakes	Teachers admitted intentionally overlooking some learner errors to preserve communicative momentum.	Selective correction reflected pedagogical judgment rather than negligence.
Contextual Factors	EFL learning environment	Teachers emphasized that limited exposure to English outside classrooms increased the importance of classroom feedback.	Contextual limitations shaped teachers' reliance on FFI practices within communicative instruction.
Teacher Decision-Making	Classroom sensitivity	Teachers continuously adjusted corrective feedback according to learner age, proficiency, confidence, and task type.	FFI implementation was highly context-sensitive and dynamic rather than fixed or mechanical.
Overall Evaluation of FFI	Effectiveness of integration	Teachers believed that integrating FFI into communicative activities improved both fluency and grammatical awareness.	Participants supported balanced integration of communication and form-focused attention in EFL instruction.

The findings presented in Table 2 reveal that teachers generally supported the pedagogical integration of form-focused instruction within communicative language teaching frameworks. All participating teachers emphasized that communicative interaction should remain the central objective of classroom instruction; however, they simultaneously acknowledged the necessity of grammatical attention for effective language acquisition. The findings indicate that teachers attempted to establish a balance between maintaining communicative fluency and providing strategic corrective feedback. Most instructors preferred implicit corrective techniques because they believed excessive interruption could negatively influence learner confidence, participation, and communicative flow.

The findings additionally demonstrated that teachers relied more heavily on reactive than preemptive form-focused instruction. In most cases, corrective attention emerged in response to learner errors, misunderstandings, or communication breakdowns occurring during classroom interaction. Teachers viewed reactive feedback as more authentic and pedagogically meaningful because it addressed immediate communicative needs. Nevertheless, some participants acknowledged the selective use of preemptive explanations when anticipating recurring learner difficulties or complex grammatical structures. Another important finding concerned the role of adult learner characteristics in shaping instructional practices. Teachers explained that adult EFL learners frequently requested explicit grammatical clarification and metalinguistic explanation, leading instructors to incorporate more direct forms of feedback when necessary.

The findings also revealed that teachers considered learner uptake to be inconsistent and context-dependent. Although corrective feedback often generated self-repair and learner reflection, teachers observed that successful uptake did not always occur immediately following intervention. This finding suggests that language acquisition was perceived as gradual and influenced by multiple cognitive and contextual variables. Teachers further reported intentionally ignoring certain minor errors in order to preserve communicative momentum and reduce learner anxiety. Such selective correction reflected deliberate pedagogical decision-making rather than neglect. Finally, the findings demonstrated that teachers regarded the Iranian EFL environment as an important contextual factor influencing FFI implementation. Because students had limited exposure to English outside the classroom, teachers believed that communicative lessons integrating strategic form-focused attention played a critical role in facilitating grammatical awareness, communicative competence, and long-term language development.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study explored Iranian EFL teachers' and students' perspectives regarding the implementation of form-focused instruction (FFI) within communicative language classrooms. The findings demonstrated that both teachers and learners viewed form-focused instruction as a necessary and effective component of communicative English language teaching. Although communicative fluency remained a primary instructional objective, participants consistently emphasized the importance of

integrating grammatical attention and corrective feedback into classroom interaction. The findings therefore support the view that communicative competence and grammatical competence are not mutually exclusive dimensions of language learning but complementary processes that can coexist within learner-centered communicative environments.

One of the most important findings of the study was that students strongly supported the integration of grammatical instruction into communicative classroom interaction. Most participants believed that language forms should be taught through meaningful communication rather than isolated grammar drills. This finding aligns with contemporary perspectives on communicative pedagogy suggesting that learners develop language more effectively when grammatical attention emerges within authentic interactional contexts (1, 2). The findings additionally support Truong et al.'s observations regarding learners' continued appreciation for explicit grammatical support even within communicative learning environments (4). In EFL contexts such as Iran, where learners often experience limited exposure to English outside educational institutions, communicative classrooms become critical spaces for integrating meaning-focused interaction with attention to linguistic accuracy.

The findings also revealed that students valued explicit metalinguistic explanations despite their positive attitudes toward communicative learning. Adult learners particularly preferred direct grammatical clarification when communicative tasks generated confusion or uncertainty. This finding may be explained by the cognitive and educational characteristics of adult EFL learners who frequently rely on analytical learning strategies and prior educational experiences emphasizing formal grammar instruction. Similar conclusions were reported by Muyesser, who emphasized the growing importance of pragmatic and metalinguistic awareness within TESOL programs (3). The findings further suggest that communicative instruction alone may not fully satisfy learner expectations in contexts where students continue to associate successful language learning with grammatical mastery and teacher guidance.

Another major finding concerned teachers' preference for maintaining communicative fluency while selectively integrating corrective feedback into classroom interaction. Most teachers emphasized that excessive interruption during communication could negatively affect learner confidence and interactional flow. Consequently, teachers preferred reactive corrective feedback strategies emerging naturally from communicative breakdowns rather than constant interruption for grammatical correction. This finding corresponds with communicative teaching principles emphasizing meaningful interaction and learner participation (2). Furthermore, the findings are consistent with research on classroom discourse and turn-taking patterns indicating that excessive teacher interruption may reduce interactional continuity and learner engagement (10, 11).

At the same time, teachers acknowledged that selective preemptive form-focused episodes occasionally became necessary, particularly when learners encountered recurring grammatical difficulties or complex linguistic structures. Such findings suggest that effective communicative teaching requires pedagogical flexibility rather than rigid adherence to exclusively fluency-oriented approaches. Teachers appeared to make continuous instructional decisions based on learner needs, classroom atmosphere, communicative objectives, and task complexity. This supports Koç and Savaş's argument that supervisory feedback and teacher cognition play essential roles in shaping classroom decision-making and corrective practices (9). Teachers' instructional choices therefore reflected a dynamic negotiation between communicative fluency and grammatical support rather than a strict commitment to one pedagogical orientation.

The findings additionally demonstrated that learner uptake and self-correction were perceived positively by both teachers and students. Students reported that corrective feedback frequently enhanced grammatical awareness and encouraged reflection on their own language production. Teachers similarly observed that communicative corrective episodes often stimulated learner noticing and self-repair, although successful uptake did not always occur immediately. These findings support sociocognitive perspectives emphasizing the role of interaction, feedback, and awareness in second language acquisition. Harumi highlighted the importance of conversational repair and interactional awareness within communicative learning environments (5).

Similarly, Gandhioke and Singh argued that communicative competence develops through learners' growing awareness of interactional and phonological features of language during communication (15). The present findings suggest that form-focused feedback contributes to such awareness-building processes within EFL classrooms.

An important aspect of the findings involved teachers' selective neglect of certain learner errors in order to preserve communicative momentum and reduce learner anxiety. Most teachers explained that not all grammatical errors required immediate correction, especially when communication remained comprehensible. Students generally accepted this instructional strategy, although many still preferred more consistent correction of significant errors. This finding reflects the pedagogical tension between fluency-oriented communication and accuracy-focused instruction frequently discussed in communicative language teaching literature. Chu and Zeng emphasized that negative emotional factors such as anxiety and hesitation can hinder learner participation and communicative confidence (14). Therefore, teachers' selective correction strategies may represent attempts to create supportive communicative environments minimizing learner stress while still promoting grammatical awareness.

The findings also highlighted the contextual importance of communicative interaction in EFL environments characterized by limited exposure to English outside classrooms. Both teachers and students recognized the classroom as the primary site for authentic English communication and corrective support. This contextual reality increased the pedagogical importance of form-focused communicative interaction because learners had relatively few opportunities to encounter natural English discourse beyond institutional settings. Similar concerns were identified by Alkhirbash, who reported that communicative methodologies frequently encounter contextual challenges within EFL educational systems despite their theoretical popularity (6). The present findings suggest that integrating form-focused instruction into communicative classrooms may help compensate for limited exposure opportunities by creating richer interactional learning environments.

Another noteworthy finding involved the role of discourse awareness and communicative interaction in facilitating language development. Students reported that communicative activities integrating corrective feedback enhanced not only grammatical understanding but also conversational confidence and interactional awareness. These findings align with research emphasizing the importance of discourse competence, repair strategies, and interactional negotiation within communicative language learning (5, 16). Furthermore, the findings correspond with studies demonstrating that communicative competence involves multiple dimensions beyond grammatical accuracy, including discourse management, interactional fluency, pragmatic appropriateness, and conversational flexibility (3).

The present study also supports learner-centered perspectives on communicative language teaching. Students demonstrated strong appreciation for classroom interaction, participation, and collaborative communication while simultaneously valuing teacher guidance and feedback. This balance reflects evolving learner expectations within contemporary EFL education, where students increasingly seek opportunities for meaningful communication without abandoning the perceived importance of grammatical instruction. Similar learner-centered pedagogical trends have been discussed in studies examining multimodal composing, communicative writing instruction, and technology-supported interactional learning (17, 18, 23). These studies collectively indicate that communicative pedagogy continues to evolve toward more integrated instructional models combining interactional engagement with strategic linguistic support.

The findings additionally revealed the influence of sociocultural and institutional factors on communicative classroom practices. Teachers' instructional choices were shaped not only by pedagogical beliefs but also by learners' educational backgrounds, institutional expectations, and classroom realities. In many traditional educational contexts, learners continue to expect explicit correction and teacher authority despite exposure to communicative methodologies. Such findings resonate with broader discussions regarding educational ideology, teacher identity, and native-speaker norms within EFL education (7, 24).

Teachers therefore operate within complex institutional and sociocultural environments requiring continuous negotiation between communicative innovation and traditional educational expectations.

The findings further contribute to discussions on classroom interaction and code-switching practices within EFL settings. Although communicative classrooms emphasized English interaction, teachers occasionally employed strategic code-switching to facilitate comprehension and maintain classroom efficiency. Such practices correspond with Tam's and Chong et al.'s observations that code-switching often functions as a practical communicative strategy rather than evidence of pedagogical failure (12, 13). The strategic use of learners' first language may therefore support form-focused clarification and interactional management within communicative classrooms when implemented appropriately.

In terms of language skills development, the findings imply that form-focused communicative instruction contributes to broader dimensions of language competence including speaking, listening, writing, and discourse organization. Previous research has shown that communicative language development requires attention to lexical complexity, discourse markers, syntactic structures, and interactional organization (19-21). The current findings support these perspectives by demonstrating that learners perceive corrective feedback and grammatical guidance as beneficial not only for accuracy but also for overall communicative effectiveness.

Overall, the findings of the present study indicate that communicative language teaching and form-focused instruction should not be conceptualized as contradictory pedagogical approaches. Instead, successful EFL instruction appears to require balanced integration of meaningful communication, learner participation, corrective feedback, and contextualized grammatical support. Both teachers and students recognized that communicative fluency alone may not ensure long-term language development, particularly in EFL contexts characterized by limited authentic interaction outside educational settings. Consequently, the integration of form-focused instructional strategies within communicative classrooms may provide a more comprehensive and context-sensitive model for language learning and teaching.

One limitation of the present study concerns the relatively small sample size and restricted research setting. The study was conducted in a single private language institute with four teachers and a limited number of upper-intermediate learners, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to broader EFL contexts. In addition, the study relied primarily on qualitative perceptions and self-reported experiences rather than longitudinal measures of language achievement or classroom performance. The relatively short duration of classroom observation may also have limited the depth of interactional analysis and the identification of long-term instructional patterns.

Future research should examine form-focused instruction within communicative classrooms across different educational contexts, proficiency levels, and institutional environments. Comparative studies involving public schools, universities, and private language institutes may provide deeper understanding of how contextual factors influence communicative teaching practices and learner perceptions. Longitudinal research designs could additionally investigate the long-term effects of form-focused communicative instruction on learners' grammatical development, communicative competence, and interactional confidence. Future investigations may also explore the influence of learner personality, motivation, gender, and technological engagement on responses to communicative corrective feedback.

From a practical perspective, language teachers should be encouraged to adopt flexible instructional approaches integrating communicative interaction with strategic attention to linguistic form. Teacher education programs should provide instructors with training in corrective feedback techniques, classroom discourse management, and learner-centered communicative pedagogy. Educational institutions may also benefit from creating classroom environments that support interactional participation, reduce learner anxiety, and encourage communicative experimentation without excessive fear of error correction.

Finally, curriculum designers should recognize that learners in EFL contexts often require both communicative opportunities and explicit linguistic guidance in order to achieve balanced language development.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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