

GRAMMAR CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE

Joni Iskandar

Kanjuruhan University of Malang, Indonesia
iskandar_joni14@yahoo.co.id

Dwi Fita Heriyawati

Kanjuruhan University of Malang, Indonesia
dwifitaheriyawati@yahoo.com

Abstract: This study was to investigate the implementation of grammar consciousness-raising activities for the students' grammatical competence. The participants were 70 students of vocational high school which were divided into 35 students in experimental group and 35 students in control group. The data were gained from pre-test and post-test. The results of post-test from the experimental and control group were compared. The findings showed that the students who were taught using grammar consciousness-raising activities had significant difference on their grammatical competence. Furthermore, the students were highly motivated in learning grammar and their grammatical competences were also increasing.

Keywords: *Grammatical Competence, Grammar Consciousness-Raising Activities.*

INTRODUCTION

English is one of languages which are taught in formal education field. It is an additional subject in Indonesia and also included in National Examination for Junior, Senior, and Vocational High Schools. In learning and mastering English, students have to comprehend and master the grammar of English since the grammar of English is basic and foundation competences in acquiring English skills which will be used in real communication.

Grammar is composed of linguistic studies. These linguistic fields are grouped into two, which are pure linguistics and applied

linguistics. Pure linguistic studies include phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics are two linguistic fields included into applied linguistic group.

English grammar is one of English competences that consists of system of a language which must be comprehended and mastered by English language students. Grammar has been one of the difficulties in mastering a foreign language in a country where the status of English is still as a foreign language like in Indonesia. There are many grammar forms that are difficult to be learned for Indonesian students. Grammar has been taught towards students with opportunities to associate these forms in more appropriate meanings, and the teaching procedures are designed to teach students to produce a range of grammatical sentences.

Learners are encouraged to understand and master language components in learning English in order to give them a better understanding of English. Understanding and mastering grammar is not easy for students because they have to comprehend three dimensions of language such as form, meaning, and the use. Murcia & Larsen (2000, p. 99) stated that “grammar is not only a collection of forms but also the three dimensions of what linguistic studies which refer to as (morpho)syntax, semantics, and pragmatics”.

In studying grammar, the students do not only focus on form, but also they have to focus on language form. In form-focused activities, students work on recognizing or manipulating the forms of the language in a number of ways such as consciousness-raising, recall, extension, correction and exam practice. Meanwhile, in language focus, students think about meaning and use of language as they prepare to take a part in a communicative activity.

The difficulties in teaching and learning grammar are also found in vocational high school students. Students do not construct sentence structures correctly and students still cannot pay attention and be aware of language forms as well. Moreover, students still cannot develop the skills needed to observe and analyze language form automatically by themselves. These problems give effect to students who still cannot reach good grammatical achievement in their target language. Moreover, students still cannot write or construct sentences by using correct grammatical rules. On the other hand, there are also many problems that are faced by English teachers

who are teaching grammar vocational high school. Teachers still cannot apply appropriate methods and techniques in teaching grammar towards students in the classroom. They do not encourage students to discover grammatical rules by themselves, and they never give any chances to students to solve their problems of grammatical rules by themselves.

Mostly, after giving explanation of grammar, students are asked to practice and then do grammar exercises. This is the problem which causes the students only construct grammatical rules correctly, but they do not understand about the meanings and the use of the grammar that have been learnt in teaching and learning process.

In this study, the researcher is going to investigate the teaching of grammar in one vocational school in Malang, Indonesia, by using grammar consciousness-raising activities. Richards & Schmidt (2002) stated that grammar consciousness-raising activities is a technique that encourages students to pay attention and makes them aware of language form that will contribute to language acquisition indirectly. Besides, there are many teachers who believe that grammar consciousness-raising activities enable students to develop explicit knowledge of grammar. The goal of using grammar consciousness-raising activities in grammar teaching is not to achieve fluency in discussing grammar, but to improve students' grammatical awareness in order that students can reach good grammatical achievement and have good grammatical competence. It also means that this technique can help students to aware of the notice the grammar rules well. The researcher believes that implementing grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar can make students pay attention and be aware of language form, meaning, and the use of the grammatical rules. Grammar consciousness-raising activities can create fun activities which can encourage students to enjoy learning grammar because in implementing grammar consciousness-raising activities teachers can provide cooperative learning activities which are able to make students closer and encouraged to discuss the problems of grammatical rules with others students in teaching and learning process. This study is going to investigate the grammatical competence difference of students who are given grammar consciousness-raising activities and those who are not given grammar consciousness-raising activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consciousness-Raising (C-R)

Richards & Schmidt (2002) define consciousness-raising (C-R) as a technique that encourages learners to pay attention to language form and to make them aware to language form that will contribute indirectly to language acquisition. Techniques include having students take conclusion grammatical rules from examples, compare differences between two or more different ways of constructing sentences, observe differences between a learner's use of a grammar item and its use by native speakers. This technique is an appropriate technique to make students aware of language form in learning grammar in teaching and learning process.

Rezaei & Hosseinpour (2011) provide a more comprehensive definition of consciousness-raising (C-R) which constitutes an approach to grammar teaching which is appropriate with current thinking about how learners acquire L2 grammar. It also constitutes an approach that is more efficient with progressive views about education as a process of discovery through problem-solving activities. So, this is an approach which is able to be applied in the grammar teaching towards students who have many difficulties in learning and mastering grammar of their target language (TL).

A consciousness-raising (C-R) approach is contrasted with traditional approaches such as grammar translation method (GTM) and Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) method to the teaching of grammar, in which the goal is to establish grammatical rules or grammatical patterns directly.

Consciousness-Raising (C-R) Activities

Moradkhan & Sohrabian (2009) argued that consciousness-raising activities technique is very efficient in improving the grammatical knowledge of EFL learners which are able to guide learners to language acquisition by combining explicit and implicit learning. In an attempt to distinguish C-R activities from other grammar teaching techniques, based on Ellis (2002), the main characteristics of consciousness-raising (C-R) activities are as the following:

- 1) There is an attempt to isolate a specific linguistic feature for focused attention.

- 2) The learners are provided with data which illustrate the targeted feature, and they may also be supplied with an explicit rule describing or explaining the feature.
- 3) The learners are expected to use intellectual effort to understand the targeted feature.
- 4) Misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners leads to clarification in the form of further data and description or explanation.
- 5) Learners may be required to construct the rule describing the grammatical structure.

According to Suter, (2001, as cited by Rahmawati, 2011), learners of foreign language who are taught by using consciousness-raising (C-R) activities should prepare these requirements to successfully face this technique. They are:

- 1) The learners must be ready to challenge their activities and lessons.
- 2) They must accept that the learning of a foreign language is a process without a definite ending or a final state of perfection.
- 3) They must have a considerable amount of confidence in their teacher's professional skill.
- 4) They must take a larger responsibility for their own learning.
- 5) They must show a high degree of motivation and active collaboration during the lesson with others.

The Reasons of Using Consciousness-Raising (C-R) Activities

Willis and Willis (2007) suggest some reasons to use consciousness-raising (C-R) activities as the following:

- 1) C-R activities build implicit and well as explicit knowledge.
- 2) C-R activities work for learners with different learning styles and intelligence.
- 3) C-R activities show grammar in context.
- 4) C-R activities show authentic language.
- 5) C-R activities can present a large amount of input.
- 6) C-R activities encourage cooperative learning.
- 7) C-R activities are interesting and fun.

- 8) C-R activities are lower the effective filter.
- 9) It is easy for learners to prepare their own C-R activities.
- 10) Skill learnt in C-R activities can be used outside the classroom.

To conclude, consciousness-raising (C-R) activities are ideal for EFL learners because they provide input and grammar in context. They allow students to make their own assumptions about how English works and confirm them with their peers or discuss in cooperative learning.

The Advantages of Consciousness-Raising (C-R) Activities

There are many advantages of applying consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar for students and teachers. For students, they can learn and master grammatical rules easier because it can make them aware of language form which is able to develop the skills needed to observe and analyze language form by themselves automatically, and students can reach good grammatical competence in their target language; consequently, they can use grammar of target language in real communication well. For teachers, they can apply appropriate methods and techniques in teaching grammar, and they also can encourage students to discover grammar rules by themselves, and teachers can create interesting and fun activities in teaching and learning process.

According to Ellis (2002), there are many advantages of using grammar consciousness-raising (C-R) activities, they are:

- 1) C-R activities allow learners to see examples that are provided in different forms before constructing sentences.
- 2) C-R activities can be applied to the learners with different learning style to avoid boredom in teaching and learning process.
- 3) C-R activities present language in context which is generally created by the learners themselves.
- 4) C-R activities encourage cooperative learning which is students work to gather cooperatively to process the language and to solve problems of language.
- 5) C-R activities involve peer checking and develop on their interpersonal skills and relationship management when they check others' writing. They learn how to respond appropriately when are being corrected by their peers.

Teaching Strategy of Grammar Consciousness-Raising Activities

Teaching strategy in implementing grammar consciousness-raising activities is easy for English teachers to prepare materials used in teaching and learning process. Teaching strategy plays an important role to make English teachers teach the students structurally in the classroom, and English teachers have to prepare their teaching strategy before the beginning of their teaching and learning process.

It is in line with Willis (1996, as cited by Mohammad, 2012) stating that teaching strategies in implementing grammar consciousness-raising activities into grammar teaching are:

- 1) Students are provided many examples of grammar focus which are being taught by the teacher by underlining the grammatical rules or verbs.
- 2) Students are asked to identify particular grammatical rules by asking them to decide two differences of the examples.
- 3) Students are encouraged to find the similarities or differences between two sentences provided in examples.
- 4) Students are asked to explain the two differences of grammatical rules provided in examples by discussing with their friends in a group.
- 5) Then, students are encouraged to construct sentences by using grammatical rules by themselves, and the teacher only provides the adverb of time to make students easy to differentiate two grammatical rules discussed.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

There were 70 participants for this study. They were the 1st graders of a State Vocational High School at Malang, Indonesia. They were divided into two groups, 35 students in experimental group and 35 students in control group. Experimental group was taught by the researcher using grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar and the control group was also taught by researcher using traditional teaching grammar technique which is often called presentation-practice-production (PPP).

Instruments

The instrument which was used to collect the data in this study was a test; pre-test and post-test. Pre-test was given to ensure the homogeneity of the participants about their language proficiency and to know the significant difference before giving a treatment both of group. The test consisted of 40 multiple choice items on grammar with two sub-tests (20 items about past tense and 20 items about present perfect tense). And post-test was given to compare the grammatical knowledge achieved by experimental and control group after giving a treatment and this test consisted of 40 multiple choice items about grammar materials which had been given when giving a treatment in materials of textbook about past tense and present perfect tense.

Data Collection

In this point, the researcher stated the steps to collect the data. The first step of conducting this research was the researcher made the draft of test items; the two experts of teaching grammar were asked to validate the test items. After that, the researchers have consulted with the experienced English teacher who teaches those classes. As the result, there were 40 multiple choice items on grammar about past tense and present perfect tense.

Then, the researcher divided students in two groups. There were two groups who participated in this study; experimental group and control group. The first group was the experimental group who was treated by using grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar, and this group was taught about past tense and present perfect tense by the researcher. Meanwhile, the second group was the control group who was treated by using traditional teaching grammar technique which is often called presentation-practice-production (PPP) technique to grammar teaching, and this group was taught by the researcher with the same topic.

In conducting this study, the researcher classified the meeting for each group in 4 meetings. The first meeting was pre-test for both groups. The second and the third meetings were to give treatment for the experimental group. And for the last meeting, the researcher gave post-test to know whether the implementation of grammar

consciousness-raising activities gave significant effect for the students or not.

Finally, the researcher analyzed the data from pre-test and post-test. The result of pre-test and post-test was computed by using SPSS 19.0 in order to find *t value*. Then, researcher computed the *t value* by using independent sample *t-test* with the level of significance is 0.05. At the end of collecting the data, questionnaire was also delivered in order to support the main result of this study.

RESULTS

The administering of pre-test was held before the treatment was given. It was used in order to know about early students' grammatical competence and to know the homogeneity of both groups. The descriptive statistics of pre-test is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test

		GROUP	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-Test Score	Experimental Group		35	35	88	62.77	14.595	2.467
	Control Group		35	30	95	66.43	18.39	3.108

As Table 1 above, the result of pre-test between both groups showed that the mean score of the experimental group is 62.77, while the mean score of the control group is 66.43. In addition, the maximum score of the experimental group is 88, while the maximum score of the control group is 95. Then, the minimum score of the experimental group is 35, while the minimum score of the control group is 30. From this computation, it was gained that experimental group had lower score, 62.77 than control group who gained 66.43.

The result of pre-test was also used to find out the homogeneity of both groups, the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Pre-Test Score			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.412	1	68	.239

The significance is .239 it means that it was greater than the significance level 0.05 so that both of experimental group and control group were assumed to be homogenous.

After giving the treatment, the researcher administered the post-test in order to know the effectiveness of grammar consciousness-raising activities on students' grammatical competence in teaching grammar and to compare the grammatical knowledge achieved by experimental and control group after giving a treatment. The result of post-test is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Post-test

	GROUP	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-Test Score	Experimental Group	35	60	98	77.09	9.341	1.579
	Control Group	35	45	95	70.74	12.27	2.074

As Table 3 above, the result of post-test between both of group shows that the mean score of the experimental group is 77.09, while the mean score of the control group is 70.74. In addition, the maximum score of the experimental group is 98, while the maximum score of the control group is 95. Then, the minimum score of the experimental group is 60, while the minimum score of the control group is 45. From this computation, it was gained that X Light Vehicle Engineering 1 had greater score, 77.09 than X Light Vehicle Engineering 3 who gained 70.74.

To verify the hypothesis and to answer the research problem of this study, the researcher computed the *t value* by using independent sample t-test then compared it with *t-critic* at significance level 0.05 and the hypothesis verification also could be found by comparing the significance (2-tailed) with the significance level 0.05.

Table 4 Mean Scores of Pre-test and Post-test between Experimental Group and Control Group

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
2.433	68	0.018	6.343	2.607	1.141	11.544
2.433	63.5	0.018	6.343	2.607	1.135	11.551

As we can see in Table 4, from computation of independent sample t-test, it could be found that $t\text{-value} = 2.433$ was greater than $t\text{-critical} 0.05$; therefore it could be summarized that H_a was accepted and the effectiveness of grammar consciousness-raising activities on students' grammatical competence was statistically found.

Based on the significance (2-tailed), it showed that the significance (2-tailed) showed 0.018, it was lower than the significance level 0.05. It could be concluded that H_a was accepted and H_0 was rejected. It could be said that the students who were taught by using grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar had a better achievement on their grammatical competence from those who were not.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings obtained in this research led to a conclusion that there was a significant difference between students who were given grammar consciousness-raising activities and those who were not given grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar. The grammar mean scores of experimental and control group allowed the researcher to reject the null hypothesis in this study. Therefore, this study supported the effectiveness of grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar towards students in vocational high schools. This study also suggested that implementing grammar consciousness-raising activities could make students aware of language forms that encourage them to learn language acquisition indirectly and help students to improve their grammatical knowledge.

The finding of this study showed that the students were more active in the class while they were learning the grammar point

because they were asked to observe, analyze and identify the examples of grammar point, differentiate two examples of grammatical rules, discuss cooperatively about the grammatical rules discussed and construct sentences by themselves. Since one of characteristics of grammar consciousness-raising activities is to encourage students in cooperative learning, students can be more active in learning grammar explicitly and as well as implicitly in teaching and learning process. Moreover, the experienced English teacher believed that grammar consciousness-raising activities is an appropriate technique in teaching grammar for vocational high school students, and it is better and more effective than traditional teaching grammar technique.

The implementation of grammar consciousness-raising activities trains the students to be aware of language forms, the use and the meaning of grammatical rules that is able to improve their grammatical competence, they can discuss to solve the problems of grammatical rules with other students cooperatively, and they can use to study independently in constructing sentences meaningfully and structurally correct.

The result of this research supports the idea of Mohamed (2004, p. 232) who stated that consciousness-raising activities are effective learning tools and can be used to raise learners' awareness of linguistic forms. Sugiarto (2006, p. 142) stated that consciousness-raising activities are effective in helping students develop their explicit knowledge of grammatical patterns especially in the simple present tense. Besides, Moradkham & Sohrabian (2009, p. 67) argued that the use of grammar consciousness-raising activities could be a very efficient technique in improving the grammatical knowledge of EFL learners which are able to guide learners to language acquisition by combining explicit and implicit learning.

On the other hand, traditional teaching grammar technique which is often called presentation-practice-production technique also has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of traditional teaching grammar technique is an English teacher could explain and do presentation about grammatical rules or language forms in front of the students during teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, the disadvantages of traditional teaching grammar technique are the students will not understand the use and the meaning of grammatical rules being discussed because they understand about language forms

only, they lack of motivation to be aware of language forms by themselves. Moreover, they lack to solve the problems of grammatical rules automatically by themselves because the activity is monotonous.

To be brief, this study is not going to reject the role of other techniques in teaching grammar. The present study aims to investigate whether students who are given grammar consciousness-raising activities have significant difference on their grammatical competence than those who are not given grammar consciousness-raising activities. In Sum, this study proved that grammar consciousness-raising activities are effective to improve the students' grammatical competence. The researcher believes that the use of grammar consciousness-raising activities is one of suitable technique in teaching grammar of vocational high school students since in the implementation of this technique there are many improvements of students' grammatical competence especially for students who are taught by using grammar consciousness-raising activities. It seems that it is better for English teachers to be aware of implementing different techniques in teaching grammar and to use them based on the materials since in Indonesia learning grammar is one of the most important parts of learning and mastering English skills in the educational system.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of grammar consciousness-raising activities on students' grammatical competence at the vocational high school students. The result obtained in this study led to a conclusion that there is a significant difference between students who are given grammar consciousness-raising activities and those who are not given grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar. The grammar mean scores of experimental and control group allow the researcher to reject the null hypothesis in this study. Therefore, this study supports the effectiveness of grammar consciousness-raising activities in teaching grammar towards students of the vocational high school.

The findings of this study show that the students are more aware of language forms that encourage them to learn language acquisition indirectly and students can improve their knowledge of grammar which is able to affect towards their grammatical knowledge. Moreover, students are more active in the class while

they are learning the grammar point in the teaching and learning process. Those are in line with Mohamed (2004, p. 232) who stated that consciousness-raising activities are effective learning tools and can be used to raise learners' awareness of linguistic forms. Sugiarto (2006, p. 142) stated that consciousness-raising activities are effective in helping students develop their explicit knowledge of grammatical patterns especially in the simple present tense.

This technique is a suitable technique in teaching grammar of vocational high school students since in the implementation of this technique, there are many improvements of the students' grammatical competence and students can improve their knowledge of grammar more easily. This is in line with Moradkham & Sohrabian (2009) who argued that the use of grammar consciousness-raising activities could be a very efficient technique in improving the grammatical knowledge of EFL learners which are able to guide learners to language acquisition by combining both explicit and implicit learning. This technique can be successful as long as English teachers implement the teaching strategy of grammar consciousness-raising activities appropriately.

Furthermore, for the English teachers should give meaningful and appropriate ways to apply these activities, in teaching grammar especially by implementing this technique of grammar consciousness-raising activities. Grammar consciousness-raising activities can help teachers to encourage students to be aware of language forms and discover grammatical rules automatically by themselves. The researcher also suggests for the future researchers to use this technique, grammar consciousness-raising activities, to investigate other English skills or component in the next research and it may address the appropriateness of grammar consciousness-raising activities for teaching junior high school students in teaching grammar as it is not known how these grammar consciousness-raising activities could be applied to junior high school students to improve their grammatical competence.

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