

Comparing the Effectiveness of Form-Focused and Meaning-Focused Instructions in EFL Teaching

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Abstract

While meaning-focused instruction is based on the idea that learners learn the second language if they follow the natural principles of first language learning, form-focused instruction pays much attention to linguistic form. Two groups were formed and had a five-week extensive reading program in this study. The control group received meaning-focused instruction and experimental group underwent form-focused instruction. The study found that both form-focused and meaning focused instruction are to a certain degree effective for the increase of vocabulary, grammar and reading proficiency. Though to some extent more efficient than form-focused instruction, meaning focused instruction alone will not greatly raise the mentioned skills, thus a recommendation is given to apply both approaches and to study the efficiency of the mixed approach.

Keywords: Form-focused, language learning, language development, meaning-focused

Introduction

Language acquisition is composed of three elements: form, meaning and function (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Form is how language elements are used in speech or writing. Meaning is the expression of the word through a language. Function shows the goal why a language unit is used, such as for offers, requests, etc

While teaching reading the question whether learners should give attention to meaning or form arises. Instruction for the second language acquisition is divided into form-focused and meaning-focused instructions (Loewen, 2010). While form-focused instruction places emphasis on accuracy, meaning-focused instruction places emphasis on fluency. The problem is that, when we teach ESL, more reading is actually done by the students than just what is part of educational process, while in ESL, except the most motivated and conscientious students, all reading that is done by students is part of educational process. Thus, reading practice is not abundant enough, to support the development of vocabulary and grammar skills' development. It makes the choice of dominant approach so important. This article investigates whether form-focused or meaning-focused instruction contributes more to language development of EFL learners.

1. Literature Review

1.1. *Meaning-focused and form-focused instruction*

Rich input and meaningful use of second language in context which leads to incidental acquisition of the second language is defined as meaning-focused instruction (Norris & Ortega, 2001, p.160). Meaning-focused instruction is based on the idea that learners learn the second language if they follow the natural principles of first language learning (Long & Robinson, 1998). Long defines focus on meaning instruction as (1998, p.18):

Although the terminology has varied, some have gone so far as to claim that learning an L2 incidentally or implicitly from exposure to comprehensible target language samples is sufficient for successful second or foreign language acquisition by adolescents and adults, just as it appears to be for first language acquisition by young children.

For instance in natural approach and direct method learners acquire the second language in a natural way. By the same token, meaning-focused instruction stems from teaching the second language naturally. Errors are tolerated and are rarely corrected by the teacher but this view of meaning-focused approach to reading has been criticized because language produced by the learner without any correction will bring about fossilized errors (Seedhouse, 1997).

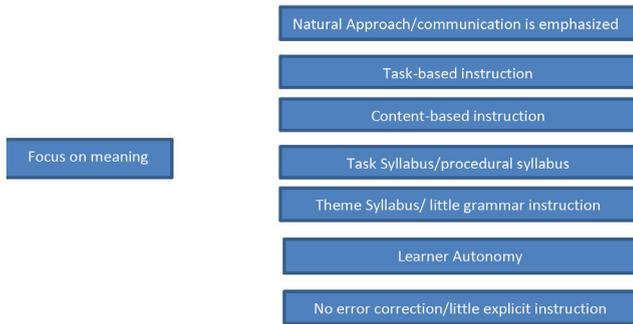
When learners are engaged in meaning-focused activi-

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ties, besides the development of reading skills they enhance language acquisition. Meaning-focused activities bring about “gaining content matter knowledge, skill improvement and enjoyment” (Nation, 2001, p.8). In the same vein, Krashen (1989) argues that meaning-focused reading helps learners build vocabulary. In meaning-focused instruction “learners are usually not specifically taught the strategies, maxims and organizational principles that govern communicative language use but are expected to work these out for themselves through extensive task engagement” (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1997, p. 141). Williams (1995, p.12) puts forward the characteristics of meaning-focused instruction as:

- They emphasize using authentic language.
- They emphasize tasks that encourage the negotiation of meaning between students, and between students and teacher.
- They emphasize successful communication, especially that which involves risk taking.
- They emphasize minimal focus on form, including: (a) lack of emphasis on error correction, and (b) little explicit instruction on language rules.
- They emphasize learner autonomy.

Table 1: Major characteristics of meaning-focused instruction



I summarized the major characteristics of meaning-focused instruction in table 1. Form-focused instruction pays much attention to linguistic form but it has been seen that learners who have been good at grammatical structures are unable to communicate effectively. Yet supporters of meaning-focused instruction are of the opinion that language teaching should be implemented to develop communicative competence which automatically entails both grammar as well as discourse and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Form-focused instruction is defined as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (Ellis, 2001, p.2). Long and Robinson define focus on form as (1998, p.23)

Focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features by the teacher and/or one or more students-triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production.

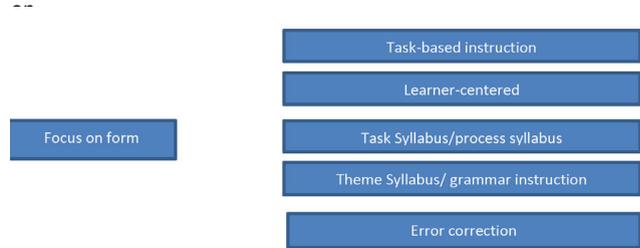
I summarized the major characteristics of form-focused instruction in table 2.

Norris and Ortega (2001, p.167) state that instruction may be regarded as form-focused if it meets the below-men-

tioned criteria:

- (i) that learners engage with the meaning of a structure before paying attention to its form, through tasks that ensure that target forms are crucial to the successful completion of the tasks;
- (ii) that instruction in a particular form occurs as a result of analysing learner needs;
- (iii) that learners’ attention be drawn to a form briefly yet noticeably, “thus achieving a difficult balance between unobtrusiveness and salience”.

Table 2: Major characteristics of focus on form instruction



Ellis et al., (2001, p.41-42) puts forward the characteristics of focus on form instruction as:

- It occurs in meaning-centered discourse.
- It is observable, i.e. it occurs interactionally.
- It is incidental, i.e. it is not preplanned.
- It is transitory.
- It is extensive, i.e. it attends to several different forms in the context of a single lesson.

Advocates of form focused instruction believe that learners cannot accomplish high level of linguistic competence without form focused instruction, and meaning focused instruction is merely not enough to enable learners to gain linguistic competence.

Accuracy has been considered as essential conditions for effective second language learning by advocates of form focused instruction so linguistic elements have been given priority in form focused instruction. Doughty and Williams (1998) state that “it is likely that focus on form can enhance lexical acquisition. And there is mounting evidence that, in the acquisition of lexical items, as with that of grammatical structures, some interaction is helpful” (p.212). In other words through interaction word and vocabulary knowledge will be reinforced and learners will gain better understanding of how to use the language accurately.

Doughty (2001) points out that “the factor that distinguishes focus on form from other pedagogical approaches is the requirement that focus on form involves learners’ brief and perhaps simultaneously attending to form, meaning and use during one cognitive event” (p. 211). Therefore learners’ attention is drawn to form and communication simultaneously. Learners through this method have a chance to study the grammatical patterns.

In focus on form instruction learners learn grammar de-

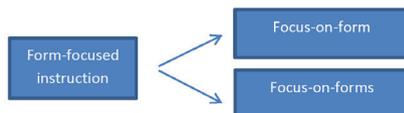
ductively and they apply the rules they have learnt to oral production (Nishimura, 2000). However, focus on meaning has been criticized by some researchers because mere exposure to the second language without knowledge of grammar will not lead learners to produce the second language accurately; moreover, learners need to know their mistakes therefore errors should be corrected as soon as they occur (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Higgs & Clifford, 1982; Skehan, 1996; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; White, 1987). Furthermore some grammatical patterns are difficult to comprehend because it occurs in contrast with the learners' mother tongue so these rules require detailed explanation so that learners can understand them properly (White, 1987; Sheen, 2003). This view shows that meaning and form should be presented to learners in an integrated way because "some sort of noticing and consciousness-raising to target grammar structures in input, and feedback on errors during language use in meaningful communicative activities would facilitate the acquisition of language" (Uysal & Bardakci, 2014, p.2).

1.2 Focus-on-form vs. Focus-on-forms

Long (1991) distinguished form-focused instruction as focus-on-form and focus-on-forms. While focus on form emphasizes meaning-oriented language use, focus-on-forms emphasizes teaching linguistic forms in isolation (Szudarski, 2012). Ellis (2001) distinguishes form focused instruction as incidental and planned form focused instruction. In incidental form focused instruction learners rather than specific samples produce general samples of language and planned form focused instruction focuses on linguistic form selected earlier.

I showed types of form-focused instruction according to Long (1991) in table 3.

Table 3: Types of form-focused instruction according to Long



Focus on forms is the instruction "in which language features are taught according to a structural syllabus that specifies which features are to be taught and in which sequence" (Spada & Lightbown, 2008, p.185). Long and Robinson define focus on forms instruction as (1998, p.16)

The learner's role is to synthesize the pieces for use in communication. Synthetic syllabi, together with the corresponding materials, methodology, and classroom pedagogy, lead to lessons with a focus on forms. Pedagogical materials and accompanying classroom procedures are designed to present and practice a series of linguistic items, or forms.

Grammar rules are presented to the learners in a systematic way in focus on forms. Focus on forms emphasizes language structures selected earlier which are or not contextualized. Doughty and Williams (1998, p.4) stress that "focus on form and focus on forms are not polar opposite in a manner that form and meaning have been regarded.

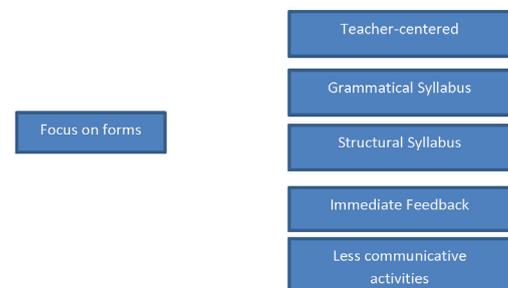
Focus-on form is the instruction, which focuses on communicative activities, but in case of a need the teacher helps the learners to master it accurately. Isolated form-focused

(focus on forms) instruction is useful, when learners are having a difficulty about a specific patte

A focus on form entails a focus on the formal elements of the language; whereas focus on forms is limited to such a focus, and focus on meaning exclude it. In focus-on-forms instruction, grammar rules are explained explicitly as isolated units and in a sequential manner. Immediate feedback is provided that is an error is corrected right away. Focus on forms instruction is studied in a sequence of "presentation of a grammatical structure, its practice in controlled exercises, and the provision of opportunities for production-PPP" (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2002, p. 420). However focus-on-forms has been found boring by the learners in that its being teacher centered does not give an opportunity to learners to communicate in the target language.

I summarized the major characteristics of focus on forms instruction in table 4.

Table 4: Major characteristics of focus on forms instruction



1.3 Incidental vs planned form-focused instruction

Ellis (2001) distinguishes form-focused instruction as incidental and planned form-focused instruction. In incidental form-focused instruction learners rather than specific samples produce general samples of language and planned form-focused instruction focuses on linguistic form selected earlier. Language is learned when such necessity arises (spontaneously, in case of a communication problem). When learners do not understand a specific form the teacher draws their attention to. When learners make errors, the teacher provides feedback to the learner in an implicit way. For instance, a learners says "I doed my homework", and the teacher repeats the error in an exaggerated intonation and gives the correct utterance and says "I did my homework". Learners pay attention to meaning, and the activities are implemented for communicative purposes, so that language is learned in a natural way.

In planned form-focused instruction learners reinforce a specific form through several examples in the target language, but this is not implemented overtly. It is done in three different ways (Ellis, 2001)

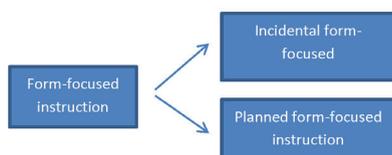
- explicit correction; the teacher corrects the learner's mistake overtly
- metalinguistic feedback; the teacher gives the learner information about the form of the learner's utterance
- elicitation; the teacher tries to get the correct form

from the learners

The main difference between incidental and planned form-focused is “with incidental form-focused, various linguistic forms, namely grammatical, lexical, phonological and pragmatic, compete for the learner’s attention, whereas with planned form-focused, the teacher can select the linguistic form to which the learner should pay attention” (Ollerhead & Oosthuizen, 2005, p.65).

I showed types of form-focused instruction according to Ellis (2001) in table 5.

Table 5: Types of form-focused instruction by Ellis (2001)



1.4 Integrated teaching of meaning and form

All the above approaches have advantages and disadvantages and correspond to certain educational situations. Eventually, when meaning and form are integrated “learning will be faster, quantity produced will be greater, and contexts in which the rule can be applied will be extended” (Rutherford, 1987, p.26). Many studies have proven that when grammatical features and communicative activities are presented together, it is better for learners’ second language proficiency because learners through this integrated approach will stand a better chance practicing the grammatical rules they have learnt which will have a long-lasting effect on second language learning (Harley, 1998; White, Spada, Lightbown & Ranta, 1991, Wright, 1996). Grammar knowledge and practice are essential components of second language learning. While form-focused instruction will enable learners gain grammar knowledge, meaning-focused instruction will help learners communicate in the second language. When form and meaning are integrated learners will have the chance of learning the second language in a natural way. Grammar skills that learners gain will be reinforced through communicative activities, such as paraphrasing some statements from the read text, helping peers to understand them better.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Design of the Study

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods at the same time. Qualitative approach has been used in this study to draw meaningful results from examination scores. Quantitative analytical approaches enable to report data results in numerical terms which help measure the credibility of research findings. The numerical data were obtained from tests which students wrote on a regular basis (once a week).

2.2 Sample Selection

The target population of this study is students of Ishik University Preparatory school, correspondingly a permission

from university administration was obtained. The tuition at university undergraduate courses is done in English, although English is a foreign language for the students. This is why a high level of English skills has to be formed in the Preparatory school, which will enable the students to learn their content-matter in English. The students in both groups (20 people in each) were chosen randomly among the volunteers, no additional criteria were applied in forming the groups. It was assured that all learners had the same level of language proficiency to obtain credible results therefore participants were selected from elementary level learners. The learners were informed that an experiment was going on and that anonymous results would be used only for research purposes and would not harm them in any way. Their consent for participation was received. Also they knew that they could drop out of the experiment if they found it inappropriate for them. None of the, however, used this opportunity.

2.3 Procedure and Data Collection

Learners in their reading classes participated in a five week-research in this study. While the control group’s instruction was meaning-focused, the experimental group’s instruction was form-focused, sometimes planned and sometimes incidental. The time spent on reading activities in both groups was equal, to provide the comparability of the approaches. Learners in the control group were provided exposure to meaningful use of the target language and then were expected to work linguistic elements out by themselves while reading. The activities included only meaning (true/false/no evidence, choose the correct answer, ask and answer the questions, information gap, etc.). When students made language mistakes, teacher did not emphasize or correct them. Only meaning mistakes were dealt with.

Learners in the experimental group paid attention to linguistic elements so accuracy was highlighted. Learners were taught lexical and grammatical knowledge to enhance language development. Sometimes before the text was read, and sometimes in the process of reading the text, when comprehension problems arose.

The mistakes were corrected by the lecturer. The lecturer explained unfamiliar words and grammatical rules so language instruction was provided. They also worked on the meaning of the texts, so they also fulfilled some true/false/no evidence, choose the correct answer, ask and answer the questions, information gap, etc. But their number was fewer, as students spent tangible time on working with vocabulary and grammar.

Students in both groups had weekly tests including pure reading comprehension, vocabulary, oriented-reading comprehension, and grammar-oriented reading comprehension questions. Questions in the test were prepared from the graded readers learners read weekly. Their scores were analyzed to see how their language development was changing and how the dynamics of results in the two groups differed.

2.4 Findings

In table 6 and 7 weekly test scores of learners were provided. Vocabulary-oriented, grammar-oriented and pure reading comprehension test scores of both groups in all weeks along with averages are shown.

Table 6: Results of Learners in the Control Group

Learner	Vocabulary-oriented Test Scores					Grammar-oriented Test Scores					Pure Reading Comprehension Scores			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Student 1	74	76	78	78	80	72	74	76	78	80	72	70	76	80
Student 2	74	74	78	76	78	72	74	76	76	78	74	74	78	76
Student 3	72	74	76	74	78	72	72	76	76	76	72	74	74	76
Student 4	70	72	76	74	76	70	72	74	74	78	70	72	76	74
Student 5	70	70	74	72	74	70	70	74	72	74	72	72	74	74
Student 6	68	70	72	70	72	68	70	72	72	72	70	70	72	70
Student 7	68	68	72	72	72	68	68	70	72	72	68	68	72	72
Student 8	66	68	70	70	72	66	68	70	70	70	66	68	70	70
Student 9	64	66	70	68	70	64	66	70	68	70	64	64	68	70
Student 10	64	66	68	68	70	64	66	68	68	72	66	66	68	68
Student 11	62	64	68	66	68	62	64	68	66	68	62	66	70	66
Student 12	60	62	66	66	70	60	62	66	66	70	60	62	66	68
Student 13	58	60	66	68	70	60	60	66	68	70	60	60	66	68
Student 14	58	60	64	64	66	58	58	64	64	68	58	60	66	66
Student 15	56	58	64	64	66	56	56	62	64	66	56	58	64	66
Student 16	54	56	64	66	68	54	56	64	66	68	54	56	66	66
Student 17	54	56	58	60	64	52	54	58	60	64	56	58	58	64
Student 18	52	52	54	56	58	52	52	54	56	60	52	54	56	56
Student 19	50	48	52	54	56	48	48	52	54	58	50	48	52	54
Student 20	48	46	48	50	54	48	46	48	50	56	48	48	50	50
Average	62.1	63.3	66.9	66.8	69.1	61.8	62.8	66.4	67	69.5	62.5	63.4	67.1	67.7

Table 7: Results of Learners in the Experimental Group

Learner	Vocabulary-oriented Test Scores					Grammar-oriented Test Scores					Pure Reading Comprehension Scores			
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Student 1	74	78	80	78	80	74	80	76	84	84	78	76	74	80
Student 2	72	76	78	86	78	70	76	76	80	78	74	78	74	78
Student 3	74	74	76	78	84	70	76	76	76	80	74	74	74	84
Student 4	74	78	82	84	86	70	74	76	76	78	74	76	78	86
Student 5	72	78	74	76	80	70	72	74	74	74	72	74	84	80
Student 6	74	74	76	80	72	70	72	76	76	72	74	72	76	80
Student 7	72	76	78	80	82	70	72	76	76	80	74	72	78	76
Student 8	74	78	80	80	82	72	70	74	74	70	72	74	78	74
Student 9	68	70	74	74	70	72	74	76	74	70	74	78	76	76
Student 10	70	72	74	74	72	70	76	74	76	72	72	76	74	74
Student 11	72	78	80	82	84	72	76	78	76	80	74	70	74	82
Student 12	74	78	80	82	84	74	80	76	80	78	78	82	76	80
Student 13	72	78	78	82	86	72	78	76	78	84	74	76	74	70
Student 14	72	76	78	80	82	72	74	74	76	78	72	76	74	72
Student 15	74	80	82	84	86	74	74	72	74	74	70	74	78	76
Student 16	72	72	70	72	72	72	76	74	76	76	74	76	74	74
Student 17	70	72	70	70	68	70	70	78	78	80	72	74	76	72
Student 18	70	70	72	74	72	70	76	74	76	78	70	74	70	72
Student 19	68	66	66	68	70	64	64	68	66	78	54	78	76	76
Student 20	66	68	64	62	68	62	62	64	62	64	60	60	64	64
Average	71.7	74.6	75.6	77.3	77.9	70.5	73.6	74.4	75.4	76.4	71.8	74.5	75.1	76.3

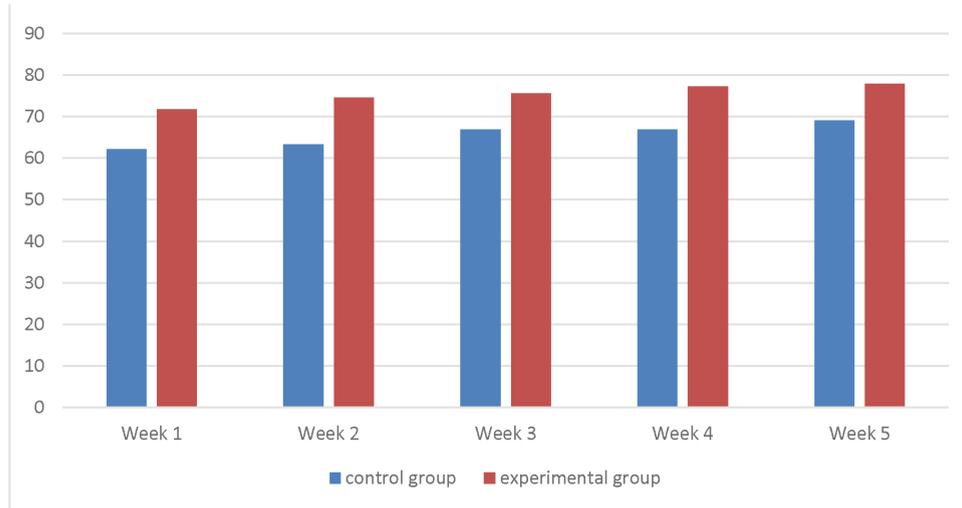


Figure 1: Vocabulary-oriented Test Scores of both groups

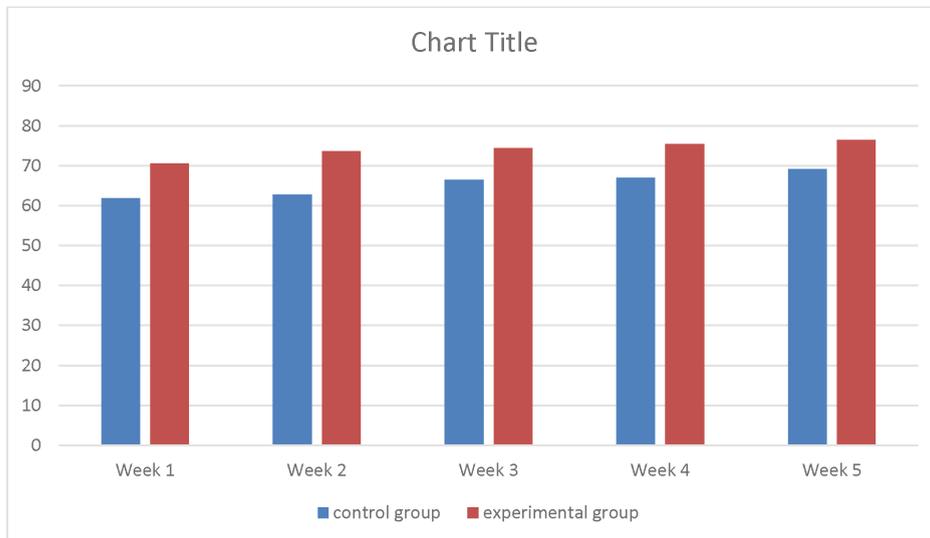


Figure 2: Grammar Test Scores of both groups

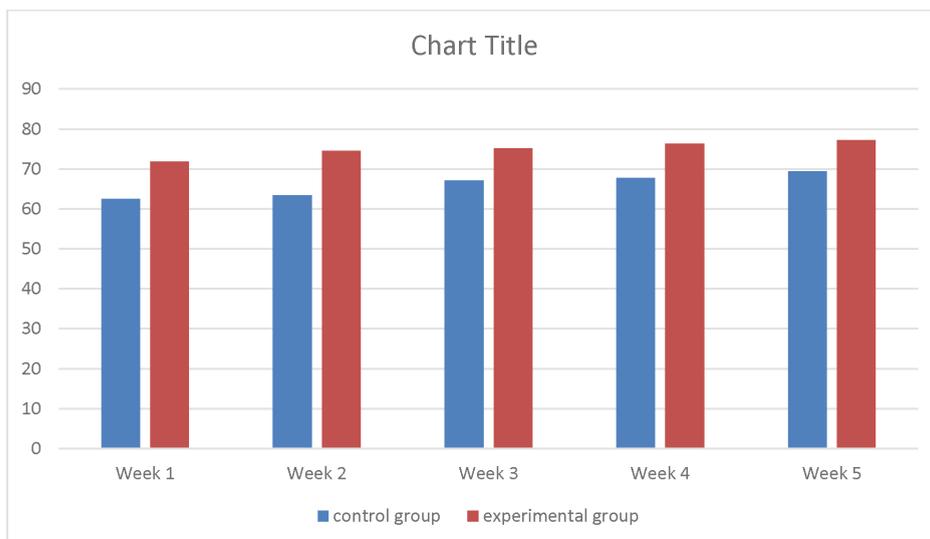


Figure 3: Pure Reading Comprehension Test Scores of learners

Figure 1 demonstrates the averages of vocabulary-oriented test scores of learners in both groups. It was found that learners who had form-focused instruction achieved more stably: their vocabulary skills' level was constantly growing (71.7 \square 77.9; growth by 6.2 or 8.6%). In the control group the results were also growing, but with a certain fluctuation (between week 3 and 4). The growth was from 62.1 to 69.1 – by 7 points or 11.2%. The control group did a little bit better than the experimental group.

Figure 2 demonstrates the averages of grammar-oriented test scores of learners in both groups. It was found that learners who had form-focused instruction achieved better: from 70.5 to 76.4 or by 5.9 points (8.4%). The control group

results were changing stably from 61.8 to 69.5 or by 7.7 points (10.9%). The control group did a little bit better than the experimental group.

Figure 3 demonstrates the averages of reading comprehension test scores of learners in both groups. Both groups revealed a growing tendency: from 62.5 to 69.4 in the control group – by 6.9 points (11.0%) and from 71.8 to 77.2 – by 5.4 points (7.5%) in the experimental group. The control group again did a little bit better than the experimental group.

In tables 8-13 the paired samples statistics is shown, to see the difference among the same group's results during the experiment and to decide how trustworthy the results are.

Table 8: Paired Samples Statistics of Students' vocabulary skills week 1 and week 5 results (experimental group)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental Group week 1	71.7	20	2.36421	0.52865
Experimental Group week 5	77.9	20	6.0064	1.47595

Table 9: Paired Samples Statistics of Students' vocabulary skills week 1 and week 5 results (experimental group)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental Group week 1	70.5	20	2.96470	0.66293
Experimental Group week 5	76.4	20	4.96726	1.11071

Table 10: Paired Samples Statistics of Students' reading skills week 1 and week 5 results (experimental group)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental Group week 1	71.8	20	5.54028	1.23884
Experimental Group week 5	71.8	20	5.12579	1.14616

Table 11: Paired Samples Statistics of Students' vocabulary skills week 1 and week 5 results (control group)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control Group week 1	62.1	20	9.11691	1.81500
Control Group week 5	69.1	20	7.06288	1.57931

Table 12: Paired Samples Statistics of Students' grammar skills week 1 and week 5 results (control group)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control Group week 1	61.8	20	8.07596	1.80594
Control Group week 5	69.5	20	6.45225	1.44277

Table 13: Paired Samples Statistics of Students' reading skills week 1 and week 5 results (control group)

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control Group week 1	62.5	20	8.07530	1.80569
Control Group week 5	69.4	20	7.57002	1.69271

Table 14: Vocabulary skills – significance of results - *t*-test

	t	df	Sig- 2-tailed	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					lower	upper
Experimental group	67.172	4	0.000	74.80000	717083	77.8917
Control group	47.156	4	0.000	65.00000	61.1729	68.8271

Table 15: Grammar skills – significance of results - *t*-test

	t	df	Sig- 2-tailed	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					lower	upper
Experimental group	71.487	4	0.000	73.60000	70.7415	76.4585
Control group	42.486	4	0.000	60.8271	60.8271	69.3329

From tables 8-10 we see that standard deviations are not high (all below 10) and do not change much (increases by about 4 points for vocabulary and grammar skills and decreases by decimals for reading skills), which proves that the group composition is quite even during the whole experiment and it could not have had an impact on the mean results. The standard error is also low (below 2) and also could not have influenced the results reliability.

From tables 11-13 we see that standard deviations are

not high (all below 10) and do not change much (decreases by about 2 points for vocabulary and grammar skills and decreases by decimals for reading skills), which proves that the group composition is quite even during the whole experiment and it could not have had an impact on the mean results. The standard error is also low (below 2) and also could not have influenced the results reliability.

In tables 14-16 the independent samples' T-test was used to determine if two sets of data are significantly diffe -

Table 16: Reading skills – significance of results - *T*-test

	t	df	Sig- 2-tailed	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					lower	upper
Experimental group	70.858	4	0.000	74.640000	71.7154	77.5646
Control group	46.249	4	0.000	61.8875	61.8875	69.7925

ent from each other/

The significance (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the difference is statistically significant. So the control group did do better, however, not so much

The significance (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the difference is statistically significant. So the control group really better, however, not so much.

The significance (0.000) is less than 0.05, which means that the difference is statistically significant. So the control group really better, however, not so much

3. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the literature analysis above, I summarized the advantages and the disadvantages of both approaches in table 14.

It is easy to see that both types of instruction are advantageous in one way and disadvantageous in another. Besides, there is no meaning without form, so the separation of the two approaches in our experiment was just conditional,

done in order to assess their efficiency (when separated) and to see whether any of them was yielding more success. Our experiment has shown that both groups increased their results during the experiment:

- concerning vocabulary skills, the experimental group's results increased from 71.7 to 77.9 - growth by 6.2 or 8.6%, and the control group's results grew from 62.1 to 69.1 – by 7 points or 11.2%.

- concerning grammar skills, the experimental group's results increased from 70.5 to 76.4 or by 5.9 points (8.4%), and the control group's results grew from 61.8 to 69.5 or by 7.7 points (10.9%).

- concerning reading skills, the experimental group's results increased from 71.8 to 77.2 – by 5.4 points (7.5%) and the control group's results grew from 62.5 to 69.4 in the control group – by 6.9 points (11.0%)

So both groups did reasonably well. However, in none of the groups the increase was dramatic, which makes us think that a mixed approach should be more efficient (of course, additional research is needed to make the decision).

We saw that the control group was to a certain degree

Table 17. Advantages and the disadvantages of meaning and form focused instruction

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Meaning-focused instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is communicative (emphasizes understanding) • is natural (L1 acquisition-like) • correspondingly, should be motivating • stimulates learner autonomy • is relevant for ESL learning, as there exists corresponding language environment outside the class • almost no error correction, which reduces anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is not very relevant for EFL learning, as there is almost no error correction, which develops fossilized errors • no language explanation, so students' self-confidence is low • students have to work hard to reach comprehension, which may demotivate them
Form-focused instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permits to enrich vocabulary and practice grammar via additional practice • makes comprehension easier • linguistic accuracy is reinforced • is relevant for EFL learning, as there is no corresponding language environment outside the class • contributes to students' self-confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is less communicative (emphasizes language) • is not very natural (differs from L1 acquisition) • is motivating for a limited number of students (who are linguistically minded)

more successful (and the difference between groups' results proved to be statistically significant), however, the difference was not really so big as to ignore the benefits of the form-focused instruction.

Thus, the recommendation that may be given based on the study is to apply both approaches – sometimes the form-focused and sometimes – meaning focused, to involve the linguistic, communicative and psychological comfort for students.

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