

## **Grammatical Consciousness-Raising through Content-Based Instruction (Cbi) In an Esl Classroom: From Theory to Practice**

**By**

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper contributes to the unending debate in language pedagogy namely: "Which approach in grammar instruction is the most effective?" It examines the subject from the standpoint of grammatical consciousness-raising (CR), a relatively new pedagogical trend which refers to a deliberate attempt to draw the English as Second Language (ESL) learner's attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language. Adopting Long's (1996) model of the Interactional Theory as theoretical framework, the paper contends that it is part of the teacher's responsibility to, by whatever means available to him, create an enabling environment for students' interaction in the ESL classroom. One of such means is content-based instruction (CBI). Via this approach, a literary piece (a prose passage from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*) was used as content to raise students' grammatical consciousness in the learning/mastery of sentence types according to their structure and functions. The consciousness-raising through content-based instruction described in this paper was put to good use by the present researcher in an EST 124: Grammar and Composition class at the Department of English, University of Port Harcourt, where the researcher lectures. The sharp focus on*

*content in a context afforded the students some valuable real-world knowledge of a culture presumably different from their own even as they attempted to make sense of the linguistic peculiarities in the excerpt used as content. The paper concluded that, as CBI makes use of authentic and interesting reading materials, it would enable ESL students not only to consciously develop linguistic flexibility but also to commence the arduous journey from communicative competence to grammatical competence.*

**Key words:** interaction, consciousness-raising, approaches, content-based instruction, competence

## **Introduction**

The issue of language teaching methods has been of central concern in language pedagogy so much so that Stern (1985:251) termed it a “century-old obsession”. Indeed, this obsession has spanned from the Grammar Translation Method (from the 1840s to the 1940s), through the Direct Method (an off-shoot of the Natural Method of the 1860s), to the Audiolingual Method (of the 1950s and 1960s) which came with an insistence on oral production drills. The Audiolingual method was superseded by the communicative approach precisely, Communicative Language Teaching (in the 1970s and 80s) which emerged with a strong emphasis on the importance of communicative competence, meaningful practice, and the use of language in situated contexts. Brown (2002) is of the strong opinion that the period we live in is the Post-Methods Era where “we [do] not need a new method”. Continuing, he argues that what we need instead is a principled approach considering that an “approach to language teaching is the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom. It is the cumulative body of knowledge and principles that enables teachers, as ‘technicians’ in the classroom, to diagnose the needs of students, to treat students with successful

pedagogical techniques, and to assess the outcome of those treatments” (p.11).

It can be argued that one successful pedagogical intervention in language instruction, an interactional approach, which can be used to teach students in the English a Second Language (ESL) environment is consciousness-raising (CR) through content-based instruction (CBI). Both CR and CBI have been widely utilized as language teaching approaches around the world, especially in EFL countries (Shir, 1986; Short, 1989; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1993; Shrum, & Eileen, 1994). However, many ESL teachers at different levels of education in Nigeria remain somewhat unenthusiastic and even unaware of the lesson opportunities which CR and CBI offer. The aim of this paper therefore is to show how CR could be applied through CBI in the ESL classroom. We go on now to the theoretical framework on which this work thrives.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There are many SLA researchers and applied linguists who support the over-riding orientation that there is a strong connection between interaction and L2 acquisition. They include Pica, 1987; Gass & Varonis, 1994; Long, 1996; van Lier, 1996; Swain and Lapkin, 1998; Gass, Mackey, & Pica, 1998; VanPatten and Benati, 2010. In the words of the applied linguists, Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.21), “Interaction has been central to the theories of second language learning and pedagogy since the 1980s.” They point out that the interactional theory is one of the three different theoretical views of language, the other two being the structural and the functional perspectives. Commenting on the interactional theory in language education, Rivers (1987) (quoted in Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.21) hold a strong opinion that “Students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages that contain information of interest to both speaker and listener in a situation of importance.” In language studies, the psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1978) (quoted in Brown 2000) laid the

foundation for the interactional theory of language acquisition and learning. Arguing from a psychological point of view, Vygotsky averred that meaningful social interaction plays an important role in the learning process. In fact, engaging in meaningful interaction with other people is the basis for new knowledge acquisition. Thus, he proposed the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where learners construct a new language through socially-mediated interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978, p.86), ZPD refers to, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers". The implication of the foregoing definition is that interaction with peers (or with fellow students) works effectively in the development of students' language skills and communicative strategies. Vygotsky believed strongly that when a student is in the ZPD for a particular task, appropriate assistance provided by the teacher can go a long way in giving the student some encouragement to achieve a particular communicative task.

The interaction hypothesis, developed on the basis of the interactional theories of language learning, was introduced by Michael Long in 1996 to account for how the development of language proficiency is promoted by face-to-face interaction and communication. According to him, interaction "facilitates language acquisition because it connects input (what learners hear and read); internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention; and output (what learners produce) in productive ways" (1996, pp.451-452). What this means is that essentially, the basic tenet of interaction hypothesis is that language is learnt through input (that is, exposure to language), output (that is, production of language), and feedback which comes as a result of interaction. Long believes that interaction is key in learning a second language, and what makes input to be comprehensible is modified interaction, or negotiation of meaning. Lightbown and Spada (1999, p.43) attempt a summarization of Long's interaction hypothesis logically reducing it to a three-step process thus:

1. interactional modification makes input comprehensible;
2. comprehensible input promotes acquisition;
3. therefore, interactional modification promotes acquisition.

Brown (2002) endorses the foregoing views, and goes ahead to suggest that:

Long's Interaction Hypothesis has pushed pedagogical research on SLA into a new frontier. It centres us on the language classroom not just as a place where learners of varying abilities and styles and backgrounds mingle, but as *a place where the contexts for interaction are carefully designed* (emphasis added). It focuses... on creating the optimal environments and tasks for input and interaction such that the learner will be stimulated to create his or her own learner language in a society in a socially constructed process (p.305).

In the above quotation, we emphasize the clause, 'a place where the contexts for interaction are carefully designed' because it keys into the grammatical consciousness-raising (CR) paradigm. As an approach to grammar instruction, CR ensures that interaction takes place through carefully designed content-based instructional tasks in the context of the ESL classroom to the end that learners' language errors are minimized even as learners are encouraged to pay explicit attention to the structural regularities of a target language. As it relates to the English language, one manifestation of paying explicit attention to the grammatical structure of the language is the relatively new concept of grammatical consciousness-raising, a learner-centred pedagogic intervention. We want to note here that it is quite likely that most people would not readily associate the term, consciousness-raising, with language teaching. If this is so, there is a need to operationally explain the common usage of the term, *vis-a-vis* its over-riding application in language pedagogy so as to further contextualize the whole study.

Generally, consciousness-raising is often used as an ideology in psychology and feminism but in this thesis, our inclination is basically

pedagogic. In psychology, it is a group-therapy technique aimed at enhancing the participants' awareness of their particular needs and goals as individuals or as a group. It implies the process of making people aware of important personal, psychological, and socio-political issues. The feminist background of consciousness-raising has its origin in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s in New York. As a feminist ideology, it aims at raising the awareness of women such that they eventually come to terms with the conditions of their own lives, discovering in the process, peculiar ways that seemingly isolated, individual problems are indeed realistic reflections of common conditions that all women encounter, all over the globe. To put it more succinctly in the words of Rosenthal (1984), consciousness-raising was a mass-organizing strategy "originally envisioned as a means of creating awareness to engender revolution" (p.310). A note-worthy point that issues from this brief note on psychological and feminist consciousness-raising is that the creation of awareness to engineer a change is at the root of consciousness-raising. Specifically, it is this awareness-creating potential that seems to suture a link between consciousness-raising in psychology and feminism on the one hand and consciousness-raising in language pedagogy on the other.

In language studies, CR is conceptualized as "an approach to the teaching of grammar in which instruction in grammar (through drills, grammar explanations, and other form-focused activities) is viewed as a way of raising learner's awareness of grammatical features of the language" (Richards, Plat, & Plat, 1992, p.78). The views of Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith (1985) are germane to our understanding of CR. According to them, CR is "the deliberate attempt to draw the learner's attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language" (p.247). Our assessment of this approach shows that CR can be likened to a learner-centred orientation in grammar instruction that draws strength from both the formal and functional models of grammar, a sort of middle-ground approach in language pedagogy. In our view, CR is an answer to

the clarion call by some applied linguists and SLA theorists who in recent times have stressed that second language teaching must move away from the question of 'Which second language teaching method is the best?' to focusing instead on how successful teachers and learners interact, negotiate meanings, and achieve their pedagogic goals in the ESL classroom (Rutherford & Sharwood-Smith, 1988; Widdowson, 1989; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Brown, 2002).

Moreover, there is this push for an approach that not only helps to diagnose the language needs of adult ESL learners but also tries to initiate pedagogical treatments with a view to assessing the outcome of those treatments. All things considered, CR is a pedagogical intervention aimed at helping the second language learner to narrow the gap between his transitional competence (TC) and the target language (TL). In its learner-centredness, the CR approach ensures that the language teacher or instructor does not function as "a sage on stage" but as a "guide on the side" (King, 1993, p.30). The teacher's job is to guide the learner to come to terms with the peculiarities of the lexical and structural features of the target language. Indeed, the approach permits the use of a CR task (CRT) which Ellis (1997, cited in Mohamed, 2004, p.160) views as "a pedagogic activity where the learners are provided with L2 data in some form and required to perform some operation on or with it, the purpose of which is to arrive at an explicit understanding of some linguistic property or properties of the target language." In other words, a CRT tends to encourage learners, with the teacher's help, to attempt to discover certain grammatical regularities inherent in an L2 data containing some targeted features. The foregoing explanations therefore bring us to the main thrust of this thesis, namely, grammatical consciousness-raising (CR) through content-based instruction (CBI) in the English as Second Language (ESL) classroom: from theory to practice. But first, what is content-based instruction (CBI)?

A number of specific definitions have been proffered for CBI. In the words of Crandall & Tucker (1990, p.187), CBI is "an approach to

language instruction that integrates the presentation of topics or tasks from subject matter classes (e.g. math, social studies) within the context of teaching a second or foreign language". Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.204) view CBI as "an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus". The viewpoint of Bilash is very pertinent to our understanding of CBI. This is how he articulates the point: CBI is "an approach to language teaching that focuses not on the language itself, but rather on what is being taught through the language; that is the language becomes the medium through which something new is learned. In the CBI approach, the student learns the Target Language by using it to learn some other new content" ([www.educ.ualberta.ca/.../content.html](http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/.../content.html)). What is immediately clear from the three definitions above is that CBI is an approach to language instruction that utilizes content or subject matter as a tool for teaching a target or second language. It is a learner-centred approach to language instruction that emphasizes or focuses on content in a given context more than on anything else. In other words, CBI characteristically involves integrating the learning of language with the learning of content simultaneously; that is exactly the reason why it is called content-based instruction. Essentially, it has a predilection for using content as the basis for developing language skills. The content could be an abstract or academic subject matter such as an excerpt from history, literature, science, etc. Such content or material should be authentic so as to arouse and sustain the interest of the students. Authentic materials could be got from prose fiction, tourist guidebooks, journals, online jokes, advertisements, among others.

There is need to conceptualize the rationale for CBI in order that our understanding of it may be better enhanced. Brinton et al (1989:2) have some extensive comments in this regard:

In the content-based approach, the activities of the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are

geared to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language. Such an approach lends itself quite naturally to the integrated teaching of the four traditional language skills. For example, it employs authentic reading materials which require students not only to understand information but to interpret and evaluate it as well. It provides a forum in which students can respond orally to reading and lecture materials. It recognizes that academic writing follows from listening and reading and thus requires students to synthesize facts and ideas from multiple sources as preparation for writing. In this approach, students are exposed to study skills and learn a variety of language skills which prepare them for the range of academic tasks they will encounter.

There is some insistence in the above quotation that one striking rationale for CBI is the student-centredness of the approach in that it provides a forum whereby students can interact with the teacher as with other fellow students. Besides, it provides a platform where students can respond orally to reading and lecture materials instead of being passive recipients of academic materials. Indeed, CBI runs counter to traditional teacher-centred approach to language instruction where the language teacher is deemed a “sage on the stage” (King 1993:30). In the teacher-centred approach, the teacher decides what is to be learned, the range of linguistic items to be tested, and how the class is to be run without any regard to the interpersonal, reciprocal nature of a language classroom. “A teacher-centred approach often utilizes lectures. Lecturing is the most frequently used teaching technique in higher education. Over the years, it has developed a bit of bad reputation because it encourages students to be passive learners who neither contribute to the class through discussion nor engage in critical thinking or problem solving” ([www.usask.ca/./tc-approach](http://www.usask.ca/./tc-approach)). A direct implication of the foregoing is that, as far as the

teacher-centred approach is concerned, the teacher is supposed to talk, teach or lecture, while the students exclusively listen and take notes passively. One serious limitation of teacher-centred instruction is that it does not afford students the freedom to interact, that is, the freedom to express themselves or practice their collaborative and communication skills in the ESL classroom. In such a classroom therefore, the lecture could become boring if the duration is long; one or two students might doze off or their minds may wander. In a large class for instance, students may start to chat in low tones with their seat-mates, or with their friends in cyberspace, that is with their friends on various social media (facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc). In the student-centred approach, on the other hand, there is a reversal of roles: the role of the language teacher shifts from a giver of information to a facilitator of student learning. More importantly, students in a student-centred classroom shift from being passive indifferent observers to active participants in classroom interaction. The student-centred approach focuses primarily on what the students need to do in order to learn, rather than on the transmission of information by the teacher.

As earlier mentioned, CBI is more student-centred than teacher-centred. In its student-centredness, CBI stimulates students to think and learn through the use of the target language. It is worthy of mention here that the English language is the target language in the Nigerian linguistic environment. English doubles as both a second and official language of formal education, politics, law, official correspondence and a major medium of creative writing. So, being a student-centred approach to language instruction, CBI conveniently provides a forum wherein students can readily respond to reading and authentic lecture materials (thereby learning grammar or language in context) as a possible means of developing linguistic ability. The approach is practically aimed at raising the consciousness of the student as well as developing and sharpening the students' language and academic skills; the students develop these skills

consciously through the content they have been exposed to in the language classroom (Richards & Rodgers 2007:204-205).

### **Grammatical Consciousness-raising by Means of Literature as Content**

To start with, a literary piece can be used as content in the attempt to raise students' consciousness in the ESL classroom. Literature refers to oral or written compositions that tell stories, dramatize situations, express emotions and analyze as well as advocate ideas. It is indeed, language in action, and the language of literature can be aesthetically-pleasing. Apart from its didactic and entertaining values, it creates an imaginative world which can broaden the students' understanding of their own and other people's culture. The language of literature helps to sharpen students' sensitivity to language use and reinforce their knowledge of lexical, structural and grammatical structures of the target language. On the entire phenomenon and desirability of the language of literature, Gurrey (1961:170) rightly comments as follows:

Literature is valuable for its language (at all times and in all seasons). The learner of the target language, in reading literature, is profiting from the clearest, most significant and appropriate use of words possible. The result of this reading experience is that he becomes more certainly aware of their fullest and richest meanings. He thus, may learn to use these words himself more effectively and... appropriately in different contexts: he sees that this context demands this word but not that, and this word is more suitable or more forcible in this context, but not in that context.

Using literature (or in this particular instance, prose-fiction) as content in CBI in an ESL classroom can be particularly engaging and can serve as a deliberate attempt to draw the students' attention specifically to some formal properties of the target language. It also tends to increase the motivation of students who often complain that grammar instruction

could be drab and boring. The point is, a grammar class can be fun especially when students are motivated. "Learner motivation increases when students are learning about something, rather than just studying language... CBI is particularly appealing in this respect because teachers can use almost any content materials that they feel their students will enjoy" (Davies 2003, p.103). In this connection, let us demonstrate how the language teacher can transit from theory to practice in the application of grammatical consciousness-raising through content-based instruction. Let us choose an excerpt from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The narrative captures the encounter between Chielo, the priestess, on the one hand, and Okonkwo and his wife, Ekwefi, on the other. Check Appendix 1 for the engrossing narrative.

### **Applying CR Through CBI**

#### **Procedure**

**Step 1:** The teacher informs the students that they are going to read a story that will enable them to understand the topic of the lecture, 'Sentence Types According to Function / Purpose'. Then he shares out a one-page photocopy of the extract from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

**Step 2:** The teacher asks the students to take note of every terminal or end punctuation mark even as they read the passage in the manner of 'Each one, take one'. What this means is that one student reads aloud the very first sentence, and another student reads aloud the sentence following it; then, another student takes the next sentence, and so on and so forth. That is the pattern: 'each one, take one', till all sentences in the passage are taken or read by the students. Asking the students to take note of every terminal or end punctuation mark as they read the passage helps to deliberately draw the students' attention specifically to the formal or structural properties of the English language in the area of sentence structures and functions.

**Step 3:** The teacher instructs the students to copy into their exercise books various sentences that end with either an exclamation mark (!), or a

question mark (?), or a full stop (.). He suggests that they should start first with sentences that contain the exclamation mark and move on to sentences containing the question mark before those that end with full stop. The reason is that the ones that end with full stop are predominant in the narrative. Meanwhile, the teacher has already outlined and categorized in his own book different sentences with different end punctuation marks. The following are some examples:

A. Exclamation Mark

1. The priestess suddenly screamed, 'Beware, Okonkwo!'
2. Beware!
3. Tufia-a! the priestess cursed, her voice crackling like the angry bark of thunder in the dry season.

B. Question Mark

1. Does a man speak when a god speaks?
2. Where is my daughter, Ezinma?
3. Where does Agbala want to see her?
4. Where else but in his house in the hills and the caves?
5. How dare you, woman, to go before the mighty Agbala of your own accord?

C. Full Stop

1. The priestess had now reached Okonkwo's compound and was talking with him outside his hut.
2. Her voice was as clear as metal, and Okonkwo's women and children heard from their huts all that she said.
3. Okonkwo came after her.
4. Bring me my daughter.
5. 'Come, my daughter', said the priestess.

#### **Step 4: CR Activity – Explanation of Sentence Types According to Function**

The teacher informs the students that sentences are often classified according to either their structure or function. For sentence structure, we

have simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. For sentence types according to function (which is the topic of the day), we have exclamatory, interrogative, declarative, and imperative sentences.

Then, the teacher goes ahead to say that the sentences which have been grouped under (A) are exclamatory. Any exclamatory sentence characteristically ends with an exclamation mark. He explains that an exclamatory sentence is a sentence which expresses any strong emotions, such as annoyance, anger, sadness, joy, surprise, disappointment, awe etc. For instance, in the passage, Chielo the priestess of the god of the hills and the caves used "Beware, Okonkwo! Beware!" to register her annoyance and displeasure that Okonkwo a mere mortal, is arguing with the mouthpiece of the gods. The 'Tufia!' which Chielo told Ekwefi is a sharp reprimand borne out of extreme annoyance. The point really is, an exclamatory sentence is used to give vent to the feelings or emotions.

Next, the teacher states that the sentences grouped under (B) are of the interrogative kind. He explains that an interrogative sentence obligatorily ends with a question mark; it is that sentence which is used to ask questions. He goes ahead to say that there are many kinds of the interrogative sentence. They include:

1. Yes or No Question: This is a simple question usually introduced by an auxiliary verb (has, have, do, will, could, was, are, etc). The answer to questions in this category is expected to be either 'Yes' or 'No'. For example:
  - (a) Do you play football?
  - (b) Aren't you coming with us?
2. Wh- or H- Question: This is a simple question that is introduced by Wh- or H- words such as who, when, which, where, what, whose, how, etc. For example:
  - (a) When did the man arrive?
  - (b) How are you doing?
3. Question Tag: This is a combination of a statement and a tag. The tag is often introduced by an auxiliary verb. For example:

- (a) Henry is hungry, isn't he?
  - (b) They've all gone home, haven't they?
4. Polar or Alternative Question: This is a question that has two possible answers provided by the speaker. For example:
- (a) Do you want coffee or tea?
  - (b) Is your name Boma or Bumi?
5. Rhetorical Question: This is a question asked solely to produce an effect or to make an assertion and not to elicit a reply. It also serves as a vehicle for the emotions; that is, it is used to show the feelings. For example:
- (a) Aren't you ashamed of yourself?
  - (b) What kind of foolishness is that?
6. Statement Turned to Question: This is a sort of echo question. It is a simple statement turned into a question since it is uttered with a rising tone to register disbelief, shock, surprise, etc or to show that the listener wants the speaker to repeat what he has just said. For example:
- (a) Your mother likes eating toads?
  - (b) Mary said what to John?

Further, the teacher explains that in the passage, sentences (B2) and (B3) are Wh- Questions. Such questions are usually asked to elicit a response. Thus, to priestess Chielo's "Where is my daughter, Ezinma?" Ekwefi responds with another Wh-Question, "Where does Agbala want to see her?" This prompted a visibly angry Chielo to answer with sentence (B4), "Where else but in his house in the hills and the caves?" which is yet another Wh-question but in this instance, serving a rhetorical function. It is important to recall that not only is the rhetorical question a vehicle for diverse emotions, it does not require an answer or a reply. In this connection, sentence (B5), "How dare you, woman, to go before the mighty Agbala of your own accord?" is also a rhetorical question. Lastly, sentence (B1), "Does a man speak when a god speaks?" is a Yes or No Question cast in the mould of a rhetorical question.

Having explained exclamatory and interrogative sentences in their context of use, the teacher then draws the attention of the students to the fact that the sentences grouped under C are of both a declarative and an imperative kind. The teacher goes ahead to explain declarative and imperative sentences thus.

Briefly, also known as a statement, a declarative sentence is used to state a fact or an opinion; it is used to relay information or ideas. It usually ends with a full stop. For example:

- (a) The lecture will hold in the auditorium.
- (b) It is raining.

An imperative sentence functions to issue commands or requests or instructions; it can also be used to express a wish or desire. It is usually punctuated with a full stop for a mild imperative or with an exclamation mark for a forceful imperative. For example:

- (a) Lower your voice.
- (b) Attention!

Further, the teacher states that sentence C1, "The priestess had now reached Okonkwo's compound and was talking with him outside his hut"; sentence C2, "Her voice was as clear as metal, and Okonkwo's women and children heard from their huts all that she said."; and sentence C3, "Okonkwo came after her." are statements or declarative sentences. Their function is to relay different bits of easily-comprehensible information to the reader. The pieces of information centre on Priestess Chielo's visit to Okonkwo's compound. Sentence C4 "Bring me my daughter." and sentence C5 "'Come, my daughter', said the priestess." are used to issue a command or to give an instruction. Therefore, they are imperative sentences. One major characteristic feature of imperative sentences is that they usually have what is technically referred to as unstated, silent or implied subjects. This is due to the fact that it is assumed that the language user is in a face-to-face contact with the decoder or listener. We can easily identify the subjects in the declarative sentences (C1, C2, and C3) thus:

C1 The priestess / had now reached Okonkwo's compound and was talking with him outside his hut. (Subject = The priestess)

C2 Her voice / was as clear as metal, and Okonkwo's women and children heard from their huts all that she said. (Subject = Her voice)

C3 Okonkwo / came after her. (Subject = Okonkwo)

At this juncture, the teacher could explain the meaning of 'subject'. The subject of a sentence denotes the word or expression which indicates who or what does the action stated by the verb. It is the person, thing, animal, concept or idea being talked about. It is essentially a noun or a noun equivalent such as pronoun, noun phrase, noun clause, gerunds, infinitives, etc. In the examples under consideration, C1 and C2 have noun phrases as subjects while C3 has a noun as the subject. Conversely, C4 and C5 have no 'visible subject' in the traditional sentence-initial position as in:

C4 /Bring me my daughter.

C5 /'Come, my daughter', said the priestess.

The sentences above begin with verbs unlike sentences C1, C2, and C3 which begin with noun phrases and a noun respectively.

**Step 5:** The teacher summarizes the lecture by drawing the students' attention to the structural properties and formal ending of declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences. The declarative sentence ends with a full stop; the imperative sentence ends with either a full stop for a mild imperative or an exclamation mark for a forceful imperative. Finally, whereas the interrogative sentence ends with a question mark, the exclamatory sentence ends with an exclamation mark.

### STEP 6: Evaluation

The teacher asks the students to copy the following questions into their exercise books. He instructs them to answer the questions orally first before writing down the correct answers in their books:

1. Suggest a suitable title for the passage.

2. List two declarative sentences from the passage (different from the ones discussed during the class).
3. Mention four sentences types classified according to their function / purpose.
4. Paying close attention to end punctuation marks, make at least 10 sentences and classify them according to their functions (at least two in each group).
5. Who is Chielo and why did she visit Okonkwo?
6. What literary device is used in, "Her voice was clear as metal", and "...her voice crackling like the angry bark of thunder in the dry season".
7. Eventually, what did Chielo the priestess do to/with Ezinma?

### **Conclusion**

The consciousness-raising through content-based instruction described in this paper was put to good use by the present researcher in an EST 124: Grammar and Composition class at the Department of English, University of Port Harcourt, where the researcher lectures. This happened during the 2014/2015 academic session as part of a regular classroom interactive session with students. Grammar and Composition is a course which seeks to develop in freshmen a well-informed attitude towards the English language, and to equip them with the knowledge of English communication and composition skills that will facilitate their academic work in an ESL environment. The students in the class who belonged to such disciplines as Educational Foundation, Adult and Non-formal Education, and English Studies found the consciousness-raising activity and content-based instruction intrinsically interesting and amply rewarding since they were allowed to participate in the classroom interaction by either reading a sentence or by pointing out various punctuation marks in the Achebean narrative. Characteristically, CBI is a student-centred approach to grammar pedagogy which provides a forum where students can respond orally to reading and lecture materials.

Moreover, it involves integrating the learning of grammar with the learning of content simultaneously. The sharp focus on content in a specified context (the prose passage from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for instance) afforded students some valuable real-world knowledge of a culture presumably different from their own even as they tried to make sense of the linguistic peculiarities in the excerpt used as content. The CR through CBI approach could be used to teach sentence types according to structure, usage of punctuation marks in dialogues, paragraphing, subordination, co-ordination, appositives or nouns in apposition, among others. These however, are outside the scope of this paper. In conclusion, as CBI makes use of authentic and interesting reading materials, it makes the ESL classroom engaging. Given that grammatical consciousness-raising is a pedagogical trend which has to do with the deliberate attempt to draw the English as Second Language (ESL) learner's attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language, CBI is a consciousness-raising tool. Applying CR through CBI enables students not only to consciously develop linguistic flexibility but also to commence the arduous journey from communicative competence to grammatical competence.

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## Appendix

Extracted from Achebe, Chinua (1958, p.70-71). *Things Fall Apart*. Ibadan: Heinemann.

The priestess had now reached Okonkwo's compound and was talking with him outside his hut. She was saying again and again that Agbala wanted to see his daughter, Ezinma. Okonkwo pleaded with her to come back in the morning because Ezinma was now asleep. But Chielo ignored what he was trying to say and went on shouting that Agbala wanted to see his daughter. Her voice was as clear as metal, and Okonkwo's women and children heard from their huts all that she said. Okonkwo was still pleading that the girl had been ill of late and was asleep. Ekwefi quickly took her to their bedroom and placed her on their high bamboo bed.

The priestess suddenly screamed, 'Beware, Okonkwo!' she warned. 'Beware of exchanging words with Agbala. Does a man speak when a god speaks? Beware!'

She walked through Okonkwo's hut into the circular compound and went straight towards Ekwefi's hut. Okonkwo came after her.

'Ekwefi', she called, 'Agbala greets you. Where is my daughter, Ezinma? Agbala wants to see her'.

Ekwefi came out from her hut carrying her oil lamp in her left hand to shelter the flame. Nwoye's mother, also carrying an oil lamp, emerged from her hut. Her children stood in the darkness outside their hut watching the strange event. Okonkwo's youngest wife also came out and joined the others.

'Where does Agbala want to see her?' Ekwefi asked.

'Where else but in his house in the hills and the caves?' replied the priestess.

'I will come with you, too', Ekwefi said firmly.

'Tufia-a!' the priestess cursed, her voice crackling like the angry bark of thunder in the dry season. 'How dare you, woman, to go before the

mighty Agbala of your own accord? Beware, woman, lest he strike you in his anger, bring me my daughter’.

Ekwefi went into her hut and came out again with Ezinma.

‘Come, my daughter’, said the priestess. ‘I shall carry you on my back. A baby on its mother’s back does not know that the way is long.’

Ezinma began to cry. She was used to Chielo calling her ‘my daughter’.

But it was a different Chielo she now saw in the yellow half-light.