

Effect of Focused Task-based (Consciousness–Raising, Task Utility, and Input Enrichment Tasks) Instruction on Grammar Acquisition

Samira Farahani¹, Saeed Taki²

1. Ph.D. Candidate, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran.

2. Ph.D., English Dept., Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran.

* Corresponding Author's Email: Saeed_taki@yahoo.com

Abstract – The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of focused-tasks on learners' grammar acquisition. For this study four intact groups were selected. Three 15-member groups were chosen as experimental groups for teaching the targeted structures (present perfect; in spite of vs. although, because vs. because of and so on) through consciousness–raising tasks, input enrichment approach, and task utility approach, while the control group was given unfocused task instructions (form-filling, matching tasks). Findings support the arguments regarding the importance of focused task-based instruction in grammar learning. The researchers suggest other researchers and teachers apply these approaches in order to promote learners' grammar learning.

Keywords: focused-task, task-based instruction, consciousness–raising task, and input enrichment approach

1. INTRODUCTION

A current trend in methodology is task-based approaches to teaching (Richards, 1999). These involve the use of tasks that engage learners in meaningful interaction and negotiation focusing on completion of a task. Learners' grammar needs are determined on the basis of task performance rather than through predetermined grammar syllabus. However, whether learners develop acceptable levels of grammatical proficiency via such an approach is problematic. The purpose of the present paper was to investigate the effects of implicit and explicit grammar instruction on augmenting Iranian learners' grammar acquisition. To accomplish this end the researchers applied three different focused tasks to experimental groups: input enrichment approach, task utility approach, and consciousness-raising tasks, and unfocused tasks to the control group of the study like form filling and matching which are truly receptive tasks. Input enrichment involves designing tasks in such a way that the targeted feature is (1) frequent and/or (2) salient in the input provided (Ellis 2003, P. 158). He (2003) argues that input enrichment technique is a kind of focused task which is designed to cater primarily to implicit learning, that is, it is intended to develop awareness at the level of 'noticing' rather than awareness at the level of understanding, like consciousness-raising tasks.

Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) noted that the second way of incorporating a language feature is in terms of 'task utility'. By this they mean that the target structure is not essential in performing a task but it is 'useful' like spot the difference task by using different prepositions.

On the other hand, the main purpose of consciousness-raising (C-R) is to develop explicit knowledge of grammar. It is intended to develop awareness at the level of 'understanding'. (Ellis, 2003, p. 163). Another feature of this task is that whereas the previous types of tasks were built around content of a general nature, for example, stories, pictures of objects, C-R tasks make language itself the content.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of tasks has received more support from some researchers in second language acquisition (SLA), who are interested in developing pedagogical applications of second language acquisition theory (e.g., Long & Crookes, 1992). An interest in tasks as the basic unit of second language teaching began when researchers turned to tasks as SLA research tools in the mid-1980s. SLA research has focused on the strategies and cognitive processes used by second language learners. The research has reassessed the role of form-focused teaching. It is assumed that there is no evidence that formal grammar teaching leads to the ability to communicate outside the classroom. Engaging learners in tasks provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than formal grammar teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 223).

2.1. Task Definition

Long (1985) defines a task as a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward ... in other words, by a task it is meant the hundred and one thing people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between. 'Tasks' are things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists.

Skehan (1996) defines task as 'an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome'.

Lee (2000) believes that a task is (1) a classroom activity or exercise that has: (a) an objective obtainable only by the interaction among participants, (b) a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and (c) a focus on meaning exchange; (2) a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans'.

Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001) consider a task as 'an activity, which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective' (as cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 5).

Breen (1989) explains task in this way: Task is 'a structured plan which provide opportunities to refine knowledge and capabilities in a new language and using it during communication'. Breen believes that a 'task' can be 'a brief practice exercise' or 'a more complex work plan that entails spontaneous meaning conveyance'. Prabhu (1987) limits the notion of a task as an activity which require learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allow teachers to control and regulate that process.

Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985) define a task as follows: A task is 'an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language, i.e. as a response. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, and listening to an instruction and performing a command, may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make teaching more communicative ... since it provides a purpose for classroom activity which goes beyond practice of language for its own sake. Nunan (1989) continues that with a communicative task as a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right (as cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 4).

2.2. Criterial Features of a Task

Ellis (2003) assumes that there are some criterial features for the task that capture all the definition mentioned above. These are:

1. Task is a work plan: A task includes a plan for learner activity.
2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning.
3. A task involves real-world processes of language use.
4. A task can involve any of the four language skills.
5. A task engages cognitive processes.
6. A task has a clearly defined outcome.

2.3. Importance of Grammar Teaching

Celce-Murcia (2001) suggests that it is not helpful to think of grammar as a discrete set of meaning-less, decontextualized, static structures, nor is it helpful to think of grammar solely as prescriptive rules about linguistic form, such as injunctions against splitting infinitives or ending sentences with prepositions. Grammatical structures not only have (morpho-syntactic) form, they are also used to express meaning (semantics) in context-appropriate use (pragmatics).

Swan (1998) claims that there are two good reasons for teaching grammar: comprehensibility and acceptability (as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 151).

Comprehensibility. Knowing how to build and use certain structures makes it possible to communicate common types of meaning successfully. Without these structures, it is difficult to make comprehensible sentences. Therefore, we are supposed to identify these structures and teach them well.

Acceptability. In some social context, serious differences from native-speaker norms can prevent integration and provoke prejudice – a person who speaks 'badly' may not be taken

seriously, or may be considered uneducated or stupid. Students may thus want or need higher level of grammatical correctness than is required for mere comprehensibility.

2.4. Implicit vs. Explicit Grammar

In recent years, the degree of implicitness and explicitness of grammar instruction has received so much attention. According to Ellis (2009), implicit instruction aims to provide learners with conditions under which they can infer the rules without awareness. The result will be internalizing the pattern without having their attention focused on it. The 'input enrichment task' and the 'task utility', the researchers applied were basically caters for implicit grammar teaching, because learners were not consciously focused on using the form correctly but rather they pay attention to the meaning of the texts in order to achieve an outcome.

Dekeyser (1995) suggests that explicit instruction involves teaching a certain rule during the learning process and encouraging the learners to develop metalinguistic awareness of that rule (as cited in Ellis, 2009). The C-R task that the researcher applied is a way to accomplish this purpose.

2.5. Unfocused vs. Focused Tasks

Ellis (2003) noted that unfocused tasks may predispose learners to choose from a range of forms but they are not designed with the use of specific form in mind. In contrast, focused tasks are tasks aimed to predispose learners to process, receptively or productively, some particular linguistic feature, for example a grammatical structure (Ellis, 2003, p. 16). Of course, this processing must occur as a result of performing activities that satisfy the criteria of a task, i.e. that language is used pragmatically to achieve some non-linguistic outcome. Therefore, focused tasks have two aims: one is to focus on communicative language use; the other is to target the use of a particular, predetermined target feature.

Ellis (2003) claims that, there are two ways in which a task can achieve a focus. One is to design the task in such a way that it can only be performed if learners use particular linguistic features. The second way of constructing a focused task is by making language itself the content of a task like consciousness-raising tasks.

In this respect, it can be asked whether consciousness-raising tasks are indeed tasks. They are in the sense that learners are required to talk meaningfully about a language point using their own resources. The 'taskness' of a C-R task lies not in the linguistic point that is the focus of the task but rather in the talk learners must engage in in order to achieve an outcome to the task (Ellis, 2003, p. 163).

2.6. Designing Focused Tasks

Ellis (2003) assumes that there are three principal ways in which researchers have set about designing focused tasks: (1) structured-based production tasks, (2) comprehension tasks, and (3) consciousness-raising tasks.

'*Structured-based production tasks*'. Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) distinguish three ways in which a task can be designed to incorporate a specific target language feature. The first is 'task-naturalness'. In this case the target structure may not be necessary to complete a task but naturally it is assumed to be used by the learners. The example Loschky and Bley-Vroman give is of a task that involves the exchange of information about a travel itinerary. The second way of incorporating a language feature is in terms of 'task utility'. By this they mean that the target structure is not essential in performing a task but it is 'useful' like spot the difference task by using different prepositions or tenses. The third way of incorporating a language feature is in terms of 'task-essentialness'. This requires that learners must utilize specific feature in order to do the task because the feature becomes the 'essence' of the task.

'*Comprehension tasks*'. Comprehension tasks may be more successful in eliciting attention to a targeted feature than production-based tasks because learners cannot avoid processing them (Ellis 2003, p. 157). There are two ways this has been attempted-input enrichment and input processing.

'Input enrichment' involves designing tasks in such a way that the targeted feature is (1) frequent and/or (2) salient in the input provided (Ellis 2003, p. 158). The present study focused on this technique by highlighting the targeted feature and also by using the targeted structure frequently in the written texts.

'Input-processing instruction' is a term coined by VanPatten (1996). Its goal is to alter the processing strategies that learners take to the task of comprehension and to encourage them to make better form-meaning connections. There are three key components: (1) an explanation of form-meaning relationship, for example, the use of the passive to topicalize the patient of a sentence by placing it in the subject position, (2) information about processing strategies, for example, the need to attend to the form of the verb to determine whether the subject is the agent of the verb or the patient as in the case with passive verbs, (3) structured-input activities where learners have the chance to process the targeted feature in a controlled manner.

'*Consciousness-raising tasks*'. The main purpose of consciousness-raising (C-R) is to develop explicit knowledge of grammar or it is intended to develop awareness at the level of 'understanding' rather than awareness at the level of 'noticing' like input enrichment task. (Ellis, 2003, P. 163). Another feature of this task is that whereas the previous types of task were built around content of a general nature, for example, stories, pictures of objects, C-R tasks make language itself the content.

2.7. The Psycholinguistic Rationale for Focused Tasks

Ellis (2003) suggests that there are two psycholinguistic bases for focused communicative tasks: (1) skill building theories and the notion of automatic processing, and (2) implicit learning.

Automatic processing involves the activation of certain nodes in memory each time the appropriate inputs are present (McLaughlin & Heredia, 1996, p. 214). Shrifin and Schneider (1977) argue that automatic processing, contrasts with controlled processing. A key difference between automatic and controlled processing is that whereas the former occurs

automatically and in parallel form, the latter occurs more slowly and functions serially. Skill development involves converting the controlled processing into automatic processing, in other words, it is the proceduralization of declarative knowledge (Anderson, 1993, 2000). Declarative knowledge is factual, i.e. it includes explicit knowledge of grammatical rules. Procedural knowledge is declarative knowledge that has become fully automatized.

N. Ellis (1994) argued that implicit learning is the acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations. The main difference between skill building theories and theories of implicit learning lies in the particular role that explicit knowledge plays in language learning. Skill building theories see learning as a process by which explicit knowledge is converted to implicit knowledge through communication practice. In contrast, theories of implicit learning view the process by which learners acquire implicit and explicit knowledge as inherently different and separate (Ellis, 2003, p. 148).

2.8. Consciousness-Raising vs. Practice

Ellis (1991) suggests that for most teachers, the main idea of grammar teaching is to help learners internalize the structures in such a way that they can be used in everyday communication (as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 168). To accomplish this purpose, the learners are provided opportunities to practice the structure, first under controlled conditions, then under more normal under controlled communicative conditions. Ur (1988) describes the practice stage of a grammar lesson in these terms: 'The practice stage consists of series of exercises.....whose purpose is to cause the learners to absorb the structure completely; or to put it another way, to transfer what they know from short-term to long-term memory'. These are the characteristics of practice:

1. There is some attempt to isolate a specific linguistic feature for focused attention.
2. The learners are required to produce sentences containing the targeted feature.
3. The learners will be provided with opportunities for repetition of targeted feature.
4. The learners are expected to perform the grammatical feature correctly.
5. The learners receive feedback on whether their performance of the grammatical structure is correct or not.

It should be clear from this list that the main purpose of practice is to develop implicit knowledge of grammar-that is to develop the kind of automatic control of grammatical structures that will enable learners to use them productively and spontaneously- the kind of tacit knowledge to needed to use the structures effortlessly for communication (Ellis, 1991).

Consciousness-raising in another hand, involves an attempt to equip the learners with understanding of a specific grammatical feature-to develop declarative rather than procedural knowledge. According to Ellis (1991) these are the main characteristics of consciousness-raising activities:

1. There is some attempt to isolate a specific grammatical 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. If there is a misunderstanding of the grammatical feature by the learners, the teacher clarifies it.
5. The learners may be required to produce the rule describing the grammatical structure.

It should be clear from this list that the main purpose of consciousness-raising is to develop explicit knowledge of grammar or it is intended to develop awareness at the level of 'understanding' rather than awareness at the level of 'noticing' like input enrichment task. (Ellis, 2003, p. 163). Consciousness-raising does not contribute directly to the acquisition of implicit knowledge, it does so indirectly. In other words, consciousness-raising facilitate the acquisition of the grammatical knowledge needed for communications. The acquisition of the implicit knowledge involves three processes: noticing, comparing, and integrating.

2.9. An Example of Consciousness-Raising Task

Ellis (1991) argued that consciousness-raising tasks can be inductive or deductive. In the case of the former, the learner is supplied with data and asked to construct an explicit rule to describe the grammatical feature which the data illustrate. In the case of the latter, the learner is provided with a rule which then used to carry out some task. Since the participants in the present article are at intermediate level, and sometimes they are allowed to use their native language, the researcher utilized inductive task.

Table 1 provides a simple example of an inductive task designed by the researcher who inspired by Ellis (1991) to raise learners' awareness about the grammatical differences between 'because' and 'because of'. This problem has been designed with number of points in mind. First, the intention is to focus on a known source of difficulty; learners frequently fail to differentiate between 'because' and 'because of'. Second, the data provided must be adequate to enable the learners to discover the rule that governs the usage of these adverbs of reason. To achieve this purpose the data include both grammatical and ungrammatical sentences. Third, the task requires minimal production on the part of learners; instead the focus is on developing an 'idea' of when two forms are utilized. Finally, there is an opportunity to apply the rule in the construction of personalized statements. This is not intended to 'practice' the rule but to promote its storage as an explicit knowledge.

Table 1. An example of consciousness-raising task

1. Here is some information about three friends who decided on specific "in" place (club)	
Tony	prefers Soul Club
Rick	prefers Soul Club

Mike	prefers Casablanca Club
------	-------------------------

2. Study these sentences about these people. When is 'because' used and when is 'because of' used.
 - a. I'd rather Soul Club because it is always packed.
 - b. I'd rather Casablanca Club because of the fashionable people.
 - c. I'd rather Soul Club because it is located in a nice place.
 - d. I'd prefer Soul Club because of the reasonable price.
 - e. I like Casablanca Club because of the fabulous music.
 3. Which of the following sentences are grammatical? Why?
 - a. I'd rather Casablanca Club because of the fashionable people go there.
 - b. I like Soul Club because the music is great.
 - c. I'd prefer Soul Club because everything is brand new.
 - d. I don't like Soul Club because the crowd.
 4. Try and make up a rule to explain when 'because' and 'because of' are used.
 5. Make up two sentences about the reason you choose your school: Use 'because' and 'because of'
-

2.10. Input Enrichment Approach, and Task Utility Approach

'Task utility' as claimed by Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) is a kind of *Structured-based production tasks*'. By this they mean that the target structure is not essential in performing a task but it is 'useful' like some information gap tasks.

Prabhu (1987) argues that, an information gap task is an activity which involves in a transfer of given information from one person to another- or from one form to another, or from one place to another – generally calling for the encoding or decoding of information from or into language. One example of an information gap task is a 'spot-the-difference' activity. Another is an activity where one student is given a picture, and must describe it to another student, who creates a drawing from the description. In one of the experimental groups, students worked in groups of three: two students were given nearly identical pictures containing a set number of differences. The students, without looking at each other's picture, must try to find as many of these differences as they can. The third student listens and takes notes on what she hears. In other words, in experimental group the researcher implicitly inclined learners to use targeted features (prepositions, present continuous tense, singular or plural forms etc.) to complete the task. In one of the sessions, the researcher reported that he heard learners applied present continuous tense while they were talking about the clothes, worn by people in the pictures (e.g. In the first picture, Susan is wearing a T-shirt but in the second picture she is wearing a dress. In the first picture, Emily is wearing jeans, but in the second picture she is wearing shorts, and so on). Another example was about the proposition of place (In the first picture, the keys are inside the box but in the second picture they are next to the box, or in the first picture the drug store is across from the bank but in the second picture it is next to the bank).

'Input enrichment', on the other hand, involves designing tasks in such a way that the targeted feature is (1) frequent and/or (2) salient in the input provided (Ellis 2003, P. 158). However, the written texts delivered to the other experimental group contained a lot of specific grammatical features. For example in one text present perfect tense was salient. In another text, present continuous tense was prominent. In the third text, 'because of' and 'because' were highlighted and so on.

2.11. Research Questions

The present study aimed to answer the following question:

- 1- Does input enrichment as an approach to focused-task have any significant effects on learners' grammar acquisition?
- 2- Does consciousness-raising tasks as an approach to focused-task have any significant effects on learners' grammar acquisition?
- 3- Does task utility as an approach to focused-task have any significant effects on learners' grammar acquisition?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 60 intermediate female teenagers. They were intermediate students in Safir institute, in Arak, Iran. The participants had a mean age of 17 and had been studying English for 8 semesters in Safir institute. All groups were randomly selected from 12 intact classes consisting of 180 students. The treatment lasted for two month, two days a week, 60 minutes a day in the institute.

3.2. Instruments

Three instruments were utilized to achieve the purpose of the study: Oxford placement test and Parallel tests. The Oxford Placement Test measures a test taker's ability to communicate in English. It provides information about a person's language level. This test is comprised of 60-items. The test is reliable (consistently grading test takers at the right level) and valid (having a strong theoretical basis). Parallel grammar tests (as pre-test and post-test of the study) were administered. Parallel tests are the ones which measure the same construct and have the same mean and standard deviation (Bachman, 1990, p.168).

3.3. Procedure

In summary, the present study was a quantitative research and a quasi-experimental design, After selecting the whole population (N=180), Oxford Placement Test was administered by the researchers and based on the results of the test, four groups (Number of each was 15) whose scores were one standard deviation above or below the population mean were selected as target subjects for the study. Three groups were randomly assigned as the experimental groups and the last group was assigned as the control group of the study. To

assess their initial knowledge in grammar a pre-test of grammar was administered. It was a test of grammar consisting of 50 multiple-choice items taken from *Nelson English Language Tests book*.

Then the treatment started. The researchers gave three different focused tasks to the experimental groups: task utility to one group, input enrichment to the second group, and consciousness-raising task to the third group but the control group was given unfocused tasks like matching, form-filling. Unfocused tasks are tasks aimed to induce learners to involve in meaning-focused activities, to achieve an outcome without any specific form/s in mind (Ellis, 2003, P. 16).

The treatment lasted for two months. Afterward, all participants were given post-test of grammar. The test was extracted from *Nelson English Language Tests book*. Finally, the results of both pretest and posttest were compared for data analysis.

4. RESULTS

This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of focused task instruction on Iranian EFL learners' grammar acquisition. To fulfill the purpose of the study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used.

As mentioned above, 180 learners participated in this study. The participants were female studying English at Safir Institute in Arak, Iran.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for all participants (Oxford placement test)*

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Placement	180	35.00	19.00	54.00	33.6952	8.17492
Valid N (listwise)	180					

All the data including mean, maximum score, minimum score, range, and so on were shown in Table 1.

4.1. One-way ANOVA

First of all it is worth noting that *One-way ANOVA* is used to determine whether there are any significant differences among the means of three independent groups. Since there were four groups in the present study, the researcher used *One-way ANOVA* to compare the means of different groups.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for two groups in Pre-test (grammar)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
task utility	15	11.0667	1.57963	.40786	10.1919	11.9414	7.00	13.00
input enrichment	15	11.6667	1.71825	.44365	10.7151	12.6182	8.00	14.00
consciousness-raising	15	11.1333	1.64172	.42389	10.2242	12.0425	8.00	14.00
Control	15	11.3333	2.76887	.71492	9.8000	12.8667	7.00	15.00
Total	60	11.3000	1.95110	.25189	10.7960	11.8040	7.00	15.00

Table 2 provides useful descriptive statistics for two groups. The data include the mean, the standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores.

Tukey HSD Table 3. One-way ANOVA in pre-test (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) grammar	(J) grammar	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
task utility	input enrichment	-.60000	.72594	.842	-2.5222	1.3222
	consciousness-raising	-.06667	.72594	1.000	-1.9889	1.8555
	control	-.26667	.72594	.983	-2.1889	1.6555
input enrichment	task utility	.60000	.72594	.842	-1.3222	2.5222
	consciousness-raising	.53333	.72594	.883	-1.3889	2.4555
	control	.33333	.72594	.968	-1.5889	2.2555
consciousness-raising	task utility	.06667	.72594	1.000	-1.8555	1.9889
	input enrichment	-.53333	.72594	.883	-2.4555	1.3889
	control	-.20000	.72594	.993	-2.1222	1.7222
Control	task utility	.26667	.72594	.983	-1.6555	2.1889
	input enrichment	-.33333	.72594	.968	-2.2555	1.5889
	consciousness-raising	.20000	.72594	.993	-1.7222	2.1222

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 indicates the output of the *One-way ANOVA* analysis and whether there are any significant differences among the means of four independent groups. As can be seen in this table the significance level for all groups are above 0.05, therefore, there are statistically no significant differences among the groups at the beginning of the study.

Table 4 *Descriptive Statistics for two groups in Post-test (grammar)*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
task utility	15	14.6000	1.24212	.32071	13.9121	15.2879	12.00	17.00
input enrichment	15	14.9333	1.33452	.34457	14.1943	15.6724	12.00	17.00
consciousness-raising	15	16.4667	1.12546	.29059	15.8434	17.0899	15.00	18.00
Control	15	12.9333	1.94447	.50206	11.8565	14.0101	11.00	16.00
Total	60	14.7333	1.89439	.24456	14.2440	15.2227	11.00	18.00

All data regarding mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores are provided in table 4.

Table 5 *Output of One-way ANOVA in post-test*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	94.533	3	31.511	15.057	.000
Within Groups	117.200	56	2.093		
Total	211.733	59			

Table 5 shows the output of the ANOVA analysis and whether there are any significant differences among the means of four independent groups. As can be seen in this table the significance level is .00 ($p=.00$) which is below 0.05, therefore, there are statistically significant differences among groups. Therefore, the null hypotheses could not be rejected. The other data indicated in the table was the degree of freedom between groups and within groups. The degree of freedom between groups was (3) and degree of freedom within groups was (56).

Tukey HSD Table 6 *One-way ANOVA in post-test (Multiple Comparisons)*

(I) grammar	(J) grammar	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
task utility	input enrichment	-.33333	.52825	.922	-1.7321	1.0654
	consciousness-raising	-1.86667*	.52825	.004	-3.2654	-.4679
	Control	1.66667*	.52825	.013	.2679	3.0654
input enrichment	task utility	.33333	.52825	.922	-1.0654	1.7321
	consciousness-raising	-1.53333*	.52825	.026	-2.9321	-.1346
	Control	2.00000*	.52825	.002	.6013	3.3987
consciousness-raising	task utility	1.86667*	.52825	.004	.4679	3.2654
	input enrichment	1.53333*	.52825	.026	.1346	2.9321
	Control	3.53333*	.52825	.000	2.1346	4.9321
Control	task utility	-1.66667*	.52825	.013	-3.0654	-.2679
	input enrichment	-2.00000*	.52825	.002	-3.3987	-.6013
	consciousness-raising	-3.53333*	.52825	.000	-4.9321	-2.1346

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

4.2. Reporting the Output of the One-Way ANOVA

There were statistically significant differences among groups as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(3,56) = 15.57, p = .00$). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed, that the mean differences among all groups were significant. In other word, there was statistically significant difference between task utility group and consciousness-raising group ($p = .004$). There was statistically significant difference between task utility task group and control group ($p = .013$). There was statistically significant differences between input enrichment group and the control group ($p = .002$). There was statistically significant difference between consciousness-raising group and input enrichment group ($p = .026$). There was statistically significant difference between consciousness-raising group and control group ($p = .000$). It could be concluded that there were statistically significant differences among the means of all groups. There was statistically no significant difference between task utility group and input enrichment ($p = .92$), though. From the data it was concluded that, null hypotheses would be rejected, i.e. focused task instruction has been effective in augmenting the grammar knowledge.

5. DISCUSSION

Ellis (2003) has pointed out; that focused communicative tasks involving both reception and production are of considerable value to both researchers and teachers. For researchers, they provide a means of measuring whether learners have acquired a specific feature. They are often preferred to tests because they provide evidence of what learners do when they are not consciously focused on using a form correctly and thus be considered to elicit implicit knowledge rather than explicit knowledge. Focused tasks are of value to teachers since they provide a means of teaching specific linguistic feature communicatively-under 'real operating conditions'.

Regarding the first question posed in this study, the result showed that for the chosen grammar point, students who were taught under the input enrichment conditions generally outperformed those who had not been exposed to such instruction. There might be several reasons for the students' superior performance in the experimental group. One of the most important facets of this technique is that it promotes learners' grammar by providing them with plenty of opportunities to notice specific form in the written text. Other important aspect of this technique is that it triggers learners' conscious mind by providing them with a lot of communicative activity while their subconscious mind picks up linguistic features non-thoughtfully. When the learners were asked to repeat the task during post task activities, their fluency and the number of the targeted forms they uttered were dramatically increased.

Finally grammatical features are highlighted and automatically attract learners' attention and there is no need to compel them to pay attention to them. It could be claimed that it is a similar to peripheral learning.

Regarding the second question posed in this study, Ellis (1991) argued that consciousness-raising, involves an attempt to equip the learners with understanding of a specific grammatical feature-to develop declarative rather than procedural knowledge. According to the result showed it was the most effective task of all other tasks. The researchers assume that since the content of the task was language itself the learners' grammar dramatically changed. The researchers noted that it increases metalinguistic knowledge. In teaching tenses, the researchers noted that to provide variety, and to reduce stress, it is a good idea to devote very little time to compare and contrast English and their native language, i.e. Persian. This is an example one of the researchers had done in one of the sessions.

Example: Present perfect tense:

In English: Subject + Modal+ past participle of the verb

Examples: I have studied the book twice.

She has lived in China since 1997.

In Persian language: present perfect is constructed by: Verb + suffixes:

Examples: These are subject pronouns in Persian= من، تو، او، ما، شما، آنها

I have eaten = من خورده ام / خورده ام

You have eaten = تو خورده ای / خورده ای

He/ She has eaten= او خورده است/ خورده است/

We have eaten= ما خورده ایم/ خورده ایم

You have eaten = شما خورده اید/ خورده اید

They have eaten = آنها خورده اند/ خورده اند

As can be seen in Persian, people use different suffixes in order to make present perfect. Another difference is that in this language, subject can be omitted because the suffixes can play the role of tense, person, and pronouns. Third, in both second person singular and plural, in English 'you' is used as the subject but in Persian different subject pronouns are used. However, to show respect or to be in state of politeness, plural form of second person is used to refer to a single person. Finally, in Persian language, people use one pronoun for third person singular to refer to both male or female, but in English people use 'He' to refer to a male and they use 'She' to refer to a female. The researchers assumed that the other reason that learners' score in consciousness-raising tasks dramatically increased was the effects of this kind of comparing and contrasting two languages to get more insight about the target language.

In brief, the value of C-R tasks lies not just in whether they are effective in developing explicit knowledge and subsequently promoting noticing but also in the opportunities they provide for learners to communicate-it leads the negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 2003, P. 166). Ellis (2003) argues that C-R tasks seem to be an effective means of achieving a focus on form while at the same time providing chances to communicate. There are some limitations to consciousness-raising. It may not be appropriate for young learners. Some learners who don't develop enough knowledge or those who like to learn by doing rather than studying. It can be used with beginners if the learners' first language is utilized. However, the alternative in such situations is not practice. Rather, it is to provide chances for meaning- focused language use. All learners, even those are suited to a consciousness-raising approach, will need a lot of such opportunities. Consciousness-raising is not an alternative to communication activities, but a supplement.

Regarding the third question i.e., if task utility as an approach to focused-task has any significant effects on learners' grammar acquisition. It is worth mentioning that the researchers used spot the difference tasks. According to Underhill (1987), these kinds of tasks have the advantage that they produce concrete evidence of communicative competence, or of the lack of it, but the disadvantage of only testing the ability to communicate factual information. Finally, the results of both pretest and posttest were compared for data analysis. Regarding to third question i.e., if task utility as an approach to focused-task has any significant effects on learners' grammar acquisition. , the researcher found, that the task was more effective than other focused activities in interactions and involvement in meaning focused activities but not in acquisition of grammar for a few reasons: The researcher claimed that he observed real personal involvement, with an accompanying increase in confidence and fluency. It was really surprised to see how dynamic the class was as learners started to spot the differences between two pictures: from thoughtful to enthusiastic and laughing. The researcher likes this task the most, since all students are implicitly induced to use targeted structures like what in input enrichment task.

6. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, according to the obtained results, the focused tasks in EFL students tended to improve participants grammar. Specifically, consciousness-raising task which catered for explicit knowledge of grammar. Input enrichment approach was more effective than task utility since it was noticed more in the input provided for learners. Task utility on the other hand, not only affected the grammar acquisition of the participants and improved it but also the researcher assumes that this technique improved their fluency too. The conclusion that may be made from the above statistics analysis is that the participants who were taught based on focused task generally tended to score higher in grammar test.

6.1. Limitations of the Study

The first limitation is related to the sample size and characteristics of participants involved in this study. Because the study focused on 60 Iranian EFL learners from a simple institute, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other student populations living in other EFL contexts, in particular to students whose first language is not Persian.

Another limitation of this research study stems from the level considered for this study. In this study, students learning English in English institute at intermediate level were selected as participants. Therefore, the results may not be applicable to students of other educational levels such as advance, or elementary school students. Also, because this study was conducted in Iran, EFL students in other countries might not display similar results.

Finally, Grammar is a construct that may be influenced by many factors. One of the variables that would be worthy examining is the role of background knowledge English language learners. Along with cultural factors, other variables may impact learners' grammar acquisition due to the influence of affective factors such as intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, self-esteem or self-advocacy and also some socio cultural factors.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, J. (1993). *Rules of the Mind*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Anderson, J. (2000). *Learning and memory: An Integrated Approach*, revised edition. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Breen, M. (1989). 'The evaluation cycle for language learning tasks' in R. K. Johnson (ed.): *The second language curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bygate, M., P. Skehan and M. Swain (eds.). (2001). *Researching Pedagogic Tasks, Second Language Learning, Teaching and Testing*. Harlow: Longman.
- Ellis, N. (1994). *Implicit and Explicit Learning of Languages*. London: Academic Press.
- Ellis, R. (1991). *Second Language Acquisition and Language Pedagogy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R., Loewen, Sh., Elder, C., Erlam, R., Philp, J., & Reinders, H. (2009). *Implicit and Explicit knowledge in second language learning, testing and teaching*. The UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Lee, J. (2000). *Tasks and communicating in language classroom*. Boston: McGraw. Hill.
- Long, M. (1985). 'A role for instruction in second language acquisition: task-based language teaching' in K. Hytlenstam and M. Pienemann (ed.): *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Long, M. and G. Crookes. (1992). Three approaches to task- based syllabus design'. *TESOL Quarterly* 26/1:27-56.
- Loschky, L. and R. Bley-Vroman. (1993) 'Grammar and task-based methodology' in G Crookes and S.Gass1993a (eds.) *Tasks in Integrating Theory and Practice*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Celce-Murcia, Marianne (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign Language*. Third Edition. New Yourk.
- McLaughlin, B. and R. Heredia (1996). 'Information processing approaches to research on second language acquisition and use' in R. Ritchie and T. Bhatia (eds.): *A Handbook on Second Language Acquisition*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, Jack C. and Renandya, Willy A. (eds.). (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, C. R., and Rodgers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J., J. Platt, and H. Weber (1985). *Longman dictionary of Applied Linguistics*. London: Longman.
- Shriffin, R. and W. Schneider (1977). 'Controlled and automatic processing II. Perceptual learning, automatic attending and a general theory.' *Psychological Review* 84: 127-90.
- Skehan, P. (1996). 'A framework for the implementation of task-based instruction' *Applied linguistics* 17: 38-62.
- Underhill, Nick (1987). *Testing Spoken Language: A Handbook of Oral Testing Techniques*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ur, P. (1984). *Teaching listening comprehension*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- VanPatten, B. (1996). *Input Processing and Grammar Instruction in Second Language Acquisition*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Willis, D. & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.