

A Comparative Study of Two Teaching Methodologies for English Tense Acquisition Among First-Year Junior High School Students

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of two instructional approaches on junior high school students' acquisition of English tense structures, including the simple present, simple past, and present progressive. Specifically, it compared the effectiveness of form-focused instruction (FFI) with the integration of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching (FFI+CLT). Participants were 68 seventh-grade students from a private junior high school in northern Taiwan. A six-week quasi-experimental design was employed. Students' grammatical competence was assessed using a grammaticality completion test and a sentence tense transformation test, and the data were analyzed with SPSS 31.0. The results indicated that students receiving FFI+CLT significantly outperformed those receiving FFI alone on both assessments, demonstrating greater gains in grammatical knowledge and controlled written production of English tense structures. These findings suggest that integrating attention to linguistic form with meaningful communication enhances learners' grammatical development more effectively than form-focused instruction alone. The study supports the pedagogical value of combining FFI and CLT in English grammar instruction and provides implications for English language teaching and future research.

Keywords

form-focused instruction, communicative language teaching, grammar instruction, grammatical competence, quasi-experimental study

1. Introduction

Since the mid-twentieth century, English language teaching has undergone a series of substantial methodological shifts, evolving from the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to the Direct Method, Audiolingualism, the Cognitive Code Approach, and various forms of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach [1]. For centuries, grammar instruction occupied a central position in foreign language teaching; however, its prominence declined with the emergence of communicative approaches to language instruction [2]. The communicative approach has been widely recognized as a major force driving innovation in English language teaching methodology [2]. Nevertheless, research conducted from the 1980s onward has suggested that communication alone is insufficient to meet language learners' needs and learning objectives because communicative instruction primarily emphasizes meaning rather than linguistic form [3-8].

Consequently, the integration of traditional grammar-based instruction with communicative language teaching has become increasingly important in second and foreign language education [2, 5, 8-16]. Within this integrated perspective, grammar is no longer viewed as an autonomous system taught in isolation. Instead, it is presented in relation to meaning, social function, and discourse structure [2]. As Larsen-Freeman [17] argued, grammar should be understood through the interaction of three dimensions: “the form or structures themselves, their semantics or meaning, and the pragmatic conditions governing their use” (p. 280). These three dimensions formed the theoretical foundation for the present study, which focused on the teaching and learning of English tenses, specifically the simple present, simple past, and present progressive tenses.

Although grammar has regained importance in language instruction, approaches to grammar teaching in ESL and EFL contexts have shifted from an exclusive emphasis on grammatical forms toward the incorporation of explicit grammar instruction within communicative learning environments [9-10, 13, 18]. As a result, research in second and foreign language education has increasingly emphasized learner-centered communicative language use while maintaining the benefits of traditional grammar instruction. Xu and Li [15-16] found that both form-focused and meaning-focused classroom interactions contributed positively to language learning. Similarly, Ellis [19] noted that form-focused instruction encompasses both traditional approaches based on structural syllabi and communicative approaches that primarily emphasize meaning. Despite growing support for integrating form-focused instruction with communicative language teaching, empirical research examining the effectiveness of such integration in foreign language contexts remains limited [20]. To date, few studies have investigated how the integration of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching influences Taiwanese students’ acquisition of a complete set of English tenses, particularly the simple present, simple past, and present progressive tenses. Accordingly, the present study was designed to address the following research questions and corresponding null hypotheses.

Research Questions

1. How does form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching affect students’ performance on a grammaticality completion task involving English tenses (simple present, simple past, and present progressive) compared with form-focused instruction alone?
2. How does form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching affect students’ written production of English tenses (simple present, simple past, and present progressive) compared with form-focused instruction alone?

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant difference in performance on the grammaticality completion task involving English tenses (simple present, simple past, and present progressive) between students who receive form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching and those who receive form-focused instruction alone.

H₀₂: There is no statistically significant difference in written production involving English tenses (simple present, simple past, and present progressive) between students who receive form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching and those who receive form-focused instruction alone.

2. Literature Review

The role of grammar instruction in English language teaching, particularly in relation to meaning-focused communicative activities, has long been a subject of debate. While traditional approaches have often emphasized explicit grammar instruction, communicative language teaching (CLT) prioritizes the use of language for meaningful communication. In recent years, however, an increasing body of research has suggested that these two approaches should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Rather, integrating form-focused instruction (FFI) with communicative language teaching has been shown to facilitate both grammatical development and communicative competence [12, 15-16, 20, 21]. This perspective is further supported by Robinson [22], Doughty and Williams [9], and Schenck [23], who advocate the incorporation of explicit attention to linguistic forms within communicative learning environments.

A major theoretical foundation for this integrated approach is Long’s [18] focus-on-form framework. Long argued that teaching grammatical structures in isolation rarely enables learners to use those forms effectively in real communication, whereas completely neglecting grammar instruction may hinder linguistic development.

To overcome these limitations, he proposed that learners' attention should be directed to linguistic forms as they arise within meaningful communicative activities. Similarly, Ellis [19] maintained that attention to form is most beneficial when it occurs in the context of meaning-focused communication. According to Ellis, classroom instruction can promote learners' awareness of grammatical features and increase their ability to notice and process those features during subsequent language use. He further distinguished between focus on forms and focus on form. The former refers to traditional grammar instruction that emphasizes the mastery of discrete linguistic structures, whereas the latter involves drawing learners' attention to language forms incidentally within communicative activities whose primary focus remains on meaning and communication.

The application of focus-on-form instruction may vary according to instructional context. Fotos [10] highlighted important distinctions between English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. In ESL environments, where learners are naturally exposed to abundant communicative opportunities, focus-on-form instruction often serves as a supplement to ongoing communication. In contrast, in EFL contexts, where authentic language exposure is more limited, focus-on-form approaches provide a valuable rationale for incorporating communicative activities into traditionally grammar-oriented classrooms. This distinction is particularly relevant in Taiwan, where English instruction has historically emphasized grammar explanation, memorization, translation, sentence writing, and structure-based teaching [24-25]. In addition, English classrooms are often characterized by large class sizes and teacher-centered instructional practices [26]. Although communicative language teaching has gained increasing attention in Taiwan, with greater emphasis on authentic language use and integrated language skills, its implementation remains constrained by examination-oriented educational traditions and established instructional practices.

Given these contextual characteristics, investigating the integration of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching in EFL settings is particularly important. Although substantial research has demonstrated the effectiveness of such an approach in ESL contexts, relatively few studies have examined its application and effectiveness in EFL environments. Therefore, exploring how form-focused instruction can be integrated with communicative language teaching in EFL classrooms remains a significant area for further research. Recent empirical studies have begun to provide evidence supporting this integrated instructional framework, suggesting that it may offer an effective means of developing both grammatical accuracy and communicative competence in foreign language learning contexts.

Recent studies have consistently supported the integration of Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) within communicative language teaching. Empirical evidence suggests that learners benefit from instructional approaches that combine attention to grammatical forms with meaningful communicative activities. For example, Xu and Li [15-16] demonstrated that FFI implemented before, during, or after communicative tasks effectively facilitated EFL learners' grammatical development. Their findings further indicated that form-focused instruction embedded within communicative activities promotes the acquisition of both simple and complex grammatical structures, highlighting that grammar instruction and communicative practice are complementary rather than mutually exclusive components of language learning. Subsequent research has provided additional support for this perspective. Lee and Lyster [11] found that form-focused instructional interventions significantly enhanced learners' grammatical accuracy, underscoring the importance of directing learners' attention to linguistic forms within communicative contexts. Similarly, Mujtaba et al. [8] reported that the integration of FFI into communicative writing activities improved learners' linguistic accuracy, complexity, and fluency, suggesting that form-focused approaches can facilitate multiple dimensions of language development. In the area of oral communication, Woyma et al. [21] demonstrated that incorporating FFI into communicative grammar instruction significantly improved learners' grammatical accuracy and pronunciation performance. Furthermore, Shao and Cho [20] revealed that the effectiveness of FFI may vary according to grammatical complexity and learners' prior knowledge, indicating the need for instructional practices that are responsive to learners' proficiency levels and learning needs.

Taken together, these findings suggest that integrating attention to form within communicative language teaching provides learners with valuable opportunities to develop grammatical knowledge while engaging in meaningful language use. Rather than treating grammar as an isolated body of knowledge, contemporary research indicates that grammatical development is most effectively facilitated when learners' attention to linguistic forms is embedded within meaning-oriented communicative activities. Through carefully designed instructional tasks, learners are provided with systematic opportunities to notice, process, and produce target

grammatical structures while participating in authentic communication. This integration of form and meaning enables learners to develop grammatical accuracy without sacrificing communicative effectiveness. As a result, communicative grammar instruction that incorporates form-focused attention not only enhances learners' grammatical competence but also promotes broader communicative competence. Consequently, an instructional approach that balances meaningful communication with attention to linguistic forms appears to offer an effective pedagogical framework for second and foreign language learning, fostering both accurate language use and successful communication.

3. Method

3.1 Research Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 68 first-year junior high school students, including 34 male and 34 female students, from two seventh-grade classes at a private junior high school in northern Taiwan. All participants were learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and had studied English as a compulsory subject since elementary school. However, none of them had received systematic instruction in English grammar. Participants were selected through purposive sampling.

3.2 Research Design, Instrumentation, and Data-Collection Procedures

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effects of two instructional approaches on learners' acquisition of English verb tenses, namely the simple present, simple past, and present progressive tenses. Specifically, the study compared the effectiveness of (a) the integration of form-focused instruction (FFI) and communicative language teaching (CLT) and (b) form-focused instruction delivered through teacher-fronted lessons. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the incorporation of communicative activities could enhance learners' grammatical development beyond that achieved through traditional explicit grammar instruction.

Two grammar assessment instruments were developed by the researcher to collect quantitative data: a grammaticality completion test and a sentence tense transformation test. Prior to the implementation of the main study, a pilot version of the grammar test was administered to 70 seventh-grade students who were not involved in the formal experiment. The pilot instrument consisted of 50 grammaticality completion items and 22 sentence tense transformation items.

Item discrimination analysis was subsequently conducted. Participants' scores were ranked and divided into high-achieving and low-achieving groups. The discrimination index of each item was calculated by comparing the percentage of correct responses between the two groups. Items with discrimination values below .30 were considered insufficiently discriminative and were removed. As a result, 20 grammaticality completion items and nine sentence tense transformation items were eliminated. The final version of the grammar assessment therefore consisted of 30 grammaticality completion items and 13 sentence tense transformation items, yielding a total of 43 test items. The internal consistency of the final version of the grammar assessment was shown to be high by the Cronbach alpha measure of 0.916.

To further improve the quality of the instruments, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 pilot participants after test completion. The interview questions focused on the clarity of the written instructions, the comprehensibility of the test items, and the adequacy of the time allocation. Feedback obtained from the interviews was incorporated into the revision process, thereby enhancing the usability and appropriateness of the instruments.

Before the instructional intervention began, all participants completed a background questionnaire designed to gather information concerning their English learning experiences, prior exposure to English instruction, and related learning characteristics. The questionnaire data enabled the researcher to identify potential outliers and to ensure that the selected participants shared relatively comparable educational backgrounds.

The participants were drawn from two intact seventh-grade classes at the same junior high school. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, while the two intact classes were randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions. Prior to instruction, both groups completed a pretest to assess their

baseline knowledge of the target tense structures. The pretest results provided information regarding participants' initial grammatical competence and served as a basis for subsequent comparisons.

The target instructional content focused on English tense usage because the participants' textbooks provided only limited explanations and practice opportunities related to tense forms. Furthermore, previous studies had seldom examined the acquisition of a complete set of basic English tenses within a single instructional framework. Consequently, English tenses were considered an appropriate target structure for investigating the effectiveness of different instructional approaches.

Following the administration of the pretest, different instructional treatments were implemented. The experimental group received instruction integrating form-focused instruction with communicative language teaching principles, whereas the control group received form-focused instruction through teacher-fronted lessons. The intervention lasted for six consecutive weeks. During this period, classes met once per week, and each instructional session lasted approximately 100 minutes.

Although both groups received instruction on identical grammatical content and utilized the same instructional materials, the pedagogical procedures differed considerably. In the experimental group, grammar instruction was embedded within communicative activities that required meaningful language use. Activities included information gap activities, role-playing tasks, pair work, group discussions, focused communicative tasks, functional language practice, contextualized reading activities, and guided writing exercises. These activities were designed to provide learners with opportunities to notice, process, and produce target tense forms in authentic communicative contexts.

In contrast, instruction in the control group emphasized explicit explanation of grammatical rules and controlled practice activities. Students primarily engaged in reading and writing exercises designed to reinforce grammatical accuracy. While grammar explanations were presented clearly and systematically, learners were not provided with communicative activities that required the meaningful use of target structures. Consequently, opportunities for interaction and negotiated meaning were substantially more limited than those available in the experimental group.

The instructional materials used throughout the intervention were adapted from several well-established grammar resources, including *Fundamentals of English Grammar* [27], *Understanding and Using English Grammar* [28], *Fun with Grammar: Communicative Activities for the Azar Grammar Series* [29], and *Grammar Practice Activities* [30]. The materials were modified to ensure consistency across instructional conditions while maintaining age-appropriate content for junior high school learners.

To minimize potential threats to internal validity, participants were not informed that they were taking part in an experimental study. Moreover, both groups received identical instructional time, equivalent content coverage, and instruction from the same researcher. These procedures were intended to reduce the likelihood of Hawthorne effects and other confounding influences associated with differential treatment.

Immediately following the completion of the six-week instructional period, a posttest was administered to both groups. The posttest contained the same items as the pretest; however, the order of questions and response options was rearranged to reduce memory effects. All participants completed the assessment under standardized testing conditions identical to those employed during the pretest administration.

Both the pretest and posttest consisted of two sections designed to measure distinct aspects of grammatical competence. The grammaticality completion test assessed learners' receptive grammatical knowledge of the target tense structures, whereas the sentence tense transformation test was designed to elicit controlled written production. Together, the two assessment formats provided complementary evidence regarding learners' grammatical comprehension and productive ability.

Several procedures were undertaken to establish content validity. First, detailed instructions accompanied by illustrative examples in Chinese were provided to ensure participants' understanding of the assessment procedures. Second, the researcher reviewed the English textbooks used by the participants to verify the alignment between test content and instructional objectives. Finally, test items were developed with reference to elementary-level General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) materials, English grammar textbooks, and instructional resources published by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC). These procedures

contributed to the representativeness and appropriateness of the assessment instruments for the target population.

3.3 Scoring Procedures

The pretest and posttest each consisted of a total of 43 items. For both grammar assessments, one point was awarded for each correct response. Participants received no points for incorrect answers or for failure to accurately transform sentence tenses in accordance with the provided prompts. The maximum possible score on the grammaticality completion test was 30 points, while the sentence tense transformation test had a maximum score of 13 points.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative methods were employed to analyze and present the data collected in this study. All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 31.0. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < .05$ for all analyses. Results reaching a significance level of $p < .01$ were also reported when applicable.

1. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated to compare the pretest and posttest performances of the experimental and control groups on the two grammar assessments.
2. A one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to examine whether students' learning gains were influenced by different grammar instructional approaches. In addition, independent-samples t-tests were performed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the two groups in the percentages of correct responses on the pretests and posttests.

4. Results

This study aimed to examine the effects of two grammar instructional approaches on Taiwanese seventh-grade students' learning of English tenses, specifically the simple present, simple past, and present progressive tenses. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze and present the findings. The results reported in this study are based on data collected from 68 junior high school students in Taiwan.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for participants' performance on the grammaticality completion test in both the pretest and posttest. On the pretest, the experimental group obtained a mean score of 10.82, which was 0.65 points higher than the mean score of 10.17 achieved by the control group. The standard deviation of the experimental group was 2.16, compared with 1.83 for the control group, indicating a slightly greater degree of score variability among students in the experimental group.

On the posttest, the experimental group achieved a mean score of 17.42, exceeding the control group's mean score of 14.17 by 3.25 points. The standard deviation for the experimental group was 4.81, whereas that of the control group was 3.92, representing a difference of 0.89. These results suggest that the experimental group demonstrated stronger performance on the grammaticality completion test following the instructional treatment.

Table 1: Proportion of Correct Answers to the Grammaticality Completion Test of Both Pre- and Post- Tests (N=68)

Group	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Experimental Group (n=34)	10.82	2.16	17.42	4.81
Control Group (n=34)	10.17	1.83	14.17	3.92
Overall	10.50	2.01	15.80	4.46

To determine whether the differences in learning gains between the two groups were attributable to the instructional approaches employed, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. The analysis aimed to examine the effects of the two grammar instructional approaches while controlling for participants' prior knowledge as reflected in their pretest performance on the grammaticality completion test. When comparing posttest performance between the two groups, participants' pretest scores were included as a covariate because initial differences in proficiency may have influenced their posttest results. As shown in Table 2, the ANCOVA yielded an F value of 4.743 with a significance level of .033 ($p < .05$), indicating a statistically significant effect.

Therefore, there is a significant interaction between the pretest and the group. Statistically significant differences were found to exist between the two groups as to how the results of the pre-test in the grammaticality completion test influenced those of the post-test. Different groups of students varied regarding the degree to which the results of the pre-test in the grammaticality completion test affected those of the post-test on the same items. The extent to which students' pretest scores influenced their posttest performance on the grammaticality completion test varied according to the instructional approach they received. These findings indicate that the impact of prior grammatical knowledge on subsequent learning outcomes was not uniform across groups. Therefore, further analyses about comparisons of adjusted means were necessary to clarify the nature of the differences between the two instructional conditions.

Table 2: Summary of ANCOVA for the Grammaticality Completion Test (Interaction Term is Included)

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups					
Group	162.743	1	162.743	7.862	**0.007
G. Comp. T. of Pre-Test	326.189	1	326.189	15.754	**0.000
Group X G. Comp. T. of Pre-Test	98.256	1	98.256	4.743	*0.033
Within Groups	1243.521	60	20.725		

* p -value < 0.05 ** p -value < 0.01.

Because the interaction effect reached statistical significance, participants' pretest scores on the grammaticality completion test were adjusted to a common level before further comparisons were made. Specifically, posttest performance was compared after controlling for the overall mean pretest score. As shown in Table 3, the adjusted mean scores on the grammaticality completion posttest were 16.339 for the experimental group and 13.942 for the control group. The covariate adjustment was based on the overall pretest mean score of 10.50 on the grammaticality completion test. After controlling for pretest performance, the experimental group continued to demonstrate superior performance relative to the control group. The comparison of adjusted means revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups. As presented in Table 4, the adjusted mean difference between the experimental and control groups was 2.397 points. This difference reached statistical significance ($p = .004$), indicating that students who received form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching performed significantly better on the grammaticality completion posttest than those who received form-focused instruction alone.

These findings indicate that students in the experimental group significantly outperformed those in the control group on the grammaticality completion posttest. The results suggest that the integration of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching facilitated students' understanding of English tenses, specifically the simple present, simple past, and present progressive tenses. Consequently, students who received the integrated instructional approach demonstrated superior performance on the grammaticality completion test.

Table 3: Estimated Proportion of Correct Answers to the Grammaticality Completion Test of Post-Test for the Two Groups

Group	Mean	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	16.339	0.491	15.362	17.316
Control	13.942	0.491	12.965	14.919

Table 4: Independent-Samples t-test on Grammaticality Completion Test for Experimental/ Control Groups

Comparison	Mean Difference	Sig.	95% Lower	95% Upper
Experimental / Control	2.397	**0.004	0.773	4.021

* p -value < 0.05 ** p -value < 0.01.

These findings are consistent with those reported by Xu and Li [15-16], who found that learners receiving a combination of grammar-based and communicative ESL instruction outperformed those who received grammar-based instruction alone in measures of language comprehension. Accordingly, the null hypothesis, which stated that there would be no statistically significant difference between the two instructional groups, was rejected.

As shown in Table 5, the experimental group obtained a mean score of 3.86 on the sentence tense transformation pretest, which was 1.14 points higher than the mean score of 2.72 achieved by the control group. On the sentence tense transformation posttest, the experimental group achieved a mean score of 7.61, whereas

the control group obtained a mean score of 5.93, resulting in a difference of 1.68 points in favor of the experimental group. Regarding score variability, the standard deviation of the control group (3.78) was higher than that of the experimental group (3.15) by 0.63, indicating greater variation in posttest performance among students in the control group.

Table 5: Proportion of Correct Answers to the Sentence Tense Transformation Test, Pre- and Post-Tests (N=68)

Group	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Experimental Group (n=34)	3.86	2.24	7.61	3.15
Control Group (n=34)	2.72	2.67	5.93	3.78
Overall	3.29	2.48	6.77	3.49

As discussed previously, when comparing the two groups' performance on the sentence tense transformation test, participants' pretest scores needed to be taken into consideration. A comparison based solely on posttest performance could have produced misleading results because the two groups differed in their initial levels of proficiency with the target grammatical structures. Therefore, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to control for the effects of pretest performance and to provide a more accurate assessment of the impact of the instructional treatments on students' posttest outcomes.

Table 6: Summary of ANCOVA in the Sentence Tense Transformation Test (Interaction Term Is Included)

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups					
Group	82.361	1	82.361	3.777	0.057
Pre-test S. Tense Trans. Task	257.628	1	257.628	11.820	**0.002
Group x Pre-test S. T. Trans. Task	1.479	1	1.479	0.068	0.796
Within Groups	1307.924	60	21.799		

* $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$

As shown in Table 6, the interaction effect between group membership and pretest performance on the sentence tense transformation test was not statistically significant, $F = 0.068$, $p = .796$. This result indicates that no significant interaction existed between the instructional group and participants' pretest performance.

As shown in Table 7, the ANCOVA results revealed that the F values for the group effect and the pretest covariate on the sentence tense transformation test were 4.001 and 11.820, respectively. The corresponding significance levels were .0049 and .001. The covariate (pretest performance) was found to be statistically significant ($p = .001$), indicating that participants' posttest performance on the sentence tense transformation test was significantly related to their initial level of proficiency as measured by the pretest. In other words, students' prior knowledge and performance on the sentence tense transformation pretest had a significant influence on their posttest scores.

The ANCOVA indicated a statistically significant group effect, $p = .049$. After adjusting for pretest performance, the experimental and control groups differed significantly on the sentence tense transformation posttest. Given that the observed significance level was close to the conventional threshold of .05, this result should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the finding provides preliminary evidence that the two instructional approaches may have resulted in differential learning outcomes.

Table 7: Summary of ANCOVA for the Sentence Tense Transformation Test (the Interaction Term Is Not Included)

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32.240	1	32.240	4.001	0.049*
Group					
S. Tense Trans. T. of Pre-Test	95.237	1	95.237	11.820	**0.001
Within Groups	491.513	61	8.058		

* $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$

Participants' pretest scores on the sentence tense transformation test were adjusted to a common level to control for differences in initial proficiency. Accordingly, posttest performance on the sentence tense transformation test was compared after controlling for the overall mean pretest score. As shown in Table 8, the adjusted mean score for the experimental group was 7.612, whereas the adjusted mean score for the control group was 6.013. The covariate adjustment was based on the overall pretest mean score of 3.29 on the sentence

tense transformation test. After controlling for pretest performance, the experimental group continued to demonstrate a higher adjusted mean score than the control group, suggesting that students who received form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching performed better on the sentence tense transformation posttest than those who received form-focused instruction alone.

Table 8: Estimated Proportion of Correct Answers to the Sentence Tense Transformation Test of Post-Test for Both Groups

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	7.612	0.532	6.549	8.675
Control	6.013	0.532	4.949	7.076

The difference between the two adjusted means reached statistical significance. As shown in Table 9, the mean difference between the experimental and control groups was 1.60, with a significance level of $p = .049$ ($p < .05$). Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 9: Independent-Samples t-test on Sentence Tense Transformation Test for Experimental/Control Groups

Comparison	Mean Difference	Sig.	95% Lower	95% Upper
Experimental /Control	1.60	*0.049	0.010	3.190

* $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ** $p\text{-value} < 0.01$

As reported above, statistically significant differences in posttest sentence tense transformation test performance were found between students who received form-focused instruction alone and those who received form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching. These findings suggest that the integrated instructional approach facilitated students' ability to produce English tenses (simple present, simple past, and present progressive) more accurately, resulting in improved performance on the sentence tense transformation test. The results are consistent with those of Day and Shapson [31], Mujtaba et al. [8] and Woymo et al. [21], who found that learners exposed to an instructional approach combining formal, functional, analytic, and communicative activities outperformed those who did not receive such instruction in productive performance. Accordingly, the null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant difference between the two instructional groups was rejected.

5. Conclusion

With regard to Research Question 1, which examined the effects of two instructional approaches on students' performance in the grammaticality completion test involving English tenses (simple present, simple past, and present progressive), the findings revealed that students who received form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching demonstrated a statistically significant improvement ($p < .05$) in their proportion of correct responses. Moreover, they significantly outperformed students who received form-focused instruction alone. These findings are consistent with those of Xu and Li, [15-16], who reported that learners receiving a combination of grammar-based and communicative ESL instruction achieved higher levels of comprehension than those who received only grammar-based instruction.

Regarding Null Hypothesis 1, the results of the independent-samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between the adjusted mean scores of the two groups. Therefore, Null Hypothesis 1, which stated that no statistically significant difference existed between the two instructional groups, was rejected.

In response to Research Question 2, which compared the two groups' written production of English tenses, the results showed that students who received six weeks of form-focused instruction integrated with communicative language teaching achieved a significantly higher mean proportion of correct responses on the sentence tense transformation task ($p = .049$) than those who received form-focused instruction alone. These findings support those reported by Day and Shapson [31], Mujtaba et al. [8] and Woymo et al. [21], whose study demonstrated that learners exposed to an instructional approach combining formal grammar instruction with functional, analytic, and communicative activities outperformed learners who did not receive such instruction on measures of productive performance.

With respect to Null Hypothesis 2, the results of the independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference ($p = .049$) between the adjusted mean scores of the two groups. Accordingly, Null Hypothesis 2, which stated that no statistically significant difference existed between the two instructional groups in written production involving English tenses, was rejected.

6. Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Based on the findings obtained from this research, several pedagogical implications can be drawn.

(1) The findings revealed that students in the experimental group performed significantly better than those in the control group on the post-test, particularly in grammaticality completion and sentence tense transformation tasks. These results suggest that English teachers in Taiwan may benefit from incorporating communicative activities into grammar instruction. Such an approach can enhance learners' understanding of grammatical structures as well as their ability to use them accurately in language production.

(2) Communicative activities should be introduced from the early stages of English learning to emphasize the balanced development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, English textbooks should incorporate a wider range of communicative tasks connected to authentic real-life contexts while maintaining explicit instruction on grammatical forms.

7. Recommendations for Future Research

In light of the conclusions reached in this study and considering its limitations, several suggestions are offered for future research on the integration of form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching.

(1) Future studies should employ stratified random sampling to establish a true experimental design rather than a quasi-experimental one. Because of practical constraints and administrative considerations, participants in the present study were drawn from two intact classes. To gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of combining form-focused instruction with communicative language teaching, future researchers are encouraged to randomly assign participants to experimental and control groups.

(2) The current study investigated only one grammatical area—English tenses, including the present, past, and present progressive tenses—and focused on a single age group within a private junior high school. Future research could explore a broader range of grammatical structures, examine learners from different age groups and geographical regions, such as college students, and investigate students' attitudes and preferences regarding various approaches to grammar instruction.

(3) Further research should also examine learners' spontaneous language production. The present study focused primarily on grammar knowledge and controlled language production, with findings based on participants' performance in paper-and-pencil assessments. Future investigations could evaluate the impact of instructional approaches on learners' spontaneous oral communication and real-time language use.

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Conflicts of Interest

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