

Realia and English Grammar: A Study of Its Impact on Cognition at Elementary Level

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Abstract

The extent of impact of real things in learning grammar was under study. This research was conducted in the area of Rahim Yar Khan. The people of this area are multilingual. The researcher had gathered data through interview method. Present indefinite tense was used to check the learning of students. Teachers were the population of this study. Semi-Structured interviews were used for the flexible mode of data gathering. Microsoft Excel 2017 was used as a tool to analyze results. This study had also analyzed the problems teachers face in teaching grammar in both public and private schools. Recommendations for better grammar learning were also made. The researcher had also calculated the encounters of real objects students needed to learn grammar rules.

Key words: Realia, Grammar Learning, Encounters

1 Introduction

In recent years, many new language learning methodologies have emerged which are based on the use of various materials according to different approaches in the teaching of the English language. Ritchie, Holzinger, Li, Pendergrass, and Kim (2015) explore the natural approach is favorable for comprehensible input. Students can better understand material in a natural way. The natural approach also explores the difference between ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning’. The acquisition is a natural phase which is done automatically; whereas if knowledge is gained through the conscious effort it comes under the domain of learning. If we focus on the meaning while ignoring the exact form then it follows the rule of a natural approach. Visualization is a key aspect of this approach. In dealing with non-native speakers, imagining is the most important aspect when learning a new language. It provides a link between object and word. This technique makes the learning better as it is attained in a natural way. (Draxler, Labrie, Schmidt, & Chuang, 2020)

Goodmacher (2006) expresses that realia is a tool in which real objects are used for teaching and learning language. Khanfar and Bouaziz (2018) simplify that when the word real is broken from the term realia it basically hints us about something natural. It investigates the real conditions

with which the learners belong. The reason is that we can effortlessly search the real things around us (Lu, 2019). These things can help us to learn vocabulary items. The major aims of realia are achieved by connecting them with teaching terminologies. Linking of things with vocabulary items make them useful in our classrooms. The teachers are now adopting it as an aid used in the learning process. Riahi (2018) states that realia provides an extra comfort to the learners in language learning. Realia is highly useful as a tool. It supports the learning of the grammar which comprises of certain rules. It is useful for learning in countless ways. There are also a lot of things and objects available around us that can be used in the classroom effectively. Oyarzo, Vargas, and Reyes (2008) describe that realia is a kind of activity based on learning. It focuses on the involvement of all the senses of the learners. This technique is against the old idea of forceful learning. Students with the help of this technique easily learn by interaction. This also supports learning through the involvement of skills (Srba & Bielikova, 2014). Realia can also be suitable for teachers to provide long term vocabulary learning to students. It mainly provides a logical and practical approach to get knowledge of language.

Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) describe that during teaching both learners and teachers of foreign language unconsciously remain in touch with previous knowledge. During this case, both of them have to develop a strong link with the knowledge of items they had already known. It is also asserted by Byrne (2017), that the group of words which are applied by the speakers belong to a particular language must follow the use of these words within an appropriate context. If the learner wants to have a successful communication vocabulary always serves a vital role. In several scenarios, it serves as a tool for learning and also acts as an interesting activity to be used. It can be effective for the teachers to know various kinds and levels of teaching media. These are quite useful to be applied in teaching-learning activity such as a link with real objects, connecting with miniatures, giving a demonstration or using gestures (Arvin et al., 2019).

Schmitt, Schmitt, and Clapham (2001) investigate the background of learning grammar. They prove how we must need them according to our context. The ultimate worth of grammar is its exact form and their use. Form consists of rules which are useful in making sentences conveying the meaning. Meaning highlights the period from which the sentence highlighted belongs. Meaning also enforces the links between the sentences (Booij, 2012). It is related to the use of words. It is often seen that knowing the accurate spellings and correct pronunciations is not enough. The learner must have to know the exact use of the required word in a given context. We always need to know what role a specific word serves within a context. We can easily judge the ability of communicator when he is involved in a particular communication. It points out whether he has the knowledge related to the context (Colton & Holmes, 2018)

2 Literature Review

2.1 Learning

Learning occurs not only by acquiring knowledge constrained mostly in the classroom but also by receiving information from the daily routine (Zainuddin, Habiburrahim, Muluk, & Keumala, 2019). The new knowledge can easily replace the old ones when people utilize the old ones. The thinking and acting according to the acquired knowledge also becomes the new knowledge. Deci and Ryan (2016) state that during learning teachers can easily view certain predicted behaviors

of their learners. The learning can seemingly be highlighted through the behaviors which show that learning is taking place. Gašević, Dawson, and Siemens (2015) investigate that learning needs two types of conditions which are termed as internal and external. The internal conditions are the most important ones which vary from learner to learner as they are named as “learners’ own conditions”. Some of them are related to attention, motivation and recollection (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Zhang, Springenberg, Boedecker, and Burgard (2017) explain that learning is a type of process which is continuous. It is a progressive process which is formed after combing through a series of different stages. It evolves gradually from time to time (Anwar Farooq M., 2017).

2.2 Techniques of learning language

There are several techniques for language learning. In audio lingual method aids such as tapes, television, and multimedia are used for audio and visual learning respectively. Teachers use this method to develop skills like listening, speaking through hearing and watching language (Lateef, Jimi, Muniyandi, & Olaide). Complete physical response method can be applied in learning. In this text is not required. Voice, actions and gestures are the necessary items at initial stage whereas, the items like media and material are used later on (Hounhanou, 2020). The other method is called silent method. Teachers use colorful rods to teach language items. Color coded pronunciation is present before students with the help of charts. Language learning through Community (CLL) can also be used by teachers. It promotes learning without the use of textbooks. CLL also shows Learners as the primary source to progress learning. Natural approach can also support learning. Real objects might be taken by instructors for vocabulary learning. Recently communicative language learning technique emerged. Teachers can assign different task to develop communication skills (Lee & Wallace, 2018). This issue in multilingual countries also solved by declaring national language as official language of country, and by promotion of cooperation among academics, researches and educational institutions for the good end (Shahzad, 2020)

2.3 Grammar Learning Strategies

Grammar is the integral part of language learning. It makes us able to talk about language. Every language has its own grammar. Grammar includes the word groups and sentences which are part of language. It is the ability of human beings in which they tend to put sentences together since childhood. But learning about how sentences are built, about the types of words and word groups itself is a complex job. When we talk about English language teaching grammar learning creates a platform for the language learning. Structure of the language can be helpful for the students for the correct use of language. It helps in many ways. First, it is the unconscious ability to use a language to convey meaning. Secondly, it is based on the information that is learnt in class from teacher. Thus there are two ways one is ‘unconscious’ and other is ‘acquired’. The student needs to be able to produce correct sentences automatically. Teachers cannot presume to have taught students a particular structure by getting them to memorize the rules.

2.3.1 Cognitive Approach

The visual material is the most important aspect being researched in exploring the cognitive approach Presmeg (2020). In this approach, it is considered that the entire functioning of the human brain in dealing with the second language or new information is stored in mind during any kind of language study (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). While it is also a view that human mind is not the sole factor in creating meaning. There are many other factors. Experience is one among them (Solé, Sole-Coromina, & Poole, 2020). It is proved by Theisen-Homer (2020) that new experiences during vocabulary learning readily enforce the learning. Goulah (2007) considers that in learning second language videos are the most applicable tool to be used for the students. This tool makes the input easier. Input provides learning with required input which is necessary for learning language. This specific environment triggers the real-time experience of the learners and easily creates room for the maximum practice. The students can also be given input which is supported by visuals (2020). The real-time access to the target language is one of the prominent factors in the cognitive approach during second language learning (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Shrum (2015) also points that leaning is done when the material is fully understandable as it is the capacity of the human mind that it only takes in understandable instructions. For a better understanding of L2 images and words can also be associated in a natural order (Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2001).

2.4 Teaching techniques of vocabulary

Nilson (2016) investigates that the newly taught rules can be sent in a long term memory through different procedures. Lake and Baroni (2018) explore that pictures along with the illustrations can be provided to generalize the structure. This technique is perfect for the introduction of rules to students which are concrete. Gestures, mimes and facial expressions can also be used to introduce the new forms before the students. The new rules presented through this technique can make the point clear (Susanto, 2017). The simple sentences can also be presented before students and then asked to guess the exact thing from those sentences. During the process of guessing they recall the structure. They can also overcome the deficiency if it contradicts with the previous knowledge (Laufer & Aviad-Levitzky, 2017). Students can also be asked to use the first language to learn the structure. Teachers present the meanings of new words before the learners in the form of their first language which helps students in having a better understanding (Pinter, 2017). Teachers can give spoken clarification to teach the new vocabulary. This technique is applied in account to make the learning of fresh words easy to comprehend (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). Real objects in classroom teaching can also be chosen (Zhao & Cziko, 2001).

2.5 Teaching Media

Obe (2018) describes that numerous good and interesting media are needed for teaching a new language. To gain the focus and attention media is used in teaching-learning activity. The control of a teacher can also be affirmed through the use of proper media. Bonner and Reinders (2018) conclude that realia is the technique used in teaching in which real-life objects are used as a tool to support language learning. The surroundings in this technique are used to link the information stored in the mind. These techniques which act as a verbal communication technique carry great weightage in different patterns. Teacher uses actual objects and brings them to a classroom in

front of a class group in existence. It is a set of procedure which works as an example or aid for teaching of a foreign language or a second language(Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013).

3 Significance of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the role of realia in teaching English grammar for different learners in various ways. It will highlight the effects of realia on the student through the eye of a teacher. The best method of teaching in fewer privilege areas is also the focus of this study. This study will also help to recognize how we can build a strong grammar among learners with the use of realia. It will also explain issues and hardships faced by teachers in teaching grammar. It will also increase the learning process in acquiring a language. It discusses the farfetched results on the cognition of learners by measuring how the vocabulary turns out to be long term and easy to learn with the help of encounters of real objects. The survey study will show all these aspects through the eyes of a teacher who has to be a keen observer.

4 Research Questions

1. What are the required numbers of encounters of visual aids useful for learning present indefinite?
2. Is realia useful in English grammar learning?
3. What are the problems teachers see in teaching grammar through realia and how they can overcome them?

5 Methodology

This study is the investigation of role of realia on the vocabulary of learners of the private and government institutes of district Rahim Yar Khan with its impacts on cognition of those learners. The researcher has used survey method. interview is the tool for the data collection phase.

5.1 Population of the Study

The population of the present study comprises all the male and female teachers of public and private schools of Rahim Yar Khan (Pakistan).

5.2 Sample of the Study

The present study has gone for one of “convenient sampling” which is truly representative of population with the feature of convenient. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016)states that convenient sampling is the key component of nonprobability sampling technique. The assumption underlying this procedure is that this minimizes the time involved in planning of extraneous or subjective factors. Thus, convenient samples are always more flexible than random

samples(Kim, Jang, Kim, & Wan, 2018). These analyses let the researcher infer from population. The teachers (n=100) of district Rahim Yar Khan are the sample of this study.

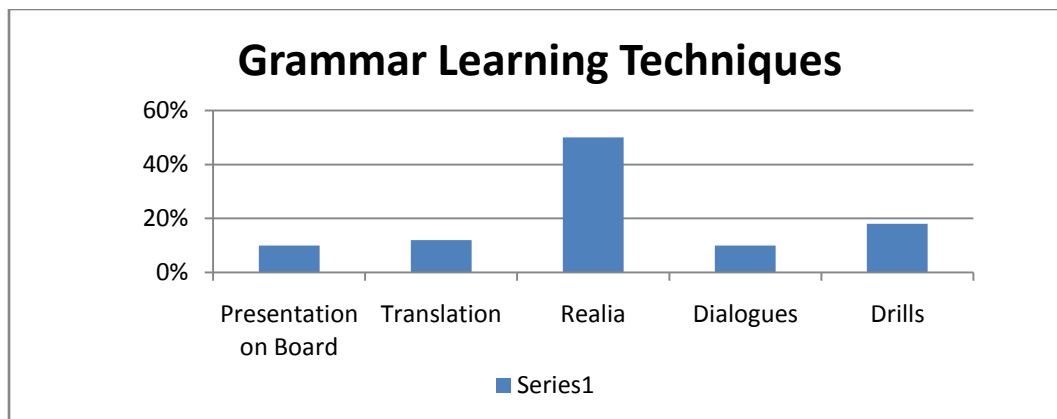
5.3 Data Collection Instrument

The interview has a key role in the survey methodology as it helps provide detailed and authentic information. So, the researcher can conduct structured, semi-structured or unstructured questionnaire to be distributed to the samples taken from the population. The data obtained is taken from a sample which is part of the population. The researcher will record the answer of the interviewees which have aided the research later in the findings' phase. The interview can be very helpful then filling of the questionnaire as it helps the researcher to have correct and precise answers as it helps the researcher to have correct and precise answers and aid in giving more information which is not possible to be asked and provided through questionnaire. The researcher has done it carefully as the success of the research is highly dependent on the chosen instruments. After pilot testing the numbers of these questions were reduced to five important questions.

5.4 Data Analysis Procedure

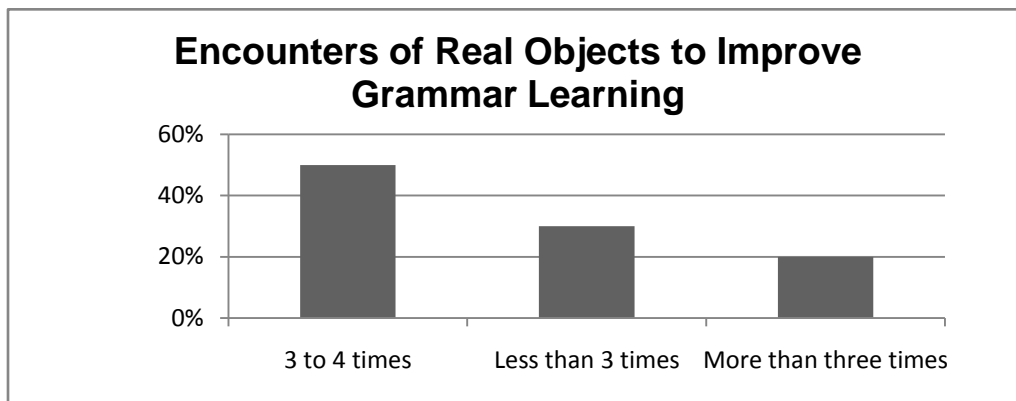
The data has been collected from two categories of schools, private and public. The groups of private and public schools has been assigned the value one and two respectively. The total numbers of teachers in the data are one hundred out of which seventy-eight represents the public sector whereas; twenty-two shows the data from the private sector. The teachers in the interview have the experience range from 1 to 37 years in the field of education.

6 Discussion of Results and Findings

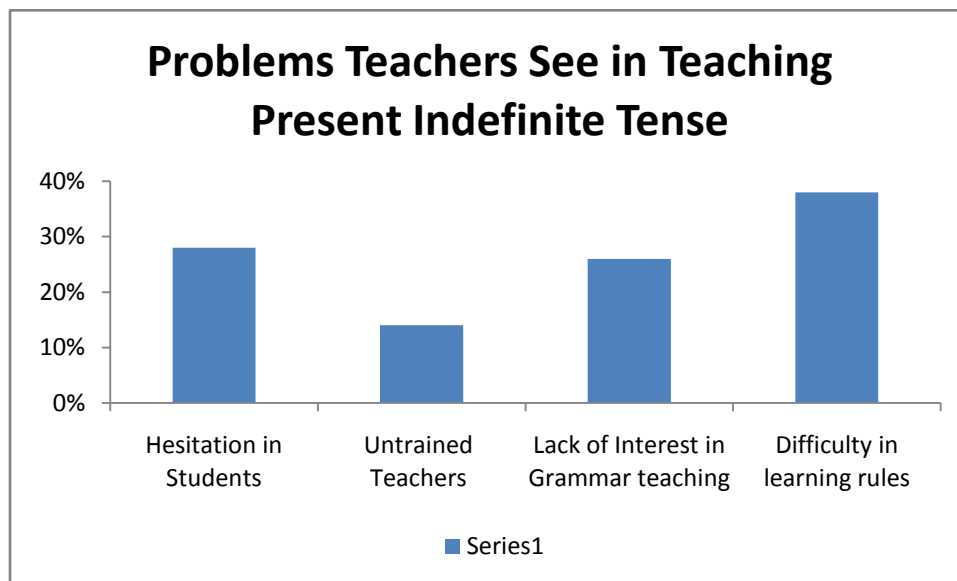


The table 1 of interview analysis is related to the methods of grammar teaching. The themes set by the researcher are presentation of board, translation, realia, dialogues, drills or various other methods. Ten percent have selected board presentation method; twelve percent are in the favor of translation method, Fifteen percent follow realia method for grammar teaching, dialogues and drills are also indicated as a good tool for learning grammar by ten and eighteen percent

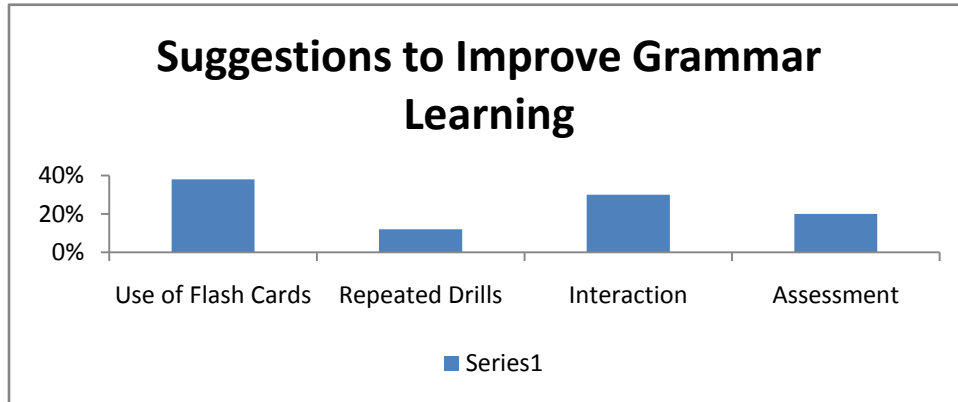
respectively. It is clear from the graph that teachers commonly take help from realia to imprint grammar rules in the minds of young learners.



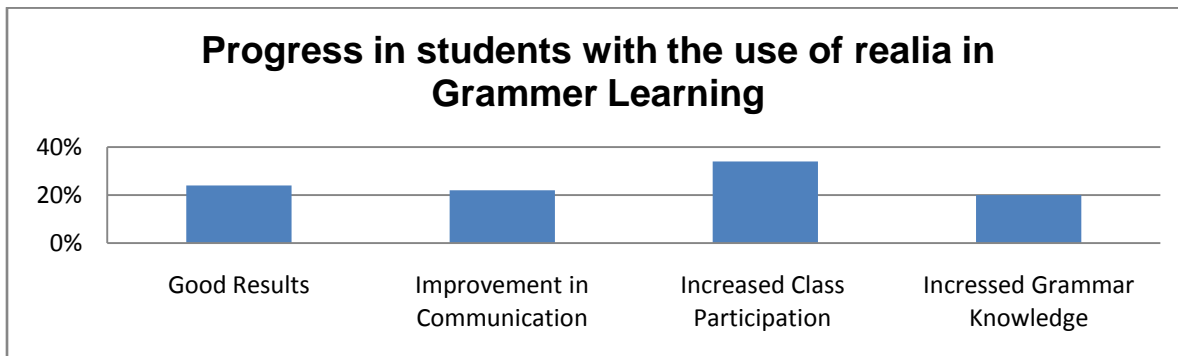
The link between grammar rules and real objects helps students a lot for the smooth inflow of items into the memory. The teachers have to repeatedly present real objects before students which are denoted as number of encounters of the real objects which ultimately take the difficult grammar rules to the long term memory. The cognition improves a lot if teacher has the exact knowledge how many encounters are enough for the students to increase the limit of their active memory. The results of this question through survey interview indicates that three to four encounters are enough.



Four set of problems teachers of both primary and private schools got into discussion during interview. The hesitation in students to learn new rules, lack of interest of teachers in grammar teaching and difficulty in learning them are the problems most important for teachers as shown in the table. There percentage is 28%, 26% and 38% respectively. The problem of training of teachers is also indicated by 14% teachers.**



The second table of interview survey deals with the different suggestions discussing ways to make grammar learning better. These suggestions are divided into Four themes. First one is about the way of imprinting grammar rules through the use of colourful flashcards which help learners to have the full understanding of the present indefinite tense which leads to be the permanent part of long term memory. Thirty Eight percent of the population is in the favor of this suggestion. The second suggestion is related to the use of repeated drills in the better learning of grammar. Earlier drills were considered as the prime focus in grammer learning. It is now taken as an outdated technique. Twelve percent of the population agree with this suggestion. Third one is interaction. The interaction is of two types among the teacher and students or with the student to student which help students a lot in creating understanding of materials and vocabulary items. This also increases the authentic use of grammar in students. Thirty percent are in fovour of this technique. Assessment can also be one of the factors which motivate the learners to focus on the learning of vocabulary items by developing a link with the real objects. 20% of the teachers apply this for grammar teaching.



It is indicated by 34% teachers during interview that their students had shown better participation in class when they adopted real stuff as a teaching aid. 22% narrated that they had seen a sudden improvement in the results of most students when they were taught grammar through realia. More than 20% of the teachers discussed that the fluency in communication was seen by them in their students as they felt no hesitation in using learnt grammar rules in their interaction. 20% of the teachers have witnessed it during the grammaer learning process. It is also seen in the table that all the percentages are closer to one another which demonstrate that all the four types of advancement in learning are somehow equally observed when instructors deal with real items.

7 Conclusion

In grammar learning realia help teachers to have lectures full of fun. Learning phase becomes fruitful if the teacher also formerly knows the path which one is to follow. The teacher can use interesting materials in class. Linking of vocabulary items with the real objects also provides students learning which is not only fruitful in terms of learning rules but also delivers a long lasting impact on their minds. The multiple encounters of real objects aid students to have the smooth and long term learning. This enables students to construct a chain of grammar rules linked with real items which in turn provide students the required command over the foreign language in their communication. From the interview data, it is clear that generally three to four encounters are enough for most students to have the clear understanding of the required present tense in terms of its usage according to context.

A few key points must be noted as teachers must have to be trained enough to handle the grammar learning tasks, one must have the adequate knowledge of foreign language, also familiar one for proper usage of real materials and lastly trained enough to form a link of vocabulary items with real objects. Few suggestions are also recommended that are needed for the learning grammar there must be use of flash cards, repeated drills, interaction and assessment.

The problems teachers face in the use of realia was one of the prime focus of this study. The major problem is difficulty in learning rules. Grammar rules are tough to learn. Hesitation in students to learn new rules is also a key problem teachers see. Sometimes teachers untrained and also lack interest in teaching grammar. This problem can be resolved by establishing proper training mechanisms and also by the way of giving benefits to the teachers. So, they become satisfied enough to be focused on their learning procedure.

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