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Contextualizing Grammatical Structures in EFL Classrooms: A Case Study of EFL Teachers at the Department of Anglophone studies-University of Algiers 2

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Abstract

Teaching a language at the sentence-level may allow learners to acquire grammatical accuracy, but may not enhance their appropriate and communicative uses of forms. Therefore, it is essential to contextualize grammar elements so as to help students develop their pragmatic and communicative competencies. In Algerian university EFL classrooms, teachers do implement a discourse-based grammar instruction approach. This research seeks to evaluate the extent to which they contextualize grammar and to investigate what techniques they use to do so. It seeks also to inquire about EFL teachers' attitudes towards the context-based grammar teaching approach. Data were collected through classroom observations employing an observation scheme constructed by the researcher for this specific purpose. The data obtained served to establish the profiles of the observed EFL teachers. Interviews were also conducted and questionnaires were administered. The data gathered from these two tools were subjected to content analysis. The outcomes of the classroom observations indicated that most EFL grammar teachers followed a traditional approach to instruct grammar. However, the interviews with the same teachers generated somehow convergent findings. As for the questionnaire data, they revealed that EFL instructors perceive the discourse-based grammar teaching approach as time-consuming in comparison with the traditional one and demanding great involvement on the part of teachers and from their students too. Grammar teachers also reported facing other obstacles such as the lack of materials and of adequate conditions to implement the discourse-based approach. Although there are undeniable disadvantages and hindrances for this method, most EFL teachers in the department of Anglophone studies at the University of Algiers 2, claimed to contextualize grammar structures because of its considerable merits and its efficiency.

Keywords: grammar, EFL, communicatives uses, competencies, teaching approach

1. Introduction

Traditionally, FL grammar teaching consisted in providing learners with rules and examples by isolating language structures, or vice versa (Thornbury 1999). However, these teaching methods neglected the significance of incorporating the four language skills usage and of attracting learners' attention to the pragmatic and the communicative uses of grammar.

Nowadays, it is widely argued that grammar teachers should expose learners to a variety of meanings and functions of structures across different contexts in order to raise students' awareness about the flexible use of these. For this reason, grammar should be

instructed at a supra-sentential level (Rojas C., 1995) In fact, the discourse-based grammar teaching makes clearer the connection between contextual meaning and grammar structures uses so as for learners to comprehend and produce these appropriately (Nunan, 1997).

This approach to instruct grammar can enable students to acquire a *communicative proficiency* and a *pragmatic competence*. Communicative proficiency is about making appropriate use of few other “interacting competencies”; namely: linguistic/grammatical competences, socio-cultural/ pragmatic knowledge, discourse competence, as well as communication strategies (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Pragmatic competence is defined as the appropriate use of language depending on the context of communication(*Ibid.*).

Grammar teaching remains a significant issue in applied linguistics; the present study is a modest attempt toward finding out valuable information about the extent to which some EFL teachers, in the department of Anglophone studies at the University Algiers 2, contextualize grammatical structures. It is also intended to uncover EFL teachers’ viewpoints about the discourse-based grammar instruction.

In fact, in grammar courses, grammatical structures are very often presented out of context. Such a method might not allow for the understanding and mastery of the pragmatic and communicative uses of English language. Therefore, the researcher seeks to address the following questions:

RQ1: Do Algerian EFL teachers instruct grammar in context?

RQ2: How do the teachers who contextualize grammar implement the discourse-based approach in their classrooms?

RQ3: What are EFL teachers’ attitudes toward the instruction of grammar in context?

This research helped finding out valuable information about EFL teachers’ techniques to grammar instruction and the rationale behind these. Additionally, it allows gaining insights into their viewpoints about the grammar contextualization. More importantly, this study provides pedagogical implications and recommendations for teachers on how their grammar instruction methods can be improved.

It is necessary also to specify that, in this paper, the term “discourse” is used to refer to long stretches of spoken and written language rather than speech. As for the term “text”, it is employed to point out to both speech and writing.

2. Research Background

The approach to grammar instruction plays a major role in EFL learning. In fact, the teaching method implemented by teachers can enhance their students’ command of grammar which is key to become a skilful language user. This section first tackles grammar instruction in general, its significance to FL learning and to acquiring communicative competence. Second, it aims to introduce the approaches and techniques to develop grammar in context in addition to some practical implications. It, also, provides information about teachers’ perceptions of the discourse-based grammar teaching.

2.1. Grammar Instruction:

Thornbury (1999) claims that the approach that is predominant in grammar instruction lessons comprises three phases: *Presentation, Practice, Production* (PPP). During the presentation stage, teachers adopt a deductive or an inductive method to introduce the grammar structure(s) to be learnt. They can employ different approaches and tools (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988). For instances, they can present isolated features of grammar in model sentences or leading questions (Widodo, 2006). Throughout the practice stage, learners rehearse the usage of the targeted elements in both focused and communicative practice.

For the focused practice, they are asked to use accurately the given grammatical form without paying attention to its communicative usage. An example of focused, or pre-communicative, exercises would be “fill in the blanks” activities (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988). In these activities, learners are not involved in communication and/or expected to share information and ideas (Rojas C., 1995).

On the other hand, the communicative practice (Production) allows students to put into practice their understanding of the grammatical feature through getting engaged in authentic communication within a given context (Oscar Rojas C., 1995). In these activities, they have to work in pairs or groups for example, to exchange information using the learnt structures (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988).

Hence, following this final phase, learners are expected to have assimilated and internalized the grammar elements taught (Rojas C., 1995).

2.2. Approaches to Contextualize Grammar:

Among the approaches that can be adopted to contextualize grammar, the following techniques extracted from the literature:

2.2.1. Integration into Language Skills:

Grammar elements should not be isolated but integrated into the use of language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) in order to enable learners to manipulate these structures accurately and fluently (Rojas C., 1995).

Ur (1988) assumes that exploiting grammatical forms in context and using the four language skills allow students to grasp the meaning and both of the oral and written use of these structures.

She displays in the table below the aims of relying on the different language skills with reference to the form and meaning of structures:

ASPECTS OF THE TEACHING/LEARNING OF STRUCTURES		
	<i>Form</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>Listening</i>	Perception and recognition of the spoken form of the structure	Comprehension of what the spoken structure means in context
<i>Speaking</i>	Production of well-formed examples in speech	Use of the structure to convey meanings in speech
<i>Reading</i>	Perception and recognition of the written form	Comprehension of what the written structure means in context
<i>Writing</i>	Production of well-formed examples in writing	Use of the structure to convey meanings in writing

Table 1: Aspects of the Teaching/Learning of Structures (Ur, 1988, p. 6)

2.2.2. The Inductive Method:

In his article about grammar teaching in context, Nunan (1997) suggests that teachers can make learners internalize the usage and function of the targeted grammatical features by implementing an inductive instruction approach and through contextualization. He states that:

“—learners are given opportunities to develop their own understandings of the grammatical principles of English by progressively structuring and restructuring the language through inductive learning experiences which encourage them to explore the functioning of grammar in context ; ...”(Nunan, 1997, p. 108)

In fact, when using this technique; the central focus is on usage rather than rules, and authentic materials are usually exploited which makes learning memorable and enjoyable.

For instance, in order to teach the past perfect tense, songs can be employed as resources where the given grammatical structures are recurrent to make students notice the patterns and induce their meanings and functions(Pomeroy (1974) as cited in Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988).

Therefore, it is preferable to provide students with grammatical elements in their contexts and to encourage them to notice, analyze, and induce the rules so that they become able to manipulate structures effectively.

2.2.3. Focus on Form:

There exists a dichotomy between two approaches to instruct grammatical features; *focus on form* and *focus on forms*.

Long (1991; cited in AbulKalam, 2013) defines Focus on Forms (FonfS.) as the teaching of grammatical elements in isolation and raising students' consciousness about their communicative functions. In addition, the instructor involves learners in communicative and non-communicative tasks in order to rehearse the use of the given grammatical points.

On the other hand, Focus on Form is described as teaching grammar features which appear in the lesson incidentally or purposefully, while the main emphasis of the class is on the meaningful or the communicative use of language. Thus, the class concentrates on one element extensively, then moves to another one (*Ibidem*). Le Van and Roger (2009) argue that: *“Focus on form, on the other hand, assumes an indirect, context-based focus on grammar,*

rather than overt, teacher-led instruction.”(Le Van and Roger 2009, p. 247).In other words, teachers can make learners study the pragmatic and communicative uses of grammar points through contextualizing structures, or by tackling these features in discourse and focusing on one particular form.

2.2.4. Text generation, manipulation and explanation:

Providing or developing texts with students can be employed to make learners explore or use grammatical features in discourse.

Coursebook texts are usually selected and adapted to facilitate learners’ understanding of grammatical structures in context. However, students can find them boring as they lack authenticity(Thornbury, 1999). Therefore, stories, extracts from novels, songs, and poetry that please learners can be selected and exploited. Another alternative to coursebook texts would be students’ and teachers’ produced texts. In such texts, language is less artificial, students and teachers are likely to be stimulated as they are engaged in a creative language production. Furthermore, learners can practice the use of the target structures which makes them assimilate and remember them unconsciously(Thornbury, 1999).For instance, teachers can ask students to write or tell their plans for the weekend in order to prompt them with a realistic context in which the use of the future tense is expected (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988).

Such a strategy can only hold learners’ interests and make them explore the use of the target structures in an authentic context which makes them remember these effortlessly (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988).

2.2.5. Dramatization:

A dramatic activity is usually an exciting experience in which learners are highly enthusiastic to take part, and will remember.

This technique is used in classroom to set up a context in order to depict how the use of grammatical elements can be influenced by social factors. Moreover, it is an effective device to promote learners’ accuracy and fluency, and to improve their sense of collaboration through cooperative group work. For instance, the instructor can teach requests and modals by asking students to write then act a role-play about an example of contexts from everyday life such as shopping at a store.

It entails taking into consideration the extent to which the interlocutors need to be courteous with each other. In other words, the choice of the most convenient grammatical features to be used will depend on social aspects and on the context.

For instance, the use of dialogues or transcribed conversations can help to contextualize grammatical points in authentic speech and to attract their attentions to spoken English usage in real-life. Afterwards, students can perform their skit or a conversation in pairs or groups (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988).Teachers can also use students-generated skits to consolidate advanced students’ grammar understanding of some grammatical elements and to make them assimilate these (*Ibid.*).

This approach to contextualize grammar increases learners' motivation, actively involves the use of the four language skills, makes them develop their communicative proficiency in realistic situations, not to mention the enhancement of their self-confidence (*Ibid.*).

2.2.6. Games and Problem-solving Activities:

Throughout the focused practice phase and/or the production stage, games and/or problems solving tasks can be used to provide learners with a context in which they can put into practice the usage of the target grammatical points, and to prepare them for the communicative stage.

However, before engaging students in these sorts of activities, they should first practice the form in isolation through drills. For instance, "The Treasure Hunt" is a fun game which is predicted to stimulate learners to use communicatively imperatives and questions.

Problem solving activities may be more convenient for the communicative practice stage, as students may not yet have absorbed the uses of the targeted points. Thus, it may become difficult for them to concentrate on the problem itself or on the context (*Ibid.*).

These activities can provide a meaningful communicative context to grammar use, and can highly be effective to motivate students to rehearse the target grammatical elements.

The contextualization of grammar may offer numerous benefits for FL teachers and their students; nonetheless, it can also present them with various challenges and drawbacks as well.

2.3. Attitudes towards the Discourse-based Grammar Instruction:

The merits and the weaknesses of the grammar teaching in context underpin teachers' perceptions of it. Additionally, disparity in viewpoints accounts for variations in teaching practices and for differences between instructors (Thornbury, 1999).

Thornbury (1999) put forward several arguments that shape teachers' opinions on in favor of context-grammar teaching:

- He reports that the researcher Richard Schmidt (n.d.) experienced formal learning of Portuguese as a foreign language and then practiced the language use in informally in real-life contexts. He reached the conclusion that studying grammar features needs to be supplemented with noticing these grammatical elements in authentic use. Noticing the use of grammatical structures in natural contexts is fundamental for the enhancement of language acquisition.
- Furthermore, he states that advocates of the communicative approach believe that providing an authentic context for communication enables them to assimilate structures effortlessly.
- Learners can acquire a good command of grammar by using it purposefully, not by studying the rules. They need to be engaged in experiential learning; that is experiencing the functional usage of grammatical forms in order to internalize them.
- A foreign language learner acquires grammatical structures in the same way children pick up chunks of language or expressions in their L1; unconsciously. As a result, they produce these words' combinations automatically and correctly. For instance, instead of learning the rule of form and the rule of use of the present perfect or the conditional, learners could learn formulaic expressions such as: "have you ever been to

...?” or “would you like...?” Thus, teaching grammar in context may promote the acquisition of language expressions.

AbulKalam (2013) conducted a study on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about grammar teaching in EFL classrooms and found out that:

- Teachers gave importance to both accuracy and fluency classroom activities.
- Instructors inclined toward “*integrating grammar within communicative context*” following learners’ needs and proficiency levels (AbulKalam, 2013, p. 119).
- They recommended as well the use of audio-visual materials to teach grammar: “*Some audio-visual materials like songs, video clips can be included in the grammar class to make the class effective and interesting;*” explained a participant (AbulKalam, 2013, p. 122).

Le Van and Roger (2009) conducted a survey on Vietnamese teachers’ attitudes towards grammar teaching. The attitudes that could be extracted from their research findings are the next ones:

- The teachers have shown a positive attitude towards the instruction of grammar in discourse. They favor presenting grammatical structures in texts and dealing with them as they incidentally appear in the source.
- Instructors did not put forward the “time-consuming” argument against the use of authentic materials, or that these materials may contain some grammatical problems.

Nevertheless, these perceptions may be contrasted with the views of the opponents to the discourse-based grammar teaching. Indeed, they view that this approach implies some drawbacks that have been also reported as follows:

From the survey of Le Van and Roger (2009) on Vietnamese teachers’ attitudes towards grammar teaching, the below mentioned dominant standpoints:

- Instructors argued that their students needed explicit teaching of grammatical forms and their functions with the use of authentic materials.
- Teachers disapproved the idea that a difficult lexis was employed in authentic text.

In the inquiry carried out by AbulKalam (2013), the results revealed that:

- Instructors agreed that learners need a conscious learning of grammar forms and rules in order to improve their accuracy (60% agreed and 23.33% strongly agreed). According to the researcher, this orientation towards formal grammar teaching may be due to the fact EFL learning takes place in a classroom rather than a natural setting.
- Most of the participant teachers preferred the inductive approaches to grammar instruction. He speculates that this attitude is due to their students possess the cognitive skill need to resolve grammatical problems.

Thornbury (1999) proposes an argument that supports the opinions of the antagonists to the contextualized grammar teaching:

- Language should be instructed at the sentence-level. In fact, there is an exhaustive number of grammatical rules that organize language into the smallest items and describe them in details. These items are decontextualized in order to be taught separately across several lessons or activities such as definite articles or the present simple, which will constitute a syllabus. By contrast, it is difficult to do so with for example, language functions such as apologizing or greeting, because they involve an unlimited amount of grammatical structures and there are no sufficient clearly established rules for these. In short, it is complex to teach grammar at the discourse level or as a tool for communicating intentions and ideas in that course programs cannot structure and cover the infinite number of the language features entailed.

It is worthwhile gaining insights into teachers' perceptions about context-based grammar teaching because it underpins the adoption or the rejection of this method. Moreover, the successful classroom implementation of the instruction of grammar in context depends on teachers' views of the practical implications to this approach.

3. Research Method

The research method followed in this inquiry is a "Classroom Research" and a *case study*. The researcher observed four 1st year EFL grammar teachers in the department of English at the University of Algiers 2. All the teachers were randomly selected and were females. The questionnaire involved the random selection of six teachers instructing grammar in the same department, all the respondents were females and three of them were among the instructors observed. They were aged between 20 to 50 years old and had up to 20 years of grammar teaching experience.

In this study, "observation" served as a tool to investigate and get insights into EFL grammar instructors' classroom practices with the aim of finding out what was targeted. In order to gather relevant informative data, the researcher constructed an *observation scheme* through which useful classroom events, for this research, are recorded and reported as noticed. The scheme is labeled: "*Grammar Teaching Procedures*" (*GTP*) *scheme*. Categories and items comprised in the observation scheme are derived from the review of the related literature and with reference to the research questions.

Each section of the observation scheme includes subsections which comprise items. The sections and their components are intended to describe classroom practices and techniques used to teach grammar. Indeed, they reflect different perspectives about EFL grammar teaching and are also based on assumptions about the development of communicative competence, and other issues influencing EFL learning. These sections are the following: Presentation of Grammatical Structures, Practice, Materials, Classroom Management.

The teachers observed were afterwards interviewed as a follow-up and in order to cross check and enrich the data obtained from the observations. The researcher sought in-depth information around their approaches and techniques to instruct grammar from their points of view. The interview questions were based on and induced from the observation scheme elements with the intention to elicit detailed responses. The interview comprised six

items produced by the researcher, and all the interviewees were asked the exact same questions.

The data obtained were triangulated so as to increase the reliability and validity of the research outcomes. This questionnaire aims to uncover EFL teachers' perceptions of the context-based grammar teaching approach and to find out whether there is any important divergence between these.

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and was split into two major divisions which included eight questions each. The first part was destined to the instructors who implemented the context-based grammar teaching, while the second part was meant for the ones who did not. Overall, the items of this questionnaire aim to uncover which methods are used to teach grammatical elements, what impression or idea teachers have about instructing grammar in discourse, and about the benefits and the drawbacks of this approach.

In order to determine which part of the questionnaire teachers are concerned with (Part One/Part Two), they were asked the next question:

Do you teach grammar in context?

This item helped also to figure out how many of them contextualize grammar.

For the classroom observations, the researcher used the second type of coding scheme which is observed/not observed event recording; and ticked items in the scheme about teachers and learners classroom practices.

For the observation scheme data, teachers' profiles have been established. Then the numerical data obtained from the Yes/ No Questions, from both of the questionnaires and the interviews, were computed to identify different patterns. The verbal data gathered from the remaining questions of these tools were also subjected to a content analysis in order to classify the responses into general themes or establishing categories. The content analysis helped to understand the meaning of the participants' responses and to identify common and contrasting ideas and opinions expressed explicitly or implicitly. Moreover, it enabled the researcher to determine the participant teachers' profiles.

After that, the observation scheme data have been displayed in a grid with different rows and columns; each row represents the scheme items and the columns are meant for the observed teachers. All the teaching behaviors recorded allow determining each teacher's profile. Then the observations data and the interviews entries were presented in table so as to compare and cross-check these. In addition, the researcher has analyzed the data from the three research instruments and presented them in written texts.

4. Presentation and Analysis of Data

Since this research is a comparative investigation on EFL teachers approaches to instruct grammar, and so as to display neatly and plainly the outcomes of this research, a matrix is provided bellow with rows for the observed teaching behaviors (Ob.), and columns for every teacher observed (T1, T2, T3, T4).

Table 2: Grid of the Observations Data

			T1	T2	T3	T4
Presentation of Grammatical Structures	Resources to Introduce Grammatical Forms	Leading Questions			Ob.	
		Model Sentences	Ob.		Ob.	Ob.
		Dialogues				
		Short Texts		Ob.		
		Long Texts				
	Forms Descriptions/ Explanations	Clearly Stating Rules	Ob.		Ob.	Ob.
		Inducing Rules		Ob.		
		Pointing out Functions and Uses		Ob.	Ob.	Ob.
Practice	Written Form	Text-based Exercises	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.
		Problem-solving Activities		Ob.		
	Oral Form	Dramatic Activities		Ob.		
		Problem-solving Activities/ Games		Ob.		
	Skills	Speaking		Ob.	Ob.	
		Listening		Ob.		
		Writing	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.
		Reading	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.	
	Focus	Form	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.
		Function		Ob.	Ob.	Ob.
		Subject matter				
		Discourse		Ob.	Ob.	
	Materials	Types	Text	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.
Visual				Ob.	Ob.	
Audio						
Sources/ Purposes		Pedagogical	Ob.		Ob.	Ob.
		Non-pedagogical				
		Semi-pedagogical		Ob.		
Classroom Management	Participants' Organization	Individually	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.	Ob.
		Paired		Ob.		
		Grouped		Ob.		
		Whole-class		Ob.	Ob.	

Table 2: Grid of the Observations Data (ctd.)

The analysis of the interview responses has demonstrated that most EFL teachers intent to attract learners' attention to the importance of using grammar features appropriately according to the context. This is done through exposing them to and engaging them in authentic communication.

The analysis of the questionnaire data has revealed that most of the respondent teachers (5/6) implement a context-based grammar instruction. The teachers that use this approach were asked to complete the first part of this questionnaire, and the ones who do not were concerned with the second part.

From the analysis provided of teachers' answers to the first part of questionnaires' responses, it can be noticed that the participants mostly had convergent answers. One may also conclude that although the participant EFL teachers confess facing several different hindrances, they continue to implement and praise the merits and outcomes of the context-based grammar teaching. Only one teacher, among the participants, claimed not implementing the context-based grammar teaching approach.

The analysis of the second part of the questionnaire shows that this teacher holds attitudes similar to those of the instructors who do implement the discourse-based grammar instruction approach.

5. Interpretation of the Results and Implications

The researcher has attempted to establish the observed EFL grammar instructors' profiles which were reflected in their teaching practices. Next, are descriptions of their observed approaches to instruct grammar.

Teacher 1

From T1 column, it can be stated that teacher 1 presented grammar structures in isolation rather than in short or long texts, for instance. The teacher neither did provide learners with opportunities to derive the rules of forms inductively, nor did she refer to the functional uses of grammatical features. Such grammar teaching practices might not enhance learners' acquisition of pragmatic and communicative proficiencies. In addition, this teacher utilized written texts exclusively which offered learners occasions to write and read but not to speak, to listen, or to communicate using the target structures. Consequently, there has been no observed integration of grammar features into listening or speaking skills. Moreover, no attention was paid to functions, to subject-matters, or to discourse. This implies that learners were strictly focusing on accuracy rather than fluency or appropriacy. T1 also utilized materials specifically designed for language teaching which may not present the authentic usage of grammar structures since they are adapted contrary to real-life materials. Furthermore, she organized classroom learning activities into individual work instead of, for example, arranging students in pairs or groups. This strategy does not likely optimize learners' collaborative and communicative skills. Thus, one can deduce from the observations findings that T1 taught the grammatical structures in isolation and thus used a traditional approach to teaching grammar (a deductive method).

Teacher 2:

T2 column demonstrates that this teacher contextualized grammatical elements so as to present and practice their functional uses. T2 encouraged learners to engage in an inductive learning of grammar forms and rules through noticing and deriving from short texts. She also employed learning tasks which promote the communicative uses of grammar structures in discourse and their integration into the four language skills. Adding to that, she involved her students in individual and collaborative work in pairs, in groups, and in whole-class work. Furthermore, rather than adopting pedagogical or real-life materials, the teacher made use of semi-pedagogical materials such as employing, in the lesson, extracts from newspapers articles. In short, the information about T2 collected with the observation scheme show that she implemented the discourse-based approach to instruct grammar; that is to say, she contextualized grammar.

Teacher 3:

In T3 column it can be seen that the teacher isolated grammar elements instead of presenting these in discourse (in texts). In addition, she first supplied her learners with rules and directed their attentions to the functional uses of grammatical features. This technique develops students' accurate and meaningful uses of grammar elements. Besides, the teacher employed text-based activities that allowed learners to rehearse the structures through writing and reading. T3 did not integrate the target grammatical features into the use of speaking or listening skills. During the practice phase, the teacher concentrated on forms, functions, and discourse. In other words, she attracted students' attention to the pragmatic and communicative uses of structures. She also taught grammar with the use of materials that were specifically elaborated for educational purposes and which are usually designed to facilitate grammar issues. Furthermore, T3 involved her students in learning activities individually or collectively. This means that she actively and collaboratively engaged learners in their language learning process. Thus, one can assume from the observed teaching behaviors that T3 adopted a deductive method to instructing grammatical points. In fact, although she attracted students' attention to the pragmatic and communicative uses of structures, she taught grammar structures in isolation.

Teacher 4:

According to the data provided in T4 column, it can be noted that the teacher isolated grammatical structures for the presentation stage instead of, for example, using dialogues to contextualize these in discourse. She provided the rules of forms to her students first, and then tackled the functions and uses of the target features. Moreover, this teacher utilized text-based tasks in which learners could practice these forms just in writing and reading. Hence, the grammatical structures targeted were not incorporated into all of the four language skills. The main language aspects emphasized during the practice stage were the forms and their functions. Thus, she trained her students to use grammar structures meaningfully and purposefully. T4 instructed grammar employing pedagogical materials rather than real-world or semi-pedagogical ones. Although pedagogical materials may be comprehensible for learners, they might not introduce them to natural language usage. Furthermore, she arranged classroom activities into individual work. This strategy may not promote the development of

learners' cooperative and communicative skills. Therefore, one can claim that following the data obtained from the observation sessions, T4 taught grammar structure in isolation and therefore, she followed a deductive approach to teaching grammatical structures.

From the above interpretation of the observations data, one can conclude that most of EFL teachers (3 out of 4), in the department of Anglophone studies at the University of Algiers 2, isolate grammar structures. Only 1 teacher used the discourse-based grammar approach. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize the fact that the observations were carried out during the few last sessions before the end of the academic year. Thus, teachers were likely to drill their students in using structures already dealt with. Moreover, since these data demonstrate that most EFL grammar teachers instruct grammar at the sentence level; this can suggest that the observed EFL instructors employ more focused practice activities than communicative ones.

In order to cross-check the outcomes of the observations, the researcher interviewed these exact same teachers and intended to determine their profiles based on their personal views.

Teacher 1:

T1 affirmed providing her students with model sentences. She maintained that she prefers presenting grammatical structures in isolation in that it is clearer and allows saving time. Such a technique cannot engage students in an inductive learning and make them notice the uses of grammar forms in context. According to her, they grasp grammar structures thanks to the rules and the uses of the forms. Nevertheless, she appears not to attract students' attention to context of communication and thus, cannot enhance their communicative competence. She argued that using text-based activities helps them comprehend better and learn to use grammatical features accurately. Consequently, she did not focus on the pragmatic and the communicative uses of these elements. She claimed to emphasize form and meaning because it can lead learners to use the forms appropriately. She claimed to use text solely because in her opinion, these materials are essential and highly efficient. Although texts can be effective, they may not integrate the use of speaking and/or listening skills while practicing given structures. T1 also explained she organizes learning activities into individual work so as to maintain discipline in her classroom. However, this strategy does not allow engaging learners in authentic communication and cooperative work. From the analysis above, one can deduce that T1 used a deductive approach that is to say, she taught grammar structures in isolation.

Teacher 2:

T2 assumed that contextualizing grammatical features illustrates their communicative uses. She added that employing written texts to present structures enables students to notice how grammar elements operate which can lead them to grasp their uses. T2 confirmed using communicative tasks and suggested that these practice the communicative uses of structures. Additionally, she claimed to focus on form and meaning so as to promote the appropriate use of grammatical structures. This may help develop learners' meaningful use of grammar

features but likely not their pragmatic uses. In fact, she should direct students' attention to the context in which these forms are used in order to show them the meanings of grammatical features in discourse, and to help learners comprehend and use these pragmatically. She advocates making use of written texts in that they are not time consuming. Texts may not be sufficient on their own since they cannot make learners integrate listening and speaking skills contrary to the audio-visual materials. T2 argued that she favors grouping students because it helps to manage the class effectively and encourages students to learn from each others. Indeed, this strategy can allow students to engage in true communication using the target structures. It may also increase their motivation and promote collaborative work.

Teacher 3:

T3 argued that she employs an approach to present grammatical structures following the degrees of complexity of the target features. She preferred providing learners with model sentences in order to make the grammar forms clearer for learners. However, this may not demonstrate the pragmatic uses of structures. She proposed that through contextualizing grammar, they can induce the rules of forms by themselves. This technique can allow learners to notice the communicative uses of structures and to acquire some autonomy from their teachers. She added that using text-based activities can help students grasp the uses of grammar structures. Nonetheless, these tasks do not involve learners in real communication. T3 told the researcher that she employs only texts in that it is necessary and can be sufficiently effective. This type of materials may not provide learners with opportunities to incorporate the use of their speaking and listening skills. She also claimed to focus on form because she teaches grammar, but she did not refer to their meaningful uses or to the context of communication. This teacher favored arranging students in pairs during learning tasks because this helps her handling the class easily. Therefore, she provides learners with occasions to practice the communicative uses of forms and she may enhance their senses of cooperation. In short, T3 implements both of the contextualized grammar teaching approach and the traditional one depending on the target structures.

When comparing the data gathered from observations of the classroom practices of each participant EFL teacher and their responses to the interview questions, one can notice that the latter are almost in line with the former for T1 and T2. More classroom observations are needed to confirm that T3 shifts from the traditional approach to the discourse-based approach according to degrees of difficulty of the targeted features (as stated in her interview).

Mostly, EFL grammar teachers, in the department of Anglophone studies at the University of Algiers 2, were observed to and claimed to use model sentences in order to present grammar structures. Isolating these forms may not contribute to develop learners' pragmatic competences.

They used only pedagogical materials, but these teaching materials do not demonstrate the authentic uses of English grammar in everyday life contexts. Indeed, this kind of materials is specifically designed for language teaching therefore, the language employed is artificial.

Text-based learning activities from authentic materials, such as writing or telling stories, exploiting magazines' articles or literary texts, are the most used. In such tasks, the

participant teachers focus on forms, meanings, and uses so as to strengthen students' understanding of grammar points. Indeed, EFL instructors consider the use of texts in grammar lessons as highly fruitful and efficient.

Furthermore, classroom work was generally carried out individually in order to maintain order in the class and to make sure that learners are actually all involved. Teachers likely prefer to rely on individual work in that there were numerous students in the EFL classrooms observed. Hence, arranging students in pairs or groups may not be easy to handle.

Nevertheless, the individual work strategy might not allow learners to integrate the four language skills in the use of the targeted structures. Additionally, such a technique can hinder the development of their interpersonal communicative skills. In fact, texts allowed students to practice the use of grammar features in reading and writing only. As a consequence, this might not enable students to produce and comprehend the functional uses of these features and their meanings in true communication.

On the other hand, some EFL grammar instructors attempt to contextualize structures in texts employing passages or dialogues. These teaching materials were taken from pedagogical or semi-pedagogical sources; which means that the language used was adapted unlike in non-pedagogical sources where the language is natural.

Additionally, employing texts as a unique resource for illustrating grammar elements may be due to the fact that texts are easier to procure and more affordable than audio or visual materials. EFL grammar teachers are not using audio-visual teaching aids probably because they are not trained to, or the department under study may not be equipped with the necessary technology for these materials.

They also relied on engaging students in an inductive learning of rules of forms and their uses through the use of contextualized grammar features. This technique can allow learners to grasp the communicative uses of the grammar elements and to become more independent from their teachers.

One EFL teacher also employed communicative tasks so as to contextualize grammar elements. She implemented this approach through arranging learners in pairs or/and groups and engaging them in problem-solving and/or dramatic activities. These strategies allowed learners to incorporate usage of the four language skills as they put into practice the uses of the targeted forms.

Teachers concentrated on forms, functions and discourse. In addition to developing learners' communication skills, it can enhance their appropriate use of grammar and their fluency in real-world contexts. This may highly contribute to developing learners' pragmatic and communicative proficiencies.

The majority of participant EFL teachers (five out of six), in the department of Anglophone studies at the University of Algiers 2, claim to follow a discourse-based approach to instructing grammar. They are convinced that contextualizing grammatical structures is an effective method to make students induce and assimilate the functions and uses of these elements.

Additionally, they report a positive response on the part of learners. In fact, students view this approach as "challenging but beneficial." In other words, although they believe it is a demanding task, they also find it attractive, motivating, and rewarding. Therefore, the participant teachers assumed that teaching EFL grammar in context and with a

communicative approach generally pleases the students of the department of Anglophone studies.

Learners are also seemingly encouraged to discover and derive the rules, meanings and uses of grammar points referring to contextual information. EFL instructors also see many advantages to using the discourse-based grammar teaching approach. Indeed, teachers consider that through inductive EFL grammar learning, students can become actively involved in their language learning process and somehow autonomous. Moreover, the exposure to authentic language in real-life contexts helps learners to understand the functions of grammatical points. It also enhances the assimilation of these which can enable students to reproduce the given structures. In fact, they become able to distinguish the various functional uses and meanings of structures and employ these appropriately following the context of communication. Ultimately, both teachers and learners often enjoy learning grammar with a communicative approach. They usually get more motivated and engaged in a communicative language classroom.

Nevertheless, EFL teachers perceive several disadvantages of the implementation of the discourse-based approach to instructing grammar. They view this method as being highly time consuming. This is likely because, in teaching grammar in discourse, they meet other structures than the targeted ones and might have to deal with many of these. Additionally, it requires a lot of efforts from them and from learners since they might have to tackle many elements in one lesson. Moreover, studying grammatical elements in context may be blurry, confusing and complex for students as it might not be plain and clear enough. They can also struggle with grasping grammatical exceptions in a particular context which can become problematic. Furthermore, EFL grammar instructors find contextualizing grammar elements unnecessary in some cases because some structures are meaningful out of their contexts (context-free).

EFL grammar instructors also complain about the lack of teaching resources for this method in that very often grammar instruction guides rely on the traditional methods for language teaching. Needless to mention the fact that Algerian students are learning English as an FL thus, they are not sufficiently exposed to the target language and do not have many occasions to practice in authentic communication the grammar points studied. In addition, in classroom work, EFL instructors find it complex to involve all the learners because of the large classes in the department of Anglophone studies at the University of Algiers 2. Indeed, implementing a communicative approach to instructing EFL grammar implies providing convenient conditions which may not be accessible for the department. Sometimes, EFL teachers have to cope, as well, with the important gap between learners' levels of proficiency. This issue hinders the successful implementation of the context-based grammar teaching model.

Consequently, EFL teachers intent facilitating grammar learning through providing simple explanations and helping learners comprehend the meanings of grammatical features in context. They also attempt to provide students with enough opportunities to notice how the targeted grammar elements operate in discourse and to practice their usage. Moreover, they prompt their students with clues and guide them towards inducing the rules and functions of contextualized grammar elements. EFL instructors also give priority and try to emphasize

mostly the most essential grammatical structures for understanding and using the target language. That is, selecting the most necessary and recurrent grammar features, then working and concentrating particularly on these during the lesson.

In order to enhance the efficacy of the contextualized grammar teaching, EFL grammar teachers suggest using audio-visual materials such as songs. This technique can allow them to notice the use of English grammar features while integrating their listening skills. Some would, as well, start using texts and would focus mainly on the grammatical aspects. For instance, they would use dialogues, extracts from novels, transcribed conversations, and so forth. They also propose engaging learners in dramatic activities such as role-plays or skits. Alternatively, EFL teachers would optimize the effectiveness of this approach by promoting a learner-centered approach to language learning and therefore, by much more involving students and implementing cooperative and collaborative classroom work.

From the findings generated by the research instruments, one can conclude that teachers perceive the discourse-based grammar teaching approach as demanding considerable amount of time compared to the traditional approach and entailing a lot of efforts on the part of teachers and from learners too. Grammar teachers also complain about the lack of teaching materials for this approach and to have to cope with the inconvenient conditions to implement it. Regardless, most EFL teachers in the department of Anglophone studies at the University of Algiers 2, instruct grammar structures in context because of its notable benefits and effectiveness. They do so, making use of texts and emphasizing on the various functions of grammar features following the contexts in which these are used. Some also employ communicative tasks so as to practice the targeted forms and to engage learners in real-world communication.

From the literature and from the present research outcomes, the suggested and the recommended practices for EFL grammar teachers are the following:

- ✓ Exposing students to the use of grammar features in context is necessary at a given stage of the lesson, even if not during the presentation phase.
- ✓ Promoting learners engagement in inductive learning of grammar forms, rules and uses, without eliminating teachers' explanations.
- ✓ Dedicating a pre-communicative stage to drill students in the production of isolated grammar structures in order to prepare them for the communicative phase of the lesson.
- ✓ Involving learners in communicative tasks in which they can make use of the targeted grammatical elements in real communication and in discourse.
- ✓ Providing learners with occasions to integrate the four language skills into the practice of grammar elements usage.
- ✓ Small classes are preferable for the discourse-based grammar instruction approach, or dividing the class into small groups during the communicative practice stage so as to carry out communicative activities properly.
- ✓ Making sure each and every student is involved, and encouraging those who are not to take part in learning activities.
- ✓ Throughout the lesson, showing students a variety of uses and functions of the target grammar points and insisting on the need to employ these pragmatically.

- ✓ Always directing learners' attention to the connections between the appropriate grammar use and the context of communication.

6. Conclusion

The study covered only 6 Algerian university-level EFL teachers' approaches to instruct grammar. It also sought to inquire the instructors' attitudes toward grammar contextualization and its learning in EFL context.

From the data interpretation, one can deduce that some EFL teachers, in the department of Anglophone studies at the University of Algiers 2, still present grammatical structures in isolation. In fact, teachers provide learners with rules, functions of the forms, and model sentences. They find isolating structures to be more effective as it is straightforward, focused and clear. Hence, for EFL teachers, it is through the rules of forms and instances that learners can assimilate the structures and their functions. Moreover, they perceive the traditional approach to instructing grammar to be the unique method that suits some complex grammar elements which can be facilitated by a rule-driven learning. That is to say presenting grammar in context can be sometimes ambiguous and confusing for students.

EFL teachers also employed exclusively text-based materials which can be highly effective and sufficient. Additionally, not all teachers are likely to be trained and have access to technology in order to make use of videos and audio tapes. However, texts cannot make learners speak or listen to the use of the target grammar structures.

On the other hand, other EFL grammar teachers, in the department under study, attempt to contextualize grammatical elements in order to highlight their communicative usage and to help learners induce the rules on their own. The participants contextualized grammar structures through texts which stimulate students to notice then to infer the rules of grammar forms and their functions, then to grasp these structures. In doing so, and with further exposure and practice, they may eventually internalize the targeted forms which can result in the acquisition of pragmatic and communicative competences.

EFL grammar instructors contextualize grammar features with the use of texts such as songs or stories; they also employ dramatic activities like role plays or skits. Teachers sometimes used problem solving activities and games. Hence, lessons were integrated into other activities like speaking and writing.

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