

Consciousness-Raising Activities to Foster Speaking Accuracy of Indonesian Efl Learners

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Abstract: *This research aimed at analyzing the application of consciousness-raising activities to foster speaking accuracy of Indonesian EFL learners. The subject participated in the research was 26 students of English department at Lampung University. Two independent variables were tested: speaking accuracy consciousness and speaking accuracy performance. Speaking accuracy consciousness was measured through a set of questionnaire and speaking accuracy performance was measured by tests. The results show for the students' speaking accuracy consciousness that T-value (6.074) is higher than T-table (2.060) with alpha level (0.000) - lower than 0.05 ($\alpha < 0.05$). The findings also revealed that for the students' speaking accuracy performance, the data show that T-value (26.820) is higher than T-table (2.060) with alpha level (0.000) is lower than 0.05 ($\alpha < 0.05$). This means consciousness-raising activities could significantly improve the students' speaking accuracy consciousness and the students' speaking accuracy performance.*

Keywords: *speaking accuracy; consciousness-raising activities; EFL learners*

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I. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a bulk of research considering the role of consciousness-raising activities on learners' ultimate comprehension and production elements of language enterprise. Quite a number of studies (e.g., Elbro& Petersen, 2004; Nakatani, 2005; Saito, 2007; Shu-Chin, 2012; Svalberg, 2007), have acknowledged a general positive impact of consciousness giving on learners' subsequent performances. Altman (1997), from her personal language learning case study, found that a key to the success of the language learner seems to be the extensive employment of consciousness—the focusing of attention on all aspects of the language to be learned.

Nakatani (2005) explored the influence of consciousness giving on young Japanese adults' use of oral communication strategies such as maintenance of fluency and negotiation of meaning. The findings revealed that the learners in the experimental group who received consciousness produced longer sentences and used more achievement strategies, and did not leave the message as often as the learners in the comparison group.

In another study, Takimoto's (2009) compared the effectiveness of C-R tasks, structured-input tasks, and comprehension-based tasks. Takimoto investigated the effects of these three types of input-based tasks on teaching English request forms in the Japanese EFL context. The results showed that all the treatment groups benefited from the instruction, and that they indicated a significantly better performance than the control group. However, the better performance of the participants in the structured-input task group during the posttest was not maintained in the follow-up test.

Ahmadi, Ghafar Samar, and Yazdanimoghaddam (2011) set out to conduct a study to explore the effectiveness of the C-R as an input-based task and the dictogloss as an output-based task on the instruction of English requestive downgraders in the Iranian EFL context. The results of the immediate and delayed post-test on the production and perception measures revealed that both tasks had a significantly positive effect on the participants' use of English requestive downgraders.

In a recent study, Barekat and Mehri (2013) made an attempt to investigate the effect of pedagogical intervention on the development of the Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic competence in requestive downgrades. The study especially compared the effectiveness of C-R activities and C-R with feedback activities. The obtained results demonstrated that the instruction was beneficial for both experimental groups, and that both groups outperformed the control group. However, the participants in the C-R with the feedback group showed a more successful performance than the learners in the C-R group. The results of all these studies demonstrate that C-R tasks provide useful means to merge formal instruction of pragmatic features within a communicative language teaching framework.

Those findings show that to create effective learning, teachers should provide consciousness-raising activities and feedback to ensure their students' successful learning. In addition for feedback to be most helpful to learners, it must consist of more than the provision of correct answers. Feedback ought to be analytical, to be suggestive, and to come at a time when students are interested in it. Then, there must be time for students to reflect on the feedback they receive, to make adjustments and to try again. As Ellis (1994) states, feedback serves as a general cover term for the information provided by listeners on the reception and comprehension of messages. The questions arise are: will the consciousness raising activities work well if implemented to the Indonesian EFL learners? How far the consciousness raising activities affect the performance of these students?

II. Theoretical Framework

The Role of Consciousness-Raising in Second Language Learning

Consideration of the role of consciousness in cognition and learning has been respectable over the recent decades. The most prominent supporters of consciousness-raising are Rutherford and Sharwood (1985). In their opinion, the function of consciousness-raising is to highlight certain language features for the learner to develop his or her consciousness, then when he or she is ready to insert these specific features into the developing the second language system, he or she will acquire them.

Rutherford (1987), furthermore, insists on the fact that language learners already have a broad knowledge of language of both specific and universal kind to build on and he calls the language learning process. He consequently sees consciousness-raising as a means of illuminating the learner's path from the known to the unknown, in other words, a facilitator for the acquisition of linguistic competence.

Ellis (2002) shares the idea that consciousness-raising facilitates the acquisition of knowledge needed for communication. He claims consciousness-raising is not only helpful in the formation of explicit knowledge but also contributes to the acquisition of implicit knowledge.

In conclusion, consciousness-raising has been considered important in language learning and to understand the role of consciousness in learning, two different types of knowledge should be perceived. The first is implicit knowledge, which is acquired without consciousness, unavailable to conscious memory even after competence and put to use spontaneously without conscious control. The second is explicit knowledge, which is knowledge that the learner is conscious of and can access on demand.

Writers on consciousness have recognized that there are some degrees or levels of consciousness. Schmidt (1990) states that consciousness implicated in mental processes is crucial to L2 learning. He categorizes consciousness into perception, noticing, and understanding.

Level 1: Perception. It is generally believed that all perception implies mental organization and the ability to create internal representations of external events.

However, perceptions are not necessarily conscious, and subliminal perception is possible. It means that perception does not necessarily accompany subjective consciousness. The term detection is worth a mention here. It is one of the subsystems of attention. The term is used to refer to cognitive registration of a particular stimulus without subjective consciousness (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Tomlin and Villa (1994) argue that detection is the necessary and sufficient condition for further processing and learning.

Level 2: Noticing.

Noticing is to assign significance to some aspects of form relative to others. It is considered to be one degree of consciousness. It refers to private experience which is brought about by drawing learners' selective attention to a certain linguistic form. Schmidt (1990) argues that noticing is necessary for input to become intake, that is, necessary for L2 learning. Noticing is subjective correlation of attention. Noticing can be seen as learners' detection with subjective consciousness plus rehearsal in short-term memory (Robinson, 1995).

According to Schmidt (1990), subliminal language learning is impossible, and the intake is what learners consciously notice. This requirement of noticing is meant to apply equally to all aspects of language. Language learners, however, are limited in what they are able to notice. Schmidt and Frota (1986) emphasize the importance of noticing in L2 learning. They have claimed that if a learner is to learn and use a particular type of verbal form, it is not enough for it to have been taught and drilled in class and that it is also not enough for the form to appear in input. They have argued that noticing is necessary for a learner to be able to use it. This can be taken to support the hypothesis that there is no L2 learning without noticing.

Level 3: Understanding. As stated above, noticing is the basic sense in which we commonly say that we are aware of something, but does not exhaust the possibilities. Having noticed some aspects of the condition, we can analyze it and compare it to what we have noticed on other occasions. We can reflect on the objects of consciousness and attempt to comprehend their significance, and we can experience insight and understanding. All of this mental activity—what we commonly think of as thinking—goes on within consciousness.

In short, consciousness takes three degrees namely perception, noticing, and understanding. And each level has its own contribution in learning processes.

Consciousness-raising activities is designed to provide learners with successful learning and enables them to use the language. A review of literature shows that consciousness raising plays an important role in the process of second language acquisition and learning different skills (e.g., Carr & Curran, 1994; Curran & Keele, 1993; Ghorbani, 2011; Robinson, 1995; Schmidt, 1990, 1993, 1994, 2001)

The principles of consciousness- raising are implemented by the researcher in his teaching strategy. The strategy takes some procedures: drawing the students' attention, building up the students' knowledge of rule initiation, noticing, hypothesis making, hypothesis checking and hypothesis confirming.

Consciousness-Raising Activities

Andrews (2007) confirms that consciousness – raising places significant demands on the L2 teacher's language consciousness. Consciousness – raising tasks are designed to provide explicit learning. They are intended to develop consciousness at the level of understanding (Ellis, 2003). Therefore, the designed outcome of a consciousness – raising task is consciousness of how some linguistic features work. Consciousness-raising task is not aimed at developing immediate ability to use the target language features but rather attempts to call learner attention to language features, raising their consciousness of them.

Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985) believe that consciousness – raising tasks are those which are on a continuum range from the intensive promotion of consciousness via the articulation of pedagogical rules. If consciousness-raising tasks are conducted inductively, they are quite similar to theories of discovery learning. Furthermore, Ellis (2003) proposes some main characteristics of consciousness-raising tasks as follows:

1. There is an attempt to isolate a specific linguistic feature for focused attention.
2. The learners are provided with data which illustrate the targeted feature and they may also be supplied with an explicit rule describing or explaining the feature.
3. The learners are expected to utilize intellectual effort to understand the targeted feature.
4. Misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners leads to clarification in the form of further data and description or explanation.
5. Learners may be required (although this is not obligatory) to articulate the rule describing the grammatical structure.

In short, consciousness-raising tasks are carried to provide explicit learning. In the classroom setting, the immediate aim to consciousness-raising tasks is to help learners notice something about the language that they might not notice on their own.

III. Methodology

The research was conducted at Lampung University. ELT Students taking speaking class of pre intermediate level at Lampung University became the subject of the research. The subject consisted of 26 students. The researcher chose the class by considering that the class was relatively homogeneous in terms of their speaking ability.

Instruments

The instruments for the research were questionnaire and speaking test.

Questionnaire

In order to investigate the students' consciousness on their speaking accuracy before and after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities, a thirty-item questionnaire was administered both before and after the treatments. Ten items examined their pronunciation accuracy consciousness, ten items examined their grammar accuracy consciousness, and ten items examined their vocabulary accuracy consciousness.

Speaking test

In this research, the researcher conducted some procedures as follows:

- a) First, 26 students were purposely assigned to be in the experimental group.
- b) Then they were given a pre -test in order to measure their speaking accuracy performance before the implementation of consciousness-raising activities. The test took the form of picture narrating. The students were given a set of picture series. Then they had to tell a story based on the given picture series. Then the students' oral production on the test was recorded and transcribed then evaluated by two raters referring to the speaking accuracy rating scale developed by Harris (1974). This scale rated students' speaking accuracy covering three categories: pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. In this case, the researcher and an experienced English teacher had a role as raters. After giving the pre test, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to each student. It aimed at finding out their speaking accuracy consciousness prior to the implementation of consciousness-raising activities.
- c) After knowing the level of their speaking accuracy, the researcher implemented consciousness- raising activities with the following procedures:

Step 1: Drawing student’s attention to the subject matter.

This step aimed at focusing the students' attention on certain language features within context. The presentation of specific language features was presented .At this stage, the students were required to respond to the researcher’s questions orally. The researcher did not tell students what language item he was going to explain. Some leading questions would be in the form of yes/no and information (w-h) questions.

Step 2: Building up students’ knowledge of the rule or rule initiation.

This step aimed at focusingthe students' attention on the use of the language features to make them consciousof the forms and the functions, and more importantly to understand themeanings they conveyed through the context.

Step 3: Noticing the language features within the usage.

In this step, the researcher asked students to do some tasks to notice the language features in pairs or in groups.

Step 4: Hypothesis-makingbyeliciting functions of the rule or rule elicitation.

The aim of this part was to give the students an opportunity to demonstrate their accuracy competence appropriately. Students had to make, test and confirm their hypothesis in order to learn target language features. Corrective feedbacks were possibly given by the researcher to help the students comprehend the target language features.

Step 5: Checking the hypothesis by familiarizing students with the rule in use through exercises or rule practice.

In this step, the researcher presented some exercises, checked for students’ comprehension, and encouraged their active involvement.

Step 6: Confirming the hypothesis by checking students’ comprehension or rule activation.

This step was geared to check students’ comprehension of the language features being taught. At this stage, the teacher provided an assessment of students’ comprehension to gauge whether the students completely grasped what they had been taught. In this case, the students were required to work individually. He gave the students opportunities to do independent work and set certain tasks from the lesson as an assignment to allow them think analytically.

c. Finally the students were given a post -test in order to find out the improvement of their speaking accuracy. The post -test took the same form of pre- test. Their speaking accuracy again was evaluated by the same two raters. After giving the pre test, the researcher distributed another questionnaire to each student. It aimed at finding out their speaking accuracy consciousness after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities.

IV. Results And Discussion

The Increasing Mean Scores of the Students’ Speaking Accuracy Consciousness

Table 3 The increasing Mean Scores of Students’ Speaking Accuracy Consciousness

Prior to the treatment		Aspect	Mean score
	1.	Pronunciation	2.01
	2.	Grammar	2.00
	3.	Vocabulary	2.13
		Total	2.05
After the treatment		Aspect	Mean score
	1.	Pronunciation	2.84
	2.	Grammar	2.88
	3.	Vocabulary	2.97
		Total	2.90

The table shows that the total mean score of the students’ responses towards their consciousness on speaking accuracy after the treatment (2.90) was higher than that of prior to the treatment (2.05). It clearly indicates that there are differences in the students’ consciousness on speaking accuracy before and after the implementation of conciousness-raising strategy

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	Pronunciation_Pretest - Pronunciation_Postest	-8,34615	7,35360	1,44216	-5,787	25	,000
Pair 2	Grammar_Pretest - Grammar_Posttest	-8,80769	7,53137	1,47702	-5,963	25	,000
Pair 3	Vocabulary_Pretest - Vocabulary_Posttest	-8,46154	7,12309	1,39695	-6,057	25	,000
Pair 4	Pre_test - Post_Test	-25,61538	21,50363	4,21721	-6,074	25	,000

The table shows that T-value (5.787) is higher than T-table (2.060) with alpha level (0.000) -lower than 0.05 ($\alpha < 0.05$) so that H_0 is accepted. In other words, there is a significant difference in the students' consciousness on pronunciation after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities. It means the students' consciousness on pronunciation improves significantly after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities.

The table shows that T-value (5.963) is higher than T-table (2.060) with alpha level (0.000) -lower than 0.05 ($\alpha < 0.05$) so that H_0 is accepted. In other words, there is a significant difference in the students' consciousness on grammar after being treated with consciousness-raising strategy. It means the students' consciousness on grammar improves significantly after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities. The table shows that T-value (6.057) is higher than T-table (2.060) with alpha level (0.000) -lower than 0.05 ($\alpha < 0.05$) so that H_0 is accepted. In other words, there is a significant difference in the students' consciousness on vocabulary after being treated with consciousness-raising strategy. It means the students' consciousness on vocabulary improves significantly after the implementation of consciousness-raising strategy.

The Improvement of the Students' Speaking Accuracy in Each Aspect

The result of pre-test and post-test also showed that consciousness-raising activities could improve students' speaking accuracy in each aspect. It can be seen from the increase of mean score in the post-test in each aspect as seen in the following table.

Table. 4.12 The Improvement of the Students' Speaking Accuracy in Each Aspect

No	Aspects	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
1.	Pronunciation	54.64	68.92	14.28
2.	Grammar	53.92	72.86	18.94
3.	Vocabulary	55.36	72.14	16.78

The table shows that the mean of the students' pronunciation score in pretest was 54.64 and the mean of their pronunciation score in post test was 68.92. That means the improvement reached 14.28 points. The mean of the students' grammar score in pretest was 53.92 and the mean of their pronunciation score in post test was 72.86. That means the improvement reached 19.94 points. The mean of the students' vocabulary score in pretest was 55.36 and the mean of their pronunciation score in post test was 72.14. That means the improvement reached 16.78 points. Thus it can be concluded that grammar aspect got the highest improvement while pronunciation aspect got the lowest improvement.

V. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the students' speaking accuracy consciousness is significantly raised after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities. The scores of the students' speaking accuracy consciousness in each aspect and in general were significantly different according to the results of the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire. In general, the t-value of the students' speaking accuracy consciousness (6.074) is higher than t-table (2.060). That finding proves that statistically the students' consciousness on pronunciation significantly improves before and after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities.

The improvement in the students' speaking accuracy consciousness cannot be separated from the teaching strategy that the researcher applied which had the students experienced each phase of language consciousness which is adapted from the theory of language acquisition. The researcher fosters the students' speaking accuracy consciousness through the strategy which includes 3 major points of consciousness – attention, noticing and understanding. It is widely accepted that attention play an important role in consciousness as psychological theories say that consciousness is the product of an attention mechanism (Posner & Rothbart, 1991). In the next process, the students' consciousness was raised through noticing certain features in the target language. This noticing prompted learners to recognize some of their linguistic limitations, pushing them to reprocess and modify their output toward comprehensibility where mental process occurred as a part of language learning process. Swain (1995) states that when learners reprocess and modify their current performance to make it more enhanced, they are engaged in mental processes that are part of the process of language learning. After noticing, the students' consciousness was boosted through the process of understanding. Understanding represents a deeper level of awareness than noticing which is limited to "elements of the surface structure of utterances in the input" rather than underlying rules (Schmidt, 2001). The students' speaking accuracy consciousness was boosted though the practice of target language to show they recognized the general principle, rule, or pattern of the target language. As Schmidt states understanding takes place when a learner recognizes "a general principle, rule, or pattern" in the perceived input. The improvement in the students' speaking accuracy consciousness also may occur because the students were provided the conditions which allowed them to be aware of the target language/input through given experience.

As suggested by Allport (1988) that three conditions must be met in order for a person to be aware of a given experience. First, the person must show a behavioral or cognitive change as a result of the experience. For example, a learner might begin using –ed endings as a result of having been exposed to input that targets the past tense. Second, the person must report that he/she was aware of the experience at the time it took place. For example, the learner might report having been aware of –ed endings in the verbs at the time of exposure. Finally, the person must be able to describe the experience. For example, the learner must be able to articulate the morphological rule underlying the regular past tense.

It can be concluded that to help learners become aware, they should experience learning themselves and both consciousness and language are inextricably connected. It can be stated that the growth of language means the growth of consciousness as well and that learning equals the acquisition of consciousness. And consciousness on speaking accuracy can help them to overcome inaccuracy in their speaking performance as Schmidt (1990; 1995; 2001) has stated that conscious awareness of the target language system is necessary if learners are to produce correct forms and use them appropriately. Therefore, the findings of the study are in line with the previous studies regarding learners' consciousness- raising.

The second research question addressed the improvement of the students' speaking accuracy performance after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities. The findings in this research indicate a statistically significant effect on their speaking accuracy performance as a result of the strategy.

It is apparent from the findings that consciousness-raising activities results in significant influence on the students' speaking accuracy performance. The scores of the students' speaking performance in each aspect and in general were significantly different according to the pre-test and post-test.

The t-value of the students' performance on pronunciation accuracy (15.430) is higher than t-table (2.060). That finding proves that statistically the students' pronunciation accuracy is significantly different before and after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities.

The t-value of the students' performance on grammar accuracy (15.697) is higher than t-table (2.060). That finding proves that statistically the students' grammar accuracy is significantly different before and after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities.

The t-value of the students' performance on vocabulary accuracy (17.321) is higher than t-table (2.060). That finding proves that statistically the students' vocabulary accuracy is significantly different before and after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities.

In general the t-value of the students' speaking accuracy performance (26.820) is higher than t-table (2.060). That finding proves that statistically the students' speaking accuracy is significantly different before and after the implementation of consciousness-raising activities. Thus it evidently shows that the proposed hypothesis (H₂) is accepted. As mentioned previously, the researcher applied consciousness-raising activities to improve the students' speaking accuracy performance. The strategy took some procedures that are adopted from the theory of language acquisition. Through this process, the students were guided to consciously understand what is being learned. The concept comes from cognitivist learning theory, which argues that, as a prerequisite for the restructuring of the learner's mental representation of the language, some degree of conscious awareness is necessary. In L2 teaching, awareness raising aims at helping learners uncover gaps in their knowledge (Thornbury, 2005, p. 41). The activities are contrast with "presentation activities", whereby the teacher presents the target knowledge to learners directly. In consciousness activities, the researcher's role as a teacher is to guide the uncovering process and provide support and feedback where necessary.

The strategy takes three major phases of consciousness-raising: attention, noticing, and understanding. The researcher draws the students' attention to the target language intentionally. The researcher draws their attention to particular features in the input by using a direct approach, a pedagogical approach that utilizes consciousness-raising activities. As stated in the theory of language acquisition and learning, allocation of attention is very vital. As Baars (1997) puts it, paying attention – becoming conscious of some material – seems to be the sovereign remedy for learning anything. It is the universal solvent of the mind. After that, the students are guided to notice certain features in the input. Finally, understanding then takes place when a learner recognizes "a general principle, rule, or pattern" in the perceived input.

Instruction follows an explicit, awareness-raising Approach. They are provided by a series of awareness-raising tasks. Such tasks consist of directing the learners' attention to particular forms in the input, and to make them aware of what they are learning.

The theoretical underpinning of the awareness-raising strategy takes Schmidt's (1990, 1990, 2001) noticing hypothesis which states that in order for input (what the learner is exposed to) to become intake (what the learner notices in the input), learners have to be aware of or notice particular features in the input such as "linguistic forms, functional meanings, and the relevant contextual features" (Schmidt, 1993). The strategy is also supported by a theory by Kasper (1996) saying that the following three conditions are necessary for L2 acquisition to take place: There must be pertinent input, the input has to be noticed, and learners need ample opportunity to develop a high level of control.

Indeed, individual differences cannot be ignored to the different outcome of the process. The students as an individual possibly pay attention and notice the target language differently. More attention they pay, more noticing they gain which results in more understanding to the target language they achieve.

It is obvious from the findings that consciousness-raising activities generates significant influence on the students' speaking accuracy consciousness. That possibly happens because the strategy takes the consciousness concepts in language learning which become the factor contributing to successful second language (L2) learning.

The findings also confirm that that awareness raising plays an important role in the process of learning. Therefore, the improvement shows that consciousness- raising strategy can be recommended to be applied by teachers to improve students' speaking accuracy performance.

VI. Conclusion

In reference to the results and discussions of the research, some conclusions are drawn dealing with consciousness- raising with feedback treatments to improve ELT students' speaking accuracy as follows:

1. Consciousness-raising plays an important role in successful language learning. Therefore in developing the students' speaking accuracy, the researcher implemented consciousness-raising activities. The procedures were implemented after he identified the factors hindering their speaking accuracy of each aspect: pronunciation aspect, grammar aspect, and vocabulary aspect.

2. By referring to the results of the research, it is clear that consciousness-raising strategy could significantly improve the students' speaking accuracy consciousness and the students' speaking accuracy performance. The improvement indicates that consciousness- raising strategy is recommended to be applied by teachers to improve their students' speaking accuracy.

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