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Pengaruh Kegiatan Penyadaran Tata Bahasa (Consciousness-Raising Grammar Activities) terhadap Penguasaan Tenses Bahasa Inggris di Pendidikan Tinggi

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effect of Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (GCRTs) on the acquisition of English tenses at the higher education level compared to Traditional Grammar Instruction (TGI). A quasi-experimental design was employed involving two groups: an experimental group of 43 university students taught through GCRTs and a control group of 41 students instructed via traditional grammar teaching. The research instruments included a pretest and posttest, classroom observations, and a questionnaire. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 29. The findings revealed that both groups were initially homogeneous at the pretest stage. However, after the intervention, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in grammatical accuracy and explicit grammatical knowledge. Classroom observations indicated that GCRTs enhanced learners' negotiated interaction, motivation, and learner autonomy. Furthermore, questionnaire results showed that most participants expressed highly positive attitudes toward the implementation of GCRTs in grammar learning. In conclusion, GCRTs proved to be more effective than TGI in improving English tense acquisition and in promoting both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning in higher education contexts.

Keywords

Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks; English tense acquisition; grammar instruction; higher education; EFL learners

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi pengaruh Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (GCRTs) terhadap penguasaan tenses bahasa Inggris di tingkat pendidikan tinggi dibandingkan dengan Traditional Grammar Instruction (TGI). Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen dengan melibatkan dua kelompok, yaitu kelompok eksperimen yang terdiri dari 43 mahasiswa yang diajar menggunakan GCRTs dan kelompok kontrol yang terdiri dari 41 mahasiswa yang menerima pembelajaran berbasis TGI. Instrumen penelitian meliputi tes pretest dan posttest, observasi kelas, serta kuesioner. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan inferensial dengan bantuan SPSS versi 29. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tidak terdapat perbedaan signifikan antara kedua kelompok pada tahap pretest, sehingga kedua kelompok dinyatakan homogen. Namun, pada tahap posttest, kelompok eksperimen menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam penguasaan tata bahasa, khususnya dalam aspek grammatical accuracy dan explicit grammatical knowledge, dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol. Selain itu, hasil observasi menunjukkan bahwa GCRTs mampu meningkatkan interaksi negosiasi, motivasi, dan kemandirian belajar mahasiswa. Data kuesioner juga mengungkapkan bahwa sebagian besar peserta memiliki sikap positif terhadap penerapan GCRTs dalam pembelajaran grammar. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa GCRTs lebih efektif dibandingkan TGI dalam meningkatkan penguasaan tenses bahasa Inggris serta memberikan dampak positif terhadap aspek kognitif dan afektif pembelajar di pendidikan tinggi.

Kata Kunci

Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks; penguasaan tenses; pembelajaran tata bahasa; pendidikan tinggi; EFL

Introduction

This study addresses a persistent and multifaceted concern in language education, specifically the effectiveness of grammar instruction in English language learning at the tertiary level. A central issue lies in the inadequate grammatical competence of university students, particularly in their productive skills of speaking and writing. Many learners continue to produce recurring grammatical errors even after entering higher education and completing formal grammar instruction courses.

This situation reflects a significant gap between formal grammar teaching and actual language use, indicating the need for more empirically grounded and pedagogically effective instructional approaches. Since the late twentieth century, the role of grammar in language curricula has undergone substantial transformation, shifting from a core instructional component to a more peripheral position. Although interest in grammar instruction experienced a resurgence in the 1990s, it has yet to regain its former prominence in language teaching frameworks.

Ellis (2021) argues that traditional grammar teaching models such as Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) are limited in their ability to foster authentic communicative competence. Similarly, Nunan (2022) highlights the ambiguous status of grammar within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where emphasis on meaning often overshadows attention to linguistic form.

Recent developments in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research suggest that neither Grammar Consciousness-Raising (GCR) approaches nor Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are fully effective when implemented in isolation. While TBLT has been shown to promote fluency and communicative confidence, it often does so at the expense of grammatical accuracy (Sato & Loewen, 2023; Ellis, 2022). Conversely, consciousness-raising approaches emphasize explicit awareness of grammatical forms but may not sufficiently support meaningful language use.

To address these limitations, SLA scholars advocate for the integration of TBLT with Grammar Consciousness-Raising techniques (Rutherford, 2021; Nassaji, 2022). This integration has led to the development of Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (GCRTs), which are considered a more balanced instructional approach that supports both fluency and accuracy (Fotos, 2023; Goo & Mackey, 2021).

GCRTs are designed to enhance learners' metalinguistic awareness by engaging them in communicative activities where grammatical structures serve as the primary focus of discussion. In these tasks, learners do not merely use language for communication but also collaboratively analyze and reflect on problematic grammatical forms (Ellis, 2022). This process facilitates the development of explicit or declarative knowledge, which is essential for subsequent language acquisition.

From a theoretical perspective, consciousness-raising represents an explicit-inductive instructional approach aimed at increasing learners' awareness of linguistic features without directly ensuring the development of implicit procedural knowledge (Schmidt, 2021; Thornbury, 2022). Within GCRTs, grammar becomes the central content of interaction, enabling learning through reflection, negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving.

Furthermore, task-based instruction is generally categorized into unfocused communicative tasks and focused communicative tasks (Ellis, 2021; Robinson, 2023). GCRTs fall under the category of focused tasks, as they intentionally direct learners' attention toward specific grammatical structures. In the context of this study, the focus is particularly on the acquisition of English tenses in higher education settings.

Accordingly, this study investigates the influence of Grammar Consciousness-Raising activities on university students' mastery of English tenses, emphasizing the integration of communicative language use and grammatical awareness as a means of improving linguistic competence in higher education.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were first-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students enrolled in the Preparatory Year Program at a university in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. The participants were aged between 18 and 19 years.

The sample consisted of two groups: an experimental group comprising 43 students who were instructed through Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (GCRTs), and a control group of 41 students who received Traditional Grammar Instruction (TGI).

Both groups were taught by the same instructor, who also served as the researcher, in order to maintain instructional consistency and reduce teacher-related variability. Instruction was delivered in 50-minute sessions, five times per week, over a three-month intervention period. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and institutional research guidelines.

Instruments

To obtain comprehensive data, the study employed a mixed-methods approach using three instruments: a grammar proficiency test, classroom observation, and a questionnaire. The validity and reliability of the instruments were reviewed and confirmed by three experts in applied linguistics.

1. Grammar Proficiency Test

A pre-test and post-test design was implemented to measure students' development in English tense mastery. Each test lasted 60 minutes and consisted of 20 multiple-choice items focusing on English tenses. Each item included four answer options, requiring students to select the correct grammatical form and provide justification of their grammatical reasoning.

Each correct response was awarded one point, resulting in a maximum score of 20. The pre-test results confirmed that both groups were initially at a comparable proficiency level.

2. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation was conducted to qualitatively examine learners' interactional behavior during instructional activities. The purpose was to document, analyze, and interpret patterns of student engagement, particularly in relation to negotiated interaction.

Interactional data were analyzed using the framework proposed by Fotos (1994), which includes indicators such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, repetitions, and requests for repetition. These categories were used to capture the extent of learner interaction during task execution.

3. Questionnaire

A post-intervention questionnaire was administered to the experimental group to explore students' perceptions of GCRTs. The questionnaire aimed to assess perceived improvements in explicit grammar knowledge, accuracy, interaction, autonomy, and other unintended learning benefits.

A five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used to measure student responses, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative interpretation of learner experiences.

Teaching Methods

Traditional Grammar Instruction (Control Group)

The control group received conventional grammar instruction based on materials from *Oxford University Press: Q Skills for Success (Books 3 & 4)*. Grammar lessons were delivered through a deductive, teacher-centered approach.

The instructor presented grammatical rules directly, followed by explanations and examples. Students then completed controlled practice exercises such as sentence completion, gap-filling, and matching activities. Immediate corrective feedback was provided by the teacher.

This instructional process reflects the traditional PPP model (Presentation–Practice–Production), in which grammar is explicitly taught through structured explanation followed by controlled practice and limited communicative application.

Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (Experimental Group)

In contrast, the experimental group engaged in Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (GCRTs), implemented through collaborative and task-based learning structures.

Students were organized into small groups of four members. Each member received a different segment of instructional content to analyze and later share with peers. This structure closely resembles the jigsaw technique (Johnson, 1995), in which learners are responsible for mastering one part of the content and teaching it to others.

The tasks incorporated principles of focused communicative tasks, including information gap, problem-solving, decision-making, opinion exchange, and jigsaw activities (Pica et al., 1993). Task design followed established frameworks proposed by Candlin (1987), Nunan (1989), and Ellis (1998), including components such as goals, input, procedures, learning setting, learner roles, teacher roles, and expected outcomes.

The primary goal of these tasks was to raise learners' grammatical awareness of English tenses while simultaneously promoting explicit knowledge, accuracy in usage, interactional competence, motivation, and autonomy.

Task input was delivered through worksheets, task cards, and structured instructions. For example, in teaching the present simple tense, students were provided with task sheets requiring them to identify forms (affirmative, negative, interrogative, imperative) and match them with their appropriate uses (habitual actions, general truths, scheduled events, and historical present usage).

Each group member completed assigned task cards individually before engaging in group discussion. Learners were then required to compare answers, justify grammatical choices, and negotiate meaning collaboratively before reaching consensus.

The procedural stages included:

1. Analyzing task input to identify correct tense forms and rules
2. Engaging in peer negotiation to compare and validate responses
3. Reaching group agreement and submitting final answers under teacher supervision

The expected outcomes of these tasks were improved understanding of English tense structures, enhanced grammatical accuracy, strengthened metalinguistic awareness, and increased learner autonomy through collaborative problem-solving and reflective discussion.

Results

Pretest Results

The preliminary analysis of pre-intervention data was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29 to determine the initial equivalence between the experimental group (GCRTs) and the control group (TGI). Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and variance, were calculated for both grammatical accuracy and explicit grammatical knowledge.

Table 1. Pretest Results for Grammatical Accuracy

Group	N	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group (TGI)	41	4.73	2.16	4.65
Experimental Group (GCRTs)	43	4.86	2.04	4.17

Table 2. Pretest Results for Explicit Grammatical Knowledge

Group	N	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group (TGI)	41	4.39	1.96	3.84
Experimental Group (GCRTs)	43	4.41	1.86	3.47

The results indicate that both groups demonstrated comparable baseline performance prior to treatment implementation. The differences in mean scores were minimal, suggesting homogeneity in initial grammatical competence across both groups.

Inferential statistics using independent samples t-tests further confirmed that no statistically significant differences existed between the two groups at the pretest stage ($p > 0.05$). This confirms that both groups started the intervention under equivalent conditions in terms of grammatical accuracy and explicit knowledge.

Posttest Results

Following the instructional intervention, a posttest was administered to evaluate the impact of GCRTs compared to traditional grammar instruction.

Table 3. Posttest Results for Grammatical Accuracy

Group	N	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group (TGI)	41	11.21	2.09	4.37
Experimental Group (GCRTs)	43	14.81	2.47	6.11

Table 4. Posttest Results for Explicit Grammatical Knowledge

Group	N	Mean	SD	Variance
Control Group (TGI)	41	10.48	1.40	1.96
Experimental Group (GCRTs)	43	12.53	2.33	5.45

The post-intervention findings reveal a clear improvement in both groups; however, the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group in both dependent variables. Statistical testing confirmed that these differences were highly significant ($p < 0.001$), with large effect sizes, indicating the strong impact of GCRTs on learners' grammatical development.

Analysis of gain scores demonstrates that learners exposed to GCRTs experienced substantially greater improvement compared to those receiving traditional instruction. The magnitude of improvement was especially pronounced in grammatical accuracy, indicating that consciousness-raising tasks significantly enhanced learners' ability to apply tense structures correctly in context.

Discussion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (GCRTs) exert a significantly positive influence on the acquisition of English tenses among university-level EFL learners when compared to Traditional Grammar Instruction (TGI).

The pretest analysis confirmed that both groups were statistically equivalent prior to the intervention, ensuring that any subsequent differences could be attributed to the instructional treatment rather than pre-existing proficiency disparities.

Posttest results revealed that the experimental group achieved markedly higher performance in both grammatical accuracy and explicit grammatical knowledge. This outcome aligns with contemporary SLA perspectives which emphasize the importance of integrating form-focused instruction within communicative contexts.

The superiority of GCRTs can be attributed to their ability to combine explicit grammatical awareness with meaningful interaction. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, GCRTs require learners to actively engage in problem-solving, hypothesis testing, and peer negotiation. This process promotes deeper cognitive processing of grammatical structures, leading to more durable learning outcomes.

Furthermore, classroom observation indicated that learners in the experimental group exhibited significantly higher levels of engagement, autonomy, and collaborative interaction. The structured task design encouraged learners to negotiate meaning, justify grammatical choices, and co-construct knowledge, which is consistent with interactionist theories of second language acquisition.

In contrast, the control group experienced limited interactional opportunities due to the dominance of the Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) model. Instruction in this group was largely teacher-centered, resulting in passive learning behavior and minimal peer interaction.

The results also highlight that GCRTs fostered a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment. Students reported increased motivation, confidence, and willingness to participate in classroom activities. These findings support affective filter theory, which emphasizes the role of emotional factors in language acquisition.

Additionally, GCRTs promoted discovery learning and metalinguistic awareness. Learners were required to analyze grammatical input, infer rules, and collaboratively validate their understanding. This inductive learning process enhanced critical thinking and long-term retention of grammatical structures.

The questionnaire data further confirmed high levels of learner satisfaction. Most students expressed positive attitudes toward GCRTs, particularly in relation to autonomy, engagement, collaboration, and enjoyment. These findings reinforce previous research indicating that task-based and consciousness-raising approaches enhance both cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning.

Overall, the integration of consciousness-raising activities within grammar instruction proved to be more effective than traditional methods in developing both accuracy and explicit grammatical knowledge, particularly in the acquisition of English tense structures at the higher education level.

Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussion of the study, it can be concluded that Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks (GCRTs) have a significant effect on the acquisition of English tenses at the higher education level compared to Traditional Grammar Instruction (TGI). First, the pretest results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group, confirming that both groups were at an equivalent level of grammatical competence prior to the treatment. This ensures that any differences observed in the posttest can be attributed to the instructional intervention. Second, the posttest results revealed that the experimental group taught through GCRTs demonstrated a significantly higher improvement in both grammatical accuracy and explicit grammatical knowledge than the control group. The statistical analysis confirmed that these differences were significant, indicating the effectiveness of GCRTs in enhancing

grammar learning outcomes. Third, classroom observation data showed that GCRTs promoted greater learner engagement in negotiated interaction, collaboration, motivation, and learner autonomy. In contrast, the TGI group experienced limited interaction due to the teacher-centered nature of instruction. Fourth, the questionnaire results indicated that most students had highly positive perceptions of GCRTs. They reported that this approach improved their understanding of grammar, increased their confidence, and created a more active and enjoyable learning environment. Overall, it can be concluded that GCRTs are more effective than TGI in improving English tense acquisition and in supporting cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of language learning in higher education contexts.

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