

# Difficulties in Mastering English Grammar Faced by Secondary School Students' (Fifth Islamic Grade) from teachers' perspective

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**Abstract:** The current study aims to know the difficulties that Iraqi Islamic students face in understanding the English grammar and the obstacles that face the teachers in teaching the grammar in EFL Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5). The sample of the study includes fifteen teachers and the educational supervising (11 boys(56%) and 5 girls(44%) )who are actually teaching English in the selected schools during the academic year 2018-2019 (in the Islamic schools ) in the city of Kirkuk who represent 61.5 % of the total number of teachers' population. A questionnaire has been conducted and applied to the selected sample. The required data are collected and analysed statistically. The study reaches to results such as , most of EFL teachers are satisfied with the materials of (Book5) concerning their; sufficiency, difficulty, authenticity, integration and appropriacy and the most difficult grammar area is the interrogation and the easiest area is sentence patterns. It also state that the activities and exercises included within( Book5) supply pupils with enough practice in the different kind of English grammar .

Regarding the obstacles of implementation and problems which the teachers face in teaching grammar in (Book 5) are; the present perfect tense is explained briefly in unit two, in some units the subjects of grammar without exercises or activities , shortage of lesson time in some schools,and lack of charts .

## Section One Introduction

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

English has been chosen as a subject in teaching curriculum of schools. When the students learn English they encounter a lot of problems that might make the process of learning difficult .These difficulties are proper a lot of aspects of differences between two languages. These aspects include syntax, phonology, grammar and morphology(Lado ,1957 :2)

The main purpose of teaching a foreign language is to be able to communicate idea with meanings in the target language (Nasr , 1963 :163) .English as a language based on the skills that are four . They are reading ,writing ,speaking and listening . Each skill sheds light and focuses on different elements of language. One of those elements is grammar.

The grammar teaching still to be issues of studying in the side of SLA .It's commonly accept which draws to the structure is good but many research concern the teaching of grammar yet demand studies specifically which are that are certain principle in the learning of classroom (Kennedy ,2001 25).

Al-Mutawa' and Kailani (1989:69) raise that students should understand and produce linguistic forms as part of a purposeful activity, not just as an exercise in language practice.

English course for Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) for the fifth secondary stage is one the most important variables that affect teaching EFL in Iraq.

English course for Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) is new considerable curriculum which is taught for the fifth secondary students in Republic of Iraq and yet it hasn't been subjected to any experimental or scientific study . English course for Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) area those educational courses which are designed especially for foreign language learn in the Islamic Schools.

This study attempts to find the difficulties in mastering English grammar faced by fifth Islamic secondary school Students' .

### 1.2 Aims of the Study

This study aims to find out difficulties English grammar in EFL Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) which is taught in the city of Kirkuk for grade five. This aim is supposed to be achieved through answering the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties that Iraqi Islamic students face in understanding the English grammar ?
2. What are the obstacles that face the teachers in teaching the grammar in EFL Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5)?

### **1.3 Value of the Study**

Inserting students to new things would definitely be difficult for them. So when the students learn a new foreign language which is difficult from their native language many problem for the students of this language will seem .

EFL students English grammar (fifth grade) at Iraqi Islamic schools for instance face a problem in understanding grammar in different issues.

EFL English courses texts are new English courses which have been systematically designed to be taught in Iraqi Islamic school. It attempts especially to develop the ability of the four language skills and encourage students to be become confident users of English.

In addition the value of this study could be itemized as follows :

- 1-It concentrate the difficulties faced by Islamic school students in learning English grammar .
- 2-It classifies the problems based on the importance of the contextual difficulties in learning English grammar.
- 3- The results of this study will help educationalists , syllabus designers and decision makers at Sunni Endowment Divan(Religious Teaching and Islamic Studies Directorate),by supplying them with importance information about efficiency of EFL English Course of Iraqi Islamic schools (Book 5).Further , this study could be valuable in reflecting points of view of the fifth secondary schools teachers staff concerning the sufficiency difficult , authenticity and appropriacy of the grammar subjects in (Book 5).

### **1.4 The Limits of the Study**

The current study is limited to English course for Iraqi Islamic school (Book 5) and the fifth year secondary teachers and English supervisor in the city of Kirkuk during the year of 2018-2019 .

### **1.5 The Definitions of Basic Terms**

#### **1.5. 1 grammar :**

It is the science of language, its pronunciation, punctuation, syntax and inflexion (Page et al., 1980:151).

#### **1.5. 2 Secondary Stage**

It is defined operationally to refer to the stage or level of the study which is started after six years of primary education .It includes six years of studying of six textbooks (English course Book 1, Book 2, Book 3, Book 4, Book 5, Book 6).Grade six is considered the final stage in the secondary school.

#### **1.5.3 English course for Iraqi Islamic Schools**

It is also defined operationally to indicate the multi-level course that has been especially designed for secondary Islamic schools .It includes six levels .The first three textbooks (Book1-3) are specified for the three intermediate grades , and the (Book 4 -6) are specified for the three preparatory grades .

### **1.6 Plan of the Study**

The following steps will be followed to be gain the aim for this study :

- 1-Selecting the groups of fifth year secondary teachers from the Islamic schools at Kirkuk.
- 2-Constructing a questionnaire for EFL teachers and English supervisor to show their point of view about English course for Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) .
- 3-Selecting the sample of teachers and English supervisor,then administrating the constructed questionnaire to the selected sample .
4. Obtaining the results and testifying some conclusions ,recommendations , and suggestions for further work.

## Section Two

### Theoretical Background

#### 2.1 The concept of English Grammar

Language system is a grammar . By the grammar ,it can be said that , the efelaction in the exact time of language . The grammar rules inform us why . However, there are about 3,500 rule s in the English (Oxford University Press, 2006).

An infant's implied the grammar information is huge complicated than heaviest model , (Harper, 1999).

Grammar is defined as a description of the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to create sentences in the language. When communication is occurred between sentences and utterances, it used to represent some experiences or describe real and unreal world (Richards and Schmidt ,2002:230).

As for Fromkin et al, (2005:14), the grammar as a term is used with a systematic ambiguity .On one side, the grammar refers to explicit theory which is created by the linguist and proposed as a description of the utterer's competence, and on the other side, it refers to the competence itself as an innate ability of a native speaker. This denotes our linguistic competence of our mother tongue.

By the grammar , it can be means that the rules that done in the early of 17<sup>th</sup> century and it continued to nowadays (Nasu , 2002 :93).From this , the word can be both single or plural . The foundation of English is rule . During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries,English grammar strated to be done spesifically to aid the learning of Latin . ( ibid: 94).

#### 2.2 The Kinds of English Grammar

##### 2.2.1 Interrogation in English Grammar

Specialists has been classified the interrogation into many types ,such as :

**1. Yes – No Questions :** It has many names such as Nexus question or Polar question (Jespersen, 1933:296). Yes – No question occurs when the auxiliary verb is located before the subject (Arema , 1997 : 342 ).

**2) Wh-Questions,** it is also known as{ Information-seeking Questions}. They are formed with one of the following (Where , why , why ,how and what ). For example :

Q1 : Where is the cat                      A: on the desk .

Q2: when does Ali wake up ?            A: At 7 o'clock .

##### 2.2.2 Nouns in English

The noun cab defined easily as a thing and it is thw essence of sentence building . There are a varirty of things nouns such as animal , person .idea etc... The example of noun can be shown in the sentences :

1.The baby and daughter were shaking their heads as thy passed our place.

.2.We like watching T.V at the home

(Quirk and Greenbaum ,1985 :59)

##### The kinds of Noun

There are many kinds of nouns , they are coomonlt classified about four types ( proper ,common nouns and abstract and concrete nouns )

1.Common nouns are the words that refer to things that are universal : umberalla evening bathing

- We love swimming in the pool

- The milkcup has been fallen and broken

2. Proper noun s are names of that are specifies someone or something ,such as Ali is a proper noun .

-Rami loved staying with his uncle Sami in Baghdad .

(Jespersen, 1933:152).

3.Concrete nouns refers to the things that is real : smell ,man and soup .

-The woman throw the stone behind the people

- Can you tast the soup , Cathy ?

4.An abstract noun refers to the things that is better like an idea or concept .Thre are example of this type :

-Childhood and beauty are equally

– Your idea can distinguish many things.

### 2.2.3 Simple present ,present continuous and present perfect

#### 1.Simple Present

*It's form* : either by making the verb as base with plural form or by adding s or es to ending of the verb .

*Use s* :

*First use : the habitual action*

Example :The sun rises.

*Second use* : the fact that timeless

Example : The train depart at 7:00 a.m.

(Murphy and Smalzer ,2003 :2-5)

#### 2. Present Perfect

*Form* : Subject + Has / Have + past participle .....

It occurs in the action that happenin g in the past , and continue at the present time

Example : They have broken the window .

(Murphy and Smalzer ,2003 :38)

#### 3.Present Continuous

It's form can be said that auxi. verb that followed by the subject is to be (is , are , am ) plus verb with ing .It refer to the action that happens now and have not finish yet .

Example : Ali is eating an apple now .

(Jespersen, 1933:230).

### 2.3 Learning English through Grammar

There are many views in teaching English language from these views ,the approach argues that language exists in context, . The pedagogical method resulting in the style linguistics also search to discover students why language contrast to the situation in that it is made (Nunan, 1991:152).

Swain (1985:50-153) has extra practical mass to that issue ,discovering that pressing to the language objective in context that is meaningful is enough fo all students to grow a complicated grammar knowledge .

Mckay (1987: 154-158) suggests that there are three different opinions on teaching grammar. The first view is that teaching grammar involves these the formal meaningful process of analogy rather than explanation. The learners may become fluent in the structures they have been taught, but may not be able to use them appropriately in wisely communication outside the classroom. The third view is that teaching grammar is a matter of giving learners the chance to use English in a variety of realistic situations.

Frank and Rinvoluceri (1987: 98) attempt to offer a kind of classroom exercises and activities, with intensive preparation in a number of basic morph syntactic items, so within a context which tensions "Communicative" rather than "linguistic" competence, and ability rather than knowledge. Therefore, the student control what is said, while the instructor provides way on how it is said. "This adds up to total involvement of learner's whole person, with total responsibility for what he or she produces in a rather loose framework of predetermined cues" (Frank and Rinvoluci, 1987: 7).

Generally speaking, CLT is linked with a shift from traditional form-oriented to a meaning oriented teaching; consistently educators are anticipated to help their learners learn how to voice their notions and illocutions instead of plaguing them with never-ending formal pattern drills; that obviously goes with the slogan that predictable form-and teacher-centered approach should be substituted by a learner centered approach. "say what you mean" instead of "Do as you are told", as well as "fluency above accuracy "(With a correspondingly relaxed view of students' linguistic errors) are other slogans that fit into the general concept of CLT.

### Section Three Procedures

#### 3.1 Population and sampling

The population of the study includes the total number of the teachers of English who teach Book 5 at the Islamic schools for boys and girls. These schools are distributed into the city of Kirkuk and its suburbs. In Kirkuk, there are 20 Islamic schools, 30 for boys and seven for girls. These 20 schools including twenty-six teachers of English.

The sample of this study includes fifteen Islamic schools, eight for boys and seven for girls. After discluding five schools, the sample of the study includes sixteen teachers and the English supervisor (9 boys(56%) and 7 girls(44%)) who are actually teaching English in the selected schools during the academic year 2018-2019 who represent 61.5 % of the total number of teachers' population.

**Table -1-**  
**The Sample of Study**

Num. of boys' teachers	No. of girls' teachers	Total	
9	7	16	
% 56	% 44	% 100	Percentage

#### 3.2 Construction of the Questionnaire

The instrument of this study is a questionnaire. It bases on fourteen items that includes 5 likerate scale. The selected teachers are asked to refer their view point belonging the items by (✓) in the suitable place (see appendix A).

#### 3.3 Validity of the Questionnaire

According to the Borg and Gall (1983:173) validity for the questionnaire refers to the degree to that a measurement instrument what is obvious to be measuring.

To make the face validity of the questionnaire, it was showed to juey members of university teaching staff, as shown in the appendix (C)

#### 3.4 The Reliability of the Questionnaire

A questionnaire reliability can be distinguished by researcher of the study on a short sample. It can be also gained by making differences between the answers of the new one with the original one (Best and Kahn, 2006: 329).

To make the questionnaire realibility, (Person Correlation Formula is applied by making split – half).so the finding of this method is appeared as 0.78 (Carroll and Hall, 1985: 125).

#### 3.5 The Pilot Questionnaire Study

There are a variety intentions that are probably to be accomplished during the form of the pilote study they are :

- Discovering the questionnaire relibability .
- Discovering the obviousness of the items .

The questionnaire was applied to the 15 teachers of English who really taught the EFL English Course For Iraq I Islami c Schhol (Book 5) .

The pilot study has appeared that items that are given are obvious and the time that demand for answering goes through 31 to 41 minutes.

#### 3.6 Final administration of the Questionnaire

The result of questionnaire administration denotes that it is valid and reliable. The final questionnaire administration to the study sample has been carried out from 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2019 to 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The designed questionnaire which consists of fourteen items is written on a sheet of paper and administrated individually to the selected sample of the teachers. Each teacher is requested to answer to formed questionnaire paper and give it back to the teacher at once .

## Section Four

### Analysis of Data ,and Discussion of Results, Conclusion ,and Recommendation

#### 4.1 The Percentage of Teachers' Responses on the Constructed Questionnaire

In order to answer questions that are raised in this study, the collected data concerning teachers' points of view about the various items of the constructed questionnaire are interpreted as follows,:

1. The answers of the first and second questions show that; 84% of the teachers think that the grammar of the English course For Iraqi Islamic schools (Book 5) arranged according to difficulty, and 16% of them think the opposite. Moreover, 72% of them think that the exercises of grammar included with (Book 5) reinforce those which have studied within the explained subject , and 28% of them do not think so.
2. Results of the third question show that; 41% of the teachers think that the grammar activities are given with the exercises enough to enhance students learning.
3. Responses on the fourth and fifth questions; 91% of the teachers clarify that the conditional clauses are placed randomly in unit 9 and 9% of them do not think so. Moreover, 77% of them point out that the grammar of (Book 5) supplies students with sufficient opportunities to use English language communicatively and 23% of them think the opposite.
4. Results of the sixth, seventh and eighth questions reveal that; 100% of the teachers believe that the grammar of (Book 5) appropriate for the fifth students' level, 68% of them believe that there are subjects of grammar without exercises such as in unit one (The Future Tense) and 32% of them do not think so, and 95% of them state that the subject of interrogation placed suitably in the (Book 5), while 5% of them have the opposite idea.
5. In the answer of the ninth question: 91% of the teachers believe that students can get enough time and opportunities to understand the tenses intensity especially in the first two units. and 9% of them believe the opposite.
6. In answering the tenth question; 40% of the teachers state that the sentence patterns (in unit 7 and 8)suitable for the fifth students' level and 60% of them think that it does not.
7. In answering the eleventh question; 95% of the teachers indicate that the "Nouns " are explained appropriately in (Book 5), whereas 5% of them do not think so.
8. In the answer of the twelfth question; 100% of the teachers clarify that the present perfect tense is explained briefly in unit two.
9. Result of the thirteenth question that concerning to arrange the subjects of grammar according to difficulty on ten units can be summarized in the following table:

Units	Subjects of grammar	Percentage of Teachers' Responses
one	simple present ,simple past and the future	66 %
Two	present continuous and present perfect	56 %
Three	conditional clauses	58 %
Four	conditional clauses in past perfect tense	76 %
Five	sentence patterns	53 %
Six	nouns	86 %
Seven	question with auxiliary verbs	74 %
Eight	question without auxiliary verbs	66 %
Nine	Yes-No question	67 %
Ten	Wh-question	80 %

10. The last item of the teachers' responses reveal that 80% of the teachers suggest to make the subject of grammars more easy ,Moreover , 90% of teachers clarify their ideas to make connection between the subjects of grammar in (Book 5) and the (Book 6) .

#### The Final Result of the Mean, Std. Deviation, Percentage of Agreement and Level of Agreement of the Questionnaire

Sample	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage of Agreement	Level of Agreement
16	3.9	1.27	82.4	Agree

#### Note:

In the answer of the note question; 55% of the teachers mention that they have attended in service-teacher training courses and 45% of them has not attended any teacher training course whereas 80% of them have not attended in any workshop that concern their specialist. Moreover, 100 % of teachers mention that they have not participated in any conferences. Most of the sample teachers have the B.A. degree in English language .

#### 4.2 Discussion of the Finding of the Questionnaire

the collected responses on th e items of the questionnaire could be summed up in the following points:

- (Book 5) supplies pupils with sufficient practice in the different subjects of grammar. It has showed that the most difficult area is the subject of interrogation. Also it gives students enough opportunities for practicing different subjects of grammar. (Book 5) materials provide students with authentic information, knowledge about English grammar. It arranged according to difficulty and they include useful and suitable pictures and colours.( Book 5 ) are available, useful and suitable for given exercises.
- (Book 5) contains clear and easy instructions to be applied in teaching.
- Most of the EFL teachers believe that the subjects of grammar in (Book 5) are clear and attainable for many reasons as follows:
  - a- (Book 5) allows group and individual work. It helps pupils to use English communicatively.
  - b- The course is appropriate for the fifth students' level. It helps students and teachers to speak and communicate, because it is based on communicative approach. Thus, it makes the learners participate in classroom activities. Teachers consider it a practical course.
  - c- (Book 5 ) gives enough time and opportunities to understand the tenses intensity especially in the first two units.
  - d- This course provides opportunities to practise all the skills and language aspects. It also gives them a lot of chances to practise various language functions.
  - e- In (Book 5) "Nouns " are explained appropriately and suitably.
  - f- It gives more information about different subjects of English grammar.
  - g- It is colourful. It contains nice pictures. Moreover, it is well-organized. This makes the activities interesting and reinforces learning. It also works like a good dictionary.

Most of the teachers need to participate in service-teacher training courses , workshop and conferences (if it is possible). All of them state that there is no mistake in (Book 5). Most of teachers believe that the appropriate number of students should be no more than fifteen in each classroom.

- Regarding the obstacles of implementation and problems which the teachers face in teaching grammar in (Book 5) are; the present perfect tense is explained briefly in unit two, in some units the subjects of grammar without exercises or activities , shortage of lesson time in some schools, and lack of charts .

#### 4.3 Conclusions

The administrated of the questionnaire to the sample of th e current study yielded the conclusions as following g :

1. Most of EFL teachers are satisfied with the materials of (Book5) concerning their; sufficiency, difficulty, authenticity, integration and appropriacy.

- 2- The most difficult grammar area is the interrogation and the easiest area is sentence patterns.
- 3- The activities and exercises included within( Book5) supply pupils with enough practice in the different kind of English grammar .
- 3- The instructions included in the ( Book 5) are clear and easy to be applied for teaching the lessons materials.
- 4- (Book 5) supplies students with sufficient opportunities to use English language communicatively. It is appropriate for the fifth students' level.
- 5- Teachers are faced with a lot of obstacles and problems in teaching grammar in(Book 5), i.e. the present perfect tense is explained briefly in unit two, shortage of lesson time in some schools, smallness of classroom size, lack of electricity, and lack of charts .

#### 4.4 Recommendations

A number of recommendations are stated below:

- 1- Supplying teachers with some national as well as international periodical ,journals ,and forums for training them in effective instructional strategies for desired learner outcomes.
- 2- Empowering EFL teachers through professional development and attending in-service training courses, joining support network and national associations, and participating in workshops and conferences.
- 3- EFL teachers should be encouraged to join local and national teachers' associations and pursuing profession development.
- 4- The Sunni Endowment Divan has to enable secondary Islamic schools teachers to meet regularly with well-experienced ones, attend, and observe their lessons and discuss what went on in their classroom. Challenging teaching situations is essential to improve new teachers' teaching practices and English skills.
- 5- Training courses should be continuous for all of the teachers. They need more practice and more information about this new course. Moreover, teachers must be sent abroad for summer courses to improve their language and be acquainted with English culture.
- 6- Substitute those foreign proper names like: John ,Dave Maddy, Nelson, ... etc. to others local and familiar names like: Ali , Muhammad, Ahmed, Omer, etc., substitute foreign places' names like: Roma ,Paris, London, to others like : Mecca, Baghdad, Erbil, Cairo, etc..

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**\*Please put (Tick) on the following Schedules**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Rarely	Strongly Agree	Agree
1. The grammar of the English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) arranged according to difficulty .					
2. The exercises of grammar included with the English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) reinforce those which have studied within the explained subject .					
3. The grammar activities are given with the exercises enough to enhance students learning .					
4. The conditional clauses are placed randomly in unit 9 .					
5. The grammar of English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) supplies students with sufficient opportunities to use English language communicatively.					
6. The grammar of English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5) appropriate for the fifth students' level .					
7. There are subjects of grammar without exercises such as in unit one (The Future Tense) .					
8. The subject of interrogation placed suitably in the English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5).					
9. Students can get enough time and opportunities to understand the tenses intensity especially in the first two units.					
10. The sentence patterns (in unit 7 and 8)suitable for the fifth students' level .					
11. The "Nouns " are explained appropriately in English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5).					
12.The present perfect tense is explained briefly in unit two.					
<b>13. Arrange the following subjects of grammar according to difficulty on the following ten units:</b>					
❖ a. Wh-question					

- ❖ b. Yes-No question
  - ❖ c. question with auxiliary verbs
  - ❖ d. question without auxiliary verbs
  - ❖ e. nouns
  - ❖ f. simple present ,simple past and the future
  - ❖ g. present continuous and present perfect
  - ❖ h. sentence patterns
  - ❖ i. conditional clauses
  - ❖ j. conditional clauses in past perfect tense
- Unit one  Unit Two  Unit Three  Unit Four  Unit Five   
Unit six  Unit Seven  Unit Eight  Unit Nine  Unit Ten

14.If there are any obstacles or problems that you face in teaching the grammar of English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools (Book 5)?**Mention them with further suggestion(if it is available) .**

#### Appendix (B)

#### The letter of the Jury Members

Republic of Iraq  
Presidency of Sunni Endowment Divan  
Religious Teaching and Islamic Studies Directorate  
Imam Al-Ghazily Islamic School,

To /

Dear Sir, Mrs.

The researcher is conducting a study entitled "**Difficulties in Mastering English Grammar Faced by Secondary School Students' (Fifth Islamic Grade )**". This study attempts to identify difficulties in English grammar adopted in designing English course For Iraqi Islamic Schools to find out to what extent these difficulties exist.

To fulfill the aims of this study a questionnaire has been constructed. I would be grateful if you, as expert in applied linguistics, pass judgment on the suitability of items, and to decide the face and content validity of the questionnaire.

Any comments, modifications or suggestions would be highly regarded and appreciated. Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Asst. inst. Omar. M. Mustafa

M.A. in ELT

#### Appendix (C)

#### Jury Members

1. Prof. Nahida Taha Majeed (Ph. D. in ELT) College of Education for Human Sciences/Tikrit University .
- 2.Prof . Amra Ibrahim Sultan,( Ph. D. in ELT) College of Education for Human Sciences/Tikrit University

- 
3. Prof. Istabraq Tariq Jawad ,(Ph.D. in ELT) College of Education for Human Sciences/Tikrit University .
  4. Prof. Nagham Qadoori,(Ph.D. in ELT) College of Education for Human Sciences / Tikrit University .
  5. Prof. Shaima Mahdi Saalh ,(Ph.D. in ELT) College of Education for Women/ University of Baghdad.
  6. Asst. Prof. Manal Omer Musa,(Ph.D. in ELT) College of Education for Human Sciences /Tikrit University.
  7. Instructor Ghanim M.Hussein , (M.A. in ELT) College of Basic Education / University of Kirkuk.