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# Exploring the Role of Meaning-Focused and Form-Focused Instruction on L2 Collocation Learning: An Instructed SLA Approach to Vocabulary Learning[a]

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**Abstract**

*Considering the difficulty of acquiring lexical forms, it is important to offer effective vocabulary instruction especially in low-input contexts like Türkiye. Since studies exploring the role of Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) in vocabulary learning are rare, we explore the effects of Meaning-Focused Instruction (MFI) and FFI on L2 collocation learning. Ninety-three students with A2 level proficiency participated in the study in MFI, FFI and Control groups. Experimental groups were given reading comprehension tasks embedding twenty collocations. These collocations were enhanced through bold-facing, and dictionary use was allowed in FFI group. MFI group did the same task with no bold-facing and dictionary use. Control group only completed the tests. Findings revealed that experimental groups performed significantly better with no significant improvement in control group's performance. A significant advantage of FFI over MFI was observed in form recognition and form recall tests highlighting the pedagogical importance of attention to form to acquire collocations.*

*Keywords*: vocabulary learning, collocations, focus-on-form, ISLA

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## Introduction

The mastery of different aspects of language such as grammar, skills and particularly vocabulary is a very demanding undertake for L2 learners. In an EFL context like that of Türkiye, language learners are disadvantaged due to the scarcity of input sources needed for the exposure to the target vocabulary and their collocations. In such contexts, the role of instruction has been especially vital, and this issue has recently begun to attract research attention under the framework of Instructed SLA (ISLA) (Benati & Nuzzo, 2017; Long, 2017) although it has mainly centralized around grammar instruction so far. However, considering the essentialness of vocabulary in language learning (Nesselhauf, 2003; Peters, 2016; Schmitt, 2010) and the multidimensionality of word knowledge (Nation, 2001), there has been a need for fine-tuned studies exploring the methods for effective vocabulary instruction that can cater for different aspects of vocabulary learning.

Learners need to acquire considerable amounts of vocabulary and master different levels of word knowledge to function properly in a second language. Nation and Beglar (2007) argue that an undergraduate non-native student with a vocabulary size of approximately 5000 – 6000 word families can successfully pursue education at an English medium department (Nation & Beglar, 2007). This is a demanding task to achieve when all the aspects of word knowledge are taken into account together with these thousands of word families. Nation (1990) puts forward main aspects of word knowledge as form, meaning, grammar, frequency, associations, register, and collocations. Schmitt (2010) indicates that meaning and written form are comparably easier to learn

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among the parts of word knowledge whereas other aspects such as collocations and register were substantially more difficult to acquire.

In addition to the learning challenge they posit, it has also been difficult to designate collocational pairs for research purposes. Two approaches to define what a collocation means loom among others, namely frequency-based approach (Macis & Schmitt, 2017; Sinclair, 1991) and the phraseological approach (Cowie, 1998; Howarth, 1998; Nesselhauf, 2005). Gablasova and colleagues (2017) indicate that the semantic bonds between the collocations and the degree of non-compositionality in their meaning is the main tenet of the phraseological approach. Frequency-based approach, on the other hand, make an estimation of word co-occurrence using statistical measurements such as frequency counts, LogDice and Mutual-Information (MI) scores (Church & Hanks, 1990; Ellis & Simpson-Vlach, 2009; Evert, 2008) based on corpora. In our study, we based our operationalizations on the frequency-based approach since it yields more objective corpus-based interpretations (Sinclair, 1991).

Collocations represent a particularly challenging aspect of vocabulary acquisition for language learners. (Howarth, 1998; Leśniewska, 2006; Peters, 2014; 2016; Philip, 2007) mainly due to their polysemous nature (Macis & Schmitt, 2017), the arbitrariness of co-occurrence (Philip, 2007) and the restricted sense they carry (Nesselhauf, 2003). Due to the challenge of defining what makes a collocational pair (Nesselhauf, 2005) and possibly the latency of the acquisition for the learners, experimental studies investigating collocation learning are still quite limited in number in comparison to other areas of vocabulary research. Additionally, there are even fewer studies focusing on collocation learning through FFI in low-input classroom contexts.

**FFI and Collocation Learning**

The role of FFI in vocabulary learning has evoked much scientific debate up to now. Scholars such as Pellicer-Sanchez (2017) and Webb, Newton and Chang (2013) argued that incidental learning of collocations through reading yields the most effective outcomes for collocation acquisition, while some others (Cobb, 2007; Ördem & Paker, 2016; Szudarski & Carter, 2016) asserted that without focused attention, learners are likely to overlook these lexical bundles. This requires a deliberate instructional attempt to focus on the form of the target words or collocations by ensuring noticing (Laufer, 2005, 2006; Schmidt, 1990). *FFI* has been put forward as an umbrella term for the most common and effective techniques to draw learners' attention to form in ISLA research (Loewen, 2018). In the ISLA approach, FFI can be implemented in numerous ways, each differing in the degree of instructional explicitness, such as Focus-on-Form and Focus-on-Forms. In Focus-on-Forms approach, students are made explicitly aware that the aim of the activity is learning of a linguistic form whereas in Focus-on-Form approach, learners' attention is drawn to form implicitly while their primary attention is on meaning (Ellis, 2001; Long, 1991).

A plethora of studies examined the effectiveness of FFI on vocabulary learning (Laufer, 2006; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011; Luppescu & Day, 1993; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009) and revealed that explicit vocabulary instruction provided positive outcomes at the deepest levels of word knowledge (form recall) (Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009). Furthermore, even simple form-based activities such as matching, dictionary use or comprehensive processing of form meaning relationships through reading contribute substantially to the acquisition process of vocabulary. (Laufer, 2003; Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011; Luppescu & Day; 1993; Peters et al., 2009). Although the need for a FFI has been established in vocabulary learning, there is still no consensus on the outcomes for collocation learning and the type of FFI that could produce optimal learning outcomes (Laufer, 2006; Shintani, 2013). To our present knowledge, our study is one of the rare studies comparing impacts of MFI and FFI by operationalizing FFI with unobtrusive Focus-on-Form component rather than an intrusive Focus-on-Forms component and using a corpus-based approach in the selection of the target items.

**MFI versus FFI in Collocation Learning**

Obtrusive ways of focusing on form distract learners' attention away from the meaning-oriented task they are engaged in. When attention is shifted from meaning to form, we sacrifice the basic function of language, which is communication. When form is overlooked through merely meaning focused tasks (MFI), on the other hand, formal properties of words such as their spelling or accuracy are neglected. In an EFL context like Türkiye, where classroom instruction is the only chance for learners to be exposed to input, we do not have a luxury of sacrificing

any aspect of language learning, or in particular, vocabulary learning. Therefore, there has been a dire need to explore ways of teaching both the meaning and the form of collocations unobtrusively. In this vein, not a plethora of studies so far investigated how MFI and FFI were tailored to collocation teaching and learning. The recent systematic research, although limited in amount, demonstrated an advantage for FFI over solely meaning-based techniques (Choi, 2017; Szudarski, 2012; Szudarski & Carter, 2016). Szudarski (2012), for instance, compared the role played by MFI and FFI operationalized as FonFs in the learning of incongruent collocations. His participants were 43 intermediate Polish EFL learners who were assigned to MFI, FonFs and Control groups. Learners were exposed to target collocations while reading different stories. FonFs group answered comprehension questions, and then had a separate explicit form focused activity on target items while MFI-only group had two consecutive tasks of answering comprehension questions only. Szudarski (2012) found that the group which had MFI + FonFs instruction showed significant improvement and outperformed the other two groups in all posttests while the differences between MFI only and control groups were not significant.

Other scholars (De la Fuente, 2006; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Shintani, 2013) also highlight the advantage of the FFI over the MFI in the mastery level of form recall. For example, De la Fuente (2006), comparing the impacts of Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and TBLT with explicit FonF, found that the group receiving explicit FonF outperformed the former two on form recall tests. Similarly, Laufer and Girsai (2008), in their comparison of MFI, FFI, and Contrastive Analysis (CAT) instruction, found that the FFI group achieved better results in both immediate and delayed form recall post-tests. Nonetheless, the variation in the operational definition of FFI was a concern since Shintani (2013) indicated that FonF produced better outcomes than FonFs for form recall of adjectives, contrary to Laufer (2006), who supported the advantage of FonFs over FonF instruction.

Considering the aforementioned studies, vocabulary acquisition research pointed to the benefits of FFI (De la Fuente, 2006; Hill & Laufer, 2003); however, the impacts of FFI on collocations have still been under-researched. To our knowledge, Szudarski's (2012) study has been the only published study that investigates the impact of FFI on collocation learning. Nevertheless, he operationally defined FFI as FonFs, which is a very explicit and obtrusive technique of drawing attention to form swaying learners' attention from meaning considerably. Thus, there remains a need for systematic research investigating the effects of a less intrusive Focus-on-Form (Ellis, 2001) component as an unobtrusive way of attracting learners' attention to form without shifting the focus from meaning as in Focus-on-Forms technique. We seek to address this niche in the area of L2 vocabulary teaching and aim to compare the effects of Form-Focused (FonF type) and Meaning-Focused Instruction on collocation learning in the mastery levels of recall and recognition. The following research questions were addressed:

Does Turkish EFL learners' knowledge of verb-noun collocations improve differentially as a result of Meaning-Focused and Form-Focused Instruction in terms of

1) form recognition?
2) meaning recall?
3) form recall?

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 93 students taking English classes at the Intensive English program of a foundation university in Türkiye. They were aged between 18-38. All participants except for an Arabic and a Turkmen student were native speakers of Turkish. Data of these two foreign students were excluded from the analyses for the translation tests (meaning recall and form recall tests), but they were included in the analyses of form recognition test (COLLEX). They had elementary (A2) level of English proficiency determined via the Cambridge English Placement Test and performed at 2000 - 3000 word level in the Vocabulary Size Test (Nation & Beglar, 2007), which is a multiple-choice test developed to measure the receptive vocabulary size. In the following year, the students were supposed to attend various English-medium departments ranging from Medicine to International Relations upon the successful completion of the English preparatory program where they were enrolled. They had 25 hours of English instruction weekly which was composed of listening and speaking, reading and writing, General English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. They had no specific vocabulary class. A great

majority of participants had never been to a foreign country with some exceptions who had been to countries like the USA, China, Germany and so on. There were participants who spoke additional languages such as Georgian, Kurdish, Serbian and Zaza.

**Materials and Selection of Target Collocations**

The current study investigated the effectiveness of two instructional methods in incidental learning of collocations. Target collocations were embedded in eight reading passages. After vocabulary size of students was determined in VST, the passages were simplified to make them accessible for students' vocabulary size and overall proficiency levels. Grammatical simplifications were made and the reading texts were cross-checked with the list of headwords of the first 10K words in English based on BNC/COCA frequencies to guarantee comprehension. Thus, it was ensured that all of the words excluding the target lexical items were within the students' current vocabulary knowledge. We used plain texts and questions in MFI materials while we bold-faced and underlined the target collocations in the materials used by the FFI group. This way, we enhanced the texts to draw attention to form (FonF). Other than the interventional modifications, the texts were identical.

With pedagogical considerations, we preferred to use real collocations as target items to ensure ecological validity in this study (Macis & Schmitt, 2017; Szudarski, 2012; Webb & Kagimoto, 2009). Verb-noun collocations are relatively more difficult to acquire than adj-adv and adj-n collocations (Peters, 2016). Therefore, verb-noun collocations were chosen to scaffold learners to master a difficult aspect of word knowledge. At the beginning of materials adaptation, there were forty candidates of collocations embedded in 12 different passages. Highly frequent node verbs were selected according to their Relative Node Frequency with the aim of maximizing exposure to target words in later instructional materials. After the determination of node words, their collocates were checked out in BNC by calculating MI and LogDice scores so as to ensure that these co-occurring words are strong collocates.

As a result, twenty collocations with medium or high collocational strength were selected as target collocations. Then, two independent raters evaluated the selected collocations for semantic transparency and congruency. Interrater reliability was $r$ = 1.0 for semantic transparency and $r$ = 0.8 for congruency. Congruent and semantically transparent target collocations were selected since participants had a low level of proficiency, and incongruent or opaque collocations would be challenging to learn for them (See Appendix for the target collocations and statistical information).

**Instruments**

Vocabulary Size Test (Nation & Beglar, 2007) is diagnostic test made up of a hundred questions to give an estimation of learners' vocabulary size in terms of 1000 word family levels. This test was administered to measure students' vocabulary size and to ensure the comparability of groups. In addition to VST, three instruments, namely COLLEX and two translation tests were adopted as pretests and posttests to measure the hypothesized difference between outcomes of MFI and FFI. All these three tests were shown to be highly reliable based on their Cronbach's alpha scores (α).

COLLEX was a receptive collocation test validated by Gyllstad (2009) measuring the recognition of both real collocations as a whole entity and pseudo-collocations as a non-collocating pair ($\alpha$ = .84). Each item in COLLEX contained three options, one of which was a frequent real collocation whereas the other two were semantically similar but totally unconventional and infrequent pseudo-collocations. Participants were asked to choose the option that seemed to be the most common and appropriate collocational pair. Below is a sample item from COLLEX.

COLLEX Test Item:

*a. make commitment* *b. do commitment* *c. produce commitment*

Translation tests, on the other hand, aimed to measure if meaning and form of the target collocations were recalled. In meaning recall test, learners provided Turkish translations of the English collocations presented to them. ($\alpha$ =.83). In the form recall test, students were provided with L1 meanings of target collocations and asked to produce the target collocations ($\alpha$ = .81). Each test was composed of twenty-three items with three distractors. We present sample items for meaning recall and form recall tests below.

Meaning recall test item:

*Conduct research* _____

Form recall test item:

*Gerginliği sezmek* _____

Additionally, in order to collect demographic information about participants, we used a background questionnaire. Instructions were provided both in English and Turkish to ensure task comprehension in all the tests.

**Procedure**

In the present study, we examined the comparative effects of Form-Focused and Meaning-Focused Instruction on incidental collocation learning. Adopting a pretest-post-test design, three intact classes with equal class sizes were randomly assigned to MFI, FFI and Control groups. The study was conducted in 6 consecutive weeks. During the first two weeks, all the participants completed the consent forms/questionnaires and took the Vocabulary Size Test. Accordingly, instructional materials were modified based on the VST results to make sure all the words fall within the learners' vocabulary size. Then, students took the pretests and in the following three weeks, the interventions were carried out. During each intervention, experimental groups attended 40-minute instructional sessions in which MFI group read two texts each embedding four target collocations, answered comprehension questions and received teacher-led comprehension-based feedback. Special attention was paid not to provide any form-focused feedback to MFI group in this phase. During the second and third week of instructional interventions, target collocations of the previous weeks were recycled in the materials to maximize encounter to target items (Peters, 2014; Webb et al., 2013). FFI group followed the same procedure as the MFI group, but target collocations were bold-faced and underlined to draw their attention to form in FFI texts. Contrary to Szudarski (2012), who compared MFI and Focus-on-Forms, the current study operationalized FFI as Focus-on-Form in which FFI was realized through textual enhancement and dictionary use (Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011). FFI group read their texts with the help of a dictionary, and their attention was drawn to target collocations unobtrusively while they were dealing with a meaning-based activity. Following reading comprehension activity, FFI group received both meaning-oriented and form-oriented feedback on the target collocations. The control group was not exposed to any specific instruction for the target collocations. They went on with their regular language classes. At the end of the instructional processes in the sixth week, all groups took the post-tests.

**Scoring**

No partial scores were given for the responses in COLLEX, and participants were awarded points only for the correct option. In the scoring of meaning recall test, slight mistakes such as use of infinitives were ignored. However, answers creating a difference in terms of meaning and form were marked as incorrect. While scoring form recall test, only target collocations were accepted as correct. One point was given for each correct answer in all the tests. Two independent researchers scored data, and disagreements were negotiated. Upon the negotiations, interrater reliability was found to be $r = 0.8$.

**Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics after the assumptions for parametric tests were checked. To test the comparability of the groups, VST scores were compared via a One-Way ANOVA, and experimental groups were found to be equally comparable, $p > 05$. In order to compare MFI, FFI and Control groups in terms of form recognition, meaning recall and form recall of collocations, pretest-posttest data were analyzed via 3x2 Factorial ANOVAs with relevant Post-Hoc analyses and pairwise comparisons.

Effect sizes were reported in this study, since *p* values are affected by the degree of the relationship between variables and sample size, reporting effect sizes and their interpretation through field-specific scales are of paramount importance (Field, 2009; Long, 2017; Norris & Ortega, 2006; Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

## Results

### Receptive Vocabulary Size

Prior to the interventions, the experimental groups were given the Vocabulary Size Test with the aim of detecting possible differences (if any) regarding vocabulary knowledge between these groups before the experiment. The results of ANOVA revealed that groups performed similarly in VST (See Table 1), and the differences between the FFI, MFI and Control group in the VST were not statistically significant, $F$ (2, 68) = 0.41, $p > 0.05$, $r = 0.24$. Hence, it was proven that the groups owned comparable vocabulary sizes.

**Table 1**

*VST Descriptive Statistics*

| | Min. | Max. | Mean | STD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FFI | 2.0 | 33 | 14.2 | 9.1 |
| MFI | 6.0 | 22 | 12.4 | 4.5 |
| Control | 0.0 | 33 | 14.2 | 9.5 |

### Form Recognition of Collocations

To address the first research question that compares MFI and FFI in terms of form recognition of collocations, a 3x2 Mix Design ANOVA involving within and between subject factors was administered on COLLEX scores. The results revealed that, generally, the performance of students significantly improved from COLLEX pretest to posttest, $F$ (1, 67) = 26.75, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.53$. So, the intervention was effective for both groups across time. There was also a significant effect of group factor, $F$ (2, 67) = 29.95, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.55$. Thus, MFI, FFI and control groups benefited from instruction at significantly different levels with a medium effect size. Pairwise comparisons revealed that the FFI group outperformed both the MFI and Control groups, with a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$). However, no significant difference was found between the MFI and Control groups ($p = 0.86$). (See Table 2 for pairwise comparisons of the groups in COLLEX).

**Table 2**

*COLLEX Pairwise Comparisons Between Groups*

| | Group | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| MFI | FFI | 0.000*** |
| | Control | 0.856 |
| FFI | MFI | 0.000*** |
| | Control | 0.000*** |
| Control | MFI | 0.856 |
| | FFI | 0.000*** |

*Note.* *** indicates $p < 0.001$.

The interaction effect between group and time factors was also significant with a medium effect size, $F(2,67) = 12.43$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.39$, which showed that the effect of time (difference between pretest and post-test) was dependent on the effect of intervention (difference between MFI, FFI, Control). To break down this interaction effect, Post-Hoc analyses were conducted. The results of the Post-Hoc tests showed that MFI group's scores in the post-COLLEX ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 2.69$) was significantly higher than pre-COLLEX ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.25$), $p = 0.001$. Also, FFI group also improved their performance significantly from pretest ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 2.49$) to posttest ($M = 9.50$, $SD = 3.21$), $p < 0.001$. Lastly, Control group's scores dropped slightly between the pretest ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 3.03$), and the posttest ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 2.34$) $p = 0.47$; however, the decline in Control group's scores lacked statistical significance. Table 3 summarizes the results of the Post-Hoc tests that compared the pretests and posttests.

**Table 3**

*Results of Post-Hoc Tests for COLLEX*

| | Pretest | | Posttest | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| MFI | 2.26 | 1.25 | 4.30 | 2.69 |
| FFI | 5.75 | 2.49 | 9.50 | 3.21 |
| Control | 3.82 | 3.03 | 3.39 | 2.34 |

**Meaning Recall of Collocations**

The second research question compared the meaning recall of the target collocations across the groups. Meaning recall test scores were analyzed through a 3x2 Mix-Design ANOVA, and the results revealed a significant main effect of time from pretest to posttest, $F(1,64) = 6.08$, $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.29$. The groups also significantly differed from each other regardless of the time factor, $F(2,64) = 6.06$, $p < 0.01$, $r = 0.29$. Findings of the pairwise comparisons showed that the FFI group performed significantly better than the Control group ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant differences were observed neither between the FFI and MFI groups ($p = 0.19$), nor between the MFI and Control groups ($p = 0.17$) (See Table 4 for the outcomes of pairwise comparisons for meaning recall test).

**Table 4**

*Meaning Recall Test Pairwise Comparisons Between Groups*

| | Group | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| MFI | FFI | 0.145 |
| | Control | 0.274 |
| FFI | MFI | 0.145 |
| | Control | 0.003** |
| Control | MFI | 0.274 |
| | FFI | 0.003** |

*Note.* ** indicates $p < 0.01$.

There was a significant interaction effect between group and time factors with a medium effect size, $F(2,64) = 12.53$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.40$. To explore the grounds of this interaction effect, we carried out pairwise comparisons of pretest and posttest scores of experimental groups. It was found that, FFI group's scores in meaning recall posttest ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 3.29$) were significantly higher than the scores in the meaning recall pretest ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 1.35$), $p < 0.001$. However, the difference between MFI group's scores in time (Pretest, $M = 1.59$, $SD = 1.73$ and Posttest, $M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.75$) was not statistically significant, $p = 0.19$. Control group's scores, on the other hand, decreased marginally from the pretest ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 1.76$) to the posttest ($M = 0.66$, $SD = 0.91$), $p = 0.05$. Table 5 demonstrates the results of Post-Hoc Tests for the Meaning Recall Test.

**Table 5**

*Results of Post-Hoc Tests for Meaning Recall Test*

| | Pretest | | Posttest | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| FFI | 1.54 | 1.35 | 4.08 | 3.29 |
| MFI | 1.59 | 1.73 | 2.27 | 1.75 |
| Control | 1.71 | 1.76 | 0.66 | 0.91 |

### Form Recall of Collocations

The last research question focused on form recall of collocations. The results of a 3x2 Mix Design ANOVA showed that there was a significant main effect of time, which had a large effect size, $F(1,64) = 45.85$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.64$. This demonstrated that groups improved their performance significantly from posttest to pretest. When only group factor was considered, the groups had significantly different performances, $F(2,64) = 7.20$, $p < 0.01$, $r = 0.31$. To reveal which groups differed significantly, Post-Hoc tests were administered. Findings showed that FFI group outperformed the other experimental groups, and the results were significant ($p < 0.05$). Although the MFI group improved their performance in the post-test, the difference between the MFI and Control groups was not statistically significant (p = 0.64). Table 6 shows pairwise comparisons for form recall test.

**Table 6**

*Form Recall Test Pairwise Comparisons Between Groups*

| | Group | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| MFI | FFI | 0.002** |
| | Control | 0.821 |
| FFI | MFI | 0.002** |
| | Control | 0.015* |
| Control | MFI | 0.821 |
| | FFI | 0.015* |

*Note.* * indicates $p < 0.05$ and ** indicates $p < 0.001$.

On the other hand, the interaction effect between group and time factor was significant, and the effect size was medium, $F(2,64) = 15.48$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.44$. To explore this interaction effect, the comparisons of pretest and posttest scores were made across all three groups. We found that the performance of MFI group got significantly better in time (Pretest, $M = 0$, $SD = 0$ and Posttest, $M = 0.86$, $SD = 0.71$), $p < 0.01$. Likewise, there was a significant increase in FFI group's scores in posttest ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 2.17$) in comparison to the pretest ($M = 0$, $SD = 0$), $p < .001$. Control group performed better in the posttest ($M = 0.67$, $SD = 0.73$) than in the pretest ($M = 0.48$, $SD = 0.68$), but this increase in scores lacked statistical significance, $p > 0.05$. Also, despite Control group's improvement, MFI and FFI groups had a better performance than the Control group in the form recall posttest and this difference was significant between FFI and Control group. These comparisons between pretests and posttests were shown in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Results of Post-Hoc Tests for Form Recall Test*

| | Pretest | | Posttest | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| FFI | 0 | 0 | 2.46 | 2.17 |
| MFI | 0 | 0 | 0.86 | 0.71 |
| Control | 0.48 | 0.68 | 0.67 | 0.73 |

## Discussion

The present study sought to explore the effectiveness of MFI and FFI instructional methods on the learning of L2 English verb-noun collocations at the form recognition, meaning recall and form recall mastery levels. In terms of the challenge it posits and the depth of knowledge it taps, form recall level is the deepest level of word knowledge followed by meaning recall and form recognition respectively (Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009). Thus, it is more demanding to learn vocabulary at the form recall level. Mainly, our findings uncovered that both instructional methods proved to be effective when they are compared to a control group who did not receive any instruction on the target collocations although the difference between MFI and Control groups lacked statistical significance. Furthermore, FFI method yielded much better learning gains than MFI method in form recognition and form recall tests emphasizing the importance of drawing attention to form to gain mastery

in the formal aspects of collocations. When the fact that form recall is considered to constitute the deepest levels of word knowledge (Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009) is taken into consideration, the positive impact of FFI in the learning of collocations is indisputably obvious, and solely meaning-based instruction cannot compensate for the role played by FFI.

**Form Recognition of Collocations**

Recognizing the form of collocations could have been the most easily acquired aspect of word knowledge (Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009), but it is clearly one of the aspects that is more prone to be affected by FFI treatments. The results of form recognition test (COLLEX) confirmed that both MFI and FFI instructional groups performed better than Control group, which proves the necessity of instruction in L2 vocabulary, in particular collocation learning. Form-Focused Instruction yielded the significantly better results for teaching of form recognition of collocations, which corroborates the findings of previous research proving effectiveness of FFI under various conditions (De la Fuente, 2006; Laufer, 2003, 2006; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009).

Szudarski (2012) was the most relevant study to our study in regards the experimental design. However, these two studies also had major differences. The way they define FFI varied considerably. In Szudarski's (2012) operationalization, FFI was a part of Focus-on-Forms while a Focus-on-Form component was adopted in our study. Regarding form recognition, Szudarski (2012) found that FonFs yielded better results than MFI which is parallel to our findings. However, the provision of explicit Focus on Forms contradicts the position of Long (2017) who opines that FonF should be implicit to avoid any obtrusion for the meaning-focused task. Therefore, we suggest that with limited amount of time and opportunities for exposure to English, it would be an unnecessary sacrifice not to take advantage of, any kind of instruction, if it be FFI in our case, which could provide better learning gains. Also, in line with Long's (2017) position, an unobtrusive FonF instruction can provide this opportunity to teach formal aspects of collocations without impeding the meaning-focused task. All in all, both MFI and FFI methods were found to be more effective in comparison to Control group in COLLEX, and the difference was statistically significant between FFI and Control group. This underlines how important it is to provide meaning oriented tasks in vocabulary teaching ideally enhanced through form-focused activities.

**Meaning Recall of Collocations**

In the mastery level of meaning recall, learners in FFI and MFI groups improved their performance and had more collocation learning gains than Control group whose scores dropped down. Surprisingly, the differences between MFI and FFI groups' scores lacked statistical significance notwithstanding FFI group's better performance, which might be because of the aspect of word knowledge we tested. Meaning recall test taps knowledge of word meanings, and the students might have acquired word meanings incidentally through reading easily.

Several studies have assessed collocation gains in terms of meaning recall (Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011; Szudarski, 2012). For instance, Sonbul and Schmitt (2009) revealed that participants receiving explicit vocabulary instruction outperformed those in reading-only group on a meaning recall test, suggesting that explicit vocabulary instruction enhanced incidental vocabulary acquisition more effectively than reading alone. Consistent with Sonbul and Schmitt's (2009) findings, our study also showed that the FFI group's performance got significantly better, and they outperformed the MFI group, despite the fact that the FFI used in this study was incidental rather than explicit—a less intrusive approach, as suggested by Long (2017).

Yet another study corroborating the present study, Mason and Krashen (2004) showed that supplementing reading tasks with vocabulary activities doubled vocabulary gains. Although they expounded that it was not worth the effort, we argue that FFI is of great use for learners and it makes considerable contributions to collocation learning. Likewise, Laufer (2005) puts forward that be it FonF or FonFs, form-focused activities helped learners notice and internalize the words they learn. The present study also proved the advantage of FFI over MFI condition showing that even less obtrusive FonF rather than FonFs can produce better outcomes than MFI.

### Form Recall of Collocations

Learning of collocations at the form recall level requires processing of collocational pairs in the deepest level of word knowledge (Pellicer-Sanchez, 2017; Sonbul & Schmitt, 2009), and our findings unveil that instruction serves a highly important role in the form recall of collocations as revealed by the superior performance of FFI and MFI groups over control group in the form recall test. Benati and Nuzzo (2017) also suggested that instruction plays a facilitative role in the broader context of L2 acquisition. The term 'facilitative' might underestimate the effect of instruction in the current study. Both experimental groups produced considerable improvements as opposed to the Control group with no improvement. We claim that this success should be regarded as 'decisive' or 'notable' rather than 'facilitative'.

It is also worth paying attention that when formal aspects are tested, Focus-on-Form produced significant results. Mastering vocabulary in the degree of recall requires a deeper word knowledge (Webb, 2005). Thus, the results of the form recall test are expected to exhibit deeper collocation knowledge. Current literature highlights that there is an advantage of the FFI condition over the MFI condition for form recall (De la Fuente, 2006; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Shintani, 2013). Therefore, superior performance of students who took FFI classes led us to the conclusion that a Focus on Form approach was essential to facilitate collocation learning at the deepest level of word knowledge, a level unattainable through MFI alone, which was also revealed by the nonsignificant difference between MFI and Control groups and significant difference between FFI and other groups in the form recall test in our study.

In our study, we operationally defined FFI as FonF, and students in the FFI group outperformed those in the MFI group in form recall test. Hence, we can conclude that less obtrusive FonF instruction is quite sufficient to support collocation learning in the form recall mastery level, and so, it is not necessary to disturb the flow of meaning focused task to draw learners' attention to form.

## Conclusion

In this study, we compared Form-Focused and Meaning-Focused Instruction in terms of their effectiveness in incidental learning of L2 collocations. Results showed that vocabulary instruction, be it MFI or FFI kind, contributed significantly to collocation learning and the impact is bigger than being simply 'facilitative'. It can be said that it is 'essential'. Furthermore, incidental collocation learning only through reading (MFI) did not prove as effective as incidental learning supported with an implicit Focus on Form (FFI). This is mainly because many collocations might have gone unnoticed under MFI condition.

### Pedagogical Implications

Within the framework of Instructed SLA, the present study provided various insights into incidental learning of L2 collocations through instruction in the formal classroom context in Türkiye. Our findings emphasized the necessity of Focus on Form in collocation learning. From a pedagogical perspective, this finding may guide language teachers in using less intrusive techniques to direct learners' attention to form while they engage in meaning-focused activities. Focus-on-Form can be easily achieved through input enhancement like boldfacing and effective use of dictionaries. Teachers can design language tasks to provide Focus on Form without intruding in the meaning-focused nature of language learning.

In addition, target collocations were embedded in short reading texts in the materials we used for this study. Maximizing exposure to the contexts where words can be seen with their collocations is of paramount importance for vocabulary learning, and reading passages creates this context for word learning. This way, students learn to deduce meaning from context and remember each word with its collocations where they appear in situ. Additionally, corpus tools shed light on language teachers' way in the selection of words to teach and in the syllabus/curriculum design. As it informed the current study, corpus is a roadmap for teachers to learn what words to teach and when to teach them through frequency counts and concordances.

Thirdly, when the difficulty of collocation learning is considered (Peters, 2016; Shei & Pain, 2000), explicit teaching of collocations seems to be an effective solution. Our study guides language teachers by presenting MFI and FFI as two ways to teach collocations without distracting students' attention from the meaning-focused activity. Therefore, teachers might want to create more time and space for activities in which

learners' attention to form is drawn either implicitly by enhancing the text and using a dictionary or explicitly through the use of word focused activities. This way, they can be more certain that target words do not go unnoticed.

Lastly, the present study has some implications for publishers and course book developers. They can integrate Focus on Form into materials design process and plan the sequence of activities they present accordingly. The value of Focus on Form techniques has now been established in collocation research, and the integration of these techniques into English course materials could effectively draw learners' attention to form providing better learning outcomes.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The current study compared the effects of FFI and MFI methods on the learning of L2 collocations. To our knowledge, it is among the first studies to explore comparative effects of these instructional methods by operationalizing FFI as an unobtrusive Focus-on-Form. It contributes to the literature by proving the effectiveness of FFI as an instructional strategy that enables learners to acquire formal aspects of word knowledge without shifting attention from the meaning focused activity. Despite some limitations, this study might inform future research in several ways. Firstly, it was conducted in six consecutive weeks and the long-term retention of collocations was not tested; however, a delayed posttest would give a better idea about the long-term effects of the interventions. In addition, only verb-noun collocations were targeted in this study; however, exploring verb-adverb or adjective-noun collocations could also be a fruitful area of research for further studies.

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## Anlam Odaklı ve Biçim Odaklı Öğretimimin İkinci Dil Eşdizimlilik Öğrenimindeki Rolünün Araştırılması: Kelime Öğrenimine Sınıf Ortamında Dil Öğretimi Yaklaşımı

**Öz**.

*Kelime formlarını öğrenmenin zorluğu düşünüldüğünde özellikle Türkiye bağlamındaki gibi düşük dil girdisi sunan bağlamlarda verimli dil eğitimini sunmak önem arz etmektedir. Biçim Odaklı Öğretimin (Form-Focused Instruction) eşdizimlilik öğrenimindeki rolü üzerine yapılan çalışmalar sınırlı sayıda olduğu için bu çalışma, Biçim ve Anlam Odaklı öğretim yöntemlerinin ikinci dilde eşdizimlilik öğrenimine etkisini araştırmaktadır. Bu çalışmaya A2 seviyesinde dil yeterliliğine sahip doksan üç üniversite öğrencisi MFI, FFI ve kontrol gruplarında katılım sağlamıştır. Deney grupları olan MFI ve FFI birbirine eş okuma anlama görevlerini tamamlamıştır. FFI grubunda hedef kelimeler koyu yazıyla vurgulanmış ve sözlük kullanımına izin verilmiştir; MFI grubu ise aynı görevleri vurgusuz metinlerle ve sözlüksüz tamamlamıştır. Kontrol grubu sadece testlere katılmıştır. Sonuçlar, deney gruplarının dikkate değer ölçüde daha iyi bir performans gösterirken kontrol grubunun performansında gelişme olmadığını, ayrıca FFI'nin özellikle biçim tanıma ve hatırlama düzeylerinde MFI grubuna avantaj sağladığını göstermiştir. Bu da eşdizimliliklerin öğreniminde biçime odaklanmanın pedagojik önemini ortaya koymaktadır.*

*Anahtar kelimeler:* kelime öğrenimi, eşdizimlilik, biçim odaklı öğretim, ISLA

## Appendix

**Target Collocations and Statistical Information**

| Target Collocation | MI | Log Dice | Congruency | Semantic transparency |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Make commitment | 4.813 | 5.472 | - | + |
| Accept proposal | 7.287 | 7.280 | + | + |
| Make appointment | 5.570 | 5.817 | + | + |
| Achieve goals | 8.565 | 8.636 | + | + |
| Set targets | 8.027 | 7.520 | + | + |
| Make profit | 6.373 | 7.053 | +/- | + |
| Conduct research | 7.402 | 8.154 | + | + |
| Launch a product | 7.064 | 7.517 | + | + |
| Adopt a position | 6.297 | 7.190 | - | + |
| Draw conclusions | 9.981 | 9.117 | - | +/- |
| Make an attempt | 6.168 | 7.797 | +/- | + |
| Invest money | 7.962 | 7.907 | + | + |
| Boost income | 6.475 | 5.863 | + | + |
| Drop a hint | 6.688 | 5.246 | - | +/- |
| Give instructions | 6.721 | 6.661 | + | + |
| Make observations | 6.288 | 5.494 | + | + |
| Steer conversation | 8.790 | 7.033 | + | + |
| Trust instincts | 7.507 | 5.004 | + | + |
| Get impression | 5.648 | 5.879 | + | + |
| Sense tension | 5.712 | 5.386 | + | + |