



## **A Study of Meaning-focused and Form-focused Tasks on L2 Vocabulary Acquisition of Low and Intermediate Levels\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

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While the literature extensively discusses the benefits of form-focused instructions for grammatical aspects, there has been limited research exploring the impact of form-focused tasks on second language vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the effects of meaning-focused and form-focused (both non-contrastive and contrastive) tasks on the vocabulary learning of low and intermediate-level students in Korean college settings. The results revealed that the meaning-focused group demonstrated vocabulary learning gains only in the posttest, whereas both form-focused tasks resulted in significant improvement in both the posttest and delayed test. This suggests that students derived greater benefits from the form-focused tasks compared to the meaning-focused task in terms of L2 vocabulary learning. Additionally, the low proficiency group benefitted more from the non-contrastive form-focused task, while the intermediate group benefitted more from the contrastive form-focused task. The study will delve into the theoretical implications and discuss the pedagogical implications arising from these findings.

### **KEYWORDS**

form-focused instruction (FFI), meaning-focused, non-contrastive FFI, contrastive FFI, L1 glosses, L2 glosses, L2 vocabulary, EFL college contexts

## 1. Introduction

Form-focused instructions warrant greater attention in EFL contexts where learners have limited opportunities for natural exposure to abundant language input beyond the classroom (Doughty and Williams 1998, Kang and Pae 2005, Schmidt 1995). As Williams (1995) highlighted, focusing exclusively on meaning and communication does not guarantee accuracy. The rationale behind form-focused instructions for second language learning originates from the critique that language forms cannot be acquired solely through exposure to comprehensible input and meaning-based acquisition (Swain 1998). Thus, the fundamental premise of form-focused instruction is that both form and meaning are necessary for second language learning (Ellis 1999, 2001). Studies on form-focused instruction primarily concentrate on teaching grammatical structures through techniques that enhance input (Schmidt 1990, 1993), consciousness-raising tasks that raise learners' awareness (Sharwood Smith 1993), or an output-based approach that addresses discrepancies between learners' interlanguage and the target forms (Kang 2003a, 2003b, Swain 1995, Swain and Lapkin 1995).

However, there has been limited research investigating the impact of form-focused instruction, particularly the use of L1 and L2 translation, on second language (L2) vocabulary learning (de La Fuente 2006, Laufer 2006, Saeidi, Zaferanieh and Shatery 2012). The process of associating lexical form with meaning is a crucial aspect of acquiring L2 vocabulary. Frequently, L2 lexical forms are linked to the existing semantic content of their first language (L1) translations rather than acquiring new semantic specifications (Jiang 2002). Consequently, L1 vocabulary can play a vital role in the acquisition of L2 vocabulary within a form-focused instructional framework (Jiang 2002, 2004, Wolter 2001, 2004). For instance, Grace (1998) reported the positive influence of sentence-level L1 translations on L2 vocabulary learning. Similarly, Laufer and Girsai (2008) discovered a significant positive effect of contrastive form-focused instruction, which compared L1 and L2, on the acquisition of second language vocabulary.

On the other hand, research on glossing has explored the role of gloss language in second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition through incidental reading (Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus 1996, Kang 2020, 2022, Ko 2012, 2017, Nagata 1999, Watanabe 1997, Xu 2010, Yanagisawa, Webb and Uchihara 2020, Zhao and Ren 2017). These studies can be regarded as a form-focused instructional approach as they involve deliberate attention to vocabulary forms during incidental reading. Yanagisawa et al.'s (2020) meta-analysis revealed that L1 glosses generally resulted in greater gains in vocabulary learning compared to L2 glosses. However, there were no significant differences between L1 plus L2 glosses and either L1 or L2 glosses alone. Additionally, they reported that regardless of L2 proficiency levels, L1 glosses exhibited superior gains in vocabulary learning compared to L2 glosses.

Previous research by Laufer and Girsai (2008) stands as the sole study to investigate the effects of contrastive form-focused instruction (FFI) on lexical learning. In other words, the study examined the effects of non-contrastive and contrastive (L1 vs. L2) form-focused instruction. However, their study employed teacher interruption during form-focused instruction, which deviates from the independent self-study nature of reading. To address this gap, future research should focus on form-focused investigations utilizing L1 or L2 glosses within the context of incidental reading. Furthermore, while it has been reported that L1 glosses yield greater vocabulary learning gains than L2 glosses regardless of L2 proficiency levels (Yanagisawa et al. 2020), it is important to consider the influence of L2 proficiency on the process of restructuring the L2 mental lexicon (Wolter 2001). Therefore, this study aims to examine the effects of meaning-focused and form-focused tasks, both non-contrastive and contrastive, supplemented with L1 and L2 glosses, on vocabulary learning among beginner and intermediate level students.

## 2. Literature Review

Williams (1995) emphasized that a sole emphasis on meaning may compromise accuracy, as it overlooks the importance of form in instruction and the provision of form-based feedback. Several studies have highlighted the effectiveness of instruction that incorporates a degree of form-focused activities or tasks (Doughty and Williams 1998, Ellis 1999, Schmidt 1995, Williams 1995). According to Ellis (2001), form-focused instruction (FFI) is defined as "any planned or incidental instructional activity designed to draw learners' attention to linguistic form" (p 1-2). Ellis (1998) proposed specific points within second language development where form-focused instruction can intervene: input, interlanguage, and output (p 94).

Firstly, input-based instruction aims to direct learners' attention to specific forms in the input, making them noticeable. This approach allows L2 learners to internalize certain aspects of L2 features by highlighting them in the input, known as input-enhancement (Sharwood Smith 1993), or by manipulating the target language forms in the input, referred to as input processing (VanPatten and Cadierno 1993, VanPatten and Oikkenon 1996). These input-based instructions involve comprehension-based language teaching that is carefully designed to expose learners to input that is rich in a particular grammatical feature (Ellis 1995). The instructional focus can also be achieved through explicit instruction, aimed at fostering interlanguage development (Kang 2004, Sharwood Smith 1993). In explicit instruction, the target rules are explicitly explained to learners, or learners are implicitly guided to discover the rules by attending to forms through consciousness-raising tasks (Doughty and Williams 1998). Lastly, the instructional focus can be placed on output (Grove 1999, Kang and Pae 2005, Swain and Lapkin 1995). Form-focused instruction through planning and monitoring output, as well as attentively recognizing the discrepancies between learners' own production and the target structure, plays a significant role in second language development (Izumi and Bigelow 2000, Izumi et al. 1999).

However, the majority of form-focused studies have primarily focused on grammatical features, with only a limited number of studies exploring the effects of form-focused instruction on second language (L2) vocabulary learning. One such study conducted by de La Fuente (2006) compared the effects of one traditional and two task-based form-focused instruction approaches on L2 vocabulary acquisition. The findings revealed that a task-based lesson incorporating an explicit focus on form was more effective than both Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) and traditional lessons in facilitating the acquisition of word morphological aspects.

Laufer (2006) examined the effects of two different approaches, Focus-on-Form (FonF) and Focus-on-FormS (FonFs), on the learning of new L2 words. In phase 1, the FonF group engaged in reading a text, discussing it in small groups, and answering comprehension questions, while the FonFs group studied the target words as discrete items along with their meanings and usage examples. In phase 2, both groups received the target words along with their meanings and spent 15 minutes studying them. Results indicated significantly higher scores for the FonFs group after phase 1, but this difference disappeared after phase 2. This study suggested that various forms of form-focused instruction could be beneficial for L2 vocabulary learning.

Saeidi, Zaferanieh, and Shatery (2012) also explored the effects of form-focused instruction on vocabulary learning in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. Participants were divided into three groups: Focus-on-Form (FonF) (dictogloss), Focus-on-Meaning (FonM) (reading and discussion), and Focus-on-Forms (FonFs) (word lists). The results demonstrated that learners in the FonF group achieved significantly higher scores compared to the FonM and FonFs groups, and the FonM group scored significantly higher than the FonFs group. The researchers explained these findings by considering the main features of FonF tasks (such as dictogloss), which include the depth of processing hypothesis, discovery learning, pushed output, noticing hypothesis, consciousness-raising, and more.

In a more recent study, Laufer and Girsai (2008) explored the impact of form-focused instruction utilizing L1 translation on second language vocabulary learning. The study involved high school learners who were assigned to one of three instructional groups: meaning-focused, non-contrastive form-focused, and contrastive (L1 vs. L2) form-focused instructions. The findings revealed that the contrastive form-focused instruction had a more positive effect on the retention of single words and collocations compared to both the non-contrastive form-focused and

meaning-oriented instruction. The researchers attributed the superiority of the contrastive group to the use of L1 and L2 translation and analysis, which aligned with the noticing hypothesis, pushed output, task-induced involvement load, and the semantic connection between the L1 and L2 lexicons.

On the contrary, form-focused studies have suggested the significance of the first language in second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition (Jiang 2002, 2004, Wolter 2001, 2006). Jiang (2002, 2004) presented evidence of the initial connections between the mental lexicons of the first language and the second language. In one of Jiang's studies (2004), Korean ESL speakers participated in a semantic judgment task where they had to determine whether two types of word pairs were related in meaning. The Korean ESL speakers responded significantly faster to same-translation pairs compared to different-translation pairs, while native English speakers did not exhibit the same effect. These findings indicated the presence of the first language's semantic structures within the L2 lexicon. In the L2 literature, Grace (1998) demonstrated that sentence-level L1 translations facilitated deeper processing as L2 learners had to establish associations (i.e., search for semantic equivalents) and direct their attention to structural differences between the two languages.

Although there has been limited research on the effects of L1 or L2 glosses in form-focused instructions, numerous studies have explored the impact of glosses on second language acquisition during incidental reading. Yanagisawa et al.'s (2020) meta-analysis revealed that L1 glosses yielded higher learning gains compared to L2 glosses, while there were no significant differences between L1 plus L2 glosses and L1, as well as between L1 plus L2 glosses and L2. Furthermore, regardless of L2 proficiency levels, L1 glosses consistently resulted in greater vocabulary learning gains than L2 glosses.

For instance, Ko (2012) investigated the effects of different gloss types on L2 vocabulary learning among Korean university students. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: no gloss, L1 gloss, and L2 gloss. The results indicated a significant difference between the no-gloss and glossed conditions, but no significant differences between texts with L1 and L2 glosses on both immediate and delayed (four weeks later) vocabulary tests. Additionally, participants expressed a preference for L2 glosses over L1 glosses. Xu (2010) examined the effects of three types of glossing on incidental vocabulary acquisition: L1 and L2 glossing, L1 glossing, and L2 glossing. The findings demonstrated more significant learning effects for L1 plus L2 or L1 glossing compared to L2 glossing in vocabulary learning. Ko (2017) further explored the relationship between L2 proficiency and four types of glosses (no glossing, L1 glossing, L2 glossing, and L1 plus L2 glossing). The study revealed that either L1 or L1 plus L2 glossing was more effective for low proficiency levels, while either L2 or L1 plus L2 glossing was more effective for advanced levels.

However, there has never been a study applying form-focused instruction to vocabulary learning during incidental reading. Therefore, the primary objectives of the study are as follows:

- (1) To examine if there are any significant differences in L2 vocabulary learning among the three experimental conditions: a meaning-based task, a non-contrastive form-focused task, and a contrastive form-focused task.
- (2) To investigate if there are any significant differences in L2 vocabulary learning between the two proficiency groups (low and intermediate levels).

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants**

In the fall semester of 2022, a total of forty-six Korean students enrolled in an elective English pronunciation course at a university in Seoul. These participants represented various fields of study, including Humanities, Social

Science, Engineering, and others. Except for nineteen students who did not take the TOEIC test, the remaining students had TOEIC scores ranging from 400 to 960, with a mean score of 737.22. Additionally, the students were asked to rate their English proficiency on a scale of 1 to 5. Based on the median score (3), they were divided into low and high proficiency groups. The low-level students had a mean TOEIC score of 680, indicative of beginner level, while the high-level students had a mean TOEIC score of 761, representing an intermediate level. The study utilized a text selected from Anderson's (2014) work on Ecotourism, as previously employed by Kang and Pae (2020).

### 3.2 Research Design

Prior to the intervention, the participants underwent a pre-test. Subsequently, they were post-tested immediately after the treatment and again two weeks later. Following a pilot test and drawing from Kang and Pae's (2020) approach, a set of eleven unfamiliar words was selected from the reading passage. For the experimental treatment, the participants were assigned to one of three tasks: a meaning-focused task (Group 11), a non-contrastive form-focused task (Group 14), or a contrastive form-focused task (Group 12). This design closely resembled the framework established by Laufer and Girsai (2008), with minor modifications. Each group was allotted 50 minutes to complete their respective tasks, ensuring an equal amount of time for all. Please refer to Table 1 for a summary of the task distribution.

**Table 1. Experimental Design**

<b>A meaning-focused task</b>	<b>A non-contrastive form-focused task</b>	<b>A contrastive form-focused task</b>
Reading comprehension	Reading comprehension with L2 glossary	Reading comprehension with L1 glossary
both L1 & L2 glossaries	Fill-in-the-blank with a word list	L2 -> L1 & L1 -> L2 translation

In the initial stage of the treatment, all three groups followed the same procedure. They were instructed to read the text on Ecotourism and answer six multiple-choice questions, which assessed their understanding of the main idea and details of the text. Subsequently, each experimental group received a distinct treatment based on their assigned task.

The meaning-focused group received marginal glosses in both L1 and L2 for a total of twenty-seven potentially unfamiliar words, aiming to enhance their comprehension of the text. The non-contrastive form-focused group, on the other hand, received marginal glosses in L2 for the same set of words. Additionally, they were presented with two form-focused tasks: (1) recognizing the meaning of the target words through an additional eight multiple-choice questions, and (2) completing a sentence fill-in-the-blank activity using the target words provided in a word list at the end of the text.

Lastly, the contrastive form-focused group received marginal glosses in L1 for the twenty-seven words. They were asked to answer the same set of six multiple-choice questions as the meaning-based group. Following this, they engaged in two translation tasks: translating sentences from L2 to L1 (Korean) and then translating the provided L1 (Korean) target words back into L2 (English).

To assess the participants' vocabulary knowledge in the pretests, posttests, and delayed posttests, the researcher utilized the vocabulary knowledge scale (VKS) developed by Paribakht and Wesche (1997), as outlined below:

- I. I have never seen this word before.
- II. I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means.
- III. I know its meaning.
- IV. I can use this word in a sentence.

In line with the approach employed by Kang (2022), the researcher assigned a score of zero for test items falling under Category I and a score of one for items in Category II. Participants received a score of 2 for items in Category III and a score of 3 for items in Category IV. To analyze the data and investigate the research questions, the researcher performed paired-samples *t*-tests to examine the vocabulary learning gains following each treatment.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Effects of Experimental Treatment on L2 Vocabulary Learning

Table 2 displays the vocabulary scores for the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest across all experimental groups. The participants' average scores for the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest were 1.66, 2.21, and 1.91 out of a total score of 3, respectively. There was an increase in the participants' mean scores from the pretest to the posttest, followed by a slight decrease in the delayed posttest. This pattern was observed consistently across each experimental group.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics**

Experimental Groups	Paired Samples	Mean	N	SD
Total	Pretest	1.66	46	.46
	Posttest	2.21	42	.49
	Delayed Test	1.91	39	.38
Meaning-focused Group	Pretest	1.80	13	.43
	Posttest	1.93	11	.35
	Delayed Test	1.81	11	.39
Non-contrastive Form-focused Group	Pretest	1.61	6	.52
	Posttest	2.23	14	.43
	Delayed Test	2.01	14	.43
Contrastive Form-focused Group	Pretest	1.60	17	.43
	Posttest	2.49	12	.44
	Delayed Test	1.89	12	.36

First and foremost, the paired-samples *t*-statistics presented in Table 3 revealed significant effects of the experiments on both the posttest ( $p < .01^{**}$ ) and the delayed posttest ( $p < .01^{**}$ ). This indicates that the treatments (meaning-focused and form-focused) had a positive impact on vocabulary learning in both the short-term and long-term periods overall.

**Table 3. Paired-samples T-Statistics**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.55	.44	-8.123	.000**
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.27	.36	-4.57	.000**

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$

To assess the individual effects of each experiment on vocabulary learning, paired-samples *t*-statistics were performed and the results are displayed in Tables 4-6. The statistical analysis revealed that the meaning-focused group exhibited a significant gain in vocabulary knowledge in the short-term period only. However, both the non-

contrastive and contrastive form-focused groups demonstrated significant retention of vocabulary knowledge in both the short-term and long-term periods. This suggests that the form-focused tasks had an advantage over the meaning-based task in terms of sustaining vocabulary learning over time.

**Table 4. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Meaning-based Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.24	.29	-3.06	.010*
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.13	.45	-.979	.351

*p*<.05\*, *p*<.01\*\*

**Table 5. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Non-contrastive Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.55	.36	-5.78	.000**
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.36	.34	-4.04	.001**

*p*<.05\*, *p*<.01\*\*

**Table 6. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Contrastive Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.82	.46	-6.88	.000**
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.27	.29	-3.34	.006**

*p*<.05\*, *p*<.01\*\*

#### 4.2. The Experimental Effects on L2 Vocabulary Learning of Low Group

Table 7 presents the mean scores of vocabulary for the pretest (1.51), posttest (2.05), and delayed posttest (1.83) of the low-level students. All experimental groups demonstrated an improvement in their scores on the posttests. However, their scores slightly declined on the delayed posttests conducted two weeks later.

**Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Low Group**

Experimental Groups	Paired Samples	Mean	N	SD
Total	Pretest	1.51	16	.42
	Posttest	2.05	16	.45
	Delayed Test	1.83	15	.31
Meaning-focused Group	Pretest	1.65	6	.51
	Posttest	1.96	6	.44
	Delayed Test	1.78	5	.36
Non-contrastive Form-focused Group	Pretest	1.53	6	.40
	Posttest	2.12	6	.52
	Delayed Test	1.90	6	.25
Contrastive Form-focused Group	Pretest	1.25	4	.25
	Posttest	1.89	4	.74
	Delayed Test	1.76	4	.41

The paired-sample *t*-statistics conducted on the low-level students indicated significant positive effects of the treatment on L2 vocabulary learning for both the posttest ( $p < .01^{**}$ ) and the delayed posttest ( $p < .01^{**}$ ), as displayed in Table 8. However, there appeared to be variations among the experimental groups, as evident in Tables 9-11.

**Table 8. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Low Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.50	.37	-5.367	.000**
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.36	.36	-3.944	.001**

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$

The paired-sample *t*-statistics revealed that among the low-level group, there was a significant improvement in vocabulary scores from the pretest to the posttest ( $p = .039 < .05^*$ ) only in the meaning-focused treatment. However, both the non-contrastive form-focused group demonstrated significant learning gains in both the posttest ( $p = .006 < .01^{**}$ ) and the delayed test ( $p = .028 < .05^*$ ). On the other hand, neither the posttest nor the delayed test showed a significant effect of the contrastive form-focused treatment on vocabulary learning. It appears that the low-level group benefited the most from the non-contrastive form-focused task, followed by the meaning-focused task, while the contrastive form-focused task did not yield significant improvements.

**Table 9. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Low Meaning-focused Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.32	.28	-2.782	.039*
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.25	.38	-1.488	.211

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$



**Table 10. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Low Non-contrastive Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.59	.32	-4.540	.006**
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.42	.38	-2.881	.028*

*p*<.05\*, *p*<.01\*\***Table 11. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Low Contrastive Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.64	.54	-2.378	.098
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.42	.34	-2.135	.166

*p*<.05\*, *p*<.01\*\*

### 4.3. The Experimental Effects on L2 Vocabulary Learning of Intermediate Group

Table 12 presents the descriptive statistics of the intermediate-level group. The mean scores for the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest were 1.76, 2.34, and 1.97, respectively, out of a total score of 3. The majority of the groups exhibited a similar pattern, with scores increasing in the posttests but slightly decreasing in the delayed posttests. The paired-sample *t*-statistics for the intermediate group indicated significant learning gains in both the posttest ( $p=.000 < .01^{**}$ ) and delayed posttest ( $p=.011 < .05^{*}$ ), as displayed in Table 13.

**Table 12. Descriptive Statistics of Intermediate Group**

Experimental Groups	Paired Samples	Mean	N	SD
Total	Pretest	1.76	26	.47
	Posttest	2.34	26	.42
	Delayed Test	1.97	24	.42
Meaning-focused Group	Pretest	1.92	7	.34
	Posttest	2.10	7	.43
	Delayed Test	1.85	6	.45
Non-contrastive Form-focused Group	Pretest	1.78	8	.62
	Posttest	2.31	8	.36
	Delayed Test	2.09	8	.51
Contrastive Form-focused Group	Pretest	1.63	11	.42
	Posttest	2.52	11	.41
	Delayed Test	1.94	10	.33

**Table 13. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Intermediate Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.59	.48	-6.189	.000**
Pretest — Delayed Test	-.20	.36	-2.777	.011*

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$

The observed significant difference in the posttest scores among the three experimental groups, as presented in Table 13, can be attributed to the form-focused instructions. Specifically, the meaning-focused group did not demonstrate a significant learning gain in either the posttest or the delayed posttest, as shown in Table 14. Conversely, the form-focused groups, both non-contrastive and contrastive, exhibited significant improvements in both the posttests and delayed posttests, as indicated in Tables 15 and 16. In contrast to the findings for the low-level group, the intermediate-level group derived greater benefits from the form-focused tasks, particularly the contrastive approach, compared to the meaning-focused instruction.

**Table 14. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Intermediate Meaning-based Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.18	.30	-1.595	.162
Pretest — Delayed_Test	-.03	.51	-.146	.889

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$

**Table 15. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Intermediate Non-contrastive Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.52	.40	-3.670	.008**
Pretest — Delayed_Test	-.31	.32	-2.694	.031*

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$

**Table 16. Paired-samples T-Statistics of Intermediate Contrastive Group**

Paired Samples	Mean Difference	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest — Posttest	-.89	.44	-6.680	.000**
Pretest — Delayed_Test	-.23	.28	-2.550	.031*

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$

## 5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the impact of meaning-based instruction and two types of form-focused instruction, namely non-contrastive and contrastive tasks, on L2 vocabulary development. The results from the paired-sample *t*-statistics revealed overall positive effects of the experimental treatments on L2 vocabulary development, as observed in both the posttest and delayed tests. However, there were variations in the effects of each treatment on

vocabulary learning. Specifically, the meaning-based group demonstrated significant vocabulary learning gains in the short-term period only, whereas both form-focused tasks led to significant improvements in both the short- and long-term periods. These findings suggest that, in general, students derive greater benefits from the form-focused tasks compared to the meaning-focused approach in L2 vocabulary learning.

Ellis (2001) introduced the concept of "form-focused instruction (FFI)" by differentiating it from "meaning-focused instruction" and by outlining three categories of form-focused instruction based on the primary focus on form or meaning and the planned or incidental attention given to target forms. Focus-on-formS emphasizes form and provides intensive treatment for preselected forms. Planned focus-on-form, on the other hand, primarily focuses on meaning rather than form. Incidental focus-on-form also emphasizes meaning but differs from both focus-on-formS and planned focus-on-form by distributing attention to a wide range of non-preselected forms. It is important to note that the meaning-based task employed in this study aligns with Ellis's (2001) "meaning-focused instruction," while the two types of form-focused tasks, non-contrastive and contrastive, correspond to focus-on-formS. In a study by Laufer (2003), vocabulary gains from reading were compared with word-focused tasks such as completing given sentences, writing original sentences, and incorporating words into a composition. The results indicated the advantages of focus-on-formS, the word-focused tasks, over the meaning-based approach.

Previous research has yielded conflicting results regarding the effects of focus-on-form (FonF) versus focus-on-formS (FonFs) instructions. Shintani (2013) conducted a study exploring the impact of these two instructional approaches on young Japanese beginners' acquisition of nouns and adjectives. The findings indicated that both types of instruction were effective for acquiring nouns, but FonF instruction was more effective for acquiring adjectives. In contrast, Laufer (2006) examined the effectiveness of FonF and FonFs instructions in teaching new L2 words to 158 high-school learners. In her study, the FonF group read a text containing the target words, engaged in small group discussions, and answered comprehension questions, while the FonFs group focused on the target words as discrete items, learning their meanings and examining usage examples. The results showed significantly higher scores for the FonFs group in the posttest; however, this difference disappeared in the delayed test. These findings suggest that form-focused instruction, particularly FonFs, plays a crucial role in L2 vocabulary learning.

On the other hand, the effects of the current experimental treatments seemed to be influenced by proficiency levels. The statistical analysis revealed differences between the low and intermediate proficiency groups in terms of their learning gains. Specifically, the findings for the low proficiency group indicated that the vocabulary learning gain in the meaning-focused treatment was statistically significant in the posttest, but this effect disappeared in the delayed posttest. In contrast, for the form-focused tasks, the contrastive form-focused group showed non-significant effects on both the posttest and delayed test, while the non-contrastive form-focused group demonstrated significant learning gains in both assessments. It appears that the low proficiency group benefited most from the non-contrastive form-focused task, followed by the meaning-based task, but did not benefit significantly from the contrastive form-focused task. In contrast, the findings for the intermediate proficiency group presented a stark contrast to those of the low proficiency group. Unlike the low proficiency group, the intermediate group benefited more from the form-focused tasks, whether contrastive or non-contrastive, rather than the meaning-focused task. Specifically, the meaning-focused group did not show significant learning gains in either the posttest or delayed posttest, whereas the form-focused groups, particularly the contrastive form-focused group, demonstrated significant improvement in both assessments.

While both non-contrastive and contrastive form-focused tasks share a common feature, which is FonFs, there is a significant difference between the two regarding the use of gloss languages (L1 vs. L2) (Yanagisawa, et al. 2020). Wolter (2001) proposed that there is a strong connection between words in an individual's L1 and L2 mental lexicon. However, as learners progress in proficiency, their reliance on the L1 mental lexicon for organizing the L2 mental lexicon tends to decrease. The pedagogical challenge lies in assisting learners in overcoming continued L1 semantic involvement and facilitating the transition from the second to the third stage of vocabulary acquisition (Jiang 2004). Semantic restructuring begins when learners become aware of the semantic distinctions between an L2 word and its L1 translation or between two L2 words that share the same L1 translation. Solely relying on meaning-focused instructions may have limited effectiveness in this aspect. The semantic differences between an

L2 word and its L1 translation or between two L2 words are often subtle. Therefore, deliberate instructional intervention, such as form-focused instructions (FFI), may be necessary and prove effective based on the current findings.

Three general categories of semantization strategies have been identified based on learners' proficiency levels: intralingual, interlingual, and extralingual strategies (Jiang 2004). According to Jiang (2004), intralingual strategies involve using linguistic resources of the target language, such as synonyms or definitions. Interlingual strategies utilize the learner's native language through bilingual dictionaries, cognates, or L1 translation equivalents. Extralingual strategies, on the other hand, rely on non-linguistic means such as pictures or objects. From a pedagogical standpoint, in the early or initial stages of language development, learners primarily rely on extralingual strategies or non-contrastive form-focused tasks akin to intralingual strategies. As learners acquire a stronger command of their native language, contrastive form-focused tasks and interlingual strategies can be introduced. Ultimately, what is learned through form-focused tasks needs to be integrated into the developing language system through meaning-focused practice and communication (Jiang 2002).

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Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: Tertiary