Impact of Consciousness-raising Task and Structure-based Production Task on Learning Comparative and Superlative Forms by Iranian Elementary EFL Learners

Fatemeh Abedi, M.A., Department of English, Qom Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qom, Iran
fatemeh.abedi24@yahoo.com
Narjes Ashari tabar*, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Qom Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qom, Iran
narcis.ashari@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relative effectiveness of consciousness-raising tasks and structure-based production tasks in comparison with the traditional teaching in learning comparative and superlative forms, following a task-based approach to teaching English grammar. To this end, from among 82 female elementary-level high school students having taken a Solutions Placement Test (2010), 72 students being homogeneous regarding their language proficiency were assigned to one control group experiencing traditional grammar learning and two experimental groups that were instructed using consciousness-raising tasks and structure-based production tasks. The study was a quasi-experimental one following a pre-test post-test control group design. All groups took a multiple-choice researcher-made pre-test measuring their knowledge of comparative and superlative forms at the outset, and after six weeks, the three groups took part in the corresponding post-test. At last, the results of ANCOVA indicated that consciousness-raising task group had the best grammar performance, but no significant differences were found between the participants in structure-based production tasks and traditional teaching. Therefore, it is recommended that other EFL teachers consider consciousness-raising tasks as an option in teaching comparative and superlative forms in their high school classes.

Keywords: Consciousness-raising tasks, Form-focused approach, Grammar teaching, Structure-based production tasks, Traditional teaching.

Introduction

Grammar has always been one of the important subjects in second and foreign language learning. In this regard, most of the textbooks in Iranian schools have a grammatical basis (Amiran & Sadeghi, 2012) and grammar has a significant role in Iran system of education, especially in the university entrance exam. However, most of the teachers in our schools in Iran still use the principles of old deductive teacher-centered approach without paying attention to the new ideas that has their roots in Grammar Translation Method (GTM). The problem arises when learners finish language courses with a weak progress in accurate language production in spite of all the attention given to it in the educational system. In addition, most of Iranian students in such classes are hopeless with deductive translation-based approach and always are dissatisfied about the boring grammar classes (Taghizadeh, 1998) because they are not as successful as they should be.

Therefore, this study was conducted to find an answer to the question of how to teach grammar and introduce some ways for grammar teaching. It is claimed that as the EFL learners cannot acquire the foreign language without knowing its structure, they require learning it (Ghorbanchian, Yohanaee, & Barati, 2014). What seems worthy of investigation is how to learn

the structure of language. Thus, the matter of selecting the most efficient ways of teaching grammar; i.e., ways that are proper for Iran educational system, looks inevitable.

Literature Review
Grammar and Traditional Teaching

Language is an efficient implement used in everyday communication. Grammar makes up a vital concept of the language, and it is a tool for forming and stating meaning without which efficient communication would be unattainable (Crivos & Luchini, 2012). In this regard, Brown (2007) believes that "grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence" (p. 420). Similarly, Ur (1999) states that grammar is a set of rules that describe how words or parts of words are joined together or changed to construct acceptable units of meaning within a language.

Language experts have different attitudes towards grammar, and there has been an argument among different linguists and researchers whether teachers should teach grammar or not, and also how teachers should teach grammar in EFL classes. Some researchers such as Krashen (1981) and Corder (1967) do not believe in teaching grammar. In contrast, some other researchers such as White (1987), Larsen and Freeman (1995, as cited in Mohamed, 2004), and Ellis (2006) think that formal grammar teaching works.

Traditionally, teachers have been teaching grammatical rules separately, and students have few chances to use them in real communication, and they think English grammar is not useful for real communication (Osuka & Yamamot, 2004). Consequently, some researchers such as Ellis (2003a), Skehan (1998, as cited in Seyyedi, 2012), and Nunan (2004) support the idea of using task-based approach for teaching grammar.

Task-based Approach

The task-based approach can be used to teach grammar in communicative methodology. Task-based approach to grammar teaching includes the use of tasks; i.e., making the learners take part in meaningful interaction and negotiation which make them to focus on integrating a task. Using tasks can make the learners to be ready for real-life communications for the purpose of acquiring implicit knowledge. In this regard, knowing the definition of task is one important matter in task-based language teaching (TBLT) framework, and it has been defined by different researchers (Sharifalnasab & Fotovatnia, 2013). Ellis (2003a) states that "a task is a tool for engaging learning in meaning-making and thereby for creating the conditions for language acquisition" (p. 319). Skehan (2003) also defines a task as an activity in which meaning has the primary importance and there is a communication problem to be solved. It is comparable to real-world activities and outcome-oriented. Finally, the priority is given to the successful completion of the task at hand.

In the same line, Seyyedi (2012) mentions that task-based is a kind of instruction in which language learners, performing activities are engaged in meaningful, goal-oriented communication to solve problems, complete projects, and reach decisions. In addition, task-based approaches to second language teaching zoom in the learner's capability to do target-like tasks without any explicit teaching of grammatical rules (Rahimpour, 2008).

In this regard, Branden (2006) mentions, the goal of the task-based teaching is to create a need to learn and use language. The tasks will make their own language and produce an opportunity for learning language clearly. However, some researchers like Nunan (2004), Skehan (2003), and Willis and Willis (2001) have criticized TBLT and believe that if focus on form is not incited while doing a task, students will improve a very low level of language proficiency. As

Tale and Goodarzi (2015) note, the learners speak easier, but their speeches are not often expressed truly. That is to say, they use strategies to complete the tasks very fast and improve a shortcut in their language use and form.

Focus-on-form Approach

Focus-on-form approach, which includes attention to linguistic features in the context of communicative activities, is taken from a task-based syllabus, and it is a feature of communicative language teaching (Ellis, forthcoming). In this regard, Long (1991) argues that focus on form improves language learning because it empowers students to notice linguistic elements like grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse features. In his view, the main aim of form-focused teaching is to focus students' attention on form at the time that they progress in lessons whose primary concentration is on meaning. In contrast, the central goal of traditional grammar instruction is to teach a specific grammatical point in isolation. Due to this, form-focused instruction which is under category of task-based approach is not the same as traditional teacher-centered grammar teaching (Osuka & Yamamoto, 2004).

As Ellis (2001, as cited in Nunan, 2004) explains, the term "form" is used to refer to structural aspects of language, which includes phonological, lexical, and grammatical aspects of language. He also states that form-focused instruction is any planned or incidental instructional activity intended to make learners pay attention to linguistic form. According to him, form-focused instruction is considered as "a cover term for terms such as analytic teaching, focus on form, focus on forms, corrective feedback/error correction and negotiation of form" (p. 1-2).

In addition, Long (1991) distinguished "focus on forms" and "focus on form" instruction. He states that focus-on-forms is part of traditional way of grammar teaching based on a synthetic syllabus and the prime belief is that language learning is a practice of collecting different entities. In contrast, focus-on-form made the students to focus on linguistic factors as they study lessons whose primary concentration is on meaning or communication. Also, Ellis (2001) has differentiated these two types, i.e., "focus on form" and "focus on forms". As a result, focus on form could be planned and focused on structures which are pre-selected, or it could be incidental, emerging from any point in a communicative activity.

There are different form-focused tasks like consciousness-raising task, and structure-based production task. As stated by Crivos and Luchini (2012), "an effective grammar teaching model should be compatible with a communicative framework that emphasizes learners' understanding of classroom input through meaningful, negotiated interactions" (p. 149).

Consciousness-raising Tasks

As Rezaei and Hosseinpur (2011) state, consciousness-raising makes up an approach to grammar instruction that is harmonious with contemporary thinking about how students learn L2 grammar. It also makes up an approach that conforms to advanced views about education as a process of finding through problem-solving tasks.

According to Ellis (1997), grammar consciousness-raising tasks are pedagogic activities in which the learners are provided with specific forms of L2 data and required to perform some operation on or with them. The purpose of these tasks is to clarify some linguistic properties of the target language. Also, Ellis (2003a) states that consciousness-raising approach aids the student to pay attention to formal and semantic points of linguistic forms, with the purpose of implicit learning for the student that contains inductive knowledge, and it is not clear when or where learners will learn the content. In other words, this approach caters students with good

learning and makes them able to use the language. In the same line, Fotos (1994, as cited in Osuka & Yamamoto, 2004) believes that consciousness-raising tasks are communicative.

In this regard, Ellis (2002) mentions that CR includes a try to supply the student with an understanding of a special grammatical point, to improve declarative rather than procedural knowledge of it. What is important in CR activities is that an attempt is made to separate a particular linguistic point for focused attention and the students are supplied with information about the final feature and probably with a clear rule describing or clarifying the feature. Moreover, they are assumed to try intellectually to get the final feature and may be required to express the rule describing the specific grammatical structure. Finally, it is noteworthy if any misunderstanding or imperfect perception of the grammatical rule by the students exists, explanation in the form of additional information and description or clarification would follow. For Ellis, CR tasks do not focus on learner's production, and do not want to cause the proper use of the targeted structure in spontaneous language use exactly following task completion. Rather, the purpose of CR tasks is to make a conscious illustration of the target structure, with formation of that structure kept to a minimum.

Finally, although many teachers think that consciousness-raising tasks empower students to improve specific knowledge of grammar, it should also be mentioned that there are some restrictions to consciousness-raising tasks. Yip (1994) and Ellis (2002) state, contribution and performance of students is extremely correlated with their interest. Those who are interested in these tasks or the points under study pay more concentration to the input and internalize them more comfortably.

Structure-based production tasks

Another way of teaching grammar is through structure-based production tasks which are under category of focused tasks. Ellis (2003b) mentions that a structure-based production task is "a task that involves exchange of information and automatized the existing knowledge, a task which makes the target structure natural, useful or essential. In other words, it is a task that 'finesse' the use of a particular structure" (p. 152). He also states that structure-based production task directed at bringing out the construction of a special structure. Samuda (2001, as cited in Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993) demonstrates this with a task that utilizes input materials and task necessities. In effect, structure-based production tasks are planned to bring out a specific target language point or structure. These tasks need the application of the target form to do a communicative activity (Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993).

Having reviewed the related literature, the present researcher found that although considerable research (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Ellis, 2005, etc.) has been devoted to focus on form, its definition, methodology, different tasks, etc., rather less attention has been paid to different form-focused tasks like structure-based production task, and consciousness-raising task and their effects on learning grammar. Therefore, the main motivation in this study was to investigate the relative effectiveness of consciousness-raising tasks and structure-based production tasks in comparison with the traditional teaching in learning comparative and superlative forms, following a task-based approach to teaching English grammar.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher sought to find the answer to the following research question:

Are there any statistically significant differences among consciousness-raising tasks, structure-based production tasks, and traditional teaching when teaching comparative and superlative forms to Iranian high school EFL learners is concerned?

Given the aforementioned research question, the following null hypothesis was formulated and investigated in this study:

There are not any statistically significant differences among consciousness-raising tasks, structure-based production tasks, and traditional teaching when teaching comparative and superlative forms to Iranian high school EFL learners is concerned.

Methodology

Participants

For accomplishing the purpose of the study, 87 fifteen-year-old elementary female EFL learners were selected non-randomly from Narjesiyeh high school in Qom, Iran. The number of participants was reduced to 72 through a Solutions Placement Test; a paper and pen test developed by Oxford University Press (2010); i.e., 72 students whose scores were within the range of 0 to 20 were considered as elementary and participated in the main study, and the other 15 students who gained scores higher than 20 were excluded from the sample of the study according to the test guidelines. Then, they were randomly divided into two equal experimental groups and one control group. The number of the participants in the consciousness-raising group, structure-based production group, and the traditional group; i.e., the control group, was 24 for each.

Design

The present study was a quasi-experimental research. The independent variable was the type of teaching technique; i.e., consciousness-raising tasks, structure-based production tasks, and traditional grammar teaching; and the dependent variable was the participants' performance on the target grammar forms. Language proficiency of the participants was the control variable since they got homogenized through a Solutions Placement Test; a paper and pen test developed by Oxford University Press (2010). All groups of participants took the same pre-test and post-test to check if any differences existed among the two experimental groups and control group regarding their grammar gains . The particular design of this study was pre-test post-test design in which the participants were given a pre-test prior to the treatment and a post-test to measure the effect of the treatments.

Instruments and Materials

To determine the general language proficiency level of participants, the researcher administered the first instrument; that is to say, a Solutions Placement Test, a paper and pen test developed by Oxford University Press (2010). It contains 50 multiple-choice questions and assesses learners' knowledge of key grammar and vocabulary from elementary to intermediate levels.

The second instrument applied in this study was a test used as the pre-test and the post-test of the study. The pre-test was administered to make sure the participants were not familiar with the selected grammatical forms prior to instruction. The pre-test included 30 multiple choice items with 17 items addressing the target forms and 13 grammar questions from the students' English book as filler items aimed at distracting the students from the target items. The pre-test was a teacher-made test. Therefore, it required to be piloted before the administration to the main participants of the study.

The pre-test was then administered to a group of 32 students who were similar to the main participants in their age and language proficiency level. They were all from the same school too. The content validity of the test was confirmed by two Qom Islamic Azad university teachers and

also one of the English teachers of Narjesiyeh high school in Qom. In order to ensure the reliability of the test, the researcher applied an internal-consistency method. The KR-21 for the test was 0.76, which was high enough to confirm the reliability of the test for the participants. Five questions related to the target forms were removed from the test based on the three experts' ideas, and the total number of test items was reduced to 30.

At the end of the study, the post-test was carried out to examine the performance of the learners on the target forms after the completion of the instruction. It also included 30 questions that were the same as those used in the pre-test, the only difference being the order of test items. The post-test, which had the same format as the pre-test, was administered to the three groups in order to compare the learners' scores with those of the pre-test in the search for any probable differences.

Data Collection Procedure

In the first experimental group, the participants were not given any explicit grammar rules; rather they were made to induce the rules from the presented texts themselves. To expose the first experimental group to consciousness-raising tasks, considering the students' level, the researcher used two stories from an article (Osuka & Yamamoto, 2004) which included a lot of superlative and comparative adjectives and a table of simple adjectives and their superlative and comparative forms. This table was given to the students every session and helped the teacher to teach the target form.

The participants in the second experimental group received structure-based production tasks for three 40-minute sessions, one session in a week. However, before starting the main phase, the instructor prepared 10 comprehension questions related to general knowledge of the world and in which the two target structures were used. The participants in this group completed the tasks by using the target structure. During their performance, the teacher did not explain the structure directly. She just introduced the grammar rules through some exercises, and then started the procedure by using two pictures from Osuka & Yamamoto (2004). For one of the pictures of this task, the following procedure adopted from Osuka & Yamamoto (2004) was used:

1. The teacher divided participants into groups of two: student A and student B.
2. She gave every participant a picture which included picture of six girls that were similar in everything except their height.
3. Student A randomly wrote a name from the list for each girl.
4. Student B asked questions to distinguish who was who. She could not ask questions using who or which. She could answer just yes or no.
5. The teacher gave students corrective feedback as she was going around the groups and checking them carefully.
6. At the end, each group came to the correct answers.

Finally, to expose the control group to the traditional teaching of grammar, the researchers used blackboard as the material and explained the target grammatical rules explicitly. Then, some sentences were used as the examples of the target forms. In this case, the teacher presented the target grammar in isolation, and the students just listened to the teacher's lecture on the target structure carefully. At the end, the students wrote the rules in their notebooks.

Data Analysis Procedure

The researchers used both descriptive and inferential statistics to test the research hypothesis. ANCOVA was used to determine whether these two types of tasks had a statistically significant effect on the elementary EFL learners' knowledge of comparative and superlative

forms of adjectives. As Dornyei (2007) stated, the reason for using ANCOVA was to eliminate the effect of possible initial differences (i.e., pre-test) on interpreting the participants' performance in the post-test. For him, in quasi-experimental studies, the use of ANCOVA contributes to the reduction of the initial group differences. Also, the LSD Post Hoc test was conducted on the data to serve the purpose. This test is the most liberal of all Post Hoc tests and its critical t for significance is not affected by the number of groups. This test is appropriate when the means of three groups are to be compared. These analyses were run in IBM SPSS software version 22.

Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics including the means and standard deviations for the participants' grammar scores on pre and post-tests in the first experimental group (EG1), second experimental group (EG2), and the control group (CG).

Table 1. *Participants' Grammar Scores on pre- and post-test in the EG1 (CR), EG2 (SP), and CG*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test in EG1	24	0	6	2.79	1.888
Post-test in EG1	24	3	16	8.96	3.381
Valid N (listwise)	24				
Pre-test in EG2	24	0	9	2.75	2.132
Post-test in EG2	24	0	14	5.46	3.867
Valid N (listwise)	24				
Pre-test in CG	24	0	8	2.83	2.014
Post-test in CG	24	0	13	5.13	3.993
Valid N (listwise)	24				

As it is indicated in Table 1, the consciousness-raising group's mean score in the pre-test was 2.79 with the standard deviation of 1.88, whereas in the post-test, this group showed a mean score of 8.96 with the standard deviation of 3.38. It was also found that participants' grammar pre-test mean score in the second experimental group; i.e., structure-based production group, was 2.75 with the standard deviation of 2.13. Considering the post-test, this group revealed a mean score of 5.46 with the standard deviation of 3.86. This result also showed an increase in the group scores that had to be checked for its significance. Finally, it can be observed in table 1 that participants' mean score in grammar pre-test in the control group was 2.83 with the standard deviation of 2.01. Regarding the post-test, their mean score was 5.13 with the standard deviation of 3.99.

The research question posed investigates the differences among the effects of consciousness-raising task, structure-based production task, and traditional teaching on learning comparative and superlative forms by Iranian high school EFL learners. An ANCOVA was run on the scores obtained from the grammar pre- and post-tests to answer this research question.

However, for conducting the ANCOVA, some underlying assumptions had to be met; i.e., normal distribution of the data, equality of variances, and homogeneity of the regression lines.

In order to make sure about the normal distribution of the scores in all groups, the researchers ran a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test on six sets of scores. Table 2 presents the results of this test.

Table 2. *One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Grammar Scores on Pre- and Post-tests*

		Pre-test in EG1	Post-test in EG1	Pre-test in EG2	Post-test in EG2	Pre-test in CG	Post-test in CG
N		24	24	24	24	24	24
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	2.79	8.96	2.75	5.46	2.83	5.13
	Std. Deviation	1.888	3.381	2.132	3.867	2.014	3.993
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.162	.112	.138	.154	.202	.179
	Positive	.162	.112	.138	.154	.202	.179
	Negative	-.088	-.097	-.099	-.091	-.131	-.100
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.162	.112	.138	.154	.202	.179
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.103	.200	.200	.145	.112	.145

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.

As it is indicated in Table 2, the p-value for each set of scores of EG1, EG2, and CG were 0.10, 0.20, 0.20, 0.15, 0.11, 0.15, respectively and all of them were   higher than 0.05; therefore, all sets of scores in the two experimental groups and one control group had normal distributions, and the parametric test of ANCOVA could be run.

Another assumption of the ANCOVA is the equality of the variances between groups. The equality of the variances between three groups was checked by Levene's test. Table 5 shows the results of Levene's test of equality of error variances.

Table 3. *Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances*

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.000	2	69	1.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Grammar Pre-test + Groups

As indicated in the Table 3, the underlying assumption of homogeneity of variance for the one-way ANCOVA was met too – as evidenced by $F(2, 69) = 0.00$, and p-value = 1.00 which is higher than 0.05 thereby showing no significant differences among the three groups' error variances.

The third assumption for running the ANCOVA is the similarity of the relationship between the dependent variable (i.e., post-test) and the covariate (i.e., pre-test) for all groups. For

testing if this assumption was met, the homogeneity of regression lines was checked, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Homogeneity of Regression*

Dependent Variable: Grammar Post-test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	344.647[a]	5	68.929	5.382	.000
Intercept	642.411	1	642.411	50.156	.000
Groups	202.785	2	101.393	7.916	.001
Grammar Pre-test	60.755	1	60.755	4.743	.033
Groups * Grammar Pre-test	61.079	2	30.540	2.384	.100
Error	845.339	66	12.808		
Total	4245.000	72			
Corrected Total	1189.986	71			

a. R Squared = .290 (Adjusted R Squared = .236)

As it is shown in Table 4, the p-value was equal to 0.10 which was higher than 0.05, so interaction between the dependent variable, i.e., grammar post-test, and the covariate was not significant and the assumption of the homogeneity of regression was confirmed. Therefore, the ANCOVA could be performed.

The researchers conducted the ANCOVA to test the null hypothesis of the study. According to Dornyei (2007), in quasi-experimental studies, the use of ANCOVA contributes to the reduction of the initial group differences. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)*

Dependent Variable: Grammar Post-test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	283.567[a]	3	94.522	7.091	.000	.238
Intercept	634.518	1	634.518	47.602	.000	.412
Grammar Pre-test	67.123	1	67.123	5.036	.028	.069
Groups	216.790	2	108.395	8.132	.001	.193
Error	906.419	68	13.330			
Total	4245.000	72				
Corrected Total	1189.986	71				

a. R Squared = .238 (Adjusted R Squared = .205)

As it is indicated in Table 5, the first line shows that the pre-test scores were significantly related to the post-test ($p< 0.05$) with the magnitude of 0.07, which is a small effect size. The next line is the indicator of the main effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. After controlling pre-test scores, there was a significant effect of the group, $F(1,68)= 8.13$, $p=0.001 < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.19$. As p-value was less than 0.05, it was confirmed that the three groups were different, and differences among the effects of consciousness-raising task, structure-based production task, and traditional teaching on learning comparative and superlative forms by Iranian high school EFL learners was significant; thus, the null hypothesis of the study was safely rejected. Therefore, it was necessary to run a pairwise comparison to locate the difference more precisely.

The LSD Post Hoc test was conducted on the data to serve the purpose. This test is the most liberal of all Post Hoc tests and its critical t for significance is not affected by the number of groups. This test is appropriate when the means of three groups are to be compared. It is not appropriate for additional means (Field, 2009). The results of the Post Hoc test are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *The Pairwise Analysis of Grammar Scores*

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
EG1	EG2	3.480*	1.054	.002	1.376	5.583
	CG	3.854*	1.054	.000	1.751	5.957
EG2						
	CG	.374	1.054	.724	-1.729	2.478

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Based on Table 6, the mean score of the participants in the consciousness-raising group differed significantly from both structure-based production (p=0.00<0.05) and control (p=0.00<0.05) groups. However, the structure-based production group did not have any significant difference with the control group (p=0.72>0.05). As the mean differences indicated, consciousness-raising group outperformed both structure-based production (I-J= 3.48) and control (I-J= 3.85) groups.

Discussion

According to the research results, the students' level of grammar learning was influenced by consciousness-raising task more than structure-based production task and traditional teaching. Also, the structure-based production group did not have a significant difference with the control group. Regarding the comparison between the experimental groups and the control group, it is worth noticing that the students who were in control group class had less progress in their level of grammar learning than both experimental groups at the end of the study.

In this regard, the results of this study were parallel with Amirian and Sadeghi's (2012) research in which an attempt was made to compare the traditional approaches with consciousness-raising (CR) tasks as two different approaches in grammar teaching. It was shown that using CR tasks in grammar teaching was specifically more effective than the traditional approaches. In the same line, in their study, Moradkhan and Sohrabian (2009) represented the need for grammar instruction in the English language classroom and how this need could be

carried out through an efficient pedagogy combining a bottom-up explicit teacher-centered grammatical instruction with a top-down communicative approach.

Moreover, Shokouhi (2009) attempted to investigate the impact of CR tasks in Iranian EFL setting by comparing them with deductive, grammar lessons common in the Iranian schools. The results showed that in the short-run, CR tasks were as effective as deductive approach in promoting the learners' grammatical knowledge, hence the effectiveness of the two form-focused instructions. A similar result was obtained in the study conducted by Nosratinia and Roustayi (2014).

Besides, Mohamed's (2004) finding that consciousness-raising tasks were effective learning tool to improve learners' attitude towards language learning also supports the findings of the present study. Furthermore, Yip (1994) also found out that using the consciousness raising method could be effective in teaching grammatical points to advanced EFL learners.

Although these studies were in the same line with the present study, Seyed Erfani and Torkani (2015) found a completely different result in their research. The statistical analyses indicated that structure-based production tasks had more significant effect not only on the learners reading comprehension but also on their attitudes toward reading comprehension; while consciousness-raising focused tasks had a significant impact only on learners' attitudes toward reading comprehension. The study also concluded the importance of applying appropriate tasks in reading courses.

In contrast, in the present study, the findings showed the effectiveness of consciousness-raising compared to structure-based production task and traditional teaching. This dissimilarity could be due to many factors, including measuring different dependent variables in the two studies. Seyed Erfani and Torkani (2015) in their research focused on reading comprehension but the present study concentrated on grammar learning especially comparative and superlative forms of adjective. Another reason for a different result might be the language level of the participants. The present study was done on elementary students but they concentrated on intermediate students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to introduce some effective tasks for grammar learning of Iranian elementary EFL students. In this case, the literature showed that type of tasks that teachers choose and focus on in the classroom is one of the important factors in promoting learners' grammar learning. In this regard, the researcher selected two tasks including consciousness-raising tasks, structure-based production tasks and compared them with traditional teaching of grammar.

The findings of the study indicated that between the two different focused tasks and traditional teaching, consciousness-raising tasks strongly improved grammar learning of Iranian elementary EFL, while structure-based production tasks were not very effective. Moreover, structure-based production tasks were a little more effective than traditional teaching.

The findings of this study can be helpful for teachers who are looking for effective ways of improving their learners' grammar learning. They can use different tasks such as consciousness-raising tasks and structure-based production tasks, and more specifically consciousness-raising tasks, in order to increase their students' grammar learning especially in low proficiency levels. In addition, they can use these tasks to have more interactive and interesting instruction.

Since grammar is complex, and students' learning styles vary, learning grammar is not likely to be accomplished through a single means. In this regard, these findings can help EFL learners to learn grammar more effectively and easier because, according to this study, the use of

CR activities in the classroom is a suitable technique in teaching grammar to EFL learners. It seems that it is better for teachers to be aware of different techniques in teaching grammar and use them based on different circumstances.

Moreover, syllabus designers or curriculum designers, and material developers benefit from the results of this research by making and developing different attractive books with inclusion of consciousness-raising tasks. Since English books in educational system of Iran are not based on task-based approach, the teachers themselves can make their own syllabus by using different tasks; specifically consciousness-raising tasks, and teach grammatical points more effectively.

Although the research has attained its purpose, there were some unavoidable limitations to this study. Firstly, this study is not generalizable to all language learning contexts. This is because the study was conducted in only one school in Qom, so the results might not be generalizable to other contexts. Secondly, the treatment period which was only five weeks was another limitation. In order to get more valid results, the students need to be trained in more than this period of time. Thirdly, the limited number of participants was another limitation of the present study. Fourthly, the use of a nonrandomized sample of students in intact classes is another factor that restricts the study generalizability. Fifthly, the limited number of sessions and also the limited number of tasks (only two tasks, i.e., consciousness-raising and structure-based production tasks) should be considered in generalizing the results of the study.

Also, any study can potentially generate new related areas for further investigation. This study looked at investigating the most effective type of classroom tasks to promote EFL learners' grammar learning specially comparative and superlative forms of adjectives in order to gain more success in learning. Within this realm of focus, additional research could be done on the following issues:

1. This study was based on the effect of consciousness-raising task and structure-based production task on Iranian EFL learners' grammar learning, so it is possible for other researchers to carry out their studies on other language skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and so on.

2. There were only 72 students all aged 15 years old. With a larger group of participants, the results might have been more reliable and more generalizable. It is recommended that this study be replicated with a larger number of participants with the same age and educational background.

3. The current study was carried out with the participation of elementary level students at Narjesiyeh high school in Qom. It would be interesting to compare its results regarding the effectiveness of consciousness-raising and structure-based production tasks with other levels of proficiency, which would enable researchers to generalize the result of this research to a wider population.

4. The current study examined the effect of consciousness-raising task and structure-based production task on the level of grammar learning of EFL learners. It could be a good idea to examine the effect of other types of tasks on EFL learners' grammar learning.

5. The use of a nonrandomized sample of students in intact classes recommends applying these findings beyond these intact classes with randomization.

6. The participants of current study were all female students, so it is possible to perform this research about male students as well, or compare the effects of these tasks on male vs. female EFL learners.

7. It is also recommended that other researchers replicate this study in an ESL context in order to examine the effectiveness of consciousness-raising and structure-based production tasks on ESL context.

8. Besides, other educational contexts like universities and English institutes are also promising areas for further investigation and can check their attitude towards application of tasks in EFL contexts.

9. Finally, the participants of the present study were all 15 years old, so it is possible to perform this research on younger or even older participant to examine the impact of consciousness-raising and structure-based production tasks on them.

References

Amiran. M. R., & Sadeqi. F. (2012). The effect of grammar consciousness-raising tasks on EFL learners performance. *International Journal of Linguistics. 4*(3), 708-720.

Basturkmen, H. , Loewen, Sh., & Ellis, R. (2004). Teachers' stated beliefs about incidental focus on form and their classroom practice. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 243-272.

Branden, K. V. (2006). *Task-based language education from theory to practice.* Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy.*White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 5,* 161–169.

Crivos, M. B., & Luchini, P. L. (2012). A pedagogical proposal for teaching grammar using consciousness-raising tasks. *MJAL, 4*(3), 141-153.

Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net

Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA research and language teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2001). Introduction: Investigating form-focused instruction. *Language Learning,51*(Supplement 1), 1–46.

Ellis, R. (2002). *Grammar teaching practice or consciousness-raising.* In J. C. Richards, & W. A. Renandya, *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (2003a). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2003b). *The study of second language acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2006). Current issues in the teaching of grammar: An SLA perspective. *TESOL Quarterly, 1*(40), 83-107.

Ellis, R., Basturkmen, H., & Loewen, S. (2001). Learner uptake in communicative ESL lessons. *Language Learning, 51,* 281–318.

Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS (3rd ed.)*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Ghorbanchian, E., Yohanaee, M., & Barati, H. (2014). A Study of Iranian high school English textbooks based on the standard criteria. *Theory and practice in language studies*, 2(4), 411- 425.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning.* London: Routledge.

Long, M. (1991). Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology. In K.de Bot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.), *Foreign Language Research in Cross-cultural*

Perspective (pp. 39-52). Amsterdom: John Benjamins. Retrieved from https:// books .google.com/books?

Loschky, L. & Bley-Vroman, R. (1993). Creating structure-based communication tasks for second language development. *University of Hawai'i Working Papers in ESL, 9*(1), 161- 21.

Mohamed, N. (2004). Consciousness-raising tasks: A learner perspective. *ELT Journal, 58*(3), 228-237.

Nosratinia, M., & Roustayi, S. (2014). The effect of grammar consciousness-raising tasks on EFL learners' reading comprehension and writing ability. *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), 19*(3), 203-216.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net

Osuka, N., & Yamamot, A. (2004). Grammar teaching using form-focused tasks. *Jalt2004 at NARA.* 647-657.

Rahimpour, M. (2008). Implementation of task- based approaches to language teaching *Research on Foreign Languages Journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities, 41,* 45-61.

Rezaei, A. A., & Hosseinpur, R. M. (2011). On the role of consciousness-raising tasks in learning grammer: A learner perspective. *Iranian EFL Journal*, *3*, 239-240.

Seyed Erfani, Sh., & Torkani, A. (2015). The impact of consciousness-raising vs. structure-based production tasks on reading comprehension of Iranian mid-intermediate EFL learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 5*(5), 1078-1089.

Seyyedi, K. (2012). Task-based instruction. *Macrothink institute, 4*(3), 242-251.

Sharifalnasab, A., & Fotovatnia, Z. (2013). The effect of different tasks on 12 learners' acquisition of grammar. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 4(2). 386-391.

Shokouhi, A. H. (2009). Consciousness-raising tasks versus deductive approach: two form-focused instruction types in teaching grammar to Iranian high school EFL learner. *Journal of Education, 4*(4), 51-70.

Skehan, P. (2003). Task-based instruction. *Language teaching, 36,* 1-14. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/

Tale, S. M., & Goodarzi, A. (2015). The impacts of task-based teaching on grammar learning by Iranian first grade high school students. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature, 4*(4), 144-153.

Ur, P. (1999). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from http://ebooks. cambridge. org/ ebook. jsf ?bid = CBO9780 511732928.

White, L. (1987). Against comprehensible input: the input hypothesis and the development of second language competence. *Applied Linguistics, 8*(2), 95-110.

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2001). Task-based language learning. In R. Carter, & D. Nunan, *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 173-179). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yip, V. (1994). Grammatical consciousness-raising and learnability. In T. Odlin (Ed.), *Perspectives on pedagogical grammar* (pp. 123-139). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.