



## Investigating the effectiveness of planned focus on form method in teaching young learners English as a foreign Language

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### Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of planned focus on form method in the acquisition of target language forms in English. The study specifically examined the planned focus on form method and the teaching model in the textbook of the 5<sup>th</sup> graders in terms of the attainment of the objectives of the target unit 'Health'. The participants of the study were 5<sup>th</sup> grade learners (n= 60) studying at a state secondary school in Milas in the district of Muğla province in Turkey. The research was a quasi-experimental research design in which two intact 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes were assigned as experimental and control groups. The data collected from pre-test, progress achievement tests, and the post-test were analysed using the SPSS 17.0 statistical programme. The progress achievement test scores and post-test scores of the subjects were analysed through independent samples t-test in order to analyse which instructional treatment was more effective in reaching the objectives of the unit. Repeated measures ANOVA test was also administered in order to measure the effects of the treatment in time, which indicated that both treatment types were effective in increasing the learners' scores from pre-test to post-test. The statistical analysis of data indicated that planned focus on form was significantly more effective than the regular instruction according to the results of the progress achievement tests [t(58)= 2.67; p=0.010]. The results of the post-test did not indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups [t(58)= -1.058; p= 0.294], the experimental group (M=60.86) performed better than the control group (M=55.06) in the post-test, though.

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**Keywords:** planned form-focused instruction; grammar instruction; teaching English as a foreign language to young learners

## 1. Introduction

The long-standing problem with English education in Turkey can be closely related to the old-fashioned method followed in teaching English in that English class hours are mostly dedicated to teaching grammatical rules isolated from any communicative aspect (British Council & TEPAV, 2013; TEDMEM, 2013; TEDMEM, 2015), or "teaching about the language and not the language in light of

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its function in communicative situations” (Macias, 2011, p. 128). Turkish EFL teachers’ practices represent the traditional grammar instruction by doing workbook or worksheets, providing grammatical explanations, carrying out quizzes on grammatical forms and repetition drills (Uysal & Bardakçı, 2014). Such an application has heightened the need for finding a better way of teaching the language to learners. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey has taken a number of measures to change this trend, one of which was the introduction of English to fourth graders at primary level in 1997 instead of 6<sup>th</sup> graders with an aim to bring about Communicative Language Teaching in order to develop students’ communication skills (MoNE, 1997). In addition, in 2006, adjustments were made in the curriculum based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) for languages (MoNE, 2006). Another reform of the MoNE was to lower the age of learning English at the primary school to the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade with the Educational Reform in 2012, which brought about a need to improve and revise the curricula, develop course books and course materials, and to increase the quality of foreign language education in order to disseminate communicative practice starting in early ages in the Ministry language teaching programmes according to the CEFR guidelines (MoNE, 2012). A more recent step taken by the MoNE for improving English language education in Turkey was that the intensive English language teaching program of 15 hours a week was applied first with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in pilot schools identified by the MoNE in 2017 (MoNE, 2017) and then it was left to the demand of the schools to apply an intensive English teaching program for the 5<sup>th</sup> grades from 11 hours to 18 hours in a week. In the English Language Teaching Curriculum issued in 2018 (MoNE, 2018) communicative orientation was once more the main focus since application of “an eclectic mix of instructional techniques” and also “an action oriented approach” was highlighted “in order to allow learners to experience English as a means of communication, rather than focusing on the language as a topic of study” (p.3). All the documents of the Ministry have therefore emphasized the need to develop learners’ communicative competence and the use of English for communicative purposes rather than its form only. However, it should be born in mind that there is also a need to focus on the structural features of the language while constructing the meaning, but this should be carried out within the context of communicative language learning. It is contended that the linguistic aspects of the language are not referred to in isolation; rather they are addressed within a communicative framework (MoNE, 2018).

Considering both the current practices in schools and what the curriculum offers, it is observed that there is a mismatch between the policy and practice in foreign language teaching programmes in state schools in Turkey (Arslan, 2012). The British Council and TEPAV (2013) report titled “Turkey National Needs Assessment of State School English Language Teaching” indicated that a foreign language teaching model which gives place to both meaning and form is required as a mediating figure for the discrepancies between the theory and the practice. Form Focused Instruction (FFI) which is described as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (Ellis, 2001, pp. 1-2) can be proposed as an alternative to other pedagogical approaches which involve only meaning-based instruction or traditional models that solely focus on structures. FFI is planned to be used with the purpose of overcoming the problems such as lack of focus on the communicative aspects of the language and giving too much focus on the linguistic elements that are encountered with teaching English in the Turkish context. The current English Language Teaching Curriculum (MoNE, 2018) promotes fostering communicative skills by handling the structural features of English implicitly rather than addressing them as a separate issue. Therefore, FFI is considered to be an appropriate model meeting the needs of learners, teachers, and program developers since learners need the opportunity to be engaged in meaningful language use in order to know how to produce the target forms communicatively (Ellis, 2012). In addition, in the course of a meaning based activity, learners’ attention needs to be directed to form as well to guarantee that learners fully acquire the new linguistic forms. FFI, therefore, entails learners to attend to form, meaning and use during one cognitive

event and this is what distinguishes it from other pedagogical approaches (Doughty, 2001), creating a communicative area for students rather than exposing them to grammatical explanations and letting students discover rules rather than giving them readymade rules.

This research study therefore aims at shedding light upon the issue of the effectiveness of FFI in a context in which English is learned as a Foreign Language. In particular, this study strives to investigate the effectiveness of Planned Focus on Form method in the learning of target language forms in English.

### 1.1. Literature review

In recent years, the place of formal instruction in learning a foreign language has been argued under various hypotheses discussing whether focus should be given on meaning or form or exposure to implicit or explicit knowledge brings out the best outcome in second or foreign language acquisition. While some studies have purported the importance of meaning-based instruction, some other studies have also shown that formal or explicit instruction contributes to language learning. *Non-interface position* also known as the zero option maintains that formal instruction has no place in L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1981) as Krashen (1982) suggests that there would be no value in learning grammar as comprehensive input would be enough in making learners acquire the language. Lightbown and Spada (2008) assert that meaning focused instruction boosts the learners' ability to comprehend and improves their fluency in speaking and their ability to communicate as it is observed through Content Based Instruction and Communicative Language Teaching; however, it is not sufficient for them to overcome the difficulties they come across in pronunciation, morphological, syntactic and pragmatic features of the language. Hence, it is maintained that a common point has been found through experience in research and teaching that instruction needs to give place to both form and meaning. Larsen-Freeman (2001) indicates that even though it is possible for some learners to grasp the linguistic form of the language through exposure to the target language, there are few learners who can achieve this and it is particularly difficult for learners who are post pubescent or whose exposure to the target language is restricted to the classroom as in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The *interface position*, therefore, holds the claim that explicit knowledge can turn into implicit knowledge through practice in which the learner is engaged in communicative activities (De Keyser, 1998). In a study Ellis (2006) maintained that both naturalistic learners and instructed learners more or less followed a similar order of acquisition but instructed learners mostly performed better than naturalistic learners in terms of grammatical competence also the instructed learners were superior in terms of proficiency levels and progression rates. In addition, Swain and Lapkin (2001) indicated that speaking and writing abilities of students in French immersion program were non-native like even after some eight years of comprehensible input and also noted the consensus over the need to develop the teaching of grammar in immersion curricula. The meta-analysis conducted by Norris and Ortega (2000) in order to investigate the effectiveness of L2 instruction also revealed that explicit instruction is superior to implicit instruction. As another position, *weak interface hypothesis*, which can be regarded as bridge between the two differing views, indicates that instruction serves to help the learner in acquiring the target language through guiding them to focus on form and meaning and therefore makes form-meaning connections. The idea behind such an application is the fact that although many features of L2 can be learnt naturally, language learners cannot gain competence only by being exposed to L2, risking fossilization. Lightbown and Spada (2008) indicate that in the absence of focus on form, some structures are not used by learners at all and some errors are fossilized in their interlanguages. Instruction that focuses on form is widely accepted within a communicative framework (Brown & Lee, 2015) as Ellis (2012) argues problematic overgeneralizations may require negative evidence either through a grammatical explanation or corrective feedback to inform the learner about the incorrectness of a target form by giving corrective feedback for the learner's non-target like L2 production. In addition, N. Ellis (2015) maintains that the

review of research regarding the effectiveness of instruction and feedback on error produced several results in that form focusing instruction brings about significant gains regarding the target forms as explicit types of instruction are superior to implicit types and explicit instruction has durable effects.

According to (Long, 1997) form-focused instruction refers to “any pedagogical technique, proactive or reactive, implicit or explicit, used to draw students’ attention to language form” (p. 5). FFI involves the procedures of focus on form (*FonF*); however, it also includes practices of focus on forms (*FonFs*) like the activities that are prepared by the teacher to teach specific grammatical forms (Ellis, 2012). Focus on forms involves giving a primary focus on linguistic structures which are presented in separate lessons as Ellis (2006) defines it “instruction involving a structure-of-the-day approach, where the students’ primary focus is on form (i.e., accuracy) and where the activities are directed intensively at a single grammatical structure” (p. 18). *FonFs* resembles to traditional grammar instruction in which the language forms are taught in an isolated way and entails a course design in which the L2 is divided into its constituents such as phonemes, words, collocations, sentence patterns, notions, functions, stress, and such forms are presented to the learners in models (Long, 1991; Long, 1997; Long & Robinson, 1998; Ellis, Baştürkmen, and Loewen (2002). Focus on forms method incorporates a synthetic syllabus in which learners are expected to learn each linguistic item one at a time through synthetic classroom practices such as explicit grammar rules, repetition of models, memorization of short dialogues, transformation exercises and so on (Long, 1997). On the other hand, focus on form is a learner centered option in that it considers the learner’s internal syllabus and it occurs when the learner experiences a communication problem. Long (2015, p. 317) describes it as “reactive use of a wide variety of pedagogic procedures to draw learners’ attention to linguistic problems in context, as they arise during communication in TBLT (Task Based Language Teaching), typically as students work on problem-solving tasks ...”. Ellis (2016) indicates the essential theoretical foundation of focus on form which entails that attention to structural features of the target language should take place in line with how an L2 is acquired remains unchanged and also focus on form needs to be reactive and brief. In addition, while focus on form was considered as incidental earlier; it is accepted as both incidental and intentional and also focus on form can be both implicit and explicit (Long, 2015; Ellis, 2016). Doughty and Williams (1998, p. 6) maintained that *FonF* and *FonFs* “are *not* polar opposites” and the main difference is that while *FonF* involves focusing on the formal elements of language, “*FonFs* is *limited* to such a focus”. In the light of these, Ellis (2016) proposes focus on form “may be pre-planned and thus address a pre-determined linguistic feature(s) or it can be incidental as a response to whatever communicative or linguistic problems arise while learners are primarily focused on meaning” (p. 7). Focus on form therefore combines elements from both focus on forms and focus on meaning, providing an alternative way for language teaching “with attention to form arising out of the communicative activity” (Ellis, 2006, p. 100) “drawing students’ attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so on), in context, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication ...” or “any effort to draw learners’ attention to form within communicative and meaning-based contexts” (Spada, 1997, p. 73) and is used to refer to a course design in which specific target forms are addressed explicitly (Long, 1991). As one type of it, Planned Focus on Form (Ellis et al., 2002) is explained as the use of focused tasks which are intended to have the learners use a target language feature within a meaningful context (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) and target forms are regarded as a tool for communicative purposes (Ellis et al., 2002). In this type, the focus of a meaningful activity is planned in advance so that the task creates occasions to elicit the target form.

As for the methodological options for FFI Ellis (2012) has provided his own framework of options involved in FFI consisting of four macro-options; namely, *input-based options*, *explicit options*, *production options* and *corrective feedback options*. *Input-based options* cover the type of instruction

in which the input is manipulated in such a way to make it easier for learners to process it. Ellis (2012, p. 869) examines *input-based* FFI under input flooding which is “input that contains many examples of the target structure” and enhanced input which is “input with the target feature made salient to the learners” such as underlining, boldfacing, italicizing, capitalizing, color coding, etc. Processing instruction can be realized through structured input which is “input that has been contrived to induce processing of the target feature” (Ellis, 2012, p. 869). In structured input activities the learners are provided with input within a context and they are asked to show that they understand the form through verbal or non-verbal responses (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). *Explicit options* involve the instruction which is designed to provide learners with the structural features of L2. Explicit options can be applied deductively or inductively. Direct explicit instruction involves the teaching of target features deductively through metalinguistic explanations and indirect explicit instruction involves inductive teaching of forms through providing learners with target language samples and asking them to come up with a rule (Ellis, 2012). In indirect explicit instruction, consciousness-raising tasks which involve data with many exemplars of the target language feature are employed to help learners identify the rules. *Production options* are described as the instruction which is planned to have the learners use the language. Production options can take the form of text manipulation such as filling in the blanks in a given sentence or paragraph or text-creation such as focused tasks. Another distinction may be done based on the type of instruction as being error-avoiding such as controlled writing exercises or error-inducing such as activities that encourage free use of the target structures (Ellis, 2012). Structured output activities give learners the opportunity to produce language fluently and accurately as Lee and VanPatten (2003) contend that structured output is a construct that may be used in designing activities to help learners produce output by making use of the forms they learn. *Corrective feedback* may be implicit which can be realized through recasts or explicit which can be operationalized through different ways such as simply indicating that an error has been done or providing metalinguistic knowledge.

### 1.2. Research questions

There has been a substantial amount of research on form-focused instruction; however, less attention has been paid to the effectiveness of Planned Focus on Form in teaching English to young learners or it is not clear whether the use of planned focus on form yields positive results in teaching English to young learners. Therefore, this study as an attempt to explore the effectiveness of planned focus on form in the learning of the target forms aimed at investigating whether Planned Focus on Form method or the teaching model in the textbook was more effective on the learning of target forms and included the following research questions:

1. Do learners who receive planned focus on form show more improvement in learning the target forms during the treatment, in comparison with another group receiving the teaching model in the textbook?
2. Do learners who receive planned focus on form show more improvement in learning the target forms at the end of the treatment, in comparison with another group receiving the teaching model in the textbook?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in learners' scores as a result of receiving planned focus on form and the teaching model in the textbook?

## 2. Method

The study which has a quasi-experimental research design (Thyer, 2011) in which a pretest was applied to two intact classes to make sure that both groups had equal knowledge regarding the target forms was carried out with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in a state school in Milas in the district of Muğla province in the spring semester of the academic year 2018-2019.

### 2.1. Sample / Participants

The participants of the study were 60 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, whose native language was Turkish. All of the participants had been exposed to English since they were fifth graders. For the study based on their proximity to one of the researchers two intact 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes were selected from the school where one of the researchers herself was an English teacher; therefore, it was convenience sampling being “easy, affordable and the subjects ... readily available” (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p 2). Both of the classes had three hours of English a week and were randomly assigned as experimental group (EG) (30 students) and control group (CG) (30 students).

### 2.2. Data collection procedures

This study particularly aimed to investigate the effects of planned focus on form and the teaching model in the textbook on gaining the objectives of the unit ‘Health’. The experimental group received planned focus on form and the control group received the teaching model in the textbook for 5 weeks. As both classes had three hours of English in a week, the data collection process lasted for 15 hours in total. The treatment design for the study involved the application of the pre-test, the application of four progress achievement tests, and the application of the post-test.

The multiple choice recognition test that was used as pre-test, progress achievement test and post-test was piloted before it reached its final version. Each question and its answer were examined in terms of intelligibility and clarity by the researcher before its application. In addition, it was also examined by the researcher and three experts to understand which item tested which function and whether the options were clear and consistent. Then, the final version was piloted before it was used in the study. The test was piloted on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students studying at a different class in the same school. The group consisted of 33 students. The class that was used in the pilot study was not involved in the actual study; they were only involved in the piloting of the study. As a result of the piloting, it was realized that items 11 and 39 were the same in the test; therefore, item 11 was changed and replaced with another question from the online question pool.

To check the progress of the learners, progress achievement tests were administered after teaching each unit objective. Then, a post-test was applied to both groups at the end of the treatment. The choice of the target forms in this study was carried out based on the curriculum of the MoNE (2018). According to the curriculum, the unit that needed to be covered was ‘Health’ which involved the following functions ‘expressing illnesses, needs and feelings, and making simple suggestions’. However, as these two functions were too comprehensive, it was considered that dividing them into four functions ‘*naming common illnesses, expressing illnesses, expressing feeling and needs, and making simple suggestions*’ was more practical (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** The functions of the unit ‘Health’ redesigned for the study (Adapted from MoNE, 2018)

Functions	Useful Language	Target forms	Target vocabulary
Naming common illnesses	He has a stomachache.	Third person singular “have/has”	Body parts: -leg –mouth -head
Expressing illnesses	What is the matter with him/her/you?	Object pronouns “him/her/you”	Common illnesses -headache -runny nose
Expressing feelings and needs	What is your/his/her problem? She needs a thermometer. She feels sick.	Possessive adjectives “his/her/your” Third person singular “feel/feels, need/needs”	Feelings and needs -blanket -mint and lemon tea-medicine-tired
Making simple suggestions	Don’t eat fast food. You should drink mint and lemon tea	Imperatives “Do’s and Don’ts” Suggestions “should/shouldn’t”	Chunks -Take some medicine. -Put a plaster on it. -Don’t carry heavy things.

The treatment process in the experimental group was planned within the framework of planned focus on form. The unit objectives and the grammatical forms which involved ‘should/shouldn’t’, ‘have/has’, ‘object pronouns’, ‘possessive adjectives’ and ‘imperatives’ were taught to the experimental group using various focus on form techniques such as *input flood*, *input enhancement*, *structured input*, *corrective feedback*, *consciousness raising tasks*, *text manipulation*, and *structured output* within the scope of planned focus on form (Ellis, 2012). The treatment process involved the presentation of the target forms and focusing on the grammatical features within a meaningful context through noticing activities such as consciousness raising activities, structuralizing activities such as grammar exercises, and proceduralizing activities such as performing activities related to skills. The treatment package for the experimental group involved handouts, a PowerPoint presentation, a unit plan, a song, a video, flashcards, a short story (Kurmaya Publishing Group, 2018) and cue cards. First of all, a unit plan was prepared within the treatment package of the experimental group. The unit plan was designed to cover all the functions that needed to be taught within the unit. For example, the first lesson plan involved the following functions: identifying the body parts, identifying common illnesses and expressing illnesses. Secondly, handouts that involved exercises such as matching, ordering, and fill-in-the-blanks were prepared by the researchers that the students would complete based on the activities. Next, a PowerPoint Presentation which involved all the activities in the handouts such as dialogues between a doctor and her patients, the flashcards (Mee Too Publishing, 2019) and visuals to teach the target subjects were prepared by the researchers. In addition, a song and a video which were appropriate for the learners’ levels and for the functions were chosen by the researcher. Moreover, flashcards (Mee Too Publishing, 2019) which involved common illnesses, feelings and needs were downloaded from the Internet, and flashcards which involved imperatives were designed by the researcher to provide visual input to learners. A graded reader named “Kim is at Mrs. Betty’s Clinic” (Kurmaya Publishing Group, 2018) was chosen and downloaded from the net and handouts were prepared in line with the story. Lastly, the cue cards were prepared for a communicative activity. Table 2 demonstrates the activities that were developed for the treatment in the experimental group and the learning outcomes of those activities.

**Table 2.** The activities and the learning outcomes for the experimental group

Activity	Learning outcomes
Warm up (Mind map)	Checks his/her prior knowledge. Refreshes his/her knowledge of the topic.
Input flood	Realizes the target vocabulary by being exposed to visual and auditory input.
Touch game	Does the actions that the teacher tells them to do. In order to do the actions, the learner needs to activate his/her schemata related to the target vocabulary.
Guessing game	Mimes an illness. Practices the target structure by doing actions. Guesses the illness by looking at his/her friends' actions.
Input enhancement	Notices the target structure that is written in bold letters or in different colours.
Structured Input	Reads the dialogues and matches the illnesses with the people. Looks at the pictures, and fills in the blanks with appropriate words.
Consciousness Raising Task	Realizes the features of the target form by answering the teacher' guiding questions. Explores the grammatical structure of the target form
Structured output	Underlines the illnesses, feelings, and needs in the reading text and completes the table with this information.
Text manipulation	Completes the text by looking at the pictures of children.
Vocabulary game	Points to the word that he/she hears with a stick.
Table completion	Places the flashcards that teacher shows under the related category in the table (illness, feeling, need).
Song	Revises the target vocabulary through having fun.
Video activity	Watches the video that involves a song about body parts and does the actions in the video such as "Open your mouth" or "Touch your nose". Watches the video about health problems and learns the common illnesses.
Information transfer activity	Reads the dialogue and write the imperatives under the categories "do's" or "don'ts". Reads the text and complete the table with the information in the text.
Role play Activity	Works in pairs and acts out the dialogues through reading and taking turns.
Reading	Reads the dialogue and categorizes illnesses, feelings, and needs. Reads the graded reader and answers the comprehension questions.
Listening	Listens to the story and ticks the illnesses he/she hears.
Speaking	Asks and answers questions using the target structures in order to find the illness that matches with his/her cue card. Retells the story by looking at the pictures.

The instructional treatment for the control group was comprised of the units that involved the target features in the course book provided by the MoNE. The treatment process involved the presentation of the target forms, teaching the related vocabulary in the unit, and the application of the activities provided in the course book. The grammatical forms were basically taught in the form of Presentation-Practice-Production as explicit language instruction. A unit plan was prepared to plan when to teach each function, in what order, and to decide which activities to use in the course book. In addition to the unit plan, the flashcards that were prepared for the experimental group were also used with the control group to support the course book. The activities that were used for the control group were taken from the course book provided by the MoNE (2018). The course book involved many different techniques and activities such as games, song, matching activity, picture story, puzzle, text completion, table



completion, dialogue completion, role play, rewriting exercise, and activities that involve language skills such as reading, writing, and listening. Table 3 presents the activities and the learning outcomes:

**Table 3.** The activities and the learning outcomes for the control group

Activity	Learning outcomes
Warm up & motivation (Simon Says)	By doing the commands that the leader orders, the learner revises the body parts and learns to be attentive.
Guessing game	By miming the illnesses and guessing an illness, the learner learns by doing.
Matching	By matching the pictures with the words, the learner practices the vocabulary and gets prepared for the speaking activity that follows. By matching the health problems with the suggestions, the learner practices the language.
Quiz	Evaluates his/her learning
Picture story	Prepares a picture story about his/her feelings and needs when s/he is ill.
Puzzle	Completes the puzzle and revises his/her prior knowledge.
Text completion	Practices the target vocabulary by completing the text through looking at the pictures given.
Table completion	Reads the text and categorizes the imperatives in the text as do's and don'ts.
Dialogue completion	Reads the dialogue and completes the dialogue with the given sentences.
Role play	Works in pairs and acts out the story by reading the speech bubbles.
Rewriting	Rewrites the given sentences that are written in imperative forms using should/shouldn't.
Reading	Reads the story/dialogue and answers true/false questions.
Listening	Listens to the track and matches the children with their health problems. Listens to the track and completes the speech bubbles.
Speaking	Works in pairs and makes short dialogues by looking at the pictures.

With the aim of measuring the effects of both types of treatment on the learning of health problems, pre-test-post-test design was used. The pre-test, the progress achievement tests, and the post-test were the same tests in the multiple choice format and were prepared by the researchers. The pre-test was applied before the treatment to both of the groups, the progress achievement tests were applied after each function was taught in order to observe the learning process of the learners, and the post-test was applied after the instructional treatment. The scores of the test were subjected to Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR20) through SPSS.17 in order to calculate the reliability coefficients or the consistency of the items in the test (Şen, 2017). The KR-20 reliability coefficient is used in cases where the items in the test can be coded as 1-0 (Şen, 2017). The reliability coefficient reliability analysis indicated that the internal consistency of the items was at an acceptable level to be used in the actual study (Cronbach's Alpha .765). Expert opinions were gathered in order to determine the content validity of the test (Şen, 2017) or whether "it measures accurately what it is intended to measure" (Hughes, 2003, p.26). Three experts agreed that the multiple choice recognition test was applicable to be used as pre-test, progress achievement test and post-test and it was compatible with the content. Thus, the multiple choice recognition test was considered appropriate to be employed in the actual study as Table 4 shows content specifications of the test (Şen, 2017).

**Table 4.** Table of specifications of the multiple choice recognition test

Unit objectives	Number of questions
Naming common illnesses	11
Expressing illnesses	9
Expressing feeling and needs	14
Making simple suggestions	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>

### 2.3. Data analysis

Pre-test-post-test design was used with the aim of measuring the effects of planned focus on form and the teaching model in the textbook within the scope of the study. The data obtained from the pre-test, the progress achievement tests, and post-test were statistically analyzed through SPSS 17.0 in order to measure the effectiveness of the two instructional treatments. First, independent samples t-test was conducted between the pre-test scores of the two groups with the aim of analyzing whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups at the beginning of the study. Next, between groups comparisons were carried out through independent samples t-test between the progress achievement test scores of the participants in order to analyze whether there were statistically significant differences between their progress achievement test scores. The between group comparisons of the progress achievement test scores revealed which instructional treatment was more effective in learning the target forms in the process of the instruction. The between group comparisons of the post-test scores were also carried out through independent samples t-test in order to analyze whether there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the subjects. The independent samples t-test of the post-test scores revealed which instructional treatment was more effective in learning the target forms at the end of the treatment process. Then, within group comparisons were conducted through Repeated Measures ANOVA within the mean scores of each group's pre-test, the progress achievement test, and post-test to measure the effects of the treatment in time. The within group comparisons revealed each group's level before, during and after the treatment.

### 3. Results

Before the treatment process, the pre-test scores of the two groups were compared in order to detect the prior knowledge and level of the learners as to the target forms through independent samples t-test. As a result of the analysis of the pre-test scores of the participants through independent samples t-test, it is observed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the pre-test scores of the learners in experimental and control groups ( $t(0.62)$ ,  $p=0.53$ ) prior to the treatment (see Table 5). The total score of the pre-test is 100. The results indicate that the mean score of the control group is 31.4 and the mean score of the experimental group is 33.1. Therefore, it was concluded that the prior knowledge of the groups was at a similar level as to the target forms.

**Table 5.** Results of independent samples t-test for the pre-test scores

		N	Mean	S	df	t	p
Pre-test scores	Control group	30	31.4	10.58	58	-.629	.532
	Experimental group	30	33.1	9.93			

In order to investigate the effectiveness of the two models; pre-test, progress achievement tests and post-test scores of each group were compared within the groups. First, with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of each type of treatment, the pre-test, the progress achievement test and the post-test scores of the two groups were submitted to Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance. A one way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted as the same group of learners' scores were measured at different time periods. Then, a statistically significant difference was found, and Bonferroni post hoc test was carried out to investigate which pairs of conditions were significantly different from each other.

*Control group comparisons.* In order to investigate whether the treatment in the control group resulted in a significant difference, within group comparisons were carried out. The descriptive statistics of the pre-test, progress achievement test and the post-test provided in Table 6 indicates an increase in the scores of the learners throughout the treatment.

**Table 6.** The mean scores of the control group in pre-test, progress achievement test and post-test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test	31.4667	10.58214	30
Progress achievement test	52.3333	20.45067	30
Post-test	55.0667	19.04429	30

The results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA indicate that there was a significant main effect of the treatment process on the test scores of the control group [ $F(2.28=33; P<01)$ ]. As the Mauchly's test of sphericity was not assumed ( $p<.05$ ), Multivariate results were used (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** The Results of one-way ANOVA for the control group

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Zaman Pillai's Trace	.703	33.090 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.703
Wilks' Lambda	.297	33.090 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.703
Hotelling's Trace	2.364	33.090 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.703
Roy's Largest Root	2.364	33.090 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.703

a. Exact statistic    b. Design: Intercept

Within Subjects Design: Zaman

As the results indicate a significant difference among the three test scores, three paired samples t-tests were used to make post hoc comparisons between the conditions. Table 8 indicates the results of the pairwise comparisons.

**Table 8.** Pairwise comparisons for the control group

(I) Zaman	(J) Zaman	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>a</sup>	95% Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>a</sup>	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-20.867*	3.312	.000	-29.281	-12.452
	3	-23.600*	2.916	.000	-31.008	-16.192
2	1	20.867*	3.312	.000	12.452	29.281
	3	-.733	1.571	.278	-6.726	1.259
3	1	23.600*	2.916	.000	16.192	31.008
	2	2.733	1.571	.278	-1.259	6.726

Based on estimated marginal means \*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

A first paired samples t-test indicates that there was a significant difference in the scores for the pre-test ( $M=31.4$ ,  $SD=10.5$ ) and quiz ( $M=52.3$ ,  $SD=20.4$ ;  $p=.000$ ). A second paired samples t-test indicates that there was a significant difference in the scores of pre-test ( $M=31.4$ ,  $SD=10.5$ ) and post-test ( $M=55$ ,  $SD=19$ ;  $p=.000$ ). A third paired samples t-test indicates that there was no significant difference in the scores for progress achievement test ( $M=52.3$ ,  $SD=20.4$ ) and post-test ( $M=55$ ,  $SD=19$ ;  $p=.278$ ) for the control group.

*Experimental group comparisons.* In order to measure the effectiveness of the treatment in the experimental group, within group comparisons were conducted. Table 9 provides the descriptive statistics for the pre-test, the progress achievement test and the post-test scores of the experimental group.

**Table 9.** The mean scores of experimental group in pre-test, progress achievement test and post-test.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-test	33.1333	9.93334	30
Progress achievement test	67.0000	20.03273	30
Post-test	60.8667	23.20929	30

The results of the one-way repeated measures ANOVA indicate that there was a significant main effect of the treatment process on the test scores of the experimental group [ $F(2.28=39)$ ;  $P<01$ ] as shown in Table 10. As the Mauchly's test of sphericity was not assumed ( $p<.05$ ), Multivariate results were used.

**Table 10.** The results of one-way ANOVA for the experimental group

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Zaman Pillai's Trace	.740	39.880 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.740
Wilks' Lambda	.260	39.880 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.740
Hotelling's Trace	2.849	39.880 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.740
Roy's Largest Root	2.849	39.880 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	28.000	.000	.740
a. Exact statistic    b. Design: Intercept    Within Subjects Design: Zaman						

In order to understand which test caused the significant difference among the tests, Bonferroni post hoc tests were applied (see Table 11).

**Table 11.** Pairwise comparisons for the experimental group

(I) Zaman	(J) Zaman	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>a</sup>	95% Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>a</sup>	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-33.867*	3.726	.000	-43.335	-24.399
	3	-27.733*	3.891	.000	-37.621	-17.846
2	1	33.867*	3.726	.000	24.399	43.335
	3	6.133	2.497	.061	-.211	12.477
3	1	27.733*	3.891	.000	17.846	37.621
	2	-6.133	2.497	.061	-12.477	.211

Based on estimated marginal means \*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

The post hoc Bonferroni test reveals that the students' improvement in the experimental group is significant within the time interval between the pre-test (M=33.1, SD=9.93) and the progress achievement test (M=67, SD=20.03; P=.000). A second paired samples t-test reveals that there is a significant difference between the scores of pre-test (M=33.1, SD=9.93) and post-test (M=60.86, SD=23.20; p=.000) while progress achievement test-post-test comparison did not indicate any significant differences for the experimental group.

The descriptive statistics indicate a decrease in the post-test scores of the subjects in the experimental group compared to their progress achievement test scores. Although the pairwise comparisons between the progress achievement test and the post-test indicate that this decrease is not statistically significant, it can be maintained that the learners could not maintain their gains at the end of the study.

*Between Group Comparisons in terms of the Progress Achievement Test.* As the study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the two different types of instructional treatments for the learning of the

target forms in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level, the scores obtained from the post-test of the experimental and control groups were examined by using independent samples t-test. As a result of this analysis, a significant difference was found between the progress achievement test scores of the two groups [ $t(58) = 2.67$ ;  $p = 0.010$ ] as is shown in Table 12.

**Table 12.** Results of independent samples t-test for the progress achievement test scores

		N	Mean	S	df	t	p
Progress achievement test scores	Control group	30	53.2	19.96	58	-2.673	.010
	Experimental group	30	67	20.03			

The results suggest that the instructional model performed in the experimental group was more effective in the learning of the target forms compared to the instructional method performed in the control group. Specifically, the results suggest that planned focus on form yielded significantly better results in the learning of the target forms within the process of the instructional treatment.

*Between Group Comparisons in terms of the Post-Test.* The post-test scores of the two groups were compared through independent samples t-test so as to see which treatment was more effective. The results are shown in Table 13. The results of the independent samples t-test indicate that no significant difference is observable between the post-test scores of the two groups ( $p > .05$ ).

**Table 13.** The mean scores of the control group and the experimental group in the post-test

		N	Mean	S	df	t	p
Post-test scores	Control group	30	55.06	19.04	58	-1.058	.294
	Experimental group	30	60.86	23.20			

Although the mean score of the experimental group ( $M = 60.86$ ) is higher than the mean score of the control group ( $M = 55.06$ ), the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, based on the results of the post-test, it can be claimed that planned focus on form and the teaching model in the textbook are not superior to one another.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study originated from the need to find a better alternative to the common tradition of teaching grammar in English as a foreign language. As the review of literature indicates, focus on meaning as an option is not considered as a solution to the problems experienced in teaching English. For example, the evaluations of Canadian French immersion programs indicated that although the learners were exposed to L2 for years, their productive skills especially in terms of grammar remained far from native like. The lack of salience and negative feedback resulted in failure to produce language accurately (Long, 1997). Therefore, focus on form, an alternative, was considered to meet the needs of

the learners in that Focus on Form entails a language teaching process in which the learners are engaged in communicative activities; and the attention is shifted to forms when the need arises (Ellis, 2016). Focus on form aims at providing learners with samples from real language through videos, stories, and role plays. In addition, focus on form provides rich input to learners by making use of techniques such as input flood in that the material that is used involves many exemplars of the target form. Compared to the drawbacks of focus on meaning such as lack of salience and negative feedback, focus on form provides learners with the chance to notice the target forms through techniques such as input enhancement in which target forms are written in bold or highlighted. Negative feedback is also provided to learners through corrective feedback. Ellis (2016) maintains that “Focus on form may be pre-planned and thus address a predetermined linguistic feature(s)” (p. 7). Based on this idea, focus on form is considered to be suitable for the context of the state schools in that predetermined linguistic features that are involved in the curriculum can be presented to the learners within a communicative context.

This study aimed at obtaining answers to three main questions. The first question asked whether the learners who receive planned focus on form show greater improvement in learning the target forms during the treatment, in comparison with another group receiving the teaching model in the textbook. The second question asked whether the learners who receive planned focus on form show greater improvement at the end of the treatment, in comparison with another group receiving the teaching model in the textbook. The third question asked whether there is a statistically significant difference in the learners’ scores as a result of receiving planned focus on form and the teaching model in the textbook.

The findings from the progress achievement test that was applied after each objective during the study indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the learning of the target forms. Therefore, based on this finding, it can be maintained that planned focus on form is significantly more effective in terms of developing the grammar of the learners [ $t(58)=2.67$ ;  $p=0.010$ ]. Given that both groups’ pre-test results were similar at the beginning of the study, it can be considered that the significant difference in the progress achievement test results is due to the teaching model realized in the experimental group. The findings from the progress achievement test are parallel with the following research findings in the SLA literature related to focus on form. The studies which were carried out in different parts of the world indicated that the learners who received focus on form were superior to the learners who did not receive focus on form (Lyster, 2004; Othman & Ismail, 2008; Gezmiş, 2011; Elgün-Gündüz, Akcan, & Bayyurt, 2012; Bakshiri & Mohammadi, 2014; Nourdad & Aghayi, 2014).

Lyster’s (2004) study revealed that form focused instruction was effective in immersion classrooms in which the instruction provided learners balanced opportunities for noticing, language awareness and controlled practice with feedback rather than instruction that overemphasized negotiation of meaning in oral tasks. This was also supported by Nourdad and Aghayi’s (2014) study, which indicated that focus on form was more effective than focus on forms in teaching passive voice of different tenses. Likewise, Othman and Ismail (2008) conducted a study which examined the effectiveness of focus on form in the learning of the simple past tense and the past perfect tense. The findings of the study indicated that focus on form helped the learners in the treatment group produce a significantly higher frequency of accurate simple past tense and past perfect tense than the control group. The first finding of the study was further supported by Bakshiri and Mohammadi (2014) who found that proactive focus on form were more effective than reactive focus on form in improving the grammar of Iranian EFL learners. The findings of Gezmiş’s (2011) study bore a resemblance to the findings of the current study in that in both studies the effectiveness of planned focus on form was measured and it was found to be more effective. The findings from Doughty and Varela’s (1998) study in which reactive focus on form proved superior to teacher-led instruction were in line with the findings of this study, as well. This finding of the study was also in line with the findings of Elgün-Gündüz et al.’s (2012) study, which compared the isolated form-focused instruction and integrated form-focused instruction in terms of students’ language development

on vocabulary, grammar and writing demonstrated that integrated FFI proved more effective in all measures compared to the isolated FFI. However, as the integrated FFI in Elgün-Gündüz et al.'s (2012) study stands for Content-Based Instruction, and the isolated FFI stands for the form-focused instruction, the treatment processes of that study and the present study are quite different from each other. Therefore, it is not possible to make a direct comparison; however, the findings can be evaluated based on their own context. While in a private school context Content-Based Instruction might provide better results compared to form-focused instruction; in a state school context focus on form may provide better results compared to regular instruction.

The second research question asked whether the learners who received Planned Focus on Form showed greater improvement in learning the target forms at the end of the treatment, in comparison with another group receiving the regular instruction. The findings from the post-test that was applied at the end of the treatment indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group; however, the difference between the post-test scores of the two groups was not statistically significant [ $t(58)=-1.058$ ;  $p=0.294$ ]. In other words, the group who received planned focus on form got higher scores from the post-test compared to the control group, yet there was not a meaningful difference between the two groups' post-test scores. One reason behind this finding may be that there were some similar activities in the treatment process of the two groups such as guessing game and text manipulation activity. The researcher decided to incorporate the guessing game activity in the treatment process of the experimental group as it is an effective game to revise the vocabulary of the unit. The text manipulation activity in the experimental group and the text completion activity in the control group were similar; however, they were not the same. The activities designed for the experimental group were planned based on focus on form techniques; therefore, they were aimed at fostering communication and also drawing attention to formal aspects of the language. The activities in the textbook were mostly designed to foster communication; however, there were also some activities to draw attention to form. The similarities in the activities of both groups were not paid attention to in the planning phase of the study as their numbers were not high; however, they may have had an effect on the results. The findings of William and Evan's (1998) study are similar to the second finding of the present study in that in the study of the experimental group who received input flooding outperformed the control group who received the regular instruction in using passive voice. However, there was not a significant difference between the two groups in terms of using adjectival participles. It may be inferred from the results of the study of William and Evan's (1998) study that the effectiveness of Focus on Form may vary depending on the target structure.

The third research question asked whether there was an increase in the learners' scores as a result of receiving planned focus on form and the regular instruction. The findings indicated that both instructional types were effective in helping learners increase their performance across three time periods of assessment. The findings further demonstrated that the experimental group made higher gains from pre-test to progress achievement test compared to the control group. In addition to that, the experimental group showed greater performance from pre-test to post-test in comparison with the control group. This finding of the study corroborated the findings of Gezmiş's (2011) study which indicated that both planned focus on form and the regular instruction were effective in helping learners improve their performance as a result of the treatment. Furthermore, this finding of the study is similar to the findings of Eş and Çekiç's (2006) study in which the effectiveness of three focus on form treatment types which are input flood, input+output and input+output+feedback in the learning of target forms were investigated. It was observed that both input+output and input+output+feedback treatments were effective in the learning of target forms, except for the input flood treatment. Unlike previous studies, Sheen's (2001) study produced different results from the present study. Sheen's (2001) study put forth that focus on forms that was applied in the experimental group proved more effective than focus on form that was applied in the control group. What is more, it was maintained that while the experimental group



made a solid progress as a result of focus on forms, the control group did not make any progress and continued to produce incorrect forms.

When a comparison was made between the two groups' performance during the treatment and at the end of the treatment in this study, it was observed that the experimental group's performance decreased from the progress achievement test to post-test while the control group's performance increased. Based on the research findings, it could be claimed that the learners in the experimental group could not maintain their gains at the end of the treatment. On the contrary, the learners in the control group showed a consistent improvement in their performance from the progress achievement test to post-test although they failed to reach the level of the experimental group. The reason behind the decrease in the experimental group's performance from progress achievement to post-test may be that the learners in the experimental group could not remember what they learned throughout the process at the end of the treatment. Another reason might be that using the graded reader did not help the learners in the experimental group improve their level of attainment. The learners liked listening to the short story during the lesson; however, they could not comprehend the story within the limited time of the lesson. Therefore, the teacher assigned the learners to read the story at home again, look up the words they did not know and to answer the comprehension questions. However, most of the learners did not do their homework and the short story did not prove effective as it was intended. Therefore, the short story may not have resulted in an increase in the learners' performance and the learners may have forgotten their prior learning in this process. The reason behind the consistent improvement of the control group may be that they were taught vocabulary using flashcards in addition to the text book. Although the treatment process for the control group was intended to involve only the textbook, extra exercises and flashcards were also incorporated into the treatment process of the control group. As one of the researchers was the teacher of both groups at the same time, she felt the responsibility to teach the target unit to the learners as best as she could. The researcher teacher did not want the control group to fall behind the experimental group just because of the research purposes. Therefore, extra materials were used for the control group to support their learning. In this case, there was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups' performances in the post-test.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study attempted to examine which type of treatment would yield better results in terms of teaching form to 5<sup>th</sup> grade Turkish EFL learners. To measure the effectiveness of the unit plan developed in line with the principles of planned focus on form, progress achievement tests were conducted during the treatment and post-test was conducted after the treatment. The findings of the study demonstrated that both treatment types helped learners increase their scores from pre-test to progress achievement test and from pre-test to post-test. Planned focus on form is proved to be significantly superior to the teaching model in the textbook based on the progress achievement tests conducted during the study. Although there were not any statistically significant differences between the two groups based on the post-test conducted at the end of the study, the experimental group performed better than the control group in the post-test. Hence, it can be concluded that planned focus on form can be used as an effective model in order to teach grammar to EFL learners in EFL contexts nationally and internationally.

As this research originated from the need to meet theory and practice in terms of teaching grammar, it may have some implications to improve language learning in EFL settings. The treatment process carried out in the experimental group involved some techniques to provide a meaningful context to learners such as videos, songs, role-plays, short story, and games; and also the techniques to focus on the formal structures of the language such as consciousness raising tasks, input enhancement, structured

input and text manipulation. As the findings indicate, such techniques as videos, songs, role-plays, short story and games that provided rich input to the learners, and provided them with a learning environment which was both fun and meaningful to notice the target structures in the input and to practice the target form can be used in similar contexts to our study. The findings of this particular study may also shed a light on the development of curriculum. As the context of this study can be considered to represent a typical English classroom in a state school in Turkey in terms of the subjects, the learning environment, and the class hours, the method applied and results obtained in this study may be taken into account by policy makers, curriculum designers, and authors of language teaching materials.

## 6. Ethics Committee Approval

The authors confirm that ethical approval was obtained from Muğla- Milas Ministry Directorate Written Permission (Approval Date and No: 14.03.2019- 2017/25).

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## Küçük yaştaki öğrencilere İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretiminde planlı biçim odaklı öğretim modelinin etkisinin incelenmesi

### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı planlı biçime odaklanma modelinin dil bilgisi kuralları gibi hedef biçimlerin öğrenilmesindeki etkinliğini araştırmaktır. Bu çalışma özellikle planlı biçime odaklanma modelinin ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı 5. Sınıf İngilizce ders kitabındaki mevcut öğretim modelinin öğrencilere 'Health' ünitesinin kazanımlarını sağlama yönündeki etkisini incelemiştir. Araştırmaya katılanlar, Muğla iline bağlı Milas'taki bir devlet ortaokulunda okuyan altmış 5. sınıf öğrencileridir. Araştırma, iki mevcut 5. sınıfın, deney ve kontrol grubu olarak atandığı yarı deneysel bir araştırmadır. Ön test, ilerleme başarı testleri ve son testten toplanan veriler SPSS 17.0 istatistik programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Öğrencilere ünitenin kazanımlarını sağlamada hangi öğretim modelinin daha etkili olduğunu analiz etmek amacıyla, ilerleme başarı testi puanları ve grupların son test puanları bağımsız örnekler t-testi ile analiz edilmiştir. Uygulamanın zaman içindeki etkilerini ölçmek için tekrarlanan ölçümler ANOVA testi uygulanmıştır ve test sonuçları her iki öğretim modelinin de öğrencilerin ön-testten son teste kadar puanlarını yükseltmelerinde etkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Verilerin istatistiksel analizi, ilerleme başarı testi sonuçlarına göre planlı biçime odaklanma modelinin, ders kitabındaki öğretim modelinden anlamlı şekilde daha etkili olduğunu göstermiştir [ $t(58)= 2.67; p=0.010$ ]. Son testin sonuçları iki grup arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark görülmesi bile [ $t(58)= -1.058; p= 0.294$ ], son testte deney grubunun ortalaması ( $M=60.86$ ) kontrol grubunun ortalamasından ( $M=55.06$ ) daha yüksek çıkmıştır.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* planlı biçim odaklı öğretim modeli; dil bilgisi öğretimi; çocuklara yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi

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