

A Model of Grammar Teaching Through Consciousness-Raising Activities

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Abstract: *How can we teach grammar in ways that enable learners to learn grammar? It is one of the key questions that arise in learning grammar. This study takes place in the context of English as a foreign language at the College where teaching English is subdivided into major components of a language; they are writing, speaking, reading, listening, grammar and vocabulary. Here the writer's focus is the teaching grammar. Grammar teaching has always been hotly debated and the most controversial aspect of language teaching. However, grammar is an important aspect in language learning in general. The writer presents a model of grammar teaching through consciousness-raising activities involving the learners to identify and understand the grammatical point in context. Consciousness-raising is to raise something to consciousness that means to make learners aware of something. Consciousness raising activities are designed to raise the learners' language awareness. The learners are required to solve the problems interactively in order to formulate both the explicit and the implicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge involves a conscious and analytical awareness of formal properties in language. Meanwhile implicit knowledge shows intuitive feeling for what may be correct and acceptable. An example of consciousness raising activities is discovery activities where the learners are asked to formulate a grammar rule based on some language examples. Discovery activities are typically very short and simple tasks. They are highly controlled, there is only one correct answer and it is unlikely that the learners will get the answer wrong. So teaching grammar by consciousness-raising activities, learners notice something about language that they may not notice on their own. The consciousness-raising activities can help learners build their conscious knowledge and understanding of how the language works grammatically.*

Keywords: *Model of Grammar Teaching, Consciousness-Raising Activities*

1. INTRODUCTION

This study talks about teaching grammar at the first year EFL college students where grammar is as a compulsory subject which is taught separately from other skills or other subjects. It is taught each semester in the name of Grammar 1, 2, 3 and Grammar 4. How can the writer teach grammar in ways that enable learners meaning here college students to learn grammar? For most teachers, the main idea of grammar teaching is to help learners internalize the structures taught in such a way that they can be used in everyday communication.

In this study, the writer focuses on teaching grammatical feature of English tenses. Why tenses is because it is the problematic area. The learners are confused by the various tenses in their simple and continuous forms and in their perfective aspects, and by the complexity of the uses of each tense. The students often ask for rules to make them aware of the use of the tenses, and consequently use them correctly. Consciousness-raising activities make the learners aware of language so they can achieve an accurate use of the tenses in an appropriate context for communication.

Consciousness-raising involves an attempt to equip the learners with an understanding of a specific grammar feature to develop explicit knowledge or declarative knowledge. One way to teach explicit knowledge of grammar is through grammar discovery activities. To end this, the learners are provided with opportunities to practice the structures where the practice consists of series of exercises whose aim is to cause learners absorb the rules thoroughly.

The main characteristics of consciousness-raising activities are there is an attempt to isolate linguistic feature for focused attention, the learners are provided with data which illustrate the targeted feature and they may also be supplied with an explicit rule describing feature. The learners are expected to utilize intellectual effort to understand the targeted feature. Incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners leads to clarification in the form of further data and description, learners may be required to articulate the rules describing the grammatical feature, Ellis (2002, p.168). It is clear that the main purpose of consciousness-raising is to develop explicit knowledge of grammar. Thus grammar teaching can involve a combination of practice and consciousness-raising.

2. CONTENT

2.1 The Place of Grammar in Language Teaching

Grammar teaching has undergone a lot of rethinking in recent years. There are some theories such as Stephen Krashen who believes that it should be abandoned, or at least relegated to a very minor role in a language program. The position of grammar in language teaching is debatable. Should we teach grammar? For most teachers, the main idea of grammar teaching is to help learners internalize the structure taught in such a way that they can be used in everyday communication. The writer herself feels the need to teach grammar. Here the writer teaches grammar through consciousness-raising activities which can be done by discovery way.

How should we teach explicit knowledge of grammar? One way is to use discovery activities. These involve providing learners with data to illustrate a particular grammatical feature and getting them to analyze it so as to arrive at an understanding of how the feature works. In the activities, the learners are provided with language data and are asked to discover or construct the grammar rule for themselves. Here is an example of a consciousness-raising activity taken from Ellis (2002, p.173) for the discovery about when *for* and *since* are used:

Table 1. An Example of A Consciousness-Raising Task

1. Here is some information about when three-people joined the company they now work for and how long they have been working there.		
Name	Date joined	Length of time
Ms. Regan	1945	45 years
Mr. Bush	1970	20 years
Ms. Thatcher	1989	9 Months
Mr. Baker	1990 (Feb)	10 days
2.	Study these sentences about these people. When is <i>for</i> used and when is <i>since</i> used? a. Ms. Regan has been working for her company for most of her life. b. Mr. Bush has been working for his company since 1970. c. Ms. Thatcher has been working for her company for 9 months. d. Mr. Baker has been working for his company February.	
3.	Which of the following sentences are ungrammatical? Why? a. Ms. Regan has been working for her company for 1945. b. Mr. Bush has been working for his company for 9 months. c. Ms. Thatcher has been working her company since 1989. d. Mr. Baker has been working for his company since 10 days.	
4.	Try and make up a rule to explain when <i>for</i> and <i>since</i> are used.	
5.	Make up one sentence about when you started to learn English and one sentence about how long have you been studying English. Use <i>for</i> and <i>since</i> .	

Table 1 provides a simple example of an inductive task designed to raise learners' consciousness about the grammatical differences between *for* and *since*. This problem has been designed with a number of points in mind. First, the intention is to focus on a known source of difficulty, learners frequently fail to distinguish *for* and *since*. Second, the data provided must be adequate to enable learners to discover the rule that governs the usage of these prepositions in time expression. Third, the task requires minimal production on the part of the learners; instead, emphasis is placed on developing an idea of when the two forms are used. Fourth, there is opportunity to apply the rule

in the construction of personalized statements. This is not intended to practice the rule but to promote its storage as explicit knowledge. If learners notice this grammatical feature of *for* and *since* then it will be implicit knowledge.

In this paper the writer puts some materials designed to teach grammar through consciousness-raising activities. A natural tendency we have is to focus on meaning before form. Learners will naturally notice content words first, but may not pay attention to function words such as prepositions, conjunctions, and endings for tense and number. For example learners are given activities which have nothing to do to lead a rule of a topic. Its aim is to help them to notice and process the use of past tense in input as a step in their learning to use it correctly by themselves.

Table 2. *Activities for the Simple Past Tense.*

For each of the underlined words, decide if it is an adjective, a past tense verb, or past participle!		
My dad is very interested in old coins. He started collecting them when he was ten. When he got the detector, Dad believed he would find a huge treasure, but he detected mostly old, used in nails. I have borrowed his metal detector to see if I can find coins...		
Adjective	Past Tense Verb	Past participle
Interested		Borrowed
Used		

The fact that the same –ed forms can have different functions makes it difficult for learners to spot the past tense verbs. This consciousness-raising activity provides training in doing that.

2.2 Consciousness-Raising Activities

2.2.1 Definition of Consciousness-Raising Activities

In everyday language, consciousness has several senses and it is often used ambiguously. Consciousness is as awareness. Awareness is state or ability to perceive, to feel or to be conscious of events, objects, or sensory patterns. More broadly, it is the state or quality of being aware of something. Meanwhile language awareness is explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use. Or it is good knowledge about language, a conscious understanding of how language works and of how people learn them and use them. Meanwhile definition of activities, the writer here means activities or tasks provided by the teacher.

Consciousness-raising is an approach to language teaching. To raise something to consciousness means to make someone aware of something. The immediate aim to CR tasks is to help learners notice something about the language that they may not notice on their own.

Moreover, consciousness can be as knowledge. According to Chomsky (1986:263-273), native speakers of English know consciously in contrast not for the second or foreign language learners for sentences below. Chomsky discusses the distinction in terms of the following sentences:

- a. John is too stubborn to talk to him.
- b. John is too stubborn to talk to.

In sentence 1, English native speakers know that *John* is the subject of *talk* but not in 2 and that *him* in 1 may not refer to *John*. These facts about English are a reflection of how much more fundamental principles of universal grammar which are unconscious. Chomsky suggests they are cognized rather known, relating cognization to implicit as opposed to explicit knowledge.

2.2.2 The Purpose of Consciousness-Raising Activities

The ultimate purpose of most language teaching is to help learners acquire the target language to a point where they can use it accurately, spontaneously and fluently. Consciousness-raising has several purposes:

1. to direct learners' attention to grammar features they might not notice on their own.
2. to help learners make form-meaning connections.
3. to help learners acquire conscious knowledge which can be used to understand input and monitor their own output.

4. to make learners more autonomous by developing their analytical ability.

2.2.3 Discovery Activities

The grammar-discovery activities have a number of advantages. In general, learners find it more interesting to discover something for themselves than to be told it. It turns grammar into a content that the learners can communicate about. In other words, learners can use the target language as the medium for discovering grammar. In this way, a grammar discovery activity doubles up as a communicative task. The biggest advantage is that grammar discovery activity helps learners to develop the analytical skill. They can continue to discover how the grammar of the language works on their own when they are outside the classroom. The grammar-discovery approach helps to foster the curiosity and the analytical skills needed to work on language autonomously.

Discovery activities are typically very short and simple tasks. They are highly controlled, there is only one correct answer, and it is unlikely that the learners will get the answer wrong.

Table 3. *The Use of Simple Past Tense*

For each of the italic verbs, decide if the form is Past Simple Tense or Present Perfect Tense. Write PST or PPT under the verb.		
Annie <i>moved</i> to England with her parents in 2007.		
She <i>has lived</i> in England for six years now.		
She <i>has made</i> a lot of friends.		
I <i>have known</i> Annie since last year.		
We <i>became</i> friends when my family moved to her street.		
The form of the verb depends on whether it refers to a finished time in the past or a time that is still continuing at the present . Decide what kind of time the expressions below refer to:		
	Finished time	Time which continues at the present
In 2007		
For six years		
Since last year		
When my family moved to her street		
Sentence number 3 above does not show or mention any time. Do you think it refers to a finished time or a time that continues now?		
Now complete the following rule:		
Past Simple Tense is used to talk about events at....		
Present perfect tense is used to talk about events at...		
Now write some sentences about yourself or about your friends.		
1. ...	in 2014	
2. ...	years ago	
3. ...	since ...	
4. ...	when ...	
5. ...		

Consciousness-raising activities can be less controlled and more open ended. What they all have in common is that they involve learners to notice a target structure or function in a text whether it is written or spoken and drawing some conclusions.

By doing these activities, the learners of Stain college achieve an accurate use of the tenses in an appropriate context of communication.

3. CONCLUSION

Consciousness-raising activities have the potential to make learners more autonomous by developing their analytical ability. They can train the learners to notice how language is used, even when they are not doing a consciousness-raising activity. Ideally, teachers hope the learners are able to pick up language from the internet, television, films and other incidental target language input they may encounter. Such autonomous learning is more likely if consciousness-raising activities stimulate their interest in language and give them the tools to explore it. At the

same time, the autonomous learners will come across use language that does not conform to what they have been taught.

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