



The Effect of Consciousness Raising on Errors
In L2 Question Formation: An Investigation of Omani Students

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Abstract

The article discusses the effects of consciousness raising on errors of Omani students in L2 question formation. A child effortlessly acquires the rules of the mother tongue (L1) with the help of an internal mechanism but foreign language learners fall back on their mother tongue when learning a new language (L2). EFL learners commit mistakes as the features of L2 are different from that of L1. Ellis (1994) and Schmidt (1990) believe that if EFL learners are taught grammar by raising their consciousness regarding the features of L2, it may facilitate learning. Consciousness raising is an attempt at directing the learner's attention towards particular features of the language. By raising the consciousness of the students, they are able to perceive the targeted features of the language and form internal representatives of them. Next time when they

perceive the same features, it becomes the input and on subsequent noticing the features are internalized and acquired. This helps in minimizing errors. 25 students of Salalah College of Technology participated in this study. A pre test was administered to them to test their knowledge of L2 question formation. It was followed by a consciousness raising task. A week later an interpretation task was administered to test if students had noticed features they had been made conscious about. A post test was given a week later to find out the developments that had taken place. It was found that consciousness raising had a positive effect on reducing errors in L2 question formation, though marginally. It helped significantly in reducing the errors committed due to lack of ignorance of the rules of L2 question formation. No effect was seen when students were at the intralingual stage. They were not ready to learn the structures of the new language.

Keywords: Consciousness raising and language acquisition, Errors in L2 question formation, Question formation in English, Question formation in Arabic, Description of errors, Explicit Grammar instructions

Introduction

Each and every language has its own set of rules. A child is predisposed to acquire these rules with the help of an internal mechanism, which Chomsky proposed as an innate blueprint for language or Universal Grammar (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2007:17). It is this innate component of the human language faculty that enables a child to construct the grammar of that particular language (if it is his mother tongue, L1) from the limited data available to him (Corder, 1967: 162). This is not the case with second language (L2) learners, learning a new language other than their mother tongue. They have to put in extra efforts especially when they are adults. Sometimes the rules of the first language are

applied, as the structure of the second language is not known. This may benefit if the rules are similar or create problems if the rules of L2 are different from their mother tongue. Hence, L1 can be a starting point in the acquisition of L2. Corder (1967:165) is of the opinion that some of the strategies adopted by second language learners are the same as those by which a first language is acquired. The sequence or the course may be different. In the earlier stages it is not expected of a child to produce correct utterances. His incorrect utterances are not termed as errors but it is the evidence that he is in a process of acquiring language. On the other hand the incorrect sentences produced by the second language learner are termed as errors, though they too provide evidence of the system of the language they are using, at that moment. This system may not be the same as the adult language. Errors are the device that the learner uses in order to learn. It is also the way of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is trying to learn. It is a process or a strategy employed by children, acquiring their mother tongue or by the second language learners. The second language learner has his mother tongue to fall back on, hence he is always testing whether the language he is trying to acquire is the same or different from that of his mother tongue. His errors can be related to the systems of the mother tongue, but according to Corder (1967: 168) they should not be regarded as persistence of old habits. They are the signs of the learner investigating the systems of the new language.

A child is not taught a language formally but mostly a second language learner learns the language with formal instructions in the classroom. He learns the rules of the language. Krashan (1982) advocated communicative pedagogy as he felt that it led to the acquisition of competence in the second language. Learning of rules or grammar teaching had no place in teaching L2, as it did not guarantee its appropriate use in speech or communication. But modern researchers like Ellis (1994) and Schmidt (1990) stress the importance of teaching grammar not in the formal manner but by raising the awareness of the learners regarding the features of the L2, which they are trying to acquire. If the students are aware of the target they have to acquire, it may facilitate

learning. It is in this context, that the errors committed by Omani students while forming questions (Yes/no and Wh questions) are investigated and their consciousness (awareness) is raised about the structure of question forms in the target language. The issues related with this study e.g. errors, structure of questions in English and Arabic, types of knowledge, consciousness raising and the acquisition process are described in detail below.

Theoretical Perspectives

The following headings discuss the theoretical aspects necessary to comprehend the issues discussed in the paper.

Errors

Human learning involves the making of mistakes. It is like learning any other skill e.g. swimming, cycling, typing etc. It is through mistakes that learners learn. Like children, second language learners too, carefully process feedback from others to produce the target language. It is necessary to make a distinction between error and a mistake in order to analyze the learner's language. Ellis (1994: 57) defines an error as a deviation from the norms of the target language. It is committed because of lack of knowledge, while a **mistake** is made when learners fail to perform their competence (Corder, 1967:167). It is a failure to utilize the known system correctly. When attention is drawn towards an error it can be self-corrected (Brown, 2000: 217). In order to analyze errors it is necessary to identify and describe them.

Identification and Description of Errors

Corder (1971: 151) provided a model for identifying errors. He suggested comparison of the students' utterances with the reconstruction of those utterances in the target language to identify errors. In case the error could not be identified in this manner, the utterances could be translated into L1 to get plausible interpretation in context and then translate it back into the target language to provide the reconstructed sentence. Once the errors are identified they can be classified according to the linguistic categories like clauses, auxiliary system, passives, tag questions etc. or by attending to the ways in which surface structures are altered e.g. omissions, additions etc. (Dulay, Burt, and Krashan, 1982: 150 as cited in Ellis, 1994:56) as shown below in table 1.

Table 1 Surface Strategy Taxonomy of Errors

Category	Description	Example
Omissions	The absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance.	*She sleeping.
Additions	The presence of an item that must not appear in well-formed utterances.	*We didn't went there.
Misinformation	The use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure	*The dog ated the chicken
Misordering	The incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance.	*What daddy is doing?

Sources of Errors

The various sources of errors help us to understand how the learner's cognitive and affective processes relate to the linguistic system. They also help to establish the process responsible for L2 acquisition. The sources can be psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, epistemic etc. Abbott (1980:124) has described the psycholinguistic sources of errors and mistakes as shown in figure

1. The errors students make can be broadly traced to three sources-- transfer, intralingual and unique.

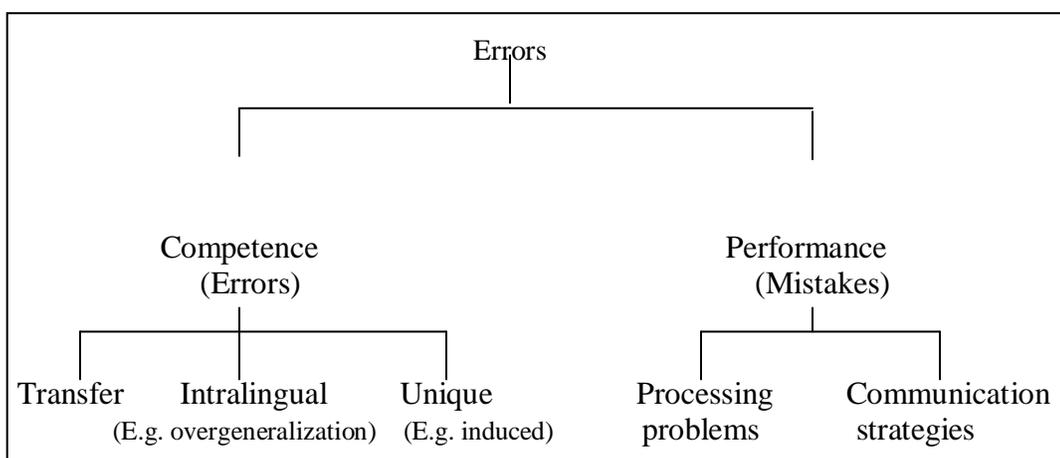


Figure 1 Psycholinguistic sources of errors

Transfer

The incorporation of the features of L1 into the knowledge system of L2 is defined as transfer (Ellis, 1994: 28). If the features of L1 are similar to that of the target language it results in a **positive transfer**, facilitating the acquisition of L2. But if the target language differs from L1 it results in **negative transfer** or **Interference**, which according to behaviorist could impede learning. From the point of view of the cognitivists 'transfer' is a learner's attempt to establish hypotheses about L2 rules and items. Faerch and Kasper (1987: 112) describe transfer as a psycholinguistic procedure by means of

which L2 learners activate their L1 knowledge in developing their Inter language. For example, * Are she read books?

Intralingual

Intralingual errors are committed when learners begin to acquire parts of the new language system. It is because of the ignorance of L2 rules. As learners progress in their second language more and more Intra lingual errors are manifested as their previous experience begins to include structures of the target language and learners actively construct the grammar of L2 as they progress. Richards (1971:209) categorizes Intra lingual errors as overgeneralizations, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules and hypothesizing false concepts. For example, * Does Fatima visited Bahrain?

Unique

The errors, which do not fall under transfer or intra lingual categories, have been classified as unique (Dulay and Burt, 1974 in Ellis 1994: 61). Learners sometimes internalize faulty rules derived from instruction that affect their competence; hence unique errors can also be induced for example, * Where do you do?

Question Formation in English and Arabic

There are three types of question forms in English depending on the reply sought -- Yes/no questions, Wh questions and Alternative questions (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990). Arabic also has similar types of questions as in English. In Arabic a sentence begins with

a verb and there is no need to change the place of the verb with the subject to form questions as in English.

Methods of Forming Question in English

Question formation in Yes/no type and Wh type is described below. Alternate questions have not been taken for this study hence they have not been dealt with here.

Yes/no Question Type

In English, yes-no questions are formed by placing the operator (first or the only auxiliary) before the subject and this reversing of the order is termed as inversion (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990), e.g.

She will be in the office later today.

Will she be in the office later today?

He can get married.

Can he get married?

Yes/no question type can be described further under the following two categories.

A. Be and Have as Operators

Collins (1990) points out that if 'be' and 'have' are the main verbs in the sentence they function as operators and are placed before the verbs to form questions, e.g.

You are ready.

Are you ready?

He has no idea what it's like.

Has he any idea what it's like?

B. Do-Support

Leech and Svartvik (1994: 327) state that if a verb group has no auxiliary verb then it lacks an operator and a dummy operator 'do' is introduced called do-support or do periphrasis. 'Do', 'does', or 'did' is used at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject but after the subject, the base form of the verb is used, e.g.

The British take sport seriously.

Do the British take sport seriously?

It sounds like someone you know.

Does it sound like someone you know?

They do the work themselves.

Do they do the work themselves?

Wh Question Type

Wh question begins with a Wh word (Leech and Svartvik, 1994). What, where, who, whose, when, which, whom (used in formal English), why and how are called Wh words. These words are used to form questions in the following manner.

A. Wh word as the subject of a question

If the element containing wh word is the subject, the verb phrase remains the same as in the corresponding statement, and no inversion or do-construction is necessary. The Wh-word itself takes the first position, e.g.

Jane said she might be late.

Who said that?

Jack is calling.

Who's calling?

B. Wh-word as the object of a question

When Wh-word is the object, the operator is placed after the Wh element. If the statements have no operator, do-construction is used, e.g.

They bought a Volvo.

Which car did they buy?

John asked a question.

What question did John ask?

Methods of Forming Questions in Arabic

The Yes/no and the Wh type are described below.

Yes/no Question formation in Arabic

Faynan (1999, 71-72) has indicated that two interrogative particles, 'hal' and 'ah' are used to form interrogative sentences to confirm or deny. They are placed at the beginning before the nouns. There is no inversion or 'do support' as in English, e.g.

Hal huwa gadimun?	(Is he coming?)
Hal anta sayyida?	(Are you happy?)
Hal anna mutakkhur?	(Am I late?)
Ah hadarat imshi?	(Did you come yesterday?)
Hal tadrusu?	(Do you study?)

Wh Question formation in Arabic

Standard Arabic has the property of fronting Wh words. The Interrogatives are placed at the beginning of the sentence (Comrie, 1987: 683), e.g.

Ayna darasa Imuallimu?	(*Where studied the teacher?)
	(Where did the teacher study?)
Keif halak?	(*How condition?)
	(How are you?)

The following question words are used in interrogative sentences (Faynan, 1999: 71)

Maan (Who), Ayain (Where), Kayf (How), Maazah (What), Limaazah (Why), Maatah (When) and Ayyu (Which)

They make questions in the following manner.

Man haada?	(*Who this?)	(Who is this?)
Mal aamal?	(*What we do?)	(What shall we do?)
Ai kitabin aandak?	(*Which books have?)	(Which books do you have?)

The sentences formed by using Wh words indicate that there are no primary auxiliaries like 'be', 'have' and 'do' in Arabic (Smith 1987, in Swan and Smith 1987: 148) and hence forms like 'am', 'is', 'are', 'do', 'did' are omitted in sentences by the Arab learners.

There are no modal verbs in Arabic and hence no subject-auxiliary inversion is found while forming questions (Smith1987, in Swan and Smith1987:150).

Explicit Grammar Instruction

Cognitivists have acknowledged the existence of two categories of human knowledge --explicit and implicit (Schmidt, 1990, Bialystok, 1981). **Explicit knowledge** is factual or declarative and is available to the learner as a conscious representation, e.g. the knowledge regarding grammatical rules. This type of knowledge is developed through formal instruction. **Implicit knowledge** is about how to do something or procedural knowledge, e.g. how to communicate in L2. Implicit knowledge is enhanced through communication or natural language use. (Anderson, 1985 in Fotos, 1993)

Krashan (1982:74) believes language learning is essentially unconscious and advocates purely communicative pedagogy. He is against presenting and practicing grammatical features and even error correction, which is termed as a 'serious mistake'. Krashan (1982) felt that it inhibited students from using difficult constructions for the fear of making mistakes. He suggested natural language use. A number of researchers (Sharwood Smith, 1981; Bialystok, 1981) have challenged this and argued that explicit knowledge -- formal grammar instructions can convert into implicit knowledge that is needed for use in communication, through practice. Seliger (1979) is of the view that grammar instruction may not cause acquisition to take place, but may facilitate it by providing the learner with a conscious understanding of grammatical constructs that can be acquired later when the learner is ready to acquire these features -- the Delayed Effect Hypothesis. It has been demonstrated that learners who receive instruction outperform those who do not (Ellis, 1994). This proves that teaching grammar contributes to their linguistic development.

Grammar teaching nowadays is associated with feature focused options i.e. involving implicit and explicit instruction. Implicit learning takes place without intention and awareness and is catered instructionally by means of unfocussed tasks. Explicit grammar instruction is about teaching grammar so that learners construct conscious, cognitive representation, which they could articulate. Ellis (1997: 84) refers to such grammar teaching as consciousness-raising.

Consciousness Raising and the Acquisition Process

Consciousness raising is one way of directing learners' attention and increasing their awareness of particular features of the language (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1985) It deals with making changes at the input stage rather than making corrections after production. Sometimes students can't produce features because developmentally they are not ready for it but consciousness-raising is directed at explicit knowledge which is not against the 'teachability hypotheses'. Teachers can teach even when learners are not 'ready' to learn an explicit rule (Ellis, 1994: 643). Schmidt is of the opinion that consciousness is necessary for language learning. Conscious learning means establishment of principles based on insight. He distinguishes three senses of consciousness -- **Consciousness as awareness, consciousness as intention and consciousness as knowledge**. Consciousness is commonly equated with awareness, which according to its degree, further categorized into **perception, noticing and understanding**. Perception implies the ability to create internal representations of external events. They are not necessarily conscious, e.g. a background noise. Noticing (focal awareness) is the information that people are aware of, e.g. people notice the contents of what they are reading. It is operationally defined as availability for verbal report. Having noticed the things, they are analyzed and compared. Objects of consciousness are reflected upon to experience insight and understanding. Consciousness as intention is to do something intentionally or make deliberate efforts to increase exposure to the language outside the class. Consciousness as knowledge is a native

speaker's intuition. To know something is to be conscious of it. Schmidt (1990) makes a distinction between perceived information or input, and information that is noticed by the learner or intake. He proposes that noticing or intake is necessary to subsequent processing of the forms leading to acquisition. In his own acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese, Schmidt found that it was only after he noticed the target form in communicative input that it showed up in his own production. He feels that when features are noticed in subsequent communicative input then acquisition of that feature may occur. Ellis (1994) suggests that formal instructions are a type of consciousness raising activity and if the consciousness of a particular feature is raised through formal instruction then the learners keep on noticing it in subsequent input, leading to the eventual acquisition of the language.

Teaching grammar formally through direct instructions is an age-old practice but increasing consciousness of grammatical structures by various treatments is a recent development (empirical studies by Van Patten 1990). Van Patten (1994) believes that by attending to comprehensible meaning bearing input learners "get grammar"; they don't build a linguistic system as a matter of oral practice. In this perspective the issue of consciousness moves from product based to process based.

When the learner is aware and the features are noticed in subsequent input he goes through four general processing steps (Sharwood Smith, 1981)

1. A feature in the input is noticed either consciously or unconsciously;
2. An unconscious comparison is made between existing linguistic knowledge, also called interlanguage and the new input;
3. New linguistic hypotheses are constructed on the basis of the differences between the new information and the current interlanguage; and
4. The new hypotheses are tested through attending to input and also through learner output using the new form.

This reveals that language learning is a cognitive process where explicit and implicit knowledge form a continuum as shown in figure 2. Consciousness can barely draw a differentiating line. Consciousness-raising performs a facilitative function in the development of explicit knowledge of a feature through formal instruction and the eventual acquisition of that feature through the development of implicit knowledge.

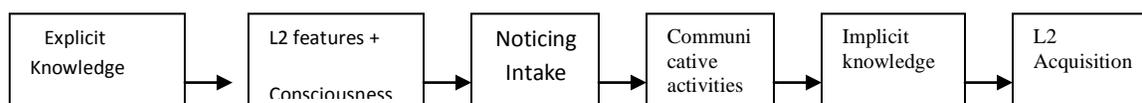


Figure 2 L2 Acquisition Process

Literature Review

A lot of research has been done in the field of input enhancement, explicit and implicit knowledge but not so in the field of consciousness-raising. Schmidt and Frota (1986 as cited in Schmidt 1990) examined Schmidt's diary to find out which features in the input he had noticed. His output was also examined to see to what extent the noticed forms figured in communicative speech. It was seen that the forms he paid attention to when people spoke with him were the ones produced. Forms that were present in comprehensible input did not show up until they had been noticed. The study conducted by Fotos and Ellis (1991) on Japanese college students showed that students could form accurate representations of the rules for grammatical constructions like adverb placement, relative clauses etc. as a result of consciousness raising tasks that required them to construct explicit rules from the input data. Fotos (1993) asked Japanese university learners to complete number of consciousness raising tasks directed at three grammatical structures. After a week the students were given listening and dictation exercises with examples of the target structures in them. Next, they were asked to underline any special

use of English, which they had noticed. The result showed that the learners, who had undergone consciousness-raising, reported noticing in all three structures in the input to a greater extent than learners in a control group. These gains were also maintained in the post-test given after two weeks. Nagata and Swisher (1995) believed that the computer was instrumental in raising the consciousness of the students by pointing out and correcting errors of the students and giving them feedback. They studied the effectiveness of traditional computer feedback which indicated missing or unexpected words in the learner's response and the intelligent computer feedback which provided feedback regarding the nature of errors by providing grammatical rules. It was found that the intelligent computer feedback was more effective. Tanaka (2000) asserted that consciousness raising approach could correct fossilization. He supported the fact that consciousness raising proved useful with individual learners than with groups. Takimoto (2006) studied the effect of consciousness raising instructions and consciousness raising instructions with feedback on 45 Japanese learners. Students were divided into a control group and two treatment groups. It was found that two treatment groups did well than the control group and the feedback was not always indispensable. Sa-ngiamwibool (2007) studied the effect of consciousness raising on Thai students' writing achievements and found that consciousness raising instructions do have significant results.

It is in line with these researches that this study discusses the effect of consciousness-raising on the errors of Omani students in L2 question formation. It does not take into consideration mistakes committed by students. The research questions of this investigation are:

1. Does consciousness-raising have any effect on the errors produced by learners?
2. Which types of errors are reduced?

Method

The subjects, material and procedure used for this study are described below.

Subjects

25 subjects participated in this study. They are students of Salalah College of Technology between the ages of 17 to 20, studying at the Intermediate level. Their mother tongue is Arabic. They have studied Arabic as their first language and are now studying English for academic purposes. Their permission was taken for this study and subsequent publication of the findings.

Material and procedure

The material and procedure is given below:

- a. Pre test:** A pre-test (See Appendix 1) was made and administered to 25 students of Intermediate level to test their knowledge regarding L2 question formation. The test consisted of -- Yes/no questions with **be, do** and **have** auxiliaries and Wh questions with **wh element** in the **subject / object** position. Alternative questions were dropped from this study to avoid repetition of the structure as this category contains both Yes/no and Wh type of questions.
- b. Consciousness-raising task:** After two days a consciousness-raising task (See Appendix 2) was given to the students to raise their awareness about question formation in English. It was a direct task type modeled on Mohammed (2004)

- c. Interpretation task:** An interpretation task (See Appendix 3) was designed on the guidelines given by Ellis (1997: 152). It was administered to the students one week after they had completed the consciousness-raising task. It was given to test if students noticed the features they had been made conscious about. It consisted of correct and incorrect question types. The students were asked to tick them as correct or incorrect and give reasons for incorrect answers. The students were instructed orally that they could draw arrows if they found it difficult to explain the reasons in words. The results were then tallied with the explanations given which indicated whether the students had noticed the structure in subsequent input and which would now become their intake.
- d. Post-test:** Finally, after a week a post-test was given to the students. This was the same as the pre-test to find out the developments that had taken place and to compare the results.

Analysis of the Data

The data was analyzed under the following categories.

Category of Errors (Pre-test)

The data collected from the pre-test was analyzed for category of errors and is presented in table 2. The categories mentioned by Dulay, Burt and Krashan in Ellis (1982:150) have

been followed. There was not even a single error for misordering hence it was excluded. Moreover many errors in substitution of Wh-words and auxiliary verbs as well as change of form from Yes/no question to Wh question were found and they have been added.

Table 2: Category of Errors for Pre-Test

	Verbs	Omission	Addition	Misinformation	substitution (word)	substitution (verb)	Change form	Total
Yes/No questions	Be	3	3	4	0	5	0	15
	Do	2	6	9	0	13	7	37
	Have	0	1	1	41	0	4	47
Wh- questions	Wh (Sub)	0	1	33	13	0	0	56
	Wh(Obj)	6	1	6	10	8	2	33
	Total	11	12	53	64	26	13	179

Sources of Errors (Pre-test)

The same data of the pre-test was also classified to find the sources of errors, stated by Abbott (180:124) that has been given in table 3.

Table 3: Sources of Errors for Pre-Test

	Verbs	Transfer	Intra-lingual	Unique	Total
Yes/No questions	Be	4	5	3	12
	Do	13	9	9	31
	Have	27	13	5	45
Wh-question	Wh (Sub)	7	32	8	46
	Wh(Obj)	12	8	4	24
	Total	63	67	29	158

Interpretation Task

After administering the consciousness-raising task, an interpretation task was given to find out if students could notice the correct structures. Some of them did, some did not and some just avoided. The structures that were not noticed, or avoided have been counted as errors. These errors have been tabulated in table 4.

Table 4: Errors in Interpretation task

	Verbs	not noticed	Avoided	Total
questions	Be	8	3	11
	Do	10	8	18
	Have	7	1	8
Wh-questions	Wh (Sub)	43	2	45
	Wh(Obj)	9	1	10
	Total	77	15	92

Category of Errors (Post-test)

After consciousness raising and interpretation task a post-test was given. The errors are categorized in table 5.

Table 5: Category of Errors for Post-Test

	Verbs	Omission	Addition	Misinformation	Substitution (Wh word)	Substitution (Aux. verb)	Change form	Total
Yes/No questions	Be	1	0	1	0	18		20
	Do	2		3		13	1	19
	Have		3	5	27		2	37
Wh- questions	Wh (Sub)			29	5			31
	Wh(Obj)	1	1	4	1	15	1	23
	Total	4	4	42	33	46	4	133

Sources of Errors (Post-test)

The same data of the post-test was also classified to find the sources of errors, which have been given in table 6.

Table 6: Sources of Errors for Post-Test

	Verbs	Transfer	intra-lingual	Unique	Total
Yes/No questions	Be	2	2		4
	Do	29	3	2	34
	Have	11	16	4	31
Wh-question	Wh (Sub)	1	32	3	35
	Wh(Obj)	15	3	3	21
	Total	58	56	12	125

Discussion of Results

The results are discussed under the following heads.

Total Number of Errors

Total number of errors tabulated according to different categories in table 2 is 179 but the errors tabulated according to sources in table 3 are 158. This difference is because some errors could be placed in more than one category indicating that sources of errors can be many. The same is true for table 5 (133 errors) and table 6 (125 errors) for post-test.

Effect of Consciousness on Errors

Figure 3 compares the total number of errors committed in the pre-test (see table 3), interpretation task after consciousness-raising (see table 4), and the post-test (see table 6). This clearly shows that consciousness-raising has marginal effect on reducing the errors. Results of the Interpretation task (see table 4) indicate that the number of errors committed were significantly less. This is because students have noticed the features of question formation and can recognize and comprehend the difference between correct and incorrect sentences. This is in accordance with the observations of Schmidt (1996) who proposed that noticing is necessary for the processing of new structures. This explicit knowledge was stored in their short-term memory. Students' errors have not decreased considerably in the post-test because maybe they were given only one interpretation task after consciousness raising to facilitate noticing. More instances of noticing may bring about the desired effect of making explicit knowledge implicit. Anderson (1980 in Fotos 1993) believes that implicit knowledge is enhanced through communication hence more exercises on the task would have been beneficial. It also

indicates that students have not reached the developmental stage where these features could be acquired. Ellis (1994) believes that if students are at the intralingual stage, they are just experimenting with the new features and will take some time to acquire them. The students have still not reached the level of maturity required for this task and are comfortable with the traditional way of receiving formal instructions from the teacher. It may work fine with higher classes and matured students.

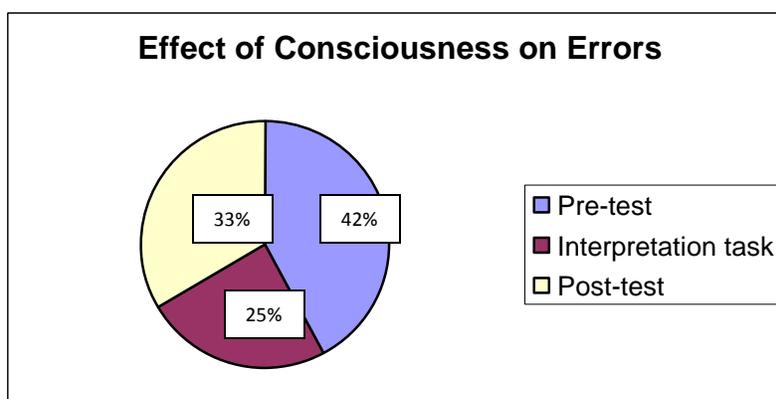


Figure 3 – Comparison of Errors

Sources of Errors

The sources of errors have been discussed under the following three heads

Transfer Errors

The examples below clearly depict that 'hal' in Arabic is replaced by auxiliary verbs like 'be' in English. 'Hal' and 'ah' are used to form interrogative sentences in Arabic (Faynan, 1991). Students are using the mother tongue equivalents in English while forming interrogative sentences which supports the definition of transfer provided by Ellis (1994: 28).

Questions in Arabic

Hal Muna Mudarissun?

Hal kullumin Mohammed and Ahmed sadikain?

Questions in English

Is Muna a teacher?

Are Mohammed and Ahmed friends?

It is also very difficult to differentiate between the various sources of errors in the case of following sentences as it seems students are trying to activate their L1 knowledge in developing their Interlanguage. This supports the description of Faerch and Kasper (1987: 112).

Hal attulab dahabu ila manzilahim?

* Is she read books?

Did students go home?

(Does she read books?)

It is difficult to say whether the error is transfer or intralingual because as seen in the first example where students have used 'did' at the beginning of the question but 'did' is not used in Arabic while forming questions. In the second example 'is' has been substituted for 'does'. It may mean that students are testing hypotheses and it's an intralingual error. It is because of this reason that number of transfer errors have decreased in the post-test. Consciousness-raising had a marginal effect on transfer errors as shown in figure 4 maybe because most of the students were still at the developmental stage.

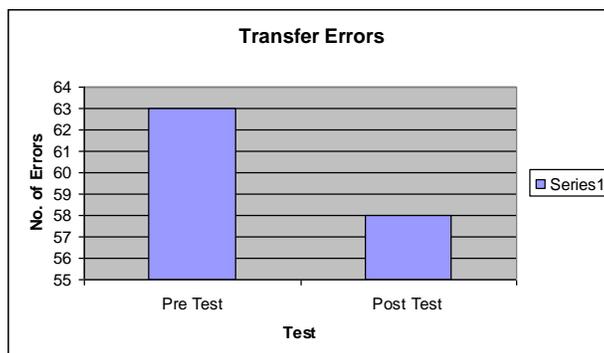


Figure 4 – Comparison of Transfer Errors in Pre and Post-test

Intralingual Errors

Figure 5 clearly indicates a marginal reduction in intralingual errors. Students acquire the grammatical structures only when they are ready and not while they are experimenting with their own hypotheses. It supports Seliger's (1979) view that grammar instruction may facilitate acquisition by developing the learner's conscious understanding of the structures that could be acquired later when they are ready for it. When students are testing their hypotheses and have reached the required developmental level, consciousness-raising has a positive effect.

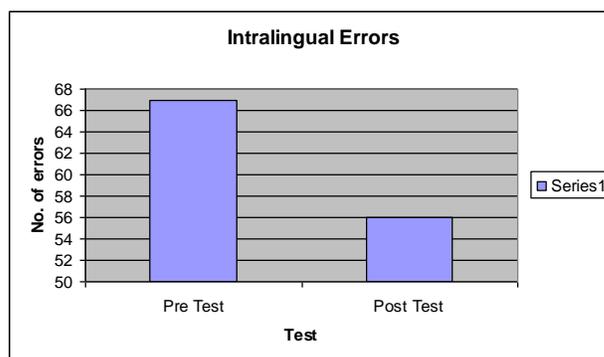


Figure 5– Comparison of Intralingual Errors in Pre and Post-test

Unique Errors

Figure 6 compares the scores of table 3 and table 6. It indicates that unique errors have reduced nearly by half after consciousness-raising. These errors were committed as a result of ignorance of L2 rules e.g. How Fatima visit to Bahrain? (Has Fatima visited Bahrain?). It supports the observations of Smith (1981) and Bialystok (1981) who argue that explicit knowledge can convert to implicit knowledge through practice. Consciousness-raising has good effect on eradicating errors caused by ignorance. Consciousness-raising has increased errors due to change of form: Yes/no question form

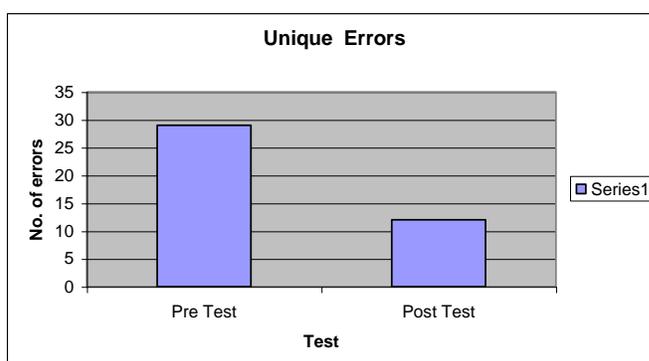


Figure 6– Comparison of Unique Errors in Pre and Post-test

into Wh question form and vice-versa, e.g. * What she do? (Does she read books?). This problem can be tackled if one type of form is taken at a time.

Errors in Yes/No Questions

These errors are compared for Pre test, Interpretation tasks and Post test shown in figure 7 derived from tables 3, 4 and 6.

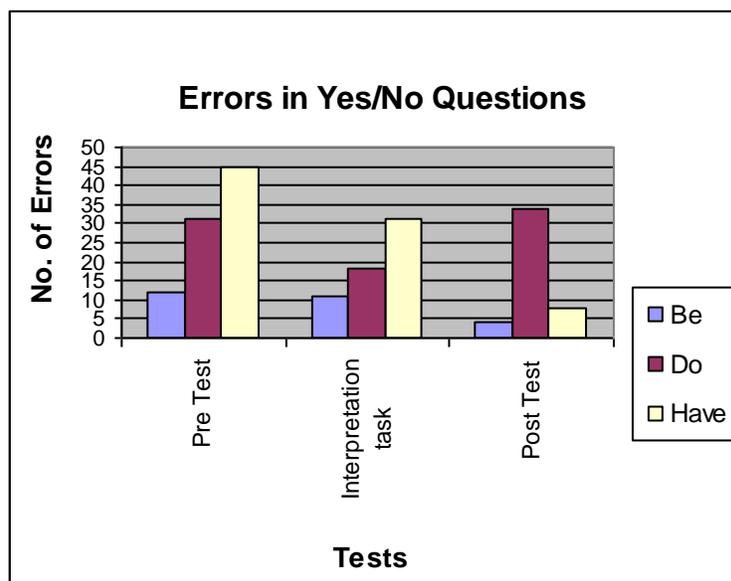


Figure 7 – Comparison of Errors in Yes / No questions

The least number of errors are associated with ‘be’ verb. Questions like ‘what **is** your name?’ are commonly used by students in conversations and have some previous implicit knowledge which gets triggered by consciousness-raising into further noticing, translating into automatic response. These observations are in accordance with Schmidt (1990) and Sharwood Smith (1981). The errors for the verb ‘do’ have increased maybe because most of the students have used ‘do’ in forming hypotheses and testing them. Students’ benefitted in the case of structures with ‘have’ because of raised awareness.

Errors in Wh Questions

Figure 8 shows the errors in Wh Question forms derived from tables 3, 4 and 6.

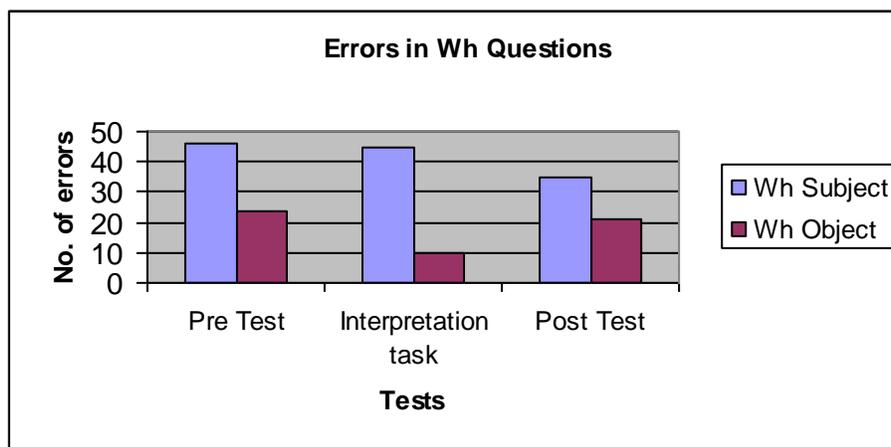


Figure 8 – Comparison of Errors in Wh questions

In questions where Wh-word is the subject of a sentence, inversion is not required and main verbs are used. It was observed that students had difficulty understanding the main verb hence, errors were committed but when the main verbs were familiar to the students less errors were committed as the order resembled that of Arabic (Verb + Subject +Object). This is in accordance with Ellis's (1994) positive transfer. When Wh-word is the subject of a sentence there is subject auxiliary inversion and same type of errors are noticed as in Yes/no questions.

Substitution errors

Figure 9 compares results from table 2 and table 5 for different categories of errors for Pre and Post-test. Substitution mistakes were the highest mistakes committed by the students, which decreased after consciousness-raising in case of Wh-word substitution. On the other hand it increased in the substitution of auxiliary verbs, because there are no auxiliary verbs like 'be', 'have', and 'do' in Arabic. Yes/No questions in Arabic begin with "hal", which is commonly substituted by 'is' and 'are' as they are unavailable in Arabic. This is in accordance with Ellis's (1994) negative transfer. Students generally use 'do' forms to test their hypothesis in question formation. In Arabic students pronounce 'how' as 'who' as there is no '/au/' diphthong. 'How' is mostly substituted for 'who' while forming questions, this is a mistake in pronunciation which gets translated into writing. It has been seen that consciousness-raising managed to reduce this type of mistake.

Students change the form of question from Yes/no to Wh and vice-versa, as they are not aware of the types of question forms in English. It also depends on which forms they are familiar with at that particular point. When they are made conscious about them through consciousness raising the mistakes are reduced. This is also true for Omissions and Additions.

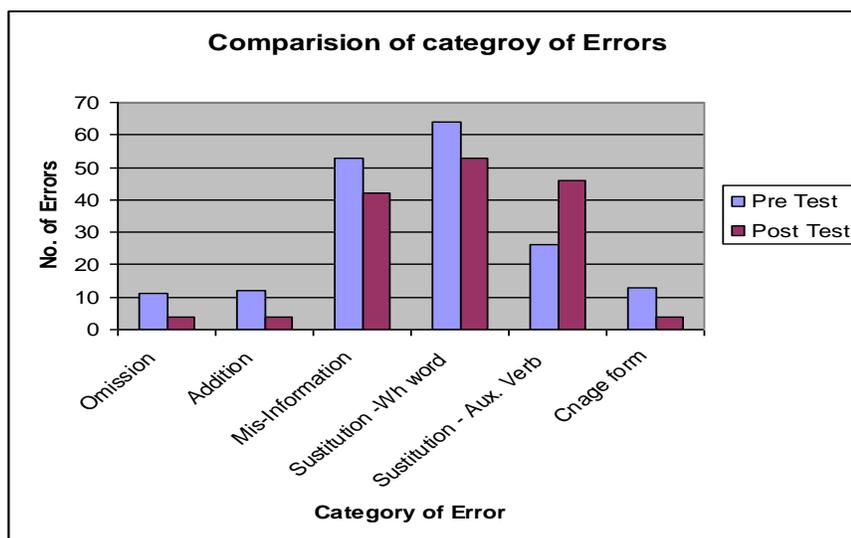


Figure 9 – Comparison of category of Errors

Limitations and Implications

This study has used only one Interpretation task as a follow up to the consciousness raising task. Maybe results would have been favourable if more exercises of varied patterns would have been used. The subsequent noticing of the target forms would have resulted in intake and successive acquisition of the target forms.

EFL learners make mistakes as they relate the new learning to what they already know about their own language. Sometimes the features of L1 are totally different from that of their mother tongue but if their consciousness is raised by presenting the real nature of the target language, the mistakes would be less. Hence it is necessary for the teachers to raise the consciousness of the learners about the new features of the language that they want students to acquire.

It is just not enough to raise the consciousness of the particular features but it must be followed by regular exercises at judicious levels where students notice the features of the target language till they acquire them.

Teachers can expose students to the authentic language by playing cassettes in the class. If they listen to conversations in various situations, consciousness raising can have better effect.

Conclusion

Consciousness-raising had a positive effect in reducing errors in L2 question formation, though the effect was quite marginal. It helped significantly, the errors committed, due to lack of ignorance of the rules of L2 question formation. No effect was seen when students were at the intralingual stage. They were just testing their hypotheses and were not ready to learn that particular structure. It is too early to map the results of consciousness-raising by using a production test as only one noticing exercise was administered at one point of time. It can be due to the implicit knowledge, which the students already possessed. If students observe the same structures in subsequent communicative input, their intake will be triggered through noticing and maybe that would lead to implicit learning after which they may appear in production. More research is needed in this field. It was seen that errors containing structures that frequently appeared in conversations showed improvement with consciousness-raising. It even helped to reduce errors caused due to ignorance by helping the learners to 'notice the gap'. If teachers expose students to conversational dialogues containing the structures to be targeted before consciousness raising then it may have better effect. Consciousness-raising is a pedagogic device, which can be applied to other areas of language teaching. It may not yield satisfactory results when applied to students whose understanding is not fully developed and who are used to depending on their teacher's

instruction. Future research should investigate consciousness-raising whenever there is a distinction between explicit and implicit learning and the ability of the students to use the language in real operating conditions.

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Appendix I

Pre Test

You have been given incomplete answers in the form of hints. Make complete questions for them.

1. _____

(Name - Muna)

2. _____

(Ahmed and Mohammed Friends- Yes)

3. _____

(I play - club)

4. _____

(Fatima visited – Bahrain- No)

5. _____

(She reads books - No)

6. _____

(Red bus –go- Salalah)

7. _____

(You –play football- No)

8. _____

(Muna teacher - Yes)

9. _____

(Students gone home - Yes)

10. _____

(Frances – teach reading)

Appendix 2

Direct task for Forming Questions

Read the information about forming questions in English. Then make sentences of your own. The nouns are underlined. The verbs are in bold. The Wh elements are underlined and Wh words are in italics.

Usually questions are made by changing the word order in a sentence i.e. placing the verbs before the subject. Generally, **BE**, **HAVE** and **DO** (auxiliary verbs) are used if the answer of the question is yes/no.

- A. If a sentence has an auxiliary **BE** verb (am, is, are, was, were), shift the verb (**BE**) to the beginning of the sentence to convert it into a question.

Auxiliary verb	Sentence	Question from the same sentence
BE	<u>She</u> is a good girl	Is <u>she</u> a good girl? (Correct)
	<u>They</u> were playing football.	Were <u>they</u> playing football? (Correct)
	<u>Ahmed</u> is eating an ice-cream.	Is <u>Ahmed</u> eating an ice-cream? (Correct)
	<u>I</u> am a boy.	Am <u>I</u> a boy? (Correct)

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

B. If the sentence has, HAVE (has, had) as the auxiliary verb; shift the verb (Have) to the beginning of the sentence to convert a sentence into a question.

Auxiliary verb	Sentence	Question from the same sentence
Have	<u>She</u> has lived in Oman.	Has <u>she</u> lived in Oman?(Correct)
	<u>They</u> have fought in the war.	Have <u>they</u> fought in the war? (Correct)
	<u>Ahmed</u> has finished his meal.	Are <u>Ahmed</u> finished his meal?(Incorrect)
	Raina has completed the work.	Has <u>Raina</u> completed the work? (Correct)

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

C. If there are no **BE** and **HAVE** verbs in a sentence, **DO** (do, does, did) auxiliary verb is used at the beginning of the sentence.

Auxiliary verb	Sentence	Question from the same sentence
DO	<u>She</u> watches T.V. everyday.	Does she watch T.V. everyday? (Correct)
	<u>They</u> swam in the sea..	Did they swim in the sea? (Correct)
	<u>Ahmed</u> sings everyday.	Is Ahmed sing everyday? (Incorrect)
	<u>The child</u> cries at night.	Does the child cry at night? (Correct)

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

D. What, where, who, whose, when, which, whom, why and how are used to form Wh questions.

These words are known as Wh words.

If a Wh word (who, what, which) is the subject of a sentence the position of the verb does not change. Do not shift the verb at the beginning of the sentence.

Wh word	Sentence	Question from the same sentence
Wh word as the subject of a sentence	<u>Ahmed</u> got a prize.	Who got a prize? (Correct)
	<u>The snake</u> bit Huda..	Bit what Huda? (Incorrect)
	<u>The redline bus</u> goes to Ibri.	Which bus goes to Ibri? (Correct)
	<u>The table</u> hit Said.	What hit Said? (Correct)

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

E. When Wh word is the object of a sentence, the verb is placed before the subject. If BE and HAVE auxiliary verbs are not in the sentence DO is used.

Wh word	Sentence	Question from the same sentence
Wh word as the object of a sentence	She bought <u>a car</u> .	<i>What did <u>she</u> buy?</i> (Correct)
	My teacher is <u>Ahmed</u> .	<i>Who is <u>your teacher</u>?</i> (Correct)
	I live in <u>Salalah</u>	<i>Where do <u>you live</u>?</i> (Correct)
	My name is <u>Mohammed</u>	<i>What your <u>name</u>?</i> (Incorrect)

Now write one sentence of your own using this rule.

Appendix 3

Grammar Task III

- A. Read the following questions and underline the verbs.
 B. If the questions are correct tick (♦) in column A but if they are incorrect tick (♦) in column B.

S.N	Sentence			Reasons if incorrect
		A (Correct)	B (Incorrect)	
1	Is he a good boy?			
2	Do create children great noise in the classroom?			
3	Ali a sportsman is?			
4	Have you finished your lunch?			
5	What he purchase did?			
6	Had Mustafa slept late at night?			
7	Does Humaid play football every day?			
8	Where Salalah is?			
9	Does eats Zavid sweets everyday?			
10	What Hilal confused?			
11	Who ate his food?			
12	A magic show there was?			

13	Which English teacher late comes?			
14	Has gone to UK he?			
15	Who is your best friend?			
16	Did you travel from Salalah to Muscat by ship?			
17	How many brothers do you have?			
18	What killed Ishaq ?			
19	Was she married to a doctor?			
20	The students their homework have done?			

C. Give reasons as to why you feel the sentences are incorrect.

Appendix 4

Sample of Students' Responses

A. Sources of Errors

The errors are listed under the following sources.

Transfer

1. Are Fatima visited Bahrain?
2. Are students gone home?
3. Are she read books?
4. Are you play football?

Intralingual

1. Does Ahmed and Mohammed friends?
2. Does Fatima visited Bahrain?
3. Do she read books?
4. Which bus go Salalah?

Unique

1. Which bus to go to Salalah?
2. Where do you do?
3. How Fatima visit to Bahrain?
4. Where the students went?

B. Categories of Errors

The errors are listed under the following categories.

Omission

1. Ahmed and Mohammed friends?
2. You play football?
3. What your name?
5. What you play?

Addition

1. What do you use play?
2. Has Fatima visited to Bahrain?
3. Are you students gone home?
4. Are Ahmed and Mohammed are friends?

Misinformation

1. Are Muna a teacher?
2. Have Ahmed and Mohammed Friends?

3. Did students gone home?
4. What is she do?

Substitution Wh word

Examples

1. What do you play?
2. What teach reading?
3. What bus goes to Salalah?
4. How teach reading?

Correct use

- (Where do you play?)
 (Who teaches reading?)
 (Which bus goes to Salalah?)
 (Who teaches reading?)

Substitution verb

1. Does Fatima visite Bahrain?
2. Is students gone home?
3. Is she read books?
4. Where are you play?

- (Has Fatima visited Bahrain?)
 (Have students gone home?)
 (Is she read books?)
 (Where do you play?)

Change form

1. Where is Fatima visited?
2. Where the students went?
3. What is she do?
4. Do you play in club?

- (Has Fatima visited Bahrain?)
 (Have students gone home?)
 (Does she read books?)
 (Where do you play?)