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A Proposed Model for Grammar Instruction to EFL Adult Learners: The Case of Second-Year Students at Biskra University

MOUSSAOUI Nadjette[1*]
[1]*University of Ouargla Kasdi Merbah, Algeria*
moussnadjet@gmail.com
CHELLI Saliha[2]
[2]*University of Biskra Mohamed Khidher, Algeria*
saliha.chelli@univ-biskra.dz

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ABSTRACT: *Due to the importance of learners' beliefs towards language learning success in general and grammar learning in specific, the present paper seeks to gauge EFL students' beliefs about the different types of grammar instruction. To this end, a quantitative descriptive method was adopted, using a questionnaire administered to 95 Algerian EFL students who enrolled in the second year at the Department of English, Mohamed Khidher University. The findings revealed that the students have positive attitudes toward the role grammar plays in language learning; however, they express mixed reactions towards both inductive and deductive grammar instruction, where most of the participants prefer the direct deductive approach. Such findings drive us to propose a model based on the experiential learning theory to correct some EFL learners' misconceptions about their learning, a shift from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach, to promote learner autonomy.*

KEYWORDS: Deductive approach; EFL learners' beliefs; experiential learning; grammar instruction; inductive approach; proposed model

* Corresponding author: **MOUSSAOUI Nadjette**, moussnadjet@gmail.com
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Introduction

Grammar, being a linchpin of a language, has witnessed ups and downs in the language teaching/learning process. On one end of the spectrum, incorporating grammar into language learning is not supported and is viewed as unnecessary. Supporters of this view, like Krashen (1983), believe that a replication of naturalistic acquisition of L1 in the classroom would be sufficient to learn the target language, so that mere exposure to comprehensible input would pave the way towards internalizing the grammar rules subconsciously. On the other end of the spectrum stand the advocates for integrating grammar into language learning; they assert that language acquisition can be fostered by formal instruction. Such diversifying views created a plethora of approaches and methods used for teaching grammar.

Since grammar is a means to an end, and a vehicle by which words settle appropriately, poor command of it will constrain the learners' language development (Thornbury, 2009, Ellis, 2006, Azar, 2007). According to Larsen-Freeman (2003), the benefits of teaching grammar are numerous; grammar is seen as an essential component of language, a system that learners can use for their communicative needs, and a tool that allows them to say more than what they already know. Also, learning grammar can facilitate the internalization of its syntactic system, thus implementing the development of accuracy and fluency.

Grammar is the backbone of a language and furnishes the basis for a set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and without it the product text will be broken, uneducated, or incomprehensible. Hence, grammar is the structural foundation of the ability to express oneself and produce grammatical acceptable utterances in the language (Widodo, 2006). The more students are aware of how it works, the more they can monitor the meaning and the way they use language, which can foster precision and detect ambiguity. Therefore, with such an understanding of grammar and concise vocabulary to use, students establish an interlanguage that is fluent and applicable to meaningful communication.

1. Conceptual Framework

Grammar is used to refer both to language users' subconscious internal systems and to linguists' attempts explicitly to codify or describe that system. With regard to the latter, its scope can be broad enough to refer to the abstract system underlying all languages or, more narrowly, to the system underlying a particular language (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Thornbury (1999, 13) claims that "grammar is the description of rules for forming sentences, including an account of the meaning that these forms convey; it adds meaning that is not easily inferable from the immediate context." Henceforth, grammar is more than merely a system of rules and conventions for relating sounds or symbols to meaning. It is only by abiding by such a system that speakers of a given speech community can communicate, and it is only by mastering this system that a learner of a foreign language can effectively use it.

1.1.Grammar Instruction

The role of grammar instruction in the FL classroom has always been a source of controversy and a heated debate in second language acquisition (SLA) research and theory. This debate can be structured in terms of meaning-focused instruction versus form-focused instruction. In a meaning-based classroom, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1997, 141) explained that "learners are usually not specifically taught the strategies, maxims, and organizational principles that govern communicative language use but are expected to work these out for themselves through extensive task engagement" (cited in Barrot, 2014, 279). The learners are exposed to target language samples that are slightly above their current level of language acquisition, in which the primary aim of language is the communication of meaning; as such, grammar instruction and learning discrete linguistic items are rejected since the acquisition of metalinguistic knowledge does not change the learners' underlying grammar as it cannot be transferred to communicative tasks (Spada and Lightbown, 2008). The use of meaning-focused instruction guarantees that learners not

only develop their linguistic competence but their sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence as well. Despite all the controversies and uncertainties surrounding the subject, grammar teaching continues to be prominent both in course books and in the classroom practice of teachers in school-based foreign language courses (Ur, 2011, p. 508, cited in Graus and Coppen, 2015, 2). According to Richards (2008), people now agree that grammar is too important to be ignored and that without a good knowledge of grammar, learners' development can be severely constrained. The critical issue for grammar teaching now becomes the question of how best to teach grammar rather than whether to teach grammar or not.

Form-focused instruction (FFI) is an umbrella term for "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form" (Ellis, 2001, 1 cited in Loewen et al., 2009, 92). Spada and Lightbown (2008) distinguished two forms of FFI in terms of the pedagogical timing of attention to form: isolated FFI and integrated FFI. Isolated FFI is provided in activities that are separate from the communicative use of language (Spada and Lightbown, 2008, 186). In other words, there is a need to explicitly teach grammar where it is claimed that language that is learned explicitly as declarative knowledge can be internalized through language practice and can be retrieved during communicative activities; such a way of teaching represents the deductive approach. On the other hand, integrated FFI, which espouses the inductive approach, occurs when attention to form is embedded within a communicative practice during which the primary focus remains on meaning. Long (1996) supports the use of integrated FFI because it allows learners to fully integrate language form into communicative interactions and allows learners to spontaneously attend to language form contextually (cited in Barrot, 2014, 279). Feedback or brief explanations are offered to help students express meaning more effectively or more accurately within the communicative interaction (Spada and Lightbown, 2008).

The teachability of grammar has also undergone a substantial change; the teaching approach moves from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. In traditional teacher-directed approaches, using structured lessons, students remain more or less passive recipients of information where it does not require them to examine their own emotional responses to the subject material; they can thus remain unaware and ignorant of what they have learned. Hence, re-orienting their teacher-centered classrooms to student-centered ones gives students their legitimate autonomy. They get engaged in practical projects, active manipulation of material, processing information, and generating their responses rather than giving the right answers. Moreover, the learner-centered approach considers learning as the process of creating new knowledge and understanding through the transformation of experiences. So it guarantees the students' own contributions to their language learning through initiative taking and active involvement through using their background knowledge; they take charge of their learning in order to enhance their autonomy as students and language users.

1.2.Learners' Beliefs on Grammar Instruction

It is important to consider students' beliefs on the feasibility and efficacy of grammar instruction. Beliefs serve 'as a guide to thought and behavior (M. Borg, 2001, 186, cited in Graus and Coppen, 2015, 3). Learners' beliefs have been identified as an important individual difference variable in second language learning (Dornyei, 2005, cited in Loewen et al., 2009, 91); as they play a significant role in motivation, selection of learning strategies, and learning in general, studying learners' beliefs might help explain the behaviors that learners demonstrate when learning a foreign language (Rahuma, 2016). EFL learners' beliefs are more influential than their knowledge since they determine how individuals organize and define tasks and problems.

According to Kern (1995 cited in Schultz, 1996, 344), to understand language learning in institutional settings, it is important to consider, learners' and teachers' beliefs, and that search on learners' beliefs can help "predict expectational conflicts that may contribute to student frustration, anxiety, lack of motivation, and, in some cases, ending of foreign language study." Put differently, learners' beliefs can be a double-edged sword; on the one hand, if EFL learners' expectations are met, FL learning will succeed; learners'

positive attitudes toward one way of instruction for learning, in the present study grammar, may validate their dedication to it and hence contribute to its effectiveness. On the other hand, unrealistic beliefs and misconceptions about language learning can impede the learning process. (Ansarin et al., 2014, Loewen et al., 2009)

Research on EFL learners' beliefs allows us to understand even little the way students perceive grammar in terms of responsibility, difficulty, and the way it should be taught. Despite its importance in FL research, little research has dealt with learners' beliefs compared to those done on teachers' beliefs and perceptions toward grammar learning and teaching. Schulz (1996) investigated and compared 92 teachers' and 824 learners' attitudes towards the role of explicit grammar study and error correction. The findings revealed that students had more favourable attitudes towards the formal study of grammar than teachers. Most teachers believed that it was more important to practice a foreign language in communicative tasks, while students agreed that their communicative competence could be improved if they practiced grammar.

In gauging learners' beliefs about grammar instruction, Loewen et al. (2009) found that the respondents had positive attitudes towards explicit instruction, which, according to them, was due to the context where foreign language learners had fewer opportunities to communicate in the target language outside classrooms. Such findings were mirrored in the study of Polot (2009), who claimed that such preference towards the traditional method was because of performance anxiety and a lack of confidence in the learners' L2 proficiency. Once more, in a recent study done by Mansouri et al. (2019), the results revealed that learners were more interested in isolated-form instruction, yet they acknowledged the complementary nature of these approaches.

Acknowledging the importance of grammar in second language learning, respondents to an exploratory study held by Rahuma (2016) showed mixed views concerning the appropriate way to teach grammar, where they called for both integrated and isolated instruction of grammar. However, Ansarin et al. (2014) deduce that the level of students is an important factor in determining beliefs. In their study, the advanced learners showed a particular preference for integrated FFI; whereas, beginner learners did not have a specific preference for either isolated or integrated FFI.

1.3.Experiential Learning

Experiential learning (henceforth EL) has become a powerful force in higher education over the last quarter century. McDonnell (2017) argues that it has played a large role in transforming how teaching and learning are conducted in the 21st century. Kolb (1984, 41) defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience." In other words, it is meaningful-discovery learning that involves the learner as a whole person, including physical, intellectual, and emotional engagement, and the external environment, including place, cultural, and social contexts; these experiences are translated into concepts and then internalized.

The significance of students' contributions to their language learning has brought an increased interest in recent years; students, as learners in general and as language learners in particular, need to take charge of their learning to enhance their autonomy as students and language users. Learning in EL revolves around the idea that individuals construct new knowledge based on their previous experiences and beliefs. Applying experiential learning in formal education, in this context of grammar study, emphasizes that the learner is directly in touch with the phenomenon being studied rather than just reading or hearing about it, which in turn increases motivation and engagement and encourages personal input, initiative, and self-direction in the learning process. In general, it focuses on the individual as a central pole in learning with the aim of autonomy (Sonja, 2003, 54, Kolb, 2015, 53). The current study adopts Kolb's model of experiential learning as the foundation of the proposed model.

1.3.1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

David Kolb (1984, 42) advances a general theoretical model of experiential learning as shown in Figure 1.

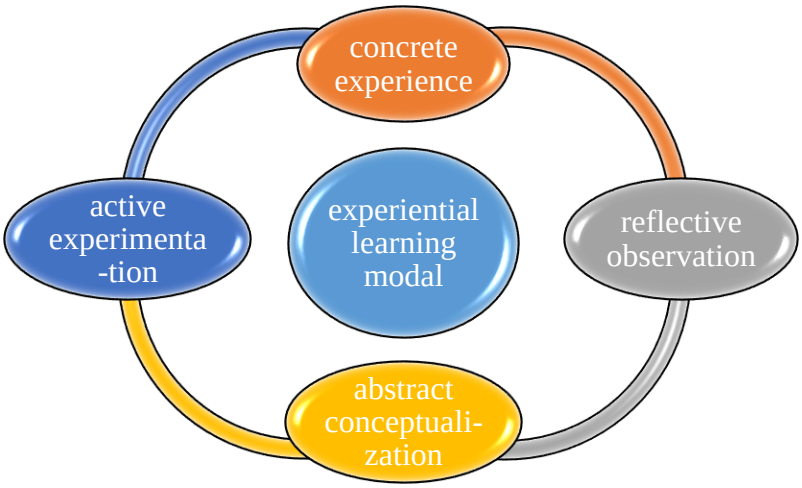

Figure 1. A Model of Experiential Learning.

Experiential learning consists of a four-stage cycle; experience gives food for reflective thinking, which in turn leads to abstract conceptualizations and hypotheses to be tried out through active experimentation (Kolb and Kolb, 2005, 3). Hence, the amalgamation and the fluent movement from one step to another ensure the creation of a healthy atmosphere where all types of learners get involved in the teaching and learning process.

(1) **Concrete experience***:* It emphasizes personal experiences, belonging, and feeling. The instructional activities that support this aspect include small group discussions, simulation and drama techniques, and the use of videos, films, examples, and stories; it entails openness and willingness to involve oneself in new experiences.

(2) **Reflective observation***:* careful observation is to be used where the learner focuses on understanding ideas and situations. The learner is concerned with how things happen by attempting to see them from different perspectives and relying on one's thoughts, feelings, and judgment. The instructional techniques include personal journals, reflective essays, observation reports, thought questions, and discussions. Hence, the most commonly used skills are observation and reflection.

(3) **Abstract conceptualization**: it entails using a systematic approach to structure and frame the phenomena. The emphasis is placed on the definition and classification of abstract ideas and concepts, aiming at precise conceptual categories. The instructional techniques include theory construction, lecturing, and building models and analogies.

(4) **Active experimentation:** it is learning by action, which emphasizes practical applications in real life work contexts. They use new ideas in actual practice. The learner attempts to influence people and change situations as necessary, taking risks in order to get things done. The instructional techniques include fieldwork, various projects, laboratory work, games, dramatizations, and simulations. (Kolb, 1984; Kohonen, 2001, Merriam and Cafferella, 1999)

2. Methodology

Since this research investigated EFL learners' beliefs about grammar instruction and the difficulties they encounter while studying grammar, we conceive that the appropriate research approach to be adopted is the quantitative descriptive one. As stated by Saunders et al., (2009), the objective of descriptive research is to gain an accurate profile of events, persons, or situations and to identify and describe the variability in different phenomena. The data was collected through a questionnaire, which contains 29 items with a Likert-type scale ranging from 1=Strongly Agree to 5=Strongly Disagree. It was administered to 95 second-year students from the Department of English and Literature at Mohamed Kheider University during the academic year 2022-2023. The participants were all native speakers of Arabic. They represent 31.66% of the total population of second-year students who have been chosen randomly.

2.1.Research Questions

The current study sought to explore EFL learners' perspectives on grammar instruction by answering the following questions:

1. What are the students' views regarding the role of grammar in learning English?
2. What statements do FLL learners provide about grammar instruction?
    2.1. Do they prefer direct explicit grammar instruction?
    2.2. Do they prefer implicit grammar instruction?
3. What are the difficulties that EFL students encounter while studying grammar?

2.2.Data Collection Tool

Questionnaires are the most commonly used tool for collecting information in FL research, in the sense that they are more amenable to modification and easy to answer. To reach the aims of the current study, a closed-ended questionnaire was designed based on two criteria: the review of related literature about different types of grammar instruction and earlier research held for the same purpose. (Schulz, 1996, Loewen et al., 2009, Rahuma, 2016, and Mansouri et al., 2019)

The questionnaire consists of 29 items in which the participants were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (5). The questions were classified under 7 constructs: efficacy of grammar, the importance of grammar, preference towards explicit isolated grammar instruction, preference towards implicit integrated grammar instruction, negative attitude toward grammar instruction, error correction, and the problems they encounter. These factors were then used to investigate differences in beliefs among learners studying English as their target language. The data collected was computed and analyzed; items in each category were summed and divided by the number of items to provide a final percentage for each subscale.

3. Findings

The findings were analyzed and grouped under three headings related to the research questions: (1) the importance and efficacy of grammar, (2) preferences towards grammar instruction, and (3) the problems the students face while learning grammar.

3.1.The Efficacy of Grammar

This construct aims at unveiling students' views on the role of grammar in learning the target language.

No	The Efficacy of Grammar	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
09	You need conscious knowledge of grammar to improve your language	34	35.8	38	40	15	15.8	4	4.2	5	5.2
13	Focused-structure exercises play a role in the process	34	35.8	35	36.8	17	17.9	6	6.3	3	3.1
15	Explicit discussion of grammar rules is beneficial to learning	23	24.2	33	34.7	27	28.4	7	7.3	5	5.2

Table 01: EFL Learners' Views about the Efficacy of Grammar in Language Learning

The above table (01) displays the frequencies and percentages of the student's responses to the efficacy of grammar in language learning in general. The results indicate that most of the students (75%) valued the conscious knowledge of grammar as an effective factor in developing their proficiency level. Almost the same percentage (70%) has been observed in the role focused structure exercises plays in language learning. Such results denote that the participants approve of the necessity of isolated instruction to develop their overall proficiency. The last item, '*explicit discussion of grammar rules is beneficial to learning*', gained the least percentage (59%) compared to the previous statements, which may reflect the negative attitudes they have towards the importance of meta-linguistic knowledge they internalize from having such discussions.

Despite the overall approval of the pivotal role grammar plays in learning English, a considerable portion of students expressed their neutrality, with 15% in the first statement, 17% in the second statement, and 28% in the third statement. Such neutral opinions might reflect the uncertainty and doubts the students might have about the impact of grammar on language learning, which can be due to the difficulties of grammar structures.

3.2.The Importance of Grammar

This construct aims at unveiling students' views on the role of grammar in learning the four basic skills

No	The Importance of Grammar	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
17	Grammar is very important when speaking	46	48.4	28	29.5	13	13.7	3	3.1	5	5.2
18	Grammar is very important when reading	33	34.7	27	28.4	20	21	10	10.5	5	5.2
19	Grammar is very important when writing	59	62.0	27	28.4	4	4.2	2	2.1	3	3.1
20	Grammar is very important when listening	18	18.9	20	21	22	23.1	32	33.7	3	3.1

Table 02: EFL Learners' Views about the Importance of Grammar in the Four Basic Skills

The results in the above table (02) reveal that 48% of the students strongly agreed that grammar is important when speaking, while 34% strongly agreed that it is very important when reading. 59% and 27% of the participants strongly agreed and agreed with the statement '*grammar is important when writing*'; whereas, only 28% of the respondents approved of the importance of grammar when listening, while 36% disagreed with it.

The findings show that the participants gave the highest percentage to writing and speaking, being the productive skills, and the lowest percentage to reading and listening, being the receptive skills. Such beliefs may be drawn from the nature of the skill the students think grammar is crucial in; in other words, when writing, they focus on grammar and spelling mistakes, and this is what they receive from their teachers' feedback. When speaking, they also try not to make grammatical mistakes. Listening, being the least skill to benefit from grammar, according to the students, might come from the belief that they focus on the meaning of words while listening which was indicated by 23% of students who had a neutral opinion and 33% who disagreed with the statement.

3.3.Direct Instruction of Grammar

This construct aims at gauging the students' preferences towards the isolated focus on form in learning grammar

No	Direct Instruction of Grammar	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagreed	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
07	Teaching linguistic forms can help you produce correct grammar	19	20	35	36.8	24	24.2	11	11.6	6	6.3
08	You can improve your grammatical accuracy through regular structure exercises	52	54.7	30	31.6	7	7.3	3	3.1	3	3.1
22	The grammar teacher provides me with the grammatical rules and I apply them to the given exercises	40	42.1	38	40	2	2.1	7	7.3	8	8.4

Table 03: EFL Learners' Preferences towards Explicit Grammar Instruction

Table (03) shows the frequency of students' responses concerning their preferences toward explicit isolated grammar instruction. Based on the results, 54% of the students strongly agreed or agreed with the statement '*Teaching linguistic forms can help you produce correct grammar*', 52% of the participants strongly agreed that the repeated regular structure exercises can help them internalize the rules of grammar, and the majority of them (82%) agree that the basic role of the teacher is to provide the learners with the grammatical rules explicitly. From the above results, the preference towards explicit grammar is widely accepted and deemed a simple and direct way to attain the targeted grammatical structures.

3.4.Implicit Instruction of Grammar

This construct aims at gauging the students' preferences towards the integrated focus on form in learning grammar

No	Implicit Instruction of Grammar	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
06	You study grammar by being exposed to the environment of using the language naturally	10	10.5	20	21	5	5.2	30	31.5	30	31.5
10	The grammatical drills have to be in a complete communicative context	4	4.2	41	43.1	8	8.4	38	40	4	4.2
14	Grammar is best taught through communicative activities	21	22.1	38	40	26	27.3	9	9.5	1	1.05

Table 04: EFL Learners' Preferences towards Implicit Grammar Instruction

The findings in table 04 indicate that the students (62%) refuse that grammar can be learned only by exposure to the target language naturally without any grammar reference either planned; where the language features in focus may have been anticipated and planned for within a communicative activity, or incidental; they may occur implicitly in the course of ongoing interaction. They believe that learning grammar is a must. Concerning the statement '*the grammatical drills have to be in a complete communicative context'*, the views have been split between 47% of students who agree with the statement and 44% of those who disagree with the statement.

Such results are incongruent with the ones of the third statement, '*Grammar is best taught through communicative activities',* where 62% of the respondents agree to have implicit integrated grammar instruction, yet an important percentage (27%) could not make up their minds. Such discrepancy in the responses of the students may be due to the fact that they have never been exposed to grammar components implicitly; hence, some students are likely to try such a new way of instruction, and some students feel safe and comfortable with the method being exposed to.

3.5.Negative Attitudes towards Grammar Instruction

This construct aims to diagnose EFL learners' attitudes towards grammar instruction in terms of excluding grammar from the curriculum and whether it impedes them from developing speaking abilities, which are presented in items numbers 11 and 12 respectively.

No	Negative Attitudes Towards Grammar Instruction	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
11	Excluding grammar from the language program is beneficial for you	15	15.7	20	21	15	15.7	20	21	25	26.3
12	Learning grammar impedes your speaking competency	22	23.1	45	47.3	14	14.7	10	10.5	4	4.2

Table 05: EFL Learners' Attitudes towards Grammar Instruction

The results displayed in table (05) reveal that the students showed mixed reactions. 46% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, so they do have positive attitudes towards grammar instruction, while 36% of the students did not prefer to study grammar, and 14% had a neutral position. Such preference towards grammar instruction may be due to the students' strong beliefs in the efficacy of grammar in language learning (table 01). 67% of the participants had negative attitudes towards the relationship between mastery of grammar and speaking competency. Although they valued the role grammar plays in speaking, they considered grammar an impediment to developing their speaking abilities. Such views can be because of the type of instruction they receive when studying grammar that is isolated from any communicative task and does not help them internalize the rules to be used later in real-life communication.

3.6.Error Correction

No	Error Correction	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
16	While speaking, teachers should correct grammatical mistakes	32	33.7	33	34.7	20	21	5	5.2	5	5.2
21	I dislike when I am corrected in class	10	10.5	13	13.6	17	17.9	30	31.6	25	26.3

Table 06: EFL Learners' Attitudes towards Error Correction

The above table (06) investigates students' beliefs towards error correction. As displayed in the table, 65% confirmed their agreement with the statement '*While speaking, teachers should correct grammatical mistakes'*, and 57% of the participants disagreed with the statement '*I dislike when I am corrected in class'*. These findings show positive attitudes towards negative feedback even when speaking, which may explain their negative feeling towards the relation between grammar and speaking because of the mistakes they may fall into while speaking. The preference towards explicit error correction correlates with isolated grammar instruction as well as with integrated grammar instruction.

3.7.Obstacles Faced by Learners in Learning Grammar

This construct aims at defining the difficulties EFL learners encounter while studying grammar. The items are divided into two factors; internal factors represented in statements 27, 28, and 29, and external factors represented in 23, 24, 25, and 26 statements, respectively.

No	Obstacles Learners Face When Learning Grammar	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
23	The way grammar is taught	70	73.7	25	26.3	00	00	00	00	00	00
24	Lack of practice	59	62.0	27	28.4	4	4.2	2	2.1	3	3.1
25	The material used while teaching grammar	18	18.9	20	21	22	23.1	32	33.7	3	3.1
26	Time allotted to the grammar module	15	15.7	20	21	15	15.7	20	21	25	26.3
27	The interference of French and Arabic (L_1 transfer)	10	10.5	13	13.6	17	17.9	30	31.6	25	26.3
28	The correct and appropriate use of grammatical aspects in the context	59	62.0	27	28.4	4	4.2	2	2.1	3	3.1
29	I am not motivated to study grammar	50	52.6	26	27.3	4	4.2	10	10.5	5	5.2

Table 07: The Participants' Obstacles While Learning English Grammar

As indicated in table 07, all of the students (100%) agreed that the method used by their teachers is not suitable for them because they feel that they are not involved in the learning/teaching process, which is noticed in their agreement (76%) with the statement '*I am not motivated to study grammar'*. Concerning the time allotted to the grammar module and the materials used for teaching it, the respondents show mixed reactions; 36% of them agree with these obstacles and 40% disagree with the statements since they are already demotivated. The results also revealed that the majority of the students (89%) agree that they have serious difficulty using the grammatical rule appropriately. However, they (57%) disagree with L_1 interference as a source of the difficulty.

4. Discussion

Research on learners' cognition shows that their beliefs and preferences play a major role in the success and failure of FL learning (Mansouri et al., 2019). The study described in this paper sought to investigate EFL learners' views about grammar instruction and eventually proposes a model that suits students' needs. The learners had positive views on grammar and considered it an indisputable skill to be learned as it is 'the backbone of the language'. Students' responses (75%) to the questions pertaining to the efficacy and importance of grammar indicate a strong conviction that grammar is useful in foreign language learning. Such results are in congruence with the findings of Schultz's 1996 and Loewen et al.'s 2009 studies.

A large number of students reported that studying grammar was useful in improving their general language ability as well as their separate language skills, where, interestingly, they stressed the importance of grammar when dealing with productive skills. Concerning the way grammar is best taught, results from the data analysis revealed that grammar should be taught, and that being merely exposed to it by natural exposure to language is not accepted at all. As mentioned by Spada and Lightbown (2008), meaning-based exposure to the language might have a positive effect on comprehension skills, oral fluency, self-confidence, and communicative abilities, but on the level of pronunciation, morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic features students would struggle. The results of this study indicate that students are generally in favour of teaching grammar.

The preference towards isolated grammar instruction is owing to the value students place on structural accuracy over communicating learning. Such belief was supported by a meta-analysis of the effect of instruction afforded by Norris and Ortega (2000, cited in Spada, 2011, 228), which indicated that explicit instruction is more effective than implicit instruction and that the effect of instruction is durable. In fact, skill acquisition theorists hypothesize that language learned first as meta-linguistic knowledge can, through

repeated meaningful practice, eventually become so well incorporated and automated that the language user forgets the meta-linguistic information and may forget having learned it in the first place (DeKeyser, 2003, cited in Spada and Lightbown 2008, 183).

The reason for preference towards repeated exercises is that these students have been exposed to explicit deductive instruction all their lives while studying grammar. Despite the movement toward communicative language teaching and the implementation of a competency-based approach since 2002 in the Algerian educational system for middle and secondary schools, it has not been fully achieved, especially for teaching grammar that is still taught using the explicit deductive approach even at the university level. Taking into consideration the influence of prior language learning experience on learners' beliefs (Graus and Coppen, 2015), it is conceivable that the way in which students were taught themselves plays a role in their beliefs. Hence, students are influenced by both explicit isolated grammar instruction and the discrete point testing methods.

Students have difficulties when speaking, which might be due to a lack of confidence along with performance anxiety. Such deficiency is due to their inability to put their explicit grammatical knowledge into communicative use. This infers from the way they are taught- the deductive approach. In this type of learning environment, students who learn grammatical rules and structures are not given the opportunity to use these structures in a communicative context. These underlying reasons led to the preference towards implicit integrated grammar instruction, which might be a remedial approach to the negative consequences that explicit instruction had on EFL students' communicative competencies.

Speculation for students' lack of significant preference towards any type of grammar instruction and the neutral position many students expressed is that they have disinterest toward grammar teaching; hence, they show their neutrality towards different methods of learning grammar. Besides, it is deemed to be due to the complexity and the difficulty students have with grammar; they prefer explicit instruction with complex grammatical structures, while the choice of the implicit approach seemed to be the most appropriate for simple structures (Ansarin, et al., 2014). Hence, being eclectic in the choice of either approach is necessary; an amalgamation of the two approaches is also recommended. Barrot (2014) confirmed that combining both isolated and integrated grammar instruction can significantly improve speaking and writing performances. Spada and Lightbown (2008), in their findings, claim that "isolated and integrated FFI need not be seen in competition with each other"; rather, they are considered "as complementary parts of a complete language learning environment." (p.188). Hence, isolated and integrated grammar instruction can be effective depending on a collection of many variables, such as linguistic domain, learners' L1, and learners' preferences.

The foremost goal of teaching grammar is to help students master new rules that enhance their productive skills; however, most of the students either do not use these rules or misuse them. Despite the fact that Algerian students get exposed to the English language from an early age in school, specifically the focus on grammar, which they start learning from the first year in middle school up to the second year at university, they still face many problems when applying the rules they studied. According to the participants, the majority of teachers are committed to the traditional methods of teaching grammar, which require teachers to impart the rules to the students, who are expected to accumulate the imparted information and apply it in the examination. Henceforth, there is hardly any effort to apply cognitive teaching strategies and techniques to teaching grammar to develop students' thinking, perception, and transfer. As a result, students are unable to process and manipulate information and synthesize and evaluate ideas.

Most of the students are reluctant to study grammar and feel bored while doing so. This could be attributed to their non-involvement in the teaching and learning process; in other words, they do not experience the information and test their knowledge; rather they are merely passive recipients who learn by heart the information or the rules. In order to engage students in a more effective learning environment, teachers should provide them with a collaborative and supportive learning context as well as promote a sense of autonomy, choice, and challenge, which is not the case at the target university, especially with the

grammar module. Hence, in the current study, the researchers endeavour to design a proposed model that is based on the tenets of Kolb's experiential learning cycle, the misconceptions students have towards their own learning as they rely on their teachers in the mastery of the grammatical elements, as well as the difficulties students have when learning grammar.

5. The proposed Model

The proposed model entails four main stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which are the stages identified in Kolb's experiential learning model. This model tries to activate the mental structure of students by using their prior knowledge and implementing effective strategies to internalize new concepts and overcome problems. This model aims to enable students to learn and work independently. Practically, students are asked to analyze the sentences individually, then discuss their assumptions with other students (peer review), and finally, from the analysis, they deduce the structures. It is appropriately used at a higher level because students need to have a subconscious knowledge of English grammar.

The first step is concrete experimentation: the learner is involved in exploration, actually doing or performing an activity. In this sense, students will be given a set of sentences that contain the grammatical structures intended to be taught and they will be asked to figure out the type of structure and justify their answers. Consequently, they get involved in a real experience since they are engaged in a mental activity that requires the activation of prior knowledge. This phase is done individually; each student has a paper that contains the sentences, and he has to write down his assumptions. In such a way, the teacher ensures the involvement of all the students.

The second phase is reflective observation: the learners share reactions and observations publicly and process the experience by discussing and analyzing their answers. They try to analyze each sentence, while the teacher writes down all the propositions that they have and then elicits justifications and explanations for the answers. By engaging students to reflect on an experience, the teacher encourages participants to think critically, experience strategies and techniques, explore key questions rather than answers, and examine their own evolving theories.

The third phase, abstract conceptualization, helps learners deepen and broaden their understanding of the concept by strengthening their experience through generalizations. After analyzing and synthesizing, students will draw conclusions about when and how they use each grammar component. In this phase, the students acquire the needed information through mental and emotional experiences where they discover and understand the rules by themselves, which gives them a feeling of satisfaction and motivation since they were engaged in what they learned rather than being only passive recipients of what the teacher presented. Raising students' awareness level has a positive impact on students' degree of learning since "only awareness is educable" (Gattegno). The more students are involved in the learning process, the more their awareness is raised.

The last phase, active experimentation, represents the application of what has been learned in new experiences, in our case, the different exercises that are given to students in which they apply the rules discovered by them. This will give them more opportunities to give correct answers in discrete point tests adopted in the official exams at the target university, and even in using them in their productive skills due to their involvement in the learning process.

By applying the proposed model to teaching grammar, the instructor targets the learners' beliefs, for it changes them from being merely passive receivers to students who are in charge of their learning /teaching process. Such experience they go through is distinctive as it makes them active, for they are the ones who discover the rules and verify their assumptions. Such a model that falls under the inductive approach ensures learners' engagement and solves the frustration issue. The proposed model is not about rote memorization but rather about thinking and understanding, which stands for a deep approach to learning that leads them to show interest in the subject and, eventually, leads to the use and amalgamation of many effective

grammar learning strategies, such as planning and monitoring, being metacognitive strategies, and cognitive strategies that might entail induction, grouping, and analyzing as bottom-up strategies, and elaboration and inferencing. This model also guarantees the use of corporation strategy.

It is extensively agreed that learners who are actively participating in the learning progression and take an interest in their academic education are more likely to achieve higher levels of learning. Henceforth, the use of the proposed model, which respects the participants' preferences towards explicit isolated grammar instruction, an approach supported by many researchers like Spada and Lightbown (2008), as well as corrects some misconceptions they have about learning; where they rely on the teacher to impart them information and believe that repetition is the key to memorizing new grammatical items, can trigger their ability to retain knowledge that leads to their intrinsic motivation and interest in the course material, which orient them to be autonomous learners.

Conclusion

Investigating EFL learners' beliefs about grammar instruction is important for ensuring success in language learning. Mid the myriad factors leading to language learning success are learners' beliefs and preferences, which are the guides that enlighten the path toward thriving learning of the target language. On the one hand, meeting learners' preferences and expectations as well as correcting some wrong beliefs would have positive effects on the learning outcome; on the other hand, wrong beliefs and misconceptions may negatively affect the learning process. This exploratory study tries to shed light on EFL learners' preferences toward grammar instruction. Most of the students recognize the importance of learning grammar and its role in enhancing writing and speaking skills, and to a lesser extent, reading and listening skills. However, they declare their frustration with learning grammar as it impedes their speaking competency. Some students prefer explicit grammar instruction, while others prioritize communication over grammar. Hence, having such divergent views urges teachers to explore students' beliefs and instructional expectations, and develop shared preferences to guarantee successful learning and teaching. Moreover, teachers might reconsider the approaches applied when teaching grammar, where the use of different approaches depends on the language feature to be learned, the characteristics of the learner, and the learning conditions. Based on experiential learning theory, the proposed model, which contains four phases, including concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, provides learners with opportunities to be involved in the teaching and learning process via deploying and developing effective meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies; hence, it calls eventually for autonomous learners.

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Authors' biographies

Mrs. MOUSSAOUI Nadjette: is a Ph.D. student in Applied Linguistics at Kasdi Merbah University, Ourgla, Algeria. She is currently teaching as a lecturer at Mohamed Khidher University, Biskra. She holds a magister degree in Linguistics from the University of Badji Mokhtar, Annaba. She is a member of a research unit under PRFU project entitled **"The Impact of English Teachers' Professional Training on Teaching Quality Improvement".** Her main research interests are cognitive science, EFL teaching methodologies, and research methodology.

Pr. CHELLI Saliha is a Professor of applied linguistics at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. She is now the President of two research units: one under PRFU projects entitled **"The Impact of English Teachers' Professional Training on Teaching Quality Improvement"** and 'Teacher Development and Efficacy' as one of the research units of the Interdisciplinary Studies in Language and Culture (ISILC) Laboratory. Her interests are in writing, listening, phonetics, research methodology, and teacher development. She developed courses in phonetics for BA (license) students in addition to others in research methodology, research statistics, and psycholinguistics for master students.