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"Assessing Teaching English Grammar to Kurdish EFL students at University level"

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Abstract

The study demonstrates the importance of grammar to Kurdish EFL students, clarifying the most common problems the English grammar lecturers encounter in their teaching process, helping teachers use the best-suited approach inside the class for the purpose of raising students' standards in English grammar as well as identifying the most effective strategies for teaching English grammar to Kurdish EFL students at university level. For this purpose, the following procedures were adopted: (1) a questionnaire of thirty items was designed for the English grammar lecturers in the English department from different universities in Kurdistan region. It includes open and closed questions about the importance of teaching grammar for Kurdish EFL students, the best-suited approaches and strategies for teaching English grammar and as well as the problems and the difficulties that English grammar teachers encounter. (2) A class observation was designed by the researcher for the purpose of ensuring the credibility of the research paper. It includes fifteen items about the approaches and strategies that have been applied by the grammar lecturer during the process teaching along with the difficulties and problems that English grammar lecturers encounter during the process of teaching.

The findings of the research study show that English grammar is an essential subject for Kurdish EFL students. Therefore, the best-suited approach as an eclectic approach with various strategies depending on students' different standards should be applied for teaching English grammar.

Introduction

"Grammar is a system of meaningful structures and patterns that are governed by particular pragmatic constraints", (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 125). It is the system that organizes sounds to words and then to sentences. According to (Ellis 2006; Nassaji & Fotos 2004; Nunan 2005) cited by (Brown, 2007), Reason, balance, and the

experience of learners in recent communicative methodology tell us that judicious attention to grammar in the adult classroom is not only helpful, if appropriate techniques are used , but essential to a speedy learning process. To fulfill language requirement teaching grammar should be followed.

1. Approaches to the Teaching of Grammar

Two approaches of teaching grammar have been referred to: the first one is the deductive approach and the second approach is the inductive approach, as cited in (Nunan D., 2015). The deductive approach is a teachercentered approach which means the rules are given to the students and explained by the teacher, which is then students exercise to apply the rules. The deductive approach saves class time and gets straight to the point which makes the learner be less active inside the class. The deductive approach makes teaching grammar to be isolated away from meaning. (Eisenstein, 1987), suggests that the deductive approach motivates students and gives students a self-confident during the practice.

In contrary, the inductive approach is student central approach which means learners study samples of language, detect, notice and have to figure out the rules by themselves. In the inductive approach, students engage more with the teaching process and formulate the rules; therefore, this process assesses their developments. The inductive approach takes more time and this causes fewer subjects to be covered.

Ultimately, none of the deductive and the inductive approached are superior to one another both are complimentary. Some students learn effectively through the inductive approach while others get to benefit from the deductive approach. Mouly (1978) cited by (Nunan D. , 2015) , has suggested that learning is a process of shuttling back and forth between the inductive and the deductive. He argues that

during the process of learning we use both approaches after one another.

2. Requirements for Teaching Grammar

Despite the fact that grammar is the system of all the languages but some scientists consider grammar to be a barrier that prevents learner form speaking. While others think that grammar helps the speaker to have better communication. Rod Ellis (2006) cited 2007), bv (Brown, presented requirements on how to teach an effective grammar, he believes that in the process of teaching forms and meaning are the most essential in teaching grammar that should be emphasized on and learners should be given the opportunity to practice forms while communicating.

The forms that cause the problem to the learners should be also focused on and draw the teacher's attention and incidental focus on the form is needed for the purpose of preventing errors occurs that communication. He suggested that grammar should be taught explicitly to the levels of intermediate and advanced except the beginning levels. Input based (comprehension) and output-bases (production) should be both concentrated on. Depending on the purpose and instructions both the deductive and the inductive can be useful approaches for the learners. Correlative feedback that involves a mixture of explicit and implicates feedback can facilitate acquisition. Furthermore. depending on the context both separate grammar lessons and integrated grammar into communicative activities are viable. Additionally, there are still various opinions on what are the best instructions that should be presented to the learners. Generally, professional community (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Williams, 2005) cited by (Brown, 2007), agree on four primary issues that have been characterized:

1. Whether grammar should be presented inductively or the deductively.

They admitted that when the question about grammar teaching arises both the inductive and the deductive approaches are often contrasted with each other. There are some moments when the inductive approach or the mixture of both is needed in the teaching grammar classroom but mostly the inductive approach is considered to be the most essential and effective for grammar teaching due to the fact that the inductive approach is to the natural language more close acquisition because the rules subconsciously or unconsciously taught. It gives the opportunity to the learner to communicate freely without any obstacles. Intrinsically, students discover rules rather than being told and this gives them a kind of motivation. It also assists student's progress and easily conforms to the concept of interlanguage development.

2. Whether or not grammatical terminology and technique terminology should be used in CLT classes.

(Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Williams, 2005) cited by (Brown, 2007), manifests that grammatical explanation and technical terminology should be approached with care in Communicative language teaching classes (CLT). For instance, teacher's explanations should be brief and simple if the students are not following the teacher's explanation in English so mother tongue should be used .Moreover, examples that are given by the teacher should be illustrated clearly for the students. For the purpose of depicting

grammatical relationships, teachers should use charts and other visuals. Among the students teachers should try to account for varying cognitive style, (for example, grammatical explanation will be easier picked by analytical learners than holistic learners). Teachers should avoid tiding themselves and students upon the exceptions to rules and they should avoid giving false information about something they do not know or have any information about, instead they should tell the student that they will search and bring the answer back.

3. Different opinions on whether grammar should be taught as a separate course or not.

They indicate the advisability embedding grammatical techniques into general language courses rather than singling grammar out as a discrete " skills " and treating it in a separate course". So they believe that grammatical information is a component of communicative competence whether it is taught consciously or unconsciously. However, According to Ellis (2006) cited by (Brown, 2007), "in some curricula, certain class hours, workshops or courses are set aside for grammar Teaching instructions grammatical paradigm that stresses communicative, interactive, meaningful learning, such courses may appear to be anachronisms, under certain conditions however they can provide a useful function especially for high intermediate to advance learners where the modicum of fluently is already in place". Conditions that are followed:

Students have the power to relate grammatical pointers to their other words in English because grammar course is explicitly integrated into the curriculum. The content of the grammar course is controlled by the

rest of the curriculum, not vice versa. In addition, grammar has been contextualized in meaningful language use. Possibly, the course suits specific problems students are experiencing. For example, the grammatical topics are not presented in the curriculum instead it comes from the student's own performance. Sometimes as a helpful review standardized test preparation that contains modules serve grammar grammatical principles that incorporated into the test and the final test of the course is an improvement of the student's performance. According to these conditions, grammar is considered to be one of these pillars that support communication.

4- Where or not correcting grammatical errors

Researchers have shown that grammatical correction by the teachers is rarely overt in any improving learner's language. But some shreds of evidence show that treating grammatical errors and drawing student's attention has an impact on learners. On the other hand, treating grammatical errors of writing is totally a different matter. Local grammatical errors better to be delayed until the learner complete one or two drafts, but global grammatical errors that change the meaning must be put into consideration. According to Ferris Hedgcock (2005) cited by (Brown, 2007, p. 426), "a certain attention to errors does indeed make a difference in final written products".

3. Principles for Teaching Grammar

(Thornbury, 2000), demonstrated that teaching grammar should be taught efficiently and appropriately by teachers.

Efficiency means teachers should use most of their energies to get learners to communicate. They should also have time to set up different materials inside the classroom in order to create an effective environment for learners, but unfortunately, most of the teachers are busy with their lives and have many different classes and simply cannot afford the time for elaborating classroom materials. Teachers also should be aware of learner's attention, this is a reason for enhancing the process of learning, but attention should be with understanding without understanding efficiency will not take place. Besides that, there should not be any lack of motivation because motivation is the key to the locked doors without the key the door of learning will not be opened. On the other hand, the classroom's activities should not be only evaluated efficiently but also appropriately.

While appropriately means knowing learner's age, their levels, the group sizes and whether the group is monolingual or multilingual, knowing the needs of the examination. their interests. available resources and materials, their learning experiences and their expectations, also the attitudes that might be affected by cultural factors should also be mentioned, and also the educational context, like a private school or public school, at home or abroad. These factors should be taken into account for successful, having a effective and appropriate learning process.

4. The Methodology of Data collection

For the purpose of testing the hypotheses, the practical procedures of the study have been carefully followed by collecting data through questionnaire and class observation. The questionnaire is for English grammar lecturers in the English department. Besides, grammar classes in the English department have been also observed by the researcher. Concerning the lecturers' questionnaire, 30 items were prepared; three of them are open questions while the rest are closed questions. All the items are grouped into four subsections including: Teachers' perceptions teachers' about teaching grammar, perceptions about the most effective teaching approach (deductive, inductive and eclectic approaches) for teaching English grammar, teachers' perceptions about the most effective strategies for teaching English grammar and also difficulties that the English grammar teachers encounter while teaching. Each of these questionnaire items presents an idea to be checked. For this reason, a sample of fifty-five English grammar lecturers in the English department was chosen at different universities in region like, Kurdistan "Sulaimani Salahadin , Duhok , Jihan , Human development and Knowledge "universities. On the other hand class observation is also another tool of the current study which includes some basic issues that are expected to have extra feedback about the bestsuitedapproach and strategies for teaching English grammar, also to knowledge the problems that English grammar teachers encounter while teaching. Basically, the class observation consists of 16 items that reflect the questionnaire's subsections with (yes, no and not applied) options. Moreover, ten grammar classes have been observed by the researcher in the English department at "Sulaimani , Duhok , Salahadin "universities in Kurdistan region.

5. Results of the questionnaire

According to the university professors learning and teaching any language can be a difficult task, and without grammar, language is a huge pile of words and expression, grammar shortens and organizes this pile into a few learnable rules that make learning language an easy task. Grammar is one of the vital components of language learning of foreign /second language since it provides opportunities to the EFL /ESL learners to have enough knowledge about tenses and aspects of the grammar of the target language so as to be able to make speeches accurately. In such a manner, it is necessary to teach grammar of any language especially students of language departments have to learn it explicitly.

Some university professors admitted that learning grammar affects learning other language skills. It fosters comprehension readying texts, and improving speaking and writing abilities. Many of the instructors agreed that grammar is the core of the writing skill in any language. Without knowledge of the grammar, well-formed and ill-formed sentences cannot be distinguished. Sentences cannot be constructed to compose a piece of writing without grammar even if one wants to speak in an academic manner then knowledge of grammar should take place. Finally, grammar gives learners a selfconfidence when the grammar is taught correctly and appropriately then everything else follows it appropriately.

Furthermore, Grammar is the backbone of language without it students will face difficulties with tenses and word order even after graduation. Therefore, according to the results of the questionnaire both pedagogical

and descriptive grammar should be taught for three years at college due to the fact that students cannot be provided with a great amount of information about grammar within one or two years. Obviously, each level and each stage have its own content, starting from Basic English education to advanced, so teaching grammar should be systematic and in complementary to each other. In addition, since the learners have a poor performance and are non-native speakers of the language, they have to be known and informed of all the aspects of the language. So grammar covers all the relevant parts of language for non-native speakers without overloading the students and the teachers. In short, quality is much better than quantity, as some teachers described grammar as mathematics, the more students practice grammar, the more they will handle the language.

Moreover, concerning the best-suited approach for teaching English grammar the results represent the fact that an eclectic approach for teaching grammar is considered more useful comparing to the deductive and the inductive approaches. Some grammatical subjects need to be taught inductively. Here, the teacher wants the students to think about the rules by themselves. Sometimes the teacher obliged to teach the deductively because of the complexity of the subject. To teach other subjects, some teachers need to use both. For students to get sufficient information on the grammatical structure and rules by the teacher with enough examples to ease the processes of learning, the electric approach should be followed. It is also important for the students to be proactive and conduct research on the various rules and practice applying them in practical

examples. Eventually, EFL learners are not native speakers there should be more than one approach to help them acquire the language depending on their level.

The results of the questionnaire have also illustrated the best-suited techniques for teaching English grammar. Rule explanation in grammar is one of the good techniques for teaching English grammar that has a good impact on students. It eases the process of learning due to the fact that students have been taught throughout the year in a deductive way of teaching. Thus, the approach has a great impact to encourage students to learn faster. On the other hand, students mostly prefer everything to be direct so they can have a clear idea where the rules have come from. Simply, the deductive approach has a psychological effect on students and it is considered as guidance.

Moreover, teaching articles through using grammatical worksheets is also another technique which is considered as cooperative teaching that motivates students and gives them self-confidence. It leads to discussions and changing ideas in the classroom by that students will have a greater chance to contact with each other and learn from one another. Additionally, giving homework and selfstudy are also regarded as good ways of teaching grammar. Due to the fact that, practice makes students stay sharp and in the loop all the time. Through homework and self-study, students will be able to find out the rules of grammar independently which makes teachers be more aware of students' abilities throughout the academic year.

On the same line, teaching grammar through a generative situation like, giving students examples through real-life situations and creating an English atmosphere makes things practical and more inclusive. As a consequence, students will be more engaged and involved in the lesson, more information will stick into their minds and they will be much more connected with a real-life situation comparing to abstract topics that students find it very hard to relate to.

In addition, teaching grammar through minimal sentences pairs is also considered a useful way of teaching English grammar. Basically, compare and contrast and recognizing the differences in grammar makes certain issues clearer and students will remember it than when it is taught separately. Likewise, teaching grammar by using concordance data is regarded as a reliable way of teaching due to the fact that students get a better understanding of all subjects. For example, verb phrase plays an important role in English grammar that is why it is very important to use concordance data.

On the other hand, translating grammatical features from mother tongue to the target language and vice versa is regarded as a bad technique. On the ground that it affects students' speaking skills and create blockage toward class interactions, due to the comparison that will happen between the two languages. Moreover, translation causes confusion for students, for example, numbers of the tenses in English and Kurdish are not equal. Beside that translation makes most of the students to try to listen more to their teachers when he/ she speaks Kurdish instead of English. Thus, students will have limited exposure to the target language.

Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire have also demonstrated all the difficulties that English grammar lecturers encounter during the process of teaching. One of the difficulties that English grammar lecturers encounter is explaining grammar lesson only using target language due to students' understandings and unfamiliarity with the grammatical terms. Obviously, students are used to that style of teaching in school.

Additionally, most of the teachers face difficulties because of students' background in English grammar. Basically, lack of strong background is an obstacle in the way of learning and this goes back to not having qualified teachers; following an old fashioned method of teaching assessment system in high schools are all multiple choices. Additionally, students were taught to memorize the rules of grammar, so they did not obtain the language very well. Besides that, they didn't study English grammar in details. Eventually, English should be given full consideration.

Moreover, the results of the questionnaire have also shown that it is difficult for the instructors to make their learners apply grammatical knowledge to communication. For the season of, students do not have enough knowledge although they study English for many years; still, they cannot apply these rules to a real situation. Besides, students have often learnt grammar knowledge as an abstract knowledge and make no connection with the real function and use communication. Therefore, grammar should be focused on all the stages of college and English language should be a habit.

In addition, not using extra references is another difficulty that English grammar lecturers encounter due to the shortage of time and effort that makes teachers' pay less attention to grammar and its resources.

the results of In like manner. the questionnaire have also shown the difficulties of using the inductive, deductive and eclectic approaches for teaching English grammar. It has been clarified that the inductive approach causes difficulties for lecturers due to all the heavy demands in preparations and planning the lesson. Likewise, the deductive approach also causes difficulties for the lecturers due to all the responsibilities, especially when there are lots of students in a single class and there is not enough teaching equipment. Thus, that would lessen the chances of the students to become more active in the class.

On contrary, the result of the questionnaire illustrates that it is not difficult for lecturers to apply both the inductive and the deductive approaches in a class. By the reason of, activities and skills are not one of kind: teachers need different methods to follow. The inductive approach is effective but not when students having difficulties, immediately the deductive approach can be used for more explanation, or the deductive approach can be applied in teaching certain structures and the inductive approach for according students' others. to understandings. So, both approaches can be integrated.

Correspondingly, most of the lecturers have agreed on the fact that the main difficulty that English grammar teachers encounter in all the universities is the poor standard of the students. Due to some undeniable reasons as, not having a good English language background, lack of practice in the part of students, the mass number of students in the classroom without having educational technology as "a smart board or data show in some universities" that makes it impossible

to plan grammar lessons and involve every student in the class. Therefore, most of the students find grammar a very difficult and boring subject that they do not cope with the way of teaching at the university and to depend on themselves, all they care about is memorization for passing the exams. Moreover, most of the time lectures are teacher- centered approach not learnercentered approach. Besides that, not having native speakers, if the language is practiced with native speakers, the grammar learning will be much easier to use. Communication should be considered as well in learning English grammar because grammar lessons are a source of motivation when taught communicatively.

6. Results of the class observation

The results of the class observation demonstrate the fact that %50 of the lecturers follow the inductive approach for teaching grammar and only % 40 of these students are motivated by this approach. Additionally, the inductive strategies as, "teaching grammar through minimal pairs, and teaching grammar through generative situation are commonly used strategies that have only %30 effectiveness on students.

On the other hand, the %60 of the teachers follow the deductive approach for teaching English grammar. The deductive approach motivates students by only %20. Beside that the common strategies that are mostly used in the deductive classes are teaching article through grammar worksheets (students will be divided into groups and give a various set of rules), rule explanations that have % 30 effectiveness on students.

As a consequence, only %10 percent of the instructors have followed the eclectic approach (a mixture of inductive and deductive approaches) for teaching English grammar. Moreover, it has been clarified that. According to the data, %100 percent of these students are motivated by this approach.

Furthermore, the class observation also demonstrates the difficulties that English grammar lecturers encounter during the process of teaching. It illustrates that only %20 percent of the instructors face difficulties in explaining the grammar lesson only using the target language due to students' understanding, while % 80 percent of these instructors have no difficulties in using only the target language .Obviously, it can be seen through students reactions and participations. Moreover, %90 percent of the instructors face difficulties due to students' poor background as well as difficulties in making students apply grammatical knowledge to communication. Additionally, %80 percent of the instructors cannot use extra- references inside the class due to the shortage of the time.

In like manner, the results of the class observation have shown that %50 percent of the instructors who applied the inductive approach do not face any difficulties in applying the approach, while only %20 percent of the instructors who used the deductive approach face problems in using the approach for the heavy demand put on the lecturers, as %40 percent of these instructors who applied the deductive approach in their classes find it an easy approach to be applied. On the other hand, the class observation illustrates that the %10

percent of the university instructors who have followed the eclectic approach consider it to be an easy approach to be concentrated on for teaching English grammar.

7. CONCLUSION

According to the results of the study, the researcher has concluded the followings:

- 1- Grammar is considered an essential subject for Kurdish EFL students. It is regarded as a language component which is crucial to the mastery of all the four skills of language. Moreover, Grammar enhances students' achievements and proficiency in English as a foreign language, for this reason, students value grammar lesson.
- 2- According to the results of the study, both Pedagogical and descriptive types of grammar are needed to be concentrated on for three years of college.
- 3- Both the deductive and the inductive approaches offer different ways for teaching English grammar, and each is effective and motivated in a different manner.
- 4- According to the results of the questionnaire, the eclectic approach is considered the most applicable and reasonable approach to be applied for teaching English grammar. On the contrary, according to the results of the class observation, the majority of the lecturers follow the deductive approach for teaching English grammar.
- 5- According to the results of the questionnaire, strategies like , rule

explanation in teaching grammar, teaching articles through grammar worksheets, self-study (homework), teaching grammar through a generative situation, teaching grammar through minimal sentence pairs and teaching grammar by using concordance data, are all considered agreeable strategies for teaching English grammar that have a good impact on students' learning process for translating except grammatical features from mother tongue to the target language and vice versa. On the other hand, according to the class observation, most used strategies for teaching English grammar are rule explanation with teaching article through using grammar worksheets (students are divided to groups and given several rules).

- 6- According to the results the questionnaire and the class observation, there are number of difficulties that English grammar lecturers encounter throughout the process of teaching English grammar such as, students' poor background in English grammar, difficulties in making learners apply grammatical knowledge to communicate and difficulties in using extra references due to the shortage of time.
- 7- According to result of the the questionnaire, lecturers are facing difficulties in explaining grammar lessons using the target language only, along with difficulties in using the inductive approach due to the heavy demands on the lecturers in planning the lesson as well as difficulties in applying the deductive approach due to all the

- responsibilities lecturers. on the Conversely, according to the results of the class observation, lecturers are not facing difficulties in using only the target language for explaining grammar lesson because of students' understanding; instead students' have problems in responding and constructing a wellformed English sentence. Additionally, half of the lecturers who have applied the inductive approach have no difficulties in using the approach. Also, more than a half of the lecturers who have applied the deductive approach face no difficulties.
- 8- According to the results of the questionnaire, lectures admitted that applying both the inductive and the deductive approaches for teaching English grammar is not difficult at any rate. Contrarily, according to the class observation, only the minority of the lecturers have followed the eclectic approach for teaching English grammar.

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Table 1: The mean of the questionnaire

Level	Mean of the class observation	Indication	Level	Mean of the class observation	Indication
2	1.8364	Pedagogical grammar should be taught for three years in college.	15	1.96	Rule explanation in grammar has a good impact on students. Translating grammatical
3	2.4364	Descriptive grammar should be taught for three years	16	2.55	features from mother tongue to the target language and vice versa has a bad impact on students
4	1.2182	Grammar is very much important for EFL learners	17	2.02	Teaching articles through using grammatical worksheets is a good way of teaching.
5	1.47	Grammar will enhance students' achievements in the English language	18	1.95	Giving homework and self- study are good ways of teaching grammar
6	1.47	Grammatical structures have so much significant in speaking / writing skills	19	1.64	Teaching grammar through a generative situation is a good way of teaching.
7	2.05	Students value grammar lesson	20	1.62	Teaching grammar through minimal sentences pairs is a good way of teaching
8	2.51	Eclectic approach is the best approach for teaching grammar.	21	1.76	Teaching grammar by using concordance data is a good way of teaching
9	2.22	Deductive approach motivates students	22	2.31	It is difficult for teachers to explain the grammar lesson only using target language due to
10	2.16	Deductive approach considers as an effective approach for teaching English grammar	23	1.62	students' understandings Teachers face difficulties because of students' poor background in English grammar Lecturers are facing difficulties
11	1.87	Inductive approach fits good learners	24	2.33	in making learners apply grammatical knowledge to communicate
12	1.87	Inductive approach is an effective approach for teaching English grammar.	25	2.24	It is difficult for teachers to use extra references due to the shortage of time.
13	2.07	Inductive approach offer more advantages over deductive approach.	26	2.16	Teachers face difficulties using the inductive approach due to all the heavy demands.
14	1.85	Differences could be found between both deductive and inductive approaches.	27	2.24	Deductive approach causes difficulties for the teachers due to all the responsibilities put on the lecturers.

Table 1:The results of the class observation

Q	Yes		No				Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	5	50%	5	50%	0	0%	10	100%
2	4	40%	1	10%	5	50%	10	100%
3	3	30%	2	20%	5	50%	10	100%
4	6	60%	4	40%	0	0%	10	100%
5	2	20%	4	40%	4	40%	10	100%
6	3	30%	3	30%	4	40%	10	100%
7	1	10%	9	90%	0	0%	10	100%
8	1	10%	0	0%	9	90%	10	100%
9	2	20%	8	80%	0	0%	10	100%
10	9	90%	1	10%	0	0%	10	100%
11	9	90%	1	10%	0	0%	10	100%
12	8	80%	2	20%	0	0%	10	100%
13	0	0%	5	50%	5	50%	10	100%
14	2	20%	4	40%	4	40%	10	100%
15	5	50%	1	10%	4	40%	10	100%