

IMPROVING STUDENTS GRAMMAR ACCURACY IN WRITING THROUGH CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING APPROACH

Bernadeta Diah Ratih Angguratami⁹

(bernadetadiahra@gmail.com)

Abstract

Grammar an important aspect of communication because it deals with how people are able to express their ideas or thoughts. It is important to construct words and sentences properly in order to convey the points effectively. As an English teacher in Grade X of a senior high school, the researcher found some problems in the students' writing that made their writing scores to be not satisfying although they gained high scores in reading. Also, grammatical errors were the major problems in the students' writing. The research was intended to improve the students' grammar accuracy in writing through consciousness raising. After implementation, the students' grammar mistakes decreased from the preliminary study to the Third Cycle, the researcher concluded that consciousness raising approach in a form of discovery learning activity helped the students in improving their written grammar accuracy. Some students also stated that discovery learning activities helped them understand their mistakes in applying the Simple Past Tense.

Keywords: *Consciousness raising approach, discovery learning activity, grammar accuracy, classroom action research*

Introduction

Grammar is the way in which sentences are structured. Grammar is considered as the important aspect of communication because deals with

⁹ Author is a graduate from Graduate School English Education Department Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya.

how people are able to express their ideas or thoughts properly. It is important to construct words and sentences properly in order to convey the points effectively. In addition, Baleghizadeh & Gordani (2012: 162) reveal that “the application of accurate grammar is an important aspect of any good piece of writing”. Without correct grammar, clear communication is nearly impossible. Proper grammar prevents people from being misunderstood while expressing the thoughts and ideas. Indonesian learners who learn English as a foreign language frequently make mistakes in grammar while writing texts. Concept misunderstanding, lack of English knowledge or limited grammar practices may lead to grammatical errors in writing. To the writer’s concern, the tenth grade students in Senior High School X also often make mistakes in grammar when they were asked to write texts. Grammatical errors were the major problems in the tenth grade students’ writing. The researcher found some problems in the students’ writing that their writing scores were not satisfying although they gained high scores in reading.

When the students were asked to write an English essay, the researcher found many mistakes in their writing. For example, when they were asked to write a recount text, they did not write the correct form of past tense. They wrote “*I was go to beach*” instead of “*I went to the beach*”. Another problem was that the students did not remember the past forms of irregular verbs. For instance, they wrote “*buyed*” instead of “*bought*”. Another problem was that they lacked English grammar and did not know parts of speech very well, they did not put any verb in the sentences which made the sentences to be meaningless. For instance, they wrote “*I speaking test with my partner about give opinion*” for “*I did speaking test with my partner about giving opinion*”. In writing, grammar is considered as one of the important aspects in constructing sentence; the students should master certain grammar points in order to be understood by the readers. If they do many mistakes in grammar, it will inhibit their communication with the readers.

Grammar cannot be ignored in teaching and learning English since it influences the students' abilities in writing, speaking, as well as understanding English. Hence, they cannot communicate effectively if they do not master the principles of English grammar. Without grammar, it is also hard to communicate orally. Speaking is an oral communication which involves the speaker and receiver. Considering the importance of grammar in writing, moreover the increasing need of preparing Indonesian learners' English competence in this MEA era, the researcher proposes consciousness raising approach (CR) as one of the approaches of teaching grammar to improve the students' grammar accuracy. According to Ellis, as edited in Richards and Renandya (2002:167), CR task is "an activity where certain grammatical feature is given to the learners and they are required to perform an analysis on that data in order to gain explicit understanding". It means that CR task involves activities to equip learners to be aware and noticed certain grammatical features and work on that data autonomously.

There are significant benefits in using CR tasks in the classroom. According to Roza (2014: 4), first, "CR tasks can direct learners' attention to grammar features they might not notice on their own". It means that it can help learners to aware and notice certain features. Second, CR tasks can make learners more autonomous by developing their analytical ability. It helps learners to foster their curiosity and their analytical skills needed to work on language autonomously. Third, it can help learners acquire conscious knowledge which can be used to understand input and monitor their own output. Therefore, the researcher proposes Consciousness Raising as a strategy to improve the students' grammar accuracy. The researcher would like to know whether Consciousness Raising can improve the students' grammar accuracy in writing or not.

Statement of the Problem

In line with the background explained before, the research problem is formulated as follows:

Will consciousness-raising activity help students improve their grammar accuracy?

Research Participants

The participants of this research were tenth grade students of a senior high school. There were 31 students in the class. It consisted of 14 girls and 17 boys. They were about 16-17 years old.

Instruments

The researcher used questionnaire, interviews, field notes, observation sheet, and students' test results. Questionnaire was used to gather the quantitative data. The aim of this instrument was to identify students' opinions about consciousness raising approach. From the questionnaire, the researcher was able to obtain information whether consciousness raising approach helped the students or not in improving the students' grammar accuracy in writing.

The researcher conducted interviews to get more information about the implementation of consciousness raising approach to help the students improve their grammar accuracy. The interviews conducted in this research were semi-structured interviews. The researcher chose this kind of interview because it was very flexible to conduct and the researcher could get as much information as needed from the students.

Field notes were used as instruments to record what was happening in the classroom during the teaching and learning activities to know the improvement of the students in the learning activities. In this research, the field notes were written by an observer. The observer wrote important details happening in the classroom during the teaching and learning activities related to the use of consciousness raising approach.

Observation sheet in this study was used to collect data when the researcher conducted the implementation step. By using an observation sheet, the researcher could identify the students' behavior in the classroom. Besides, the researcher could also gather data and explain descriptively and systematically by using the observation sheet.

Students' test results were the main source of the data. The researcher analyzed the data by checking the students' test results. The researcher examined their work one by one. Besides, the researcher counted the grammatical errors from their works after implementing consciousness raising approach in a form of discovery learning activities.

Procedure

Each cycle consisted of four stages namely Planning, Action, Observation and Reflection. While conducting the research, she referred to the theories of CR activities purposed by Ellis as edited in Richards and Renandya (2002:16) which had some steps namely "Isolating Specific Language Features, Providing Language Feature, Utilizing Intellectual Effort, Clarification, and Articulating the Rule" explained as follows:

a. Isolating Specific Language Features

The researcher had a plan to isolate the grammar accuracy which should be improved by the students. The grammar point was Simple Past Tense because the researcher found many mistakes on the students' writing products when they were asked to write recount texts.

b. Providing Language Feature

The researcher asked the students to write a narrative text which contained Simple Past Tense as the language features. The researcher then asked the students to read carefully the text with their partner. The researcher also provided some questions which should be answered by the students about the text.

c. Utilizing Intellectual Effort

The researcher asked the students to analyze the generic structure and the language features of the text. The students would discuss in pairs. After that, the researcher asked the students to write a narrative text based on the picture series which were provided by the researcher.

d. Clarification

The researcher asked the students to change their writing products with their partners and checked it. The researcher would ask the students to give feedback on their friends' works. The researcher also would ask the students to discuss their writing products with their partners.

e. Articulating the Rule

The researcher asked some students to come and present their discussion with their partners in front of the class. It was expected that the students could reveal what they got and learned especially the grammar that they found. After that the researcher asked the students to rewrite and revise their writing products based on their discussions.

Results

The results are about the improvement of students' grammar accuracy in Simple Past Tense from the preliminary study until the Third Cycle. The results are satisfying enough because consciousness raising approach in a form of discovery learning activity is able to help the students improve their grammar accuracy in Simple Past Tense. Table 1 below shows the improvement from the preliminary study to the Third Cycle.

Table 1. The Percentage of Students' Mistakes

No	Students	The Percentage of Students' Mistakes (%)			
		Preliminary Study	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1	S1	93	90	47	64
2	S2	94	37	12	19

No	Students	The Percentage of Students' Mistakes (%)			
		Preliminary Study	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
3	S3	94	57	80	16
4	S4	90	100	37	13
5	S5	86	5	0	13
6	S6	92	74	92	68
7	S7	96	53	23	74
8	S8	91	95	6	16
9	S9	48	41	22	54
10	S10	83	33	38	15
11	S11	90	50	7	17
12	S12	93	93	10	15
13	S13	86	72	50	30
14	S14	79	76	14	21
15	S15	77	41	38	30
16	S16	71	36	16	72
17	S17	86	43	0	23
18	S18	92	65	52	50
19	S19	82	64	39	43
20	S20	76	61	47	59
21	S21	13	80	38	44
22	S22	50	90	67	75
23	S23	82	90	87	31
24	S24	80	73	35	56
25	S25	94	89	92	50
26	S26	88	84	40	17
27	S27	100	27	45	18
28	S28	97	100	60	0
29	S29	95	77	9	44

No	Students	The Percentage of Students' Mistakes (%)			
		Preliminary Study	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
30	S30	82	88	16	8
31	S31	43	20	7	5
Total Average		81	65	36	34

From table 1, it can be seen that the students make progress in their written grammar accuracy. It can be seen in the preliminary study that the class average percentage of the students' mistakes is 81. Meanwhile, in Cycle One, it decreases into 65, and in Cycle Two becomes 36 and in Cycle Three it decreases into 34. Here, the researcher concludes that discovery learning activity helps the students in improving their grammar accuracy in writing.

Roza (2014: 1) argues that "the activity is able to help the students to construct their conscious knowledge and learn how the language works grammatically". The result presented in table 1 is the same as the students' opinion towards the use of discovery learning activity to improve students' grammar accuracy in Simple Past Tense. From the questionnaires which were completed by the students, there were 16 students from 31 students (52 %) who agreed that the discovery learning activity helped them understand the concept of Simple Past Tense. Moreover, there were 12 students (38%) who stated that discovery learning activity really helped them understand the concept of Simple Past Tense. There were only 3 students (10%) who stated that discovery learning activity did not help them understand the concept of Simple Past Tense.

Roza (2014: 4) also argues that "the activity helps the students to develop their analytical ability". One of the purposes of the activity was to help the students notice certain grammar features that they might not notice on their own. Some students stated that the discovery learning activity helped them understand their mistakes in applying Simple Past Tense. They analyzed their work that had been checked by their friends and they revised

it directly. They learned from their mistakes in order not to do the same mistakes. Walsh (2005: 18) also argues that the activity is able to “help the students to notice the grammar and it helps the students to be aware of the grammar that they use”. They are aware of the mistakes that they make in their writing products. This is one of students’ comments in the questionnaire:

Student 31 : “ *Itu membantu karena dapat belajar dari kesalahan penggunaan grammar dan mengerti bagaimana penggunaan grammar*” (It helps because I can learn from my mistakes and understand how to use grammar).

Some of the students stated that discovery learning activities helped them understand the concept of Simple Past Tense through discussions and analyses with their friends. According to Ellis, as edited in Richards and Renandya (2002:169), CR activity involves “active and interactive learning which will create enjoyable atmosphere so the students will memorize the material well”.

From the questionnaire, there were 16 students from 31 students (52 %) who agreed that the discussion activity helped them to understand the concept of Simple Past Tense. Moreover, there were 15 students (48%) who stated that discovery learning activity really helped them understand the concept of Simple Past Tense. The activity makes the students discuss with their friends and can learn the concept of Simple Past Tense from the peer discussions. Moreover, from the field notes, the observer reported that she had heard the students’ conversation when they were helping each other to remember the rules of Simple Past Tense:

“Then there were some students who already understood the language features and told their friends:

A: Kamu seharusnya pake past tense. Nih salah semua. (You should use past tense)

B: Ohhh...past tense itu yang kayak apa sih? (Ohh..... What is past tense?)

A: Untuk jelasin kejadian di masa lalu itu lho (It explains past activities)

B: Oh iya ya...Maam pernah ngajarin itu. Aku lupa. (Oh, I see, the teacher already told us, I forgot it)"

(From the field notes on the First Cycle)

Nunan (1999:47) argues that discovery learning activity promotes collaborative atmosphere that can make the students appreciate and respect each other while learning. The conversation shows it helps the students analyze and understand the pattern of Simple Past Tense. They learn from their mates and they reminded each other about the grammar and even explained the concept of Simple Past Tense. In addition, Nunan (1999:48) reveals that discovery learning activity is able to create greater participation of the students which is related significantly to improvements in language proficiency. It means that the students who use the language rapidly will make a good progress as well. From the field notes and observation sheet, it can be seen that the students enjoyed learning together with their friends. They were more aware and had more willingness to listen and understand their friends' explanation. Therefore, it helped them understand the concept of Simple Past Tense.

The researcher also identified that the discovery learning activity helped the students increase their English vocabulary. The participation of the students in discovery learning activity usually occurs in a small group work and Nunan (1999) finds out that the students produce a greater quantity of talk in group tasks which contain comprehensible input to understand the target language.

The students also stated that the activities help them to enrich their vocabularies. The improvement was shown from the students' speed while they were writing narrative text. In the First Cycle, they took a while to write simple narrative texts. They looked up the dictionary and asked some vocabularies to their friends or the researcher. However, in the second and

Third Cycle they did not take much time to write, although they had different picture series. They could write faster in the Third Cycle than in the First Cycle. It seemed that they used to write after having some writing exercises from the First Cycle. It was also stated in the questionnaire that some students could enrich their vocabularies.

Student 30: *“Sangat membantu karena saya dapat belajar lebih dan menguasai vocabulary lebih banyak”* (It really helps me because I can learn more and enrich my vocabularies)

Having analyzed the data taken from the research, the researcher concludes that the discovery learning activity was able to help the students to improve the students' accuracy in Simple Past Tense while they were asked to write narrative and it can be seen from the decreasing percentage of the students' mistakes. In the preliminary study, the percentage was 81%, in the First Cycle was 65%, in the Second Cycle was 36% and in the Third Cycle was 34%. It can be seen that the percentage decreases significantly from the preliminary study until the Third Cycle.

Summary

This study examined the improvement of students' grammar accuracy in past tense through consciousness raising approach in a form of discovery learning activities. Formerly, the researcher found out that the students made many mistakes in applying Simple Past Tense while writing a narrative text. Having identified the problem, the researcher tried to find the solution to overcome the problem faced by the students and discovery learning activity was chosen to improve the students' grammar accuracy. The activity was chosen because it has many advantages. The results were satisfying enough because discovery learning activity could help the students improve their grammar accuracy especially in the past tense from the preliminary study until the Third Cycle of the research. The students made progress in their grammar accuracy in writing which can be seen from

the decreasing mistakes percentages. In the preliminary study, the class average percentage for students' mistakes was 81. Meanwhile, in Cycle One decreased into 65, in Cycle Two became 36 and in Cycle Three it decreased again up to 34. Hence, the researcher concluded that the discovery learning activity helped the students in improving their grammar accuracy in writing. Some students also stated that discovery learning activity helped them understand their mistakes in applying Simple Past Tense. The researcher also found that discovery learning activity could help the students increase their English vocabulary.

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