

Approaches and Methods to Teaching Grammar in Textbooks used in Schools in Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe, compare, and contrast approaches and methods to teaching grammar in textbooks used in schools in Iraq. It chooses, as samples for analysis, textbooks of one particular class to focus on the approaches to teaching grammar in these textbooks. These textbooks are taught for first intermediate class and belong to two different series titled Iraq opportunities and English for Iraq. Each of these textbooks follows essentially different approaches to teaching grammar. This study aims to highlight the similarities and differences between the books and reveals the weaknesses and strengths of the approaches in these books. The data collection method of this research is the collation texts for analysis. The data is analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The study considerably contributes to the field of language teaching in Iraq especially grammar teaching through drawing attention of language teachers, textbook writers, as well as learners to a certain degree, to the weaknesses and strengths of the PPP method in the Iraq opportunities textbook and task-based approach in the English for Iraq textbook.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 The problem and its significance

Teaching grammar witnessed essential changes and the significance of teaching grammar has been considered differently from time to time. This significance has been affected by the developments in the empirical studies conducted by second language acquisition researchers in addition to the national developments. These factors changed the views to teaching grammar from one that considered teaching grammar an essential target, to one that neglected grammar, and to the recent reconsideration of the significance of the role of teaching grammar (Richards and Rodgers 2001). Teaching grammar in Iraq has taken these changes into consideration in its textbooks design. A considerable amount of these changes manifested in the textbooks chosen for this research. *For example, Iraq opportunities* series was printed and taught for first intermediate classes from the 2007-8 school years to the 2013-4 school years when the new series *English for Iraq* was printed and used instead with wholly different contents and approach. The frequent change in textbooks' contents, approaches, and methods represents a problematic challenge for language practitioners as well as learners. As a result, this research purposes to explore the reasons behind changing these textbooks and reveal the similarities and differences between the old and new textbooks. The research questions are:

- 1- What are the types and amounts of grammar structures taught in English language textbooks of first intermediate class in Iraq; *Iraq opportunities* and *English for Iraq*?
- 2- What are the approaches and methods to teaching grammar in these textbooks?
- 3- How many practice grammar exercises are there in these textbooks?

1.2. The value of the study

This research focuses on very lately used textbooks which are probably have not been researched yet or at least included in limited studies in this context. Therefore; conducting such original research could introduce considerable results for the process of language learning in schools in Iraq. The research includes textbooks of first intermediate class as a sample for analysis and excludes textbooks of other classes in order to gain more accurate and specific results.

1.3 The aims of the study

This study aims to; highlight the similarities and differences between the books, reveal the weaknesses and strengths of the adopted approaches to develop the communicative abilities of learners, and indicate to what extent that textbooks follow more recent approaches to teaching grammar. These goals will be achieved through analysing these books in light of my own experience as a language teacher as well as in light of results of the recent studies of second language acquisition conducted in this context.

Section 2: Literature review

2.1. An overview of language teaching

Over the past few decades, language teaching witnessed fundamental shifts in the teaching of grammar, as mentioned above, from one that considered grammar teaching

an essential target, to one that neglected grammar, and to the recent reconsideration of the significance of the role of grammar teaching. Approaches to grammar instruction have witnessed many changes along the history of language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). These changes have not been regular and have been a result of a number of notional and empirical developments in the field. They can be outlined to three general approaches: commencing from one that adopted methods of teaching with an exclusive focus on form, to the later approach which evaluated the meaningful communication, and the most recent emerged set of instructional techniques which focus on both grammar and meaning.

It is obviously noted with the advent of the communicative approach, that not only the grammar teaching has been weakened, but also a negative attitude has been created to grammar teaching (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011). However, the shortcomings of the communicative approach became increasingly noticeable and it was seen inadequate. This new view came from the observation of the language-teaching professionals and the studies conducted in this context. Hence, in reaction to the problems related with the traditional grammar-teaching approaches, on the one hand, and the inadequacy of the exclusively communicative approaches, on the other hand, Pica (1988) suggested an approach called *focus on form* (FonF). This approach is a combination of *focus on forms* (FonFs) and *focus on meaning* approaches. It concentrates on the linguistics forms in meaningful communication contexts.

However, recent researches in second language acquisition have led to a reconsideration of the importance of grammar (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011). Many researchers and language teaching professionals now have become growingly conscious of the significant role of grammar instruction in language teaching and learning, therefore; it should not be neglected in the language classrooms. There are several reasons for this reconsideration of the role of grammar. First, it has been found that the theory of learning language unconsciously problematic. Second, it has been experimentally proved the inadequacy of meaning-focused teaching approaches. Third, recent researches have shown that if the form-focused instruction is incorporated into a meaningful communicative context are significantly effective on the rate and the ultimate level of language acquisition (Schmidt, 1993).

Given the current developments and acknowledgments of the significance of grammar teaching, recently, many suggestions uphold inclusion of grammar teaching in classroom instruction (Cook, 2001). Subsequently, many authors have developed techniques or methods of language instruction that integrate the focus on grammar into meaningful communication. These techniques include; processing instruction, textual enhancement, discourse-based grammar teaching, interactional feedback, grammar-focused tasks, and collaborative output tasks.

2.2. Description of the textbooks

This subsection presents a general description of the textbooks; *Iraq Opportunities* and *English for Iraq* and explores their contents and what they teach.

2.2.1. Iraq Opportunities

Iraq Opportunities is a multi-level course that is specially designed for intermediate schools. The basic premise of the course is that intermediate students learn English best when they are dealing with interesting and meaningful content. However, this book

follows a grammar-based approach i.e. the Presentation Practice Production (PPP) model (Nassaji and Fotos 2011). This book includes ten units each unit comprises two lessons. Each lesson begins with a short presentation dialogue or text, which contains the target language items followed by an explanation. Then, students do some practice to master these items in carefully staged and guided exercises. Each unit ends with a communication workshop to provide an opportunity for students to perform language through writing and speaking activities. There are further language exercises for the students in the Activity Book. The main features and contents of this book will be described in the following points:

A. Topic-based units

Iraq Opportunities textbook incorporates both international cultural topics as well as topics designed specifically for Iraqi students learning English. It is organized into ten units, within each unit there are different sub-topics, which provide variety and at the same time explore the unit theme. There are two main kinds of content:

- Topics related to the students' own world: There are plenty of opportunities in the book for students to talk and write about themselves and their own environment. Few examples are 'making friends' (Unit 1); families (Unit 2); 'home environment' (Unit 3); 'school life' (Unit 4); 'going out' (Unit 5).
- Cultural input: Both international and Iraqi cultural topics are explored. For example, in lesson two, students learn about some of the national and international cultures i.e. Iraqi and international costumes, and in lesson nine, they learn about the aspects of British culture such as the features of Cambridge city in England. The aspects of British culture are also looked at outside the main lessons in special Culture Corners factfiles introduced after units five and ten titled 'Homes in Britain' and 'British Wildlife' respectively.

There are in every unit two main input lessons connected thematically, for example 'Hi /Penfriends' (Unit 1), 'Our Family/My Family' (Unit 2), 'Our House/My Room' (Unit 3), 'Lessons/Projects' (Unit 4). The lessons develop the topic and give students the opportunity to talk about themselves. Each lesson presents and practices a new grammar point, but in manageable 'doses', for example, the verb to be is presented over three lessons – I/you (Lesson 1), he/she/it (Lesson 2) and plural forms (Lesson 3).

B. Skills development

• Reading

Students using *Iraq Opportunities* read a wide variety of text types, including the followings: letters, descriptions, brochures, profiles, a notice, a form, a diary, students' compositions, a TV guide, e-mail messages, a magazine page and questionnaires. There is a varied selection of reading task types: prediction, table completion, true/false questions, matching texts with pictures, matching paragraphs with topics, sequencing topics, sequencing pictures or texts, finding references for pronouns and reading for specific information.

• Listening

Each unit has dialogues. The following task types are used: checking predictions, gap fills, matching descriptions and people, dictation and finding discrepancies between reading and listening texts.

• Writing

Each unit has one major writing task in the Writing Workshop. The following text types are focused on in main writing tasks: e-mails, a description of a family, a description of a room, a school timetable, a description of a place, a form, a description of a school day, a letter to a penfriend, a tourist information leaflet, a description of an animal, a personal memory and a story.

- Speaking

There are speaking activities in almost every lesson of *Iraq Opportunities*. They are organised in a variety of ways – for pairs, groups or the whole class. Task types include: personalisation exercises which allow students to talk about themselves and their own experience; guided drills of grammar points which lead on to freer practice exercises; role-plays; information gap activities; games and quizzes; surveys, interviews and questionnaires; storytelling; and guided discussions. The following functions are examples of what focused on: meeting people, talking about families, talking about places, classroom language, and talking about daily routine.

C. *Approach to grammar*

Iraq Opportunities follows a grammar-based approach to teaching grammar. This approach is Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model. It is predominantly teacher-centred. The typical lesson according to this model passes through the following stages:

- Reading and Listening

Students first do a task on a dialogue or reading text. These dialogues and texts contain clear examples of the target structure. However, the aim at this stage is to focus students' concentration only on the meaning of the text and become familiar with the new grammatical structure.

- Presentation

In this stage the target grammatical items are extracted from the dialogue or text and presented, usually in the form of completed examples in a table. These examples of grammar and the context provided in the text are used by the teacher to explain the rules of form and use. All the examples are read by the teacher and students listen to and repeat them.

- Practice

Practice activities are carefully graded and get students to apply the rules from the presentation stage. First, there are activities in which students use the target structure in a much guided way. Then students move on to more productive stage, but guided, written and oral practice activities.

D. *Approach to vocabulary*

Iraq Opportunities provides a three-dimensional approach to vocabulary learning: firstly, it helps students to deal with lexical items in context; secondly, students have the chance to build up their own personal lexicon; thirdly, they have plenty of opportunities to use vocabulary in context. However the positive features of this model of language teaching, it still has some weaknesses which will be discussed in later sections.

2.2.2. *English for Iraq*

The content and methodology of *English for Iraq* textbook are essentially student-centred, aiming to promote students to learn through doing and actively engaging in meaningful individual and interactive tasks. Students do not depend on the teacher to

direct all learning or to be the source of all information. *English for Iraq* considers students at this level able to begin making progress in language skills. It also expects students to take more responsibility for their own learning, for example, by looking for more opportunities to practice language outside the classroom by reading English outside the course book and by doing more homework. This book puts great emphasis on skill development and activities are more varied and more task-based. The features and contents of this book are best described in the following points:

A. Task-based units

English for Iraq uses an integrated skills approach to language teaching, covering all four language skills as well as grammar and vocabulary. It reflects the real interaction and communication that involve multiple skills simultaneously. This book provides opportunities to involve students in meaningful interactive tasks that enable them to use the target grammatical item while their focus is on meaning. These tasks include two types: explicit and implicit tasks. Explicit are the tasks included the grammatical structure itself as a content of the task, while implicit are the tasks not included the grammatical structure (Nunan 2004). This textbook is organized into eight units. The core teaching units are from one to three and five to seven. Unit one partly revises materials from the previous year, unit four revises the first half of the book, and unit eight revises the second half of the book. There are seventy four lessons in the whole book. The core units each have ten lessons, revision units four and eight have each seven lessons.

B. Skills development

English for Iraq textbook as mentioned above, adopted an integrated skills approach and puts a great emphasis on skills development.

- Reading

This book contains a variety of text types such as conversations, short descriptive and narrative texts, factual texts, cartoon stories, letters, charts, notices and stories. This book provides a various reading tasks to practice the reading skills and techniques which are accomplished through the following procedures: introducing the text, introducing the task, and reading silently by students, checking answers of class, and discussing the text.

- Listening

Listening materials of this textbook include songs, rhyme, and recorded texts for task-listening. Task-listening activities are accomplished through the following procedures: preparation for listening, checking understanding the task, listening and doing the task, and checking the answers.

- Writing

This book includes a variety of writing activities such as vocabulary exercises, completing grammatical tables, spelling and punctuation exercises, writing answers to questions and completing gapped exercises. These activities are aiming to reinforce students' understanding of sentence syntax and also to reinforce work on structures and vocabulary. There is another type of writing activities include rewriting a series of

sentences in paragraph form, writing paragraphs or summaries. These tasks aim to develop students' skill of continuous text writing.

- Speaking

Speaking activities are divided into two main types according to their purpose. Activities of controlled and guided practice purpose accuracy such as questionnaire; substitution conversation; and read and talk exercises. While, activities of less controlled practice purpose fluency such as talking about picture; comparing answers; discussing texts; and role-playing.

B. Approach to vocabulary

English for Iraq includes various text types which provide students new vocabularies. The essential new vocabulary in each unit is presented in a vocabulary box. Students are encouraged to work out the meanings of the other new vocabularies.

C. Approach to grammar

This book employs a task-based approach to teach grammar. This textbook provides opportunities to involve students in meaningful interactive tasks that enable them to use the target grammatical item while their focus is on meaning. These tasks are called structured grammar-focused tasks and also called consciousness-raising tasks (Ellis 2001). Consciousness-raising tasks are designed to draw learners' attention to a particular linguistic feature through a range of inductive and deductive procedures. These tasks involve the grammatical structure explicitly as content. They include two forms: deductive tasks when the rule is provided for learners and inductive tasks when the learners discover the rule for themselves by analysing the data provided for them (Nunan 2004). This book focuses on preparing an ample range of tasks of student-to-student interaction which encourage them to use the targeted structure through their negotiation of the meaning.

Section 3: Methodology

This study aims to describe, compare, and contrast approaches and methods to teaching grammar in textbooks used in schools in Iraq. It chooses textbooks of one particular class, as samples for analysis, to focus on the approaches to teaching grammar in these textbooks. These textbooks are taught for first intermediate class and belong to two different series titled *Iraq opportunities* and *English for Iraq*. The *Iraq opportunities* textbook is written and printed in cooperation with Pearson Education institution in England and is taught for students in 2007-8 school years. This book includes ninety four pages that comprise ten units with two lessons in each. The Ministry of Education in Iraq decided to replace this series by a new one called *English for Iraq*. This series is written by Terry O'Neil and Peter Snow from Garnet Education institution in England and printed and used in 2013-4 school years. It includes 100 pages that comprise eight units with ten lessons in each except units four and eight which are specified for revision include seven lessons in each. Each of *Iraq opportunities* and *English for Iraq* books includes two volumes: Student's Book and Activity Book. The Student's Book is the main teaching resources which will be the focus of this research. There are three major levels in schools in Iraq. The first level is the primary which includes six classes

begins from the age of six to twelve. The secondary level also includes six classes from the age of thirteen to eighteen. This level is divided into two stages: intermediate and preparatory. In the first four classes of the primary level students have English lessons to accommodate with the English language while the formal learning begins in the last two classes. Approximately students of all levels have a daily language session for forty five minutes. Their total exposure for language teaching per week is about four hours. The context of language teaching in Iraq is an exam-oriented context. Students have monthly paper exams to assess their progress and achievement of the curriculum objectives. Furthermore, they have to do a final paper exam in order to pass to the next class. The majority of these assessment exams are teacher-constructed exams. However, students in the sixth primary, third intermediate, and third preparatory have to do central ministerial final exams in order to pass to the next level.

This research highlights the similarities and differences between the textbooks in terms of what do they teach, how do they teach, and how much do they teach. These three areas of researching explore and examine the essential features of the collected data which lead to obtain concrete results for this research about the developments in the field of language teaching in schools in Iraq in general and the developments of adopting approaches to teaching grammar in particular. The data collection method of this research, as mentioned above, is the collation texts for analysis. I founded that this is the most feasible method and matches the research questions.

This research followed qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse data. This mixed methods approach to analyse data enables the researcher to explore and examine different features of the data and consequently leads to obtain more accurate and comprehensive results rather than employing one particular method that might leads to partial results. In terms of quality, it identifies and compares the types of grammar structures taught in each book. As well, it compares the approaches to teaching grammar in these books and highlights the similarities and differences between these approaches. In terms of quantity, it compares the amounts of grammatical structures in each book and the exercises to practice these structures. The data is analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively in section four which includes two subsections; results analysis, and discussions. This analysing subsection includes three subsections also. Each of these subsections addresses one of the questions of the research. The first subsection deals with the types and amounts of grammatical structures taught in each book. This subsection highlights the similarities and differences between the books in terms of what and how many they teach of grammar. The types of structures in the textbooks are presented in a table to show their sequence in the books. They are compared with each other to indicate their relative complexity and difficulty. Grammar structures in these books are classified into relatively simple, complex, and more complex structures considering the level of the learners and their context. The amounts of grammatical structures taught in each book measured in descriptive statistics. The mean results of these statistics in each book indicate the similarity or the difference in the orientations of the books to teaching grammar. They illustrate to what extent these books focus on teaching grammar and how much space they allocate for that. The approaches to teaching grammar in these books are analysed in terms of their features, weaknesses and strengths to meet learners' communicative needs. There are two

different approaches to teaching grammar in these books. These approaches are explored and focused on in the second subsection. The third subsection deals with the amounts of practice grammar exercises in each book. These exercises are presented in a table and discussed in this subsection to indicate how much do these books focus on practicing grammar. Finally, the findings of this research as well as the limitations are summarized in the conclusion section.

Section 4: Results and Discussions

4.1. Results Analysis

This subsection analyses, compares, and contrasts approaches to teaching grammar in *Iraq opportunities* and *English for Iraq* textbooks. It analyses the data qualitatively and quantitatively. In terms of quality, it compares the types of the grammatical structures taught in each textbook. Furthermore, it compares the approaches and methods in these textbooks to teaching grammar. In terms of quantity, it compares and contrasts the amounts of the grammar structures as well the practice grammar exercises in each book. These issues will be examined in the following three subsections:

4.1.1 The types and amounts of grammar structures

There is a considerable difference between the types of the grammatical structures taught in each textbook. However, there are few of these structures are repeated and introduced in both of them. (See table 4.1)

unit	Iraq opportunities	English for Iraq
1	<i>To be (singular); Question words: Who? What? Where? Subject pronouns and Possessive adjectives: (singular)</i>	<i>Past simple; present simple; past continuous; adjectives; possessive 's'; possessive pronouns; adverbs of frequency; question formation</i>
2	<i>To be (plural); Question word: How old; Subject pronouns and Possessive adjectives: (plural); Articles: a/an; Possessive: 's'</i>	<i>Future tense: will; time adverbials; comparatives and superlatives</i>
3	<i>Have got ; Articles: the, a/an</i>	<i>Present perfect tense; adverbs of manner</i>
4	<i>Demonstrative pronouns: this/that, these/those; Singular and plural nouns</i>	<i>Review</i>
5	<i>Imperatives; some/any</i>	<i>Present perfect with eve/never; present perfect and past simple tense; comparatives and superlatives; questions with prepositions at the end</i>
6	<i>Can/can't; There is/there are</i>	<i>Link words and phrases; present continuous; future continuous; adverbs of frequency</i>
7	<i>Present simple: Affirmative/Negative</i>	<i>Imperative sentences; reflexive pronouns; first conditional</i>

8	<i>Present simple: questions; like/don't like</i>	<i>Review</i>
9	<i>Present continuous: all forms</i>	
10	<i>Must/mustn't; object pronouns</i>	

Table 4.1 Types of grammar structures

The table above illustrates the types of grammar structures taught in each textbook. *Iraq opportunities* textbook includes simple structures compared with those in *English for Iraq*. It includes structures such as *verb to be*, *subject pronouns*, *possessive adjectives*, *articles*, and so on, which could be considered less difficult structures than those in *English for Iraq*. *Iraq opportunities* textbook follows a systematic sequential order of structures. It orders the grammatical structures moving from the simple to the complex ending with the more complex structures. It begins with structures such as *verb to be*, *subject pronouns*, *possessive adjectives*, and *question words*. Then it moves to complex structures such as *have got*, *singular and plural nouns*, *imperatives*, *some/any*, *can/can't*, and *there is/there are*. Finally, it ends with more complex structures such as *present simple*, *like/don't like*, *present continuous*, and *must/mustn't*. However, the complexity of these linguistic items depended on the ability of learners to acquire these items rather than their complexity in terms of the linguistic description. For example, the *present simple* is presented in late lessons of the book considering that this structure from the most complex structures in the book. VanPatten (1996) have demonstrated that, while the third person 's' is simple in terms of grammatical description, it is complex in terms of language processing.

English for Iraq textbook included structures more complex than those structures in *Iraq opportunities*. Different forms and functions of structures such as *past simple*, *present perfect* and *future continuous* are considered more complex than structures such as *verb to be* or *subject pronouns* in *Iraq opportunities*. Comparing the verb tenses in the textbooks, *Iraq opportunities* contains only two verb tenses: *present simple* and *present continuous* while *English for Iraq* contains seven verb tenses: *past simple*, *present simple*, *past continuous*, *present perfect*, *present continuous*, *future*, and *future continuous*. *Iraq opportunities* considers its verb tenses the more complex structures in the book, as mentioned above, and consequently it presented them in late lessons of the book. However, there are three verb tenses: *past simple*, *present simple*, and *past continuous* presented together in the first unit of *English for Iraq*. *English for Iraq* textbook includes also structures such as: *adverbs of frequency*; *time adverbials*; *comparatives* and *superlatives*; *adverbs of manner*; *questions with prepositions at the end*; *link words and phrases*; *reflexive pronouns*; and *first conditional*. These structures can be considered more complex than the structures in *Iraq opportunities* in terms of their grammatically and learnability.

unit	Iraq opportunities	English for Iraq
1	3	8
2	2	3
3	1	2
4	2	-
5	2	1

6	2	3
7	1	3
8	1	-
9	1	
10	2	
Total	17	20
Average	1.7	3.3

Table 4.2 Amounts of grammar structures

It is clearly recognizable from the table 4.2 above that both the textbooks do not contain a long list of structures and there is not a considerable difference between the amounts of these structures in these textbooks. There are seventeen grammatical structures taught in ten units of *Iraq opportunities* textbook. The average of structures per unit is 1.7 structures. In spite of the main focus of *Iraq opportunities* textbook on teaching grammar and its employing a grammar-based approach, it does not present a wide range of structures. It focuses on presenting a set of basic grammatical structures for learners at this level in order to provide ample opportunities to practice these structures and gain control of using them. In fact, the PPP model of teaching grammar in this book considers practice as the primary factor and plays the effective role in thoroughly language learning. There are seemingly some differences between the contents of table 4.1 and the amounts of structures in table 4.2. In fact, there is not a real difference because the amounts in table 4.2 represent the first appearance of the grammar points and it does not consider any repetition or other appearance of these points in any subsequent lesson(s). This repetition or grading is a deliberate technique intended to grade the target structure over one lesson in order to cover the whole features of this structure and provide wide range of activities to practice this structure. It is a dominant feature of this book which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. As a result of this feature, there are some of the structures repeated in successive lessons but they are counted for once. For example, *verb to be* (See appendix A) is repeated in lessons one, two and three but it is counted for once and also *present simple* (See appendix B) is repeated in lessons thirteen, fourteen and fifteen but it is counted for once too.

English for Iraq contains twenty structures taught in six core teaching units. There are only three more structures than the structures in *Iraq opportunities*. However, the average of structures is 4.3 structures per unit. It is higher than the average of structures in *Iraq opportunities* considering that there are only six core teaching units in *English for Iraq*. It seems once again that there is non-matching between some of the structures in table 4.1 and the amounts in table 4.2. In fact, this book mainly focuses on recycling structures and re-presenting them several times in different subsequent points in the book (this will be discussed next section). Therefore, counting these structures depends on their first occurrence in the book disregarding any subsequent appearance of them. To sum up, *English for Iraq* includes a small-scale increase in the amounts of the structures compared with the amounts of the structures in *Iraq opportunities*. However, the types of these structures are different because they are more complex than those in *Iraq opportunities*.

4.1.2 The approaches and methods to teaching grammar

There is a fundamental difference in the approaches and methods to teaching grammar in the textbooks. These approaches and methods and their features will be explored in this subsection. *Iraq Opportunities* follows a very popular form of grammar-based approaches to teaching grammar. It employs a Presentation Practice Production (PPP) model (Nassaji and Fotos 2011). Each lesson in this textbook consists of a structured three-stage sequence: a presentation stage, a practice stage, and a production stage. In the presentation stage, the new grammar rule or structure is introduced, usually through a text, a dialogue, or a story that includes the structure. The students listen to the text or read it aloud. The sentences included the target form are extracted in a table to draw students' attention to the intended structure. The teacher reads these sentences for students and explains for them the rules and the functions of the target form. The main purpose of this stage is to help students become familiar with the new grammatical structure and keep it in their short-term memory. The presentation stage is followed by a practice stage, in which students are given various kinds of written and spoken exercises to repeat, manipulate, or reproduce the new forms. The practice stage usually begins with controlled practices that focuses learners' attention on specific structures and then moves to less controlled practices with more open-ended activities. The aim of the practice stage is to help students gain control of the knowledge introduced in the presentation stage, to take it in, and to move it from their short-term memory to their long-term memory. Finally, the production stage takes place at the end of each unit in a communication workshop. Learners are encouraged to use the rules they have learned in the presentation and practice stages more freely and in activities that are more communicative. The aim of this last stage is to master thoroughly the new form by enabling learners to internalize the rules and use them automatically and spontaneously. In a sense, the aim here is to develop fluency.

The key feature of the PPP approach in *Iraq opportunities* textbook is grading the structures. Most of the grammatical structures are graded in two or sometimes three successive lessons to focus on one of the features of these structures in a lesson and provide wide range of activities to practice and master this feature before moving to the other features of these structures. The following structures are presented over one lesson. The verb *to be* is presented over three lessons – *I/you* (lesson one), *he/she/it* (lesson two) and *plural forms* (lesson three). The *possessive adjectives* are presented over three lessons– *my/ your* (lesson one) *his, her, its* (lesson two), *your, our, their* (lesson three). *Have got* is presented over two lessons – *have got* (lesson five), *has got* (lesson six). The *demonstrative pronouns* are presented over two lessons – *this/ that* (lesson seven), *these/those* (lesson eight). *Present simple* is presented over three lessons –Affirmative/negative *I/you/we/they* (lesson thirteen), *Affirmative/negative he/she/it* (lesson fourteen), *questions* (lesson fifteen). *Present continuous is presented over two lessons – affirmative /negative* (lesson seventeen), *questions* (lesson eighteen). This large number of graded structures reveals the dominance of this feature over the textbook. However, the other structures of this textbook are not graded because they could be covered in one lesson such as the ability auxiliary verb: *can/can't* (lesson eleven), necessity auxiliary verb: *must/mustn't* (lesson nineteen).

The second feature of this approach is recycling structures. However, it is not a dominant feature like the previous one. There are few structures presented and covered completely in lessons but they are recycled and re-presented in different subsequent lessons. For example, *have got* is presented for the first time over lessons five and six and is recycled and re-presented in lesson ten.

The following examples are chosen to illustrate the features of the PPP approach to teaching grammar, and to highlight its weaknesses and strengths. First example, the verb *to be* is presented over three lessons (See appendix A). It is presented in lessons one, two and three through the following stages: First, in the presentation stages, the target forms are presented in dialogues and texts. Students read and listen to these dialogues and texts, usually fill in the gaps in some of them. The forms of verb *to be* are extracted in tables to draw students' attention to these forms. The tables are titled with the targeted structure. The forms in these tables and in every other table in the book are printed in a bold font in order to enhance them and draw students' attention to them. Students listen to the teacher and repeat these sentences. The teacher explains the different forms of the verb *to be*. The aim at this stage is to help students be familiar with the target structures, and to keep them in their short-term memory. Second, in the practice stages, students do some guided exercises to use these grammatical structures. Third, in the production stage, students have some activities in the communication workshop to practice writing an e-mail and talk about their personal information. These activities aim to encourage students to use the target structures freely in more communicative activities.

Second example, the *present simple tense* is presented in dialogues and texts over lessons thirteen, fourteen and fifteen (See appendix B). First, in the presentation stages, students read and listen to the dialogues and texts to fill in the gaps in the dialogues and match the texts with the photos.

The sentences which include *present simple* are extracted in tables. There are six tables represent six presentations in these three successive lessons. These tables include the followings: *affirmative (I/you/we/they)*, *negative (I/you/we/they)*, *affirmative (he/she/it)*, *negative (he/she/it)*, *Yes/No questions*, and *Wh- questions*. Second, in the practice stages, there is a set of various written and spoken guided exercises after each presentation to practice these forms. The aim of these exercises is to gain control of the knowledge introduced in the presentations and to move it from their short-term memory to their long-term memory. *Present simple* is excessively graded in separated presentations and practices stages in order to cover the various forms of this structure and to enable students to fully master one of these forms before moving to the other. However, Ellis (1994) stated that language items are not isolated entities to be mastered one at a time in a step-by-step fashion. Learners do not learn one aspect of language perfectly one at a time; rather, they acquire partial mastery of numerous items simultaneously. For example, it was difficult for many of my students to acquire the third person singular-s at this stage in spite of the frequent practices they did on this structure. Long and Crookes (1992) stated that research has demonstrated that learners rarely, if ever, move from zero to targetlike mastery of new items in one step. Third, in the production stage, students have to do some written and spoken activities in the communication workshop to practice writing a text about their school day and talking

about their daily routines. These activities attempt to encourage students to use more freely and communicatively the various forms of the present simple learned and understand the functions of this structure in context. However, Skehan (1996) contented that the PPP model is not only inconsistent with the premises of current second language acquisition theory, but it is also unsupported by research findings. He pointed out that the evidence in support of such approach is unimpressive, for example, levels of attainment in conventional language learning are poor and students commonly leave school with little in the way of usable language. Actually, from my own experience of teaching language using the PPP method for about five years in schools in Iraq, I approve that statement that the outcome of this method is unimpressive in terms of the learners' communicative abilities.

The *English for Iraq* textbook contains some of the features of the task-based language teaching. First, it is mainly featured with recycling structures (Cook 2001). Recycling allows learners to encounter the target structures in a range of different environments or situations and consequently maximizes opportunities for learning. Therefore, extensive recycling of linguistic items is a dominant and remarkable feature of this book. There are a lot of examples of recycled structures in this book to increase students' opportunities to use and consequently master the target forms. For example, *past simple tense* is presented for the first time in unit one lesson one. It is recycled and re-presented in late lessons of the same unit exactly in lessons eight and ten. Further, it is re-presented for several times in different subsequent units such as unit two lesson ten, unit four lesson seven, unit six lesson ten, unit seven lesson ten and unit eight lesson six. Another example of recycling is the *present perfect tense*. It is presented for the first time in unit three lesson one. It is also recycled and re-presented in the same unit lesson seven, unit five lessons one, four, seven and nine in addition to unit eight lesson one.

The second feature of *English for Iraq* textbook is the integration. Grammatical structures are not taught separately from the lexical and phonological components. Formal and functional aspects of language are integrated in the task in order to explicitly reveal to learners the systemic relationships between form, function and meaning. This feature is clearly manifested in most of the textbook's tasks, for example, in unit two lesson one. This task aims to develop students' vocabulary of seasons and weather and the pronunciation of these words, but it also enables them to study and practice sentence formation. Moreover, it focuses on three structures: the *future tense*, the position of the *adverbs of frequency* and the position of the *adverbial phrases of time*.

The third feature of this textbook is task dependency. It means within a lesson, one task should grow out of, and build upon, the ones that have gone before. The task dependency feature is illustrated in the example above from unit two lesson one. It shows how each task exploits and builds on the one that has gone before.

The fourth feature of this book is grading the grammatical items. However, it is a rare feature in this book used to provide an appropriate focus on particular features of some of the structures. For example, the *present perfect* is introduced first time in unit three lesson one. It is re-presented in unit five lessons one, three, and four to focus on the functions of using the verb *to be* as a past participle in the *present perfect*. Furthermore, it focuses on using the *frequency adverbs ever* and *never* in the *present perfect*. The first

occurrence of *present perfect* focused on introducing the form and functions of the *present perfect*. The second occurrence focused on other features of this structure. These features are not introduced in the first occurrence of *present perfect* because they might not get the required attention of students and consequently are not acquired.

The following examples illustrate the structured grammar-focused tasks designed to teach grammar in explicit deductive and inductive forms. First example is from unit one lesson one (See appendix C). The *past simple* tense is introduced in an explicit inductive grammar-focused task. The task is also communicative, involving meaningful language exchange taking place as a primary task component, yet there is an explicit focus on form since the task content is the grammatical structure *past simple* tense. This task attempts to raise students' awareness and call their attention to the grammatical structure. *Past simple* is presented in a dialogue. Students' task is to read the questions included *past simple* and choose the appropriate answers' endings from the speech bubbles on the same page. They listen to the teacher who reads the complete sentences to check their guesses. Then, they practice these conversations and ask each other similar questions to make their own conversations about their holidays. Students have practiced the target language structure, *past simple*, yet they have not been informed about the target structure or given the rule governing the use of this structure. However, this structure should have been taught in the form of deductive task rather than inductive because learners without the rule might confuse the correct past forms of the regular and irregular verbs. This structure is recycled many times in different subsequent lessons as mentioned above.

The second example is from unit three lesson one about *present perfect tense* (See appendix D). This structure is presented in an explicit deductive structured grammar-focused task. The *present perfect tense* is presented in a dialogue. Most of the sentences in the dialogue are in the *present perfect tense*. First, students listen to the teacher reading the dialogue. Then, they read it aloud and answer some questions about people in the dialogue. There is a colour information box in the same page includes some extracted sentences from the dialogue illustrating the abbreviations, the questions and short answers in the *present perfect tense*. Students sing a song in this tense on the next page. The rule is given in a box explaining the formation of the *present perfect tense*. The rule includes explanations for students about the form and functions of this tense. The teacher explains for them what are the past participle and its types. This structure is re-presented also in unit five lessons one, three, and four.

4.1.3 The amounts of practice grammar exercises

This section focuses on the amounts of practice grammar exercises in each textbook. These exercises are designed to provide opportunities for students to practice the target grammar point in either controlled or freer practice.

unit	Iraq opportunities	English for Iraq
1	11	4
2	11	4
3	14	5
4	12	-

5	9	6
6	11	4
7	10	6
8	10	-
9	10	
10	10	
Total	108	29
Average per unit	10.8	4.83

Table 4.3 the amounts of practice grammar exercises

Iraq opportunities greatly focuses on practice since the PPP model followed in this book believes that “practice makes perfect” (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011, p.6). Consequently, there are 108 practice grammar exercises in this book. This number includes in addition to the controlled guided exercises in the practice stage, the freer productive exercises in the production stage since the exercises in both stages focus on practicing the target grammatical structure. They range from nine exercises in unit five (the least number) to fourteen exercises in unit three (the most number). The average of these exercises is 10.8 exercises per unit. This large number of exercises reveals the strong tendency of this book to concentrate on teaching and practicing grammar. Students are given various kinds of written and spoken exercises to repeat, manipulate, or reproduce the new forms. First, there are activities in which students use the target structure in a much guided way. Then students move on to more productive, but guided, written and oral practice activities. For example, in lesson eleven, the modal verb *can* is presented in a dialogue (See appendix E). After the presentation stage, there are four exercises in the practice stage. These exercises move from controlled practice to a less controlled practice to use the target form. However, the notion of “practice makes perfect” is not appropriate because language acquisition processes appear to be governed by many psychological constraints (Pienemann, 1998). For example, learners’ motivations, beliefs and attitudes towards language learning, and their aptitudes and personalities considerably affect their language acquisition.

As discussed above, *Iraq opportunities* textbook follows the PPP approach of language instruction. In this model, grammar instruction consists of a structured three-stage sequence: a presentation stage, a practice stage, and a production stage. The practice stage contains the practice grammar exercises. It usually begins with controlled exercises that focus students’ attention on specific structures and then moves to less controlled practices with more open-ended activities. The practice activities are carefully graded and get students to apply the rules from the presentation stage. The aim of the exercises in the practice stage is to help students gain control of the knowledge introduced in the presentation stage. The table 4.3 above illustrates the amounts of the exercises designed in each textbook to practice the target structures.

However, *English for Iraq* depends in language instruction on integrating syntactical, lexical and phonological components in a task-based approach. There are some exercises introduced at the same point of each unit to provide students with opportunities to practice grammar structures learned in each unit. In each unit exactly in

lesson nine, there is a page titled 'round up' which includes exercises to practice and review the grammatical structures learned in this unit. There are (29) exercises in six teaching units. There are from four to six exercises in every unit (See table 3.3 above). These exercises in every unit summarize the main structural items introduced in the unit. Language models are provided for use in class and also as a reference for students at home. Exercises for oral and written practices follow the model. An example of these exercises is the 'round up' page in unit five (See appendix F). First, students practice making sentences about things they have or have not done in their life. Second, they ask and answer questions about things they have or have not done in their life. These two above exercises enable students to practice the *present perfect tense* with *ever* and *never* introduced in this unit. Then, they make up and perform a short four-line dialogue in pairs. The aim of this exercise is to focus on the difference in uses of the *past simple* and *present perfect tenses*. Third, they ask and answer questions ending with prepositions. Students do this activity in pairs. Fourth, they ask and answer questions to compare countries. Fifth, they make statements to compare places. The aim of these two activities is to practice the *comparatives* and *superlatives*. Sixth, they ask and answer questions about where things and people come from and they talk and write about their own country and other countries in order to practice once again making questions with *prepositions* at the end and use *comparatives* and *superlatives*.

Shortly, there is a considerable difference between the amounts of the practice grammar exercises in the books. *Iraq opportunities* textbook contains a very large number of practice exercises compared with those in *English for Iraq*. This large number in *Iraq opportunities* reflects the principle of the primacy of practice of the PPP approach. In contrast, there is approximately one fourth of that number in *English for Iraq* which reflects the principle of the task-based approach to integrating language components in a task rather than focusing only on practicing one of these components separately.

4.2 Discussions

The textbooks followed substantially different approaches to teaching grammar. *Iraq opportunities* textbook follows a grammar based approach to teach grammar i.e. PPP model. It teaches grammar explicitly in linear and deductive presentations. However, *English for Iraq* textbook follows a communicative approach to teaching grammar i.e. task-based approach. It teaches grammar through involving students in meaningful and interactive tasks included the target forms.

Although the advantages of the PPP method of being easy to use, to organize, and to evaluate, and also the teacher is in full control of the structures intended to be covered, it has its weaknesses. Language is viewed as a series of grammatical forms and structures that can be acquired successively. Skehan (1996) pointed out that such a sequence of Presentation Practice Production stages does not reflect the principles of second language acquisition:

The underlying theory for a PPP approach has now been discredited. The belief that a precise focus on particular form leads to learning and automatization (that learners will learn what is taught in the order in which it is taught) no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology. (Skehan 1996:18)

It has been found that the focus on teaching grammar as a set of rules and structures inadequate in meeting the communicative needs of language learners (Ellis 1997). For example, there is no much evidence from my experience as a language teacher that it leads to the kind of learning that enables learners to perform the targeted form in free oral production (e.g. in a communicative activity).

However, *English for Iraq* employs a task-based approach to teach grammar (Nunan 2004). This textbook provides opportunities to involve students in meaningful interactive tasks that enable them to use the target grammatical item while their focus is on meaning. These tasks are called structured grammar-focused tasks and also called grammar consciousness-raising tasks (Ellis 2001). They include two types: explicit and implicit tasks. Explicit tasks are those tasks included the grammatical structure itself as content of the task, while implicit tasks are the tasks that not included the grammatical structure as a content of the task. The explicit structured grammar-focused tasks are mostly designed for learners of English as foreign language (EFL) contexts. Therefore; the textbook writers designed the majority of grammar tasks from this type of tasks. They have designed the tasks to include the target structures as content. These explicit grammar-focused tasks include two forms. Deductive tasks, where the rule is given for learners, and inductive tasks where the rule is discovered by learners themselves by analysing the data provided. Tasks of this textbook are designed in the forms of both deductive and inductive tasks. These tasks are prepared to provide opportunities to involve students in meaningful interactive tasks that enable them to use the target grammatical item while their focus is on meaning. According to Ellis (2001), structured grammar –focused tasks contribute to the development of implicit knowledge by facilitating noticing and comparing. However, if such tasks are followed by ample exposure to communicative activities containing the target structure, the learners will be more likely to integrate form into his/her implicit knowledge system. As research suggests (see Samuda and Bygate 2008), frequent exposure to the target structure in subsequent communicative activities not only increase awareness of the form but also assist processing and retention. Research on such tasks suggests (Fotos, 1993; Nassaji, 1999; Wong, 2005) that explicit structured grammar-focused tasks in communicative classrooms are as effective at promoting gains in explicit knowledge of the grammar feature as traditional grammar lessons, while maintaining the benefits of task performance. In addition, performance of the task produces amounts of L2 task talk comparable to talk produced by performance of meaning-focused communicative tasks. Additional research (Fotos, 1994; Nassaji, 2009; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004) also suggests that once learners' awareness has been raised, learners are able to notice the structures in meaning-focused activities several weeks later.

Section 5: Conclusion and Suggestions

This research presented a comparison and an analysis of sample textbooks used in schools in Iraq. It presented a comparison and an analysis of the approaches and methods to teaching grammar in *Iraq opportunities* and *English for Iraq* textbooks. The

research revealed the weaknesses and strengths of the used approaches to develop learners' communicative abilities as well as it highlighted the types and amounts of grammar structures in each textbook. The research found that there is a difference in the types of the grammar structures taught in each book but there is a similarity in the amounts of these structures. For example, the structures of *English for Iraq* are more complex than the structures of *Iraq opportunities*; however, the amounts of these structures in these books are twenty and seventeen structures respectively. This research found also that there is a considerable difference in the amounts of practice grammar exercises in the books, for example, *Iraq opportunities* includes a large number of exercises while *English for Iraq* includes about one fourth of this number. However, the main finding of this research is concerned with the approaches used in these books. It found that these books follow two different approaches to teaching grammar. *Iraq opportunities* follows a grammar-based approach to teaching grammar i.e. PPP model. In spite of the advantages of the PPP approach of being easy to use, to organize, and to evaluate, and also the teacher is in full control of the structures intended to be covered, it has its weaknesses. This method assumes that language consists of a series of grammatical forms and structures that can be acquired successively. It views grammar teaching as a linear and deductive presentation of the rules which is inadequate in meeting the communicative needs of language learners (Nassaji and Fotos 2011). For example, there is no much evidence from my experience that it leads to the kind of learning that enables learners to perform the targeted form in free oral production (e.g. in a communicative activity).

However, *English for Iraq* textbook follows a communicative approach to teaching grammar i.e. task-based approach. It provides opportunities to involve students in meaningful interactive tasks that enable them to use the target grammatical item while their focus is on meaning. Task based on grammar structures as content have repeatedly been found to be effective in promoting both negotiation of meaning and awareness of the target structure (Ellis 2003). Grammar-focused tasks containing communicative instances of the target form is a recent version of the communicative language teaching which is widely used in most of the second and foreign language teaching contexts (Nunan 2004). It is useful for developing learners' awareness of grammar structure and encourages their negotiation of meaning which is too complex to be achieved through formal and old fashion instruction such as in the PPP method.

In short, this research revealed the inadequacy of the PPP method followed in *Iraq opportunities* textbook to meet the communicative needs of language learners and the weaknesses of the deductive and linear presentations of rules in this method. It also indicated the strengths of the task-based approach followed in *English for Iraq* textbook to develop learners' accuracy and fluency through engaging learners in a meaningful-focused interaction although their attention is drawn to the nature of the target structure. This research has considerable contributions to the field of language teaching in Iraq. In addition to its findings, it can provide novice as well as language teaching practitioners with a view of how the field of language teaching in Iraq has evolved. Furthermore, it draws the attention of them to the features of the teaching materials and approaches they use which they may have not noticed before. Knowledge of these teaching approaches can improve their experience and develop their language teaching skills. However,

teachers have to take into consideration that approaches and methods are not prescriptions for how to teach but they are resources of well-used practices, which teachers can adapt or implement based on their own beliefs, learners' needs and the context of teaching (Richards and Rodgers 2001).

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