

The Consciousness of Learning Grammar Communicatively Through Role Play in EFL Classroom

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Abstract— Consciousness is a very important aspect in the teaching and learning of Grammar in EFL Classroom. It makes students become aware not only on the form or the language pattern, but also on the meaning and the way to use it. For this case, this research aims to describe the use of role play as a communicative task for encouraging students' consciousness in learning grammar. The research was done in grammar class B of 2016-2017 that consisted 35 students as the participants of this research. The researcher did observation and interview to collect the relevant data to give the better supports in finding out what had been stated in the research's purpose. The finding of this research showed that role play enabled the students to study grammar communicatively. In this case, the students became conscious to create many sentences based on the given topic and context and then use those sentences in their role-play. In other word, the students gained both grammar competence and communicative competence. Also, the researcher found that the students showed positive attitudes during the teaching and learning grammar process by using role play.

Keywords— Consciousness; Communicative grammar; Role play.

I. INTRODUCTION

Grammar is talking not only about the system how to construct words and phrases into sentences with a specific pattern but also about the meaning of them. Grammar has the important role to enable the students in EFL classroom to produce the acceptable utterance in the language (Widodo, 2006). Related to this theory, If students who study in EFL classroom have good grammar knowledge, they will be easy to comprehend paragraph, passage in written and spoken text. By uttering the grammatically meaningful sentences, the students may have communicative ability to use the language for the daily needs in communication. It is stated by Crystal (2004) that grammar is the structural foundation to help the students to express what is being thought with the correct meaning and

the effective ways in using the language. It means that grammar gives the benefit to everyone who learns it to have capability either producing the structured sentences or using those sentences into such acceptable communication. Considering the importance of grammar for the language acquisition, the students who study in EFL classroom must have consciousness to learn grammar.

However, not all of EFL students are motivated to learn grammar consciously because they view grammar as difficult, scary and boring subject. It is proved by Poyato (2005) in his research that advanced language students described their grammar learning experiences as boring and disempowering. Then, Poyato and Natolo in their research (2010) added that the international survey done with 17 million teenagers from 32 countries

indicated that two-thirds of their teenagers were bored in class when they learn grammar. Furthermore, Haudeck (in Mohammed and Nagaratnam, 2011) has reported that many learners have difficulty in understanding grammar rules, although these have been taught intensively. Based on these studies, it can be concluded that grammar does not get special interest and respect in teaching and learning language among the students themselves.

Related to the previous studies, the difficulty of learning grammar is also experienced by the researcher's students especially in Grammar I subject. In this case, they could not make sentences into the correct tenses pattern that are learnt including simple present tense, past tense and future tense. Even though, they had got many drills, they often made the same mistakes in every exercise mainly how to use the appropriate **verb, auxiliaries** and **to be** in the form of negative, positive and question or Wh questions sentences. When the students were asked to make their own sentence examples, they were not able to make the sentences with the appropriate rules and context. Consequently, the students got bored and they liked talking rather than doing and discussing some given exercises. It seems that they could not build their concentration in learning. In the quiz and the test time, a large number of students always felt upset and not ready to have the test. As the result, they got lower marks in every test or exam.

Besides the students' problem, the researcher and the other grammar lecturers in STKIP PGRI sometimes frustrated to know what we have given to the students does not reflect the positive effect. In the certain condition, the lecturers also got the boring time and lost the way in teaching grammar. Such this situation is also found in a research done by Andrews and Fitch (cited in Payatos, Natolo, 2010) proved that teachers and students are alike to view grammar as the boring lesson in the language instruction. This finding showed that the boring time in the process of learning and teaching grammar is not only experienced by the students but also the teachers. Teaching grammar is not an easy work but a complete and complex thing to be done. Whatever the students and other educators assume about grammar, the researcher realized that grammar has special place in the language teaching

to help the students acquire English as the foreign language. By learning grammar, the students know how to make the sentence patterns correctly, to put their ideas and to form the meaning so that they can success in the communication. The researcher becomes aware that it is the big responsibility and task to make the students release their constraint in learning grammar by giving the positive ways and enjoyable activities in the language teaching.

The main focus of the researcher on this study is how to build the students' consciousness in learning grammar because consciousness gets the important and crucial part in the language teaching in EFL classroom. According to Richards, Plat, and Plat (1992) consciousness is viewed as a way of raising learner's awareness of grammatical features of the language through drills, grammar explanation, and other form-focused activities. Then, Krashen (2002) explained that the conscious learning process places a great emphasis on error correction and the presentation of explicit rules. In this process of study, the educators or teachers must give the students clear explanation with the explicit rule of grammar pattern. The students should be given the opportunity to present their sentences either through dialogue activity or presentation to enhance their confidence to use the language. It is very possible for the lecturer or teacher to give direct error corrections after the students's practice to make them become aware on their mistakes and do revision. According to Ellis (2004), in a practical definition, explicit knowledge deals with language and the uses to which language can be put. Then, to raise the consciousness is that students are made aware of the target grammatical item through discovery-oriented tasks (Larsen-Freeman, 2001).

To build the students's consciousness in learning grammar, the teachers have to give numerous exercises and activities into the communicative task. It aims to allow the students not only have good ability in sentences pattern but also use the language communicatively and correctly. According to Widodo (2006) helping students apply grammatical rules into communicative task is very challenging so that the teacher can integrate grammar or structure into other language skill or activity. Then, Larsen-Freeman (cited in Lu, 2009, p. 24) stated that

teaching grammar communicatively is as a means to help students convey their intended meaning appropriately and function its form in situational context and the roles of the interlocutors. Teaching grammar within communicative task gives integrated sequence in what case the students should pay attention to the form or grammatical structure, the meaning and the function of them in the language use (Doughty and Williams, 1999). These theories emphasize that teaching grammar can be integrated into another language skill, activity or task. By using this way, the students are taught not only about the language form but also the way how to use it into communication. Link to this case, building students' consciousness in studying grammar through communicative task is very important to do in the language teaching. Consciousness can promote the students's ability to produce the meaningful sentences and allow them to be aware to use the sentences communicatively.

One of the communicative tasks that can build the students' consciousness in using the language pattern is a role play activity. Role play makes the students to have an interaction task that can stimulate their communicative mood. Poyatos and Natolo (2010) remarked that bringing students to the centre of the grammar process is to have students custom with role play game to overcome grammar learning problem. Role-playing exercises come in many forms in the language classroom so that the learners should not be reluctant to experiment with their style and structure" (McDaniel, 2000). Perhaps, role play can break the students' constraint and problem in learning grammar because it can bring positive atmosphere in which the students feel enjoyable and show the interesting manner. Larsen-Freeman (2000) points out, role-play gives students the chance of interacting and practicing communication acts in different contexts and because of this it is of primary importance in language teaching. Role play enables the students to practice their grammatical structure in pair even in group like in the real situation of specific context. In role playing, the students do not work alone but in partnership through interaction process. Ladousse (2004) indicated that through role play; the students can develop their communicative ability and increase interaction and motivation in the classroom. In this

case, role play is very helpful to encourage the students for studying grammar in the relax and flexible situation. Studying grammar through practicing in pair or group can build their self confidence and their consciousness to explore and to produce many sentences.

Due to the benefit of role play to build students' consciousness in learning grammar, the researcher believes that this activity can cope the students 'problem and constraint. For this reason, the researcher did the research in her classroom in which a large number of students got difficulties in learning grammar especially in learning tenses including simple present tense, simple past tense and future tense as the problematic area. In this situation, the researcher used role play in pair rather than in group to make the student feel more comfortable and concentration in studying grammar. The goal of this research was to describe whether role play can build students' consciousness to produce many sentences based on the given role and to develop their mental set to practice the language explicitly without worry to make any mistakes.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Design*

The researcher used descriptive design with qualitative data because the researcher aimed to describe the factual data accurately that gotten from the real and existential process of learning grammar. Here, the researcher described about the procedure of how to use role play in exploring students' consciousness to use grammar communicatively. Then, the researcher described whether the students had positive response, attitude and awareness in studying grammar through role play in a whole process of class interaction.

B. *Participants*

The participants were the students who studied grammar 1 at the first semester of 2016-2017 in STKIP PGRI Sumatera Barat of English Department. The researcher limited this study in one class that is class B consisting of 35 numbers of students. The reason why the researcher purposed this class is that the average of students got the lowest marks while having grammar tests. The marks are in the range of C and D in the area of

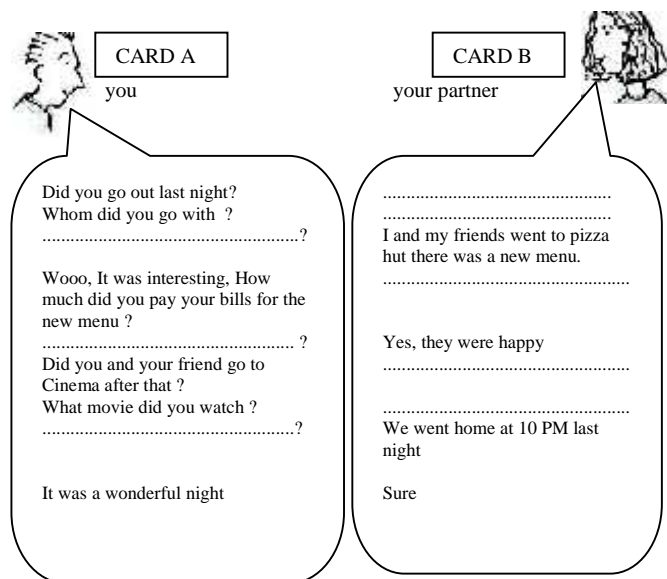
three tenses ; simple present tense, simple past, and simple future tense.

C. Instruments

In this research, the researcher became the key instrument because the researcher got involve totally to get the data, to see the process and to describe the data without being presented by somebody else. The instruments used by the researcher in the data collection are observation and interview. In the observation phase, the researcher observed and took notes on students' attitude as long as they studied grammar through role play activity. And then, in the interview phase, the researcher asked about their feeling and response whether they can build their awareness or consciousness about the form and the function of language especially in grammar area.

D. Procedures

- a. Before presenting their own role play performance, the students were explored and drilled to make the sentences in the variation of forms including positive, negative, yes/no question and Wh question in simple present tense, past tense, and simple future tense.
- b. The students were divided into work pairs to practice the example of dialogue presented in the cue card to help them build the sequences communicative acts. The topic and situation of play were given in this dialogue as the following example card;



- c. The students were given the opportunity to complete the blank sentences to give the response or question on their own card, and then they performed in front of the class.
- d. The other students listened carefully and together with the lecturer did the correction if the pair who performs did some mistakes about the use of be verb, auxiliary verb, main verb, as well as language meaning.
- e. After practicing and correcting, the students were given the task to make their own dialogue or play with their partner based on their own situation and context of conversation.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Students Show Their Consciousness to Use Grammar Communicatively in Role Play Activity

Role play gave new classroom environment to the students in studying both the generic structure and the usage of the language in a communicative way. Role play created students centered learning activities because it encourages the students to work maximally to gain their language mastery in any situations. Based on the observation done by the researcher in her grammar class, all the students worked consciously to prepare their sentences related to the given role. In this interaction task, the students discussed with their partner about the appropriate words and structures or sentences to be used in the role play accordance with the situation or the context of the play. The researcher saw that the students worked more flexible and develop the sense of their awareness about grammar and the way how to use that. If they hesitated to use auxiliaries do/does, did or will, they asked the researcher or the other group or pair. It proved that the students could recognize or identify their mistakes and willingly correct them before their performance.

The researcher's finding about the importance of role play toward the students' consciousness in learning grammar could support what Rojas (1992) posited that grammar should be taught integrated into speaking skill or dialogue activity. This activity allows the students not only get the grammatical pattern but also the way how to use those patterns in a vary situation spontaneously. Having role play

activity, the students got the opportunities to learn for constructing the varieties of sentences in present tense, past tense and future tense and then practice them into a simple dialogue in their play. To teach grammar in such this way needs drilling in order to make the students achieve both their grammatical and communicative competence. In drilling the students' competence, the researcher used cue card or role card to control the role and the language that should be uttered. According to Clare (2006) giving role card is very helpful to instruct the learners to make the improvisation in preparing their dialogue. What Clare stated could support the researcher's finding that the students' consciousness was increased when the researcher used role card. In this case, they got a lot of chance and time to fix their sentences based on the given topic and situation before they used those sentences into dialogue or pair communication. Furthermore, the researcher's finding could also proved the theory form Krashen (2002) who agreed that role play is a kind of deductive and explicit rules to build the consciousness of language learning process that emphasizes on error correction and representation. Through this research, the researcher got a successful way to make the students become aware about their mistake after having many corrections on their dialogue presentation. As the result, the students reconstructed their mistakes that tied to more appropriate pattern of grammar and they can identify whether their sentences correct or incorrect.

Besides the data from observation, the result of interview also had the importance role in the finding of this research. The interview was done to all participants to know about their point of view on the teaching and learning grammar through role play toward their consciousness in the language use. All of the participants confessed that studying grammar through role play make them aware about the language pattern and know how to use it. The example of interview done to some participants as the representative of all participants was stated at the following:

“ Grammar is not difficult anymore for me since I studied in pair, and study grammar with role play task is very beneficial for the development of my grammar ability because I must pay attention on both the

pattern and the meaning before I used the sentences in the play” (student No. 6)

“Role card can guide me to develop the correct sentences because it gives the clues about what should I utter based on the topic and the given context.it makes me understand whether I will produce the sentences into simple present, simple past or future tense” (student No. 11)

“The correction given after my dialog presentation makes me realize about my weakness on Grammar and I do effort myself to evaluate my mistake and to activate in producing the correct sentences in order to use them in the real conversation instead of role play” (student No. 12)

The result of interview showed that the students appreciated studying grammar by using role play as the communicative task. They liked having partnership and fun because they could discuss in the partner work in the enjoyable situation. They pointed out that role play eased them to use the grammar communicatively because role play provides the topic and situation of the conversation. Perhaps, this kind of task can evoke them to use grammar as the daily habit of having conversation in the real situation because role play guided them to study grammar consciously and to use it contextually. The error correction given on their work could build their consciousness to relearn the correct pattern and rules of the tenses as the problematic area including Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense and Simple Future Tense. In this situation, they encourage and empower themselves to practice grammar communicatively on the form, meaning and function in the appropriate language use.

B. The Students Show the Positive Attitude in Learning Grammar Through Role Play

During the observation time, the researcher saw that the students had high motivation while doing role play. Consciously, they prepared and made the sentences that tied with their role in the play that had been provided in the role card. They tried to

work well with their own pair and to be active along the exercises. They did not show their reluctant to complete their duty in making dialogue with the rule or pattern of three tenses that have been learnt. If they were getting doubt about the use of auxiliaries **do/does**, **did**, or **be going to** or the use of verbs, they came directly to the researcher or to their friends who had better comprehension about the tenses. Their friends helped them with the pleasure without having negative competition among them. It seemed that they enjoyed practicing grammar through role play. When a pair performed excellent dialogue with good and correct grammar use, it became the inspiration for the other pairs. Otherwise, when a pair did many mistakes, the other pairs gave them valuable corrections. In the other word, the students showed positive feeling during the task and they supported and motivated one to another. This finding could emphasize what Ments cited (in Ziafar, M., Toughiry, N., & Sadat, H. Z, 2014)) role-playing activities give positive and safe in dealing with students' attitudes and feelings. Burden (2004) also stated in his research's finding that a favorable attitude would motivate learners to reach their learning goals. From these related findings, it could be concluded role play can build the students' positive attitude in learning grammar. Positive attitude can help them to achieve grammar and communicative competence in the language acquisition. Then, the students' positive attitude could be seen from the result of interview to all participants and the large number of them gave positive responses and arguments about the activities. Some interview results could be seen as the following:

“Role Play can make me desire in learning English because I am not afraid of making any mistake because there is error correction from the lecturer and the other group and it is very important to make conscious about my weaknesses and try to be better” (student No .30)

“It is the new atmosphere for me to enjoy studying grammar in the communicative way, I become more active and I am not reluctant if the lecturer ask me to make many sentences with the appropriate pattern to build the dialogue because I always want to perform in front of my friends” (student No. 27)

Based on the result of this interview, almost all students showed that they liked studying Grammar in a communicative way through role play. Motivation, desire and relax atmosphere given in role-play activities affect on their ability in the use of correct grammar. In this case, they tried not only to make the correct pattern and meaning of the sentences but also to use them into conversation.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

For many years, grammar is taught inductively within the grammar translation method that focused on forms rather than on the meaning and function so that the students in EFL classroom got some difficulties to apply it in the real conversation. For this problem, communicative task like role play could give the best solution to make the students get more grammar drilling and practice. Role play has many advantages in the language teaching in EFL classroom. Role play makes the students study in relax and enjoyable atmosphere because it provides classroom interaction that build the students' motivation and self confidence. Before the role play performance, the students were allowed to make many sentences based on the context of the play. In this way, they learn how to make the language pattern consciously that concern both on the form or rules of sentence and on the meaning and the function of them. Role play helps the students to increase their consciousness for learning grammar and get better achievement so that the students can master it and use it in many situations. Besides, role play as the communicative task can build students 'positive attitude in learning grammar because they work in team not individually. By working in class interaction, the students get valuable experiences that develop their social awareness so that they can be successful in learning grammar and reduce their anxiety and constraint toward it. After the significant result on the students's grammar ability in this research, the researcher do hopes that it can inspire a large number of educators to apply role play in building students' grammar and communicative competences. The educators including teacher and lecturer have the same function to improve the students' quality by being creative and innovative to find the new method or strategy that can be applied in EFL classroom.

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