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Inductive Consciousness-Raising Tasks:

Learning the Meaning and Use of the Present Perfect

By

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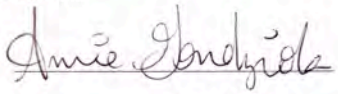

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, a Project Report entitled "Inductive Consciousness-Raising Tasks: Learning the Meaning and Use of the Present Perfect" submitted by Amie Gondziola in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

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Abstract

How to teach grammar within the communicative language classroom has been an issue of concern for many educators ever since it has become apparent that simply providing comprehensible input does not ensure high levels of grammatical accuracy (Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990; Lightbown & Spada, 1994). Second language acquisition (SLA) research provides evidence of the benefits of different types of form-focused instruction (FFI) combined with communicative activities (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, 1997, 2011). One of the newer techniques for teaching grammar is the consciousness-raising (CR) task (Fotos & Ellis, 1991). Despite their potential, CR tasks are not generally found to be among grammar textbook activities. This quasi-experimental study compared learning gains of those who were exposed to an inductive CR task (n = 10) and those who received a traditional teacher-fronted (TF) lesson (n = 9) in an adult English as a second language (ESL) context. Participants' ages ranged from 23-69; two of them were men, the other seventeen were women. They came from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds but all had a Canadian Language Benchmark score of 6. Participants were taught the resultative meaning and use of the present perfect tense-aspect form in both treatments. Pre- to post-test gains showed that both groups increased in their grammatical accuracy of the present perfect. The primary implication of this study is that CR tasks should be added to ESL grammar textbooks and to ESL instructors' repertoires of teaching strategies in order to provide students with a wider range of effective ways to learn grammar.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has gathered great momentum in the last three decades, becoming the preferred method of teaching in many language classrooms today (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005). Coinciding with the rise of CLT had been an uncertainty of the status of grammar in second language curricula, which resulted in an initial temporary abandonment of grammar instruction (Nunan, 2004, p. 9). For example, ESL textbooks in Quebec in the 1980's were theme-based and included grammar explanations or activities only as appendices or supplementary materials (L. Ranta, personal communication, April, 8, 2013). Empirical studies have since shown that grammar is beneficial and possibly necessary for L2 learning (Ellis, 2008). According to Celce- Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999), both grammatical and communicative competence should be high on the language teacher's list of priorities, as "using language grammaticality and being able to communicate are not the same, but they are both important goals" (p. 2). But how grammar should best be taught in a CLT classroom is currently under investigation and is the focus of this study. The following sections present a survey of the literature relevant to this issue, beginning with a brief historical sketch of the place of grammar instruction in CLT, the definition of grammar instruction, the definitions of both inductive and deductive consciousness-raising (CR) tasks, the benefits of co-construction in CR tasks, and studies on CR task effectiveness.

Brief history of grammar instruction

Over the past 2,500 years, with the exception of the past 150 years of documented language teaching, explicit grammar instruction is a component that had long been "considered not only necessary but also sufficient" (Rutherford &

Sharwood-Smith, 1988, p. 9). Krashen (1985) argued that explicit teaching of grammar rules and practice drills could not lead to the kind of implicit knowledge that underlies communicative L2 use. Instead, L2 teaching should consist of comprehensible input and a positive affective learning environment. Krashen's rejection of formal grammar instruction and practice influenced many language educators to exclude explicit grammar instruction in the 1980s and 1990s. However, a backlash against this extreme position has led many language teachers to be receptive to the ideas of second language acquisition (SLA) researchers who recommend incorporating grammar instruction. This recommendation is based on studies conducted in communicative contexts such as French immersion in Canada (e.g., Swain & Lapkin, 2002), intensive ESL in Quebec (e.g., Lightbown & Spada 1994, 2006), and immigrant students in North American schools (e.g., Hinkel, 2003). Research in all of these contexts has highlighted the limited learning outcomes from comprehensible input alone and the need for what researchers variously refer to as 'focus on form' or 'form-focused instruction'. In this paper, I will use the terms 'grammar instruction', focus on form, and FFI as synonyms (see Ellis, 1998, for a discussion of the different meanings of these terms).

What is Grammar Instruction?

Ellis (2006) defines grammar instruction as involving "any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it" (p. 84). In other words, grammar instruction consists of grammar explanations and/or language practice. Grammar explanations can be deductive or inductive and teacher-guided or

task-based (Ranta, 2012). According to the dictionary definition (Richards & Schmidt, 2002), deductive teaching involves teaching a rule first and then having students use the rule. In contrast, in an inductive approach, learners discover or induce the rules themselves, which has been found to be a successful approach. For example, Vogel, Herron, Cole, and York's (2011) study compared the effects of a guided inductive approach with those of a deductive approach on grammatical accuracy gains in learners of French over 14 weeks. They found that the inductive grammar treatment led to significantly greater learning gains in the short term.

Whether grammar instruction is inductive or deductive, the goal of a good grammar explanation should be to help learners make a strong connection between the grammatical form and its meaning and use (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). It can be argued, however, that a learner-centered approach as in CR tasks is more likely to strengthen form-meaning connections than traditional teaching, which is usually teacher-fronted and deductive in nature.

Consciousness-raising tasks

The term *consciousness-raising* was first applied to discussions of L2 teaching by Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1985), who defined it as "the deliberate attempt to draw the learner's attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language" (p. 274). The term was then appropriated by Fotos (1993) to apply to a specific type of grammar activity, that is, "a communicative task with a grammar problem to be solved interactively as the task content" (p. 388). CR tasks are different from grammar practice exercises because they do not necessarily require the use of the forms that students are discussing. For example, it

is possible to discuss the rule for adverb placement without using adverbs. Fotos (1994) suggests two pedagogical advantages of having grammar as the task content: 1) when grammar is the content, students take the task more seriously; and 2) even if learners share the same L1, they are still forced to use English in order to complete the task.

Deductive vs. inductive CR tasks

CR tasks can be deductive or inductive (Ellis, 1997). The task used in White and Ranta (2002) is an example of a deductive CR task that targeted the rules for selecting the correct third person singular possessive determiners (*his* or *her)*. The learners were first taught a rule of thumb and then completed modified cloze passages as a group, referring to the rule to which they had just been exposed. Inductive CR tasks, in contrast, are a form of discovery learning in which the learner is guided to discover the grammar rule by noticing a pattern without the teacher explicitly pointing it out. An example of an inductive CR task can be found in Ellis (1998, p. 48). The task involves the following steps: students read a passage about Mr. Bean, underline the prepositions *in, on,* and *at*, organize them in a chart, and then articulate a rule for their use to convey temporal relationships. According to Tamir (1995), discovery learning tasks in general are presumed to lead to better retention because they are more meaningful; enhance students' motivation, interest, and satisfaction; and develop students' problem-solving skills. It is to be noted that these claims have not as yet been supported by research on L2 learning.

In CR tasks, learners discuss grammar, which inevitably means that they negotiate meaning using grammatical meta-language. Meta-language, which is "the

language used to analyze or describe a language" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 329), has been found to not only facilitate the focus of a learners' attention on the target form but also aid learners in deciding which form to use (Fortune, 2005). The argument could be made that it is this type of language use (i.e., "languaging", Swain, 2006) that makes CR tasks beneficial. CR tasks have been found to be effective ways of teaching grammar, as this next section will demonstrate.

Studies of CR Task Effectiveness

A large number of studies have explored numerous aspects of FFI (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, 1997, 2011) yet only a small number have investigated CR tasks. The first study on the impact of CR tasks was by Fotos and Ellis (1991). They investigated to what extent an inductive CR task was successful in developing an explicit understanding of how dative verbs work in English. The learners were Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) university students. A CR, teacher-fronted, and a control group were compared. The results showed that both the TF and CR groups saw significantly higher post-test scores than the control group; however, on the delayed posttest, the TF group outperformed the CR group in terms of gaining explicit L2 knowledge.

Fotos (1993) conducted an experiment at a university in Japan to investigate the amount of learner noticing produced by two types of grammar treatments; a) traditional grammar lessons and b) interactive, deductive CR task (referred to as grammar problem-solving tasks) and she compared the effects of the treatments with each other and a control group. She measured the frequency of noticing the target structure in communicative input in all three groups one and two weeks after

the treatments were given to the traditional grammar lesson and CR task lesson groups. She had the students complete a number of dictations that included examples of the target structure; in the dictations, they underlined any of the features to which they had paid special attention as they were listening to and writing the dictations. Similar to the Ellis and Fotos'(1991) study, Fotos (1993) study found that both treatments were equally effective.

Fotos (1994) compared the results of deductive CR tasks, TF grammar lessons, and communicative tasks in an EFL class in Japan. The target structures were adverb placement, indirect object placement, and relative clause usage as the focused forms. The CR and TF groups received a focus on form in their treatments, whereas the communicative group's tasks matched the grammar tasks in terms of length and format but focused on content other than grammar. Again, Fotos found CR tasks to be "as effective as a teacher-fronted grammar lesson in promoting gains in knowledge of the target structure" (p.323).

In the context of an intensive ESL program in a French language school in Quebec, White and Ranta (2002) compared the effect of deductive CR tasks on learners' knowledge and accuracy in using the possessive determiners *his/her*. The CR task group (referred to as the Rule group) was given a metalinguistic explanation about the possessive determiner agreement rule, and then they participated in an activity in which they articulated and applied these rules; the activities occurred several times over a two-week period. The Comparison group did not receive any special instruction about possessive determiners but followed the same communicative curriculum as the CR task class. The findings showed that the CR class displayed more target-like use of *his/her* in an oral production task.

In summary, these four studies suggest that CR tasks are at least as effective as traditional TF instruction. Further research on a wider range of grammatical structures is needed in order to better familiarize practitioners with inductive and deductive CR instruction. In the present study, an inductive CR task was developed to teach the contrast between the simple past and the present perfect and to compare it with a traditional teacher-fronted lesson dealing with the same grammar form. This particular target form was selected because learners find it relatively difficult to learn how it differs from the simple past in meaning and use (Bardovi-Harlig, 1994; Richards, 1979).

Taking into consideration the findings from previous studies on CR tasks, as well as the challenges of learning the present perfect, the following research questions guided the study:

1. Does a consciousness-raising task lead to superior gains on immediate post-tests compared with a traditional teacher-fronted lesson?

2. Is there a between-group difference in performance?

Method

Participants

The participants of this research were 19 adult learners from one intact full-time ESL class at a post-secondary institution in Edmonton, Alberta. Their ages ranged from 23-69 years. All learners have a Canadian Language Benchmark proficiency level of 6. Seventeen of the participants were female and two were male. The range of length of residence in Canada was 7 months to 22 years, with a mean of five years. The participants spoke one or more of 14 first languages (Albanian, Amaaric,

Arabic, Bangla, Burmese, Cantonese, Creole, French, Korean, Oromic, Portuguese, Somali, Tigrigna, Turkish).

All participants were given an information letter and consent form (see Appendix A) and were asked to complete a background questionnaire (see Appendix B). With the exception of one participant from each group, almost all participants (17/19) either agreed or strongly agreed that they liked working on grammar activities (see the group results in Appendix B). With regard to the participants' perceived confidence in their knowledge of the present perfect, the majority of the CR participants claimed to know the form "fairly well" (7) and the others stated "a little bit" (3). The participants in the TF group were more varied in their perceptions of their own knowledge of the present perfect with three choosng 'very well" and one in each of the other categories ("not at all", "a little bit" , and "fairly well"). When asked how they had learned grammar in the past the ten students in the CR group reported as follows: doing textbook activities (10), reading the Internet/websites (8), listening to the teacher tell me the rules (10), working with a partner on a grammar activity (8) and working by myself on a grammar activity (9). The nine students in the TF group showed somewhat less uniformity: doing textbook activities (6), reading the Internet/websites (6), listening to the teacher tell me the rules (7), working with a partner on a grammar activity (3) and working by myself on a grammar activity (8). All participants claimed to like being told the grammar rule explicitly. More learners from the CR group liked to discover the rule by looking at examples and seeing a pattern (7 in CR group and 5 in TF group). One big difference was in students' responses to the item about working with partners: eight

out of 10 in the CR group agreed that they liked working with a partner whereas only three students in the TF group did so.

Target grammar form

Both the CR task and the TF lessons used in this study targeted the difference between the simple past and the present perfect. Deciding when to use the simple past or the present perfect is often difficult for learners because the forms "are not mutually exclusive choices: there are many situations where either of these tenses would be suitable" (Leech, 2004, p. 35). However, in this study, learners' attention was drawn to the situation where there is a very clear choice, that is, the dead vs. living distinction. More specifically, if people are no longer living, any discussion of their achievements will use the simple past. However, if they are living, and if what they have achieved or succeeded in is still relevant to them, or there is a chance that they will make a similar achievement again, the present perfect is used. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman (1999), "the use of the present perfect has more to do with our present perspective on the event, rather than on the actual time at which it took place (and) this concept is difficult to get across to ESL/EFL students" (p. 125). Bardovi- Harlig (1994) found that the present perfect emerges later in the learners' interlanguage than the simple past does, and she also noted that the simple past serves as an acceptable substitution for some learners. Bardovi-Harlig (2000) discovered that learners are more likely to mark past tense on some verbs than others if the meaning of the verb can be easily determined (e.g., lexical aspect). For example, achievement and accomplishment verbs are more likely to be marked with past tense markers when the action is

completed because it is easier to determine the meaning using these verbs (e.g., I walked for ten minutes).

Form, meaning and use

Every grammatical form or structure can be described in terms of its form, meaning, and use. This framework for describing grammatical forms was developed by Diane Larsen-Freeman and is usually depicted as a pie-chart (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). *Form* refers to the morphological and syntactic characteristics of a particular grammar feature. *Meaning* defines the intended message or the semantic part of a given form (i.e., lexical, grammatical, and abstract meanings). *Use* describes when and why a particular form is used by speakers of English. A summary of the form, meaning and use of the simple past and the present perfect are presented in Table 1. The information in the table comes from Celce- Murcia (1999) and Leech (2004).

Table 1

Form, Meaning, and Use of Simple Past and Present Perfect

	Simple past	**Present perfect**
Form	Base form of regular verb + *ed* *e.g. walk = walked* Irregular verbs: do not end in *-ed* but have internal changes or no change. (e.g., *Be = was/were; teach = taught*) - Phonological variants -Verbs ending: with a voiceless phoneme = /t/ -with a voiced phoneme = /d/ -with a /t/ or /d/= /id/	*Has/have* + Verb+past participle *e.g. I **have eaten** dinner.* *She **has waited** for an hour.*
Meaning	Simple past puts distance between the present and what happened in the past. It refers to an event prior to now. Excludes the present moment. It often demonstrates remoteness from the present by referencing a specific time or date, or an adverb to indicate exactly when the event happened. E.g., *I talked to her yesterday.*	There are two ways in which a "past event might be related to the present by means of the perfect: (a) it may involve a TIME PERIOD lasting up to the present, and (b) it may have RESULTS persisting at the present time" (Leech, 2004, p. 36). Present perfect offers "a special way of looking at events whereby the results or consequences of an event are seen to extend up to the present moment" (Richards, 1979, p. 497).
Use	a) to indicate that the event, actions, states or situations are completed, not still ongoing, e.g., *"I went to school everyday last year*" b) as a softener to express politeness e.g., *"Did you want me to pick you up?'* c) in hypothetical language, e.g., *If I ate that whole cake, I would gain 10 pounds.*	a) state or habit up-to-the-present, e.g., *I've known her for years;* *I've always walked to work* b) indefinite, e.g., *Something awful has happened.* c) Resultative past: a past state or event, from which the results are still operative at the present time; implies that the past event is still important and relevant at moment of speaking e.g., *You've ruined my dress!*

The specific meaning and use that was the focus of this study was the resultative present perfect. The integration of this form into the treatment materials will be described in the "Instructional treatment materials" part of the next section.

Design of the study

This study was a quasi-experiment in which two contrasting teaching interventions were administered to two groups and learning outcomes were assessed through pre- and post-test change. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the two treatment groups: inductive CR task (n = 10) or deductive teacher-fronted lesson (TF) (n = 9).

Pre-and post-tests.

Tests were developed to measure the learners' understanding of the form, meaning, and use of the present perfect. Both pre- and post-tests (see Appendix C) were very similar in structure, but were made up of slightly different questions. Each test consisted of two parts: a fill-in-the-blank exercise and a semi-structured writing activity, both of which required learners to use either the simple past or the present perfect. The fill-in-the-blank exercises were taken from two different grammar textbooks (Fuchs & Bonner, 2006; Thewlis, 2000). The writing activity was specially designed for this study. It included two timelines of the lives of famous Canadians for each test (i.e. Emily Murphy, Jim Carrey, Joni Mitchell, and Tommy Douglas) with a maximum of five lifetime achievements per person. One deceased Canadian (for whom learners were expected to describe the achievements in simple past) and one living Canadian (for whom learners were expected to describe the achievements in present perfect) were included in each test.

Instructional treatment materials

This resultative meaning and use of the present perfect form was taught using a 'famous Canadians' theme that was both relevant and of possible interest to these newcomers. Two Canadian magazines (Hurd, 1992; Lewis, 2010), a website about Canadians (Canadians.ca, 2004), and a textbook with Canadian content (Cameron & Derwing, 2010) were used in creating the input. When reading through these materials, the goal was to find biographical information that specifically included a number of lifetime achievements for ten famous Canadians (five dead and five living). This therefore provided ample opportunity for both present perfect and simple past to be exemplified.

The CR task was developed following the general procedure:

> The first step is to isolate a specific feature for attention. The learners are provided with input data illustrating the feature, and may also be given a rule to explain the feature. They are then required either to understand it, or (if they have not been given the rule) to describe the grammatical structure in question. (Nunan, 2004, p. 99)

A worksheet with multiple steps to guide the learners to notice the pattern of use of the present perfect/past was developed using the ten biographies as the input (see Appendix D). The objective of this task was to derive the meaning and use rules of the present perfect in the context of a deceased person's (simple past) versus a living person's (present perfect) lifetime achievements.

The explanation that was given to the TF group as their explicit instruction at the start of their lesson included a comparison between the simple past and

present perfect in regard to both dead and living people's achievements and accomplishments. The explanation included these details:

a) the present perfect is used when the results of the action (or accomplishment) is still important/relevant /still matters to the person who did this action. So, even though present perfect refers to something that happens in the past, one would use this form if the implications of that action still hold meaning to the person who did the action, today;

b) the simple past is used with the achievements and accomplishment verbs when talking about a deceased person, or if a living person is completely finished with the action, thus they will not continue to do that same action in the present or future.

Along with the explanation, there were worksheets created for the TF group (see Appendix E). The first consisted of two paragraphs about one living (Rick Hanson) and one deceased (Terry Fox) in which students would read and identify the two grammar forms (simple past and present perfect). The second worksheet used the same biographies from the CR task, but instead they were made into fill in the blanks. All achievement and accomplishment verbs (including the verb 'to be', if it was describing something of importance) were turned into blanks on each biography and the base form of the verb was put into brackets just before each blank.

Procedure

During the initial meeting in the participants' classroom, all were informed of the purpose of the study and their right to opt out. They were then given the

information and consent form and background questionnaire (see Appendix A and Appendix B). After that, they wrote the pre-test as a whole group (see Appendix C). The next day, participants were randomly assigned to two groups (CR and TF), and the learners in the CR group were grouped into pairs. The instructional treatments were administered to the groups separately. While the researcher worked with one group, the other group received a non-grammar-oriented lesson from their regular teacher. The researcher worked first with the CR group; it took the group approximately 50 minutes to complete the task. At the end of the task, the researcher facilitated a five-minute discussion about what the participants had learned and clarified the use of the simple past and present perfect in relation to the achievements and accomplishments of dead vs. living people. The researcher then gave the TF group a 10-minute grammar explanation of the meaning and use rules of the two verb forms. Next, the TF participants took 25 minutes to read through two paragraphs on famous Canadians (one deceased, Terry Fox and one living, Rick Hansen) and to circle all of the present perfect verbs and simple past verbs. Students then worked on their own to fill in several gaps across nine paragraphs about living and dead famous Canadians (see Appendix E). After both groups had received their treatments, they wrote the post-test together in the same room.

Data Analysis

The data were gathered from the pre-tests and post-tests and from the background questionnaires. Learning gains in knowledge of the meaning and use of the present perfect and simple past were measured and between-group differences calculated using the pre-test and post-test data. To answer the first research

question, knowledge gains for each group were measured in terms of the number of correct answers. Out of a possible 23 marks on the pre-test and 22 marks on the post-test; the tests were analyzed quantitatively as correct (1 mark), partially correct (0.5 mark) or incorrect (0 mark). For example, in the gap-fill section, if the student chose the correct grammar form (e.g., present perfect) but did not choose the correct form of *have*, he or she would receive a half mark, (e.g., *She have worked*…). For the written production subtest, each verb that was provided in the input (on the timelines of each of the famous Canadians) in both tests was worth one point if the learner used the correct verb (maximum of 9 points for the pre-test and 6 points for the post-test). Learners were expected to get their information about these Canadians from the timelines, therefore they were expected to describe the Canadians using this input. If the participant included additional verbs to describe the famous Canadian (i.e., verbs that were not provided in the input), those verbs were not counted, whether they were used correctly or incorrectly. The reason for this scoring rule was to keep the totals consistent within and between groups; thus, the total possible score for each test was the same for all learners, giving no learner an advantage over another for having written more correct sentences. If participants chose the correct form (e.g., present perfect) but had the subject-verb agreement incorrect (e.g., he have worked) or the past participle incorrect (e.g., she has spoke), they would score a half mark (0.5). If the participant had the tense wrong (e.g., He 'had' (past perfect) instead of 'He has') the answer was marked incorrect. On average, the students wrote five sentences for the written production subtest.

From the scoring of the pre- and post-tests, a number of variables were derived for each group: total correct on pre- and post-test, correct simple past vs.

present perfect, correct gap-fill vs. written production, correct simple past gap-fill vs. simple past written production, and present perfect gap-fill vs. present perfect written production. Multi-analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test for significant differences.

Results

Research Question 1: Does a consciousness-raising task lead to superior gains on immediate post-tests compared with a traditional teacher-fronted lesson?

Before addressing the first research question, *t*-tests were used to determine whether both groups were comparable at the pre-test; the results in Table 2 indicate that there was no significant difference between the two groups at the pre-test nor at the post-test and both groups improved over time. A one-way MANOVA indicated that there was no main effect for between groups (Wilks' $\lambda = .913$, F (.334), Error df = 14.00, p = 0.850, $\eta^2 = .087$.) The MANOVA also revealed a significant main effect for time (Wilks' $\lambda = .105$, *F* (29.970), p = .000, $\eta^2 = .895$). That is, the difference between the pre-test and the post-test was significant for both groups and the effect size was large. In answer to the first research question, then, both groups improved significantly from the pre-test to the post-test with no advantage to either treatment.

Table 2

Mean Scores and (Standard Deviation) on Pre and Post-Test Totals

	Pre-test Total (maximum = 27)	Post-test Total (maximum = 22)
TF *n* = 9	14.06 (*SD* = 3.57)	15.83 (*SD* = 1.71)
CR *n* = 10	12.65 (*SD* = 3.38)	16.40 (*SD* = 3.67)

A further analysis was conducted to determine whether there was any difference between learners' performance on the gap-fill vs. the written production subsections of the tests. As with the total test scores reported above, the MANOVA results indicated no main effect for group but a significant effect for time. However, post-hoc analyses revealed that it was only on the gap-fill items that the learners improved ($F = 45.134$, $p < .000$, $\eta^2 = .726$); performance on the written production subtest at the post-test was not significantly different from the pre-test ($F = .920$, $p = .351$, $\eta^2 = .051$).

Research Question 2. Is there a between-group difference in performance?

Table 3 presents the group means for the items requiring a simple past verb vs. present perfect verb on both subsections of the pre- and post-tests. A MANOVA was used to determine whether learners were statistically stronger or weaker on one form or the other and whether the test method (gap-fill vs. cued written production) had an effect. The between subjects group (Wilks' $\lambda = .911$, F (.340), $p = .847$, $\eta^2 = .089$) and the within subjects forms (Wilks' $\lambda = .229$, F (11.757), $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .771$) results indicated again that there was no group difference but that both groups

improved over time. With respect to the present perfect, learners improved on both the gap-fill and the written production subtests; for the simple past, only scores on the gap-fill improved. Inspection of the means in Table 3 reveal that the means for both groups was lower on the simple past written production at the post-test; this was not, however, a statistically significant difference.

Table 3

Means and (Standard Deviations) for Simple Past vs. Present Perfect on the Gap-fill and Written Production subtests

	PRE GF SP Maximum = 6	PRE GF PP Maximum = 8	PRE WP SP Maximum = 5	PRE WP PP Maximum = 4	POST GF SP Maximum = 8	POST GF PP Maximum = 8	POST WP SP Maximum = 3	POST WP PP Maximum = 4
TF	4.33 (*SD* = 1.80)	3.00 (*SD* = 2.14)	3.56 (*SD* = 1.24)	.50 (*SD* = 1.17)	6.39 (SD = 1.32)	4.78 (SD = 1.03)	2.22 (*SD* = 0.97)	2.11 (*SD* = 1.05)
CR	4.50 (1.35)	2.70 (1.90)	2.65 (1.63)	.75 (1.03)	7.10 (0.88)	4.95 (1.72)	2.40 (0.99)	1.90 (1.29)

Note. TF=teacher fronted lesson; CR=consciousness-raising task; PRE=pretest; POST=post test; GF=gap-fill; WP=written production; SP=simple past; PP=present perfect

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of CR tasks on learning the meaning and use of the present perfect vs. simple past verb forms. The study compared a CR task to a teacher-fronted lesson conducted in an intact adult ESL class that was randomly assigned to one of two groups. Tests of significant differences revealed no between-group differences (i.e. neither group grew more than the other) but a significant effect for time. This means that both groups showed a significant amount of change

from the pre-to the post-test that could not have been due to chance; therefore, this suggests that both instruction types were effective. Further analysis revealed that learners' improvement was on the gap-fill subsections of the test rather than on the cued written production section. Comparison of learners' performance on the present perfect items vs. the simple past items revealed improvement in the use of the present perfect on both subtests but only on the gap-fill items for the simple past (see below for further discussion).

With regard to the first research question, we see that the CR task did not lead to superior gains. Indeed, both groups made significant grammatical gains from the pre-test to the post-test, which suggests that both forms of grammar instruction were effective in terms of raising learners' awareness of the difference between the use of the simple past and the present perfect. These results are in line with previous studies, which have shown equivalence between CR tasks and teacher-fronted grammar instruction (Fotos, 1993, 1994; Fotos & Ellis, 1991). Given the considerable differences in research design between the present study and the CR studies by Fotos, the reliability using a CR task as an instructional tool is strengthened.

The similarity in outcomes for the CR and the TF groups is perhaps due to the great similarity in the treatment materials. The two treatments were similar in terms of the content – that is, both are important, interesting topics (famous Canadians), both explored the same aspect of the rule of present perfect (achievement, accomplishment). Because the CR task was so highly structured, it did not generate uncertainty about the rule, which is sometimes found with inductive tasks (Erlam, 2005). The CR group learners were incrementally guided

through the process of analyzing the rule. The group discovered the dead-living connection on their own (i.e., discussing the accomplishments of a deceased person would use past tense, discussing the relevant accomplishments of a living person would use present perfect), but the underlying rules had to be taught explicitly at the end of the lesson. Points that were clarified were: If the person is living and finished with his/her achievement and it no longer holds relevance, simple past can be used; if he/she is living and the achievement still holds relevance, then use present perfect. This raises the question of how structured (or unstructured) a task should be in order to constitute discovery learning.

As shown in Table 2, the standard deviation in the TF group was much smaller than in the CR group in the post-test. Overall, the TF groups' variability between learners was reduced, whereas the CR group remained widely varied in terms of who understood it and who did not. The background questionnaire might help to explain some of this difference. As the CR group has 7/10 people claiming to like discovering the rule inductively and working with a partner while learning grammar, one might think that the majority of the group would achieve high levels grammatical accuracy. However, in the background questionnaire, no learner in the CR group claimed to understand the present perfect "very well" to begin with, making growth for all learners, regardless of the teaching method, likely to have at least some variation. Overall, the TF group claimed to have a higher level of understanding of the form at the start ("very well" = 3; "fairly well" = 4), which suggests that the little instruction they received could have been enough to make at least 7/9 of the TF group understand the form very well by the end of the treatment, with relatively little variation.

The second research question addressed differences between all the learners' knowledge of the present perfect and the simple past. It was found that learners' use of the present perfect improved on both the relatively easier gap-fill subtest and the more challenging cued written production subtest, whereas use of the simple past improved only on the gap-fill. On the surface, this seems to contradict the findings of Bardovi-Harlig (1994, 2005) who found that the present perfect developed later than the simple past. However, she also found that the learning of the present perfect could have a short-term negative effect on learners' accuracy in using the simple past. This suggests that the form-focused instruction provided in both the CR task and the TF lesson, which drew attention to the meaning of the present perfect, might have caused learners in this study to be temporarily less sure of their use of the simple past.

Finally, an exploration of learner's performance on the cloze (gap-fill) vs. the written task indicated that students scored better, as one might expect, on the cloze, which imposes fewer cognitive demands on the learner than the written task. In the gap-fill, learners were given the verb and simply had to choose between two tense-aspect forms according to the context. In contrast, the written production task required learners to interpret the timeline, match it to the correct grammatical form based on the context, and rewrite the information in two paragraphs (one for the deceased, one for the living individual). What can be learned from this is that how one measures learning has an impact on the results. It is likely that the cloze overestimates what learners know because it is highly scaffolded, whereas the written task may underestimate what they know due to its unfamiliarity.

Limitations

This study is limited in several ways. First, the data collection period took place over the course of only two ESL classes, and the treatment was only 55 minutes for the CR group and 35 minutes for the TF group. Second, a delayed post-test, which would have been useful in determining the depth of learning of the form, was not administered. Without a delayed posttest, we are left wondering about the long-term effects of the treatment. Third, without a control group, it is not possible to know if the improvement in test scores was due simply to a test-retest effect, especially since there was only a 24-hour delay between the pre- and post-tests. Last, the written tests also do not indicate what effects CR tasks might have on accuracy of use of the present perfect in open-ended writing or in speaking.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that the present perfect can be learned through FFI and that CR tasks are equally as effective as TF instruction in terms of grammatical accuracy gains. Language instructors should therefore be actively encouraged to include CR tasks in their lesson plans. CR tasks are, however, still very under-researched and there is a need for more extensive studies to explore the usefulness and benefits of such learning strategies. In an ongoing analysis of ESL grammar textbooks, Ranta (personal communication, April 18, 2013) has observed little evidence of CR tasks in commercially produced materials. I recommend further analysis of ESL course textbooks and if it is indeed empirically confirmed that CR tasks are rarely available in course texts, then grammar textbook authors should include them in their books in the future.

Conducting this research has given me a great deal of respect and appreciation for the research process. Creating the treatment materials and tests has taught me to be diligent and purposeful when deciding which items or questions to include in order to best answer the research questions in a study. I found the experience of creating a CR task and exploring how students learn from it to be intensive. This process has also shown me how to simultaneously look at both the broader perspectives of SLA and at very specific details of it at the same time. Finally, I learned that although research is a rigorous process, it is worth it. The skills I have developed throughout this process could not have been learned from reading a textbook and I recommend that more ESL teachers do this in order to gain this same experience for themselves.

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Appendix A

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Information Letter

Study Title: *Learning the Meaning and Use of the Present Perfect in English".*

Research Investigator: Amie Gondziola MEd Student, Educational Psychology amieg@ualberta.ca 780-492-5245	**Supervisor:** Dr. Leila Ranta Associate Professor, Educational Psychology lranta@ualberta.ca 780-492-7511

Background
I am inviting you to participate in this study because you are an intermediate ESL student. I am carrying out a study for my Master's of Education capping project.

Purpose
I am carrying out this study to help teachers understand more about what kinds of tasks help their students learn grammar.

Study Procedures
To be in this study, please read this letter and the consent form carefully.

- The study will all take place during your class time. At no point in the study will you give your name, except when you sign the consent form.

- First, you will complete a background questionnaire about yourself; this will take about 5 minutes.
- Next, you will complete a short grammar activity that will take about 15 minutes.
- Then, I will give you instructions and you will work on another grammar activity in pairs or alone. This grammar activity will take about 25- 30 minutes.
- After that, you will complete one more short grammar activity that will take about 15 minutes.

- Some of the students' voices in this study may be recorded when they do the activity.
- I will also record my voice during the study.

Benefits

It is likely that you will know more about the present perfect grammar form after being in this study than you did before. We hope that this study will help teachers better understand what kinds of tasks help their students learn grammar. You will not receive any money or payment for participating in this study.

Risk

There are no expected risks if you choose to participate in this study.

Voluntary Participation

- You do not have to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop participating in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. You can stop doing the grammar activities at any time.
- Once the data is collected and I have left the school, you may not take your data out of the study.

Confidentiality

Your participation in this study will be private, your name will not appear anywhere at any time. My academic supervisors and I are the only people who will be able to see this data. The University of Alberta Research Ethics Board also has the right to review the data at any time. The data will also be stored on a password-protected computer in a secured location by the Department of Education Psychology at the University of Alberta for a minimum of five years. After five years the data will be destroyed.

The results from this study will be reported in a research report and may be presented at academic meetings and conferences, and published in an academic journal. A summary of this study will be sent to your teacher to share with you. If you leave the program before then, please e-mail me your e-mailing address and I will send you a summary of the results.

Further Information

- If you have any further questions, comments or concerns regarding this study, please contact the researcher, Amie Gondziola at amieg@ualberta.ca or Dr. Leila Ranta at 780-492-7511. If you have concerns about this study, you may contact the Research Ethics Office, at 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: *"Learning the Meaning and Use of the Present Perfect in English"*.

Principal Investigator(s): Amie Gondziola with the Educational Psychology Department at University of Alberta; 780-492- 3111.

Co-Investigator(s): Dr. Leila Ranta

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	Yes	No
Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet?	Yes	No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, and that your information can only be withdrawn if I have not left your school yet?	Yes	No
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your information?	Yes	No

This study was explained to me by: _____

I have read and understood the attached information letter and agree to take part in this study:

_____ _____

Signature of Research Participant Date

_____

Printed Name

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator or Designee Date

A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE PARTICIPANT.

Appendix B

Background Information

1) What is your first/native language?
_____

2) In what country were you born?_____

3) How long have you been in English-speaking Canada? __months ___ years

4) Age _____

5) How have you learned English grammar in the past? (Check all that apply)
_____Doing Textbook activities
_____Reading the Internet/websites
_____Listening to the teacher tell me rules
_____Working with a partner on a grammar activity
_____Working by myself on a grammar activity

Other:
_____

_____

Circle the answer that best fits you

6) Do you like it when your teacher tells you the rule and then you practice it? Yes No
7) Do you like to discover the rule by looking at examples and seeing a pattern? Yes No
8) Do you like to work with a partner when you're learning grammar? Yes No

9) I like doing grammar activities (check the answer)
_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

10) How confident are you that you can accurately use the 'present perfect' (e.g., I have waited for you.)?
_____Not at all
_____A little bit
_____Fairly Well
_____Very Well

Background Questionnaire Findings

Table 1

Response to Statement: How Have You Learned English Grammar in the Past?

	CR Group (n = 10)	TF Group (n = 9)
1. Doing textbook activities	10	6
2. Reading the Internet/websites	8	6
3. Listening to the teacher tell me rules	10	7
4. Working with a partner on a grammar activity	8	3
5. Working by myself on a grammar activity	9	8

Table 2

Opinions on Explicit Instruction, Discovering Grammar and Working With a Partner

	CR Group (n = 10)	TF Group (n = 9)
1. I like it when your teacher tells you the rule and then you practice it.	10	9
2. I like to discover the rule by looking at examples and seeing a pattern.	7	6
3. I like to work with a partner when you're learning grammar.	6	3

Table 3

Response to Statement: I Like Doing Grammar Activities

Group	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. CR Task Group (n=10)	1	0	3	6
2. TF Group (n= 9)	1	0	5	3

Table 4

Response to Statement: How Confident Are You That You Can Accurately Use the 'Present Perfect' (e.g., I <u>have waited</u> for you.)?

Group	Not at all	A little bit	Fairly well	Very well
1. CR Task Group (n = 10)	0	3	7	0
2. TF Group (n = 9)	1	1	4	3

Appendix C

Pre-test Written

Use these time lines, use the information in the boxes to write about each of these people. Use the appropriate verb (simple past *or* present perfect).

a) Emily Murphy – Canadian women's rights activist - 1868 – 1933

1868_____1908_____1916_____1929_____1933
Born Died

Starts speaking out for women's rights; organizes women's groups	Becomes the first female judge	Fights for women to be considered people and wins in the Supreme Court

b) Jim Carrey – Great Canadian actor, comedian, and movie producer - 1962-

Stars in the popular movies '*Ace Ventura*', '*The Mask*' and '*Dumb and Dumber*;' wins numerous awards	Wins a Golden Globe award for Best Actor in the movie *Liar Liar*	Wins the People's Choice Award for favorite Comedian actor

1962_____
Born

Post Test Written

Using these time lines, write about these people, using either simple past or present perfect verbs

a) Tommy Douglas - October 20, 1904 – February 24, 1986

Becomes the first democratic socialist elected in North America	Introduces universal health care in Saskatchewan	Helps create Canada's first publicly owned automobile insurance company

1904_____1944_____1949_____1960_____1986
Born Died

b) Joni Mitchell – Great Canadian musician, songwriter and painter -1943 -

Wins Best Folk Performance Award	Wins Best Pop Album Music Award	Is inducted into the music hall of fame	Receives a Lifetime achievement award

1943_____
Born

Appendix E

Inductive Group

1. With your partner, read through the descriptions of great Canadians. Look at the verbs in the descriptions and create two piles – one for each verb type.

2. Once you have created the two piles, copy all of the **bolded** verbs from the descriptions into the appropriate column.

Name of the verb form: Simple past	**Name of the verb form: Present Perfect**
Became Succeeded Challenged changed, …	Has worked has made has aired…

3. Now, look at the birth dates and death dates of each of the Canadians and fill the missing information in this chart.

Person	**Birth Dates**	**Death Dates**	**Living**	**Dead**
1.Clara Brett Martin	January 25, 1874	October 30, 1923		x
2.	March 24, 1936		x	
3.Terry Fox				
4. Joni Mitchell				
5.	October 18, 1919	September, 28, 2000		
6. Lester B. Pearson				
7.	August 16, 1972 -			
8. Alison Redford				
9.	November, 14, 1891	February, 21, 1941		
10.	June 25, 1946 -			

4. Separate the information from the Canadian descriptions (1-10) into these two categories. Write down what tense number one was written in and if the person was dead or alive. Do the same for all of the numbers. Use the numbers on the descriptions you just read and sorted to organize this information.

Grammar form (Simple Past or Present Perfect)	Living or dead (same order as above)
1. Simple Past	dead
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

What pattern do you see between the grammar form used and if the person is dead or living?

5. Now, look at the handouts on the present perfect. Read through the grammar rules. Write down some key points here, if you would like.

6. a) Go back over the descriptions of the Canadians and discuss when the present perfect is used instead of past tense.

b) With your partner, try to create a grammar rule: when is the present perfect used instead of the past tense?

c) Write the rules for the use of present perfect with dead and living people:

Appendix E

Teacher-Fronted Group
Activity 1 – Noticing the verb form

1) Read through this paragraph and circle all of the <u>past tense</u> verbs.
Terry Fox - July 28, 1958 – June 28, 1981

Terry Fox **was** a young man from British Columbia who discovered he had cancer when he was 18 years old. Terry lost one of his legs to cancer. He wanted to do something for other people who had cancer. He planned to run all the way across Canada to raise money for cancer research. In 1980, he started running in St. John's, Newfoundland. He ran 42 kilometers a day for 143 days. He made it to Ontario before his cancer returned. He died of lung cancer in 1981. Terry Fox became a hero to all Canadians for his courage and strength.

Why do you think past tense used here?

2) Read through this paragraph and circle all of the <u>present perfect</u> verbs.
Rick Hansen - August 26, 1957 -

When he was 15 years old, Rick Hansen was paralyzed from the waist down in a car accident. He was inspired by Terry Fox and decided to wheel around the world on a 26-month trek to raise money for spinal cord research. Attracting international media attention as he progressed, he wheeled 40,000 km through 34 countries on four continents before arriving back in Canada. He returned to Vancouver BC in May of 1987 after raising $26 million for spinal cord research. Like Terry Fox, he has been called an international hero. He has won dozens of awards from universities across Canada. Hansen is currently president and CEO of the Rick Hansen Foundation, which has generated more than $200 million for spinal cord injury-related programs. Hansen has improved the lives of those with spinal cord injuries and has made a large contribution to spinal cord research.

Why do you think present perfect is used here?

Cloze Activity – Practice

Read through these paragraphs about famous Canadians and, based on context of the paragraph, write the correct verb form - present perfect or simple past - in the blanks.

August 16, 1972 -

1.George Stroumboulopoulos is a Canadian radio and television personality. His show *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight* covers everything from politics, pop culture, the environment, human rights, entertainment, sports and more. It (win) ____has won_____eight Gemini Awards. He (interview) _____has interviewed_____ hundreds of world leaders, celebrities and politicians. George (to be) _____involved in a large number of charities and he (travel) _____ all over the world to help others and raise awareness about political and environmental issues.

October 18, 1919 – September 28, 2000

2. Pierre Trudeau (to be) _____ a very popular Canadian prime minister. Many Canadians (admire) _____ him very much. He (to be) _____ prime minister from 1968 – 1979 and then again from 1980-1984. He (establish) _____ the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Canadian Constitution in 1982. The nation mourned when he (die) _____ in 2000.

June 25, 1946 -

3. Romeo Dallaire (to be + name) _____a Canadian hero because of a peacekeeping mission he led in Rwanda between 1993 and 1994. He (suffer)_____ from post-traumatic stress disorder because of what he saw and experienced in Rwanda. Dallaire (work) _____to bring an understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder to the general public. He (write) _____several articles and chapters in publications on conflict resolution, humanitarian assistance and human rights.

April 23, 1897 – December 27, 1972

4. Lester B. Pearson (to be) _____ Canada's 14th prime minister in the 1960s. He (introduce) _____ universal healthcare, Canada's pension plan, and student loans. He also (win) _____a Nobel Peace Prize because he (settle) _____the Suez Crisis. He (die) _____ in 1972.

November 7, 1943 -

5. Joni Mitchell is a singer/song writer, who (perform) _____her music all over the world. She (write) _____dozens of songs with deep lyrics. Joni (win) _____ many awards and (influence) **she** _____many singers over the years.

January 25, 1874 – October 30, 1923

6. Clara Brett Martin (become) _____the first woman lawyer not only in Canada but in the whole British Empire. She (succeed) _____ in 1897 after she (challenge) _____ and (change) _____ the laws that (prevent) _____ women from studying law. Despite a very successful career as a lawyer, Clara rarely (appear)_____ in court because people would get upset when she was there. She (die) _____ in 1923.

March 7, 1965 -

7. Alison Redford is the first female premier in Alberta. She (to be) _____ an active member of the community for many years. She (promise) _____to build 50 new schools in Alberta, some of which (to be) (finish) _____already. She (serve) _____as the province's premier since 2011.

November 14, 1891 – February 21, 1941

8. Dr. Frederick Banting (to be) _____ one of the men who (discover) _____ insulin. He (convince)

_____his boss at the university to let him use the lab there. He (take) _____ insulin out of a pancreas and later (inject) _____ the insulin into dogs to lower their blood sugar. He (receive) _____ a Nobel Prize in medicine in 1923. Dr. Banting (die) _____ in 1941.

March 24, 1936 -

9. David Suzuki (work) _____with businesses, government and individuals to help preserve the environment with his science-based research. He (make) _____ science popular with his TV show, The Nature of Things. The show (air) _____ in more than 50 nations. He (make) _____ people more aware of the environment and he (show) _____people that there is still hope for the future.