

***Pedagogic Grammar
and
Second Language
Acquisition***

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Module 2 – Oct. 1999

1. 0 Introduction and Aims

There are two questions presented in this task. 1) What do you understand by the term consciousness-raising? 2) To what extent is a grammar-translation approach or method based on consciousness-raising? I will answer the second question by presenting the argument: “To what **extent** is a grammar-translation method **related to, not based on,** grammatical consciousness-raising? I will refer to the former as GTM, the latter as C-R.

1.1 Defining C-R

I understand the term consciousness-raising using Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith’s (1988:3) definition of:

“C-R is a continuum ranging from intensive promotion of conscious awareness through pedagogical role articulation on one end, to the mere exposure of the learner to specific grammatical phenomenon the other.”

They also believe C-R is a compromise between second language learning and acquisition, and that instruction is more inductive than deductive. For these reasons, Rutherford is against traditional grammar instruction and rejects the separation of the two as unrelated entities. As found in his research (1985:284), these are the primary goals of C-R:

- a) To give the learner the necessary grammar exposure in order to realign the circles of understanding, and to facilitate the awareness of L1 grammar.
- b) To point out features of L2 so learners can capture and process understandable meaning by connecting the “new” with what they already know.

The basis of Rutherford’s belief is getting learners to notice this “gap” between themselves and the English spoken by native speakers. Once this occurs, learners can form and test this hypothesis, in order to successfully achieve natural language acquisition.

1.2 Elaboration on C-R

In addition, Michael Sharwood-Smith (1988:53) argues that “traditional instruction” is but one type of C-R. He describes it as “a cognitive approach to grammatical instruction with distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge.” Harley and Swain (1984) believe when accuracy is an issue, C-R can help bridge the gap in a learner’s competence. From this culmination of definitions, one understands that C-R is a method of teaching, which provides learners with valuable background information from their first language. The function of this background is to give the learner the ability to solve problems on their own for grammatical pattern transfer, to the second language or L2. By any definition, it cannot be explained in simple terms. It can be easily seen that there are many theories and conflicting beliefs. But, to better understand the relationship between a GTM and a C-R is to recognize that there are many ways of teaching grammar. Regardless of the difference in opinions mentioned above, it is wrong to present teachers with a limited choice of either:

- a) Completely avoiding grammar instruction **or**
- b) a return to grammatical focus on form.

1.3 The History of CR and GTM

As mentioned in Rutherford (1988:9), the controversy that has surrounded C-R and its relationship in language pedagogy has existed for about 150 years. But, it has only been two or so decades that the role of grammar has had “empirically-based” research. By contrast, this relatively recent advancement in language-teaching techniques is quite young in age. This focus on grammar has not only been viewed as a necessity of language instruction, but as a sufficient factor for language learning as well. It is therefore considered part of our “language tradition” (Wilkins, 1984:73). It was originally the study of Latin and Greek as foreign languages that the “Classical Method” was created. This method focused exclusively on the rules of grammar, vocabulary, memorization and other forms of translation used primarily for the mastery of writing skills. At the time, there was little or no emphasis given to the development of oral/aural skills. The primary objective of foreign languages to be learned was for the purpose of scholarly status or to obtain a high level of reading skill and/or proficiency in that particular language.

1.4 The Cycle of Language Teaching Methodologies

There have been many methodologies throughout the ages, and many even seem to repeat themselves. Albert Marckwadt (1972:5) called this cyclical pattern of language teaching methodologies “the changing winds and shifting sands.” After World War II, when the “Army Method” lost its primary necessity, in came the “Audio-lingual Method” between the 1940’s and 1950’s. Even before this era, both of these were preceded by the “Direct Method.” With an attempt to break away from the Grammar-Translation Method, a methodological “merry-go-round” occurred. In an effort to bring back grammar through the focus on cognitive awareness, ALM critics watched as the GTM resurfaced once again. The use of the GTM in the 19th century was brought about by the study of Latin-grammar (see section 1.3) to the development of general, and finally universal-grammar (UG). However, the twentieth century saw a decline in literature-based language learning. So, behaviorist-based theories like the Natural Method and the Direct Method, though quite differing in learning strategy, shared the same disregard for grammatical instruction. Rutherford notes:

“In a sense, the differential regard for a grammatical C-R, as embodied in early 20th century grammar translation vis-a-vis direct Methodism, has continued to this day, though the names of the methodologies in question keep changing. As for consciousness-raising itself, however, all its proponents throughout history seem always to have assumed that the matter to be raised to consciousness comprised the *combinatorial units* of whatever model of language analysis happened to prevail at the time (1988:17).”

If this is true, then C-R has indeed traveled through Marckwadt’s “changing winds and shifting sands” by adapting through a composition of Rutherford’s “combinatorial units.” Because the C-R approach to grammar instruction has been used as a tool of language learning rather than the object, it has survived this cycle throughout the ages. From this, I will argue that C-R and a GTM may be **related** by their common preoccupation with *what* it is that learners should be called attention to. However, this relationship does not imply that GMT is necessarily **based** on C-R.

2.0 The Grammar-Translation Method vs. Grammatical Consciousness-Raising

2.1 GTM - The Survivor

As mentioned before, during the 19th century, The GTM was originally known as the Classical Method. It has withstood the tests of time, and prevailed as the dominant method of language teaching to this day. But, how has this controversial method survived such scrutiny over the ages? How can it remain the preferred method in educational institutions? I will answer these questions by first comparing and contrasting GTM and C-R to each other. Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979:3) list the following features involved in a Grammar-Translation Method:

- a) Taught in the mother tongue with little focus on actual use of the target language
- b) Vocabulary is taught in lists or in isolated form
- c) Explanations of grammar are logical and very elaborate
- d) Word-connection is provided by grammar with focus on form and word inflection
- e) Difficult reading of classical texts begins at an early stage
- f) There is little focus on text context. Emphasis is on grammatical analysis only
- g) Translations are disconnected as drills and separated from the mother tongue
- h) Pronunciation is of little value or focus throughout instruction

Richards and Rodgers (1986:5) believe, “It has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.” I agree with their beliefs because I myself am a product of this archaic-style of language methodology. In response to their quote, “GTM is remembered by thousands of school learners, for whom language learning meant the memorization of endless lists of unusable grammar, etc.” I think back to my 4 years in high school struggling to learn Spanish as a foreign language. With virtually no focus on any communicative ability, I vowed never to teach my students the way I had been instructed by the “Old grammar-translation method.” To this day, as an instructor of EFL here in Japan, I have kept that promise to teach my students without relying on a GTM “crutch” to lean on for support.

2.2 C-R Approach to Grammar Instruction

In contrast to GTM, Ellis (1992) believes that C-R focuses more on the awareness of grammatical features rather than mastery of production. These are the predominant features included in a C-R approach to grammatical instruction:

- a) Specific grammar rules and features are isolated
- b) Learners are given data to find the main feature and explicit features
- c) Learners must bring intellectual effort to find the main features
- d) Lack of understanding prompts clarifying in the form of data and explanation
- e) Learners might be expected to formulate rules that describes that target feature

As can be seen from these two lists, the two approaches have very little in common. For these reasons, it may be concluded that GTM is **not based** on C-R. But, for the sake of argument, I refer to my previous question, “To what extent is a grammar-translation approach **related** to C-R?” In response to this, I again argue while they may have features

which complement one another, i.e. their common goal to achieve second language acquisition; it is clear from these two lists that they share very little in approach, theory, or presentation.

2.3 Pienemann's Teachability Hypothesis

In addressing the original question presented, the connection can be made to what extent a GTM is might be based on C-R, is illustrated in Pienemann's (1985) *Teachability Hypothesis*. In this study, it is argued that a grammar feature or structure cannot be internalized until the learner reaches a stage appropriate to his/her development level. I agree with this theory, and understand that a C-R approach can be used as the catalyst. This method takes the explicit knowledge of the learner and then transfers it over to implicit knowledge domain. These are Pienemann's steps for implicit knowledge acquisition:

- 1) Notice of the linguistic features presence
- 2) Comparing features to the learner's grammar
- 3) Integrating that new feature into the learners existing grammar

In response, Ellis (1992) believes because #1 are #2 are achieved through the help of C-R, and the third contingent upon steps one and two, this particular style is hardly transmissive of effective language acquisition. He argues that while C-R might promote problem solving and discovery learning, it may not be suitable for all learners. Even though C-R may provide meaning-focus for language use, it is not a replacement for communication activities. However, it can be utilized as a valuable supplement for learner acquisition.

2.4 Explicit and Implicit Learning Process

The next analysis includes research done by Michael Sharwood-Smith. In his work in 1981, he contrasts the difference between explicit and implicit learning. He believes that **explicit** knowledge involves a conscious and analytical awareness of formal properties in language. But, it is **implicit** knowledge that shows intuitive feeling for what may be correct and or acceptable. He argues that even though implicit knowledge is the learning objective, explicit knowledge does have its place in language acquisition. He goes one step further in saying that applied conscious rules, are often relied upon during language teaching dealing with different degrees of explicitness. As mentioned before, C-R is a means to an end - a facilitator to acquisition. The choice is on what, when, how often, and how detailed the instruction will demonstrate the effect it will have on the learner's behavior. All of these remain important factors in the SLA process. I will expand on Smith's research by using a diagram to illustrate his theory in detail.

2.5 Smith's C-R "4-Squares" of Language Learning

Figure 1

A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Less explicit. * Use of symbolic devices * Reduces teachers' assistance 	B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Most elaborate and explicit in guidance * Encourages student to making better generalizations
C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Brief & indirect clues given * Self-discovery through hints * Least explicit of the four squares 	D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Prescriptive teaching of grammar * Complex base in metalanguage * Common in school structure

In Sharwood-Smith's "4-Square" Theory (Fig. 1), each cell contains the components of various parameters in each type of instruction. The level of explicitness and deductive thinking runs horizontally from Box C to D. The level of elaboration and inductive thinking runs vertically from Box C to A. Both are based on a 0 point to 10 scale of usage, with 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. In this theory, Smith argues that the articulation and learning of rules is not an element of necessity in C-R also found by Lawler and Selinker (1971) and Bialystok (1981). They believe that C-R occurs without verbal confirmation of rules awareness, simply because not all learners have the ability to do so. This brings to light another deficit in the use of GMT, first mentioned in 1.4. There is an overemphasis placed on metalinguistic-ability, with rules of limited validity present in Cell D of Smith's square. This, along with the assumption of effective "rote-learning" out of context, posts debate to which structural regularities should be brought to attention by C-R.

2.5.1 Explicit vs. Implicit Knowledge

To elaborate on Sharwood-Smith's work, I refer to Krashen's Monitor Theory, or "MT" (1976) in which he believes learning and acquisition are two entities with no interface. I argue if this is true, then C-R has no relationship to this theory whatsoever. McLaughlin (1978) took a critical look at the Monitor Theory and challenges that the process has two types, one being controlled and the other being automatic. At first, the process is a rather "stop-and-go" pace, but gradually becomes "automized" through the use of C-R. In response to this, Krashen argues that language comes before acquisition because his monitor is the knowledge mediator. He believes his findings are based on empirical evidence rather than, what he refers to as, "pure speculation." Sharwood-Smith offers a compromise of the two, with his model. He states that either explicit OR implicit utterances can be processed into viable linguistic output. To finalize his view on empirical evidence, he goes on to say that the EFL/ESL acquisition devise is seen as impermeable. However, via practice, explicit knowledge may indeed aid the acquisition process. For this reason, C-R should not and cannot be dealt with in a simplistic way. From this research, it seems clear that teacher-based C-R and student-based conscious learning can be critically investigated in a higher, more complex-model guide. I agree with this and use Rutherford's (1987) belief

that helping the learner build an “explicit-reference” model of the target language, can lead to the direct mechanical performance of that language. He believes the success of his theory, is based upon the elimination of placing immediate expectations on the learner to perform.

3.0 C-R Methodologies Introduction

Yip’s work in second language acquisition, and learning the usage of ergative verbs, has been suggested as a “viable” approach. She argues that in the battle between empirical results and learnability considerations, grammar instruction has a place and C-R can be utilized as one attractive approach. Again, I will critically analyze this research to find if there is a relationship between GTM and C-R. Yip refers to Krashen’s (1985) Input Monitor that “comprehensible input” alone is enough for effective SLA. However, from Sharwood-Smith’s (1981) “Elaboration and Explicitness” grammar approach and Rutherford’s (1987) C-R “Compromise-Method, one can see how hotly contested this debate is. The primary argument in this multitude of theories is this (*a vs. b*):

- a) Comprehensible input is sufficient enough for SLA
- b) Explicit instruction or indirect C-R is necessary in SLA

3.1 Empirical vs. Theoretical Methods

A strict “no-grammar” approach may seem to have many advantages. However, I argue against the faults of this reasoning. Ellis (1984) believes that focus on form as well as L2 data exposure, must be evaluated in this particular methodology. To support this theory, Harley and Swain (1984) found that this “input-only” method was not enough to make speakers in their French-Immersion program complete. They went on to show when the issue of accuracy was at hand (section 1.1.0), C-R was the method found most effective in bridging the gap to enhance proficiency. However, other factors such as learner’s interest in accuracy, form and even “attention-span”, played a great deal in using C-R for their SLA.

3.2 Learnability

The motivational aspects of learning a new language involves moving along progressively from one state to another. To achieve this, input alone seems to be insufficient in triggering this mechanism. White (1988:3) supports this and believes a lack of evidence may lead to the inappropriate use of form. She goes on to suggest that what is needed, if and when this occurs, is negative evidence. This can be accomplished by drawing the learners’ attention to grammatical overgeneralizations, i.e. arriving at grammars which are *overinclusive*. Again, C-R can be used to achieve this in a more positive way (see Figure 2) to promote less negative side-effects, made responsible by the famous “red-pen method” of error correction!

Fig. 2:

X Superset: Incorrect forms from Learner’s Grammar
Y Subset: Correct forms for Target Language

3.3 Research in C-R on Ergative Verbs

Because *ergative* verbs resemble passive verbs in many ways, they can create problems in SLA. I argue that C-R can be used effectively to give learners the “ammunition” needed to make these distinctions on their own. Only until recently, discussions on ergative verbs in pedagogical grammar were brought about by Perlmutter (1978) and Collins COBUILD grammar (1990). The distinction was finally made between simple intransitive verbs - where volitional control is applied, and unaccusative verbs - which are not. For example:

- (A) The earthquake shook the building. (transitive)
- (B) The building shook. (intransitive-ergative)

In sentence (A), the earthquake is the agent, and the building is the patient. In sentence (B), the patient “building” now becomes the agent or subject. In the production of passivized-ergative construction, I found the patterns used by my Japanese high school students, similar to studies done by Zobl (1989), i.e. “most people are fallen in love.” I believe that C-R can help students break this pattern by alerting the learner to the differences between the two.

3.4 Yip’s Study of C-R on Ergative Verbs

To direct learners’ attention to poor formation of passive-form ergative verbs, Yip (1989:133) used a method of C-R on her ESL students at the University of Southern California. First, a pre-test in questionnaire form was given to her students. Next, immediately after the test, a two-week C-R session was held. These were the goals of the activity:

- a) Elevating the learners’ level of awareness by reducing the scope of verbs
- b) Alerting the learners’ to the meanings of each word
- c) Directing less attention to the grammatical features

Finally, after the C-R session was completed, the same test was given as a post-test. She believes the results of the test suggested that the C-R sessions were responsible for the students’ improvement.

3.5 Is C-R effective? A response to Yip’s research

As Yip demonstrates in her study, all of her students improved on their post-test scores. This was recorded by the drop in percentage of errors made. She also adds that some other factors may have made an impact in her students’ test results. For example, some students were more willing so participate in the C-R discussion, while others seemed to show less interest in the project. While Yip’s research in the study of C-R seems reliable from her findings, one cannot resist criticizing the validity of her research due to the small number of students used for this study. Another weakness in the study, was using the same questionnaire for a post-test. Although the use of C-R for this study seemed to be “successful”, it is difficult not to criticize the fact that the students may have mastered the

format of the test given the second time. This point is recognized by Yip as she refers to this improvement as a possible “Eureka Effect” of temporary mastery. Finally, their knowledge had not been proven to be permanent, due to the lack of follow-up over an extended period of time. From this study, Yip concludes that C-R is difficult to isolate for research purposes and that the other factors mentioned, should be acknowledged in assessing this as an effective teaching strategy.

4.0 C-R Discussion and Debate

I believe the question, “To what extent is a grammar-translation approach or method **based** on consciousness-raising”, is limited. I argue that focus should instead be placed on, “What **relationship** does GTM have to C-R?” As stated by Rutherford (1987:104), “C-R is a means to an end, not the end itself.” If this is true, then one could debate that C-R exists in a “symbiotic” relationship with other theories or methodologies used for SLA, regardless of their cyclical rotation. Because the primary goal of C-R is to raise learner-awareness through a variety of techniques, all approaches or methodologies should be recognized as part of a process and not as the goal. He goes on by saying that the “common bond” connecting many of the grammar-based approaches were:

- a) On **which** grammatical features learners should be focusing?
- b) On **what** feature should teachers draw learners’ attention?

The relationship between GTM and C-R is this: for a C-R activity to occur naturally and spontaneously during a lesson, a GTM cannot be utilized due to its lack of compatibility with C-R (see 2.0). From this, I believe that a GTM **cannot** be based on C-R.

4.1 Grammar Progression

Another point of discussion in the C-R /GTM relationship is the idea that grammar should not be viewed as a linear progression. I support this argument because in the SLA schemata, many learning functions are not in control by the teacher, but rather the learner. So, even after “Chapter 1 is taught”, it may be several years before the concept is learned or understood completely by the receiver of that lesson. My argument is supported by research done by Rosamond Mitchell in 1988. Through these studies, a need for awareness of “L1/L2 contrasts in L2 teaching are recognized in the belief that SLA is more cyclical than linear in nature.

4.2 The role of C-R in Language Acquisition

The final discussion point is the debate of conscious learning vs. unconscious acquisition. Levelt et al. (1978:5) believes that because these two modes of learning are completely different, the problem remains in the conversion of one to the other. But, the “Learning Factor”, of how, when, and in what order learning occurs, cannot be controlled by the instructor. In the “Linguistic Factor”, languages are not constructed in linear fashion. So, the reflection of conscious-learning and acquired skills needs a bond to bring them together.

This bond of “meta-cognition” and awareness facilitates the transfer of implicit to explicit knowledge. The analysis of the two can be summarized as this:

- a) In a GTM, **knowers** use grammar for explication of language acquisition.
- b) In C-R, **learners** utilize teaching, teachers, and the materials for explanation.

As mentioned by Allwright (1984a), language instruction is not just teaching a body of knowledge. The primary role of C-R “to teach students how to learn, in order to become better managers of their own learning.” I agree with this and believe it to be the goal of education, not just second language acquisition.

5.0 Conclusion

I will conclude this report by reiterating what consciousness-raising means to me and to what extent a GTM is based on C-R. I believe C-R is the “filler, the glue, the bridge, or the bond”, which can help in facilitating the process of second language acquisition. Even though a GTM and C-R may be related in their focus on form, or eventual goals in SLA, I disagree that the former is based on the latter. Again, I refer to Rutherford (1987:104). He believes that, generally speaking, “grammar is in the service of language *use* and grammar through C-R, in the service of *learning*.” It is this symbiotic relationship that never be forgotten. Sharwood-Smith (1988: 114) also believes that “C-R is but a method of potential facility, with which has no automated control of competence in learner structure.” C-R is one part of the whole in a language equation. Because C-R is very complex and/or even unresolved by empirical standards, it needs to be approached in a systematic way to include C-R by the teacher, and conscious-learning by the learner. Based on these arguments, one thing seems to be clear. Because grammatical consciousness-raising has survived throughout the ages of language development, it is likely be with us for many generations and/or new methodologies to come.

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