

Investigating Kurdish EFL Learners' Perceptions of Cognitive Grammar Learning Strategies

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ABSTRACT: English has become the language of science and technology, trade, instruction, politics, and tourism. A person who knows this language may have the opportunity for many jobs. Thus, it is crucial to motivate students to acquire this language in a suitable manner. This study aimed to investigate the strategies for learning English as a foreign language and learning grammar in particular. The aim was to update and adopt new strategies for learning English as a foreign language. The current study attempted at finding out why some Kurdish students make grammatical mistakes and errors despite the fact that they study English for a reasonable number of years. It investigated the perceptions of Kurdish learners of English as a foreign language in using grammar learning strategies with the variables of: gender, proficiency level, in public and private universities. It was conducted at three universities: Dohuk, Newroz, and Jihan. The population covered about 125 teachers and learners. This study used a mixed method: it utilized questionnaire and interviews as instruments and two different levels of proficiency were chosen: second- and fourth-year learners. The questionnaire included 100 learners of English as a foreign language. The interviews included 25 teachers and learners of English from public and private universities in Duhok city. The data analysis revealed that Kurdish English language learners use a number of strategies in learning and also in using grammatical structures. However, Kurdish English foreign language learners believed that strategies of grammar learning are important in the process of language learning. The findings showed differences in learning strategies between proficiency-levels, but no significant difference in terms of gender. The study ended up that grammar learning strategies have a significant effect in the spoken and written performance of learner.

Keywords: Grammar learning Strategies, Cognitive, Meta-cognitive, Social-affective strategies, Kurdish EFL learners.

1. Introduction

Grammar is a major component of language. Grammar in its general sense means a person's competence or linguistic competence which includes the sounds, the meaning, and the rules of the grammar. Grammar in its particular sense means that side of language which only includes grammatical structures and rules (Crystal, 2008, p.217). Although many scholars believe that grammar is not necessary for language classroom, it still plays an important role in producing accurate language. New studies show the exposure to a target language is not enough for learners to produce linguistic forms accurately, especially if it is just limited to the classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 2001) Thus, the importance of grammar has increased recently in EFL settings.

The importance of learning grammar is due to the fact that learners lack enough communication abilities in either written and spoken language in an authentic context (Brumfit & Johnson, 1987). However, Cornwall (2010) claimed that exposing learners to sufficient grammatical knowledge will make them speak and write systematically. Additionally, Krashen & Terrell (1983) asserted that learners have to be exposed to comprehensible input instead of learning it consciously by teaching grammar rules explicitly. In order to be proficient a learner, should be exposed to meaningful context by using various grammatical structures (Ellis, 2006). Learning grammar in an appropriate way provides a whole cohesive system concerning the formation and transmission of the language. However, to pass on the knowledge of grammar, we as teachers have to understand it ourselves and, even better, develop the passion and enthusiasm for learning grammar in our students.

Many studies concerned about learners' beliefs in the field of applied linguistics from different countries within the last 30 years. However, these studies proved a positive effect on learners. They also showed the relationship between effective and ineffective learners and their strategy use. They revealed that good learners use high levels of meta-cognitive, social-affective and cognitive strategies more often than poor learners. Some of these studies were applied to school, and some of them at university level. The present study is rather different because it is rarely used in Iraq and Kurdistan. Furthermore, the study is not concerned with strategies of language learning in general, or with foreign or second language learning or acquisition. It is mainly concerned with grammar learning strategies and with the cognitive strategies in particular. It is also limited to learning grammar strategies that are used by learners at collage level only, in the English language departments in public and private universities in Duhok city.

1.1 Statement of the problem

At many universities in Kurdistan, the focus is apparently on grammar and accuracy in both curriculum and examinations. Teachers administer tests that are specifically grammar-based. Furthermore, students are exposed to tests just to obtain a significant understanding of grammar structures. However, the students' achievement in exams is not up to the expectation of their teachers. Kurdish learners of English have grammatical problems, among others, both when they speak and write. Although they are taught grammar during their long learning stages, many of them still make a lot of errors when they write and speak.

1.2 Aims of the study

This study aims at investigating the strategies of grammar learning that Kurdish EFL learners use in learning grammar. It also attempts to find out why these students make grammatical mistakes despite the fact that they study English for a reasonable number of years. The study investigates the reasons why some English grammar learners are more successful than others.

1.3 Research questions

The current study attempts to answer the questions below:

- 1-Which strategies of grammar learning are used by Kurdish university EFL learners?
- 2-Which strategies do Kurdish university EFL learners most frequently use?
- 3-Which strategies do Kurdish university EFL learners find most useful?
- 4-Are there differences in using grammar strategies in terms of the variables of gender, proficiency level, and university?

1.4 Hypotheses of the study

This study hypothesizes the following:

- 1-Kurdish university EFL learners use different grammar strategies.
- 2- Some strategies used by Kurdish EFL learners are more frequent than others.
- 3- Some strategies are more useful for Kurdish learners than others.
- 4-There are differences in using grammar learning strategies in terms of: gender, proficiency level, and university.

1.5 Significance of the study

Learning grammar is very significant for language learners and teachers. This study can be of some value specifically for Kurdish EFL learners as well as for their teachers. Kurdish EFL learners may not know these strategies, which may help them to promote, monitor and regulate the learning of grammar. The teachers can

assist students to use these strategies in an effective way. It will give them insight into how these learners internalize their strategies in learning grammar.

2. Literature Review

Recently, grammar instruction has been mostly shaped by the Communicative Language Teaching CLT approach. However, this approach should be presented in a meaningful context, and should focus on communication. Furthermore, CLT should include the following components:(grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategies), which are under the umbrella of communicative competence. Moreover, in CLT approach, the role has shifted from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach where the learners are responsible for their own learning, and their own styles to be independent learners”(Brown,2000).

There are many reasons for teaching grammar. Hence, Richards and Renandya added two reasons for teaching grammar (2002, p. 152):

1-Comprehensibility:

It is difficult to write comprehensible sentences, if the learners do not know structures. However, to build and produce certain structures, means to write and communicate successfully.

2-Acceptability:

In some social contexts, when the learner is not good at grammar skills or speaks in appropriately, they may be considered uneducated by native speakers. Therefore, it is advisable to have control over grammar.

There are two ways for teaching grammar: the deductive approach, and inductive approach. The deductive approach is a traditional approach and it is called rule-driven approach. It is associated with the Grammar Translation Method, in which the lesson begins with explaining or translating the grammar into a mother language. Thus, there is little opportunity for the learner to use the target language because the teacher uses the first language for teaching learners. While, the inductive approach simply begins with examples and through these examples the learner discovers the grammar rules. In this approach the learners study the examples and from the examples they discover and understand the rule. It works through exposure to a huge amount of input, and learners learn grammar unconsciously (Thornbury, 1999, p. 29-68).

Another method for learning a language appeared, it is called Teaching Grammar in Context. It includes many aspects such as: who the writer/speaker, and the listeners are, what the communication is about, where does the communication take place, styles and registers (Brown, 1994, p.348). The effective communication whether written or spoken should have a harmony between formal interpretation and functional interpretation (Halliday, 1985). The aim of learning a language by context is to learn how to form structures appropriately, and how to use them to communicate meaning. This method teaches the learners to get things done, socialize, and express themselves through language. It teaches grammar in context, and focuses on teaching and learning in real situations and by means of classroom activities which leads to developing learners; critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, decision making skills (Nurhadi, 2014, p. 71).

There are two main approaches that are used for teaching foreign language: grammar based approaches and communicative based approaches. The grammar based approaches are like: Grammar Translation Method, The Structural Approach. While, the communicative based approaches include: The Direct Method, The Natural Approach and Communicative Language Teaching.

The aim of Grammar Translation Method is translating the sentences from the target language in to the first language. It is a classical method and focuses on the grammar rules, memorizing the vocabulary, and translating the text into the first language. The Structural Approach focuses on the basic structures of English such as sentences and vocabularies (Richards & Rogers, 2014, p.3). It uses the mother language, and the teacher should encourage the students to speak from the early phases.

The Direct Method avoids the use of first language, and it emphasizes listening/speaking over reading/writing. It focuses on fluency. The Natural approach focuses on the naturalistic ideology of teaching the second

language. It states that learners should listen to the target language as much as possible before they speak, because it believes that learners learn the second language as they learn their first language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p.44).

CLT aims to allow learners use appropriate and meaningful communication in a target language which means CLT aims at developing learners' communicative competence. It sees the language as a system of expression of meaning, and not a system of rules. Communication is the main goal of CLT.

In the field of applied linguistics there are many strategies of learning the second language. They may occur without awareness or unconsciously with the learners and sometimes occur during the early stages of learning. Learning strategies emerged when the learning processes shifted from teaching to learning.

2-1 Types of Learning strategies

Oxford (1990) stated that information is stored in memory in two ways: **direct** and **indirect** strategies. Direct strategies, long-term memory, the part that holds the information for a long period. They involve: cognitive, memory and compensation strategies. In contrast, the short term memory which are indirect strategies and these include meta-cognitive, cognitive, affective and social strategies. The active part of memory which is called working memory keeps the information for a short period (Lachman et al., 1979).

a-Cognitive strategies

They include conscious processes that the learners acquire to retain the received information through as forming and organizing information, taking notes, and using resources. These strategies include the material that are acquired physically and mentally and the use of some techniques that kept to language learning. They classify, order, and recall the information such as inference, note-taking, forming, organizing information, and using resources.

b- Meta-cognitive strategies

Learners use meta-cognitive strategies to make their own plans. These strategies involve a series of behaviors done by learners such as assessing their linguistic resources, identifying problems they face, postponing speaking till they have confidence, self- monitoring with correction of one's production (Chamot et al. , 1985).

c-Social strategies

These strategies entail learners interacting socially with their peers and teachers in order to learn the second language. These strategies need language learners to work with their peers to gain information and feedback. In other words, interacting with advanced people to make the learning process go on. Social strategies demand the teacher or proficient learners to repeat, paraphrase, clarify, and give more examples. In cooperation, learners work together with their peers so as; to communicate and solve problems, and to gain information. In questioning, learners ask for the clarification, explanation, verification, and comprehension.

d-Affective strategies

These strategies can be attained in three ways, namely: self-talk, self- reinforcement, and self-encouragement. These strategies use the affective control to foster the learning process. By using mental techniques self-talk reduces the anxiety which makes the learner feel confident and competent to sustain the process of learning. While in self- reinforcement, when an activity has been successful, learners provide personal motivation by rewarding themselves. Finally, self encouragement takes place, when learners say or write positive statements to themselves. These statements make the learners feel more confident when they learn the new language (Oxford, 1990: 143).

2.2 Previous Related Studies

Chamot et al., (1989) researched the mental processes that were used by learners of a second language in listening comprehension, and the strategies that were used by learners in different phases of comprehension, and different strategies that were used by successful and un successful listeners.

O'Malley et al., (1990) conducted two studies inside and outside the classroom under the name of "Methods for Teaching/ Learning Strategies in the Foreign Language Classroom". The first study aimed to investigate the feasibility of integrating learning strategy instruction for both intermediate and high school levels Spanish and Russian classes. The second study helped teachers and students of Russian, Japanese, and Spanish to carry out informal assessment activities in their classes. Another aim of these studies was the distinction between cognitive, meta-cognitive, and social or affective strategies. The two studies used mixed methods such as questionnaire and interviews for collecting data. The instructions were provided for the teachers in reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, speaking, listening, problem solving, and self- regulation learning. They conducted interviews with language learners on learning strategies. The population of interviews consisted of EFL in Japanese, Russian and Spanish classrooms. The studies revealed that learners used the relevant strategies, and they improved their language skills with self- confidence in successful classrooms. Gurata (2008) investigated the learning strategies used by Turkish EFL learners and the use of grammar structures in their learning and whether there was a significant difference between one learner and another on the basis of several variables, namely achievement in grammar tests, proficiency level, and gender. The study used a quantitative method, namely a questionnaire for collecting the data. The respondents to the questionnaire consisted of 176 learners from three different proficiency levels: (pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate). The results showed that learners used different learning strategies according to different proficiency levels, and that pre-intermediate learners used these strategies more than upper-intermediate learners in the grammar learning strategies.

Alhaisoni (2012) investigated the learning strategies utilized by learners who were university graduates Saudi Arabia. The study investigated the differences between the students' in terms of gender and their proficiency level in language learning strategies (LLS). It used the intensive English language program at the University of Hail in Saudi Arabia. The participants included 701 males and females. The results revealed that learners used memory and social-affective strategies less than meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies in their process of learning the second language. It showed no significant difference between males and females in using GLS. It also revealed that highly proficient learners used GLS more frequently than lower proficient learners. Al Sayabi et al., (2017) investigated the effectiveness of using cognitive, meta-cognitive and social-affective strategies in learning grammar by Omani tenth grades students. The study also probed the learners differences according to different proficiency levels when using GLS. It used a quantitative method, namely a questionnaire in collecting the data. It included 170 Omani learners. The study revealed that proficient learners used meta-cognitive strategies more than less proficient learners. Barjesteh & Azizmohammadi (2020) investigated the relationship between using grammar strategies in intermediate EFL Iranian's learners and their achievement in a grammar test. The study used the quantitative method, i.e. a questionnaire for collecting the data. The participants comprised 37 males and 29 females. They were asked to answer the list of GLS that was adopted by Oxford (1990). The results revealed no significant difference in terms of gender in their grammar test.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of the current paper included 125 teachers and learners a total of 42 males and 83 females in 3 public and private universities in Kurdistan, in Duhok. The participants of the questionnaire were 100 students while the interviewees were 25 teachers and learners. The settings were English departments at the College of Languages, and Basic Education at Duhok, Newroz, and Jihan Universities.

3.2 Research Instruments

This paper used two instruments to assess language learners' use of strategies, a questionnaire and interviews to collect the data needed for investigation. The questionnaire contained items of learning strategies as suggested by (O'Malley et al., 1990). The questionnaire was sent to a group of jury members to assess its

validity. It consisted primarily of four parts. The first part, included the demographic information about the participants such as name of the university, gender, and course level. Whereas, the second, third, and fourth parts included the 38 statements of possible cognitive strategies that may be used by learners when they learn and use the grammatical structures.

The participants were expected to answer the questionnaire and its items in two questions: (1) Do you use this strategy? And (2) " It is a useful strategy (but I may not use it". A Likert- scale was used consisting of 5 options: always (5) to never (1), for the whole items. The data obtained were processed and analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences(SPSS).

The researcher conducted interviews as a second research instrument. Dornyei (2007) stated that qualitative data expands easily, and it is not about collecting enough data but rather to collect useful data. The participants consisted of 10 teachers and 15 students. The in-person interviews were recorded by mobile phone. Interviews varied in length between 15-30 minutes that included ten questions for teachers and students. The interviews added more information regarding teachers' perception of language learning strategies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Questionnaire Results

a-The type of grammar learning strategies used by Kurdish learners

Table (1) shows the statistical description used by Kurdish learners and that they used meta-cognitive strategies (mean=4.10) more frequently than cognitive and social-affective strategies. Whereas social-affective strategies means are a little higher than cognitive strategies. The total means of each category of strategies in descending order is as follows; Kurdish learners used meta-cognitive(mean=4.10), social-affective strategies(mean=4.07), and cognitive strategies (mean= 4.04) respectively.

Table (1). Means and standard deviation of the three types grammar learning strategies

Strategies	Mean	SD
Meta-cognitive	4.10	0.948
Social-affective	4.07	9.935
Cognitive	4.04	1.238

The tables below include the items means and their main category of GLS.

Table (2). The cognitive strategies mean in descending order

Cognitive strategies	Mean	SD
5. I take notes when my teacher explains a new grammar rule.	4.04	1.238
12. I practice writing sentences using the new grammar rule to help me remember its structure.	3.93	1.027
3. When my teacher corrects my grammatical mistake, I practice repeating the correct form.	3.89	1.163
11. I remember the grammar rule by thinking of the context/ situation where it is used.	3.82	1.123
9. I emphasize the explanation of the new grammar rule and its important parts by underlining them or coloring them differently.	3.75	1.048
1. I understand the new grammar rule through linking it to the context/situation in which it is used.	3.72	0.792
8. I memorize a new grammar rule by repeating it several times to myself.	3.59	1.303
2. I identify the grammar rules that I face difficulty with and exert an effort to understand them better.	3.52	0.969

21. I categorize the new grammar rule I learn under a group of similar things (e.g. verbs, tenses, adjectives etc).	3.51	1.096
17. I use the new grammar rule in my speaking.	3.50	1.168
13. I replace the grammar rule that I am not sure of with another one that I already know when writing or speaking.	3.50	1.142
18. When I learn a new grammar rule, I try to link it to other rules that I already know.	3.48	1.168
14 I regularly review the grammar rule I learn.	3.41	1.164
6. I remember the grammar rule by thinking of its location in the book(e.g. in the picture, in the dialogue, in my notebook, or on the board).	3.40	1.198
7. I analyze the parts of the newly learnt grammar rule.	3.28	1.102
19. I practice doing grammar exercises outside the classroom.	3.26	1.323
23. I combine the new rule I learn with the previous ones to produce longer and more complex sentences.	3.25	1.175
10. I try to deduce the use of the new grammar rule that I come across.	3.22	0.991
22. I consult grammar books for better understanding of the new grammar rule.	3.09	1.223
20. I draw charts to help me understand the grammar rule I learn.	3.03	1.359
15. When I learn a new grammar rule I compare it with its correspondent rule in Kurdish.	2.73	1.332
4. I use my own language(e.g. simplification, Kurdish) to write the use of the new grammar rule.	2.63	1.248
16. I practice using the new grammar rule by writing e-mails, letters or composition.	2.60	1.119

Table 2 presents the means of the items of to the cognitive strategies. The means ranged between (4.04 and 2.60). Furthermore, the cognitive strategies and their highest seven means ranged between (items 5, 12, 3, 11, 9, 1, and 8 respectively) which fall under always rating (4.04= 3.59). The highest mean in cognitive strategy is item number 5 (I take notes when my teacher explains a new grammar rule) with the mean (4.04) and SD (1.238) . However, students in the interviews' answers were with the cognitive strategy because it was easier to them. This could be because grammar lectures were interesting or presented in an interesting manner. On the other hand, item number 16 (I practice the new grammar rule by writing e-mails, letters or composition) got the lowest mean (2. 60). This means that students were less interested in writing skill. In brief, regarding the responses to the questionnaire, the majority of the strategies were used, yet the cognitive strategies were the most frequent ones to some extent. The findings reflect what was found out by (Chamot et al. , 1985, p.99) who arrived at the conclusion that Russian and Spanish ESL learners used cognitive strategies more frequently in different proficiency levels.

Table (3). The meta-cognitive strategies means in descending order

Meta- cognitive strategies	Means	SD
2. I try to find out why I make grammar mistakes.	4.10	0.948
5. I focus on using grammar rules correctly when I speak and write.	3.97	1.105
1. I correct the grammatical mistakes that my teacher has marked in my written assignments.	3.78	1.142
7. I notice the new grammar rule when they exist in a listening or a reading text.	3.65	1.114
6. I notice my friends' grammatical mistakes and I correct them.	3.61	1.171
3. I imagine the situation in which I can use the newly learnt grammar rule.	3.54	1.105
4. I prepare for the grammar rule that will be covered before coming to class.	3.14	1.255

In table 3 the item number 2 which states (I try to find out why I make grammar mistakes), had the highest mean (Mean= 4.10) with the SD (0.948). In fact, this item came within always rating (4.10- 3.14). This means that students tended to be independent for example in making their plans, observing their own speaking and writing, and evaluating their success. In addition, students knew their needs and abilities in terms of assessing their resources, identifying the problems they face, self-monitoring, and postponing their speaking till they had confidence. Another reason could be that their teachers gave them the chance to correct their mistakes. However, the lowest mean (3.14) in this strategy was for item number 4 which states (I prepare for the grammar rule that will be covered before coming to class). The reason behind this could be that students did not pay more attention to the rules of grammar and this was one of the main goals of CLT which was the dominant approach.

Table (4). The social-affective strategies means shown in descending order

Social-affective strategies	Means	SD
3. I practice speaking English even when I am worried about making grammar mistakes.	4.07	0.935
1. I ask my friends for help when I do not understand my teacher's explanation of a grammar rule.	3.92	1.195
2. I understand grammar better when studying with a friend or a relative.	3.83	1.256
4. I ask my teacher to repeat the explanation of the new grammar rule when I do not understand it.	3.69	1.134
8. When my teacher corrects my grammar, I ask him/ her questions about my grammar mistakes.	3.45	1.306
7. I prefer working on grammar tasks alone rather than working with classmates.	3.30	1.227
5. Playing grammar games helps me comprehend grammar rule better.	3.28	1.303
6. I ask competent English speakers to correct my spoken grammatical mistakes.	3.16	1.269

In table 4 the means of items number 3 and 1 (4.07 and 3.92) were the highest in this category. The total means rated between (4.07- 3.16). However, item number 3 was the highest which states " I practice speaking English even when I am worried about making grammar mistakes" with a mean value of (4.07). It might be that Kurdish EFL learners are more social, they have aspiration to learn the target language, and they do not feel the fear of making mistakes. Oller and Perkins (1978) clarified that affective strategies have a noticeable influence on learner's performance. In addition, Dornyei (2005) focused on social and affective factors and claimed that they are the fundamental factors for effective learning. Item number 6 " I ask competent English speakers to correct my spoken grammatical mistakes" was the lowest score (3.16). The reason behind this could be that there were not enough English speaking people around the students, however, the large number of students in the classroom may not give them the chance to ask their teachers. In addition, the teachers could not always provide students with adequate feedback and further explanations. The same finding was arrived by Gurata (2008) and Al Seyabi (2017) studies. Carroll and Swain (1993) reported that a large number of students in the class hindered the process of learning and did not let the teacher provide students with further explanation or adequate feedback. Consequently, the teacher could provide pair work activities and make a group work to overcome this problem and save the time. Also, students can ask questions and develop their learning strategies with their peers.

As a result, the means of the items indicated that Kurdish EFL learners utilized meta-cognitive strategies more than socio-affective and cognitive strategies. The learner who used meta-cognitive strategies is the one who is more ambitious in the process of language learning (Barjesteh & Azizmohammadi, 2020). Additionally, Goh (2008) reported that meta-cognitive strategies enhanced the learning process by learners as they made the learner use appropriate strategies. The paper indicates that all the grammar learning strategies were used to some extents. The results support the findings of other studies carried out by Al Seyabi et al, (2017), and Gurata

(2008) who found out that meta-cognitive strategies were used more frequently than social-affective and cognitive strategies.

b. The strategies that learners find most useful

The questionnaire also provided another scale about the perceived usefulness of the GLS. Those strategies which were frequently used were considered the most useful strategies, upon which the participants agreed. Item number 5 of the cognitive strategy which states "I take notes when my teacher explains a new grammar rule e.g. I write down the meaning and the usage of the rule", ranked the first in terms of importance. In fact, it came with the highest mean value among the rest of the other items in the questionnaire, which amounted to (49,622) with a mean value of (4.04). It indicates that Kurdish EFL learners tried to get benefit from the knowledge that their teachers provided to them, and they wrote the key words and the concepts to help them in their performance and language tasks.

c. Gender difference in terms of using GLS

There is no significant gender difference in terms of strategy use in this paper. This goes counter to the results found out by Yalcin (2006), who, proved a significant difference due to gender in terms of strategies use. However, this paper findings are in line with the former studies by Hong-Nam et al., (2006) which found out no significant differences between gender in terms of strategy use in all learning strategies.

d. Difference in grammar learning strategies in terms of proficiency level

This paper also investigated the differences in students' proficiency levels in learning English. The findings revealed the significance difference between the levels of competence towards cognitive strategies. It shows that second grade students used cognitive, meta-cognitive and social-affective strategies more than fourth grade students. Typically, less proficient learners tend to have planning, self-monitoring skills, and management in using meta-cognitive strategies because they are beginners and they need to work hard so as to upgrade their language learning. In addition, the finding of this paper agrees with those by Gurata (2008). Who found out that pre- intermediate students used these strategies more than upper-intermediate students?

4. 2 Interview Results

a-Interviewed Teachers perceptions of GLS

This paper aim to examine the context of the participants who were represented by 10 teachers from three universities, namely: Dohuk, Newroz, and Jihan. It has been found out that all teachers are aware of the importance of teaching and learning grammar and of the significance of using GLS since English is a foreign language and they have to control the grammar of the target language.

However, teachers agreed that cognitive, meta-cognitive strategies need to be used by learners though social-affective strategies were the most useful for them, since, they improve learners' competence. Social-affective strategies give the learner more chance to participate confidently in the class.

b. Interviewed Learners' perceptions of grammar learning strategies

70% of the participants are aware of the importance of learning grammar because without learning grammar in an adequate way, very little can be conveyed. This is in one hand. On the other hand, 30% of the participants believe that learners should be exposed to the target language so as to learn it in the same way they learn their first language. This paper has found out that EFL learners used different strategies in learning grammar. Some learners are aware of the usefulness of cooperation with their classmates since cooperative learning makes learning fun and interesting. While others focus on meta-cognitive strategies by planning, observing, and assessing their learning. They design a plan for their learning in order to be used when embarking on a task. They observed their learning by verifying, correcting and checking one's performance, and identifying the obstacles that hinder their achievement. These results of interviews are close to the results arrived by questionnaire, namely those mentioned in item 2 and 5 in meta-cognitive strategies.

5.Conclusion

This paper has found out that Kurdish EFL learners at university level utilize different strategies for learning and using grammar. The strategies are meta-cognitive, social-affective and cognitive. The findings revealed that learners use meta-cognitive strategies more than other strategies. Additionally, the learners differently use these strategies according to: gender, proficiency level, and public and private departments variables. In addition, it revealed that there is no significant difference in terms of gender. However, the significant difference is in terms of proficiency levels when learners use GLS. The less proficient learners utilize meta-cognitive strategies more frequently than proficient learners. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in learners' use of cognitive and meta cognitive strategies in terms of universities, but in the use of social-affective strategies in terms of universities.

On the basis of these findings, GLS should be given more attention inside the class, and learners should be aware of improving their learning and use of these strategies. In other words, learners should be motivated to use the different types of the learning strategies. Learners should also be encouraged to connect grammar rules to the situation and context. Finally, learners, especially those with low social-affective skills, must be supported to interact with their colleagues in the areas that they face difficulties.

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