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## The Role of Planned Preemptive and Reactive Focus-on-Form in Developing L2 Learners' Grammatical Accuracy

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### Abstract

Drawing on the principles of noticing hypothesis, focus on form (FonF) instruction emerged as a mediator between meaning-focused and form-focused approaches to teaching L2 grammar. The present study examines the differential effects of two forms of FonF, *planned preemptive* and *reactive FonF*, on Iranian beginner EFL learners' grammatical accuracy in written output. Following a quasi-experimental design, 40 beginner learners, including both male and female, were recruited out of 100 based on the results of a proficiency test and then assigned to two experimental groups. One group received planned preemptive feedback on related grammatical items to enable the learners to avoid any errors, while the other group received reactive FonF which was implemented by offering explicit corrective feedback on learners' errors after the occurrence. The results of t data analysis revealed that while both groups underwent a significant change in terms of L2 grammatical accuracy, the planned preemptive group outperformed the reactive group which indicated that (a) presenting language before the task performance could result in enhanced noticing and improved performance and (b) drawing students' attention to the linguistic elements during meaningful activities presents an additional difficulty of distributing attention over both form and meaning.

**Keywords:** Corrective Feedback, Grammatical Accuracy, Interactive FonF, Planned Preemptive FonF, Reactive FonF

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## INTRODUCTION

As an instructional procedure lying at the heart of task-based language teaching (TBLT), focus on form (FonF) has thus far received considerable attention for its potential applications in L2 context (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Shabani & Hosseinzadeh, 2017; Kim & Nassaji, 2017). Michael Long proposed FonF as an approach that “overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (Long, 1991, p. 45-46). In his interaction hypothesis, Long (1981, 1983, 1996, cited in Long & Robinson, 1998) explained that during FonF instruction, language learning occurs as a product of interaction in which both meaning and form are attended to. This procedure leads to an intake due to noticing differences between the received input and produced output (Schmidt, 1990, 2001). To further demystify FonF, the researchers add that FonF instruction ushering a learner-centred approach and analytic syllabus draws learners’ attention to the language during communicative tasks to nurture a more fluent and accurate language (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Long & Robinson, 1998; Long, 2000).

Schematizing the different ways a FonF can take place, Ellis (2016) gives an all-inclusive classification of FonF procedures as follows:

a) The *outside-task FonF* can be implemented either as pre-task activities during which learners are given opportunities to pre-plan a task or post-task activities as in task repetition.

Interactive FonF is practiced through offering corrective feedback (CF) to the learners’ noticed gaps in learning during interaction, or predicting the learners’ potential sources of errors a priori and offering fine-tuned instruction to avoid their occurrence, two procedures becoming technically known as reactive FonF and preemptive FonF, respectively. B) The within-task FonF, on the other hand, is claimed to be of either interactive or non-interactive nature. In *non-interactive FonF*, the teacher selects one single linguistic item beforehand and treats it through focused tasks where learners pay their focal attention to the target form.

The present study has set as its goal to investigate whether preemptive and reactive FonF are proved conducive to the development of grammatical accuracy during L2 writing and, if yes, to what extent.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Form-Focused Instruction

*Form-focused instruction* refers to “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (Ellis, 2001, p. 1-2). Rooted in task-based language teaching, FonF was proposed as one of the approaches to language instruction. FonF is a learner-centered approach where it is the learner and his/her system of interlanguage development that determines which form to focus on and when (Long, 2000). It is also based on an analytic syllabus that utilizes pedagogical tasks in

which the form is attended to temporarily and briefly while the learners are performing a communicative task, either in production or comprehension (Long & Robinson, 1998). Lightbown and Spada (1990) asserted that it can increase the linguistic knowledge which, in itself, results in a more fluent performance and native-like grammar. They, consequently, concluded that integrating form-focused instruction with meaning-focused instruction can promote overall communicative abilities and skills. A variety of classifications (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2002; Williams, 2005; Ellis, 2016) have been proposed which account for the different techniques of FonF as discussed below.

### **Reactive FonF**

*Reactive FonF*, as a type of within-task FonF (Ellis, 2016), takes the form of CF to remedy learners' linguistic errors after they occur (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). CF can be exercised by either the teacher or another learner (Ellis, 2001; Ellis et al., 2002; Loewen, 2011; Ellis, 2016), implicit or explicit, input-providing or output prompting, and finally, either online or offline, in the form of such different techniques as recast, explicit correction, repetition, clarification requests, metalinguistic clues, elicitation, and paralinguistic signals (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). As a facilitative tool, CF paves the way for noticing, hypothesis-testing, and providing learners with opportunities which promote interaction and language use (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013; Pawlak, 2014).

The effects of CF have been examined by a

large number of researchers. For example, Lyster and Ranta (1997) reported that explicit CF such as elicitation and metalinguistic feedback successfully led to uptake since they assisted learners to draw on their declarative knowledge and test the hypotheses they formulated while processing language whereas recast did not because of its ambiguity. However, Mackey and Philp, (1998) asserted that recast was more effective for learners at higher developmental levels as they were able to restructure their interlanguage (IL), i.e. language produced during the learning process.

Lyster (2004) found that prompt improved both oral and written performance by enabling the learners to put forth their declarative and metalinguistic knowledge, exercise noticing and monitoring, and as a result, showcase an enhanced performance. Moreover, Ammar and Spada (2006) found that although both recast and prompt were effective in improving both high- and low- proficient learners' performance, prompt was more beneficial to the low- proficient ones. Ellis et al.(2006) also found that metalinguistic feedback was more durable and successful in fostering linguistic awareness and noticing.

The results of a study by Rahimi and Dastjerdi (2012) examining the effects of immediate vs. delayed CF indicated that the learners who received delayed CF could not produce complex structures. They also showed more fluent and accurate oral performance as they felt less anxious and more relaxed. Having studied the effects of different types of CF on different aspects of learning in different contexts, Sato and Lyster(2012), Rassaei

(2013), Rassaei and Moinzadeh (2014), and Gooch, Saito, and Lyster (2016) found that CF was an efficient and a desirable technique for improving linguistic performance.

### **Preemptive FonF**

Preemptive FonF, as another kind of within-task FonF (Ellis, 2016), is defined as “the attempts by the students or the teacher, to make a particular form the topic of the conversation even though no error (or perceived error) in the use of that form has occurred” (Ellis et al., 2002, p. 427). Preemptive FonF could be applied in two ways: learner-initiated, as learners find a gap or a hole in their knowledge, or teacher-initiated, as the teacher, following some predictions, feels the need to draw learners’ attention to language (Ellis et al., 2002; Williams, 2005). Serving as a tool to support learners both linguistically and cognitively (Van Avermaet, Colpin, Van Gorp, Bogaert, & Van den Branden, 2006), preemptive FonF lends itself to showing both correct and incorrect form of language (Pawlak, 2014) through conveying explicit information (Nassaji, 2010). Moreover, it equips the learners with a safe learning environment which is less challenging and discouraging so as to undergo enhanced learning (Heift, 2013).

The potential role of preemptive FonF as a fledgling line of research has been often neglected mainly due to the researchers’ attention to the notion of reactive FonF and subsequently the preponderance of works conducted in this area (e.g. Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mackey & Philp, 1998; Lyster, 2004;

Ammar & Spada, 2006; Sato and Lyster, 2012; Rassaei, 2013; Rassaei & Moinzadeh, 2014), a state which left the assumption that reactive FonF is the only viable solution to the treatment of learners’ errors. However, more recent studies suggest that preemptive FonF is able to improve the learners’ performance. For example, Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001) found more preemptive and reactive FonF in the pre-intermediate and intermediate classes, respectively. Preemptive FonF was also more effective due to its explicitness which leads to more noticing, monitoring, learning, and uptake.

A study by Nassaji (2010) indicated that preemptive FonF occurred more frequently than reactive FonF at all levels of proficiency and it was the technique which beginner learners needed and liked to initiate due to the limited linguistic knowledge they possessed. However, those with advanced proficiency level benefitted more from reactive FonF.

Panahzade and Gholami (2014), comparing the effects of planned preemptive and reactive FonF on the lexical resource in oral performance, found that focusing on form either as a priori or posteriori successfully improved and bettered the oral lexical performance. Gholami and Aliyari (2015) also compared the effects of written CF with and without planned preemptive FonF and reported that although both were effective in improving the essay writing, those who received planned preemptive FonF, besides written CF, wrote better essays than those who did not.

In a quite recent study, Shabani and Hosseinzadeh (2017) examined the effects of

planned preemptive and reactive FonF on acquiring third person singular -s. The results revealed that although both techniques were equally beneficial, planned preemptive FonF brought about more stable effects.

Most of the studies reported are in favor of preemptive FonF. Nonetheless, Williams (2005) claims that, contrary to learner-initiated preemptive FonF which is called forth by highly-motivated learners (Ellis et al., 2002), teacher-initiated preemptive FonF is not a FonF technique since it does not follow the most imperative aspect of FonF, that is, problematization. Moreover, according to Ellis et al., (2002), teacher-initiated preemptive FonF could provoke the thought that the teacher cares more for form in lieu of meaning. They, however, argued that preemptive FonF can be effective in certain situations, such as when planning for a task.

### **Planning and FonF**

Planning is "... a problem-solving activity" (Ellis, 2005, p. 5) during which learners can choose the linguistic items they need for performing tasks as a result of syntactic processing and attending to language (Swain, 1985, 1995, cited in Ellis, 2005). Planning lowers tension and stress, increases attention and awareness (Ortega, 2005), and eliminates the cognitive loads of tasks (Ortega, 1999). It also helps the learners evaluate the tasks and task demands, establish form-function relationships and, finally, develop accurate, fluent, and complex language (Skehan, 1998, cited in Ortega, 1999).

A study by Ellis (1987) indicated that learners produced more accurate language when provided with planning time as they used the language available to them through observing the planning time. However, Crookes (1989) found that planning time was helpful regarding vocabulary and linguistic complexity while it did not affect morphology, grammar, and accuracy.

The study by Skehan and Foster (1997) also revealed that planning time led to more fluent language. However, the results were different regarding accuracy and complexity in different tasks. For example, planning time brought more accuracy in personal and narrative tasks, but more fluency and complexity in decision tasks. They concluded that, while planning, learners have time to separately focus on form and content without which they would have difficulties attending to both at the same time, and thus, produce a more accurate, fluent, and complex language. Ortega (1999) also found that planning time enhanced learners' linguistic complexity and fluency whereas accuracy improved in some respects.

Yuan and Ellis (2003), comparing pre-task and online planning, found that both were effective as the learners produced more fluent oral language under pre-task planning condition, while those in online planning condition produced more accurate language. Similar results were found by Ellis and Yuan (2004) in written production where online planning led to more accurate language. Pre-task planning, on the other hand, caused more fluency and complexity due to focusing on both content and organization.

Some more empirical studies, such as Rahimpour and Nariman-Jahan (2011), Piri, Barati, and Ketabi (2012), Seyyedi, Ismail, Orang, and Sharafi Nejad (2013), and Asgarikia (2014), examined the effects of planning during story-telling tasks and found the benefits on different aspects of production. In a recent study, however, Kargozari, Soleimani, Jafarigohar, and Hemmati (2016) found that pre-task and on-line planning did not improve narrative writing. The results, however, revealed that on-line planning fostered accuracy and that planning was more conducive to accuracy, fluency, and complexity among those with higher proficiency level.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

Surfing the existing literature reveals that the effects of planning, as a type of outside-task FonF, combined with preemptive FonF, as a type of within-task and interactive FonF, on grammatical accuracy is not clear-cut. Against this background, the present paper, following the model proposed by Ellis (2016), has set out two aims. First, it aimed to examine whether preemptive FonF as a within-task FonF could be helpful in increasing the overall grammatical accuracy when combined with planning as an outside-task FonF. Second, it has set to compare the effectiveness of two techniques of interactive FonF i.e. planned preemptive and reactive FonF, on beginner learners' overall grammatical accuracy in writing. To meet these purposes, the following questions were raised:

**RQ1:** *Do the beginners produce more*

*grammatically accurate language after receiving planned preemptive FonF?*

**RQ2:** *Do the beginners produce more grammatically accurate language after receiving reactive FonF?*

**RQ3:** *Is there any significant difference between planned preemptive and reactive FonF in bringing about more grammatically accurate language in the written scripts in the case of beginners?*

## METHODS

The present study followed a quasi-experimental design comprising quantitative analyses. The quantitative phase-aligned itself with a pretest-posttest comparison-group design with two groups, one experimental and one comparison, which, according to Mackey and Gass (2015), allows for comparing different methods and making inferences about the better and more commensurate intervention.

## Participants

A total of 100 learners, including both male and female, from an institute, volunteered to participate in the study and 40 were selected as the participants based on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) results, i.e. the scores within one standard deviation above and below the means. The selected learners were 14 to 16-year-old Iranians and beginner in terms of language proficiency based on the number of correct answers on the proficiency test. They spoke the same L1 (Farsi) and had already studied English for at least two years. The learners



were, then, randomly assigned into two groups: planned preemptive group (as the experimental group,  $n=20$ ) and reactive group (as the comparison group,  $n=20$ ). The former included 12 males and 8 females, and the latter included 11 males and 9 females.

### **Instrumentation**

The participants were chosen based on the results of OPT, version 2.00, which contains 60 items on vocabulary and grammar. Having considered the test instructions, a 30-minute time period was allotted to answer the questions.

A total of 10 story-telling tasks adapted from Hill (1980), Thompson (2010), and Simmons (2010) were presented during 10 treatment sessions and performed orally by the learners. Attempts were made to choose those tasks which could fit the learners' proficiency level and linguistic knowledge. To attenuate the possible practice effect which could arise out of repeating similar tasks, the researchers presented them in a 2-3day time interval. The tasks were presented as handouts which included a series of pictures for which a story could be narrated.

### **Testing instruments**

To account for the practice effect, three different story-telling tasks adapted from Thompson (2010) and Saslow and Ascher, (2011) were utilized as the pretest, immediate, and delayed posttests. The reliability of the tests was examined through Cronbach's  $\alpha$  after being

pilot-tested. The value equaled .84 and, thus, suggested a desirable value. Any dialogues or labels were omitted from the pictures so that the learners could use their own grammatical knowledge when producing stories. The learners were given 10-15 minutes, according to the pilot test done before the main study, and were instructed to write about the pictures as the tasks were chosen following the learners' level of proficiency, no such resources as dictionaries were required. Moreover, as the purpose of the study was to examine the effects of the types of treatments on the learners' production, no planning time, pre-emption, and CF were offered in testing sessions.

### **Pilot study**

Both instructional and test tasks were pilot-tested with a group of learners who were akin to the main participants before the main study began. The pilot test suggested that 8-10 minutes were required for performing the instructional tasks so that both learners, in each dyad, could tell the story once. Moreover, the pre-emption and CF to the learners' errors were implemented based on the observations during pilot-testing. In other words, for pre-emption, the grammatical points were selected on the basis of the language incidentally occurred and used by the learners during pilot-testing. The CF was also offered based on the same grammatical points. As written production was the targeted construct, all the three tests were completed in the written form. However, to account for the distinctions between the oral and written constructs regarding the burden on

working memory and time for revising (Ellis & Yuan, 2005; Kellogg, 1996; Levelt, 1989), 10-15 minutes were estimated, after pilot-testing, for performing the tests in haste which gave the learners enough time to finish writing while minimizing the possibility, if any, for rereading and revising stories.

### **Procedure**

The study was implemented in an EFL context. The participants of the study were randomly classified into two conditions including planned preemptive and reactive FonF. First, the pretest was administered to see if the groups were similar regarding grammatical accuracy in written production at the inception and, then, the treatment sessions commenced and lasted for five weeks. The sessions were held twice a week each lasting for about 25-35 minutes. The participants, during each session, worked on one story-telling task which was the same for both groups. Thus, 10 tasks were covered during 10 sessions. The tasks were orally completed with the aim of increasing the interaction between the learners, on which FonF and linguistic development are based, and integrating FonF practice into the classroom conversation and context (Long & Robinson, 1998). The handouts of both groups contained a set of pictures about which the learners could tell stories as well as lexical prompts which were among those that might have been forgotten by the learners. Therefore, to fully take advantage of the attentional resources for grammar, they did not use dictionaries; instead, additional help was provided by the teacher

since lexicon was not the focus of the study. However, the handouts of the groups were different in that the planned preemptive group was also provided with a box which included the grammar they needed accompanied by one example for each. The grammatical features were chosen according to the ones occurred and used during the pilot test prior to the main study.

In the planned preemptive group, grammar was attended to through planning and preemption. The learners were reminded of the linguistic information included in the handouts at the outset of each session and prior to distributing them. They were also asked to avoid providing CF to their partners. The first 10 minutes were allotted to individual pre-task planning, following Crookes (1989), Yuan and Ellis (2003), and Ellis and Yuan (2004), during which the preemption occurred. That is, the teacher, taking advantage of the small sample size, talked to each learner about the items included in the grammar box in order to assure that the items would be used by them during the main task performance. Then, 8-10 minutes were allotted to work in dyads, practice, and tell the stories to the partners. The last 10-15 minutes were allotted to the learners' presenting the stories to the whole class during which no CF, in any forms, was offered.

In the reactive group, grammar was attended to through CF. No time was considered for planning. Instead, they worked in dyads and practiced telling the stories to their partners during the first 8-10 minutes of the treatment sessions during which the teacher, taking advantage of the small sample size, stood over



the learners and briefly corrected them for their erroneous utterances. It was, then, followed by the learners' presenting their stories to the teacher and their other classmates while CF was carefully offered as soon as an erroneous utterance was produced. The teacher also asked the learners to carefully listen to their friends so that they could equally benefit from the comments. Because of the explicitness of preemptive FonF (Nassaji, 2010), the offered CF was of explicit type including repetition, elicitation (to make the learners self-correct), and metalinguistic feedback offered briefly when needed.

In line with the major goal of the study, the learners' written stories on the pretest, immediate, and delayed posttests were scored according to the accuracy measure developed by Ellis and Yuan (2004) which evaluated the quality of written production based on the number of error-free clauses; i.e. the percentage of clauses without syntactic and morphological errors was calculated. The errors regarding word order, following Skehan and Foster (1997), were also calculated. The scores were fed into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.00, to be analyzed. Inter-

rater reliability was calculated on 25% of the collected data rated by two more teachers who had the experience of teaching English for more than five years. The results of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  were .96, .95, and .98 for the pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest, respectively. Because of the small sample size, Shapiro-Wilk test was used to see if the data had normal distribution. Independent-samples t-test and a mixed between-within repeated measure (RM) ANOVA were conducted to answer the research questions. CI was set at 95%.

## RESULTS

The obtained results of the Shapiro-Wilk goodness-of-fit test were .124, .097, and .871 for the planned preemptive and .092, .264, and .546 for the reactive group on the pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest, respectively, denoting that the data were distributed normally.

The learners' pretest scores were compared to find if the two groups were similar in terms of grammatical accuracy prior to the intervention.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics for the pretest scores*

Groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pretest	Planned preemptive FonF	20	.1235	.10028	.02242
	Reactive FonF	20	.1170	.07888	.01764

Looking at the descriptive statistics, one cannot see a large difference between the groups (see Table 1). Therefore, it seems that

both groups were similar regarding accuracy in grammar on the pretest.

**Table 2**  
*Independent-samples t-test results for the pretest scores*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.094	.302	.228	38	.821	.00650	.02853	-.05125	.06425
Equal variances not assumed			.228	36.003	.821	.00650	.02853	-.05136	.06436

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to find the significance of the difference, if any. An examination of the Levene's test, in Table 2, showed a non-significant p-value ( $p = .302$ ) suggesting that the assumption of equal variances is not violated. An examination of the independent-samples t-test showed a non-significant p-value between the planned preemptive and the reactive group on the pretest ( $p = .821$ ,  $df = 38$ ,  $t = .228$ ) with

negligible difference (mean difference: .006,  $CI = -.05$  to  $.06$ ) indicating that both groups performed similarly prior to the treatment sessions.

The research questions asked whether the beginners produce more grammatically accurate language following receiving planned preemptive and reactive FonF and compared the groups.

**Table 3***Descriptive statistics for the scores of the groups*

Groups		N	Mean		Std. Deviation
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
planned Preemptive FonF	Pretest	20	.1235	.02242	.10028
	Immediate Posttest	20	.5210	.03245	.14513
	Delayed Posttest	20	.5860	.03328	.14883
Reactive FonF	Pretest	20	.1170	.01764	.07888
	Immediate Posttest	20	.3795	.04589	.20521
	Delayed Posttest	20	.4605	.04816	.21539

Looking at Table 3, one can see that both groups' mean scores improved from the pretest to the immediate and to the delayed posttest. It, therefore, seems that both techniques increased

the grammatical accuracy. The learners' scores were, then, compared through conducting a mixed between-within RM ANOVA.

**Table 4***RM ANOVA results for the scores of the groups*

Source		Type II		Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
		Sum of Squares	df				
Time	Greenhouse-Geisser	3.689	1.795	2.055	95.025	.000	.714
Time * Groups	Greenhouse-Geisser	.109	1.795	.061	2.803	.073	.069
Error (Time)	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.475	68.196	.022			

As seen in Table 4 and considering the recommended correction to the degree of freedom (Larson-Hall, 2010), the results showed a large statistical main effect for time ( $F_{1.79, 68.19} = 95.02, p = .000, \eta^2 = .714$ ) denoting that both groups' performance

changed over time. The interaction effect, however, was medium and not statistical ( $F_{1.79, 68.19} = 2.80, p = .073, \eta^2 = .069$ ) denoting that the groups' performance changed differently over time. Pairwise comparisons using the Bonferroni correction were conducted for each group to closely examine the change.

**Table 5***Pairwise comparisons for the scores of the planned preemptive group*

(I) Time	(J) Time	Mean Difference			95% Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>b</sup>	
		(I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-.397*	.024	.000	-.461	-.334
	3	-.463*	.042	.000	-.572	-.353
2	1	.397*	.024	.000	.334	.461
	3	-.065	.048	.587	-.192	.062

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Pairwise comparisons for the planned preemptive group revealed a statistically significant difference from the pretest to the immediate ( $p = .000$ , CI = -.46 to -.33) and delayed posttests ( $p = .000$ , CI = -.57 to -.35).

However, it was not statistical from the immediate to delayed posttest ( $p = .587$ , CI = -.19 to .06). Therefore, planned preemptive FonF elicited higher grammatical accuracy (see Table 5).

**Table 6***Pairwise comparisons for the scores of the reactive group*

(I) Time	(J) Time	Mean Difference (I-J)			95% Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>b</sup>	
		(I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-.263*	.047	.000	-.385	-.140
	3	-.344*	.046	.000	-.464	-.223
2	1	.263*	.047	.000	.140	.385
	3	-.081	.052	.404	-.217	.055

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Pairwise comparisons for the reactive group revealed a statistically significant difference from the pretest to the immediate ( $p = .000$ , CI = -.38 to -.14) and delayed posttests ( $p = .000$ , CI =

-.46 to -.22). However, the performance from the immediate to delayed posttest was not statistical ( $p = .404$ , CI = -.21 to -.05). Therefore, reactive FonF elicited higher grammatical

accuracy as well (see Table 6). Table 7, however, shows a statistically significant and

large difference between the groups ( $F_{24, 1.33} = 7.08, p = .011, \eta^2 = .157$ ).

**Table 7**

*Results of between-subject effects for the groups*

Source	Type II Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	15.951	1	15.951	453.375	.000	.923
Groups	.249	1	.249	7.087	.011	.157
Error	1.337	38	.035			

**Table 8**

*Pairwise comparisons for the groups' scores on the immediate and delayed posttests*

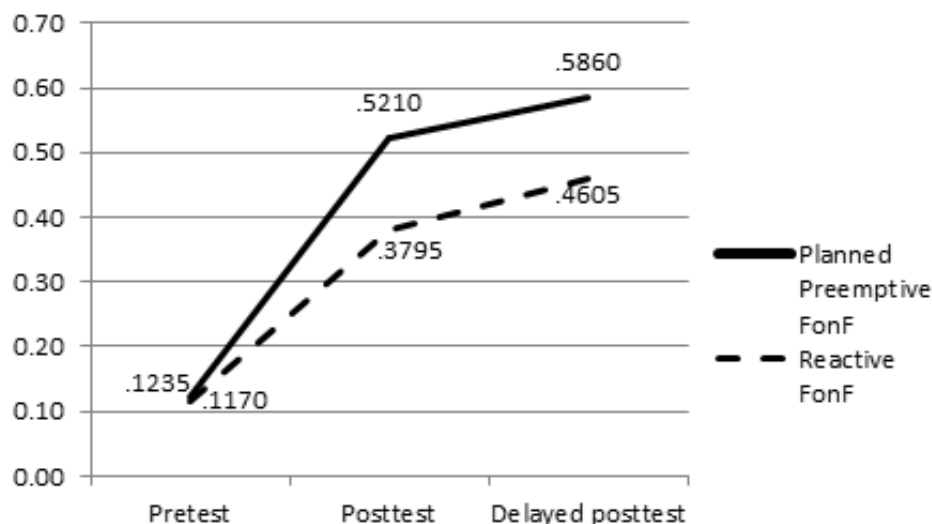
	(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. <sup>b</sup>	95% Confidence Interval for Difference <sup>b</sup>	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Immediate Posttest	planned	Reactive FonF	.142*	.056	.016	.028	.255
Delayed Posttest	planned	Reactive FonF	.126*	.059	.039	.007	.244
	Preemptive FonF						

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Pairwise comparisons revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups' immediate ( $p = .016, CI = .028$  to  $.255$ ) and delayed posttests ( $p = .039, CI = .007$  to  $.244$ ) (see Table 8). The difference between the

groups is clear in Figure 1, as well, confirming the outperformance of the planned preemptive group despite the fact that both FonF techniques resulted in gains in grammatical accuracy.



*Figure 1. Mean development of the groups*

## DISCUSSIONS

The present study was an attempt to examine the effectiveness of two FonF techniques- planned preemptive and reactive FonF- in increasing the beginner Iranian EFL learners' grammatical accuracy. The overall results suggested that both techniques were successful in enhancing grammatical accuracy. However, a significant statistical difference was seen in the mean scores of both the immediate and delayed posttest between the two groups, indicating that the learners in the planned preemptive group outperformed those in the reactive one.

The results of the research question examining the effects of planned preemptive FonF on improving the beginners' grammatical accuracy in written output showed an increase, to a large extent, from the pretest to the immediate posttest. In addition, the results revealed an enhanced performance on the delayed posttest indicating that planned

preemptive instruction successfully drew the learners' attention to the grammar, and thus, improved their grammatical accuracy. Moreover, it could be inferred that noticing and attention seemingly improved thanks to the planning time provided prior to the task performance (Swain, 1985, 1986, cited in Ellis, 2005) which helped the learners use and select the language they needed and had at their disposal (Ellis, 1987).

Therefore, in line with Ellis (2005), planning time helped the learners analyze and produce target-like language. This could be consistent with Ortega's finding (2005) that FonF under planning condition let the learners showcase an enhanced performance through lowering their stress and tension. It also seemed that, confirming Skehan and Foster's (1997) findings, planning time enabled the beginner EFL learners to overcome the difficulty of simultaneously attending to both form and content. In other words, the learners had enough time to divide attention between form and



content, and as a result, produce more accurate language in the story-telling tasks. Pre-task planning was also found helpful for a more stress-free and user-friendly task performance. This finding is commensurate with that of Ellis and Yuan (2004). However, the results run counter to Ellis and Yuan (2004) since pre-task planning, according to the present study results, led to more accuracy. It also seems that the preemption, echoing Ellis et al.'s (2001) views, did encourage noticing, the monitoring process during task performance, and finally, the realization of learning due to its clarity and explicitness which, according to Nassaji (2010), is the information most of the beginner learners are in need of. The presented grammar also reduced the task demands helping the learners perform with less pressure. It also enabled the learners to benefit from their visual memory to remember the structures and vocabularies, which could trigger linguistic predicament.

The results of the research question dealing with the effects of reactive FonF on the beginner Iranian EFL learners' grammatical accuracy suggested that the reactive FonF, like planned preemptive FonF, enhanced the learners' grammatical accuracy. The results also showed that the learners performed better on the delayed posttest. It seems that CF served as a means to pave the way for the learners to rely more on their declarative knowledge and hypothesis-testing (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) and notice the linguistic forms to improve their learning (Lyster, 2004). The results are consistent with Ammar and Spada (2006), suggesting that explicit CF has been beneficial

to the learners with low levels of proficiency due to their transparent goal. The results also reflected Ellis et al.'s (2006) claims that metalinguistic feedback leaves both short- and long-term effects on the learners' raised awareness.

The results of the research question comparing the effects of planned preemptive and reactive FonF on increasing the beginner Iranian EFL learners' grammatical accuracy revealed a significant difference between the two groups. In other words, the learners who received planned preemptive FonF outperformed those receiving reactive FonF with a difference tending to be significant. Moreover, the planned preemptive group learners outperformed those in the reactive group on the delayed post-test. It can, thus, be inferred that, thanks to the planning time (Ellis, 1987; Skehan & Foster, 1997) and the preemption (Ellis et al., 2001), planned preemptive FonF was more powerful in raising awareness, noticing and monitoring the performance. However, the results of the present study run counter to Marzban and Mokhberi (2012) who found that reactive FonF was more effective to the EFL learners than the preemptive FonF. Hence, although both treatment conditions improved grammatical accuracy, planned preemptive FonF boosted noticing more effectively, as a *bona fide* criterion for learning (Schmidt, 1990), suggesting that within-task FonF could even be combined with outside-task FonF (Ellis, 2016) to achieve a better performance. However, as it can be seen, only grammatical accuracy, as one of the measures of the learners' production, was

examined. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other aspects of productive performance such as fluency or complexity. Therefore, the method could be replicated to examine the aforementioned areas as well. Moreover, the results were only limited to the low-proficient learners and a context where English is treated as a foreign language. Thus, similar studies are suggested to be conducted to examine the higher proficiency levels and the contexts treating English as a second language.

## CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine the effects of planned preemptive and reactive FonF on Iranian beginner EFL learners' grammatical accuracy in written performance. The overall results were in favor of planned preemptive FonF although reactive FonF, as seen, was beneficial as well. In other words, both types of instruction did increase the learners' grammatical accuracy. Following both types of instruction, the learners also did not lose their abilities in two weeks after the last treatment session. Nonetheless, the planned preemptive group learners outperformed those in the reactive group, indicating that planned preemptive FonF was more effective and more durable. Therefore, it can be concluded that, even though responding to the learners' errors can promote their linguistic performance, presenting the language that is needed beforehand may have similar or, even, better results in noticing processes (Schmidt, 1990). Furthermore, as the results confirmed, the preemptive FonF can be increasingly beneficial

when combined with planning time and it could be suggested that an outside-task FonF could empower the effects of a within-task FonF. The role of output (Swain, 1985, 1995, cited in Ellis, 2005) cannot be downplayed as well since it can enable learners to find the possible gaps in their IL system, monitor their production, and finally, redress them through the teacher or the other learners' assistance. The results, therefore, have implications for the teachers who are responsible for providing any secure conditions and appropriate opportunities to achieve safer and more desirable learning outcomes. The critical role of interaction in bringing about enhanced performance is another implication of the present study since the findings suggested that, besides the interaction between and among learners, the teachers and their assistance can be conducive to directing learners' attention towards the target language. Furthermore, in addition to CF, the teachers could capitalize on the notion of pre-emption as a potent strategy to bring positive changes in the learners' grammatical performance. The results can also be used to develop classroom materials and course books where the pre-emption and providing linguistic clues before presenting tasks could be considered an instrumental tool and technique to ease the task performance.

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