Comparing the effects of cognitive linguistics to task-supported instruction in developing EFL students learning of Reported Speech

Abstract

Due to its internal complexity, reported speech is a challenge for EFL learners. Most ESL/EFL learners get perplexed when reading grammar books and the explanations of their meaning and usage. As a solution, cognitive linguistic research, based on theory of conceptual blending and mirroring human cognition processes, is suggested to be of benefit for students. In this study, elements of cognitive linguistic analysis of English reported speech was incorporated into EFL learning materials. The research questions explored the influence of types of instruction for EFL development of English reported speech, as measured by a post-test, and a delayed post-test. Based on a quasi-experimental design, the participants of the study (N. 57) were distributed randomly on three groups: cognitive, task-supported, and control. Pedagogic consciousness-raising tasks were utilized to provide a context for meaningful practices for cognitive and task-supported groups. The statistical analysis revealed that participants from the cognitive and task supported groups outperformed the participants from the control group and that of the cognitive group outperformed that of the task supported.

Key words: Cognitive linguistics- task based instruction- English grammar- consciousness raising-

أثر التعليم القائم على اللغويات المعرفية في مقابل التعليم المدعوم بالمهام في تنمية تعلم الكلام غير المباشر لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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المستخلص:

يعد الكلام غير المباشر أحد التحديات لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية نظرًا لتعقيده الداخلي؛ حيث يقع معظم متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية أو كلغة أجنبية في حيرة من أمرهم عند قراءة الموضوعات التي تتناول الكلام غير المباشر من حيث معناه واستخدامه في كتب قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية، ومن ثم، فقد تمثل الأبحاث في مجال علم اللغويات المعرفي القائم على نظرية المزج المفاهيمي ودراسة العمليات المعرفية البشرية أحد السبل الفعالة للتغلب على صعوبة تعلم الكلام غير المباشر، ويهدف البحث الحالي إلى دمج عناصر التحليل اللغوي المعرفي للكلام غير المباشر في مواد تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ولقد هدفت أسئلة البحث الحالي إلى مقارنة أثر نوعي التعليم (القائم على اللغويات المعرفية & المدعوم بالمهام) في تنمية تعلم الكلام غير المباشر في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية طبقًا لنتائج الاختبار البعدي والاختبار التتبعي، واعتمادًا على التصميم شبه تجريبي تم تصنيف طلاب عينة البحث (ن =57) عشوائيًا إلى ثلاث مجموعات: المجموعة المعرفية، والمجموعة المدعومة بالمهام، والمجموعة الضابطة، كما تم الاعتماد على مهام رفع الوعي بطرق التدريس لتوفير سياق مناسب لتحقيق ممارسات هادفة للمجموعتين التجريبيتين (المعرفية، والمدعومة بالمهام) ولقد أسفرت نتائج التحليل الإحصائي عن تفوق طلاب المجموعتين التجريبيتين: المعرفية، والمدعومة بالمهام على طلاب المجموعة الضابطة، كما تفوق طلاب المجموعة المعرفية على طلاب المجموعة المدعومة بالمهام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغويات المعرفية – التعليم المدعوم بالمهام – قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية – رفع الوعي.

INTRODUCTION:

Cognitive linguistics and language teaching:

Cognitive linguistic (CL) theory of language and usage-based approaches to language pedagogy have been recently gaining recognition and reputation by second/foreign language acquisition and learning researchers (Robinson, Cadierno & Shirai, 2009; Tyler 2012). CLs assumes that language is composed solely of form-meaning pairings, or 'symbolic units' (Littlemore, 2009), underneath that syntax and morphology cannot be strictly separated from semantics and lexis; but rather, all linguistic units carry some sort of meaning. Investigating the meaning of such pairings can be linked to the exploration of the nature of conceptualizing the actions reported.

The CL movement started principally as a reaction to generative linguistics, which was felt to deal with language as a special-purpose constituent, detached from general cognition and the way language is actually used. CL treats language and its acquisition as usage-based and as reflecting the general cognitive abilities that operate in our interaction with the world (e.g. Holme, 2009). In this line of thought, linguistic phenomena are considered to be 'motivated' because they are more congruent with typical human perceptual and cognitive experience (Boers, 2011).

The main tenets of CL approaches may be summarized as follows (Bielak 2011; Boers & Lindstromberg 2008; Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007): Firstly, language is part of general cognition, not disconnected from it. Secondly, language knowledge is systematized into a structured network of conventionalized form-meaning mappings, named constructions, not a generative system. Thirdly, language is a tool for organizing, processing, and partaking information, which puts the main focus of linguistics on meaning (rather than on formal paradigms) and on multiword units (rather than on single words). In general, CL approaches do not assume strict separations either between lexicon and syntax or between pragmatics and semantics, but a dynamic, usage-based model of language processing and acquisition (Madlener, 2015).

Such views were illustrated by Robinson & Ellis (2008) in different forms; of which the most relevant to the current study are:

- *Functional analyses* of language which hold that constructions are symbolic, their defining properties of morphological, syntactic, and lexical form being associated with particular semantic, pragmatic, and discourse functions.

- *Usage-based theories* of language acquisition which hold that we learn constructions while engaging in communication; the interpersonal communicative and cognitive processes that everywhere and always shape language.

- *Construction Grammar and Phraseological theories* of language demonstrating that much of communication makes use of fixed expressions memorized as formulaic chunks, that language is rich in collocational and colligation restrictions and semantic prosodies, and that the phrase is the basic level of language representation where form and meaning come together with greatest reliability.

One yardstick for conceptualizing a particular event or message, based on the above assumptions, is the degree of engagement with the text which is inherently subjective, as it varies widely depending on the assessment of the speaker and listener (his/her background knowledge and choice of discourse focus); and how the event is reported in terms of linguistic units, word choice, proper syntactic form and the strategies of reporting. Accordingly, to explore and report the meaning of a language expression, one needs to determine the conventional linguistic choices, the context of use, and the background knowledge it appears to evoke (Madlener, 2015).

Such view of language uncovers the semantic motivation behind certain syntactic, grammatical, or morphological phenomena. Using selected, carefully adapted for unprepared audiences, and contextualized CL concepts in EFL instruction can reveal the perspective of a native speaker and make form-meaning mappings relatively transparent for EFL learners. Accordingly, the underlying conceptual characteristics of CLs make it a good candidate for the role of providing a comprehensive theory that could successfully support EFL instruction (Achard & Niemeier 2004; Tyler and Evans 2004; Tyler 2012).

Thus, in a nutshell it can be said that the concept and application behind the incorporation and application of the different concepts regarding the use of cognitive linguistics is based on the fact that the language is dependent and forms a major part of the overall human cognition process which includes human perception and categorization (Fauconnier, Gilles and Turner, 2003).

In addition to this, cognitive linguistics is also based on the fact that language and its learning approaches among individuals' changes from time to time and this is mainly dependent on their level of interaction as well as the environment that they are

provided with. Once we are done with the basics and definition of cognitive linguistics it is now important into further tiers of this form of linguistics so that its application in teaching English as a foreign language can be analyzed and evaluated on an effective scale and manner. (Tomasello, 2003)

A number of researchers conducted studies using CL theory to inform English EFL teaching in different fields. CL approaches were successfully applied to teaching of phrasal verbs (Liu 2010), metaphorical/idiomatic language (Lindstromberg & Boers 2005; Littlemore 2006; Boers & Lindstromberg. 2008; Yasuda 2010), and general grammar (prepositions: Lindstromberg 2010; Tyler & Evans 2004; Tyler Mueller & Ho 2010; tense and aspect: Niemeier & Reif 2008).

Despite the rich qualitative support for utilizing CLs to EFL instruction, the existing number of quantitative research studies is not adequate to provide solid empirical backing to EFL instructional benefits associated with CLs: that is, a number of the aforesaid studies failed to employ a rigorous research design or use statistical procedures that may give corresponding findings for generalization. Also, there is a dearth of research into how CL EFL applications can be paired or combined with best practices in language pedagogy. For example, Achard (2004) examined CL pairing with the Natural Approach, whereas Holme (2009) explored CL applications of total physical response (TPR) to the EFL classroom. While each of these pedagogic approaches are valid for a restricted range of language structures, it is difficult to apply them in all language-teaching contexts. Boers (2011) reached a similar conclusion about the limits of EFL applicability of CL theory: whereas concepts from metaphor research have been helpful for teaching figurative language, existing applied CL research does not promote learner recognition and retention of new figurative phrases, nor does it overcome the consequences of learners' individual differences, such as motivation, proficiency, and learning styles.

In sum, the generalizability of CL advantages for EFL instruction still appears to be limited, and it appears that much more enquiry needs to be conducted to further validate, refute or possibly refine the previously established benefits. As such, and to address the above-mentioned gaps as much as possible, the goal of the present study is to investigate the relevance of CL to EFL teaching. The study focuses on the efficacy of applying CL analysis of English reported speech to EFL instruction, using a mixed-methods design and supplementing CL approach with task-supported language teaching.

The concept of reported speech (RS): Why are they problematic for EFL learners?

In theory, speech reports are traditionally classified into two fundamentally different types: direct speech and indirect speech. Linguists typically consider direct speech as a form of quotation or a reference to linguistic objects like sentences or utterances, and indirect speech as an intentional clausal embedding, syntactically and semantically on a par with attitude ascriptions (*believes that*) and modal operators (*it is possible that*) (Maier, 2015). According to the influential demonstration theory of quotation, the difference between direct and indirect speech is due to the fundamental opposition between demonstration and description: Direct quotations are a type of demonstration that depict certain aspects of an utterance (such as its content, the accent or emotional state of the speaker) and give the audience an impression what it would be like to listen to the reported speaker directly. Indirect speech reports, however, *describe* aspects of the reported utterance, focusing mainly on its propositional content (Recanati, 2001).

In practice, RS is a very rich grammar area to teach as it can involve considerable manipulation of form. It is important to foreign language learners because, at this point, they are fine-tuning their communication skills to include expressing the ideas of others, as well as, their own opinions. Besides, RS is an essential lesson for all students who learn English as a foreign language, regardless of their age and interests. Different grammatical rules govern English and other languages reported speech, which can be confusing to those students who are learning English as a second or foreign language, and can be disastrous in real-life scenarios. Students tend to let their first language, in this case, Arabic, interfere with their understanding of how native English speakers turn direct speech into reported speech. This happens especially in the use of tenses. Once students use past tense in the main clause in English they are tempted to use present tense in the secondary clause, just like in Arabic. They need to be made aware that, when speaking English, they should also use the past tense in the secondary clause. However, they interpret the meaning of the sentence through the filter of their native language. For a sentence such as "He said he respected her", Arabic students tend to interpret that, at the present moment, he no longer respects her. They tend to say "He said he respects her" in order to communicate that he still respects her at the present moment. While this sort of misinterpretation could be confusing or even embarrassing in social conversation, it is important to remember that we are discussing students who are learning English for the purpose of working as translator or interpreters. Interpreting a

sentence such as "Steve said that women were given the right to speak and elect" to mean that the women used to have such rights, but no longer are, can lead to misinterpretation and awkward situations.

Students often find reported speech to be a problematic area of English grammar for many reasons. First, their native languages, Arabic in our case, has less formal distinction between direct speech and reported speech than that of English. Accordingly, they often make errors when they were required to convert direct speech into reported speech and vice versa. Second, the nature of the term itself which enforces different mental processes to change the speech from direct to indirect. This hinders students to master the rule and make many errors. They were often confused to change the verb tense, the pronoun, the demonstrative, and the adverbial time and place when they converted direct speech into reported speech. Word order in reported speech is another reason for the difficulty students face in reported speech. For example:

direct speech   : *'How old are you?'* Mr. John says.

reported speech   : *Mr. John asks me how old I am.*

Word order difference between direct and indirect speech is another area that is often affected when students attempt to convert direct speech into indirect speech (Celce- Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983). Smith (2010, p.1) confirms this stating: *"while in conversation, the correct use of reported speech isn't of such great importance, proper use of this form in writing is an absolute necessity to express clear meaning. Issues regarding word order, proper identification of subject, direct object and indirect object and situation; place and time, can make the conveyance of intended meaning extremely unlikely"*. As a result, and since reported speech is a part of English grammar, students have to master it in order to be able to produce correct utterances. Moreover, as students belong to the Faculty Education, they are prepared and expected to be teachers. They have to master English grammar so that they are able to give correct explanation to their students later on.

Teaching reported speech, then, is not such an easy task for most foreign language teachers since most languages differ in their syntactic and semantic structures and features and influenced by the different cultural aspects of students' first language, which increases the difficulties placed on students while reporting in a foreign language. As such, students should be given detailed explanations of the contextual problems they are facing as native speakers of Arabic. This will grant them a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, which will help them remember how to

correctly use the tenses when they turn direct speech into reported speech and vice versa. An issue we also need to address is the narrow understanding of the change of tenses in English exercise books and multiple choice tests. Many answer keys, as Irina (2015) suggests, favour using past tense in the secondary clause when it has been used in the main clause; in everyday life, these two variants are often interchangeable for native English speakers. Sometimes we encounter the situation where the sender of the message and the receiver are all situated at the same time, and then there is no sequence of the tenses; e.g. "Sam said the run was leaking a bit" is usually considered correct when in fact "Sam said the run is leaking a bit" is also equally correct. Tests often do not take this into account, and students who have a good intuition of the different situations do not benefit from the rigid answer keys. In addition, there are some different cognitive and metacognitive processes that students should make on reporting somebody's word from direct into indirect and vice versa.

CL to teach Reported Speech

The CL approach to teach EFL/ESL is based on blending theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), which presumes that the phenomenon (reported speech) set up certain mental space structures. Such setting-up happens through manipulating various markers (e.g. *that*, *if*, *when*, *unless*, *whether*) and using different verb forms. Coherence and validity of reported phrases depend on the successful configuration of all the elements constituting their structure, as individually construed by a given speaker (Bielak, 2011). The CL approach takes into account the contextual needs and formal characteristics of the reported forms as they fit in each context of use. Thus, linguistic tools commonly employed by native English speakers, can be utilized to create felicitous reported phrases, while also demonstrating the dependence of such phrases on the communicative context and the speaker's stance toward a given situation.

An important insight from Bielak and Pawlak (2011) work is the idea of compositionality of the reported phrases: by analyzing combinations of regular and less regular reported constructions and identifying patterns of inferential structure and metonymic reasoning involved, it is essential to single out the elements constituting reported constructions and make those aspects of meaning directly analyzable. Treating the reported phenomenon as meaning-form 'packages' (Achard & Niemeier 2004) allows us to break down composite grammatical meanings into separate parts and subsequently highlight the form–meaning connections of those parts explicitly to learners. A careful adaptation of these CL insights into EFL materials has the ability to highlight

individual aspects of reported meaning and also outline patterns that learners could readily rely upon in the subsequent construction of their own reported sentences.

Explicit instruction and task-based language teaching

CL theory can be incorporated into the classroom through explicit instruction, the effectiveness of which has been firmly established in prior research (Norris and Ortega 2000; Ellis 2002; Spada and Tomita 2010). In particular, the underlying tenets of *focus on form* (Long 2000), *noticing* (Schmidt 2001), and *consciousness-raising* (Sharwood, Smith 2007) emphasize the effectiveness of helping the learner notice and understand key meaning motivations behind target forms. Focus on form or consciousness-raising is instrumental in helping learners notice linguistic cues, especially when targeting complex, polysemous, or potentially ambiguous linguistic forms (Fordyce 2013; DeKeyser and Prieto Botana 2015). Furthermore, proponents of CL theory have suggested combining CL principles with selective focus on form (Achard & Niemeier 2004; Cadierno 2008; Holme 2009).

However, viable pedagogical solutions are needed to make these novel insights appear approachable to the learners. The paradigm of task-based (supported) language teaching (TBLT) is highly compatible with the basic CL assumptions since both provide a rich initial ground for further collaboration. Having emerged as a natural progression from communicative language teaching and shifting the pedagogic focus onto meaning-oriented and learner-centered instruction (Van den Branden et al. 2009), TBLT has been gaining increased popularity recently (e.g Ahmadian, 2012; Bin Tahir, 2017; Ellis 2009, 2011, 2017; Samuda & Bygate, 2008),.

While there exist a number of definitions for tasks, this study will rely on the comprehensive operationalization of task, provided in Ellis (2017: 5–6): "A task is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome… it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms". Thus, this pedagogical viewpoint of tasks, presupposes language use for input, output and interaction.

Tasks provide learners with an opportunity to produce language in a context that resembles or aims to recreate an authentic language acquisition environment (Révész 2011: 438). While the focus on communication and meaning remains the primary element of TBLT, focus on form incorporated into instruction in line with the learners' developmental needs is crucial for boosting EFL acquisition (Ellis 2017; Madlener 2015; Van den Branden *et al.* 2009). Thus, TBLT is considered to be the most felicitous

approach that can be used if focusing on both form and meaning which is the target of the current study.

The value of using task-based methodology in combination with CL insights has been explicitly addressed in Cadierno (2008). In Robinson, Cadierno, & Shirai, (2009), they used pedagogic tasks to measure how the manipulation of cognitive complexity can facilitate the development of EFL construal patterns. Madlener (2015) added to this issue. He used targeted pedagogic tasks (based on prior corpus-based research) to teach usage patterns of the English *like* constructions. Finally, a number of experiments conducted at Georgetown University reported in Tyler (2012) used various versions of pedagogic tasks to deliver CL insights to learners.

While it is a promising direction to combine both CL and TBLT, the relative dearth of studies at this point in time does not allow us to make comprehensive conclusions about the best ways to combine their insights. This study thus aims to address this gap by complementing the applied CL focus with the use of pedagogic tasks.

Task-supported instruction and consciousness-raising

The instructional context of this study is closer to 'task-supported' rather than 'task-based' since it takes the form of encoded usage rather than realization as purposeful use (Ellis 2009). In such context, tasks are not the main medium of instruction but rather one of the key components of the general syllabus, providing learners with semi-authentic contexts for practicing target forms (Samuda and Bygate 2008: 60). As it will become clearer from the 'Methods' section, constraints of the instructional context in the English Language and Translation Dept. in the college made it impossible to re-conceptualize the existing curriculum as entirely task-based. Relying on tasks as means of support, rather than the main component of instruction was more feasible in the provided educational environment.

In the present study, the task support was realized in form of the *consciousness-raising tasks*. Eckerth (2008a: 92) defines consciousness-raising tasks as 'form-focused tasks' that can be used as 'a pedagogical device to direct learners' attention to specific EFL forms; reported speech in our case, while they are communicating in the EFL'. The main purpose of consciousness-raising tasks is to give learners the opportunity to explore target features in a focused context while simultaneously attending to completing task guidelines.

The efficacy of consciousness-raising tasks was proven in multiple EFL contexts (Crivos & Luchini (2012); De la Fuente 2006; Eckerth 2008a). Specifically, Crivos & Luchini (2012) examined how grammar-focused consciousness-raising tasks affected proficiency gains in acquiring word order, finding that consciousness-raising tasks were a more powerful teaching method than formal instruction. In De la Fuente's (2006) study on the efficacy of using consciousness-raising tasks for instruction of vocabulary, participants of the task-based group performed statistically significantly better on the delayed EFL vocabulary retrieval test than the traditional group participants, which suggests a positive long-term effect associated with consciousness-raising tasks. Eckerth (2008a) reported that learners' language scaffolding skills are necessary for successful completion of consciousness-raising tasks. Eckerth's (2008b) study focused on investigating the effects of dialogic tasks onto specific learning gains and on the process of task completion itself. The findings demonstrated that task completion yielded significant task-specific learning gains both immediately and after passage of some time. Furthermore, consciousness-raising tasks were associated with greater linguistic complexity in terms of both perception and production.

These findings provide support for using consciousness-raising tasks as a way to deliver guided focus on form in EFL settings, that is, helping highlight CL insights in a meaningful usage context.

METHODS

Target structure

The author conducted preliminary small pilot enquiry in free online learner corpora regarding the most commonly occurring errors in reported speech. It was found out that the range of constructions carrying -the time construction (e.g. *he will give a speech tonight/he said he would give a speech that night/he gave a speech three days ago/ he said he had given a speech three days ago*)—as opposed to the pragmatic/speech act—represents the biggest challenge for EFL learners. In other words, learners experience the most difficulty (as exhibited through imprecise or erroneous tense sequences and/or other time indicators) when attempting to highlight actions they are reporting.

Problems of the study

There were three problems formulated in this study and can be outlined in three question: 1) 'How far have the EFL students in Uklat As Sokoor, Qassim University, mastered reported speech?' 2) 'What types of errors do they make in reported speech?' and 3) 'What are the possible causes of students' errors in reported speech?'

Research questions and hypotheses

This study intended to examine the general effects of task-supported focus on form upon the instruction of reported speech, as well as the relative significance of CL insights included into the instructional treatment. The study addressed three research questions:

Research Question 1: To what extent does task-supported instruction have an effect on EFL students' development of reported speech constructions?

Research Question 2: To what extent does task-supported instruction with added CL insights have an effect on EFL students' development of reported speech constructions?

Research Question 3: How far does the addition of CL insights into task-supported instruction produce greater EFL students' development of reported speech constructions than task-supported instruction alone?

The term '*CL insights*' refers to CL explanations added to pedagogic materials (Ellis, 2017). CL insights were part of instruction for only one of the groups (referred to as the *cognitive* group hereafter). The group that received instruction without the CL insights will be referred to as the *task-supported* group. Finally, *effect for EFL development* is operationalized as performance on the post-test and the delayed post-test (see section on study design).

While there does exist considerable research pertaining to the effectiveness of CL in EFL teaching, its total scope and limitations do not yet allow for directional hypotheses; accordingly, it would be most appropriate to frame the research hypotheses as null statements.

H1: Task-supported instruction will not produce any effect for the EFL students' development of reported speech constructions.

H2: Task-supported instruction with added CL insights will not produce an effect for EFL students' development of reported speech constructions.

H3: The addition of CL insights into task-supported instruction will not produce greater EFL students' development of reported speech constructions than task-supported instruction alone.

Participants

The data were collected in the department of English language and translation at a large university in the Middle province in KSA; Qassim University. The study included three main groups— *cognitive*, *task-supported*, and *control*. The participants in the three groups share the same background knowledge and experience in English and have been subjected to the pre-test to control their incomes and all of them were male, due to the university regulations, in their mid-20s. The total number of participants in the three groups was 57. A key limitation of this population sample is that the influence of L1 on the participants' prior conceptualization of the concept of reported speech was not assessed. However, qualitative analysis of errors in learner corpora demonstrated that learners still struggle with forming grammatical tense sequences and assuming context-appropriate stance for expressing reported speech in the foreign language. To ensure that there were no differences in the prior level of mastery of reported speech, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was administered on pretest data (see the 'Results' section for full report).

All participants previously studied English with various degrees of instructional intensity in intermediate and secondary schools; however, due to lack of uniform reporting on the participants' prior educational contexts, their proficiency was captured only through standardized test scores: everyone earned a minimum of 60% on the Intensive Course Final Exam prior to being admitted to department.

The treatment types received by each group were as follows:

1. the *control* group ($N = 22$) received no explicit classroom instruction targeting reported speech and only completed the three tests;

2. the *task-supported* group ($N = 18$) received instruction targeting reported speech using the traditional teacher-facilitated explanation and pedagogic tasks, that is, materials for task-supported group did not include explanations guided by CL insights;

3. the *cognitive* group ($N = 17$) received teacher-facilitated presentations of reported speech as well as pedagogic tasks. Teacher-used instructional materials did include CL explanations of the target form.

Instructional procedure

The entire process of data collection took six weeks. During the first week, all three groups completed pretests. The pretest scores were approximately the same across all three groups (25, 24.5, and 23.5 for the cognitive, task-supported, and control groups, respectively; later explained in details in the section on test administration and scoring for details on one-way ANOVA).

The treatment for the cognitive and task-supported groups took place over the course of six weeks. Following its completion, immediate and delayed (10 days after the end of instruction) post-tests were administered to measure relative gains that may have happened in the course of the treatment. Each of the tests took approximately 50 minutes to complete.

Tests

The tests created for this study attempted to address both implicit and explicit knowledge and reflected production and comprehension aspects of reported speech usage. They consisted of four distinct parts: controlled production, free production, 'grammaticality judgment/comprehension: pictures', and 'grammaticality judgment/comprehension: sentences'.

Controlled and free production parts, where students were asked to fill in the blanks and describe a picture respectively, thus demonstrating how they used the target form in specific contexts, aimed to target primarily implicit knowledge. Grammaticality judgment/comprehension parts, on the other hand, were supposed to target explicit as well as implicit knowledge.

The maximum number of points on each test was 49, as demonstrated in the cross-sectional breakdown below:

1. controlled production (13 items, 29 points);

2. free production (4 items, 8 points);

3. grammaticality judgment and comprehension: pictures (4 items, 4 points);

4. grammaticality judgment and comprehension: sentences (8 items, 8 points).

Test forms included discourse excerpts representing different genres and registers from the Corpus of American Contemporary English to recreate authentic usage patterns of reporting. Test images were obtained through searches on Web sites. Each of the four test subsections had three possible versions (A, B, and C), and those were counterbalanced for each test installment (pretest,

post-test, and delayed post-test) and comprehensive answer keys were created for each version.

Instructional materials

Each experimental group received three teacher-facilitated PowerPoint presentations (disseminated over six weeks) and six pedagogic tasks. The length of each presentation described below was about 50 minutes. In other words, both groups received explicit pedagogical treatment of the same length. However, even though both groups addressed metalinguistic aspects of language, they did so in different ways: that is, each group's presentation content was reporting specific (see next two sections). In addition, the pedagogic tasks (see separate section) were the same for both treatment groups.

Cognitive group

All cognitive presentations were informed by a single CL account of reporting (Matsumoto, 2008) and aimed to represent the CL insights in a learner-accessible manner. The first presentation focused on exposing students to the meaning-centered and compositional reality of language. The corresponding mental steps needed for reporting were presented to students as follows:

1. Start with thinking about the background knowledge in question. What is realistic?

2. What is the possible or projected time of reporting?

3. Pick the pronouns, tenses and related vocabulary that will reflect such an arrangement.

4. Start reporting using the above mentioned insights.

5. Check if your sentence makes sense in the given context.

A cognitive chart was designed to serve as a one-stop reminder of all these steps, mirroring the cognitive processes necessary for creating felicitous reports. Cognitive group participants could use it during the teacher-facilitated instruction and during the pedagogic tasks that they completed in class. Even though students were encouraged to bring their copies of the cognitive chart to every class, it was noted that not all participants made active use of it.

Furthermore, the second presentation, demonstrated the underlying meanings of the English tenses and the related vocabulary and how they are used to express a variety of semantic configurations. The third presentation aimed at showing the participants how reporting is shaped within specific usage contexts and how surrounding context-specific information might affect the tense composition of the sentence. It demonstrated how

to shift from direct to indirect speech explaining the necessary grammatical changes that should be made because the spoken words by someone may be reported in another place at a different time, and perhaps by a different person. These shifts are as follows:

- Personal pronouns in the first person, which refer to the speaker, are shifted to second or third person, unless the speaker is reporting him/herself. The second person pronoun, which refers to the listener, is shifted to first or third, according to the identity of the listener.
- Demonstratives and deictic adverbs which refer to the here and now (this, these, here, now) are replaced by more remote forms (that, those, there, then).
- Verb tenses of the statement (reported clause) are 'back-shifted' from a present to a past tense and from a past tense to a past perfect if the introductory verb is used in the past simple tense. It should be noted that the form of the tense does not change, i.e., simple, continuous and perfect remain the same, except from the past simple to the past perfect.
- Reported interrogatives and imperatives follow the normal word order of declarative sentences.
- Changing of some models yet some others remain unchanged.

In addition, the later presentations highlighted the process of reporting different types of sentences; assertive, imperative, interrogative, exclamatory, and the optative ones. The cognitive PPT presentations thus explained the general system behind the notion of reporting sentences by focusing on meaning behind every single grammatical form and its usage contexts. In short, in this process of consciousness raising and pedagogical explanations, the students had to consider and keep in mind the different characteristics mentioned earlier when pondering the compositional meaning and implications behind a given reported sentence:

Task-supported group

The task-supported group received a traditional presentation of the English reported speech informed by EFL textbooks and 'ESL Grammar Book' (Celce-Murcia 1983) through which emphasis had been placed on the set of grammatical changes that are necessary to be made while reporting. During the first week of instructional treatment, learners were given an overview of reporting all types of sentences. During the second and third weeks, the focus was on tense combinations in all types of reported sentences. The tense sequences were highlighted according to the

explanations and descriptions provided in the traditional ESL materials. In the remaining weeks, the focus was on practicing different types of sentences using these forms in various contexts, as provided by the textbooks.

While they received a traditionally balanced presentation of various aspects of the reporting forms, participants of the task-supported group were not asked to engage in conscious reflections on meaning behind different tense pairings beyond the range discussed in textbooks and beyond the meaning context provided by pedagogic tasks.

Pedagogic tasks

Both treatment groups completed a shared set of pedagogic tasks to support the teacher-facilitated PPT presentations. The reported sentences in these tasks aimed to resemble the authentic context of target language use as much as possible. All tasks were consciousness-raising in the sense that they directed subjects' attention toward the way of reporting sentences and that reporting sentences is crucial for their successful completion.

All tasks and their key characteristics are captured in Table 1.

Table 1:

Pedagogic tasks used in the study

Time	Task order and name		Knowledge/skills addressed through task	Foci	Gist of task
WEEK 1	1	Sentence strips	Sequence of tenses between sentences, time markers, and verb choice	Controlled production, comprehension; grammar task	In groups of 2–3, students discuss meaning of sentence strips representing the different types of sentences to be reported, sequence of tenses, the use of different time markers and verbs.
	2	Understanding background knowledge	Speaker knowledge	Consciousness-raising, comprehension; grammar	Students are given four sentences and asked to explain background knowledge that

Time	Task order and name		Knowledge/skills addressed through task	Foci	Gist of task
				task	had to precede formation of each type, tying the rationale to form (tense choices).
WEEK 2-3	3	Hedging in data commentaries	Tenses, verbs, sentences and context knowledge	Controlled production, comprehension; grammar task	Adapted from Swales and Feak (2004), this task elicited students' written data commentary of available statistical information within provided table. Students had to frame their data commentary as hypotheses and predictions using conditionals.
	4	Global warming causes	Tenses, verbs, sentences and context knowledge	Comprehension, controlled production; grammar task	Students discuss a political speech using presentations and speech acts, then other students try to report the highlights of the speech. For content knowledge, students relied on materials and class discussions from earlier in the semester.
WEEK 4-5-6	5	Text repair: break-up letter	Tenses, verbs, sentences and context knowledge	Consciousness-raising, controlled production; communicat	Students identify ill-formed sentences in a break-up letter and rewrite the letter in own way

Time	Task order and name	Knowledge/skills addressed through task	Foci	Gist of task
			ive task	supplying correct forms based on understanding/interpretation of local semantic context.
6	Seating chart task	Tenses, verbs, sentences and context knowledge	Free production; grammar task	Working in groups, students try to seat people of different and sometimes conflicting backgrounds around two dining table and reporting each other's sentences using the grammatical role. The sentences listed could not be satisfied in their entirety, so students had to try to satisfy as many reported sentences as they possibly could.

The results of this instructional intervention are reported in the next section.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

Using SPSS v.22, one-way ANOVA was administered on pretest data to ensure that all groups were at the same proficiency level (cognitive vs. task-supported: $p = .904$, standard error (SE) = 1.6; task-supported vs. control: $p = .86$, SE = 1.5; cognitive vs. control: $p = .60$, SE= 1.55).

Descriptive statistics for all three groups by testing task and an overview of mean overall scores obtained across three tests by all groups are presented in the following tables (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2:

Descriptive statistics by testing task

Testing task	Pretest means			Post-test means			Delayed post-test means		
	Cog	Task	Control	Cog	Task	Control	Cog	Task	Control
Controlled production	13.59	12.61	13.18	22.06	18.11	14.82	21.29	16.56	14.32
Free production	3.8	4.11	3.55	6.24	5.56	3.77	6.29	5.61	4.45
Comprehension: pictures	2.6	2.83	2.91	3.24	2.94	2.77	2.71	2.50	2.50
Comprehension: sentences	5.12	4.89	3.95	6.65	4.94	4.23	6.24	5.11	4.14

Table 3:

Descriptive statistics of mean test scores across three groups

Score	Group	Mean	SD	*N*
Pretest score	Cognitive	25.18	5.27	17
	Task	24.44	4.33	18
	Control	23.59	4.83	22
Post-test score	Cognitive	38.06	3.25	17
	Task	31.67	5.35	18
	Control	25.59	4.85	22
Delayed post-test score	Cognitive	36.53	3	17
	Task	29.78	4.44	18
	Control	25.45	5.71	22

Table 3 shows that mean pretest scores were quite similar for all three groups, with 25.18, 24.44, and 23.59 for cognitive, task-supported, and control group, respectively, the average standard deviation (SD) among all three groups was 4.77. On the post-test, average score of the cognitive group was 38.06, the one for the task-supported group was 31.67, and the one for the control group

was 25.59. In addition, the SD for the entire sample was 6.871. Thus, the average score of cognitive group participants expanded by 13 points, that of task-supported group participants grew by 7 points, and that of control group increased by 2 points. Moreover, while the delayed post-test scores were 36.53, 29.78, and 25.45 for the cognitive, task-supported, and control groups, respectively, which demonstrate an average loss of about 2 points for both treatment groups; the score of control group stayed approximately the same, declining only by an average of one tenth of a point between the post-test and the delayed post-test.

ANOVA comparison for all three groups

In the present study, a repeated-measures within-subjects ANOVA was chosen for the main statistical procedure because the participants of the three groups contributed to the statistical test means at different points of the experiment. To ensure equality among the participants; Mauchly's test of sphericity was conducted. The p-value obtained on this test (.448) was not significant; therefore, the condition of sphericity could be considered satisfied for the present data and study context. Normality assumptions (skewness and kurtosis) were also met for this data set. The data in Table 4below provide an overview of tests of within-subjects effects, while Table 5 reports the results of multivariate tests.

Table 4:

ANOVA (Repeated measures): Tests of within-subjects effects

Source		df	Mean square	F	Sig.**
Time	Sphericity Assumed	2	881.486	70.66	.000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.942	907.824	70.66	.000
	Huynh-Feldt	2.000	881.486	70.66	.000
	Lower-bound	1.000	1762.973	70.66	.000
Time * GROUP	Sphericity Assumed	4	170.188	13.64	.000
	Greenhouse-Geisser	3.884	175.273	13.64	.000
	Huynh-Feldt	4.000	170.188	13.64	.000
	Lower-bound	2.000	340.376	13.64	.000

** $p < .01$.

Table 5:

ANOVA (Repeated measures): Multivariate tests for performance across time in three groups

Effect		Value	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Time	Pillai's Trace	0.74	77.08	.000	0.74
	Wilks' Lambda	0.26	77.08	.000	0.74
	Hotelling's Trace	2.91	77.08	.000	0.74
	Roy's Largest Root	2.91	77.08	.000	0.74
Time * GROUP	Pillai's Trace	0.54	9.86	.000	0.27
	Wilks' Lambda	0.47	12.12	.000	0.31
	Hotelling's Trace	1.11	14.44	.000	0.36
	Roy's Largest Root	1.10	29.7	.000	0.52

Table 4 shows that the *p* value is <.001, demonstrating that the differences between the subjects' mean scores on all three tests were statistically significant for each treatment group pairing (i.e. between cognitive and task-supported groups, between task-supported and control groups, and between cognitive and control groups).

As can be seen from Table 5, multivariate tests focusing on the interaction between time and group variables demonstrate medium-strength effect sizes (partial eta squared). To check the specific areas of interaction between groups, Scheffe's post hoc comparison was conducted; the results are represented in Table 6 below.

Table 6:

ANOVA (Repeated measures): Multiple comparisons, Scheffe's post hoc test

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard Error	Sig.
Cognitive	Task	4.63*	1.251	.002
	Control	8.38*	1.195	.000
Task	Cognitive	−4.63*	1.251	.002
	Control	3.75*	1.176	.009
Control	Cognitive	−8.38*	1.195	.000
	Task	−3.75*	1.176	.009

* $p < .01$.

Results presented in Table 6 suggest that the relationships between all group pairings were statistically significant with consistently observable $p < .01$.

Furthermore, and to compare performance on each testing task (free, controlled, and comprehension), ANOVAs were produced to determine the areas of greatest and least improvement over the period of the study. These results presented in the next sections:

ANOVA for controlled production. Overall differences for controlled production were found to be statistically significant ($F = 8.4$, $p = .001$, partial eta-squared = 0.237). thus, and to avoid possible redundancy in discussion, only the data demonstrating actual interactions between groups will be reported. Scheffe's post hoc test revealed that the differences between the two treatment groups and the control group were statistically significant, while the differences between the task-supported and the control groups were not.

ANOVA for free production. For the free production part of the tests (interaction between time and group: $F = 3.5$, $p = .01$, partial eta squared = 0.11), there is significant differences between the cognitive and the control groups, as well as between the task-supported and the control groups, were found to be statistically significant, and insginficant difference between the cognitive and the task-supported groups.

ANOVA for 'comprehension: pictures'. For the 'comprehension: pictures' part, none of the interactions between groups proved to be statistically significant (interaction between time and group: $F = 1.0$, $p = .4$, partial eta squared = 0.03). This may be related to the small number of items in this part of the test (four total).

ANOVA for 'comprehension: sentences'. For the final part of the test, 'comprehension: sentences', marginal effect size (F = 3.4, p = .04, partial eta squared = 0.06) was found and thus the differences between all group pairings proved to be statistically significant.

Accordingly, these findings suggest that controlled production parts of the tests were the areas of biggest improvement over the course of the study.

comparison between cognitive and task-supported groups on overall test gain scores

Finally, and to have an overall idea about the gains of the two treatment groups; the descriptive statistics pertaining to the overall test scores and the production scores indicate clear differences between post-test outcomes in cognitive as opposed to task-supported groups. The following tables (table 7 and 8) describes this:

Table 7:

Descriptive statistics for overall gains scores: Cognitive vs. task-supported groups

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE mean
Cognitive	17	12.82	5.01	1.21
Task-supported	18	7.28	5.43	1.28

As can be seen from the table above, the mean overall gain score for the cognitive group was 12.82, while the mean overall gain score for the task-supported group was 7.28, with the SD mean in the low 5+ range (SE mean = 1.216 and 1.280 for the cognitive and the task-supported groups, respectively). The overview of the t-test comparison between these trends is provided in Table 10.

Table 8:

T-test on overall gains scores: Cognitive and task-supported groups

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
3.13	33	.004	5.55

An independent samples t-test procedure was conducted to measure differences between two distinct groups; cognitive and task-supported, through comparing individual/independent scores on two sets of tests. Levene's test for equality of variances

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($p =$.826; $F = 0.049$) confirmed equal variances for this analysis. The two-tailed test for equality of means proved to be statistically significant with $p = .004$ with t (33) = 3.133.

Summary of results

Comparing the pre-test and the post-test, the first treatment group (cognitive), obtained greater production score and overall test score gains than both the task-supported and the control groups did. On the other hand, participants of the two treatment groups were able to obtain greater test score gains than the participants of the control group and thus providing support for the value of task-supported classroom instruction for learning reported speech.

DISCUSSION

To start interpreting the meaning of the results obtained, answers to the research questions will be first addressed and then general implications of the findings will be highlighted.

Research Question 1: To what extent does task-supported instruction have an effect on EFL students' development of reported speech constructions?

Research Question 2: To what extent does task-supported instruction with added CL insights have an effect on EFL students' development of reported speech constructions?

Research Question 3: How far does the addition of CL insights into task-supported instruction produce greater EFL students' development of reported speech constructions than task-supported instruction alone?

In response to the first research question, the initial null hypothesis assumed is rejected since statistical analysis revealed that the task-supported group outperformed the control group on both the post-test and the delayed post-test and that the differences between the scores of these two groups were statistically significant.

The second null hypothesis (research question 2) is also rejected as the cognitive group outperformed the control group on both the post-test and the delayed post-test and the differences were statistically significant.

The above results demonstrated that the two treatment groups outperformed the control group and thus showing that explicit instruction of reported speech supported by pedagogic tasks is more effective for EFL development of this target form than no instruction.

In addition, and in response to the third question, the third null hypothesis is also rejected for the statistical analyses revealed that the cognitive group outperformed the task-supported group on both the post-test and the delayed post-test.

In addition to the general trends regarding effectiveness of instruction types, the analysis of post-test data revealed some other trends that worth highlighting and discussing in details in the following sections:

Improved comprehension scores. Prior research has generally hypothesized that comprehension knowledge is supposed to precede production and, accordingly, the receptive knowledge should exceed the productive knowledge for EFL learners (Ellis 2004; Fordyce, 2013). This hypothesis was confirmed by the pretest scores on comprehension sections. All groups were initially at approximately the same level. After the instructional treatment, almost all of the cognitive group participants made steady gains on the comprehension sections, while for participants of the task-supported and control groups, the gains in comprehension scores were not as consistent. Even though the numbers of comprehension items in the tests were too small for inferential statistics, this small-scale trend is suggestive of improved comprehension of the reported speech rule that resulted from exposure to the CL treatment.

Improved production scores. Production items of the tests were where most development took place between the pretest and the post-test, suggesting that the instructional treatment was contributory for indorsing production. It can be inferred that pedagogical tasks and the teacher-facilitated instructional presentations were effective methods for developing the participants' production skills. Between the two treatment groups, the cognitive group outperformed the task-supported group on the production parts of the test, and the difference was calculated to be statistically significant with $p < .01$. This result indicates that the amalgamation of the two instructional methods (cognitive and task-supported) was more effective in improving the participants' production of reported speech than the task-supported treatment alone. A dearth of further research focusing specifically on production aspects of reported phrases would be necessary, before any additional certain conclusions could be drawn in this respect.

Improvement in overall test gain scores. The ANOVA and other comparisons measuring gains between tests revealed that the difference between the gains made by participants of the two experimental groups was statistically significant with $p < .001$. This statistical finding proposes that the grouping of both the CL presentations of the rule accompanied by pedagogical tasks was

generally more effective than the task-supported treatment alone: double gains were achieved by the cognitive group participants compared to those of the task-supported group.

It would be logic to hypothesize here that the presentation of rule of reported speech to the cognitive group was more consistent and meaningful because it had a consistent groundwork in the shape of CL presentation of language. In fact, one of the great challenges for FL teachers has been the implementation of such procedures that help learners process comprehensible input while at the same time giving them opportunities for focusing on form and language awareness. (Pishghadam, Khodadady & Rad, 2011). Accordingly, the performance of the cognitive group may be attributed to the general focus on meaning and the CL insights emphasizing the role of local context and speaker's background knowledge when reporting the phrases provided.

Furthermore, since both experimental groups demonstrated improvement on test scores between the pretest and the post-test and since tasks were the instructional variable shared by both groups, it is highly likely that tasks were the vital instructional feature contributing to students' development within both treatment groups. This actually has been put into practice by introducing focused tasks which were designed to focus learners' attention on specific properties of the linguistic features (reported speech). This included incidental attention to form that can be performed preemptively or reactively through feedback. It can be instant as an immediate response to learners' error, or delayed till the end of communicative tasks (Ellis, 2017).

Taking these trends into a broader theoretical context, it is important to highlight the fact that focus on form alone (as received by the task-supported group) was not demonstrated to be as effective as the focus on both form and meaning, i.e. tasks combined with CL insights in the form of conscious raising and interpretation activities. The consciousness-raising tasks produced gains for both treatment groups supporting the underlying theory of language assumed in teacher-facilitated presentation that plays a further facilitative role for EFL development. It is possible that tasks helped further contextualize the meaning conveyed through the cognitive explanation, and thus the use of tasks may have further enhanced the performance of the cognitive group. However, this is just interpretation to the results since the study did not have a cognitive-only (no tasks) group to specify the precise nature of interaction between the two variables.

General implications of the study

This study aimed to test the applicability of CL theory to the instruction of reported speech in grammar within a mixed-methods design, using tasks as pedagogical means supporting the delivery of instructional content. Both treatment methods—cognitive and task-supported—were effective for producing EFL development of the target form, as measured by the tests. In line with findings of Drobot (2008) and DeKeyser and Prieto Botana's (2014) meta-analysis supporting the benefit of explicit instruction for structures of greater complexity, this study demonstrated that explicit focus on form was effective for the classroom instruction of reported speech. It is important to discuss the interaction between CL instructional approach and raising metalinguistic awareness. Recent research by Simon & Jerry (2019), suggests that explicit knowledge and instruction, and learner's dependence on some metalinguistic awareness strategies can be a powerful tool for promoting students' learning and use of the grammatical features. If adapted to learners' level, CL provides a framework for raising metalinguistic awareness systematically, which is a clear benefit of applying CLs in EFL instruction.

Furthermore, the amalgamation of both CL and tasks was more effective than the use of tasks alone. Although, pedagogic tasks proved to be an appropriate method for exploring authentic usage contexts, CLs appeared provide better results when combined with tasks and thus provide a better theory of language in general than the traditional (formal and structural) approaches to language analysis. Being a usage-based theory of language, CLs is highly compatible with research on task-based teaching, which also emphasizes language learning through meaningful content and contextualized language use (Ellis, 2017). Tasks can function as a pedagogical platform complementary to the process of amalgamating the CL theory to language classroom. These results suggest that the focus on both usage-based forms and meaning made a difference in the learners' performance. While pedagogic tasks are a valuable addition to the instructional process, the improved teaching methods alone are not sufficient. A more accurate and insightful theory of language is needed to make language teaching more meaningful overall such as that of CL.

Limitations and future directions

The study has a number of limitations. First of all, number of participants (57) was relatively small, preventing the results from becoming more generalizable. It is also possible that some of the findings can be attributed to the context of this particular graduate English Language and Translation program as well as to the educational and cultural backgrounds of the participants.

Replication with students from other backgrounds (i.e. taking into account other prior instructional experiences) would be instrumental for establishing the degree of generalizability of this study's findings. Furthermore, it was not possible to account for learners' individual differences; additional data on learners' self-efficacy, proficiency and motivation, working memory, and general aptitude would need to be collected to determine the effects of possible intervening variables.

Also, the duration of the instructional treatment was six weeks, bearing in mind that the CL insights are relatively novel in classroom instruction; however, it would be necessary to test the long-term effects of a similar treatment. Establishing more specific effects of longitudinal and systematic classroom exposure to CL theory had previously been proposed as an area of recommended inquiry by other researchers (Holme 2009; Tyler 2012). Furthermore, teachers' appropriate training would be crucial for successful replication of conducting CL research. Promoting CL as a basis for an EFL instructional system would require significant popularization of CL in teacher training departments and a CL-oriented shift in language teacher training curriculum.

In general, while this study does provide support for using adapted CL theory in the classroom amalgamated with tasks, the research conducted thus far is not sufficiently supporting for assuming CL theory's superiority over traditional instruction; additional future research needs to examine how CL theory in combination with other systematic pedagogical interventions can be used for teaching other linguistic features.

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