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Consciousness-Raising Tasks Versus Deductive Approach: Two Form-Focused Instruction Types in Teaching Grammar to Iranian High School EFL Learners

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Abstract

Consciousness-raising (CR) task is a new way of teaching grammar developed in communicative contexts although little has been written on the effectiveness of CR tasks in EFL setting. The present study is an attempt to investigate the impact of CR tasks in Iranian EFL setting by comparing them with deductive, grammar lessons common in the Iranian schools. The subjects of this study were 80 EFL pre-university male students who were randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control one. The control group received three ordinary teacher-fronted, deductive lessons, a common way of teaching methodology in Iran, on three grammatical structures (adverb placement, indirect object placement and the use of relative clause). The experimental group, however, was treated with three 'consciousness-raising' (CR) tasks dealing with the same target structures. The results showed that in the short-run, CR tasks were as effective as deductive approach in promoting the learners' grammatical knowledge while in the long-run, the CR group maintained their gains more effectively than the deductive group. The conclusion is that CR tasks can function more effectively than deductive approach if the following conditions are met: (a) performing the consciousness-raising tasks in learners' L1; (b) providing the learners with feedback whenever they encounter a problem in solving the

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tasks; (c) grouping the learners in such a way that at least one learner in each group would be more proficient than the other members to help the less proficient ones understand and discover the rules more effectively.

Key words: Consciousness-raising Task, Deductive, Iranian EFL High School Learners, Teaching Grammar

Introduction

The field of second language pedagogy is witnessing an increasing interest in the idea of focus on form and the suggestion that attention to form should be encouraged in second language classroom. Focus on form or 'form-focused instruction' (FFI), though recently debated, has been a continuing controversy in second language education. Spada (1997: 73) defines form-focused instruction as 'any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learner's attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly'. It is worth noting that phonological, grammatical, and lexical structures occupy the three principal formal categories that typically appear in language curriculum (Brown, 2001: 361). Since these can be separate studies, the notion of form in this study is limited to grammatical elements.

Based on the findings of morpheme studies (e.g. Dulay & Burt, 1973; Perkins & Larsen-Freeman, 1975; Turner, 1979), Krashen (1985) put forward his 'Input Hypothesis' stating what all L2 learners need in order to successfully acquire a second language is exposure to comprehensible input and motivation. This hypothesis, in turn, led to the adoption of the strong version of the communicative approach to language teaching which is defined by Spada (1997: 74) as a teaching methodology oriented primarily towards exchanging meaning without providing any focus on form or error correction.

However, today, only few language experts advocate this 'zero option' to grammar or no form-focused instruction at all (Ellis, 1997: 47) since the extensive empirical research in Canadian immersion contexts, which were purely communicative, has shown that in spite of the fact that immersion students were exposed to meaningful language use over a long period, they had serious problems with certain grammatical forms. This has led many SLA researchers (Harley & Swain, 1984; Lightbown, 1991, 1998; Spada & Lightbown, 1993; Robinson, 1996; Harley, 1998 among others) to argue that

exposure to language is not enough for L2 acquisition. These researchers, according to Nassaji (2000: 242-43), have hypothesized that the inclusion of some kind of form-focused instruction within communicative language teaching could be more effective.

To put it in a different way, researchers advocate a more form-focused approach to language teaching, arguing that activities which focus solely on message are inadequate to develop an accurate knowledge of the language in question, and to compensate for this inadequacy some kind of form-focused activity needs to be incorporated into the communicative classroom contexts. Therefore, a large number of research studies since the mid-nineties have focused on finding various methods to integrate formal instruction within a communicative framework- whether through 'negative feedback' (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Doughty & Varela, 1998; Muranoi, 2000); 'input enhancement' (Wong, 2003; Abu Radwan, 2005) or 'grammar consciousness-raising' (CR) task (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Fotos, 1993, 1994; Mohamed, 2004).

Statement of the problem

The extant studies on Consciousness-raising task, as a new way of teaching grammar, have attempted to investigate the effectiveness of such tasks within communicative classrooms whether in ESL context (e.g. Mohamed, 2004) or EFL context (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Fotos, 1993, 1994). In other words, such tasks have been recommended to incorporate grammar instruction within ESL classrooms or introduce more communication in EFL communicative classrooms. However, Fotos (1998: 304) stressed that grammar consciousness-raising tasks could even be a useful approach to teaching grammar in EFL settings where the focus is on the formal aspects of language rather than communication. The present study is an attempt to explore the effectiveness of CR tasks in an EFL setting where grammar is of paramount concern in teacher-fronted classrooms. Thus, the following research questions are addressed:

1- Do differences in the types of form-focused instruction lead to differences in language learning in the short-run?
2- Do these two different types of form-focused instruction have different long-run effects?

Hypotheses

Based on the above questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1- Consciousness-raising tasks are as effective as teacher-fronted deductive lessons in the short-run.
2- Consciousness-raising tasks are as effective as teacher-fronted, deductive lessons in the long-run.
3- Consciousness-raising tasks are not as effective as the deductive lessons both in the short and long-run.

Communicative focus on form

The exact role of form-focused instruction in communicative language teaching will become clear only when experimental research succeeds in isolating and examining this type of instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 1990: 432). To achieve this end, early focus on form studies in communicative contexts were mainly intended to probe the effects of including form-focused instruction with meaning-focused instruction. It is worthwhile to know that most such studies were carried out within Canadian immersion programs.

To investigate the developing spoken English of French elementary school students in Canada, Lightbown & Spada (1990) carried out a study whose subjects were students in Grades 5 and 6 and had received five months of intensive ESL instruction (communicative in nature). The researchers, during their observations of the four classes, concentrated on the students' use of the progressive -ing form and also on the adjective-noun order in noun phrases. After analyzing their observations, Lightbown & Spada found differences in the production accuracy of the targeted grammatical features among the four classes. For instance, in class 1 the students were more accurate in their use of the progressive-ing and in class 4, the learners had the lowest accuracy on all the features examined by the researchers, but had very good comprehension and speaking skills. After analyzing the teachers' types of instruction used in their class, Lightbown & Spada found that the students' accuracy on specific grammatical features in the L2 correlated with the form of instruction they received. In class 1, the most form-focused instruction was provided and in class 4, the instruction was highly focused on the

content rather than the form. Lightbown & Spada's study demonstrated that type of instruction makes a difference on the production accuracy of L2 learners and form-based instruction within a communicative context could contribute to more accurate levels of linguistic knowledge and performance. This study suggests that accuracy, fluency, and overall communicative skills are probably best developed through instruction that is primarily meaning-based and where guidance is provided through timely form-focus activities and correction in contexts.

To examine the effect of form-focused instruction on young L2 French learners in an immersion program, Harley (1998) conducted a study focusing on the acquisition of gender morphemes in French. A pre-test, a post-test (immediately after the five-week-treatment) and a follow-up test (six months following the treatment) were administered to the students who received form-focused instruction and those who received their regular instruction (with no particular instructional focus). The results of Harley's experiment showed that the form-focused group produced better results than did the group who received instruction with no specific focus. Furthermore, the students from the form-focused instruction group could show that they had a metalinguistic knowledge of gender in French.

Most of the studies, carried out within the Canadian immersion program to investigate the effects of combining form-focused instruction with communicative interaction, have argued at the same conclusion (Spada, 1987; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Doughty, 1991; Harley, 1998; Day & Shapson, 2001). They have provided evidence in support of the idea that classrooms providing a focus on form within contexts of meaningful communication do better than either those that completely avoid form-focused instruction (mere communicative classes) or those that emphasize form-focused instruction to the virtual exclusion of communicative activities (traditional grammar classes). This, in turn, has led scholars to seek new methods to integrate form-focused instruction within communicative context.

Consciousness-raising tasks

One way of integrating form-focused instruction within communicative classrooms is consciousness-raising (CR) task. Tasks

of this kind are different from production-based activities designed to promote accuracy. CR tasks are aimed at assisting learners to notice grammar forms through meaning-focused interaction. In other words, they are designed to increase learners' awareness of how the target structure is used (Fotos, 2002: 143-144). It is worthwhile to know that the content of such tasks is the grammatical structure itself which students are supposed to derive through interaction.

In a pilot study on grammar instruction by Fotos & Ellis (1991), first-year Japanese EFL college students were divided into three groups: 1) the first group performed the grammar task in groups of four or in pairs, 2) the second group received a teacher-fronted grammar lesson in English by a native speaker instructor, 3) the remaining students served as the control group and did not receive instruction on the targeted feature of the study, which was dative alternation. The pre-, post- and final tests consisted of three identical grammaticality judgment tasks and three identical tasks where the participants were required to generate two rules on dative alternation. The post-test scores of the group with a grammar consciousness-raising task increased 10%, while the grammar-lesson students made a gain of 14%. The grammar consciousness-raising task appeared to have functioned equally well as the grammar lesson in the short-term but not in the long-term. Furthermore, the grammar task appeared to have promoted similar amounts of interaction among the learners. This pilot study has shown that grammar instruction and communicative language use can be simultaneously integrated through grammar consciousness-raising tasks. However, the results were, according to Fotos (1994: 328), somewhat limited since only one grammatical feature (dative alternation) was tested. In addition, the gains in L2 accuracy were not maintained in the delayed post-test.

To investigate the effectiveness of two types of instruction in the development of explicit knowledge about grammatical features, Fotos (1993) compared the grammar consciousness-raising task group with the teacher-fronted group. Her subjects were 160 Japanese university EFL learners who were required one 90-minute session per week. They were assigned to three groups: (1) the grammar task group who performed three grammar consciousness-raising tasks, (2) the grammar lesson group who received grammar lesson identical in

content to the grammar tasks, and (3) the communicative tasks matched in format, length, and task feature but lacking grammatical content. This study has presented evidence in support of grammar instruction whether it consists of formal, teacher-fronted presentation or performance of interactive, grammar problem-solving task. In addition, the study suggests that grammar consciousness-raising task is nearly as effective as formal instruction in providing explicit knowledge about grammar.

In a replicated study for the effectiveness of CR tasks, Fotos (1994) utilized three grammar tasks: 1) adverb placement, 2) indirect object placement, and 3) relative clause usage. She administered these three tasks to three classes of Japanese ESL students. Class 1 received a FonFs[1] treatment in the form of three teacher-fronted grammar lessons on adverb placement, indirect object placement, and relative clause usage respectively. Class 2 received a FonF[2] treatment in which the participants performed three grammar consciousness-raising tasks with the same grammatical features. Class 3 received a FonM[3] treatment, characterized by three communicative tasks with no grammatical content. There was no control group. Pre-tests, post-tests, and delayed post-tests were administered to all three classes. All three groups scored better on the post-test than they did on the pre-test, and gains were maintained for the three groups on the delayed post-test. The gains made on the post-test and the delayed post-test by the three classes were significant within each group.

Fotos compared grammatical accuracy across the FonF (with the grammar consciousness-raising tasks) and FonFs groups on adverb placement, indirect object placement, and relative clause usage. She

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1 - 'Focus on Forms' (FonFs) refers to the traditional way of form-focused instruction in which a specific grammatical feature is taught intensively in one session. Thus, it is characterized by teaching the forms rather the message they convey (Long, 2001: 184)

2 - 'Focus on Form' (FonF) refers to the type of instruction that attempts to draw learners' attention to the formal features of the target language as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication (ibid)

3 - 'Focus on Meaning' (FonM) refers to type of instruction in which no attention is paid to the forms used to convey the message, that is, the instruction is only devoted to communication (ibid)

discovered that the FonF group was as accurate as the grammar group (FonFs) on the three targeted grammatical items. The results of Fotos' (1994) study, therefore, have provided support for the use of grammar consciousness-raising tasks as one possible alternative to teaching with a FonM or with a FonFs approach because it integrates language use and grammar instruction in the classroom.

In another study investigating the effectiveness of CR tasks, Mohamed (2001), quoted by Ellis (2003: 165), found that consciousness-raising task was more effective than teacher-fronted grammar teaching with groups of high intermediate ESL learners form mixed L1 backgrounds but not with a group of low-intermediate learners. This study suggests that the effectiveness of CR tasks may depend on the proficiency of learners. Ellis (2003: 165) also agrees with Mohamed that learners need sufficient proficiency to discuss grammatical points, and if they lack this, they may not be able to benefit to the same degree form a CR task.

In a more recent study by Mohamed (2004), fifty-one students were studied in two groups to determine their attitudes to learning grammar by two types of CR tasks. One group was given a deductive CR task which provided explicit explanations of a grammar structure while the other group received an inductive CR task which required the learners to discover the grammar rules for themselves. The examination of the two CR tasks suggests that both deductive and inductive CR tasks are effective learning tools that can be used in the language classroom to make learners aware of form where formal instruction is necessary.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of this research were two classes of Iranian high school students, 40 each, learning English as part of their school curricula. They did not generally use English out of school, and most English they knew was from their curricular textbook. These students

had two-credit hours per week of English with a non-native speaker instructor who, in this case, was also the co-researcher.

Design and Treatment

The study included one experimental group and one control one. The control group received three teacher-fronted, deductive grammar lessons on noun clause, gerund, and relative clauses, respectively. The experimental group, however, performed three CR tasks dealing with the same grammar structures. For each task treatment, the subjects in the experimental group were assigned randomly into five discussion groups each of which included three members. The students first performed the tasks individually, and then they shared their solutions with the other members of the group, which was followed by a class discussion. In the class discussion, each group stated explicitly the grammar rules which they had discovered from performing the tasks. As it is clear, in the task treatment group, instead of saying the grammar rules, the teacher encouraged the students to discover the rule by themselves. It should be noted that having grammar problem as task content requires learners to use and attend to utterances in the target language to solve the task. However, Ellis (2003: 166) argues that beginner learners will need to use their L1 to talk about language although the product of their discussion could still be in the target language.

Instrument

To investigate the effect of the treatment, three grammar tests were administered on different occasions. First, in order to make sure that subjects in both groups did not have any prior knowledge to the target structures, they were required to complete pre-tests before receiving any instruction on each of the target structures. Afterwards, subsequent to teaching each target structure, a post-test was administered to compare the grammatical knowledge achieved by the experimental and the control group. It is worth mentioning that no discussion of the grammar structures took place before any of the

treatments, and no teacher feedback on the tests, grammar lessons, or task performance was given at any subsequent time. Besides, the task group was not permitted to keep their task material, and the control group was not allowed to take notes during the grammar presentation.

Finally, two weeks after the treatments, both groups were given a delayed post-test to see whether or not the experimental and control group maintained their gains. This aimed at investigating which of the two types of form-focused instruction would have a better long-term effect.

Data analysis

In the present investigation, paired t-tests were used to examine the significance of differences between pre and post-test scores of each treatment, while independent t-tests were used to determine the significance of differences between the pre-tests and post-tests of the experimental and control group.

Result and discussion

CR tasks in the short-run

The first research question was to compare the effectiveness of CR tasks and deductive lessons in the short-run. Bear in mind that no discussion of the grammar point was included in the task treatment except for what was written in the task sheet and task cards, and the students' learning of the form was gained only from performance of the tasks. As shown in Table 1 below, the paired t-test between pre- and post-tests of each target structure was significant indicating that both deductive and task treatment were effective in promoting learners' grammatical knowledge. Then, we saw that the results of independent t-tests between the post-tests of deductive and task group across the three target structures were not significant. This suggests that consciousness-raising task group achieved similar gains in post-tests across the three target structures. Thus, the task treatments appeared to have functioned equally well as the deductive lessons in the short-run.

Table 1: Paired and Independent T-tests (pre-post)

	Group	N	Mean	Paired (sig)	Independent (sig)
Structure 1 (Adverb placement)	Deductive	40	12.6750	.000	.512
	Task	40	13.2000	.000	
Structure 2 (I.O. placement)	Deductive	40	11.2500	.000	.167
	Task	40	12.5750	.000	
Structure 3 (Relative clause)	Deductive	40	11.1750	.000	.098
	Task	40	12.7500	.000	

This finding is in agreement with Fotos & Ellis' (1991) study which has provided evidence that in the short-run, CR tasks are as effective as deductive lessons in developing grammar gains in learners. Furthermore, unlike Fotos & Ellis (1991), the present study used three target structures to see whether Fotos and Ellis' findings with one target structure (indirect object placement), would be consistent for different grammatical structures. The results of this study, nevertheless, indicate that CR tasks were as effective as deductive lessons across the three target structures.

CR tasks in the long-run

The second research question was to compare the effectiveness of CR tasks and deductive lessons in the long-run. As shown in Table 2 at the first target structure, the paired t-test between post and delayed post-test was significant for the CR treatment while it was not significant for the deductive treatment. This implies that deductive group maintained their grammatical gains after two weeks while the CR group did not.

Table 2: Paired and Independent T-tests (post-delayed)

	Group	N	Mean	Paired (sig)	Independent (sig)
Structure (Adverb placement)[1]	Deductive	40	1.05000	.210	
	Task	40	5.62500	.000	
Structure (I. O. placement)	Deductive	40	9.2500	.054	.002
	Task	40	11.9250	.181	
Structure (Relative clause)	Deductive	40	9.5250	.088	.002
	Task	40	12.0750	.134	

Thus, in the first target structure (adverb placement), the deductive lesson was effective whereas the CR treatment was not. On the contrary, in the second and third structures, the CR treatment has been proved effective. As shown in Table 2 above, the paired t-tests between post and delayed post-tests of each treatment were not significant. This indicates that both CR task group and deductive group were capable of maintaining their gains after two weeks. Furthermore, the result of the independent t-tests between the delayed post-tests of both groups were significant across the second and third structures indicating that one of the treatments has been more effective than the other in the long-run and since the mean score of CR treatment is higher than the deductive treatment, it shows that in the second and the third structures, CR tasks have been more effective in the long-run compared to the deductive lessons. That is, the subjects

1 - In the first target structure (adverb placement) only the deductive group could maintain their grammatical gains; that is, the paired t-test was significant only for CR group, implying that CR group could not maintain their gains in the long-run. Thus, there was no need for administering an additional independent t-test to show which treatment was more effective. That is why there is a blank square under the independent t-test column for this target structure. However, in the second and third target structure (indirect object placement and relative clause usage respectively), the paired t-tests for both task and deductive treatments were not significant indicating that both groups have maintained their gains, so here to show which group was more effective in the long-run, additional independent t-tests were needed.

of CR tasks have maintained their gains more effectively than their counterparts after two weeks.

To sum up, in the first target structure (adverb placement), only the deductive group was able to maintain their gains after two weeks, indicating that CR treatment was not so effective. However, in the second and third target structures (indirect object placement and relative clause), CR treatments were effective. That is, both CR and deductive groups maintained their gains after two weeks.

This part of our findings is almost in consistent with Fotos' (1994) study. Two of the tasks (second and third target structures) appeared to have functioned like the grammar deductive lessons in the long-run. However, the first CR task on adverb placement did not result in the same level of longer-term learning as did the traditional teacher-fronted grammar lesson although the first task was the easiest target structure requiring the identification of only one rule (Fotos, 1994: 331).

The possible explanations for the less successful performance of the first task might be (a) the learners' lack of familiarity with such a task-based teaching and group work, and (b) their imperfect understanding of the goal and procedure of the task. That is, we assume that since this was the student's first experience of group work, they might not have been able to benefit completely from the task while their performance improved in the second and third tasks. During and after the task performance, the students raised some questions showing that they had not grasped the goal and the procedure of the task completely. That is why we elaborated on the goal and procedure on the second and third target structures. However, in contrast to Fotos & Ellis' (1991) study, CR group in the second and third maintained their gains successfully. These findings are in consistent with the findings of Fotos (1994). Thus, his explanations for the success in this regard seem in order: (a) the sequencing of task performance from easy to difficult is to allow learners to become familiar with task performance in a group participation pattern; (b) the presence of a production section on the grammatical tests which require the learners to produce the structures they had studied was used to serve as an additional consciousness-raising activity (ibid: 340).

Moreover, we are of the opinion that having more proficient learners perform the task in front of the class after completing the tasks in groups can have the effect of prompting the learners to execute the task more accurately. Thus, some aspects of target structures which are not noticed initially by learners during the in-group performance can become conscious in this way, and the less proficient learners will benefit from this.

CR tasks priority

As seen in Table 2 above, the independent t-tests between delayed post-tests of CR group and the deductive one were significant across the second and third target structures (P=0.002<0.05). This implies that one group has maintained their gains more effectively across the second and third target structures; that is, indirect object placement and relative clause usage respectively, and since the mean score of the CR group has been higher than the deductive group (second structure: task $\overline{x}$=11.92> deductive $\overline{x}$=9.25/ third structure: task $\overline{x}$=12.07> deductive $\overline{x}$=9.52), it can be concluded that compared to the deductive group, they maintained their gains more efficiently. This finding has not only provided support to Fotos' (1994) argument that CR tasks are effective in the long-run, but it has also shown that CR tasks can result in better maintenance of grammatical rules in learners compared to deductive lessons. There are three possible explanations for this more efficient performance of CR group in the delayed post-tests:

a) Unlike the previous studies in which learners performed the tasks in English as their L2, the learners in this study performed the tasks in their L1. Possibly, this has induced the learners, especially the less proficient ones, to benefit more from performing of the tasks. It is worth noting that since CR tasks are based on discovery-learning, using L1 helps the learners make the most of their prior knowledge to discover and understand the rules more effectively. This suggests that possibly in an EFL setting like Iran and especially in non-communicative classrooms where the focus is on grammar, the CR tasks are likely to result in better gains if performed in the students' L1.

b) The second explanation could be the way that learners were grouped for performing CR tasks. Given Nassaji's (2000: 247) suggestion that it is important that the learners be grouped in such a way that at least one learner in each group is more proficient than

others in the group, for each group, one of the more proficient students was chosen as the head. This more proficient student was asked to help the rest of the group to understand and discover the grammatical rules. Therefore, this also might have been a cause for CR group's more effective maintenance of grammatical rules.

c) One of the activities which makes the present study a little different from some previous studies (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Fotos, 1994, 1998, 2002) was the addition of feedback by the teacher. It must be noted that while performing the tasks in groups, whenever the students faced a problem, they raised their hands and asked for help and subsequently feedback was provided to help solve their problem. This additional feedback was another type of focus on form called 'preemptive focus on form'[1] This feedback seems to be one of the main causes that prompted CR group to maintain their gains more effectively, as compared to previous studies. This finding provides support for Fotos & Ellis' (1991: 619) suggestion that providing the learners with feedback may enhance the effectiveness of CR tasks. This in turn suggests that combining CR tasks with other types of focus on form (e.g. preemptive feedback in this case) is likely to lead to a longer retention of the grammatical gains. Thus, it is recommended that future research investigates the effect of combining CR tasks with other options in teaching grammar such as input enhancement, negative feedback and production practice (see Ellis, 2002a).

Conclusion

To justify consciousness-raising tasks as alternative to deductive approach, it is necessary to demonstrate that they are at least as effective as deductive lessons in developing explicit knowledge of L2 grammar in learners (Ellis, 2002a: 165). The present study, however, has demonstrated that CR tasks are not only as effective as deductive

1 - Preemptive focus on form involves the teacher or learner initiating attention to form even though no actual problem in the production has arisen. Preemptive focus on form in case of initiation by learners addresses an actual gap in the learners' knowledge. That is, when students by themselves ask about a potential problem before producing that problem, it reveals their interlanguage gap. That is why when such problems are solved by the teacher or other students, they will be retained longer. This characteristic of student-initiated preemptive focus on form has prompted the SLA research to prefer this type of feedback to negative feedback carried out after committing the errors (see Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001: 427).

lessons but also can transcend deductive lessons under specific conditions. These findings, in general, support the previous claims for the efficacy of consciousness-raising tasks (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Fotos, 1993, 1994, 2002; Ellis, 2002a; Mohamed, 2004). It must be noted that consciousness-raising tasks are supported by Ellis's (1995) theory of second language acquisition where noticing operation plays a key role. Based on this model, once learners' consciousness about a particular form has been raised, they become aware of that and begin to notice that form in the subsequent input. This noticing is believed to turn the input into intake and induce the learners to compare their own output with the target forms available in the subsequent input. This process is considered as a prerequisite for the final acquisition of that feature. Thus, it can be concluded from Ellis's theory (1995) that formal instruction must be directed at raising the learners' consciousness about target forms rather than making the learners producing them immediately.

The present study has also provided support for Fotos' (1998: 304) claim that CR tasks can even be a useful approach to teaching grammar in EFL classrooms where the focus is on the formal study of language instead of communication. Besides, the present study has demonstrated that CR tasks are not only as effective as deductive approach (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Fotos, 1993, 1994) but in non-communicative EFL classrooms they can even function more efficiently than deductive approach if they observe the following conditions:

(a) performing the consciousness-raising tasks in learners' L1

(b) grouping the learners in such a way that at least one learner in each group would be more proficient than the other members to help the less proficient ones to understand and discover the rules more successfully.

(c) providing the learners with feedback whenever they encounter a problem in solving the tasks. The feedback should indeed be 'judicious', to use Hopkins and Nettle's (1994: 158) term. In other words, it should be different from the traditional way of providing the learners with the correct answer immediately. It is advisable to lead the learners to discover the answer by themselves instead of giving them the answer at their first attempt.

Pedagogical implications

Consciousness-raising tasks have some built-in characteristics which make them useful options for grammar teaching:

1) In the case of beginners, consciousness-raising tasks are advantageous because such tasks require L1, non-verbal responses, or minimal L2 responses. Thus, in case of learners with low level of language ability, CR tasks are preferred to production practice requiring the learners to produce the target structure which in turn may lead to their frustration (Gabrielatos, 1994: 7).

2) If such tasks are carried out in the target language, they serve the double purpose of raising learners' consciousness about a specific grammatical item while providing opportunities for communicating in the target language (Ellis, 1993: 109).

3) Ellis (2002b: 30) believes that one of the most important advantages of such discovery-based CR tasks is their learner-training function. In other words, by performing CR tasks, learners develop the skills needed to investigate and analyze language data automatically for themselves.

As for the limitations of the study, it should be borne in mind that the effectiveness of CR task could depend on particular items being taught. Thus teaching various grammatical points by using CR tasks may lead to opposite results. In other words, according Richards (2002: 164) some target language forms may be amenable to a particular type of form-focused instruction, while some others may not. Therefore, it is recommended that future research will address this issue and investigate the generalizability of the findings of the present study by examining various target forms. Further, this study was conducted in high school so its findings may be restricted to this particular context. In other words, the CR approach might not be so much appropriate and effective in other contexts. Thus, it is suggested that various, similar studies will be carried out in different contexts and language levels such as middle school or university level.

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