Simple Present Tense and Present Continuous Tense: Consciousness Raising Tasks and Communicative Activities

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Within the field of second language (L2) teaching there is a continuous debate about if grammar should be taught (Fotos & Ellis, 1991). The purpose of language can be described as both functional and formal. The former relates to the communicative aspect of language that mostly occurs outside of the classroom such as asking for direction. The latter refers to language rules and structures such as syntax, morphology and phonology (Bialystok, 1981). Grammar is an aspect of formal language instruction; hence, grammar instruction is a necessary part of L2 teaching and learning. Considering the integral role of grammar in language learning second language teachers try to adopt teaching methods that are effective for second language acquisition. A major aspect of this discussion is whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly.

According to Fotos and Ellis (1991) explicit grammar instruction contributes to L2 learning by creating awareness of grammar structures, which makes noticing more likely to occur during the input phase and acquired as implicit knowledge. This approach to teaching grammar is further highlighted as being effective at constructing structured communicative activities. The opposite method, implicit instruction, guides learners in discovering these codes, personally through introduction of grammar in a variety of contexts and followed by extensive practice. Despite the difference, there are merits to both approaches. However, the amount of explicit knowledge learner can retain is limited (Fotos & Ellis, 1991). Therefore, it is important to teach learners how decipher and use language forms and rules through implicit teaching and consciousness raising (CR) tasks in combination with communicative activities.

Consciousness raising tasks are those activities aimed at

creating awareness of a target grammar feature. The aim of consciousness raising tasks is not for accurate production but for learners to become conscious of the target grammar feature (Mohamed, 2004). CR tasks help learners to understand formal language properties and develop analytical, conscious awareness and accuracy intuition (Roza, 2014). This occurs through a process three-part grammar problem solving process, which includes observe-hypothesize-experiment (Willis & Willis, 1996). Each part can be divided into elements associated with the process of CR tasks namely; (1) Isolation of target linguistic features; (2) Provide the target linguistic features in written or aural input; (3) Provide opportunities to interact with the text for meaning analysis; (4) target feature identification; (5) Provide opportunities for learners to attempt to understand the target feature; (6) provide opportunities for clarification of form, meaning and use of the target linguistic features; (7) Provide opportunities for articulation and description of the form and use of the target grammatical structure; (8) Provide opportunities for hypothesis testing and application of the target grammatical structure. Following this process, grammatical structures such as tense can be presented to ESL/ESL learners for better comprehension.

Simple Present Tense and Present Continuous Tense CR Task

Teaching tense such as, present continuous tense and simple present can be difficult for second language learners. Where the tense is nonexistent in the learners' first language, teaching and learning the target grammar feature can be difficult. Using CR tasks to present these tenses, is a method of assisting learners to identify and test the form, meaning and use within context. Through this process learners work interactively to create explicit and implicit knowledge of the target grammar feature. Hence, in developing effective consciousness raising task for presenting simple present and present continuous tense, form, meaning and use must be considered. Simple present tense is used to talk about statement of truths, facts and routine activities, while present continuous tense is used to express an activity currently in progress. To create the

present tense form. "s" is added to the root word when the subject is singular. However, when the subject is plural the root word does not require the letter "s". In reference to present continuous tense, the simple present form of the verb be is used in combination with the "ing" form of the verb. The verb be changed based on the subject.

Taking into account the meaning, use and form of the grammar in focus, an appropriate context within which simple present tense and present continuous tense can be presented in a CR task would be self-introduction and describing actions that are currently in progress. The associated activities could include: firstly, presenting simple present tense and present continuous tense within the context of a self-introduction; secondly, providing a template to identify and isolate the two types of word forms found in the text; thirdly, directing the learners to articulate two rules for both categories of words. The second activity can be semi-structure where the learners can fill in the blanks using the two categories of words while consulting and testing the rules that were previously identified. Finally, an error detection activity can be used for application of the grammar structure.

Following the three-step process, observe-hypothesize-experiment as illustrated by Willis and Willis (1996), the activities previously mentioned fit into each stage of the of the CR task process. The proposed lesson plan will be further explained in relation to CR task elements. In reference to the observation stage, the two target grammar features (simple present tense and present continuous tense) are presented in a passage in activity one. The focus is written in bold for easy isolation from the other words. To further ensure easy identification of the target grammar feature only, the singular form of the verb is used. From observing the verbs in context, the learners can discuss with their partner and use the table to categorize the two forms of the words in bold text. These are singular simple present tense verbs, such as likes and the singular verb be and the "ing" verb form such as "is thinking." The second stage is for hypothesis formation. The learners can further discuss with their partner and create two rules in relation to the two words categories. In activity two and three, the learners can then

experiment and apply the rules identified. Hence, the fill in the blanks activity is provided along with the root verbs. The form of the verb that is most appropriate for each sentence can be negotiated with a partner. For instance, sentence two: she (likes/liking) food.

Similarly, in activity three the learners can further test and apply their knowledge. This is an error detection activity. As a result, the learners are required to check if the correct grammar is used in the sentences and in the cases where the grammar is incorrect the learners are required to rewrite the incorrect sentences with the correct form. Carrying out these different tasks help the learners to understand the meaning and use of the two grammar structures presented in the passage. Expanding CR into communicative activities is a useful method that supports further practice of the grammar focus.

Communicative activities follow a similar process as consciousness raising tasks. These activities combine both explicit and implicit grammar teaching. To teach the grammar structure previously presented using CR tasks, communicative activities can be used for further practice. In the proposed activity, the learners are asked to play "who is he/she" game, which is adapted from "who am I" game. For warm up, the learners are instructed to brainstorm about their favorite celebrities. The learners are instructed to think about some concepts that are true to the person, such as hobbies, nationality and likes. After which in groups of six, the leaners are asked to describe their favorite celebrity, while the other group members listen and try to guess who the person is. After all students have described the chosen celebrity, the group member with the highest number of correct guesses would be given the opportunity to describe their second favorite celebrity in front of the class. By doing this activity, the learner who is describing the celebrity is practicing the grammar structure orally, while the other students are receiving aural stimuli. Activity 2 focuses on using the continuous tense. The learners are instructed to think about what the celebrity previously mentioned is doing now. This is a more collaborative activity as the other group members must listen to speakers' statement and to give a reason for the action in progress that was mentioned by their group member. The learners can

practice this activity in a circle three to four times for 15 – 20 minutes. These activities are personalized to make them more interesting and appropriate for the learners.

In conclusion, teaching learners how to decipher and use language forms and rules through implicit teaching and consciousness raising (CR) tasks, in combination with communicative activities, is important in the field of second language teaching as grammar is an integral part of language and as such should be learned. CR presents grammar in step process that guide language learners to identify the target grammar within context, test and apply it in different contexts base on the hypothesized rule developed by the learners from the tasks.

Following the observe-hypothesize- experiment process of presenting the CR tasks, the proposed lesson plan aims to help learner identify specific meaning, form and usage of the simple present and present continuous tense. Additionally, expanding the tasks using communicative activities offer further practice and deeper comprehension of the target grammar feature. Furthermore, these activities encourage the learners to use their imagination and to add humor to the activity to reduce affective filter and allow the learners to end class on a light mood with the aim of students retaining the form, meaning and use of simple present tense and present continuous tense.

References

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Appendix A

Consciousness Raising Tasks

Activity 1

This **is** Ken, he **is** 12 years old. He **lives** in Minato-Ku. He **likes** smartphone and video games. He **plays** Pokemon-Go on his phone a lot. He **goes** to Willis International school. He usually **walks** to school. When the weather is bad, he **takes** the bus to school. He always **wears** t-shirt and Jeans on weekdays. Today **is** Wednesday. He **is wearing** grey and white t-shirt today. He **is sitting** in social studies class. His teacher **is** late, so he **is waiting** for his teacher. He **is checking** his schedule on his smart phone. He **is thinking** all the assignments do for class. His classmates **are writing** in their notebooks.

List the tenses in bold above into two categories.

Category 1	Category 2

1. How are the words in category 1 used (rule 1)?

_____
_____

2. How are the words in category 2 used (Rule 2)?

_____
_____

Activity 2

Use rule 1 and rule 2 to select the correct form of the words to fill in the blanks in the states.

wear is hold like prepare/make live stand/work

1. This _____ Aya.
2. She _____ 5 years old.
3. She _____ food.
4. She _____ in Hanno city, Saitama.
5. She _____ in Mos burger.
6. She _____ a small Mos Burger uniform.
7. She _____ a mayo bottle.
8. She _____ a teriyaki burger.

Activity 3

According to rule 1 and rule 2, are the sentences below correct? Correct the wrong ones.

1. This **is** Maya
2. She **is liking** sports.
3. She **wears** a red T-shirt.
4. She **is playing** soccer.

5. The other players **are run**.
6. The boy behind her **is smile**.
7. The ball **is rolling**.
8. Three boys **are wearing** blue shirt.

Communicative Activity

| Rule 1:
Use simple present tense to talk about:
    (a) Statements that are true
       about yourself
    (b) Facts
    (c) Daily activities

Formula: Subject + SP verb+ Object | Rule 2:
 Present continuous tense to talk about:
    (a) Things you are doing now.

Formula: Subject + SP verb be +verb- ing +

Object |

Brainstorm
Think of some celebrities. Choose your 2 favorite one ones.
Think about their personal information. Name, age, favorite color, hobbies, fashion sense.
Imagine what they are doing today (now) be creative.

Who am is he/she game

Instructions
1. Sit in groups of six.
2. Describe your celebrity. DO NOT say their name.
3. At the end of your description, ask the question: Who is she/he?
4. The other students will have a maximum of 3 minutes to guess your person's name.
5. After three minutes, if the other students fail, the answer can be given.
6. The winner gets to describe their celebrity next.
7. Each group member has 2 chances to describe their celebrity.
8. At the end of the game, the person with the highest number of correct answers will describe their second celebrity to the class.

Activity 1
Describe your favorite celebrity in six sentences. For example, name, hobbies, hometown/nationality, hobbies, fashion sense, favorite things or any other ideas.
Start the description using: My favorite celebrity is_____.

Example: My favorite celebrity **is** Idris Elba. He **likes** soccer.
[after returning to their groups]

Activity 2
State what you THINK your celebrity is doing now. The person next to you will say why, then state what they think their celebrity is doing. (Use your imagination, make it funny.)

Example. Student A: Idris Elba **is playing** the piano.
                Student B: He **is playing** the piano because he is lonely.
                Student B: Taylor Swift **is doing** her make-up.
                Student C: She **is doing** her make up because she has wrinkles.
[Do this 3-4 times in a circle]