أثر تدريسي عبارات ضمائر الوصل لمتعلمين اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية على مهارات فهم القراءة

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الملخص

تناولت هذه الدراسة أثر تعلم بعض عبارات ضمائر الوصل على مهارات الفهم القرائي لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية. كما تناولت الدراسة فهم جمل الوصل عند ظهورها في النصوص المكتوبة. تم اختبار بعض الطلبة العراقيين فى احدى مدراس الثانوية للصف السادس الاعدادي في تعلم تراكيب عبارات ضمائر الوصل واثر تعلم هذه التراكيب على مهارات القراءة والفهم . استغرقت الدراسة أربعة أسابيع . تم استخدام الية الاختبار الاول (pre-test) لمعرفة مستوى الطلبة لفهم عبارات ضمائر الوصل ومن ثم اعطاء الدروس والتعمليمات والامثلة بخصوص الية وقواعد استخدام تراكيب عبارات ضمائر الوصل. وبعد عملية الشرح والتوضيح للتراكيب تم اعطائهم الاختبارالثاني (Posttest) لقياس الاداء المعرفية وقدرة اتقان التراكيب في مهارة القراءة وكانت درجات الطلبة في الاختبار التمهيدي الاول أقل من درجاتهم فى الاختبار النهائي الثاني. بعد تعرضهم للتعليمات الصريحة والضمنية، كان أداء متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية افظل في الاختبار الثاني حيث سجل الطلاب الذين تعلموا تراكيب الجمل الموصلة نتائج جيدة في الاختبار الثاني. أن نقص في معرفة تراكيب النحوية للجمل الوصل المختلفة يساهم في ضعف القراءة، حيث أن بعض الطلبة لم يكونوا على معرفة بتركيبات الجمل المختلفة من فهم محتوى النصوص المكتوبة بشكل كامل. حيث ان كتب اللغة الإنكليزية تحتوي على مجموعة متنوعة من أنماط مختلفة من الجمل، ولتعزيز مهارات فهم القراءة، يجب أن يكون متعلموا اللغة الثانية قادرين على التعامل مع هذه الهياكل والتراكيب الجمل المختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : عبارات ضمائر جمل الوصل ومهارة القراءة والفهم، مهارة القراءة للمتعلمين اللغة الانكليزية والتراكيب النحوية

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The Impact of Teaching Iraqi EFL Learners Relative Clause on Their Reading Comprehension skills

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Abstract
This study examined the effect of teaching certain aspects of relative clauses on EFL learners' reading comprehension skills. The study also investigated how well students understood relative clauses when they appeared in written texts. It focused on a group of sixth-grade students from Iraq attending a high school, assessing their understanding of relative clause structures and how learning these structures impacted their reading skills. The study lasted four weeks, beginning with a pre-test to gauge students' comprehension of relative clauses. Following this, students were given instructions and examples related to relative clause structures. After the explanation and simplification of relative clause structures, a post-test was administered to assess students' performance and their ability to apply these structures in reading and writing. Students scored lower on the pre-test compared to the post-test, indicating improvement after receiving explicit and implicit instructions. Those who learned about relative clause structures performed well on the reading comprehension post-test. Lack of knowledge of the grammatical structures of different relative sentences was found to hinder reading comprehension. Students who were unfamiliar with various sentence structures may struggle to fully understand written texts. Since English textbooks contain a variety of sentence styles, it is essential for second language learners to be able to navigate these structures in order to enhance their reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: relative clauses and reading comprehension skill, EFL learners' reading skill and syntactic structures.

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1. Introduction

A relative clause is one kind of dependent clause. It has a subject and verb, but it can't stand alone as a sentence to give a full thought. Another name for a relative clause is an "adjective clause" since it functions like an adjective—it gives more information about a noun. A relative clause always begins with a "relative pronoun," which substitutes for a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun when sentences are combined:

Pronoun	Stand for	Uses
Who	People	Substitute noun or pronouns He/she/they/ we
Whom	People	substitutes for object nouns/pronouns (him, her, us, them)
whose	people or things	substitutes for possessive nouns/pronouns (his, hers, ours, theirs)
that	people or things	can be used for either subject or object can only be used in restrictive relative clauses (see below)
which	things	can be used for either subject or object can be used in non-restrictive relative clauses can also be used in restrictive relative clauses, though some people don't like this use

Relative pronoun as subject (in the bold)

I like the person. **The person** was nice to me.

I like the person **who** was nice to me.

I hate the dog. **The dog** bit me.

I hate **the dog** that bit me.

I am moving to Louisville, KY. **It** is home to the Muhammad Ali Museum.

I am moving to Louisville, KY, **which** is home to the Muhammad Ali Museum.

 Relative pronoun as object (in the bold):

I like the bike. My father gave me **the bike.**

I like the bike **that** my father gave me.

A relative clause which is known as an adjective clause involves two types of relative clauses, restrictive and nonrestrictive:

Here are some examples:

Restive clause: The lady <u>who lives next door</u> is a famous writer.

Nonrestrictive clause: Mr. Ali, <u>who lives next door</u>, is a famous writer.

In the first example (a), the relative clause" who lives next door is used to make the lady more specific and give the listener or the reader more information about the subject, without this information, the meaning would be unclear.

On the other hand, in the second example (b), the relative clause could be omitted without affecting sentence's meaning because the subject "Mr. Ali" himself covey enough information about the person. The listener or the reader could understand the meaning of the sentence without the relative clause in the sentence. The relative clause begins with a relative pronoun such as, ",

"whom" or "whom". The selection of a pronoun depends on the noun to which the relative clause refers and what type of relative clause is used. A relative clause can have different functions in a sentence:

OS: I know the students who got an A

OO: I know the woman who you are looking for

SS: The student who got an A is a friend of mine.

SO: The student whom you have talked to got an A

1.2 Background of the study

A relative clause is a complex sentence structure in English. It still represents a major obstacle for the first and second learners (Izumi, 2003). Inserting one sentence into another sentence is one of the most distinctive features of language as a cognitive system (Gibson, Desment, Groder, Watson, & Ko, 2005.P. 314). Due to their structural complexity, English relative clauses (SRCs) are particularly difficult to be processed by EFL learners. English learners face some difficulties in mastering relative clauses in the sentence. Some of them are not able to write such structures or understand them. In this study, the research tries to analyze the problem relating to the effect of relative clauses on reading comprehension and figure out the correct treatment for these problems.

The term syntax refers to the interrelationship of words to form constituents. To understand sentence menacingly, English learners have to understand the syntactic structures and how these components of the sentence combine to form a meaningful thought, Berman (1984). It is easy for EFL students to comprehend a sentence consisting of one independent clause, but it is hard for them to understand a relative clause embedded into another sentence. The explicit instructions regarding showing how the position of the relative clause comes inside the sentence are important for EFL learners. Students need to be exposed to both reactive explicit and implicit instructions. "Reactive implicit instruction refers to a learning condition in which the target forms happen as an outcome of the task being performed in class. Proactive implicit instruction happens when tasks are deliberately designed to contain target forms, and performing the task provides the opportunity to use those structures. Reactive explicit instruction, on the other hand, refers to a learning condition in which the instructor provides metalinguistic or explicit corrective feedback while learners produce the target structure", Nezakat-Alhossaini, Youhanaee, & Moinzadeh, (2014). Krasher's view (1981, 1982, 1993) is that implicit instruction can be only for simple grammatical structures. Complex structures such as relative clauses can be taught by the explicit instructions method. Based on a research study that is conducted by Alhossanini, Youhanaee & Moinzadeh (2014) about the impact of explicit instructions on EFL learners' implicit and explicit knowledge: a case of English relative clauses. The results obtained from previous studies show that complex structures like relative clauses can be acquired through explicit instructions. Students who can't write a correct relative clause structure in the English composition are those who are not exposed to clear explicit instructions about relative clause structures in English sentences. Also, students who don't catch up with the meaning form complex sentences with a relative clause are those who don't have enough grammatical knowledge about using the relative clause. Norris and Ortega (2000) conducted a research study about the effectiveness of giving explicit instruction to students. The findings were that explicit instruction significantly affected the learners' performance.

Word cognition is an important skill for comprehending complex structures in English. Scott (2004) makes a study about comprehending complex sentences by assessing spoken and written

language skills in age school children and adolescents. The findings are that most students who do low scores are those who get a normal limit of word cognition.

Scott (2009) "Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are familiar with the concept of sentence complexity. The global measure of utterance length (mean length of utterance [MLU] in morphemes or words) is a commonly used measure for capturing sentence complexity in young children's naturalistic language production (conversations or narratives). For older children, SLPs have used additional measures of sentence complexity including the extent to which sentences contain more than one clause, and the extent and nature of complexity in noun phrases (NPs) and verb phrases (VPs). An example of NP complexity is shown in the contrast between sentences (1) and (2) below":

A) The amendment was a disaster.

B) The thoroughly rewritten and meaningless amendment that was inserted by the aide was a disaster. Both sentences have the same subject, "amendment". The subject in the first example (A) is NP while in the second example (B) four words pre-modify the head noun" amendment" and six post-modifies words in the form of a relative clause. The relative clause, being center embedded, interrupts the main clause subject (amendment) and its predicate (was a disaster). The aide is not a disaster—the amendment is a disaster. Such a kind of relative clause represents a big challenge to the reader to understand the content in the textbook. Consequently, if we want to compare examples (A) and (B), we will find that example (A) is easier to understand than example (B) because of the complexity structure. The sentence that starts with common hierarchy (S V O) or (S + V) is easier to comprehend than a sentence, containing a relative clause structure.

A) She found her key. (S +V+O)

B) Alex passed his exam. (S +V+O)

C) My watch stopped. (S + V)

D) The baby cries. (S + V)

Finally, sentences that are embedded in the structures are harder to understand than those which are not embedded, for instance,

A) The reporter whom the senator attacked on Tuesday ignored the president.
(Subject modifier, object – extracted (SO), not embedded)

B) The fact that the president ignored the reporter who the senator attacked on Tuesday bothered the editor. (object modifier, object extracted (OO) embedded)

After deep research by Chen and Colleagues (2003), they concluded that a sentence with more embedded verbs and clauses as in example (B) is harder to comprehend in the reading than a sentence in example (A). More inserting embedding verbs and clauses in the sentence makes it more complicated for readers and writers.

Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (henceforth NPAH) as outlined by Keenan and Comrie (1977) the two scholars hypothesized that there is a universal hierarchy that exists about the position which can be relativized in a sentence:

Subj> Direct Obj> Indirect Obj>Obj of adposition>Genitive> Obj of comparison Simply put, this hierarchy indicates that there exists no language, so far, that can relativize a direct object but cannot do so with a subject. The NPAH also shows that the subject has the highest position on the hierarchy, implying that the syntactic role of the subject is the most accessible one; thus, it can be relativized in virtually all languages around the globe. Examples of these positions are shown below:

a. The woman who saw the ghost (Subj)

b. The woman whom the boy saw (Direct Obj)

c. The woman to whom the boy gave a locket (Indirect Obj)

d. The paper that the woman drew a rabbit on (Obj of adposition)

e. The woman whose pen the man took (Genitive)

f. The woman that the man is shorter than (Obj of comparison)

1.3 Effecting Techniques and Strategies for Improving Reading Compression Skills

Reading strategies as "the mental operations involved when readers approach a text effectively to make sense of what they read… Good readers apply more strategies more frequently …and more effectively than poor readers." (Pani 2004). According to Block (1986), "reading strategies" refer to the actions that readers take to understand a task, make sense of the text, and address any comprehension difficulties. Moreover, according to Anastasion and Griva (2009), reading is described as a purposeful and conscious process. The process involves utilizing manual techniques and behaviors to decipher the text, understand the words, and ultimately grasp the intended meaning of the written material (pp. 283-284).

Cognitive, metacognitive, and support strategies, as proposed by Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001), are specific approaches that readers can use to improve their understanding of a text. Cognitive strategies are purposeful actions that readers take to enhance comprehension, such as drawing on prior knowledge and adjusting reading speed. On the other hand, metacognitive strategies involve planning and monitoring comprehension, like setting reading goals and previewing the text. Finally, support strategies are resources that readers can use to assist their understanding, such as taking notes and consulting external sources while reading.

The training techniques used in this study were based on the procedure developed by Brown and Palincsar (1984). This procedure included three specific reading strategies: predicting, text mapping, and summarizing. Predicting goes beyond simply guessing and helps students achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the text. According to Duffy (2003), predicting is making student's good anticipator of the meaning. Then, text mapping is a method that involves highlighting keywords, phrases, and concepts within documents. The use of features such as outlining, hyperlinking, and text formatting in word processors helps achieve this. According to Carnine, Silbert, and Kameenui (1997), students can improve their understanding of a text by employing strategies such as summarization, paraphrasing, retelling, self-questioning, prediction and verification, reading aloud, and rereading. These strategies not only help identify key concepts, but also condense the content into memorable key ideas. Furthermore, Casazza (1993) argues that skilled readers can effectively summarize the most important concepts in a text by utilizing a suitable organizational structure. In addition to that, English learners need to understand the deep meaning of the passage. Teaching students how to infer the meaning of a text is too essential method for readers. Karlin (1984) students must move beyond surface -level understanding and delve into the deeper implications of the writer's intended meaning.

In formal classes, EFL/ ESL teachers can use simple techniques such as identifying the topic sentence, the main ideas, and supporting details. Teachers can also enhance students' comprehension skills by encouraging them to summarize the text. This can be done by helping students identify the main ideas and supporting details.

1.3 Research Question

To investigate the possible effectiveness of relative clause structures on EFL learners' reading skills, this study aims to investigate the contribution of teaching relative clauses on second language learners' reading skills. The study addressed the following questions:

1- To what extent does teaching EFL learners a relative clause affect their reading comprehension skills?

2- To what extent does syntactic knowledge contribute to reading comprehension?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading comprehension skill

Corner and Winer, (1966) stated that students who have poor knowledge of syntactic structures are unable to decode the meaning in the written text. The main reason for students' poor performance in reading comprehension is the absence of grammatical knowledge, Bentin, 1990, Bowey, 1986a, Menyuk, (1991). Students who don't know complex structures like relative clauses are not capable of appreciating the meaning and writing English sentences properly.

King & Just (1991) when students read the (RC) in text written a lot, they memorize these (SRCS) a lot, and then the way they process RC and understand the meaning will be easier than those who aren't exposed to reading RCS in the text written. Based on Frazier's study (1987). The relative clause that comes as a subject (SRC) is more highly understandable than the relative clause that comes as an object(ORC). The discrepancy between (SRCS) and (ORCS) is that (SRCs) more occurring in the textbook than (ORCs). As a result, students can memorize and process (SRCs) more distinctively than (ORCs). Morvay's study (2012) found that syntactic had the second highest correlations right after vocabulary within L2 reading comprehension. Morvay made a study, and through the study, he taught different grammatical forms. One of these forms was teaching a relative clause form to the L2, after teaching L2 some aspects of relative clause. The posttest gave different results. Teaching some aspects of relative clauses contributed to changes in L2 reading comprehension performance. Thompson and Shapiro (2007) identified some variables that contribute tosentence complexity, including (a) the number of number of verbs, which in turn aligns with the number of clauses); (b) the number of embeddings; (c) the order in which major components appear in the sentence, whether canonical (i.e., subject-verb-object; SVO) or non-canonical (e.g., passive sentences);

A- Alex(S) Kicked (V) the ball (O)   (canonical)
B- The ball (O) was (V) kicked (V) by Alex (S)   (Passive voice)
C- It was the ball(O) that Alex(S) kicked (V)   (non-canonical)

The sentences that are canonical in order are easier for readers to be comprehended by learners than those that are non-canonical in order. Some studies also revealed that subject modifying (SRCs) is read more quickly than object modifying, as shown in the examples below:

A) The doctor that the critics praised at a banquet insulted an actor from a big action during an interview.   (Subject-modifier)

B) An actor from a big action during an interview insulted the doctor that the critics praised at a banquet during an interview.   (Object- modifier)

Several scholars have explored various grammar teaching techniques, particularly in the context of teaching English relative clauses (ERCs). Haiying (2014) evaluated the effectiveness of the noticing function of the output hypothesis in ERC instruction for senior high school students. Xiaorong and Li (2011) examined the role of output tasks in ERC teaching for college students, while Zhichao (2012) studied the impact of written output tasks on ERC instruction for senior high school students. Other researchers have investigated the effects of explicit versus implicit instruction in ERC teaching. Juan (2009) found that students with low levels of English proficiency struggled to master ERCs, indicating that explicit instruction was more effective for these learners. Conversely, Qimeng

(2015) concluded that explicit instruction was more beneficial for restrictive relative clauses, while implicit instruction was advantageous for non-restrictive relative clauses.

A study conducted by Akmal (2020) on the writing section of the TOEFL test found that many EFL test-takers struggle with forming correct relative clauses. The results indicated that students lack a comprehensive understanding of grammatical structures. This issue primarily arises from the fact that most students do not practice these structures in advance. Consequently, the test outcomes demonstrate that students have a limited grasp of grammar.

The time factor is also crucial. Teaching grammatical concepts to students is not an easy task and requires significant time investment. Some EFL teachers overlook this aspect and teach grammar hurriedly, without incorporating authentic or contextual practice and testing. Teachers should allocate ample time to grammar instruction, as grammatical cases often contain numerous rules and exceptions. Sufficient time is vital for ensuring that students learn these structures effectively.

Context is the most essential factor in teaching students English as a second language. Teaching language without its context is ineffective. Students who study language in isolation from real-life situations struggle to learn and produce the language fluently. It is necessary to utilize authentic tests and instructional materials in the classroom. Many texts adapted by EFL instructors are not well-designed for teaching. Some books and materials fail to include real contextual aspects, so skillful teachers must seek out appropriate resources.

The complexity of sentence structures also contributes to the difficulty of comprehension. Sentences with multiple English modifiers can make texts challenging to understand. Students who are unfamiliar with complex grammatical structures may struggle with relative clauses, leading to difficulties in understanding English texts. It is essential for students to be exposed to various structures to enhance their reading comprehension skills.

There are qualitative differences between native speakers and English learners; for instance, English learners do not produce complex structures as effectively as native speakers. English learners often exhibit lower proficiency, slower processing speeds, and limited experience with the target language (Felser & Drummer, 2022). Second language learners are generally unable to construct detailed syntactic representations like native speakers. To comprehend and produce more complex sentences in terms of meaning and structure, English learners need exposure to diverse syntactic structures within texts.). For example, second language speakers, they say a simple sentence like that, *"The man next door there is friendly"* ,they can't construct a full relative sentence just like the one said by native speakers, "*The man who lives next door is very friendly".* Additionally, instructors should support learners by providing explicit and implicit grammatical rules and information about these structures (Baek, 2012). A restrictive relative clause provides essential information to define or clarify the noun or noun phrase it modifies, whereas a nonrestrictive clause provides unnecessary, but possibly interesting information (Izumi, 2000). The examples of the two types of relative clauses are as follows:

A- Alex, who is a famous engineer, is from England. (Nonrestrictive clause)

B- The participants who were interviewed volunteered to be part of the study. (Restrictive clause)

2.2 Factors Impacting Reading Comprehension Skill

There are various factors that can influence reading comprehension. These encompass environmental influences, levels of anxiety and exhaustion, individual interest and motivation, word recognition speed, potential medical issues, and syntax structures.

The first factor is environmental. It plays a crucial role in reading conditions. English learners who reside in safe and calm environments are more qualified to understand what they read than those who don't have a good environment. Readers don't comprehend the text very well when there are some sounds around them, like noises or radios (Dennis, 2008).

The second factor is anxiety. According to Dennis (2008), examinations, classes, and homework are affecting students' reading skills and putting more pressure on them. Students will not enjoy reading if they get more school assignments and lessons.Learners who experience anxiety may struggle to comprehend instructions, resulting in confusion and a limited understanding of the reading task.

The third factor to consider is the level of interest and motivation. It is important to note that students lacking motivation and interest will likely struggle to achieve high scores in reading comprehension and may not effectively acquire language skills (Mohseni Takaloo, N., & Ahmadi, M. R., 2017).

Motivation plays a vital role in the reading process and can be classified into three distinct types. The first type is intrinsic motivation, which pertains to the desire to engage in an activity because one finds satisfaction or sees value in doing so (Usher, 2012). Intrinsic motivation in reading can originate from a profound interest in the content or main idea of a text (object-specific) or from the engagement the text elicits within the reader (activity-specific). When students possess intrinsic motivation, they approach reading with enthusiasm, resulting in more effective reading. It is believed that increased reading time enhances intrinsic motivation, thereby improving reading comprehension. Providing students with intrinsic motivation is crucial for their development of comprehensive reading skills (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008).

The second type of motivation is known as extrinsic motivation. It pertains to the external factors that incentivize students to engage in reading. These factors may include grades, rewards, recognition, or a competitive drive to outperform others (McGeown, Norgate, & Warhurst, 2012).When teacher offers a prize for the competent readers who comprehend the text critically, they will get desire to read and achieve good scores.

The third factor is recognizing the amount of Vocabulary, terms, and idioms that are important for English learners to understand the text. Most students who can't read the text critically are those who don't know the vocabulary. According to Gabb (2000), a limited vocabulary and a lack of background knowledge are big barriers for students to comprehend the assigned materials. The amount of vocabulary that EFL students get is affecting students' reading skills.

The fourth factor to consider is medical issues, as Hollowell (2013) discovered a potential connection between medical problems and poor reading comprehension skills. Children with ADD (attention deficit disorder), speech problems, and hearing impairments are not able to read and understand the given text. In addition to that, students with medical problems don't participate as effectively in oral reading and class discussions as those without medical issues.

The final element is the grammatical frameworks. Scott (2009) states that students lacking a solid understanding of grammatical structures struggle to interpret the meaning in written texts. The primary cause of students' weak performance in reading comprehension is the lack of grammatical understanding. For instance, students lack an understanding of the types of relative clauses (nonrestrictive, such as my friend, who is from Germany, obtained an academic degree or restrictive, like the participants who volunteered to be part of the study) and their function as a subject, "the students who left the class want to rejoin," or as a direct object, "I presented a small gift that wasn't expensive to the teacher." According to Alotaibi, (2016) students who don't know complex structures

like relative clauses are not capable of appreciating the meaning and writing English sentences properly. In their study, Thompson and Shapiro (2007) found that there are several variables that affect sentence complexity. These variables include the number of verbs, which is related to the number of clauses. Additionally, the number of embeddings and the sentence structure, specifically the order of major components, contribute to sentence complexity. Sentence structure can either be canonical (subject-verb-object; SVO) or non-canonical, like passive sentences.

A- Alex(S) hit (V) the ball (O)   (canonical)
B- The Box (O) was (V) carried (V) by Alex (S)   (Passive voice)
C- It was the ball (O) that Alex(S) kicked (V)   (non- canonical)

The sentences that are canonical in the order are easier for readers to comprehend than those which are non-canonical in the order. Studies revealed also that subject modifying (SRCs) is read and understand more quickly than object modifying, as shown in examples below:

A) The doctor *that the critics praised at a banquet* insulted an actor from a big action during an interview.   (Subject-modifier)

B) An actor from a big action during an interview insulted the doctor *that the critics praised at a banquet* during an interview.   (Object- modifier)

Finally, some studies conducted by Gibson and colleagues (2005) about embedding sentences showed that sentences with inserting clauses and verbs represent a kind of difficulty for students who want to catch up with the meaning while reading.

3.1 Methodology

The location is Al Krar High School, in the southern region of Iraq, specifically in Thi-qar Province. The students enrolled at the high school are boys in the 12th grade. The school focuses on teaching various academic subjects, including English as a second language. Emphasis is placed on English instruction because proficiency in the language is necessary for university enrollment and job applications.

3.2 Participants

The twelfth grade members are between 18 and 19 years old and come from an Arabic-Iraqi background. Most of them speak English as a second language, but they are not fluent and have limited proficiency. These students need practice and instruction to improve their English language skills. They do not fully understand the structure of relative clauses. According to data collected by the researcher, students struggle to understand relative clauses when they appear in different positions within a sentence. Some students need specific guidance to fully grasp these structures.

3.3 Procedures.

The researcher tries to reach the right level for the students. He strives to find a good academic method to teach them. The researcher used the pre-test and post-test in the study. The pre-test consisted of two parts. The first one is about multiple choice items while the second one is about one passage containing some aspect of the relative clause.

Part (1)/ Read the following statement and choose the best answer:

1- Children who hate chocolate are uncommon.   A- Subject   B- Object
2- They live in a house whose roof is full of holes.   A- Subject   B- Object
   3- An elephant is an animal that lives in hot countries.   A- Subject   B- Object
   4- Let's go to a country where the sun always shines   A- Subject   B- Object
   5- The person who lives in this house has not been seen for days.   A- Subject   B- Object
   <u>A- Restrictive</u>   B- nonrestrictive
   6- The mayor, who lives in this house, has not been seen for days.

A- Restrictive   B- nonrestrictive

Part (2) read the following paragraph and underline the sentence that contains some aspects of relative clause.

It was just the time when I needed a gift. The vase you've offered me is exactly what I wanted. This vase reminds me of a vase which was at home and whose patterns where nearly the same . This is the best China that I've ever seen. My mother , Who was an artist, used to arrange Roses in it , which was beautiful . This is the reason why I'm so pleased with your present. Guess the place where I put it ? On my desk, just in front of me.

Students' pre-test results:

Participants	(SRCs) Who/which/that	(ORCs) Which/that/whom
Ahmed	4	2
Ali	3	2
Kadim	3	1
Hussam	3	2
Latifa	3	2
Muhammud	3	3
Adam	3	2
Adnan	2	1
Rami	2	2

In the second part, several questions measure students' understanding of relative clauses in a given passage. The test is based on comprehending the function of the relative clause in the sentence. The results of the pretest were not good. Students identified and understood the subject relative clauses (SRCs), but they were unable to identify the relative clause that functions as an object.. The results of pretest showed to the researcher that students need to learn relative clauses and the position in which they come in a sentence. After students have taken the pretest, the researcher started to support the students by supplying them with multi resources. The researcher used many resources, including books, notes, websites, and articles to activate students' knowledge about understanding and using relative clause structures in English. In the last stage, when the posttest is given to the students, the posttest results are different than the pretest one. Giving some notes and some other explicit instructions by the researcher to the students played an important role in their performance. They start understanding structures and using them perfectly. The posttest showed better results than the pretest.

Students' posttest results:

Participants	(SRCs) Who/which/that	(ORCs) Which/that/whom	(RCp) whose
Ahmed	8	7	8
Ali	9	8	8

Kadim	6	7	7
Hussam	7	8	9
Abbas	6	7	8
Muhammud	8	7	8
Adam	9	8	7
Adnan	10	8	7
Rami	9	7	8

The researcher utilized an action research format cycle consisting of four basic steps: (1) specifying the problem, (2) assessing the problem, (3) specifying multiple solutions, and (4) reflection and evaluation. Working with students involved three periods: before intervention, during intervention, and after intervention. Before teaching and assisting students, the researcher gathered data from a pretest to identify students' weaknesses and strengths in order to present effective lessons to improve students' performance in using a complex grammatical structure such as a relative clause. In the first week, the teacher did not intervene in teaching students about the relative clause or provide any instructions on how to understand and use it. The researcher only administered the pretest, which took about an hour. The students' answers indicated that they struggled to understand and use the relative clause when functioning as a subject or an object. They did not differentiate between object relative clauses (ORC) and subject relative clauses (SRC), nor did they grasp the meaning of a relative clause that functions as an object.

Based on Frazier's study (1987), students find it easier to understand Subject Relative Clauses (SRCs) than Object Relative Clauses (ORCs). According to the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH) outlined by Keenan and Comrie (1977), the subject in a sentence is more accessible to students than the object. Students find it easy to write and understand an RC that functions as the subject, but struggle with RCs that function as objects. During the intervention, the teacher provided explicit instructions to the students. The teacher used paragraphs and sentences containing aspects of RCs to measure reading comprehension skills. Throughout the pretest period, students made many mistakes. One common error was students' lack of familiarity with RCs functioning as an objects. Students were accustomed to using the standard sentence structure (Subject-Verb-Object, *I have a car*) and did not have issues with SRCs, *"The person who came to see me was my manager"* as demonstrated in the test. Students performed well in identifying SRCs but struggled with ORCs. The data revealed that students had not received comprehensive instruction on how to write and understand relative clauses. To improve, students need to learn syntactic structures related to relative clauses in order to effectively parse them.

The researcher presented many examples to the students. These examples are not only sentences but also some passages and paragraphs containing many aspects of (RC). The teacher asked students to read the following passage and then underline the relative clause and its function, *"Ali is an Iraqi student. He gets full marks in all his grades. He has a brother who lives outside of Iraq. All the teachers like him because he is a smart one. He is very helpful in that he assists his friends inside the classroom. His father who works at the factory wants him to be a doctor"*. In addition to that, students were given some implied questions to test their understanding of the relative clause.

Q1/ who wanted him to be a doctor? A- His father   B- Ali

Q2/ The one who lives outside of Iraq is Ali   A-True   B- False

After finishing these activities, the researcher asked students to do the assignment for the next day. The assignment was some questions to determine the function of adjective clauses:

1- The man who lives next door is very friendly.   A- RCs   B- RCo

2- I like the bike that my father gave me.   A- RCs   B- RCo

3- The dog that I bought yesterday was too expensive.   A- RCs   B- RCo

In the third week, students completed their homework correctly. They worked on the task in the classroom better than before, resulting in different scores due to the researcher's instructions. The researcher encountered some hardships, one of which was ensuring that students could understand the functions and types of relative clauses practically. The researcher used paragraphs to test students' knowledge of comprehending these complex structures. Students tend to avoid using relative clauses as they represent a complicated structure compared to a formal sentence consisting of (S V O). During the activities, the researcher motivated students to use all types of relative clauses. The researcher provided practical examples by giving them written paragraphs that included relative clause structures. Handouts with detailed explanations and examples were given to the students. The researcher also gave students a reading comprehension test to determine their understanding of these structures. The following day, students returned with their homework, which they completed perfectly. After intervention in the fourth week, students completed their assignments properly, with many of them receiving full marks. The performance of students differed in their ability to recognize relative clauses in sentences, as their understanding of passages or paragraphs in English was limited due to their lack of experience with these structures, which they found relatively challenging. After checking the homework, the researcher noticed that students did great work with only a few mistakes. As a result, the researcher decided to give them a posttest.

4.1 Results

In the pretest, the scores were low. Students struggled to understand relative clauses (RC) when they appeared in sentences. They were only able to handle some cases and could comprehend the relative clause when it served as a subject. However, they made numerous mistakes with object relative clauses (ORCs). Additionally, restrictive and non-restrictive clauses proved to be a complex structure for them as they involved embedding verbs and nouns within a single sentence. The data collected from the pretest by the researcher indicated that students did not grasp the meaning of relative clauses. When reading passages, they tended to skim over relative clause structures, hindering their comprehension of the text. Their scores in identifying subject relative clauses (SRCs) were higher than their scores in identifying ORCs. The chart below illustrates their scores in the pretest. Conversely, in the posttest, the results were different. Mistakes were minimal, and students began to understand and differentiate between SRCs and ORCs. Posttest scores
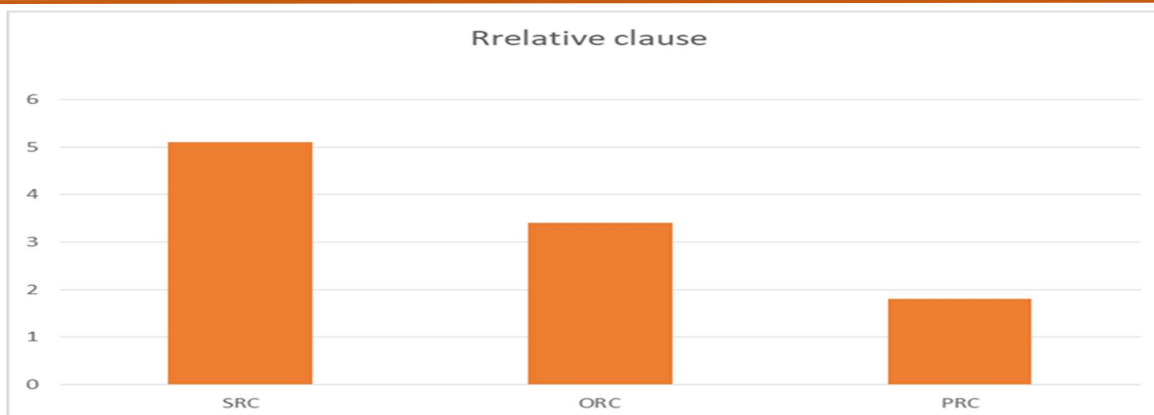
indicated an improvement in performance compared to the pretest, with students making no errors and achieving good grades. The results of the posttest are displayed in the chart below. A comparison between the two tests reveals a significant difference. Students' grades in the posttest were higher than in the pretest, where they demonstrated weak understanding of the structures. However, in the second test, students excelled, earning perfect scores. The improved grades reflected students' comprehension of the structures tested. Many students lacked knowledge of the grammatical rules associated with RC and did not utilize these structures in their writing. Exposure to explicit and implicit instructions helped them enhance their understanding.

4.2 Conclusions

Teaching students syntactic structures is essential for understanding their meaning. Students need to enhance their knowledge by constructing a relative clause within a sentence. They must learn all types and functions of relative clauses. After working with students, the researcher discovered some important facts. One of these facts is that students only have the ability to comprehend small, basic sentence structures such as SRCs. They fully understood SRCs but struggled with more complex structures like ORCs. Some students avoided using these structures in their assignments to prevent errors. The English language is not only built on basic structures but also on complex ones. It includes different styles involving both simple and complicated structures. Students need to be able to handle all these structures, regardless of their complexity. Students often found it difficult to understand relative clauses when used as an object or genitive in written text. Poor readers who struggle to comprehend passages lack syntactic knowledge. Therefore, providing explicit and implicit instructions on teaching EFL learners relative clauses is crucial for developing students' reading comprehension skills. Students typically use canonical structures (*Alex kicked the ball*) which are easier than non-canonical structures (*It was the ball that Alex kicked).* Relative clauses with more embedding verbs and phrases are harder to understand. ORCs remain more challenging for EFL learners. Successful readers can utilize various factors and skills to comprehend texts. The reading methodology significantly impacts learners' reading skills. Implementing more effective reading strategies to understand text meaning is crucial for enhancing readers' autonomy (McCrea, 2003). Training in reading instruction is highly effective for improving learners' reading skills. Research shows that students who receive instruction in reading using specific strategies consistently achieve higher scores in both literal and inferential comprehension compared to those taught through conventional approaches (Brown & Palincsar, 1984).

4.3 Recommendations

For EFL instructors, it is important that English learners are aware of syntactic processing, which plays a crucial role in forming relative clauses. According to NPAH theory, students are more likely

to understand a noun phrase or clause as a subject rather than an object, due to the repetition of the subject in the sentence. Therefore, instructors of English as a second or foreign language need to ensure that EFL learners understand the various types of relative clauses. When preparing a passage for a reading comprehension activity, instructors should underline the different types of relative clauses and their functions, along with their meanings in context. It is also important for teachers to focus on relative clauses used as objects or in the genitive case, as these can be challenging for second language English learners. EFL instructors should not deprive second language learners of written text; learners should utilize textbooks and apply what they have studied when learning English. Providing both implicit and explicit instructions is essential for effective teaching. Teaching students in context is crucial, and the researcher made efforts to incorporate this approach in written textbooks, including paragraphs and passages. Teaching students grammatical structures, such as relative clauses, separately from the textbook is not a practical teaching method. Students should practice these structures through written passages or paragraphs. Teaching ESL/EFL learners to write complex structures that include relative clauses can greatly improve their comprehension of sentences while reading.

Both EFL learners and teachers should read more authentic texts to enhance their understanding of various written materials. Successful readers are able to utilize all factors and skills to comprehend texts effectively. The reading methodology used has a significant impact on learners' reading skills. Implementing more effective reading strategies to grasp the meaning of the text is crucial and can be taught to enhance readers' autonomy (McCrea, 2003).

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