



Research Article

The Effectiveness of Reactive and Preemptive Focus on Form VS. Focus on Forms in Teaching Grammar Tenses

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<p>ARTICLE INFO</p> <hr/> <p>Submission History</p> <p>Received: 2024-06-15 Accepted: 2024-08-20</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords</p> <p>Focus on Forms Focus on Form Preemptive Reactive Grammar EFL Junior High School Learners</p>	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p><i>This study was an attempt to compare the effects of focus on forms and the focus on form from one side, and preemptive and reactive focus on form from the other side on EFL Junior High school learners' grammar acquisition. For this purpose, 60 learners out of a total number of 110 grade eight learners studying at Daneshgah Shiraz High School in Shiraz, Iran were chosen based on their performance on OPT. Independent Samples test was used to check the homogeneity of learners. The 60 learners were divided into three groups, the focus on forms, and each of the two focus on form groups who were taught grammar through preemptive and reactive techniques. All the three groups were given a grammar pre-test. At the end of the study, the participants in all groups were given post-tests. Mann-Whitney U was run to test the null hypotheses. Results of the study showed a significant difference between the effect of the two methods with the focus on form groups outperforming the focus on forms group, and the preemptive group outperforming reactive group as well. The findings of this study have implications for EFL teachers, teacher educators, and material developers. The findings of this research are useful for teacher trainers to incorporate appropriate and practical techniques for the instruction of grammar through focus on form preemptively. They should be trained in terms of the ways through which they can initiate attention to form, mostly by bolding, and asking for highlighting of tenses, and give explanations preemptively based on their experience.</i></p>
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Introduction

Finding a way on how to teach grammar has been the focus of an ongoing debate in the field of foreign language acquisition. Actually, by considering other research areas, teaching grammar has gained a considerable amount of empirical research in foreign language acquisition (Borg & Burns, 2008). Considering different

approaches to learning and teaching grammar, focus on form is an effective approach which is a vital issue in SLA research. This innovative method was introduced after the development of communicative language learning and was put forward by Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (as cited in Poole, 2005). The importance of F-on-F method lies in some benefits that are proposed by some researchers and instructors. In

conducting F-on-F approach, a lesson starts with completing a communicative task. And a teacher tries to draw learners' attention to a grammatical point. That is, the teaching syllabus reflects the learners' 'inbuilt syllabus' (Nunan, 1998). Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2001) classified form-focused instructions into two types: Focus-on-Forms and Focus-on-Form. In the first type, the focus is on the form, i.e. the linguistic features are attended to but in the latter one, the attention to form is taken through meaning-centered activities during a communicative task. Among various techniques introduced for this approach, reactive and preemptive F-on-F is chosen to be investigated in terms of efficiency in raising grammatical knowledge. The effectiveness of these techniques was explored by performing some focused tasks, the focus of which was on English grammatical tips by different researchers like (Baleghzade, 2010), and (Marzban, 2012).

Reactive F-on-F occurs in situations that involve negotiation based on Pica (1994), for example, phonologically, lexically, and morpho-syntactically to resolve difficulties in mutual understanding that impede the course of their problem. There are two types of negotiation, the negotiation of meaning, that is entirely communicative in orientation, as it is directed at enabling the participants to achieve mutual understanding in order for communication to proceed. The negotiation of form is didactic in orientation, as it is directed at improving accuracy and precision when no problem of understanding has arisen. As Lyster and Ranta (1997) asserted, both types of negotiation occur in meaning-focused instruction such as immersion classrooms and both of them involve corrective feedback and thus are reactive in nature. Reactive F-on-F arises when learners produce an utterance containing an actual or perceived error, which is then addressed usually by the teacher but sometimes by another learner (Marzban, 2012). Thus, it supplies learners with negative evidence (Marzban, 2012).

Like reactive F-on-F, preemptive F-on-F is problem-oriented, and preemptive F-on-F involves the teacher or learner initiating attention to form even though no actual problem in production has arisen (Marzban, 2012). To put it in other words, reactive F-on-F addresses a performance problem whereas preemptive F-on-F addresses an actual or a perceived gap in the students' knowledge. So very simply, reactive F-

on-F addresses errors (i.e. performance problems) that have emerged in the context of meaningful communication. Preemptive F-on-F, on the contrary, addresses problems that are predicted to occur and thus block communication (Baleghzade, 2010).

It is worth investigating the impact of F-on-F and F-on-Fs on learning grammar which is the foundation of junior high school learners as the basic and vital part of their future knowledge by providing conditions to be involved in various strategies and recent methods of instruction, focused on the necessity of form-focused instruction in second-language classrooms. Nowadays, the need and attention to focus on form (F-on-F) has increased.

Regarding the Iranian junior high school classrooms and what the consequences of reactive and preemptive focuses of form are, little research has been done to show the practical use of F-on-F and F-on-Fs that are actually made in this context.

Literature Review

Research and discussions on grammar learning have recently focused on three options as "focus-on-forms, focus-on-meaning, and focus-on-form" (Long, 1991). In focus-on-forms instruction, language is divided into separate linguistic units and taught in a sequential manner through explicit explanations of grammar rules and immediate correction of errors (Long, 2000). Classes follow a typical sequence of "presentation of a grammatical structure, its practice in controlled exercises, and the provision of opportunities for production, that is PPP" (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2002). The underlying logic of this approach is that the explicit knowledge about grammar rules will turn into implicit knowledge with sufficient practice (De Keyser, 1998).

As part of the language components, grammar has a vital position in language learning. Chang (2011) stated that grammar is central to the teaching and learning of languages, which is also the system of language rules. English grammar is considered an essential guide for learning English in an effective way.

Focus-on-forms (F-on-Fs), where specific linguistic forms are taught directly, will be contrasted to Focus-on form (F-on-F) which is a vital construct in task-based language teaching, and was first introduced by Long (1998, 1991) to

refer to an approach where learners' attention is attracted to linguistic forms as they engage in the performance of tasks, and both of them will be discussed in the next parts in details.

Contrary to reactive F-on-F, which has received a fairly significant amount of attention from researchers, preemptive F-on-F has been relatively overlooked. Ellis et al. (2001) identified preemptive F-on-F, which occurs when either the teacher or a learner initiates attention to form, usually by raising a question, "even though no actual problem in production has arisen". Although both reactive and preemptive F-on-F might be useful, learner topicalization of linguistic items in student-initiated F-on-F might be especially useful, because learners can recognize and draw attention to linguistic items that are problematic for them (Ellis et al. 2001; Slimani, 1989).

According to (Farrokhi & Chehrazad, 2012), it becomes clear that F-on-F can be an effective teaching approach and should be applied in the classroom syllabi. They mention that over the past several decades, teachers and researchers have paid great attention to the role of preemptive and reactive F-on-F teaching. They stated that much of the debate in L2 pedagogy has involved preemptive and reactive F-on-F and whether it causes improvement in writing skills.

Norris and Ortega (2000) worked on 49 studies, mostly of the F-on-F kind, and declared that the effectiveness of the instruction was decreased when this was measured in the case of learners' ability to use the targeted structure spontaneously in communication.

Shach (2008) conducted research on F-on-F and the overall benefits of F-on-F based on the language outcomes with advanced L2 or foreign language learners, or on the differences between form-focused and non-form-focused instruction. The study was on the 78 upper-primary school children in Brunei, and showed that F-on-F tasks can be embedded in this communicative language teaching context, and that their use is perceived as effective by the children, and concluded that the lessons seemed enjoyable and easy for learners. They could perform well, were motivated to do more F-on-F tasks, and enjoyed the stories, illustrations and humorous cartoon characters, which also provided contextual support.

Whereas Rahimi Domakani (2008) underscored the significance of communication

and meaning in form-focused instruction and stated that this type of instruction draws EFL students' attention to linguistic forms that might otherwise be overlooked and provides them with attentional resources that are required to acquire the target linguistic features, Mohammadnia and Gholami (2008) demonstrated that the concept of F-on-F instruction arose from the rational belief that it paved the way for EFL students to pay attention to linguistic features in a meaningful context as they take place within a wider framework of meaning.

Othman and Ismail (2008) identified the impact of employing F-on-F instruction on second language learners' accurate production of past perfect and past simple tenses. They collected data from two ESL classes in Malaysia. The first group received F-on-F instruction in grammar, and in the second group, grammar was taught through standard practices. Moreover, the researchers administered a pretest and posttest to identify the impact of F-on-F instruction on the students' production of the past perfect and simple past tenses. The findings of the study indicated that participants in the F-on-F group outperformed the students in the control group.

According to what Nassaji (2013) investigated, and the results were based on the relationship between participation structure, and incidental F-on-F in adult ESL classrooms at three levels of language proficiency, that is, beginner, intermediate, and advanced, it was indicated that both the occurrence and effectiveness of incidental F-on-F varied according to the three different types of participation structure.

Panahzade and Gholami (2014) examined the effects of planned preemptive and delayed reactive F-on-F on lexical development in oral performance and found that both types were effective in promoting lexical development and that attending to form either before or after performing the task was equally effective. Teachers could also benefit from preemption because they could engage in interaction with learners. Gholami and Aliyari (2015), in another investigation, argued in favor of planned preemptive F-on-F as increased noticing, facilitated attending to form and content, activated linguistic and schematic knowledge.

In an article, Shintani (2015) studied incidental grammar acquisition in two different instructional contexts, F-on-F involving comprehension-based

language instruction, and F-on-Fs, involving production-based language instruction. It seeks to answer questions that have received little attention, namely, whether learners can learn a grammatical feature that is not the explicit focus of the teaching and, if so, what interactional conditions are facilitative of incidental acquisition. This investigation focused on a group of learners— young beginner children—who have received little attention in the instructed second language acquisition. He declared the only way to elicit production from such learners is through F-on-Fs instruction. In the case of incidental acquisition, this is more likely to be achieved through F-on-F instruction than through F-on-Fs instruction.

Saeed and Reinders (2021) examined the impact of the timing of form-focused instruction on the acquisition of the past counterfactual conditional and framing expressions for English questions. The participants of the study were 63 EFL students and received integrated or isolated form-focused instruction on the target structures. The investigators collected data through interviews and cloze tests. Moreover, mixed-design ANOVA and dependent *t*-tests were run to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that the students in the two experimental groups improved significantly and the timing of form-focused instruction had a varied effect on the two target structures.

In an article, Gumus (2021) carried out a piece of research and found that the participants favored planned F-on-F instruction because they benefited from guessing the meanings out of the context as it helped them retain the knowledge for a longer time. In addition, the participants stated that their exam scores have been positively affected by planned F-on-F instruction.

Azizpour and Alavinia (2021) selected 40 Iranian advanced EFL learners within the age range of 16-20 from a language school in Karaj, Iran. This study found that although F-on-F and F-on-Fs instruction have significant positive impacts on grammar acquisition of the subjunctive by Iranian advanced EFL learners, the students who received F-on-Fs instruction significantly outperformed the learners who were taught through F-on-F instruction. In this way, explicit instruction of the subjunctive can raise students' awareness of specific grammar rules, which can then help them notice the language

forms in subsequent input. Thus, in the context of teaching and learning subjunctive, EFL learners' attention to detailed analysis of grammar rules facilitates comprehension and production.

Reactive Focus-on-Form and Pre-emptive Focus-on-Form

In an article Elis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2007) found a neglected aspect of classroom teaching preemptive F-on-F. This exploration was motivated by theories of SLA that emphasize the importance of attention to form in the context of meaning-centered activity. Researchers have concentrated on reactive F-on-F as the main discourse mechanism for achieving such attention during instruction. On the basis of the study reported there, they argued that preemptive F-on-F may be just as important. A study of 12 hours of teaching involving two teachers does not permit generalizations about preemptive focus on form. Preemptive focus on F-on-F may feature less in other types of instruction or with other teachers. They wonder, for instance, whether immersion teachers and younger students in a public-school context are as likely to raise matters of form quite so frequently as the participants in their study did. Nonetheless, the results of this study indicate a need for researchers and teacher educators to recognize the potential importance of preemptive F-on-F.

Panahzade and Gholami (2014) examined the effects of planned preemptive and delayed reactive F-on-F on lexical development in oral performance and found that both types were effective in promoting lexical development and that attending to form either before or after performing the task was equally effective. Teachers could also benefit from preemption because they could engage in interaction with learners.

In their study, Khabiri and Arabloo (2014) compared preemptive with reactive F-on-F and targeted writing skills. The participants of this study were only intermediate learners. The results of this study suggested reactive F-on-F was more successful in improving students' writing. Concerning the fact that reactive focus on form is known as error correction, corrective feedback, or negative evidence/feedback in different investigations (Long, 1996) and is carried out when the students have committed the error, it can be concluded that giving feedback after the

error happens (reactive) is more effective than providing it as a priori (preemptive). This may be due to the fact when students receive feedback after making the errors, they become more sensitive to their errors. This may also lead to their further attempt to avoid repeating the same error.

In an article Saeidi and Safay Mohseni (2011) investigated how frequently different types of F-on-F in general, and preemptive and reactive types in particular, are used by teachers in different student proficiency levels. The results indicated there was no difference in the frequency of L2 teachers' use of F-on-F, including reactive and preemptive, across different proficiency levels of learners.

Marzban and Mokhberi (2012) studied three groups of EFL learners who completed the same task and compared the two types of approaches to F-on-F that is 'reactive F-on-F' and 'preemptive F-on-F'. The results of the study suggested that reactive F-on-F in comparison with preemptive F-on-F furnishes an excellent means for developing the ability to use the grammatical knowledge of the target structure in context. The results showed that the majority of the preemptive FFEs were initiated by the teacher rather than students and dealt with vocabulary whereas the linguistic focus of reactive FFEs was largely on grammar.

In an article, Shabani and Hosseinzadeh (2014) explored the effects of two types of F-on-F techniques, that is, teacher-initiated planned preemptive and reactive F-on-F aiming at increasing Iranian L2 learners' accuracy in and control over using third person singular -s in written narratives. The two treatments were presented as two distinct series of instructional programs in which one group received a combination of teacher-initiated preemptive F-on-F and pre-task planning and the other group received reactive F-on-F which included CF. The quantitative results indicated that both types of instruction did promote accuracy similarly in using the target form. Moreover, the effects of teacher-initiated planned preemptive F-on-F have been suggested to be more stable. It can thus be interpreted and concluded that both techniques were equally effective in drawing attention to language, increasing accuracy, and enhancing learning, and that combining two F-on-F techniques could also result in more stability of the effects. The teachers should also consider the

facilitative role that interaction between the teacher and his/her learners and among the very learners plays in performing the tasks.

Following the model suggested by Nassaji (2013), in an article Shabani and Vahedi (2023) tried to know whether the occurrence of incidental F-on-F varies according to the types of student-teacher participation structure whole class, small group, and individual in the performance of dictogloss tasks. Furthermore, the study investigated the effectiveness of incidental F-on-F across contexts in using regular and irregular past tense of verbs.

Tajic, Karimi, Ramezani (2020) found that based on the occurrence of preemptive F-on-F episodes (FFE) in the classes of two male and two female English-language teachers, it aimed to explore the frequency of student-initiated and teacher-initiated FFEs as well as the uptake and no uptake moves in four classes. All cases of preemptive FFEs were identified in 6 hours of instruction obtained from videotaping of four classes. Results confirmed that preemptive F-on-F does occur in the process of meaning-focused communication and that they are used by male and female teachers almost equally to deal with linguistic difficulties. The findings showed that student-initiated and teacher-initiated FFEs occurred almost equally in four classes. Results can raise the awareness of ELT teachers about the benefits of employing preemptive F-on-F in the context of meaning-focused communications.

In this regard, another study was done by Dorji (2018) who demonstrated that instructors should teach grammar explicitly and pointed out that explaining the grammar rules was outstandingly helpful and attached paramount importance to correcting language learners' errors. In like manner, Onalan (2018) explored the perceptions of 75 EFL teachers on grammar instruction and collected the data on a scale with 15 items that addressed a number of major issues in teaching grammar. The results of the study showed that junior EFL learners had a strong tendency toward learning grammar communicatively. In another study, Ebrahimi et al. (2015) investigated the impact of F-on-F and F-on-Fs instruction on grammar acquisition of conditional sentences by 90 Iranian intermediate EFL students. The participants of the study were chosen from a language institution in Shiraz. The investigators administered an Oxford Placement Test to

ensure the homogeneity of the language students. After that, they used a pretest to identify the participants' knowledge of conditional sentences. Then, the first experimental group received F-on-F instruction for conditional sentences whereas the second experimental group received F-on-Fs instruction. The findings of the study showed that F-on-Fs instruction on conditional sentences was more efficient than F-on-F instruction.

Furthermore, the results of another study provide some pedagogical implications that can be of benefit to syllabus designers and material developers, EFL teachers, and learners in Iranian language schools. To this end, the study aimed at identifying the impact of F-on-F and F-on-Fs instruction on the acquisition of the subjunctive by Iranian advanced EFL learners and investigating whether there is any significant difference between F-on-F and F-on-Fs in their impacts on Iranian advanced EFL learners' acquisition of the subjunctive (Azizpour & Alavinia, 2021).

On the other hand, in the case of different features of F-on-F and F-on-Fs and the problematic issues that are related to foreign language education in Iran where English is learned as a foreign language in junior high schools, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the reactive F-on-F instruction in comparison with preemptive F-on-Fs in the acquisition of a set of tenses, by 8th grade students studying at a high school in Shiraz, Iran.

To fill in the gap, this study tries to put emphasis on the comparison of the above-mentioned strategies in the context of learning foreign language in junior high schools of Iran, which has been neglected so far. Therefore, finding ways to investigate the effect of F-on-F and F-on-Fs on learning grammar together for Iranian junior high school students, once in the case of learning through reactive strategies, and then through preemptive ones is necessary. In other words, it should be carried out in order to see which strategy is more beneficial and can influence the learners' grammar acquisition.

To address the main concerns of the study, the following research questions were raised:

1. Does Focus on Form VS. Focus on Forms instruction play any role in grammar acquisition of Iranian EFL Junior high school learners?
2. Is there any significant difference between the two strategies of Focus on Form instruction

(preemptive, reactive) in Iranian Junior high school EFL learners' acquisition of grammar?

Based on these questions, the following null hypotheses are raised:

1. Focus on Form VS. Focus on Forms instruction does not play any role in the grammar acquisition of Iranian EFL Junior high school learners.
2. There is not any significant difference between the two strategies of Focus on Form instruction in Iranian Junior high school EFL learners' acquisition of grammar.

Method

Participants

The participants for this study were 60 EFL female junior high school students from Daneshgah Shiraz High School, which is located in Shiraz Iran. The sample was chosen non-randomly, based on convenience sampling. They were 14 and 15 years of age. The language learners participating in this study were selected based on their performance on the OPT test. The sample was chosen out of 110 students who were willing to take part in the research by piloting OPT and those scoring within one standard deviation above or below the mean were considered for the study. To make sure that the criterion of homogeneity is met, the independent samples test was employed to reveal that the two groups were homogeneous. It is worth noting that the language learners were randomly assigned into three main groups, namely, F-on-F, reactive (Group 1N=20), F-on-F, preemptive (Group 2, N=20), and F-on-Fs (Group 3, N=20). Besides, it should be mentioned that the names of the participants were not disclosed in this study to maintain anonymity.

Instruments

A) OPT

First, the OPT was used to create homogeneous groups of participants concerning their English knowledge of grammar. It was a sample of OPT to select pre-intermediate learners. It was administered to the language learners by the researcher and the students whose scores fell within the range of one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as the target participants of the study, and the rest whose scores were not in the appropriate range were excluded from the research.

B) Pre-test of Grammar

A pretest of the grammar was developed and administered by the researcher to determine the participants' knowledge of the tenses. It should be mentioned that three university professors of Applied Linguistics confirmed the validity of the pretest. Moreover, the reliability of the pretest was estimated by using Kuder Richardson formula ($KR-21 = 0.8587$). On the pretest, the students in both groups were expected to answer 30 items related to grammar knowledge. It included multiple-choice tests. It is worth noting that each item had one point with no penalty for wrong answers. The allocated time was 30 minutes.

C) Posttest of Grammar

After eight weeks of instruction on the tenses, the same test of the tenses was administered to F-on-F reactive, F-on-F preemptive, and F-on-Fs groups as a posttest. The participants were expected to answer 30 items related to grammar knowledge. It involved multiple-choice items. To compare the impact of the treatments, the posttest of tenses was administered to the participants in the groups. The students did the posttest in 30 minutes. It must be noted that each item again received one point. There was no penalty for false answers. The results obtained from the posttest were compared with the pretest's results using SPSS to investigate the effectiveness of the strategies on learners' grammar development.

Data Collection Procedures

In the present study, the researcher tried to investigate the potentially valuable role of F-on-F strategies, and F-on-Fs Instruction and examined two different ways of F-on-F, which are reactive and preemptive to see their effects on grammar acquisition of Iranian EFL Junior High school Learners. This is necessary first to identify two categories of F-on-F; reactive and preemptive. Reactive strategies are those that arise as a result of an actual or perceived error in something that a student has said and involve corrective feedback using the negotiation of meaning or form. Negotiation of form refers to attempts to establish a correct form interactionally even though no breakdown in communication has occurred. Preemptive strategies are those in which either the teacher or the student draw attention to a linguistic form even though no error in the use of this form has occurred. Finally, a posttest was administered in groups. The results obtained from the posttest

were compared with the pretest's results using SPSS to investigate the effectiveness of the different strategies on learners' grammar development.

All groups met once a week during the two-month project and were taught by the researcher. All the participants were at pre-intermediate level proven by the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) that was administered before the selection. The students were divided into three groups - the PPP group (20 persons), the F-on-F reactive group (20 persons), and the F-on-F preemptive group (20 persons). The subjects of the study were randomly selected from a larger population based on the OPT test.

Treatment for grammar acquisition

To achieve the target of this study, eight stories were chosen from the book, *Steps to Understanding* (Hill,1981), used in the experimental group in which the reactive and preemptive F-on-F strategies were used as a medium of instruction. *Steps to Understanding* is a collection of enjoyable short stories for English learners, in which the stories are classified into introductory, intermediate and advanced levels. The selected stories used in the present study are mainly from the elementary and pre-intermediate sections.

In the F-on-F group, the tenses were taught by resorting to focus on meaning strategies, and the importance of communicative language teaching principles and authentic communication was focused. Therefore, the teacher drew language learners' attention to the tenses by accomplishing communicative activities and employed negotiation to assist students in recognizing the properties of the tenses in context. Thus, it is worth noting that in the F-on-F group work is used for having more interaction. Besides, the teacher provided the students with a reading passage each session and made the tenses salient through bolding, italicizing, and underlining verbs, and before finishing the work in groups, they were supposed to highlight or underline the verbs of suggested exercises in different colors, using colored pens or highlighters.

The teacher divided the language learners into groups of five and asked them to take notes and use their notes to write a text different from the original version. First, the students listened to the text. Second, they were asked to read the text. In the reactive group, the students received feedback

from their peers or the teacher. Finally, the instructor asked each learner to read the new story to the class for more correction and give suggestions for improvement. The correct form of the common errors was written on the board in different colors based on the tenses.

In the preemptive group, before reading the text, the teacher gave some suggestions, wrote them on the board based on her experience and problematic errors that the students had. The teacher tried to explain the errors that were important and more frequent and called the learners' attention not to make them again in their stories.

In the F-on-Fs group, there was no focus on meaning strategy and the teacher taught the tenses by explicit explanation on the board. To this end, the teacher taught the tenses based on,

presentation, practice, and production. Thus, she provided the language learners with an explanation of the tenses and noted that the tenses are, present, present continuous, past regular, and irregular.

Results and Discussion

A quantitative approach was taken to analyze the data. The results are tabulated and discussed in terms of statistical calculations in the following parts. It embraces the analysis of data concerning the purpose of the study to provide direct answers to research questions.

Normality of Data Distribution

To check the normality of data distribution, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used. The data is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Tests of Normality of OPT

OPT	Shapiro-Wilk			Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
	.969	60	.138	.444	.309	.743	.608

First, the researcher obtained statistics running in Shapiro-Wilk test. As presented in Table 1, The p-value is higher than 0.05. Pretest scores are normally distributed ($p > .05$). OPT is normal.

Homogeneity of Learners

To check the homogeneity of learners, 110 students were selected. They took the OPT test,

and 60 learners who were at the same level were chosen. Independent Samples Test was run, and the mean scores of OPT between the two groups of Focus on Form and Focus on forms was shown. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Independent Samples Test on the Learners' Homogeneity

GROUP	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
			F	Sig.	t	sig
Focus on Form	18.8750	3.83096	.831	.366	1.030	.308
Focus on Forms	17.6500	5.24430				

As revealed in Table 2, the mean of OPT test in Focus on Form group is 18.8750 and the mean of OPT test in Focus on Forms group equals 17.6500. Based on the findings of Levene's Test, the equality of variances is admitted ($F=0.831$, $p=0.366$). There is no significant difference between the mean scores of OPT between the two groups.

Comparing the Mean of Grammar Test Scores in the two groups

To answer the first research question (Does Focus on Form VS. Focus on Forms instruction

play any role in grammar acquisition of Iranian EFL Junior high school learners?), scores on the Focus on Form and Focus on Forms at both the pretest and posttest were summarized as descriptive statistics including mean, and standard deviation. Table 3 demonstrates the descriptive statistics summary of Focus on Form and Focus on Forms groups and compares them to determine whether any of the differences between the means are statistically significant, Mann-Whitney U Test was run to assess the null hypothesis.

Table 3.

The results of Mann-Whitney U

	GROUP	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank	z	sig
Pre-test	Focus on Form	24.2250	2.15416	31.49	-.628	.530
	Focus on Forms	23.8000	1.90843	28.53		
Post-test	Focus on Form	26.3500	2.65591	36.30	-3.658	.000
	Focus on Forms	22.9000	3.61139	18.90		

As the analysis of data in Table 3 shows based on Mann-Whitney U Test, in the pretest, there is no significant difference between the means of the two groups (Focus on Form and Focus on Forms) on the pretest of grammar scores ($p=0.530$, $z=0.628$). The analysis of the data revealed there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups in the posttest ($p=0.000$, $z=3.658$).

Difference between two Strategies of Focus-on-Form Instruction in Grammar Acquisition

Table 4.

The results of Mann-Whitney U

	GROUP	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank	z	sig
Pre-test	Preemptive	24.1500	1.95408	19.90	-.331	.758 ^b
	Reactive	24.3000	2.38636	21.10		
Post-test	Preemptive	27.4000	2.23371	24.68	-2.277	.023 ^b
	Reactive	25.3000	2.67739	16.33		

As the results of Mann-Whitney U show in Table 4, in the pretest there is no significant difference in groups ($p>0.05$), ($p=0.758$, $z=0.331$), but in the post-test, there is a significant difference in groups ($p<0.05$), ($p=0.023$, $z=2.277$).

Discussion

Research hypotheses revisited

1. Focus on Form VS. Focus on Forms instruction does not play any role in the grammar acquisition of Iranian EFL Junior high school learners.

For the first hypothesis in this study, the Mann-Whitney U test was calculated. As shown in Table 3 and in the pre-test, there was not any significant difference between the means of the two groups in grammar test scores. It is bigger than 0.05 ($p>0.05$), ($p=0.530$, $z=0.628$). However, in the post-test, there was a significant difference between the means of the two groups, and it is smaller than 0.05 ($p=0.000$, $z=3.658$). As the results of Mann-Whitney U show in Table 3, in the pretest, there is no significant difference between groups, but in the post-test, there is a

The second research question concerned the difference between the two strategies of Focus on Form instruction in Iranian Junior high school EFL learners' acquisition of grammar. To compare the impact of preemptive focus on Form instruction with reactive Focus on Form instruction on grammar acquisition of learners, the means in preemptive group with reactive group is presented. Mann-Whitney U Test was run to assess the null hypothesis. The results of comparing the two groups are shown in Table 4.

significant difference between groups. Based on this result, the first null hypothesis was rejected. 2. There is no significant difference between the two strategies of Focus on Form instruction in Iranian Junior high school EFL learners' acquisition of grammar.

To compare the impact of preemptive F-on-F instruction with reactive F-on-F instruction on grammar acquisition of learners, the mean in preemptive group with the mean in reactive group is presented. The result of the Mann-Whitney U for comparing two groups is shown in Table 4.

As the results of Mann-Whitney U show in Table 4, in the pretest there is no significant difference in groups ($p>0.05$), ($p=0.758$, $z=0.331$), but in the post-test, there is a significant difference in groups ($p<0.05$), ($p=0.023$, $z=2.277$). The grammar scores in the preemptive group increased from the pre-test to post-test in comparison to reactive group. In light of this result, the second null hypothesis was rejected.

Considering these findings, it could be concluded that although both groups demonstrated improvement after the treatments,

as shown in Table 3, the pretest and posttest of the test of grammar acquisition of the two instructional interventions F-on-F approach, and F-on-Fs approach examined to help the participants improve their grammar acquisition. But F-on-F approach showed a significant effect on grammar acquisition. The participants who received F-on-F instruction were observed to attain higher test scores compared to F-on-Fs group participants. Therefore, F-on-F instruction proved more effective than F-on-Fs instruction for the participants.

This study intended to investigate the impact of F-on-F and F-on-Fs instruction on grammar acquisition of the tenses by Iranian junior high school EFL learners. The first null hypothesis of this study was rejected. Therefore, the researchers found that in Iranian schools, F-on-F and F-on-Fs instruction have significant positive impacts on grammar acquisition, in the case of tenses by the junior high school Iranian EFL learners.

One plausible justification for this finding is that in some Iranian schools, there is a large number of students who receive grammar from language institutions in each class. Thus, individual attention and meaningful interaction are the ways that involve them in interaction, and discussion that is beneficial for their learning grammar. Besides, EFL teachers cannot address the language learners' problematic grammar forms that is somehow repetitive via traditional classes. Therefore, since offering newer ways of teaching grammar is a crucial factor in instruction, teaching grammar rules based on F-on-Fs instruction might be a demanding task for EFL teachers in classes with many students taking part in language institutions in addition to school English classes.

The teacher taught English grammar to junior high school students through making stories because the teachers' goal was to make the students communicate in a structured manner. The teacher also considered that grammar learning followed by highlighting assignments was the best method to understand and remember the grammar structure easily for this age. As stated earlier, these activities lead students' attention to grammar in activities and tasks that were enjoyable for them. The students communicatively learn the grammar structure of tenses.

Although Ellis (2001) pointed out that undoubtedly, in an EFL setting, intentional

learning is beneficial, particularly for older students, the findings of this research revealed that F-on-F instruction is more vital for junior English language learners. Unlike Loewen (2018) who asserted that adult students are mostly accustomed to explicit learning and instruction, and they might gain more from F-on-Fs instruction, this investigation showed that junior high school learners will benefit from F-on-F instruction. In the same vein, unlike the findings of this study, Loewen (2018) asserted that while there has been a paradigm shift away from explicit instruction, recent research has shown that preemptive F-on-F instruction can be useful in improving junior high school students' grammar acquisition.

The results of this investigation are in line with Shach (2008), Mohammadnia and Gholami (2008), Othman and Ismail (2008), Nassaji and Shabani (2013), Shintani (2015), Gumus (2021), Shabani and Vahidi (2023), who asserted that attention to F-on-F instruction facilitates grammar acquisition significantly. Furthermore, the results of this study are in contrast with the previous studies (e.g., Dekeyser, (1995); Robinson, (1996); Rahimi Domakani (2021), Azizpour and Alavinia (2021); Dorji (2018); Onalan (2018); Ebrahimi et al. (2015).

This study also examined the comparative effect of preemptive F-on-F and reactive F-on-F on EFL learners' grammar acquisition. The null hypothesis of the study was rejected based on the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test. The results showed that the group that received preemptive F-on-F improved their grammar acquisition significantly more than the reactive group. In other words, the preemptive group demonstrated significant improvement from the grammar pretest to posttest.

Panahzade and Gholami (2014) examined the effects of planned preemptive and delayed reactive F-on-F on lexical development in oral performance and found that both types were effective in promoting lexical development and that attending to form either before or after performing the task was equally effective. Teachers could also benefit from preemption because they could engage in interaction with learners.

Some researchers found different findings. For example, Saeidi and Safay Mohseni (2011) investigated how frequently different types of F-

on-F in general, and preemptive and reactive types in particular, are used by teachers in different student proficiency levels. The results indicated there was no difference in the frequency of L2 teachers' use of F-on-F, including reactive and preemptive, across different proficiency levels of learners.

Also, other researchers had a different idea. Marzban and Mokhberi (2012) studied three groups of EFL learners who completed the same task and compared the two types of approaches to F-on-F that is 'reactive F-on-F' and 'preemptive F-on-F'. The results of the study suggested that reactive F-on-F in comparison with preemptive F-on-F furnishes an excellent means for developing the ability to use the grammatical knowledge of the target structure in context. The results showed that the majority of the preemptive FFEs were initiated by the teacher and dealt with grammar whereas the linguistic focus of reactive FFEs was largely on grammar.

Conclusion

Findings of the study showed that grammar knowledge of eight students are highly influenced by F-on-F instruction. The participants received eight sessions of F-on-F instruction. It played a considerable role in the grammar acquisition of Iranian EFL Junior high school learners. Also, this research showed that in the case of grammar acquisition students improved their grammar through preemptive F-on-F significantly more than reactive F-on-F. When teacher writes some important points on the board in advance, the learners pay more attention to using them in the stories they reconstruct.

There are some strategies that can be used in classes and help the students to take advantage of the F on F instruction. These are instructions on how to teach F-on-F, For example, students can take part in group work and teacher can help them by asking for discussion and giving feedback on their summary and providing some stress-free conditions in class that students read exciting stories with enjoyment, and highlight the desired exercises for the new pattern of grammar in different colors as a homework. Highlighting in opposite colors as a key for learning present, and past tenses helps students to improve their grammar acquisition. It can be considered as one of the best approaches and can be used by

students in junior high schools who are interested in using highlighters for learning.

Those who are responsible for developing students' education should think about having educational programs in the light of F-on-F activities in schools and provide with them facilities so that students can take advantages of them and improve themselves. Thus, it should be taken into account and the instructors should consider the benefits of taking an action and weigh them against the drawbacks of inaction.

With regards to the present research, the following limitations were also identified for this study. First of all, it is limited to junior high school students. Secondly, it is limited to F-on-F and F-on-Fs, as two important factors. It is also limited to the grammar of students. It was also limited in terms of having a limited number of participants for a period of short time for investigation.

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