



*Effects of the planned focus of form approach on grammar use in a2 elf students of a Public University in Ecuador*

*Efectos del enfoque planificado del enfoque de formularios sobre el uso gramático en estudiantes a2 efl de una Universidad Pública en Ecuador*

*Efeitos do foco planejado de abordagem de formulário no uso de gramática em estudantes a2 efl de uma Universidade Pública do Equador*

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## **Abstract**

EFL students tend to have precision problems. It is mainly observed when they have to produce a text or maintain a dialogue. Swam and Ellis agree that this occurs due to a break between the focus of meaning and form. Therefore, this research is intended to determine if a Planned Focus on Form (PFoF) approach, which mixes form and meaning, generates an effect on A2 students of a Public University in Ecuador. Therefore, a pre-test and post-test were applied to 31 students, who learned grammar structures using PFoF. The results indicate that PFoF has a positive effect on both grammatical knowledge and General English skills.

**Keywords:** PFoF; grammar, A2; EFL learners.

## **Resumen**

Los estudiantes de EFL tienden a tener problemas de precisión. Se observa principalmente cuando tienen que producir un texto o mantener un diálogo. Swam y Ellis coinciden en que esto ocurre debido a una ruptura entre el enfoque del significado y la forma. Por lo tanto, esta investigación tiene la intención de determinar si un enfoque de Enfoque Planificado en Forma (PFoF), que combina forma y significado, genera un efecto en los estudiantes A2 de una Universidad Pública en Ecuador. Por lo tanto, se aplicaron una prueba previa y una prueba posterior a 31 estudiantes, que aprendieron estructuras gramaticales usando PFoF. Los resultados indican que PFoF tiene un efecto positivo tanto en el conocimiento gramatical como en las habilidades de inglés general

**Palabras clave:** PFoF; gramática, A2; EFL estudiantes.

## **Resumo**

Os alunos de EFL tendem a ter problemas de precisão. É observado principalmente quando eles precisam produzir um texto ou manter um diálogo. Swam e Ellis concordam que isso ocorre devido a uma ruptura entre o foco do significado e da forma. Portanto, esta pesquisa pretende determinar se uma abordagem de foco planejado no formulário (PFoF), que combina forma e significado, gera um efeito em estudantes A2 de uma universidade pública do Equador. Portanto, um pré-teste e um pós-teste foram aplicados a 31 alunos que aprenderam estruturas gramaticais usando PFoF. Os resultados indicam que o PFoF tem um efeito positivo no conhecimento gramatical e no inglês geral.

**Palavras-chave:** PFoF; gramática, A2; Alunos de EFL.

## **Introduction**

The practice of teaching English in the EFL context has allowed teachers to observe the difficulty that students have in producing communication-using English as a second language. It is common to note that they can understand grammar rules; however, at the time of applying it in a conversation or producing a piece of writing, students have a lack of precision and coherence now of applying the language in an appropriate form. Regarding the teaching of grammar, Krashen (1982) stated that students have to acquire an L2 in a naturalistic way; On the other hand, Swan (2008) and Basoz (2014) maintain the importance of grammar learning, mainly because of its impact on accuracy, which is a critical requirement especially for academic purposes in university students.

Considering these positions, Long (1997) and Ellis (2002) presented Focus on Form (FoF), which unites specific characteristics of the opposite positions. FoF intends to raise students' attention to grammatical structures while they are immersed in communication through reading, listening, and speaking.

FoF is divided into Planned Focus on Form and Incidental Focus on Form. The first refers to the previous selection of grammatical aspects to be learned by the students, while the second causes students to learn a variety of grammatical topics as they arise during the lesson (Ellis, 2002; Nourdad & Aghayi, 2014).

Due to the A2 level of the students according to the Common European Framework of References, the researchers applied a planned focus on form (PFoF). Therefore, the research questions are:

1. What is the effect of the application of PFoF on the grammar knowledge of A2 students?
2. Is there a significant difference between grammar knowledge after the intervention?
3. Does PFoF affect any other ability of students concerning language learning?

## **Method**

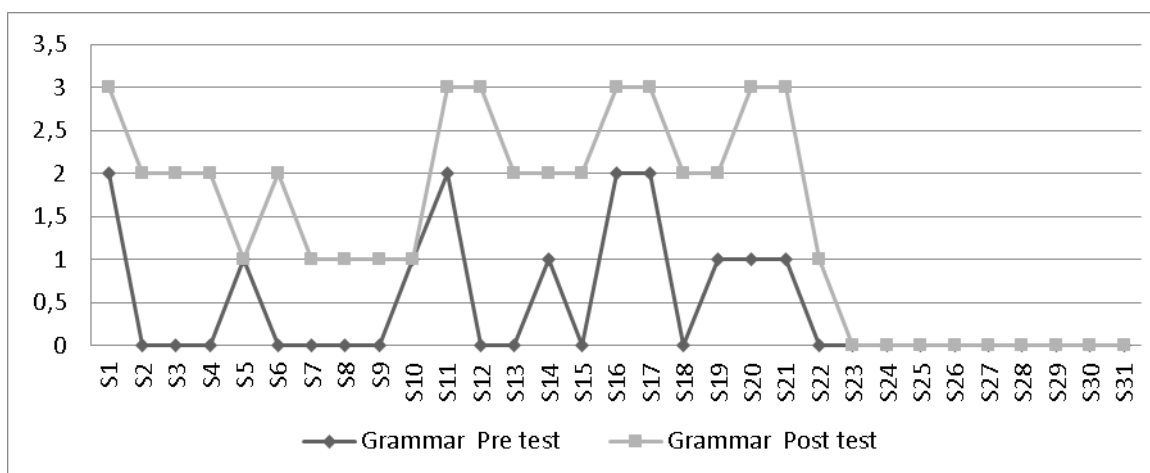
This research responds to the experimental design of action research (Creswell, 2015). Thirty-one students participated in the research; they study at a public university in Babahoyo, Ecuador, and belong to the medium and low socioeconomic level. Besides, a previous test and a subsequent test were used. These tests were the Cambridge KET test, and two versions of them were applied;

version one was the pre-test, and version 2 corresponds to the post-test. The intervention was carried out for five weeks, and 8 sessions, where the students learned six tenses related to an A2 level (North, Ortega and Sheehan, 2010). The results of the pre-test and post-test were compared with the SPSS T-test statistical program.

## Results

The effect of the PFoF instruction on grammar knowledge was analyzed using the writing section of the KET exam. This skill was evaluated using a rubric developed by Fry, E., Kress, J., and Fountoukiddis, D. (2000). The results indicate that knowledge of grammar and its application in written production increased by 31%, which indicates that the PFoF has a significant impact on the knowledge and application of grammar (Appendix 1).

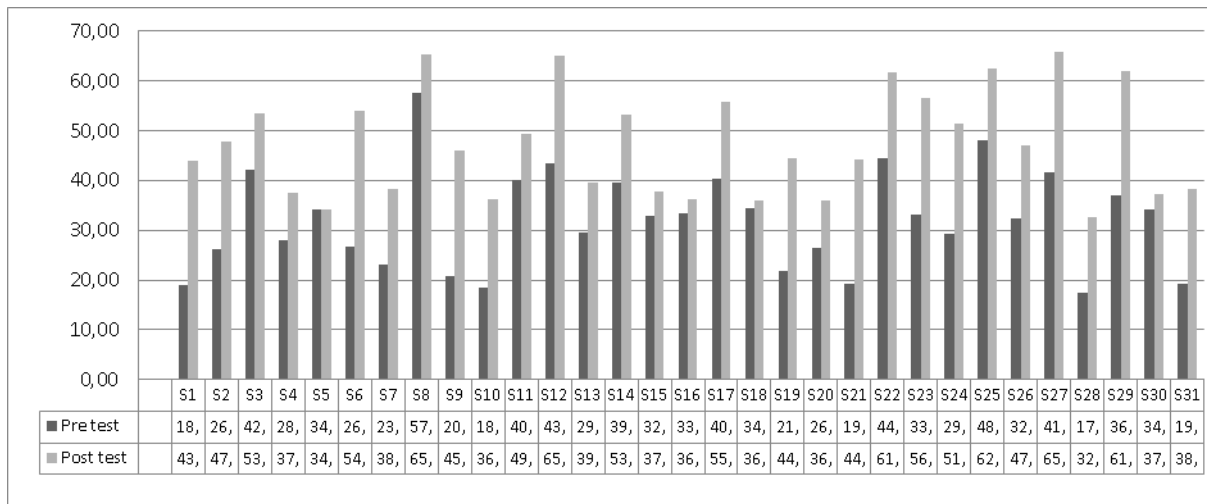
**Figure 01. Key English Test (KET) test results: grammatical components of the writing section**



Source: Student responses on the KET exam

About the effects of PFoF on students' L2 skills, the results showed that the average of the results increased by 68%. Also, the improvement in the overall results of the KET exams is significant (Appendix 02).

**Figure 02. Results of the Key English Test: pretest and post test**



Source: Student responses on the KET exam

Regarding the effects on students' abilities, the results show that PFoF has a positive and significant effect on listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills since p is lower than 0.05 for every studied skill.

**Table 01. T student test applied to the means of the components of the pre and post KET tests**

			Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
			Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
						Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Pretest	-								
Reading	Posttest									
Pair 1	Pretest	-	-8.2387	1.86221	.33446	-1.50694	-.14081	-2.463	30	.020
Pair 1	Pretest	-	-7.08871	6.89551	1.23847	-9.61800	-4.55941	-5.724	30	.000
Pair 1	Pretest	-	-1.22581	2.36234	.42429	-2.09232	-.35929	-2.889	30	.007
Pair 1	Pretest	-	-6.22581	5.61373	1.00826	-8.28494	-4.16667	-6.175	30	.000

Source: Student responses on the KET exam

## Conclusion

The findings of this research showed that PFoF generates a positive influence on grammar learning at A2 levels. These results are related to Nourdad and Aghayi, (2014), on the positive effects of FoF on passive voice learning. Also, the PFoF has been shown to positively affect English skills such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing. These results are related to the findings of Rahimpour, Salimi, and Farrokhi (2012), where they demonstrated that students who received PFoF obtained better results in the accuracy of oral narrative tasks. We consider that the

significant effect that the PToF has on grammar and English is produced because this type of methodology uses a variety of techniques and resources (Farrokhi & Talabari, 2011), which integrates the students' ability to increase their grammar knowledge while they are immersed in communicative activities.

## Recommendations

Based on the results, it is concluded that similar research should be done with students from various universities to determine in a wide range of the effects of PToF on their knowledge of grammar. On the other hand, since this methodology seems to have a positive effect on A2 levels, it could be a significant advantage in the EFL area to investigate its effect on higher levels of knowledge of English.

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## Appendix

### Grammatical component of the pretest and posttest

Students	Pre test: Grammar section	Post test: Grammar section
S1	2	3
S2	0	2
S3	0	2
S4	0	2
S5	1	1
S6	0	2
S7	0	1
S8	0	1
S9	0	1
S10	1	1
S11	2	3
S12	0	3
S13	0	2
S14	1	2
S15	0	2
S16	2	3
S17	2	3
S18	0	2
S19	1	2
S20	1	3
S21	1	3
S22	0	1
S23	0	0
S24	0	0
S25	0	0
S26	0	0
S27	0	0
S28	0	0
S29	0	0
S30	0	0
S31	0	0
MEAN	0.45	1.45

Fuente: Authors.

**Grammar is valued out of 5.**

**T student test of the grammar component of the writing section of the pretest and posttest**

**Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sets. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	.4516	31	.72290	.12984
	Posttest	1.4516	31	1.15004	.20655

Fuente: Authors.

**Paired Samples Correlations**

			N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest		31	.629	.000

Fuente: Authors.

**Paired Samples Test**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-1.00000	.89443	.16064	-1.32808	-.67192	-6.225	30	.000

Fuente: Authors.

**Pretest and post test results of KET English test**

	Pre test					Post test				
	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	TOTAL	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	TOTAL
S1	7.73	1.25	5	5	18.98	8.64	6.25	8	21	43.89
S2	8.18	0	6	12	26.18	9.09	13.75	6	19	47.84
S3	7.73	12.5	8	14	42.23	7.73	18.75	8	19	53.48
S4	5.00	0	6	17	28.00	9.54	0	8	20	37.54
S5	5.91	1.25	6	21	34.16	5.91	1.25	3	24	34.16
S6	9.54	1.25	5	11	26.79	11.82	16.25	6	20	54.07
S7	6.82	1.25	7	8	23.07	7.27	0	7	24	38.27

S8	10.91	13.75	10	23	57.66	9.54	23.75	10	22	65.29
S9	7.73	0	8	5	20.73	8.18	13.75	5	19	45.93
S10	7.27	1.25	5	5	18.52	10.91	1.25	5	19	36.16
S11	7.27	8.75	6	18	40.02	10.00	12.5	6	21	49.50
S12	10.45	10	4	19	43.45	10.91	21.25	10	23	65.16
S13	8.64	0	4	17	29.64	8.64	0	8	23	39.64
S14	8.18	7.5	7	17	39.68	7.73	17.5	8	20	53.23
S15	7.73	1.25	6	18	32.98	6.82	0	6	25	37.82
S16	5.45	0	5	23	33.45	6.36	0	8	22	36.36
S17	8.64	8.75	2	21	40.39	10.91	15	9	21	55.91
S18	4.09	6.25	8	16	34.34	9.09	0	6	21	36.09
S19	6.82	0	6	9	21.82	7.73	8.75	9	19	44.48
S20	5.45	0	6	15	26.45	6.82	6.25	4	19	36.07
S21	6.36	0	3	10	19.36	7.73	17.5	5	14	44.23
S22	10.45	10	11	13	44.45	8.18	22.5	11	20	61.68
S23	5.91	1.25	5	21	33.16	9.54	15	8	24	56.54
S24	9.09	1.25	6	13	29.34	9.09	16.25	8	18	51.34
S25	10.91	11.25	7	19	48.16	10.00	22.5	7	23	62.50
S26	7.27	1.25	6	18	32.52	8.18	15	8	16	47.18
S27	9.54	0	9	23	41.54	7.73	21.25	14	23	65.98
S28	4.55	0	6	7	17.55	6.36	1.25	6	19	32.61
S29	10.91	10	9	7	36.91	8.64	21.25	9	23	61.89
S30	7.27	0	7	20	34.27	8.18	0	9	20	37.18
S31	7	0	5	7	19	7.27	0	7	24	38.27

Fuente: Authors.

### T student test applied to KET results in pretest y posttest

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pretest	32.0645	31	9.88243	1.77494
Posttest	47.3548	31	10.57213	1.89881

Fuente: Authors.

**Paired Samples Correlations**

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Pretest & Posttest	31	.698	.000

Fuente: Authors.

**Paired Samples Test**

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	-15.29032	7.97577	1.43249	-18.21586	-12.36479	-10.674	30	.000

Fuente: Authors.

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