

**THE EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE AND FOCUS ON FORM  
INSTRUCTION TOWARD EFL LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT  
OF GRAMMAR IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL AT  
SMKN 3 KOTA SERANG**

**Cucum Rohmawati**

University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa  
she.ceria44@yahoo.com

**Syafrizal**

University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa  
syafrizal@untirta.ac.id

**Yudi Juniardi**

University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa  
yjuniardi@yahoo.com

**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this research is to find out the effect of cognitive and focus on form instruction toward vocational high school EFL learners' achievement of grammar in vocational school at SMKN 3 Kota Serang. The researcher used quantitative research implementing the true experimental design as research method. There were two groups used in this research, the mainly; the experimental and control group. Sample of this research is students of SMKN 3 Kota Serang, 39 students selected for experimental group, and 38 students selected for control group. The research found that there is significant influence of cognitive and focus on form instruction toward vocational high school EFL learners' achievement of grammar, it was indicated by the value of t-test higher than the value of t-table ( $0.950 > 0.000$ ) at the level of significant of  $\alpha 0.05$  and the degree of freedom of 75. It means that the hypothesis was accepted. From those findings, it can be concluded that the use of cognitive and focus on form instruction is effective to influence learners' achievement of grammar in vocational school at SMKN 3 Kota Serang. All these suggest that the use of cognitive and focus on form instruction in the class of English is highly encouraged.

**Keywords:** Teaching Grammar, EFL, Cognitive, Focus on Form Instruction.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Academic research on instructed second language acquisition (SLA) has investigated whether instruction is effective for L2 learning and how to optimize L2 learning environments in classrooms (Loewen, 2015, p. 7). For learners to communicate spontaneously in L2 They must acquire the target grammar; thus, grammar acquisition has been the main focus of SLA research. One of the approaches to L2 grammar instruction is Focused Form, in which learners notice linguistic features while focusing primarily on meaningful communication (Doughty & Williams, 1998, pp. 1-11; Long, 1991, pp. 39-52). The cognitive mechanisms involved in the development of L2 knowledge during Focused Form instruction has yet to be examined in detail.

In another side, basic contradiction of the cognitive model of grammatical competence of students is the seeming incompatibility of the views of “cognitive” (Langacker, 1986, pp. 1-40) and “mental” (Chomsky, 1965, p. 240). In fact, the contradiction between mentalism and cognitivism in understanding the nature of grammatical competence explains a single process of linguistic functioning – “from the brain” (mentalism) and “to the brain” (cognitivism).

Furthermore, cognitive aspect itself plays an important role in grammar acquisition and language development. Based on the principle of cognitive theory (Atkinson & (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1986, pp. 89-195), Cognitive psychology is concerned with how information is represented and transformed in the brain. It is a study of perception, and of how knowledge is acquired, how it is stored, and how it is purposively used. Cognitive learning theory is the application of this psychology to learning. It means that the intelligence of the students’ grammar acquisition and language development and their desire to express what they mean will be shared with the language input of the teachers, and will encourage them to acquire the language. From the language they have acquired, will experience the development in line with their cognitive development.

The correlation of cognitive and language is in the assumption that language influences its view of the world, and affects the minds of the individual who uses the language. The understanding of a person against the language or word will affect his view of reality. Like Japanese people who have a high cognitive (mind) because they have many vocabularies in expressing reality, they have a detailed understanding of reality. The cognitive mechanisms involved in the development of L2 knowledge during Focused Form instruction has yet to be examined in detail. Then, cognitive also affects someone's language; in this case the students of vocational high school where cognitive will be evaluated in 3 things. The first cognitive (C1) consists of religion (religious education), civics, Indonesian, math, Indonesian history, and English. Then, in second cognitive (C2) there are entrepreneurship and physical education, and in thirds cognitive (C3) there are all productive subject, that is the lessons about vocational skills for vocational high school students.

In fact, there has always been a dispute about whether and how to teach grammar in a second/foreign language (Doughty & Williams, 1998, pp. 1-11). Yet, as Reiser and Dick (1996, p. 316, cited in Syafrizal & Rohmawati, 2017, pp. 66-83) argue that teachers can use different strategies of teaching to achieve teaching-learning goals and objectives. It means that the teacher's role to provide effective plans/strategies in accomplishing students' educational needs, whose general purpose is to communicate using the language being learnt. Then, with the advent of focused form instruction, as a change of communicative language teaching, a shift occurred from incidental and implicit grammar teaching instruction to formal and meaningful grammar teaching syllabus.

Thus, the students of SMKN 3 Kota Serang are mostly passive in learning English. Yet, the curriculum applied in the school is K13 (Curriculum 2013) where the students need to be active in learning, this is based on Permendikbud No 63 about the basic framework of the curriculum which is an emphasis on the modern pedagogic dimension of learning, which uses a scientific approach in learning as it

includes observing, asking, gathering information or trying, associating or processing information, and communicating for all subjects to be performed by education staff or teacher as a learning media

It can be assumed that in teaching learning activity, there should be teaching principles such as authentic communication and student-centeredness, and, on the other hand, maintains the value of the occasional and overt study of problematic L2 grammatical forms, which is more reminiscent of non-communicative teaching. Focus on form instruction as a type of instruction that, on the one hand, holds up the importance of communicative language teaching principles. The learners are experiencing difficulties in the comprehension and/or production of certain L2 grammatical forms, teachers and their peers are obligated to assist them notice their erroneous use and/or comprehension of these forms and supply them with the proper explanations and models of them. Moreover, teachers can help their students and learners can help their peers notice the forms that they currently lack, yet should know in order to further their overall L2 grammatical development.

Furthermore, it's assumed that it can help students to learn about how to use language in a way that emulates realistic communicative scenarios. More to the point, teacher-student/student-student classroom interaction, via both oral and written modes, should consume the majority of class time. Likewise, evaluation should center on students' abilities to actively engage in authentic communication, using the forms they have learned during interaction.

Therefore, the present study will show the effect of cognitive and focused form instruction methods of teaching grammar and used conditional sentences as the target structures because of the syntactic and semantic complexities in conditional constructions. And the present study will analyze the effects of focus on form instruction in light of a cognitive mechanism called cognitive comparison. However, few studies have dealt directly with the cognitive comparison and how to activate it by instruction. Therefore, Related to this case, the researcher is interested in

observing about the effect of cognitive and focus on form instruction toward EFL learners' acquisition of grammar in vocational high school at SMKN 3 Kota Serang.

### **REASON FOR CHOOSING THE TOPIC**

The difficulty of conditionals in English can be related to the structures themselves. Mindt (1996, p. 232) also argued that conditionals complexity and particular tense uses in comparison with other sentential patterns turn them into fairly problematic constructions, both in first and second language acquisition. In addition, conditionals consist of main clauses and subordinate clauses which are difficult for students to comprehend because of their syntactic complexity (Lord, 2002, pp. 224-233).

### **STATEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM**

The writer will observe some problems related to the theme of the research. They are:

1. Does focus-on-form instruction with written modeling without incorporate explicit grammar explanation have a great effect on vocational high school EFL learners' development in using the English conditional at SMKN 3 Kota Serang?
2. Does focus-on-form instruction with written modeling without incorporates explicit grammar explanation have a greater effect on vocational high school EFL learners' development in using the English conditional than written modeling with incorporate explicit grammar explanation at SMKN 3 Kota Serang?
3. If focus-on-form instruction has an effect, does it hold over the post-test period at SMKN 3 Kota Serang?
4. What is the effect of cognitive and focused form instruction toward EFL learners' achievement of grammar in vocational school at SMKN 3 Kota Serang?

5. How effective are cognitive and focused form instruction toward EFL learners' achievement of grammar in vocational school at SMKN 3 Kota Serang.

### **Objectives of Study**

The objectives of Study are as follows:

1. To find out the effect of focus-on-form instruction with written modeling without incorporate explicit grammar explanation on vocational high school EFL learners' development in using the English conditional at SMKN 3 Kota Serang.
2. To find out the greater effect of focus-on-form instruction with written modeling without incorporates explicit grammar explanation on vocational high school EFL learners' development in using the English conditional than written modeling with incorporate explicit grammar explanation at SMKN 3 Kota Serang.
3. To find out the effect of focus-on-form instruction over the post-test period at SMKN 3 Kota Serang.
4. To find out the effect of cognitive and focus on form instruction toward EFL learners' achievement of grammar in vocational school at SMKN 3 Kota Serang.
5. To find out the effectiveness of cognitive and focus on form instruction toward EFL learners' achievement of grammar in vocational school at SMKN 3 Kota Serang.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Vocabulary can be defined as " words we must know to communicate effectively; words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)" (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009, p. 385). In another side, Burns (1972, p. 295) defines vocabulary as the stock of words which is used by a person, class or profession. Then, Hornby (1995, p. 1331) defines vocabulary as the total number of words in a language; vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings".

The importance of vocabulary is demonstrated daily in and out the school. In classroom, the achieving students possess the most sufficient vocabulary. The acquisition of vocabulary is essential for successful second language use and plays an important role in the formation of complete spoken and written texts. In English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) learning vocabulary items plays a vital role in all language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nation, 2001).

Then, Cognitive is the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. It encompasses processes such as knowledge, attention, memory and working memory, judgment and evaluation, reasoning and "computation", problem solving and decision making, comprehension and production of language. Human cognition is conscious and unconscious, concrete or abstract, as well as intuitive (like knowledge of a language) and conceptual (like a model of a language).

Moreover, Cognitive, meta- cognitive and self-regulated skills are necessary for acquiring language. Cognitive processes and strategies needed for successful mathematical problem solving are: comprehension strategy hypothesizing or setting a goal and making a plan to solve the problem, estimating or predicting the outcome computing or doing the arithmetic, and checking to make sure the plan was appropriate and the answer is correct (Montague, 2003).

Cognitive Linguistics is a rapidly growing and relatively new approach to the study of language and its relation to cognition. It encompasses a variety of theories such as Cognitive Grammar, Construction Grammar, Radical Construction Grammar, and usage-based theories of grammar, among others (Robinson and Ellis, eds, 2008)

In another side, focus on form is an instruction that draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, pp. 45-46). On the contrary, focus on form instruction involves teaching isolated linguistic forms in separate lessons base

on a structural syllabus. It includes both traditional approaches to teaching forms and more communicative approaches.

In focus on form instruction, the primary attention is on form. It does not only pay attention to the importance of the communicative language teaching, but it also maintains the value of occasional and overt study of L2 vocabulary and grammar forms (Poole, 2005). It is considered a more promising pedagogical choice than focus on forms and focus on meaning because of its communicatively need oriented attention to form and its saliency in the language acquisition process (Huang, 2008).

Then, in focus on form instruction, the primary attention is on form. It does not only pay attention to the importance of the communicative language teaching, but it also maintains the value of occasional and overt study of L2 vocabulary and grammar forms (Poole, 2005). It is considered a more promising pedagogical choice than focus on forms and focus on meaning because of its communicatively need oriented attention to form and its saliency in the language acquisition process (Huang, 2008).

Furthermore, Ellis added that focus on form instruction seems to have a better chance of success if it is directed at morphological features than syntactic structures. It does not only pay attention to the importance of the communicative language teaching, but it also maintains the value of occasional and overt study of L2 vocabulary and grammar forms. It is considered a more promising pedagogical choice than focus on forms and focus on meaning because of its communicatively need oriented attention to form and its saliency in the language acquisition process.

In planning focus on form, however, the teacher decides in advance what forms should be focused on, but the primary attention is on meaning rather than on form. In incidental focus on form, attention is divided among a wide range of forms that have not been preselected, but the primary of attention is on meaning (Ellis, 2001, pp. 1-46).



Rohmawati (2016, pp. 101-109) stated that A vocational school, sometimes called a trade school or vocational college, is a postsecondary educational institution designed to provide vocational education, or technical skills required to perform the tasks of a particular and specific job. Vocational schools are traditionally distinguished from four-year colleges by their focus on job-specific training to students who are typically bound for one of the skilled trades, rather than providing academic training for students pursuing careers in a professional discipline.

Then, one form of grammar learned by vocational high school EFL learners is conditional sentences. Conditional sentences are used to indicate the cause and effect or the temporal sequence of two events. The main structure of conditionals contains “an antecedent clause” and “consequent clause” or “protasis” and “apodosis” (Traugott et al 1986; Yule 1998; Zhang 2005; Polanska 2006).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used quantitative paradigm, seeking to explain phenomena by collecting numerical data that were analyzed by using mathematically based methods (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2002, p. 81). Quantitative research was explained through phenomena by collecting numerical data that was analyzed by using mathematically based methods in particular statistics. All these might suggest the research that quantitative research tended to involve numbers in order to measure the valid result by involving statistical analysis.

Meanwhile, this research used true experimental design that was regarded as the most accurate form of experimental research, in that it tried to prove or disprove a hypothesis mathematically, with statistical analysis. True experimental designs are characterized by the random selection of participants and the random assignment of the participants to groups in the study. This was in line with Creswell (2008, p. 235) who stated that true experiment was a form of experimental research in which individuals were randomly assigned to groups.

### **Source of Data**

The data are taken from syllabus, lesson plan, National Examination material, teaching learning and learning process in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade Students of SMKN 3 Kota Serang, Banten.

### **Subject of the Study**

The subject of the Study is the 11<sup>th</sup> grade Students of SMKN 3 Kota Serang, Banten. Total numbers of students are 77 students (39 students are from XI Accounting 1 as experimental group, 38 students are from XI Accounting 2 as control group).

### **Data Collection**

Since the research used quantitative research, the main instrument of this research was the researcher as teacher in the classroom and use formula to count the pretest and posttest. Then, to support the data about effectiveness of cognitive and focus on form instruction toward EFL learners' acquisition of grammar, the researcher used questionnaire as a tool to collect data from diverse large and widely scattered population groups. Observation also was used to have better understanding of what was going on in the implementation of focus on form instruction in the teaching programs and how the teacher as well as students participated in the activities. The data was held within April 8<sup>th</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup> 2018.

### **Technique of Data Analysis**

There are two ways to analyze the data, they are:

- 1) Descriptive technique: A descriptive technique is used to know the students' behavior during the teaching learning process.
- 2) Statistical technique: A statistical technique is used to know any influences to the students' writing application letter or no from the result of pretest and posttest.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

## Findings

After the implementing cognitive and focus on form instruction in teaching conditional sentences, the researcher got some results. This part displays the descriptive analysis of the result of the pretests for both the experimental and control groups. The results of students' scores for both the experimental and the control groups in the pretest are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Results of the Pretest of Experimental and Control Groups**

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Experimental	39	60.00	80.00	65.71
Control	38	60.00	75.00	67.96

Table 1 showed that among 40 students of the experimental group and 38 of the control, the lowest score of the experimental group was 60 and the control group was 60. The highest score of the pretest of the experimental class was 80 and the control group was 75.00. It revealed that there were still differences in terms of the highest and lowest scores between the experimental and control groups. Whereas, the results of students' scores for both the experimental and the control groups in the posttest are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the results of the Posttest of Experimental and Control Groups**

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Experimental	39	75.00	92.50	82.76
Control	38	70.00	87.50	79.80

Table 2 showed that there were differences between the experimental and control groups in understanding conditional sentences after the treatment. It showed that among 39 students of the experimental group and 38 of the control group, the lowest score of the experimental group was 75.00 and the control group was 70.00. The highest score of the posttest of the experimental group was 92.50 and the control group was 87.50. It revealed that there were differences in terms of the highest and lowest scores between the experimental and control groups. From those two scores, the experimental group seemed to be better than the control group.

Then, after a week interval, the students did the same posttest. It was used to know whether it hold over the post-test period or not. The results of students' scores for both the experimental and the control groups after an interval week posttest are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the results of the interval Posttest of Experimental and Control Groups**

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Experimental	39	75.00	92.50	83.21
Control	38	70.00	87.50	78.49

The lowest score of the experimental group was 75, the highest score was 92.50, and mean was 83.21 where it was improved from the first posttest.

Yet, in control group, the first posttest showed that the lowest score was 70, the highest score was 87.50, and mean was 79.80. After an interval week, the result of posttest showed that the score was still same, the lowest score was 70, the highest score was 87.50, but mean was decreased from 79.80 to be 78.49. The result showed that the students' of experimental group's achievement hold over the post-test period.

The next step is hypothesis testing for the pretest scores using t-test for independent samples. The result showed that the mean difference of t-test was at the value of T test value based on the table is -63.777 with sig. 0.000. Since sig. < 0.05, it

can be concluded that  $H_1$  received. It means that grammar achievement of Vocational High School EFL Learners at SMK Negeri 3 Kota Serang before and after getting treatment is statistically different. So, teaching grammar cognitive and focus on form instruction give effects on Vocational High School EFL Learners at SMK Negeri 3 Kota Serang.

### **Discussion**

The researcher has analyzed the data of cognitive and Focus on form instruction test toward vocational high school EFL learners' achievement of grammar at SMK Negeri 3 Kota Serang. The analysis was used to know the objective of the research and the result of the formulation of the problem chapter I that entitled the effect of cognitive and focus on form instruction test toward vocational high school EFL learners' achievement of grammar at SMK Negeri 3 Kota Serang in the academic year of 2017 / 2018.

This research was designed to reveal one of the problems in teaching grammar. It focused the problem on how to affect students' grammar achievement by giving such kind of alternative technique that can be used in the classroom activity.

The discussion of the research findings focuses on descriptive analysis of each variables and the inferential analysis of each variable, which is the effect of two independent variables toward one dependent variable. The independent variables are cognitive and focus on form instruction. Then, the dependent variable is grammar achievement.

The researcher found the process of teaching conditional sentences by using cognitive and focus on form instruction involved some steps to guide the activities in the classroom, such; analyzing, finding, and differentiating every type of conditional sentence. Then explaining the fact of every type conditional sentence and creating the English sentence of modality by using the structure of conditional sentences.

Based on the result of the data analysis, she concluded that the students' score of grammar achievement by using cognitive and focus on form instruction for

experimental group is better with mean score 65.70 in the pretest, then the score of mean significantly increased to be 82.82 in the post test. Then, after an interval week, the students of experimental group still keep their achievement in grammar with mean 83.21.

After doing posttest, both students in experimental and control group were given an interval week. It was used to know whether cognitive and focus on form instruction hold over posttest period. And the result showed that in experimental group  $F_{\text{Value}}$  with  $\alpha = 0.05$  was 1.24, and  $F_{\text{Table}}(10.10; 0.05) = 3.18$ . Then,  $F_{\text{Value}}$  with  $\alpha = 0.01$  was 1.24,  $F_{\text{Table}}(10.10; 0.01) = 5.35$ . Then of control group,  $F_{\text{Value}}$  with  $\alpha = 0.05$  was 1, and  $F_{\text{Table}}(10.10; 0.05) = 3.18$ . Then,  $F_{\text{Value}}$  with  $\alpha = 0.01$  was 1,  $F_{\text{Table}}(10.10; 0.01) = 5.35$ . It means that  $F_{\text{Value}} < F_{\text{Table}}$  for the lowest and the highest score in both groups. So, it can be concluded that data in posttest after an interval week for both experimental and control group was homogeny.

T test value based on the table is -63.777 with sig. 0.000. Since sig. < 0.05, it can be concluded that  $H_1$  received. It means that grammar achievement of Vocational High School EFL Learners at SMK Negeri 3 Kota Serang before and after getting treatment is statistically different. So, teaching grammar cognitive and focus on form instruction give effects on Vocational High School EFL Learners at SMK Negeri 3 Kota Serang.

## REFERENCES

- Aliaga, M. & Gunderson, B. (2002). *Interactive Statisticss*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall
- Burns. (1972). *Teaching English to Children. From Practice to Principle*. Collins ELT: Prentice Hall.
- Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles: Sage
- Doughty, C., & Williams, J. (Eds.). (1998). *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2001). Introduction: Investigating Form-Focused Instruction. *Language Learning*, 51, 1-46

- Hornby (1995). *Vocabulary Learning For Young Learners*. National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University.
- Long, M. (1991). *Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology*. In K. de Bot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.), *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 39-52). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Lord, C. (2002). Are Subordinate Clauses More Difficult? In J. Bybee & M. Noonan (Eds.). *Complex Sentences in Grammar and Discourse*, (pp. 224-233)
- Mindt, D. (1996). English Corpus Linguistics and the Foreign Language Teaching Syllabus. In Thomas, J. and Short, M. (Eds). *Using Corpora for language Research* (pp. 232-247). Harlow: Longman
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Neuman, S. B., & Dwyer, J. (2009). *Missing in action: Vocabulary instruction in pre-k*. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(5), 384-392.
- Rohmawati, C. (2016). *Teaching Application Letter through Email for the 12th Grade Students of SMKN 3 Kota Serang Academic Year 2016/2017*, pp. 101-109
- Syafrizal & Rohmawati, C. (2017). Teaching Speaking Strategies at Vocational High School. *The Journal of English Language Studies*, Vol. 02, No. 01, March 2017, (66-83)