

Title: The Communicative Classroom and Issues in the Teaching of Grammar  
Author: Natalie Lovick and Marina Cobb, Defense Language Institute

There is a misconception that communicative language teaching neglects or diminishes the role of developing grammatical competence. For students to achieve grammatical accuracy, teachers often resort to discrete point language teaching or what Long (1997) calls *focus on formS*. They thus overlook a great variety of opportunities for deliberate grammar practice where learners are “able to connect grammatical forms to the meanings they realize in communication” (Ellis, 2006). According to Long (1997) and Doughty (2001), *focus on form* is the one approach that promotes interlanguage development since learners are able to concentrate both on linguistic form and, at the same time, the meaningful language that they are producing. How can this be done in a language classroom? First, a summary of the three approaches to teaching grammatical competence will be presented: *focus on formS*, *focus on meaning*, and *focus on form*. A discussion will follow on the limitations of the first two approaches in regards to communicative competence, and the presentation will then focus on the third approach: *focus on form*. Specifically, it will be demonstrated how the concept of *focus on form* can be used to improve grammatical competence in a communicative classroom through creative activities for student interaction targeting specific language structures. Activities presented are Russian specific and include structures denoting possession, time expressions, verbs of placement, reflexive verbs, subjunctive mood and others, which are taught in beginning and intermediate Russian courses. Similar activity formats can be adapted and used for other languages.

- Doughty, C. (2001). Cognitive underpinnings of focus on form. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction* (pp.206-257). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. 2006. Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective, *TESOL Quarterly*, 40: 828-832.
- Long, M.H. (1997). Focus on form in Task-Based Language Teaching. From Fourth Annual McGraw-Hill Satellite Teleconference. <http://mhhe.com/socscience/foreignlang/top.htm>