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Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks VS Traditional Grammar Lessons for Developing Explicit Knowledge and Accuracy

Abstract

This article attempts to compare the effects 'Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks' and 'Traditional Grammar lessons' on the acquisition of English tenses in terms of gains in explicit knowledge and grammatical accuracy. The study shows that the results of the students who follow the innovative materials overwhelm those who follow the traditional grammar lessons.

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ملخص

يسعى هذا المقال إلى مقارنة الآثار المترتبة عن استعمال مقاربتين مختلفتين في تدريس قواعد الأزمنة الإنجليزية: مقاربة "المهام النحوية التحسيسية" ومقاربة "القواعد التقليدية"، وذلك من حيث قدرتهما على تنمية المعرفة الجلية والدقة النحوية، وقد بينت الدراسة أن المقاربة الحديثة أنفع للطلبة من القواعد التقليدية.

Introduction

In the beginning, Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) had nothing to do with grammar pedagogy but aimed at enhancing natural second language development through meaningful experiential activities and achieving real life goals. Because the results of this approach were not satisfying, a shift of attention was biased towards some ramifications rather than letting down the whole approach altogether. So, this strand did not last long when some fervent advocates (Ellis, 1990. 1992, 1997; Fotos, 1993, 1994;

Nunan, 1989, 1991) proposed espousing TBLT and focus on form. This integration offers a balanced model for the teaching of language in general and grammar in particular in a way that is compatible with SLA principles.

Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks

A wise balanced view emerges assuming that Grammar Consciousness Raising (GCR) and TBLT which seem to oppose can complement each other. The idea of integrating the two approaches becomes an urgent need in L2 methodology. It is justified on the ground that task-based syllabuses cater for enhancing fluency amongst learners. This endeavour for furthering communication is thought to yield natural language development as is the case with children acquiring their mother tongue without paying attention to form and without receiving grammatical instruction. Grammatical accuracy is thought to develop naturally without intervention. This non-interventionist view has failed in the attempt. Learners following TBLT proved to be fluent but inaccurate communicators. The only solution is to keep the approach which has proved to be successful for enhancing fluency and to feed it with some focus on form. This gives rise to the combination of TBLT and GCR and results in the appearance of two approaches 'consciousness-raising communicative tasks' and 'grammar consciousness-raising tasks'.

For our purposes, we have opted for grammar consciousness-raising tasks (GCRTs) to teach university English grammar as a subject matter. The common departure of the two major approaches of these tasks is raising learners' consciousness through some process-orientated procedures. Their divergence lies in that consciousness-raising communicative tasks do not involve learners in talking about grammar and discussing grammatical issues in order to make them discover grammatical rules and build up an explicit grammatical knowledge. The GCRT Approach attracted our attention because it encouraged peer interaction, comprehensible input and comprehensible output as potential factors for enhancing noticing and promoting L2 development. We opted for GCRTs because of the countless limitations of the traditional teacher-fronted grammar lessons (TTFGLs) which are fundamentally based on teachers' spoon feeding and learners' blind reception and rote learning. The aim of the students following this method is to receive 'substantial' information from the mouth of the teacher without any debate. Some students may prefer the traditional grammar lessons to escape from making use of their intelligence and mental energies. Students who are accustomed to learning by heart rather than understanding gradually lose their capacity of thinking and reasoning. It is indubitable that blind imitation woefully blocks the mind, yields morbid dependence to others, and even creates an inferiority complex in the individual. The traditional method is blatantly unavailing. It represents a serious jeopardy which threatens the efficiency of the whole educational system. As a solution, we presented GCRTs as an

innovative method that is capable of bringing about encouraging results in grammar pedagogy.

GCRTs differ from TTFGLs in many respects. The former represent a process approach; the latter a product approach. While the former aim at facilitating grammatical development, the latter aim at inculcating grammatical knowledge. The former is organic and associative in essence, the latter is linear and cumulative. The organic approach is marked by backsliding, restructuring and the interaction between the various grammatical features. TTFGLs aim at developing grammatical well-formedness; GCRTs aim at developing grammatical understanding. TTFGLs regard grammar as an end; GCRTs regard grammar as a means.

Models of Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks

GCRTs aim at integrating the teaching of grammar with the provision of communicative tasks where learners talk about grammar and exchange information about its problematic issues. In short, grammar becomes the content of the task.

Nunan's Model

Nunan (1989a) shows that the status of grammar became 'uncertain' after the rise of the Communicative Approach, but this view was seriously challenged. He acknowledges the importance of form-focused tasks and the essentialness of grammar in the communicative use of language (*ibid*. 13). He also suggests that 'grammatical consciousness-raising activities' of the kind provided by Rutherford (1987) should be incorporated into task design because as he argues "Any activities which encourage learners to think about the nature of language and ways of learning imply a more critical and reflective learner role than those in which the learner is memorising or manipulating language" (*ibid*. 83). Nunan (1991: 148-149) advocates the use of GCRTs because (1) they are in tune with the view that learning a language is an 'organic' rather than a 'linear' process, (2) that it rejects the split between 'acquisition' and 'learning', (3) that it contrasts with traditional grammar in many ways including greater emphasis on form-function relationships and their presentation in larger 'discoursal contexts', and (4) that it rejects the naïve view that once something is taught it will necessarily be learned.

Fotos's Model

Fotos (1991) elaborates an exploratory study on GCRTs in a thesis written for a doctoral degree and subsequently published in *TESOL Quaterly* by Fotos and Ellis (1991) under the title: "Communicating about grammar: A Task-Based Approach".

The impetus that motivated Fotos's study was to find a pedagogical solution to the teaching of grammar in a way that was theoretically and empirically compatible with the fundamental principles of SLA and CLT. Her proposal to solve the grammar question was through the combination of formal grammar instruction and TBLT. According to Fotos and Ellis (1991: 610-11), GCRTs attempt to raise learners' consciousness about the grammatical features, to develop their communication about grammar, to promote their explicit grammatical knowledge, and to engage them in real communication based on an exchange of information in order to reach an agreed grammatical solution through closed tasks. These tasks are not designed to ensure 'acquisition' of targeted features but only to trigger their learning, and therefore no attempt is made for getting learners to produce any L2 form and structure except incidentally.

As reported in Fotos and Ellis (1991), Fotos's study of the use of a communicative, grammar-based task in an EFL classroom was to explore: (1) whether the task successfully developed explicit linguistic knowledge of a specific grammatical feature, (2) whether it promoted the type of 'negotiation interaction' which has been reported in other two-way information gap tasks performed in pairs or gaps and assumed to facilitate L2 acquisition (*ibid*. 611-612). The results demonstrated that Japanese EFL learners following GCRTs outperformed those following TTFGLs. They increased their knowledge of a difficult L2 rule, and promoted their communication about grammar and conversational modifications. Yet, it has been pointed out that GCRTs "did not result in the same level of longer term learning as did the traditional, teacher fronted grammar lessons", and this was attributed to "the learners' lack of experience in working in small groups and the absence of teacher feedback on their solution to the task" (*ibid*. 622).

In a subsequent article, Fotos (1993) examined the amount of learner noticing yielded by TTFGLs and "interactive, grammar problem-solving tasks". She makes clear that GCRTs integrate grammar instruction and meaning-focused use, and have a "grammar problem to be solved interactively as the task content". (*ibid.* 388) Their aim is to raise learners' consciousness of specific grammar points through the promotion of explicit grammatical knowledge so as to enhance noticing and to heighten language proficiency. The two research questions she wanted to investigate concerned whether grammatical explicit knowledge either through grammar lessons or grammar tasks produced more noticing of targeted structures in communication compared with a control group which received no grammar activities and whether the amount of noticing resulting from grammar tasks was comparable to that of grammar lessons. Fotos's (1993) population was assigned into three groups. The first group received the TTFGLs on adverb placement, indirect object placement, and relative clause usage. The second group performed three GCRTs identical in content to the TTFGLs. The third group performed regular communicative tasks matched to the

grammar tasks in form and content but lacking grammatical content. The findings showed that GCRTs were "as effective as formal instruction in the promotion of subsequent significant amounts of noticing, as compared with the noticing produced by the control group", and that "a number of learners who developed knowledge about grammar structures went on to notice those structures in communicative input after their consciousness had been raised" (Fotos, 1993: 385). Fotos (1994) builds on the results of the previous studies and raises new questions for investigation: (a) whether the positive results of the pilot study carried on just one task may apply for other tasks; (b) whether GCRTs produce proficiency gains comparable to those produced by TTFGLs; (c) whether GCRTs produce L2 negotiations comparable to those resulting from communicative tasks; (d) and whether variations in task formats affect the quantity of learners L2 negotiations. She comes to the conclusion that that GCRTs can be recommended as a useful pedagogy to the teaching of grammar at a time when many teachers are looking for suitable methods to bring back traditional grammar into communicative classrooms (*ibid*. 343). Her vision of GCRT (1994: 325) runs as follows:

> [It] provides learners with grammar problems to solve interactively… it is communicative and has an L2 grammar problem as the task content. Although the learners focus on the form of the grammar structure, they are also engaged in meaning-focused use of the target language as they solve the grammar problem. They develop grammatical knowledge while they are communicating.

On balance, Fotos and Ellis (1991), Fotos (1993), and Fotos (1994) propose the use of indirect GCRTs where an inductive approach to learning grammar involves some information-gap tasks. The necessary data from which to work out grammatical rules are distributed among groups of learners who will share their respective information to sort out the appropriate grammatical rules. These tasks allow learners to develop an explicit grammar of the TL and to promote communication among learners about its grammar.

Ellis's Model

Ellis (1990) argues that formal instruction should be targeted at developing explicit knowledge which may subsequently facilitate implicit knowledge. Formal instruction allows learners to know about some specific structures, to notice them, to monitor their own erroneous production, but not to use the language in communication. The ultimate goal is consciousness-raising rather than practice. Ellis's model, then, proves to be quite different from most traditional approaches which seek to enable learners to use the structure first in controlled practice and next in free communication. His model lays great emphasis on comprehension, attention, noticing and other cognitive processes, but belittles the role of production. Ellis

(1992) presents arguments in favour of teaching grammar as consciousness-raising (CR) without giving lectures on grammar because such a transmission approach is found to be incompatible with current research about how learners acquire L2 grammar and with progressive views about education as a discovery process. Instead, he proposes a task-based approach combined with CR that encourages learning as a discovery process where learners have to solve problems about grammar and talk about language intricacies. He shows that GCRTs may be inductive where learners are supplied with data and asked to construct appropriate explicit rules, or deductive where learners are provided with rules and asked to use them to perform some specific tasks. Though there is no empirical evidence to suggest which type is more efficient, Ellis thinks that both will be equally useful (*ibid*. 239).

The most elaborated study of GCRTs comes from Ellis (1997: 160-65). He concedes that the aim of these tasks is to develop explicit knowledge of some grammar points accompanied with some 'metalingual knowledge'. This can be achieved either in direct or indirect ways. Firstly, explicit knowledge can be achieved through direct explanation as in traditional grammar, but this approach falls into disfavour since it is grounded on an educational transmission model, and as such may not be interesting for learners as long as it does not allow them to take responsibility for their learning. Secondly, indirect explicit grammar instruction can be achieved through designing appropriate tasks. This discovery approach provides serious L2 interaction among learners while learning about problematic grammatical structures; that is to say, "Grammar becomes both the object of learning and a topic for communicating about" (*ibid*. 160). Ellis argues that while all grammar exercises and drills can raise learners' awareness, the fundamental characteristic of a GCRT is to develop a conscious representation better than the other activities without the least attempt of eliciting the production of targeted structures except incidentally or their correct use in subsequent free communication. As such Ellis's definition of a CR task is worth quoting here:

> A CR task is a pedagogic activity where the learners are provided with L2 data in some form and required to perform some operation on or with it, the purpose of which is to arrive at an explicit understanding of some linguistic property or properties of the target language.
>
> (Ellis, *ibid.* 160)

Ellis explains what is implied in inductive or deductive GCRTs. In inductive tasks, learners can get the information to form explicit knowledge from two main sources: either from their implicit knowledge which should be analysed or from structured data which allow learners to discover regularities for themselves; however, the one does not exclude the other (*ibid*. 160-61). In deductive tasks, descriptive information can be presented in various ways: (1) verbally or non-verbally (for

example, a diagram) or in both ways, (2) in non-contrastive or contrastive ways, and (3) in complete or partial ways. If the information is partial or inaccurate, learners are required to provide a complete account of the targeted structure (*ibid*. 161). In addition, Ellis makes clear that regardless of whether GCRTs are deductive or inductive, they consist of some data and operations to be performed on them. The data include a variety of choices. They may be "authentic vs. contrived", "oral vs. written", "discrete sentences vs. continuous text", "well-formed vs. deviant", and "gap vs. non-gap" (that is, whether the data distributed among learners contain partial information and must be shared with other classmates, or whether each learner is provided with all the necessary data) (*ibid*. 161). The operations that may be performed on the data generally consist of (1) "identification" of a specific feature, (2) "judgement" of correctness or appropriateness, (3) "completion" of text, filling gaps or selecting choices, (4) "modification" of a text via replacing, reordering or inserting items into a text or rewriting a part of a text, (5) "sorting" or classifying into categories, "matching" two types of data in accordance with a given principle, (7) "rule provision"; that is, in inductive tasks, learners may or may not be required to provide rules for the examined data; but if asked to do so, rules can be presented verbally or non-verbally (*ibid*. 161-62).

From the methodological point of view, Ellis (*ibid.* 162) argues that GCRTs can be performed individually, in small group work, or with the whole class either orally or in writing, in L2 or L1, in a straightforward way or in the form of games which may be appealing to learners. GCRTs are said to provide learners with explicit knowledge which promotes 'noticing' and 'comparing' which are very essential for learning to take place. One limitation of these tasks is that they may not suit young learners as they do not have enough implicit knowledge in the TL to draw on; and consequently, complete the tasks in their L1. Conscious learning, in general, may not be efficient for younger people as well as some adults of the "data-gathering kind" who dislike rule formation and prefer implicit learning which "operates largely independently of intelligence" (*ibid*. 164). According to Ellis (2003: 162-163), GCRTs are designed so as:

> … to cater primarily to explicit learning –that is, they are intended to develop awareness at the level of 'understanding' rather than awareness at the level 'noticing', and they "make language itself the content … learners are required to talk meaningfully about a language point using their own linguistic resources. That is, although there is some linguistic feature that is the focus of the task learners are not required to use this feature, only think about it and discuss it. The 'taskness' of a C-R task lies not in the linguistic point that is the focus of the task but rather in the talk learners must engage in order to achieve an outcome of the task.

A GCRT is a kind of student-student interaction, talk, or communication about grammar. It includes a variety of co-operative learning techniques where learners are divided into different groups and handed different parts of teacher-taught materials to teach them to each other. It can be said that a GCRT, then, is reminiscent of the jigsaw method defined by Johnson (1995: 114) as a method "in which teachers divide the academic content to be learned into parts and delegate individual parts to each group member. Thus, group members are responsible for learning only one part of the content and then teaching that part to the rest of the group".

Rationale for GCRTs instead of CR Communicative Tasks and TTFGLs

GCRTS and CR communicative tasks have some similarities and differences. Their point of convergence lies in their endeavour to draw learners' attention to specific language structures in order to raise their consciousness. Both involve comprehension, and both are structure-based in essence. The two firmly maintain that grammar could be best taught under a process-orientated approach rather than a product-orientated approach. Their differences appear in the fact that CR communicative tasks are non-grammatical in nature; they incorporate the targeted structures in sentences or texts in order to perform the task effectively. GCRTs are grammatical in essence; their content is the targeted structure itself, and learners are required to talk about grammar in order to discover certain rules and to solve a problematic grammatical issue. CR Communicative tasks initially attempt to raise learners' consciousness, and subsequently push learners to use some language features so as to carry out the task appropriately. The focus is on meaning and message conveyance. In contrast, GCRTs are not directed at developing immediate language use of the target structure but rather at drawing learners' attention to specific structures, enhancing their comprehension, and raising their consciousness in order to facilitate their noticing of the targeted structure in subsequent communicative input (Fotos, 1994: 326).

The option for comparing TTFGLs and GCRTs stems from the fact that they form the extreme points of the continuum. CR communicative tasks, however, occupy a medial position. They are quite similar to the well-known communicative grammar activities already practised in CLT courses, and which have failed to develop learners' grammatical competence. As Richards (1999: 17) says "the use of communicative language tasks plus *ad hoc* intervention by the teacher to provide corrective feedback on errors that arise during task completion may not be sufficient to achieve acceptable levels of grammatical accuracy in second language learning". There are sound arguments for adopting GCRTs instead of CR communicative tasks. First, in CR communicative tasks, learners do not feel that they are studying grammar *per se*, but rather like learning to communicate, or to play games. As Fotos (1994: 326) points out:

> Grammar problems constitute serious task material, in contrast to the trivial nature of many communicative tasks. This point is particularly important in EFL teaching situations where formal, teacher-fronted grammar instruction characterizes many classrooms and communicative activities may not be regarded as serious language study.

In general, FL learners are very keen in studying grammar. They often ask their teachers to teach them the essentials of the FL grammar that allow them to codify the chaos of linguistic data into a reduced set of rules. After all, human beings are endowed with a cognitive ability that allows them to establish relations about linguistic entities and to absorb the TL through reasoning and analogical undertaking. As Servan-Schreiber and Anderson (1990: 592) argue "The world is regular, and people are efficient regularity detectors". GCRTs help learners discover the rules for themselves, build up their explicit knowledge, and promote their grammatical accuracy. As Hood (1994: 28) maintains that "Drawing the learners' attention to the linguistic patterns and providing them with the underlying rules and principles can enhance the learning process since learners usually try to discover rules from the language data for themselves." So, even though teachers do not provide learners with grammatical rules, learners will look for the rules for themselves. This endeavour, however, is time consuming and too demanding upon learners. It is likely to be confusing for it may lead learners to deduce wrong hypotheses about the complex immanent structures of the TL.

So, GCRTSs seem to be favourable to TTFGLs, especially that the teaching of grammar through the latter has not been successful in its attempt to make learners internalise the TL grammar. Such an approach which is based on a transmission of knowledge does not encourage learners to work out grammatical regularities for themselves. In addition, experience has shown that learners who go practising language forms and structures at great depth in controlled classroom environments often fail to use the right forms in communication or even free writing. Many structures which are thoroughly rehearsed and practised in the classroom and at home are generally deemed to be lost as soon as learners start to use language in non-controlled situations. In short, grammar which is taught through controlled drilling and practice will not last long among learners (Batstone, 1994a: 46). In support of this rationale is the fact that practice will not be useful unless it engages learners to produce the targeted structures in situations akin to those of real communication. Tasks that reflect such a requirement are quite difficult to design, and this fact provides a strong rationale for using GCRTs (Ellis, 1997: 647).

Another rationale for GCRTs is to allow learners to discover patterns in formal as opposed to informal styles. For example, some kinds of reported speech are quite common in academic writing and formal texts, but they are hardly used in informal

spoken forms. Thus, FL learners need to explore written grammar which is different in many aspects from spoken grammar. The problem with CR communicative tasks is that students may complete the tasks in their L1 and not in the L2; the advantage of GCRTs is that students have grammar problems as task contents that cannot be solved without the use of the TL (Fotos, 1994: 326). Another argument in favour of GCRTs and explicit grammatical knowledge is that Algerian students study English for a four-year period for the fulfilment of a License degree in English, and most of them would be potential teachers of English. They are, therefore, supposed to acquire an effective explicit grammatical knowledge about the English language to convey it later on to other learners and to be able to reply to all their questions about the intricacies of language in an explicit way. As Douglas (1994: 350) strongly stated, "If learners are headed toward professional goals, they may need to stress formal accuracy more so than learners at the survival level". It is also necessary to help students to develop an explicit knowledge of English grammar because they are supposed to teach secondary school learners who study for a three-year period in order to sit on the Baccalaureate Exam where various kinds of grammatical exercises need to be solved accurately. For students working on a license degree in English, grammar is considered as an independent course to be taught as a subject matter; the syllabus dictates that a series of grammatical lessons have to be covered during the first two academic years of the License degree. While the grammar course is contrived to help students develop grammatical accuracy, other courses such as phonetics and oral expression are provided to cater for promoting fluency and overall communicative competence. Students need to develop an explicit grammatical knowledge of English because if they want to follow post graduation studies, they are required to take the test of English which generally consists of a battery of grammar points.

It is worth mentioning that GCRTs are quite compatible with SLA research and how people learn languages. They are in harmony with modern CR theories –the attention hypothesis, the noticing hypothesis, and the input enhancement hypothesis. In addition they are in tune with Krashen's comprehensive input hypothesis (1981; 1987) in their endeavour to expose learners to meaning rather than to submit them to TTFGLS. They are in symbiosis with Long's interaction hypothesis (1983) which emphasizes interactional activities among learners to allow them to negotiate meaning through the use of comprehension checks and clarification requests. They are also in conformity with Swain's output hypothesis (1985) which acknowledges the role of comprehensible output for promoting grammatical competence, expressing efficient meaning, developing syntactic processing, and testing out hypotheses about the TL. It should be recalled that the last three hypotheses complement each other, present real opportunities for learners to work in groups, to comprehend, to talk, and to interact in order to gain accuracy as well as fluency in the TL. GCRTs are also corroborated by skill-building theories which insist on the move

from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge or from knowing to using **(**Bialystok, 1981, 1982).

The Present study

Most task-based SLA research is carried out under laboratory conditions. For us to feel more secure with the claims made by some proponents such as Fotos (1994) and Ellis (1997) that GCRTs are more effective than TTFGLs, we carry out a classroom experiment on first-year students of English at the University of Constantine in order to infirm or confirm the following hypotheses:

1. Grammar consciousness-raising tasks are more effective for improving grammatical
   accuracy in the use of English tenses than traditional teacher-fronted grammar lessons.
2. Grammar consciousness-raising tasks are more effective for promoting *grammatical explicit knowledge* about English tenses than traditional teacher-fronted grammar lessons.

In order to assess the comparative effectiveness of TTFGLs and GCRTs, we have recourse to two means of research, commonly used in SLA studies:

1. The proficiency test made up of the multiple choice-questions test consisting of twenty sentences to evaluate students' grammatical accuracy in the use of the English tenses
2. The justification test to assess students' explicit grammatical knowledge for their choice of the selected tense options.

At the beginning of the experiment, the control and experimental groups were administered a proficiency pretest made up of a multiple choice-questions test together with a justification test to investigate respectively whether there were any differences between them in grammatical accuracy and grammatical explicit knowledge. The students were presented with twenty sentences reflecting all the tenses, and they were required to choose one tense from among four alternatives and to provide a grammatical justification for the selected tense. Both groups showed 'homogeneity' among them. The size of the population of this experiment was a total of 360 Algerian university students in the Department English, University of Constantine. The sample of the present study consists of 66 students of English making up two classes: 31 students in the control group and 35 students in the experimental group. The students were randomly assigned to either the control group or the experimental group in order to prevent 'contamination'.

Treatment Cycles

The students had two required 90-min period per week of English grammar with an Algerian instructor who was the researcher himself and the regular grammar

classroom instructor. Since this could be a bias factor, we acted as a facilitator to avoid the 'Hawthorne effect' –showing more attention, devotion and enthusiasm to one treatment and not enough to the other (Benati, 2001: 105-6). The experimental group performed GCRTs dealing with the selected English tenses. Students in this group were randomly assigned into pairs or four-member groups for each task treatment depending on the number of rules for each tense. The control group received TTFGLs on the same tenses. The contents of the lessons were dictated to the students from the task cards elaborated for the GCRTs. The necessary explanation was provided, and the difficult words were written on the blackboard**.**

In terms of grammatical accuracy, the mean score of the control group in the pretest was 07.90 and that of the experimental group was 07.45. In terms of grammatical explicit knowledge, the mean score of the control group in the pretest was 03.70 and that of the experimental group was 03.54. The student t test was delivered using computer software: MODALISA VERSION: 4, and did not reveal a considerable difference between the pretest score means. After the administration of all the traditional grammar lessons and the performance of the grammar tasks, the two groups took a posttest that was somehow similar to the pretest.

The types of materials needed for carrying out the experimental study are TTFGLs, GCRTs and proficiency tests.

TTFGLs consisted of traditional grammar teaching and written practice. These lessons followed the conventional stages: Presentation and Practice. In the presentation stage, thorough explanations of the forms and uses of the English tense under study were provided. Every tense was presented in the affirmative, negative, interrogative and interro-negative form together with yes/no short answers with all the singular and plural persons. Then, the students were presented with four sentences, and required to understand their meaning carefully, to underline their verbs, and to find the rule which governed them. This procedure of drawing rules from a set of sentences is known as the inductive approach; it encourages students to observe, analyse, and comprehend the sentences so as to discover the rules by themselves. If the students were not able to do so, the instructor would guide them to find the appropriate rule. Once the rule was given, the instructor drew a time diagram on the blackboard so as to show the students where the action of the verb happened in relation to three main points: past, present and future. At the practice stage, students were presented with an exercise where they had to put the verbs in brackets in the correct form and to provide oral answers. The exercises we opted for consisted of short texts to introduce students to discourse grammar where tenses were used in clear contexts and where devices of coherence and cohesion were tactfully displayed. All the exercises were extracted from Freeman's book (1983).

The GCRTs are designed in conformity with the task components proposed by Candlin (1987), Breen (1989), Nunan (1989), and Ellis (1998) including 'goals', 'input', 'procedures', 'setting', 'learner roles', 'teacher roles' and' outcomes'. They met the main criteria established for any language task by Prabhu (1987: 46-7). First, they were, in essence, 'information-gap activities' which required exchanging information amongst all the members of the group whose task cards were quite different in content. Second, they were considered as 'reasoning-gap activities' in the sense that students were supposed to use their cognitive faculties so as to perceive, reason, and induce rules from a series of sentences. Third, they engaged students in 'decision-making activities' through gathering information from each other and reaching a common decision. Likewise, the GCRTs developed in this study were in symbiosis with Pica *et al*. (1993: 19-26) criteria for developing real tasks and which included 'jig-saw', 'information gap', 'problem solving', 'decision making' and 'opinion exchange'

Quantitative Analysis of Grammatical Accuracy and Grammatical Explicit Knowledge

We have made use of a statistical package for the present experimental work called "MODALISA VERSION: 4". The proficiency test was administered before beginning TTFGLs instruction and GCRTs performance. Three months later, the same proficiency test with minor alterations was administered to both the control and experimental groups as a posttest. Grammatical accuracy gains between the pretest and posttest mean scores were calculated for the two treatment groups, and the student t-test was used to examine the significance of differences between them. The mean of the control group grammatical accuracy pretest was 07.90, and its mean in grammatical accuracy posttest was 13.16. The net gain in grammatical accuracy for the control group was 05.26. Furthermore, the mean of the experimental group grammatical accuracy pretest was 07.45, and its mean in grammatical accuracy posttest was 15.02. The net gain in grammatical accuracy for the experimental group was 07.57. The student t-test was used to examine the significance of differences between the pretest and posttest mean scores between the two treatment groups.

As for grammatical accuracy, given that the student t value calculated: 0.515 is inferior to the t value on the table of t values: 1.96 at 5%, we accept the null hypothesis; therefore, the difference between the two means in the pretest is not significant. Given that the calculated t is superior to the t value on the table: 2.33 at 2%, the null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, the difference between the two means is significant at 2%. The GCRTs provide better results in grammatical accuracy than the TTFGLs. Consequently, the first and main hypothesis, which stipulates that "GCRTs are more effective for improving *grammatical accuracy* in the use of English tenses than TTFGLs" has been confirmed. The results of the t test lent strong support for a positive answer to this first hypothesis. It can be deduced that the same

significant results attained in the mastery of the tenses through GCRTs can be attained for the teaching of other grammatical structures in English or other languages.

As for explicit grammatical knowledge, it in the same proficiency test used in the present study for the analysis of grammatical accuracy that the students were required to provide the appropriate justification for their choice of any particular tense amongst the four tense options provided for each sentence. The objective of this test was to assess the explicit grammatical knowledge that the students were supposed to have already acquired either through TTFGLs or GCRTs. The difference related to grammatical explicit knowledge in the score means within the same groups and between the two groups was also significant**.** Within the same group, the control group score mean in grammatical explicit knowledge pretest was 03.71 and in the posttest 09. A gain of 05.29 was obtained. Within the same group also, the experimental group mean score in the grammatical explicit knowledge was 03.54 and in the posttest 12.02. A significant gain of 08.48 was achieved.

Given that the calculated t is superior to the t value in the table: 2.58 at 1%, the null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, the difference between the two means is significant at 1%. The GCRTs resulted in better students' achievements in grammatical explicit knowledge compared to TTFGLs. Therefore, the second hypothesis which stipulates that "GCRTs are more effective for promoting *explicit grammatical knowledge* about English tenses than TTFGLs" is significantly corroborated.

The results of the experiment also indicated that traditional grammar instruction resulted in the emergence of correct grammatical forms, and this is a sound counterargument for those researchers who deny the beneficial effects of grammar instruction whatever its nature. In addition, the results revealed that GCRTs were much more effective in improving grammatical accuracy than TTFGLs. The good results acquired by the experimental group students point to the pedagogical usefulness of this innovative approach. What must be said is that in contrast to the traditional grammar students who have always some grammar practice activities after each lesson, the grammar task students have not been presented at all with any form of practice. Although the practice stage would have been a bias in favour of the traditional grammar group, the grammar task group had achieved better results. The place that practice has enjoyed for a long time seems to fall into disfavour. GCRTs which lay a great emphasis on CR proved to be very efficient types of classroom activities. The use of such tasks is supported by what SLA researchers like Ellis (2003) tell us about how learners acquire languages. We can therefore suggest that the positive results of GCRTs in the teaching of English tenses may be extensively generalised to a host of grammatical structures. In contrast to CR communicative tasks which present learners with trivial and inconsequential content and which dispense them with the necessary grammatical explicit rules, GCRTs provide

students with rich and variegated grammar content that comes in hand for those who need to tackle clear rules of thumb. Furthermore, GCRTs accommodate students who study grammar as a subject grammar; that is, those who want to learn about grammar for academic purposes, to specialise in English or any other language, and not for those who want to use the language for survival or pure communication, as is the case with people who want to use the language for the sake of trade or tourism.

The building up of grammatical explicit knowledge in L2 learning has been contested by some researchers such as Krashen (1981) on the ground that this explicit knowledge will not turn into implicit knowledge. However, the students have shown that their grammatical explicit knowledge has turned into grammatical accuracy in subsequent time. The aim of GCRTs is to help students understand the systematic nature of language and the inherent mechanisms of its functioning –a process which allows them to perform the language competently in later stages. In this case, GCRTs may contribute to language acquisition by allowing students to develop grammatical explicit knowledge that will later facilitate the acquisition of implicit knowledge (Fotos and Ellis 1991: 622). Grammatical explicit knowledge is deemed necessary because it represents a declarative knowledge which allows skill getting which is vehemently observed in the internalisation of grammatical explicit rules. Procedural knowledge allows skill using which appears in the use of grammatical tenses as shown in the multiple choice-questions test and will later appear in uncontrolled communication. Finally, since GCRTs have been found to be more effective in promoting grammatical explicit knowledge, they can be used as an alternative to TTFGLs.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that GCRTs are more effective than TTFGLs in developing grammatical accuracy and grammatical explicit knowledge. Therefore, GCRTs can be recommended as a viable approach to integrate formal instruction and communicative language teaching for the teaching of grammar in EFL classes. Our interest in grammar does not mean that we are seeking a golden age of grammar teaching, but we are only deploring the strong return of traditional grammar to our communicative classrooms on the one hand and the total abandonment of grammar teaching in schools and universities on the other hand.

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