

Dovetailing focus on form instruction with cognitive styles: A constructive endeavor

Farzin KHALILI, Urmia University, Iran
Zhila MOHAMMADNIA, Urmia University, Iran¹

The present study attempted to ascertain the utility of adjusting pedagogic focus on form procedures to language learners' cognitive styles. To this end, 100 ($N=100$) EFL learners (50 field dependent and 50 field independent) in four groups received vocabulary instruction by means of two instructional interventions comprising visual input enhancement as a technique of focus on form and the orthodox reading comprehension procedure. The study specifically sought to discover the predominant and consequential factors of vocabulary learning and to take account of the foreseeable, feasible, and presumed interaction between the pertinent variables. The results of the study indicated that instruction type and cognitive styles significantly impacted the learners' vocabulary learning. Additionally, the foregoing factors interacted and swayed the learners' acquisition of the apposite second language words. The results of the study may delineate appropriate lines of research for further empirical investigation.

Keywords: Cognitive Styles; Field Dependence; Field Independence; Focus on Form; Visual Input Enhancement

1. Introduction

In view of multitudinous studies (e.g., Adams, 2007; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Kartchava & Ammar, 2014; Lee & Huang, 2008; Li, 2010; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2013; Mackey, 2006; Mackey & Goo, 2007; McDonough, 2004; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Ponniah, 2008; Shintani, 2015; Weigand, 2018) focus on form instruction has procured material enchantment and appeal in instructed second language acquisition. In essence, focus on form constitutes the intermittent and episodic relocation of instructor and learners' attentional capabilities in order to tackle with and address the code-feature-induced perplexities in the process of converting incoming input to

¹ Corresponding Author: z.mohammadnia@urmia.ac.ir

internalized linguistic intake or the encoding of conceptual information through the utilization of language (Long & Robinson, 1998). This characterization of focus on form underscores its concurrent focus on the formal features of language on the one hand, and communicative functionality on the other hand (Loewen, 2005). To be more specific, it accentuates the fact that this pedagogic intervention strives to attract the learners' attention to problematic features of the code in the process of meaningful interaction in genuine communication (Nakatsukasa & Loewen, 2015).

Nonetheless, focus on form does not comprise a methodology with a strictly specifiable instructional program. Alternately, it encompasses a set of pedagogic interventions which attract the learners' attention to language form by means of a wide range of explicit and implicit techniques (Doughty & Williams, 1998b). Among these techniques, visual input enhancement has aroused considerable attention. It comprises an endeavor to attract learner attention to particular features of written input by means of textual manipulation techniques, namely boldfacing and color-coding among others (Lee & Huang, 2008).

The assessment of the characteristics of this technique of focus on form instruction puts forward the possibility of its congruence with variegated cognitive and affective factors (Ellis, 2008). Notwithstanding, an intense scrutiny of the empirical studies of visual input enhancement (e.g., Izumi, 2002; Shook, 1994) indicates the fact that, researchers have predominantly overlooked the inspection of the foregoing learner differences. To be more specific, little attention has been given in the literature to the importance of the aforementioned characteristics in the characterization of acquisition within instructional contexts. Furthermore, the explication and elucidation of the results of the few studies which have endeavored to specify the mediating role of these traits in interlanguage development have been beset by variegated perplexities.

Ellis (2008) contended that, the main intricacies of these studies arise out of their designs. He pointed out that, individual differences constitute differentiating factors and need to be examined in studies which adopt a factorial design. Nonetheless, the preponderance of such studies has been conducted through correlational designs, and there is a dearth of factorial research studies (Abraham, 1985). The complications surrounding the close scrutiny of the foregoing learner factors have exacerbated the discernable paucity of research in foreign language contexts encompassing the EFL context of Iran.

To be more specific, Iranian researchers (e.g., Baleghizadeh, & Abdi, 2010; Gholami, & Gholami, 2018; Gholami, Nabi Karimi, & Atai, 2017; Mohammadnia & Gholami, 2008; Mohammadnia & Khalili, 2014c) have

principally disregarded the inquiry into the consequential role of individual learner differences in the potency, fruitfulness, and constructiveness of focus on form techniques. The present study strived to tackle with this issue in the context of Iran. To this end, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. Does instruction type have an effect on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition?
2. Does cognitive style have an effect on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition?
3. Is there an interaction between instruction type and cognitive style?

2. Background

2.1. Focus on form instruction

Initially, the idea of focus on form was formulated by Long (1988) who delineated it as the mapping between the formal features and their meanings and contended that form encompasses variegated aspects of grammar (e.g., tense system), lexis (e.g., phrasal vocabulary), and pragmatics (e.g., speech acts). Long's (1988) characterization of this instruction accentuated its pedagogic utility due largely to its precedence over preceding approaches in making target forms salient in furnished linguistic input. Notwithstanding, his sustained and unremitting work on this pedagogic intervention has broadened its scope in the field.

In a recent definition, Long (2015) averred that focus on form comprises the reactive and transient utilization of multifarious didactic procedures in learning tasks which endeavor to rivet the learners' attention to knotty, thorny, and convoluted linguistic issues in course of pithy communication and escalate and intensify the prospect of synchronizing the students' innate processing potentiality, interlanguage development, and formal attentiveness. This characterization accentuates and foregrounds the fact that focus on form encompasses a *modus operandi* which contrasts with the long-established and run-of-the-mill pedagogic focus on forms approaches which embraced the designation, instruction, and practice of code features according to a structural curriculum (Poole, 2004). Additionally, it differentiates this proposition from exclusively focus on meaning approaches which underlined the magnitude of incidental acquisition and underscored the import of implicit learning in a content-based pedagogic context to the exclusion of a focus on the formal features (Ellis, 2016).

The foregoing definition evinces the solid theoretical underpinnings of focus on form instruction and the interplay which exists among its assumptions and

similar apropos and prevalent pedagogic endeavors. Particularly, it highlights the incorporation of the predominant postulation of Schmidt's (2001) Noticing Hypothesis into focus on form instruction. This hypothesis foregrounds the role of conscious attention in the process of the conversion of input into intake which leads to language learning. Moreover, the great prominence which is given to bone fide communication in tasks in the aforementioned characterization of focus on form explicates and elucidates the task-based structure of these procedures and establishes focus on form within Task-Based language Teaching (Long & Crookes, 1992) which espouses and advocates the exclusive utilization of learning tasks in pedagogical interventions (Ellis, 2003).

An intense scrutiny of prior characterizations of focus on form by Long and his associates (e.g., Long, 1988, 1991, 1997; Long & Robinson 1998) and the perusal of his work on negotiation of meaning (e.g., Long, 1983, 1996) evinces that they are at variance with his current definition (i.e., Long, 2015) of this pedagogic intervention. To be more specific, Long's previous work on focus on form was swayed by the preponderant postulation of his Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1983, 1996) that accentuated the consequence of oral communicative interaction in the acceleration and facilitation of incidental acquisition of linguistic features. Furthermore, it was based on the contention that focus on form predominantly encompasses negotiation of meaning which facilitates the learners' comprehension of input, furnishes them with negative feedback, and expedites their development of a native-like competence. Moreover, the preceding definitions delineated focus on form in terms of an implicit and incidental approach which excluded pre-determined pedagogic interventions through metalinguistic feedback.

Nonetheless, Long's contemporary work, which is in line with other researchers (e.g., Ellis, 2015), deems that, in lieu of an approach, focus on form comprises a set of pedagogical procedures which strive to attract the students' attention to code features while target language is utilized as a means of communication. This portrayal of focus on form discriminates it from focus on forms approaches which deploy didactic activities to direct learners' attention to the formal elements which are treated as the objects of pedagogical intervention. Additionally, it entails pre-specified and explicit instructional endeavors in addition to the incidental and implicit ones. Lastly, the recent characterization acknowledges that non-interactive focus on form procedures are existent in comprehension-based techniques including input enhancement (Ellis, 2016).

Notwithstanding, this characterization does not exhaustively expound on the substantial evolution and extension of the scope of focus on form instruction by other scholars (e.g., Lyster, 2001; Salmani Nodoushan, 2008; Skehan,

1996). More specifically, the accentuation of the reactive essence of focus on form procedures in this definition has been denigrated and depreciated by a number of researchers who contend that focus on form might comprise instructor and learners' pre-emptive procedures (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001) and may incorporate proactive endeavors via focused learning tasks which are designed to elicit particular pre-planned target forms (Ellis, 2016; Littlewood, 2007). Furthermore, it disregards the compatibility of particular focus on forms procedures such as the orthodox Presentation-Practice-Produce (PPP) process with the communicative structure of focus on form procedures. In other words, it does not establish a strict criterion to draw a distinction between communicative focus on forms activities such as the final stage of PPP and genuinely focus on form interventions (Ellis, 2016). This issue was addressed by Doughty and Williams (1998a) who strived to resolve it by extending the scope of focus on form. More specifically, they contended that focus on form constitutes a continuum of procedures which encompass a focus on code features and is differentiated from focus on forms interventions which are limited to undivided attention to formal elements.

Moreover, Long's (2015) assertion that focus on form comprises transitory procedures is deemed a moot point (Doughty, 2001; Doughty & Williams, 1998b; Williams, 2005). This issue is associated with the obtrusiveness feature of focus on form and embraces the contention that the pertinent procedures of this pedagogic intervention should not obstruct the flow of communication (Ellis, 1999). Nonetheless, focus on form constitutes a cognitive process as well as a communicative one. Consequently, processing of meaning is the foremost and overriding cognitive component of these procedures and should be the uppermost litmus test for their specification and differentiation from the purely focus on forms approaches (Williams, 2005). These points accentuate the fact that the evanescent structure of certain pedagogic procedures might not ascertain their potentiality to synchronize processing of form with meaning. This issue was addressed by Doughty and Williams (1998b) who formulated a taxonomy of focus on form procedures based on their cognitive obstruction.

Lastly, Long's (2015) definition of focus on form excludes learners' attention to code features outside the learning tasks. To be more specific, it rules out learners' communicative endeavors and their concomitant focus on form procedures prior and posterior to task performance (Ellis, 2016). This assertion is at variance with Skehan's (1996) averment who enunciated the likelihood of focus on form in the course of planning which transpires preparatory to engagement with communicative activity within task. By the same token, it disregards the beneficial and advantageous impact of task recurrence on the form-meaning mapping (Nassaji & Fotos, 2010).

The foregoing issues are essentially moot in second language acquisition. They underscore the pedagogic potency of focus on form as an emergent *modus operandi* and its prospective compass in methodical instructional endeavors. In the light of aforementioned issues, focus of form may be characterized as a cluster of predominantly transitory reactive and preemptive pedagogic procedures which induce the learners to allocate their conscious attentional resources to the impenetrable, unfathomable, and troublesome linguistic issues in furnished input prior, in the course of, and posterior to interactional and non-interactive task performance which strive to facilitate and expedite the synchronization between learners' internal cognitive capability and processing of linguistic form and meaning.

2.2. Mediating impacts of cognitive styles

The aforementioned procedures have been widely drawn on to specify the utility of *apropos* instruction in interlanguage evolution and buildup. Notwithstanding, the preponderance of theoretical and empirical work on focus on form has overlooked the vast, tremendous, and prodigious dissimilarities among language learners. To be more specific, in general, studies have discounted the likelihood that individual learner differences (Robinson, 2002; Skehan, 1989) mediate the impact of focus on form procedures on language acquisition (Ellis, 2008). Nonetheless, the material and consequential role of learner variables in the characterization of language acquisition has been widely underscored by diverse researchers (e.g., Decapua & Wintergerst, 2005; Ehrman & Leaver, 2003; Gardner, 2001).

This issue underscores the consequential role of the foregoing dissimilarities in language acquisition and emphasize their role in naturalistic and instructed learning contexts. More specifically, it brings to the fore the fact that pedagogical endeavors should undertake to address personal characteristics and idiosyncrasies in the process of instruction. An intense perusal of focus on form techniques evinces that a number of them comprise a built-in tendency take measures about this issue. Visual or textual input enhancement is one of these techniques and refers to isolated or collaborative utilization of typographical intimations and signals such as the manipulation of the magnitude, hue, sort, and style of fonts to draw learners' attention to pre-specified aspect of input with negligible cognitive obstruction (Lee & Huang, 2008; Lowen & Inceoglu, 2016). This technique of focus on form (Doughty & Williams, 1998b) appears to be more attuned to individual learner differences including cognitive styles among the others.

The foregoing styles constitute favored, persistent, and characteristic procedures by which individuals discern, recollect, catalogue, process, and signify linguistic information (Dörnyei, 2005). They encompass "preferred

forms of brain activity associated with information acquisition and processing” (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003, p. 314). These definitions bespeak the requisite and indispensable role of conceptual and perceptual idiosyncrasies including field dependence/independence (Witkin, Oltan, Raskin, and Karp, 1971) and ambiguity tolerance (Ely, 1989) in processing and internalizing incoming stimuli. Field dependence/independence dichotomy differentiates learners in terms of their proclivity to be swayed by the features of the surrounding environment (i.e., field dependent) or their tendency to focus undivided attention on specific features of perceived input (i.e., field independent) (Ehrman & Leaver, 2003; Salmani Nodoushan, 2014). On the other hand, Ambiguity tolerance constitutes “a person’s ability to function rationally and calmly in a situation in which interpretation of all stimuli is not clear” (Chapelle & Roberts, 1986, p. 30; see also Al-Shalabi & Salmani Nodoushan, 2009).

3. Method

3.1. Participants

For purposes of the current study, the researchers selected an adequate sample of field dependent/independent EFL learners ($N=100$) who served as the participants of the study. This all-male sample comprised 50 field dependent ($n=50$) and 50 field independent ($n=50$) learners. These learners were chosen from among 290 intermediate-level learners of a private language institute in Urmia (Iran). They were native speakers of Turkish, ranged in age from 16 to 22, and had approximately three years of studies in the designated language institute.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Proficiency Test

In this study, *Nelson English Language Proficiency Test* (Fowler & Coe, 1976) was employed to specify an adequate number of intermediate-level learners from among 542 learners of the designated language institute on the basis of the aforementioned objectives. This test encompasses 50 multiple-choice items and assesses language proficiency in two chief sections: (1) cloze test, and (2) grammar. The developers of the test have contended that statistical estimations have shown that the test has satisfactory reliability and validity indices, and that it constitutes an admissible measure of proficiency. ‘Standard deviations from the mean’ was used as the classification criterion; the intermediate learners were specified as the ones whose scores were within one standard deviation above and below the mean score of the population on this test.

3.2.2. Reading texts

The researchers utilized particular excerpts of the reading passages in the textbook entitled *Intermediate Select Readings* (Lee & Gundersen, 2011) in the treatment sessions of the study. The appointed passages were 150 to 220 words long and addressed variegated aspects of academic and social life.

3.2.3. Vocabulary pretest and posttest

Based on the previously stated aims, the researchers developed two 50-item vocabulary tests comprising a pretest and a posttest based on the vocabulary items of the utilized passage excerpts in the treatment sessions. To be more specific, in order to prevent practice effect, the researchers developed a parallel version of the pretest and used it as the posttest. Cronbach's *Alpha* estimate of internal consistency revealed that the reliability indices of the pretest and posttest were 0.83 and 0.81 respectively, and guaranteed their appropriateness for the assessment of the participants' vocabulary knowledge prior and posterior to the pertinent treatment.

3.2.4. Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT)

The researchers implemented the *Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT)* (Witkin, Oltan, Raskin & Karp, 1971) to determine the intermediate-level learners' cognitive styles. This test comprises three major sections with 25 complex geometrical backgrounds from which the learners are asked to specify and hand-pick particular simple figures. The primary part of the test encompasses 7 items and aims to familiarize the learners with the structure and objectives of the test. Nonetheless, its score is not considered in the final assessment of the test takers. The central part of the test comprises 18 items which are rated on a true/false basis. As the developers of the test have contended, it has a satisfactory reliability index (0.82), and its higher scores represent higher levels of field-independence (See also Salmani Nodoushan, 2006b, 2007).

3.3. Procedure

The present study adopted an Aptitude-Treatment-Interaction (Ellis, 2008) approach to the study of the mediation-oriented role of individual learner differences in language learning. More specifically, the researchers utilized two different pedagogical approaches to instruct the learners who were differentiated according to their field dependent and field independent cognitive styles. In other words, the learners with each of these styles were exposed to both of these approaches to determine their vocabulary acquisition in each condition. Consequently, the researchers employed an experimental pretest-treatment-posttest design to conduct the study.

To this end, first, 290 intermediate EFL learners were chosen out of a population of 542 learners at a private language institute in Urmia (Iran) based on their results on a proficiency test. Second, the *GEFT* (Witkin et al., 1971) was administered to the specified intermediate learners to determine their cognitive styles. Third, 50 field dependent and 50 field independent learners were randomly selected from among these learners and were randomly assigned to four experimental groups: field independent group #1, field independent group #2, field independent group #3, and field independent group #4—each with 25 learners. Third, one of the groups of each cognitive style received vocabulary instruction by means of Visual Input Enhancement (VIE) and the other one received instruction through Reading Comprehension (RC) for 10 sessions, 2 sessions per week. In the VIE, the researchers furnished the learners with excerpts of texts with five textually enhanced (i.e., boldfaced and italicized) vocabulary items and asked them to read them and write a short summary for each of them. On the other hand, in RC, the researchers provided the learners with the unenhanced versions of the same excerpts and asked them to read them and answer their comprehension questions. These questions asked the learners to guess and mark the meanings of the selected vocabulary items from among three options. Lastly, all of the groups took the vocabulary posttest of the study. One-way *ANOVA* and one-way Factorial *ANOVA* tests were utilized for data analysis.

4. Results

In order to guarantee that the experimental groups of the study were homogeneous in regard to their vocabulary knowledge, a one-way ANOVA test was run among their performances on the pretest prior to the onset of the study. The descriptive Statistics for this test are represented in Table 1.

Table1

Descriptive Statistics for Field Dependent and Field Independent Learners' Results on the Pretest

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Field Dependant1	25	23.44
Field Dependent 2	25	22.72
Field Independant1	25	21.56
Field Independant2	25	23.08
Total	100	22.70

The researchers assessed the results of the *ANOVA* test to specify the

significant differences among the performances of these groups. Table 2 represents the results of this test:

Table 2
ANOVA Test of Field Dependent and Field Independent Learners' Results on the Pretest

	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	1.113	.348
Within Groups		
Total		

As shown in Table 2, the *p*-value of the *ANOVA* test (.348) was higher than the level of significance .05. Consequently, it was contended that there were not any significant differences among the groups of the study in regard to their vocabulary knowledge before the onset of the study. These results are graphically displayed in Figure 1:

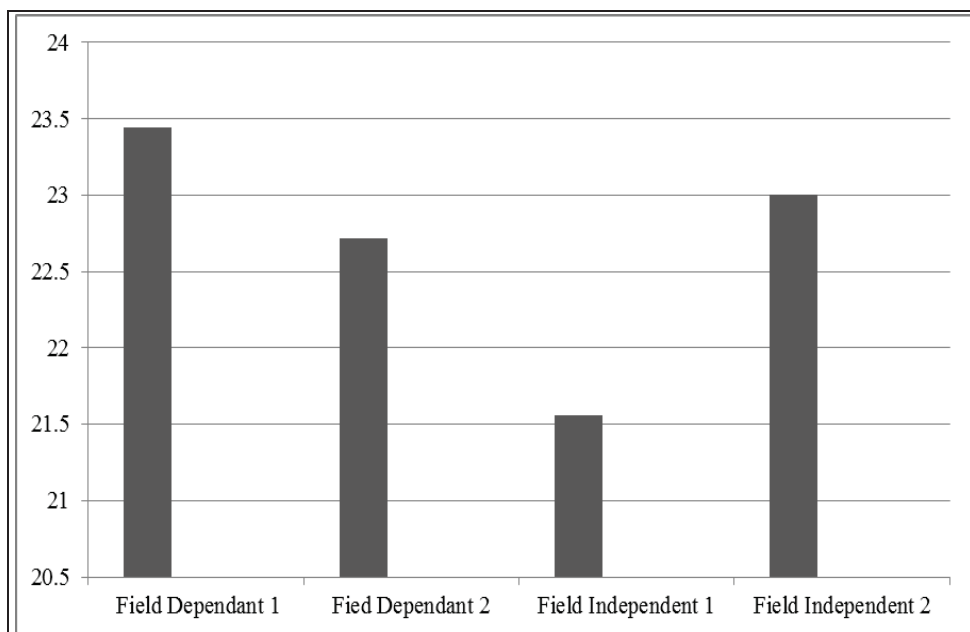


Figure1. Field dependent and field independent learners' results on the pretest.

These results highlighted the homogeneity of the experimental groups and paved the way for the treatment of the study and the analysis of the results of the participants' performance on the posttest of the study. Based on the

aforementioned objectives, a one-way Factorial ANOVA test was run to answer the pertinent research questions. The descriptive statistics for this test are represented in Table 3:

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Field Dependent and Field Independent Learners' Results on the Posttest across Instruction Type

Cognitive Style	Instruction Type	Mean
Field Dependent	VIE	26.60
	RC	32.84
	Total	29.72
Field Independent	VIE	38.60
	RC	25.64
	Total	32.12
Total	VIE	32.60
	RC	29.24
	Total	30.92

The close scrutiny of the descriptive statistics of these groups in Table 3 shows that RC had a more beneficial impact on filed dependent leaners' vocabulary learning (M=32.84) than VIE (M=26.60). On the other hand, field independent benefited from VIE (M=32.60) rather than RC (M=25.64). Notwithstanding, to specify the significant effect of the relevant factors, tests of between-subject effects were evaluated. The results of this test are provided in Table 4:

Table 4

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Field Dependent and Field Independent Learners' Results on the Posttest

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	104.118	.000
Intercept	10937.703	.000
Cognitive Style	16.474	.000
Instruction Type	32.290	.000
Cognitive Style * Instruction Type	263.590	.000

The results of Table 4 show that the *p*-values for the cognitive style (0.000)

and Instruction type (.000) as main factors were below the level of significance 0.05. Furthermore, the p -value interaction effect between cognitive style and instruction type (0.000) was below the predetermined significance level. Consequently, it was contended that, instruction types and cognitive styles affect EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Additionally, it was argued that, the foregoing factors interact and sway the learners' test performance. The results of this factorial *ANOVA* are diagrammatically represented in Figure 2:

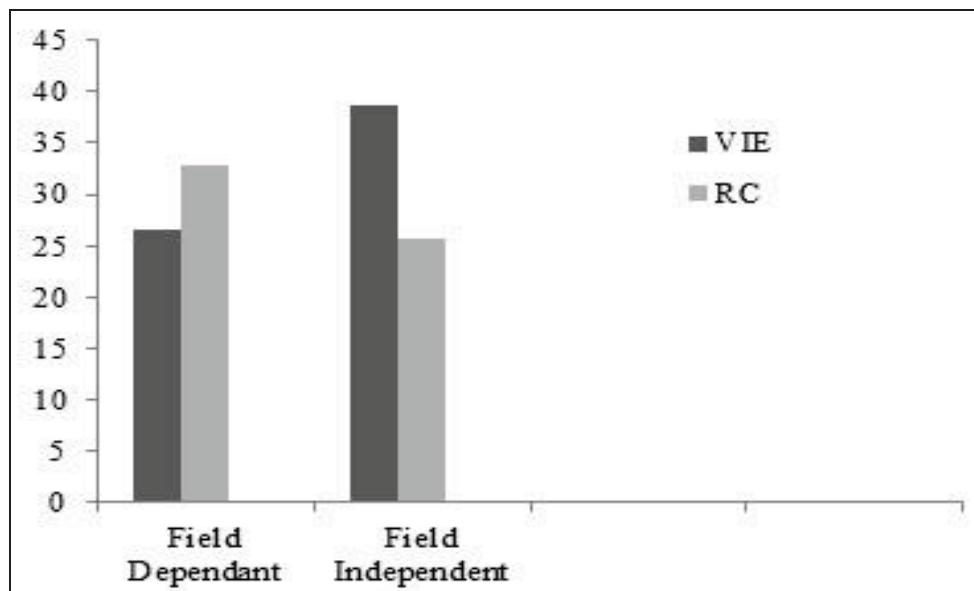


Figure2. Field dependent and field independent learners' performances on the posttest across instruction type.

5. Discussion

The results of the study accentuated the fact that instruction type comprising the use of VIE may exert an influence on learners' vocabulary acquisition in instructional settings. More specifically, while field independent learners benefited from VIE, field dependent ones profited from RC. These results are in line with the preponderance of research in the field (e.g., Izumi, 2002; Lee, 2007; Nilforoohan, & Afghari, 2007; Salmani Nodoushan, 2006a, 2007, 2011; White, 1996, 1998; Winke, 2013; Mohammadnia & Khalili, 2014a, 2014b).

These results may be partially attributed to the ameliorative role of directing learners' conscious attention to the specific aspects of furnished input. To be more specific, as Schmidt (1990) pointed out, the efficacy of VIE as a technique of focus on form instruction may arise from its role in the facilitation of noticing in the process of acquisition. That is, VIE may be

sufficiently fruitful and productive in attracting the learners' attention to input and may expedite the conversion of input to intake. Additionally, the results may be ascribed to the efficacy of top-down processing in the interpretation and internalization of new information (Goldstein, 2010). To be more specific, they underline the indispensable role of pragmatics¹ and semantics² in the inter-operation of word and sentence meaning. Finally, the results may be interpreted in terms of the premise that both inductive and deductive reasoning modes, which may be associated with RC and VIE respectively, are constructive in language acquisition (Brown, 2007).

Moreover, the results foregrounded the consequential role of cognitive styles in the acquisition of vocabulary items (Ben Maad, 2008). These results support the results of previous studies (e.g., Chapelle & Roberts, 1986; Chiang, 2016; Hansen & Stanfield, 1981; Salmani Nodoushan, 2006b, 2007; Stanfield and Hansen, 1983). These results may be attributed to the fact that cognitive styles constitute the preferred modes of information processing and superintend the cognitive processes which are indispensable to the conversion of incoming stimuli to intake which is preserved in long-term memory and underlies the process of acquisition (Ehrman et al., 2003). In other words, as supervisory agents, cognitive styles dominate, regulate, and oversee the process of acquisition from its onset to its outset.

Finally, the results revealed that, instruction type and cognitive styles may work in tandem to sway the process of instruction. The results provide support to the results of a number of studies (e.g., Abraham, 1985; Takahashi, 2005). These results may be attributed to the congruence which is discernable between specific cognitive styles and techniques of focus on form instruction including VIE. To be more specific, VIE attracts the learners' attention to particular aspects of the input (e.g., vocabulary items) and exhorts them to analyze and interpret their meaning to the exclusion of the surrounding linguistic context. Consequently, it may be in harmony with the idiosyncrasies of the field-independent cognitive style which prefers undivided attention to the particular elements of the context. By the same token, RC beseeches the learners to speculate about the meanings of certain words via the use of the linguistic context and as a result may be compatible with the characteristics of the field dependent cognitive style which focuses on the wider picture.

6. Conclusion

The present study made an attempt at discerning the ameliorative effects of dovetailing the VIE technique of focus on form instruction with cognitive styles. The results of the study highlighted and accentuated the importance of adapting pedagogical approaches to the learners' individual differences. More

specifically, the results confirmed the advantageous and beneficial impacts of instruction type and cognitive styles on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, they pointed out the possibility of an interaction effect between these factors. The scrutiny of the empirical and theoretical backgrounds of the study brings the fact to the fore that the results predominantly underscore the empirical evidence and are in line with the theoretical discussions of focus on form and cognitive styles. The results of the study may be deemed as beneficial to the field due in large to their role in the specification of the indispensable role of individual learner differences in both naturalistic and instructed learning contexts and their delineation of the interactional effects among the foregoing factors which may sway the process of language learning.

Notwithstanding, the results of the study have to be interpreted cautiously owing to a number of reasons. First, since the present study comprised male intermediate-level learners, its findings may not be generalized to female learners in variegated proficiency levels. Second, the study was carried out in a foreign language context and in a private language institute. Consequently, the results may not be applicable to other academic contexts and settings. Finally, the study only focused on field dependence/independence cognitive factors and overlooked the learners' various affective factors.

Nonetheless, as the results revealed, the diverse personal factors may interact and work in tandem to affect the process of learning. These issues accentuate the need for further research in this field. Further studies have to extend the scope of the present study through the inclusion of male and female participants from various academic settings. Furthermore, they have to underscore or revise the results of this study in both EFL and ESL contexts. Lastly, these studies will have to seek to account for and elucidate the role of the interaction effect among various cognitive and affective factors during the process of second language acquisition.

Notes:

1. For an in-depth discussion of pragmatics, please see Allan and Salmani Nodoushan (2015) and Salmani Nodoushan (2017).
2. For a discussion of semantics, please see Cruse (2004).

The Authors

Farzin Khalili (Email: Farzinn.khalilii@gmail.com) is an MA student of TEFL from Urmia University. He has taught English at English language institutes in West Azerbaijan Province, Iran. He is interested in research on task-based

language learning and teaching, focus on form instruction, and language testing.

Zhila Mohammadnia (Email: z.mohammadnia@urmia.ac.ir) is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at Urmia University, Iran. She is also the Associate Editor of the Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability. Her research interests in the field of Applied Linguistics and Teaching English as a Foreign Language include Critical Discourse Analysis, Media Discourse, English for Specific Purposes, Focus on Form, and Second Language Acquisition.

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