

Improving Grammar Mechanics Among Kurdish EFL Learners: A Case Study

Atta A. Ahmed ¹ 

¹English Language Teaching Department, Tishk International University, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
Correspondence: Atta A. Ahmed, English Language Teaching Department, Tishk International University, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
Email: atta.ahmed@tiu.edu.iq

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Abstract: Acquiring proficiency in a second language enables learners to interact and communicate effectively in daily situations. Language learners can improve their ability to articulate their thoughts clearly and effectively. Understanding grammar aids learners to use language effectively in written forms. Grammar mechanics is one of the strategies to improve grammar comprehension which could be done through one of the most important instructional procedures, which helps the learners to overcome the challenges during the lessons. The current research aims to investigate the role of teaching intervention in improving grammar comprehension of a group of Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners. A one-group pre-experimental study was conducted to measure participant improvement through pre-test and post-test assessments. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to analyse the collected data. A Paired Sample T-Test was used to assess the level improvement between pre-test and post-test. The findings indicate a significant improvement in grammar comprehension between the pre-test and post-test results following the teaching intervention. The study provides an insight that the educators can improve the grammar comprehension of the learners using targeted materials in the teaching context, especially for the Kurdish EFL learners.

Keywords: Grammar Mechanics, Grammar Comprehension, Teaching Intervention, Kurdish EFL Learners

1. Introduction

English as a global language has played a pivotal role in life in all aspects. Managing the skills of English language is fundamental for most people because of the importance of English language in the field of classroom instruction in formal and informal education (Sapoetra, 2017). Learning another language permits the learners to communicate actively and efficiently in everyday life situations. Learners of another language get access to maximize the capability to express themselves clearly (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). Teaching grammar in second or foreign language has promoted substantial arguments for decades (Ellis, 2008). Furthermore, diverse teaching approaches suggested over time have endorsed various teaching grammar patterns in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Along with academic research, teaching methods focused on the importance of teaching grammar comprehension skills to activate the prior knowledge of the learners in EFL classroom environment. Enhancing grammar comprehension skills is emphasized by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages (Little, 2011).

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Understanding grammar aids learners to use language effectively in written form. Grammar mechanics is a crucial strategy for improving grammar comprehension, helping learners overcome challenges during lessons through targeted instructional procedures. It has been proposed that incorporating multiple types of exercises of grammar mechanics into teaching grammar will improve grammar comprehension of the learners, such as providing authentic materials to undertake during individual work, group work, and pair work activities in classroom. Providing additional activities and exercises might decrease the number of mistakes they make during the learning process. Educators need to look for the learners' weaknesses while teaching and find solutions for these problems they encounter (Cantürk, 2001). Learners with strong grammar skills perform better in grammar mechanics and communicate more proficiently when practicing language skills. The current study's importance rests on its capacity to offer thorough details on the particular difficulties associated with grammar mechanics. It is possible to adapt the teaching methods to create a stimulating and productive learning environment.

The primary objective of this study is to explore and apply treatments emphasizing grammar mechanics that facilitate Kurdish EFL learners in enhancing their grammar competency. As a consequence of the methodological case study, this research attempts to investigate the preferences and specific needs of the participants to assist in creating customized grammar education methodologies. The course, *English File*, was used for the first-year students of their undergraduate journey. The main issue this study attempts to address is the current disparity in grammar competency among Kurdish EFL learners. For educational interventions to be developed, it is essential to comprehend the specific areas of difficulty, such as grammar mechanics, and investigate workable solutions.

The researcher developed a research question with the aim of exploring the impact of instructional materials on the improvement of fundamental grammar mechanics skills in Kurdish EFL learners and identifying the key factors contributing to their effectiveness within this unique context.

- 1) To what extent do Kurdish EFL learners demonstrate improvements in grammar mechanics as measured by pre- and post-test assessments after participating in targeted interventions?

2. Literature

This literature review explores the vital subject of empowering Kurdish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners by looking at a case study that aims to improve undergraduate students' grammar mechanics. This contributes to demonstrating the intricate components of grammar comprehension in this specific cultural and linguistic environment.

2.1 The Importance of Grammar Comprehension in Language Learning

Emel and Toraman (2015) state that understanding language is substantially influenced by its grammar. Learning grammatical concepts helps students better understand the principles of sentence building, which improves their ability to interpret written and spoken language. The information provided by grammar is essential for the reader's comprehension, making it of utmost importance. The structure is what communicates the author's exact meaning to the reader (Quinn, 2001). Grammar enhances learners' overall understanding abilities by assisting them in identifying word order, verb tenses, and phrase patterns. Grammar describes how words are put together in sentences (called syntax) and their forms and

structures (called morphology). Put differently, grammar establishes the standards for the correct usage of spoken and written language, facilitating mutual understanding (MacMillan, 2017).

Grammar is considered as one of the significant skills in communication in everyday life. Syvak (2018) believes that there is exactly the same amount of importance of learning grammatical patterns at home by children as there is in school in their lessons. For this reason, learning grammatical patterns should reflect their learning in different circumstances. Since all languages have grammatical patterns, appropriate grammar is also necessary for learning a new language and for comprehending English as a second language. Given the diversity of languages spoken in the world, it is very beneficial for learners to hear solid, consistent English as it will motivate them to become fluent speakers. Thus, it also helps native English speakers comprehend different dialects (Celce-Murcia, 2016; Mohammed, 2023).

Lastly, while using proper grammar can help learners succeed in many aspects of life, especially in the classroom, it will also provide a better knowledge of language in general. Understanding grammar rules is essential to grasping grammar in its whole. Strong grammar abilities enable students to communicate ideas to listeners and readers in a clear and intelligible manner. Understanding grammar rules and knowing when to apply them is crucial.

2.2 Teaching Methodologies and Grammar Mechanics

Grammar in English language is prominently hard to learn for native speakers as well as foreign language speakers. There are various methods to teach grammar since it has several difficulties, exceptions, and vague rules to make the learners master grammar. Previously, traditionalists suggested some approaches to teach grammar such as rote-learning techniques that depended on pure repetition gradually. However, innovative educators preferred teaching grammar using some creative ways such as teaching grammar in-context (Thornbury, 1999).

Taking teaching methods into consideration, there is a hot debate about which approach is more effective for teaching grammar: inductive or deductive. Alzu'bi (2015) states that teaching grammar following a deductive approach concentrates on giving instructions before doing practice. The teacher explains the topic and provides a comprehensive description of the grammatical rules and patterns to the learners. Following the session, students are supposed to use worksheets and exercises to mechanically practice what they just learned. Even while this kind of instruction is widespread, many people—including educators—are reconsidering it in light of the growing number of post-secondary students who are coming to adulthood with inadequate literacy abilities (Widodo, 2006). According to former educators, the teacher-centered and rote learning methods used in deductive teaching discourage many pupils from writing (Nur, 2020; Sik, 2015).

On the contrary, in teaching grammar inductively, multiple instances are provided to demonstrate a certain idea, and it is expected of the students to infer the concept's operation from these examples (Benitez-Correa et al., 2019; Widodo, 2006). The idea is not explained in advance, and it is assumed that learners will pick up on grammar principles more naturally when they read and write for themselves (Ke, 2008). Learning grammar and seeing how these principles function in a sentence helps pupils retain the material more easily than if they were just given an explanation without any examples (Haight et al., 2007). According to Shaffer (1989), the primary objective of the inductive teaching approach is for students to

retain grammar concepts. To this end, teachers employ strategies that are proven to be cognitively effective and leave a lasting impact on students' contextual memory.

2.3 Related Scholarly Studies

There have been several studies to explore the role of grammar comprehension in improving grammar mechanics. In a study conducted by Yüksel et al. (2023) to assess the English coursebook material for EFL undergraduate students, data was collected through a triangulation method of data collection. It included questionnaire, observation, and interview with the learners and educators. Their study resulted that vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar of the participants have been improved and upgraded the students' levels through the coursebook designed by the institute. The learners' development resulted from the role of the teaching intervention as it elevated their academic performance. Muhammad and Jawad (2019) conducted a study to investigate the appropriate methods to improve the grammatical general errors of the Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners and to raise them to standard level of grammar comprehension. They used a mixed methodology design of their study. The questionnaire was used to collect data from the teachers to assess their perceptions about their preferred methods of teaching grammar, learners' grammatical knowledge, and their difficulties in using grammar in their academic pursuits through open-ended questions. Furthermore, observation was another tool for data collection to explore the approaches that are employed in the classes and observe how do learners encounter grammar comprehension in classroom environment. Their study resulted that the lecturers prefer the eclectic method using different strategies to elevate the learners' grammar comprehension to be suited with standard level.

Shirav and Nagai (2022) employed a study to explore the impact of grammar instruction such as active voice, passive voice, and complex grammatical structure inductively and deductively in a Japanese classroom environment. Their study followed a quantitative and qualitative approach using a quasi-experimental design to analyze the data. The researchers focused on two groups in total 34 of the participants from second year students in a vocational school. The results of production and recognition tests were compared through a pre-test and post-test. The result of their study showed a remarkable influence of the improvement of the learners through the chosen approaches of teaching grammar. Therefore, the researchers confirmed that the learners received more benefit from the inductive method and their post-test demonstrated that outperformance comparing to the group of participants who followed deductive approach. Jones et al. (2013) argue that grammar instruction has a great impact on developing writing skills of EFL undergraduate learners. Their study focused on grammar comprehension theories to assess error-making of the students' grammar in context during writing through teaching intervention. The mixed methodology was applied to analyze the collected data. The result of their study showed that the teaching intervention has great impact on improving students' understanding of grammar comprehension in writing skills.

Through this explanation, it can be concluded that there are several reasons that impact the enhancement of students' grammar comprehension performance. Selecting teaching material is one of the factors to improve the grammar mechanics of the learners in university level. Another way is through upgrading the academic level of the students using different methods of teaching, particularly inductive method, in which it elevates the grammatical performance of the learners in the area of grammar mechanics. Finally, the role of teaching intervention in improving the grammar comprehension of the learners.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the study

The current study follows a quantitative pre-experimental one-group design to explore the enhancement of grammar mechanics through the influence of teaching interventions using coursebooks in English language. The participants of this research were Kurdish EFL learners who participated in both pre-test and post-test assessments to investigate their proficiency in English grammar. According to Campbell et al. (2016), research designs that aim to explore and provide deeper understanding of statistics is referred to quantitative study. Pre-experimental design is a type of quantitative approach that includes only one group of the participants in the study. It focuses on receiving a certain intervention.

3.2 Sample of the study

The present study included 24 first-year university students, comprising 14 females and 10 males, with an age range of 18-22 years. These students were assessed at a pre-intermediate language proficiency level, as determined by a comprehensive placement test administered by the University's Language Center. Ethical standards were rigorously adhered to, with explicit consent obtained from both the educational institution and the participants. Participants' grammar mechanics were assessed using pre-test and post-test results to identify improvements.

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test Results

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	52.25	24	11.946	2.439
	Post-test	64.54	24	13.866	2.830

Table 1 presents paired samples statistics for a study involving pre-test and post-test measurements. In Pair 1, the pre-test yields a mean score of 52.25 with a sample size of 24 participants. Following an intervention, the post-test demonstrates an increased mean score of 64.54, also with the same sample size of 24 participants. This data suggests a notable positive shift from the pre-test to the post-test condition, indicative of a potential impact or improvement resulting from the intervention.

In relation to the pre-test and post-test samples, Standout Set A was utilized to assess the students' current grammatical knowledge, with a specific focus on the grammar mechanics of the participants. Following a six-week teaching intervention, Standout Set B was employed to evaluate the improvements made by the participants. In terms of the reliability and validity of the tests, standard assessments—utilizing Standout test samples with the same format, style, and design of the questions as the current study—were employed. Both tests were conducted during morning sessions to maintain the face validity of the assessment.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process spanned six weeks in 2023. In the first week, participants took a grammar comprehension pre-test to establish a baseline. Over the subsequent six weeks, participants attended classes twice a week for two hours each session, using the English File coursebook. Activities included individual and group exercises focused on grammar mechanics, interactive discussions, and targeted practice sessions. The post-test, administered at the end of the six-week period, assessed the participants' progress.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

To assess the collected data, a one-group pre-experimental study design was used to investigate participants' improvement through pre-test and post-test scores. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed for data analysis. A Paired Sample T-Test was chosen to assess the level of improvement between pre-test and post-test scores due to its suitability for comparing two related samples. The results indicated a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, demonstrating the effectiveness of the teaching intervention.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Grammar Mechanics Improvement and its Impact on Intervention in Teaching

Understanding grammar mechanics is essential for learning foreign languages for undergraduate students.

Table 2: Paired Samples Test for the Pre-test and Post-test Results

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pretest - posttest	12.292	7.304	1.491	15.376	9.208	8.245	23	0.000

Table 2 elucidates the pre-test and post-test results which is used to investigate the impact of the treatment for the participants during the course. The changes in pre-test and post-test results indicate improvement for each participant in the study. The mean paired difference which is -12.292 determine the inclusive in the language proficiency. This improvement is indicated by the positive change in the mean scores. Moreover, the standard deviation and standard error mean suggest that the score changes are both significant and consistent across the group. The 95% confidence interval of the difference reveals that the true mean difference is expected to fall within the range of -15.376 to -9.208. The t-value of 8.245 with 23 degrees of freedom (df) is indicative of the statistical significance of the observed improvement in

scores. This is further supported by a p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, which is well below the conventional significance level of 0.05. The results of this analysis clearly demonstrate a substantial improvement in language proficiency among the university freshmen following the intensive English language course. The mean paired difference of -12.292 indicates that, on average, students achieved a 12.292-point increase in their test scores. The negative mean value points to an overall enhancement in language proficiency, which is in line with the goals of the instructional intervention. Students displayed consistent improvements, as indicated by the relatively low standard deviation and standard error mean. The statistical significance of the improvement is evident in the t-value and p-value. With a t-value of 8.245 and a p-value of 0.000, the observed differences are highly unlikely to be due to chance. The results of the current study affirm a positive and substantial influence on participants' language proficiency and grammar comprehension. The result of the present study is in line with the findings of earlier literature employed on role of providing treatment such as teaching intervention in developing the knowledge of the participants, especially in grammar comprehension and mechanics which was conducted by Yüksel et al. (2023). In addition, presenting grammar concepts, integrating grammatical notions, and vocabulary exercises are examples of prospective areas of development that their research determined to better address the educational requirements of secondary school learners. Furthermore, Jones et al. (2013) support the importance of the role of teaching intervention in enhancing students' reading comprehension and grammar mechanics.

In terms of instructional interventions, the negative mean difference and the highly significant p-value of .000 suggest that, on average, Kurdish EFL learners' grammar mechanics skills improved following the implementation of the coursebook. Nonetheless, the wide confidence interval indicates variability in individual responses, with some students making substantial improvements while others showed less progress or even a decline in their grammar comprehension skills.

Nevertheless, these disparities in pre-test and post-test scores highlight the significance of recognizing individual learning pathways. In other words, there were variations in the students' performance, and not all of them exhibited the exact same progress. As a matter of fact, some of the learners experienced a drop in their result even after receiving the teaching treatment for six weeks in which they highlighted to have less concentration during the teaching sessions. This declination of the Kurdish EFL learners in the present study might be due to several factors such as individual differences of the learners.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, acquiring proficiency in a second language enables learners to interact and communicate effectively in daily situations. Language learners have the opportunity to enhance their capacity to articulate oneself intelligibly. For many years, there have been strong arguments in favor of teaching grammar in second or foreign languages. This research explored the role of teaching interventions in improving grammar comprehension among Kurdish EFL undergraduate learners. It further demonstrated that there is an alternative in the result of the learning of the participants in grammar comprehension before and after the teaching intervention. Students' performance improved significantly after receiving the treatment over the specified period. From this perspective, it can be inferred that teaching intervention can be used to raise the academic level of the learners in the area of grammar comprehension. The changes in pre-test and post-test results best describe the influence of the treatment in improving learners' academic performance in grammar comprehension. It is worth mentioning that not all participants improved equally

due to their individual differences. This highlights the need for teachers to understand the various learning styles and methods that can aid in learner improvement.

Conflict of interest:

There is no conflict of interest for this paper.

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