



IRAQI
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية

ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

Journal of Language Studies

Contents available at: <http://www.iasj.net/iasj/journal/356/about>



Attitudes of EFL University Students towards the Application of Cognitive Grammar to Teaching Selected Grammar Topics

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Received: 19 / 9 / 2023, Accepted: 9 / 10 / 2023, Online Published: 30 / 11 / 2023

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate the attitude of EFL university students towards the application of Cognitive Grammar (henceforth CG) in the Kurdish context to teaching selected grammar topics, namely English tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. CG is an approach within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics (henceforth CL) to the meaning of grammatical structures and has two crucial guiding principles: the symbolic commitment and usage-based commitment. The study has used an attitude questionnaire as its data collection tool. Its participants were comprised of (27) EFL university students who had taken part in a 12-week course of Cognitive Grammar treatment focusing on the

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aforementioned grammatical phenomena. The data was analyzed descriptively through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS by finding the mean score, standard deviation and percentages of the respondents' answers to the statements of the questionnaire. It was found that the participants generally had a positive attitude towards the application of CG to teaching the above-mentioned topics. The overall mean score of the questionnaire was (3.7680) which shows the students' high agreement with the questionnaire's items. It was also found that the approach had increased the students' learning motivation and had a positive effect on the affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of their attitude. The study has ended with some recommendations for further studies before being able to generalize the findings of the current study.

Key words: Cognitive Grammar, Cognitive Linguistics, attitude, English as a foreign language EFL.

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المستخلص

هذه الدراسة هي محاولة لاستقصاء موقف و استيعاب طلاب الجامعة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه تطبيق النحو الإدراكي (Cognitive Grammar – C G) في السياق الكوردي لتدريس مواضيع النحو المحددة، وتحديدًا الأزمنة الإنجليزية، تركيب الجمل المبنى للمجهول وأفعال المساعدة. يعتبر النحو الإدراكي (CG) نهج ضمن إطار اللغويات الإدراكية (Cognitive Linguistics CL) لفهم معاني التراكيب اللغوية وله مبدأي توجيهيين حاسمين: التزام رمزي والتزام قائم على الاستخدام. استخدمت الدراسة استبيان للمواقف كأداة لجمع البيانات، حيث شمل مشاركين بقوام (27) طالبًا جامعيًا في تخصص تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، شاركوا في دورة مدتها 12 أسبوعًا حول تطبيق النحو الإدراكي مع التركيز على الظواهر النحوية المذكورة أعلاه. تم تحليل البيانات بشكل وصفي باستخدام برنامج الإحصاء للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) من خلال حساب المتوسط والانحراف المعياري ونسب الإجابات للمشاركين على أسئلة الاستبيان. تبين أن المشاركين عمومًا

لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه تطبيق النحو الإدراكي في تدريس المواضيع المذكورة أعلاه. كان متوسط الاستبيان العام (3.7680)، مما يشير إلى اتفاق العالي للطلاب مع بنود الاستبيان. تم أيضاً الاكتشاف أن هذا النهج قد زاد من دافعية الطلاب للتعلم وكان له تأثير إيجابي على الجوانب العاطفية والسلوكية والمعرفية لموقفهم. انتهت الدراسة ببعض التوصيات لإجراء دراسات مماثلة مستقبلاً قبل أن نتمكن من تعميم النتائج التي توصلت إليها الدراسة الحالية.

الكلمات الدالة: النحو الإدراكي، اللغويات الإدراكية، الموقف، الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL).

1. Introduction

This study is an investigation of the attitudes of Kurdish EFL university students towards the application of Cognitive Grammar to teaching selected grammatical elements, namely, English tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. The study has first shed light on CG as an approach within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics (CL), to the structures and meanings of grammar and has provided insights into its background. It has also elaborated on its two crucial guiding principles; the symbolic commitment and usage-based commitment. Moreover, the study has given brief accounts of each of the aforementioned grammatical phenomena from CG's perspective.

2. Cognitive grammar: key commitments

Cognitive Grammar holds that language is symbolic in nature and is neither independent nor descriptive without a substantive reference to cognitive processing. It belongs to the Cognitive Linguistics movement which is a modern school of language with the claim that Language is a fundamental component of cognition, not an independent cognitive unit that is separate from other mental abilities (Langacker 1987, 1991, 1999; Fauconnier 1994, 1997; Taylor 2002). It considers language as involving extra general phenomena like "attention, perception, categorization and memory" that it cannot be separated from (Langacker 2007; Taylor 2002).

Langacker (2008, p.3) argues that "grammar is meaningful" due to the fact that its components, such as vocabulary words have inherent meanings and through grammar, speakers can create and represent the more complicated meanings of complex statements such as "phrases, clauses, and sentences". It is a crucial part of the conceptual framework that allows us to understand and interact with the outside world. It is not just an essential element of cognition but also a key to comprehending it. CG posits that all linguistic structures have meanings that can be described in terms of cognition and analyzes those meanings in connection with general cognitive processes. It reduces grammar to pairings of form and meaning as it considers grammatical structures symbolic. Langacker further

states that CG assumes two crucial guiding principles: the symbolic commitment and usage-based commitment.

2.1 The Symbolic Commitment

One of the important functions of language is the encoding and externalizing of humans' thoughts and expressing their mind. The way language does this is through the use of symbols because "language is symbolic in nature. It makes available to the speaker- for either personal or communicative use- an open ended set of linguistic signs or expressions, each of which associates a semantic representation of some kind with a phonological representation" (Langacker 1987, p.11). To Taylor (2002, p.16) "CG is built on the premise that language is inherently and essentially symbolic in nature". Symbols are parts of language. They can be meaningful subparts of words, which are called morphemes by linguists such as "dis-" in "*distaste*" or whole words like "*cat, run, tomorrow*" or "strings" of words. These symbols comprise of forms or phonological structure that can be uttered, written or signed and the meanings or semantic structures that are normally paired with those forms. As symbols are comprised of two parts that are conventionally connected; it is better to refer to them as symbolic assemblies. In other words, a symbolic assembly is the pairing of form and meaning (Evans& Green 2006; Goldberg 1995; Langacker 1987, 1991).

Taylor (2002), argues that according to the symbolic thesis, linguistic units regardless of whether they are one word, a morpheme, a phrase or a full passage, consist of a phonological structure, a semantic structure and a symbolic relation linking them together and are arranged in the fashion illustrated in figure 1 below.

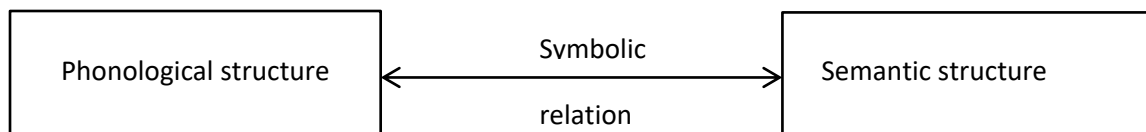


Fig.1: The three elements of a linguistic expression (adopted from Taylor 2002, p.21)

CG posits that a language may be comprehensively defined just via the use of these three elements. Phonological structures refer to the explicit representation of language expressed through the channel of sound. Semantic structures pertain to the interpretation of the meaning conveyed by a given word while the symbolic relation is the link found between the phonological and semantic structures (Taylor 2002, pp.21-22).

Further, the structures which make up a symbolic assembly, may themselves pair with other symbolic constructions to create yet more complicated ones at a more advanced level of arrangements. For instance, the composite unit "*jar lid*" is formed as the result of the combination between both symbolic components "*jar*" and "*lid*" which can be presented as follows, with upper and lower case letters indicating the semantic and

phonological poles respectively: [[JAR]/[jar]] + [[LID]/[lid]] = [[JAR LID]/[jar lid]]. These structures form a symbolic assembly where each one of them is made up of a semantic structure and a phonological structure held together by a symbolic relation. These semantic and phonological structures as well as the symbolic relationship between them constitute the content requirement which is necessary for describing the grammar of a language (Langacker, 1987, 1999, 2008, p. 162).

In addition, according to Broccias (2013); (Evans& Greens (2006), adopting the symbolic volume involves significant consequences for the cognitive approach of grammar. Meaning has gained a central status to the whole of grammatical structures, ranging from rather abstract elements known as meaningless grammatical markers like prepositions, auxiliaries and determiners.

However, according to Tyler (2012, pp.140-143); Tyler& Evans (2003), prepositions in English, offer the main describing system of spatial relationships. In most cases, they describe the relationship between two entities referred to as foreground and background or figure (F) and ground (G) with the F being the focus element and the G as the positioning element as in *The football is next to the tree* where the *football* is described as the F and the second entity *tree* as the G. Further, the preposition *for* designates the relationship between two elements in which the F is aligned with the G. However, the F is portrayed as having intention as in *Head for the hills!* in which it is inferred that getting to the hills guarantees safety from the danger that the participants of the event are running from. Despite the fact that safety is not mentioned but it is the final goal and '*the hills*' is the secondary goal.

Therefore, if grammatical units are all symbolic units consisting of form and meaning along with a symbolic relation between them, form cannot be studied in isolation from meaning. This description by cognitive grammar is not applicable just to the vast majority of vocabulary words but to the entire set of units that comprise a language, from a morpheme to grammatical structures and categories (Langacker 2009c; Evans & Green 2006).

2.2 The Usage-based Commitment

The usage-based thesis is the second basic assumption of the cognitive theory to grammar. It rejects the innateness of language and assumes that learning a language is the result of its meaningful use that constitutes the core difference between the formal and cognitive approach to grammar. It considers that the formation of knowledge of language or grammar in the speakers' mind is achieved through the symbolic units being used in contextual language communications. Contrary to generative linguistics view of language as an independent and separate entity from cognition; CL considers language meaningful and that it reflects humans' mental processes like perception and categorization and views meaning as been embodied and formed through human's social and physical interaction with the world. Hence, the acquisition of language can be characterized as a

bottom-up mechanism propelled by exposure to linguistic stimuli (Tyler 2012; Langacker 2008; Croft & Cruse 2004; Taylor 2002).

CG regards language as a means for achieving communicative goals which results in the derivation of meaning as well as the emergence of alternative linguistic forms in accordance with the purpose of the communication (Tyler 2012; Bybee 2008; Langacker 1988, 1987) which may lead to different linguistic representations of the same propositional content. In these situations, the emphasis on context and real use of language joins with the active role of language speakers in constructing the language and their task to master the language resources as well as the elements of social and cultural context (Waara 2004, p.55).

The advocates of CL support the idea that “learning language involves determining structure from usage” (Robinson & Ellis 2008, p. 3), “knowledge of language emerges from language use” (Croft & Cruse 2004, p. 3) and that the input to language learning is the exposure to authentic linguistic statements that are complete in terms of their phonological, semantic and symbolic characteristics (Taylor 2002). Thus, knowledge of language means knowing how to use the language (Evans & Green 2006).

According to Langacker (1987), the actual use of the language system and the speakers’ knowledge of its use are quite important. Grammar is responsible for the speakers’ knowledge of all language practices, whether or not these practices are included in more general propositions. Therefore, Bybee (2006a) has proposed that grammar be viewed as the cognitive arrangement of speakers’ experience with language.

A usage event is a rather basic construct that underlies the usage based approach to language. It is an actual and contextualized use of language that is entrenched in culture and context and constitutes a case of linguistic behavior (Langacker 1987, 1999, 2007, 2009c). Moreover, Langacker (2008) argues that it is the language user, not the linguistic system, who creates a comprehension of fresh phrases, by making use of the complete range of accessible sources for this purpose. Moreover, language expressions can become components of what constitutes their standard linguistic value after their entrenchment and acquiring of the rank of a unit. These symbolic units are thus distinguished by CG based on the degree of their conventionality in contrast with the generative grammar’s classification of language structures as grammatical or ungrammatical.

According to Taylor (2018, p.17), usage, that is linguistic occurrences experienced by the learner, is the 'input' to language learning. Consequently, 'rules' (generalizations) are developed over time. He explains that the input to acquisition is real-life occurrences. The learner's input to acquisition is usage as a linguistic event in all of its complexities. As a result, generalizations or rules are established based on observed situations. So, language learning is understood as a fairly bottom-up mechanism as based on contacts with separate occurrences, the commonalities in them are then noticed and abstractions are established which represents a way of acknowledging the usage-based property of CL.

3. Cognitive grammar descriptions of English tenses, modal auxiliaries and passivization

This section offers detailed descriptions of the grammatical phenomena under discussion based on CG theory of grammar in which the grammatical categories are analyzed based on their meanings and uses.

3.1 Tense

As a grammatical category, the concept of tense pertains to the placing of a situation in relation to time. Langacker (1991, pp.249-250) agrees with the idea that English has two tenses, present and past as future is formed with the help of a modal. Their semantic description is related to epistemic distance, they are generally recognized using the time-line approach, where immediacy vs. non-immediacy renders into present vs. past time for actual occurrences. Thus, “present indicates the occurrence of a full instantiation of the profiled process that precisely coincides with the time of speaking; past indicates the occurrence of a full instantiation of the profiled process prior to the time of speaking”.

Taylor (2018, p.196) states that in English, tense and aspect are intertwined, and studying these concepts entails evaluating the difference between perfective and imperfective events. Thus, the difference between the present and past tenses relates to the difference between progressive and non-progressive. Examples such as “*write a novel*” or “*write ten novels*” denote bounded situations as the events go on until the time at which the novel and the ten novels are finished. Instances such as “*write novels, write a novel every year*” denote unbounded situations as there is no preplanned time at which the situation reaches its end.

However, aspect refers to the element that determines or classifies a situation as ongoing or completed, repeated or habitual. Aspect can be conceptualized as the perspective or portrayal that a speaker presents of a specific situation or an activity (Evans & Green 2006; Miller 2002, p.143).

Aspect has been characterized as an essential category of both perfect and progressive which cover perfect, imperfect, progressive and nonprogressive aspects with perfectives occurring in both progressive and simple past tense and imperfectives occurring in simple present tense but not in the progressive (Langacker 2002, p.86; Leech 2013).

The CG distinction between perfective and imperfective verbs finds parallels in the categories of dynamic and stative verbs, along with the difference between states, activity, accomplishment, and achievements that forms its basis. Perfectives are compatible with activity, accomplishment and achievement verbs while imperfectives are compatible with stative verbs. Perfective processes in CG often incorporate changes, meaning that their constituent states are not thought of as being identical, and are restricted by the temporal range of predication. According to their definition, perfectives are bounded and signify heterogeneous time-bounded processes. Figure (2A) illustrates the key semantic features of perfective verbs whose constituent parts are presented

through a zigzagged solid line to emphasize the changes that are typically entailed (Evans and Green 2006, p.631; Langacker 2002, p.86).

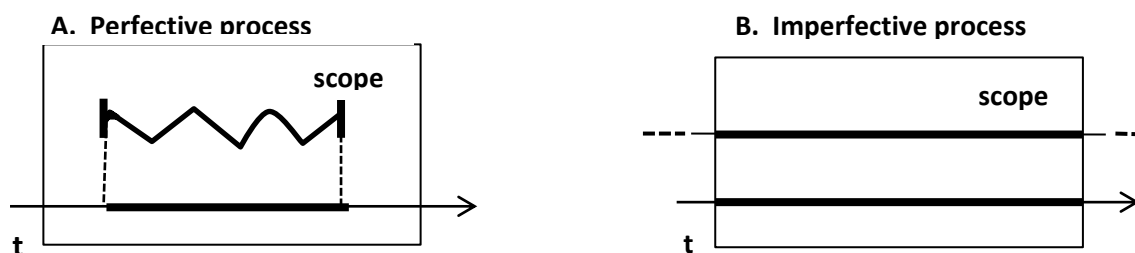


Fig. 2: Perfective & imperfective processes adopted from (Langacker 2002, p. 88)

In the perfective process the wavy line which stretches along the time arrow highlights a change over specified time and the process is bounded by the vertical bars found at both ends of the line which signal its start and end, and are both considered to be within the parameters of the prediction (Langacker 2002, p.88; 1987, p.261). However, imperfective events are thought of as homogenous, meaning that their constituent states are practically considered as same, that they are distinguished by intrinsic stretchability/contractibility, and that their time span is not intrinsically limited. A sequence of relationships typical of processes is depicted by a broad straight line, which means that no change is occurring and that the relations are understood to be fundamentally the same. Unlike perfectives, imperfectives are not intrinsically bounded which is reflected by the absence of vertical bars on both ends of the line which consequently illustrates the event's unlimited time span conveyed by the solid-line portion of the whole line (ibid).

Unlike dynamic and perfective verbs, stative and imperfective verbs are traditionally not consistent with the progressive which is considered in CG as a contrast between English perfective and imperfective verbs. The non-progressive perceives an event as a single entity, whereas the progressive perceives it as developing and unfolding. The suffix *-ing* is added to perfective verbs to transform them to imperfective which consequently summons a special viewpoint on seeing the situation content. For example in “A *monkey is climbing the tree*”, a component of a complex relationship within a longer process has been highlighted internally by the progressive construction. It is claimed in CG that *-ing* forces a narrow range known as immediate scope (IS) in the temporal domain which is the focused phase or attention point; the situation's other components that do not come within its limits are defocused. Another influence of *-ing* which is represented by the ellipses is to perceive the focal states as equal and remove any distinctions between them and consequently interpret the highlighted relationship as similar and homogeneous. Moreover, *-ing* transforms a process into a complicated timeless relationship through cancelling sequential scanning which is typical of all types of verbs (Langacker 2013, p. 155, 2008, 2002, 1987; Thornbury 2011; Taylor 2018).

There is another analogy in CG between the perfective and imperfective events and between count and mass nouns. The distinction between the perfective and imperfective is the same as the distinction between count and mass nouns. A bounded situation is a specific event or state that is delimited in time and space and has a distinct identity. Count nouns on the other hand, refer to entities that are individuated, quantifiable, and have a distinct identity. Thus, the analogy between bounded situations and count nouns suggests that both can be treated in similar ways semantically and grammatically (Taylor 2018, pp.196-199; Langacker 2013, p.133, 1991).

The features of the bounded events are similar to those of the things referred to by count nouns like *table* which as a count noun indicates a thing that has a boundary and its components are not considered instances of the thing. For example if a table is broken down into small parts, there will be numerous different components of a table and not different extra tables and that the pieces will be different from the table and not the same. On the contrary, if you take a piece of meat and chop it in half, each half is still the same as the original with more of same kind but not extra different things. Situations without boundaries are thus comparable to "substances" as substances have no intrinsic boundary and are homogeneous inside in a way that any part constitutes an example of the material as well as having the ability to be duplicated and the new instances still be considered as the same substance. For example, unbounded situations such as *to write novels* would be comparable to materials like *meat* or *water* (ibid).

Therefore, any slice of meat is still meat and any part of the process of writing novels is writing novels. Thus, this is a very crucial distinction between the bounded and unbounded events or perfective and imperfective (Taylor 2002, 2018).

It needs to be iterated here that it is the verb phrase along with its complements and not the verb itself, which determine whether a verb is perfective or imperfective. It cannot be said that *to write* for example, is bounded or unbounded; however, it is the verb and its complements like the direct object that together show this quality. For instance, in *write a novel* versus *write novels*, is the direct object here in both phrases; the count noun *a novel* in the former and the plural noun *novels* in the latter that introduce the events as perfective and imperfective respectively. Moreover, two types of perfective events need to be distinguished: those having an end point and those that are perceived to be punctual, or things that happen at a specific time but actually with no duration such as *to cough once* or *to arrive home* as they both take place at a specific time and have no duration. However, *to cough twice* will change the situation from being punctual into an extended event that takes time similar to the phrase *to go home* that is also different from *to arrive home* and takes time. If the coughing is repeated for an unlimited number of times, it then turns into imperfective and consequently consistent with the progressive. So, perfectives are comprised of punctual and extended events. Moreover, perfective events can become habitual if they are iterated frequently enough where a habit is something that persists over time and is static. For example *write a novel* is perfective while *write a novel every*

year and repeat this yearly for unlimited times, it changes into habitual and a type of stative (Taylor 2018; Evans 2019).

3.2 Modal auxiliary verbs

This subsection offers a CG-based analysis to the meanings to the English core modal auxiliary verbs, namely, *can, could, will, would, may, might, shall, should* and *must*.

From a semantic standpoint, modals provide a distinct viewpoint on a given circumstance. They evaluate a situation in terms of its probability. There are various types of modalities. The scenario of "*Louise walking to the store*" can be evaluated using modal verbs to indicate different degrees of probability (might), impossibility (can't), desirability (should), necessity (must) or possibility (can). These varied modalities can frequently be described in connection with a concept of force (Taylor 2002, p.406).

There are cognitive analyses of the meanings of modal auxiliary verbs, such as the ones by Sweetser (1990) and Talmy (1981, 1988). They have based their analyses on force dynamics theory. Both scholars specifically contend that forces, forward motion, and paths are at the core of modal meanings.

According to Sweetser (1990), humans' propensity to speak of the internal domain with words from the external domain is the result of a broad and coordinated system of metaphors. This claim is underpinned by Lakoff and Johnson (1980 as cited in Tyler, 2012, p. 107) who have noted that verbs for physical interaction are often employed to describe mental functions, as in, *I have a good **grasp** of the issues* and *I don't have a good **grip** on the theory*. Speakers also utilize common terms of physical coercion, forward movement, and paths to describe their own interior mental processes like comprehension and reasoning as in *he **swayed** the crowd **to his side** with his passionate speech* or *my thoughts were **racing ahead to the next point** in the argument*.

The English modals originated historically from non-modal lexemes that once conveyed physical ability or sense of obligation; for example, *may/might* originate from the verb *magan*, "to be strong" which is obviously referring to physical power, and *must* stems historically from the verb *moste*, which is the past tense of the verb *mot* and means "obligated" that evidently illustrates social obligation. Moreover, *will* stems from a verb meaning 'want' while *can* signals that its subject has the knowledge or cognitive power to do some actions. It is important to note that these fundamental meanings have specific characteristics that serve as the foundation for their later development into modals (Langacker 1991; Tyler 2012).

According to Taylor (2002), the difference between epistemic uses of the modals and their root or deontic uses is caused by the origin of the force. The following examples illustrate the typical uses of English modals with both root and epistemic meanings.

- (1) a. This noise must cease immediately!

- b. You may leave the table now.
 - c. She really should phone her mother more often.
 - d. He absolutely will not agree to it.
 - e. Could you please pass the carrots?
- (2) a. It must be lonely there at night.
- b. There may be some snow by tomorrow evening.
 - c. That should be enough.
 - d. Umbrage will certainly be taken at those remarks.
 - e. Could she actually be older than my aunt?

(Langacker 1991, p.272)

When a modal's only purpose is to suggest whether the given process is likely to occur, it is considered epistemic. A root modal usually contains some notion of potentiality oriented toward the fulfillment of that process, such as obliging, permitting, desire and ability. The speaker in (1)(a) is most likely the person with the power, but it is also possible that the speaker is only expressing a responsibility placed on them by another party (such as the landlord). In (1)(c), should the source of obligation be attributed to the subject (who is responsible for that obligation), the speaker (who evaluates it), or the societal norms that serve as the foundation for the conclusion? And in (1)(e) does *could* here denote physical capacity, desire or societal duty? (ibid).

In epistemic modals, the source of potency is not identified with any individual or certain aspect of the world. It is vague, inclusive, equated with the world and its evolution and not provided by any particular force. Instead, the force towards realization of the selected process is provided by the generalized force of the world's structure and unfolding reality. Epistemic modals assess whether this developmental momentum will take reality far enough down the relevant path to reach the designated process (Langacker 1991; Taylor 2002).

Langacker (1991) considered this study a refinement of the claim by Sweetser (1984) and Talmy (1988) that force dynamics best explain English modals. Sweetser argues that the difference between root and epistemic modalities results from force-dynamic qualities whether they are pertinent to the social interaction domain or the reasoning domain. The senses of these force-dynamics according to (Sweetser 1984 as cited in Langacker, 1991, p. 273) can be illustrated through *may* (the lack of a potential obstacle), *must* (a powerful, unstoppable force), *can* (a positive capacity), and *will* (a full path to a target).

Langacker (1991) declares that Sweetser's analysis is nearly the same as his proposed one. Both are force-dynamic descriptions whose interpretations of the main modal senses are actually consistent. However, Sweetser (1984) has claimed that the solely future interpretation of *will* does not appear to show some force or obstacle but rather a perfect

route to an action or goal, which renders its inclusion in the force-dynamic account difficult.

The above account covered detailed analyses of modality in English from a cognitive grammar point of view. It dealt with the meaning of modal auxiliary verbs based on the force-dynamics theory advocated by Talmy (1988) and Sweetser (1990) as well as Langacker's (1991) proposed approach, the dynamic evolutionary account, regarding the modals' semantics and their historic evolution from English main or content verbs. The following paragraphs will now tackle the meaning of the mentioned core modals using Sweetser's force-dynamic approach aided by diagrammatical explanations.

Tyler (2012) has based her representations of the meaning of the modal auxiliary verbs on Sweetser's (1990) analysis of the modal verbs. Figure (3) below and its accompanying diagrams and explanatory examples are taken from both (Tyler 2012, pp.110-114 and Tyler, Mueller and Ho 2010, pp.37-39). The diagrams represent the modals' root meanings, i.e., their real world and social senses, along with their epistemic counterpart or their metaphoric extension to the logical reasoning. For example, according to the proximal-distal metaphor *now is here, then is there*, the use of present tense indicates a higher degree of surety and speaker force, while past tense indicates a lower degree of surety and attenuation of speaker force.

The diagram of each modal contains the actor, who is the forward-moving figure. The internal force is depicted by lines inside the head of the actor and both arms outstretched while the external force is presented by a larger second figure.

Figure (3a) illustrates the meaning of *must* in which two figures are depicted. The one at the back with both arms stretched represents an irresistible external authority or force as in *You must finish this paper today (or you'll fail the course)*. The second figure in front with one stretched arm is in solid line and symbolizes the mover or actor. Moreover, the metaphorical extension of *must* is that the evidence is that powerful it compels the speaker to make conclusions as in *You must be happy you took this course. (After all, you earned an A+ and the professor has offered you an assistantship in his lab)*.

In the case of the socio-physical meaning of *will* as shown in figure (3b), the forward-moving figure down a path represents the actor or performer and the lines in their head stand in for the internal power emerging from the performer's wish or capacity. The two outstretched arms are supposed to symbolize powerful forward motion while the heavy lines denote the present tense of the modal and consequently its more powerful version. The fact of the force coming from the actor indicates total confidence and commitment as well as implying of future as in *You will finish the paper today=strong command from superior*. Finally, the metaphoric extension of *will* is that the speaker is led to the total certainty of their conclusion due to their confidence about the state of reality and their commitment.

The physical and social force of *would* as the past form in figure (3c) is still strong but with diminished wish or devotion which is represented by the forward-moving figure in

dotted lines as in *You would finish this paper today (if you work all afternoon)*, which contains a strong proposal made by the speaker. Its metaphoric extension suggests that the speaker's conclusion is strongly supported by the evidence, but there is some place for doubt or decreasing of their wishes.

As regards *shall* and its root meaning in figure (3d); the actor who is represented as the forward moving figure in solid lines accepts the superiority of a strong outside force portrayed in the larger figure behind him as well as strong feelings of duty or obligation. Its metaphorical extension implies that the speaker can draw a firm conclusion because they are confident that all of the facts and premises will proceed in the correct directions or according to the regulations. Examples such as *The defendant shall be hanged by the neck until dead* or *All parties shall agree to binding arbitration* contain compelling judgments that everyone and all the parties concerned have to obey.

However, the root meaning of *should* in figure (3e) as the past form of *shall*, incorporates the actor's acknowledgement of the outside force's rightful power as signified by the double-headed arrow between the outside force and the actor, a diminished perception of the effectiveness of the outside force as well as a decreased feeling of obligation as can be seen in *You should finish this paper today; (You know it was due yesterday and the professor said he'll take points off for late homework)*. Here the speaker is both making reference to an outside force and reaching out to the listener's sense of duty or obligation. The implication of its metaphorical extension is that the speaker can draw the conclusion if all the data is true, if everything unfolds the way they previously have and if the rules are followed then the speaker can draw his conclusion.

As with the root meaning of *can* in figure (3f); it is the only modal that does not have an epistemic or metaphorical extension as it is merely concerned with ability and illustrates capacity or knowing how to do something. Its diagram depicts an actor with muscle symbols on his arms in solid unlike the head and its little lines in light black as there is no internal force involved. For example *I know I can lift 100 pounds* or *Nancy can multiply huge numbers in her head*.

However, the diagram of *could* as the past form of *can* in figure (3g) is a duplicate of *can*'s diagram but in dotted lines to reflect its root or socio-physical meaning as a diminished ability to carry out activities as in *You could wash the dishes if you wanted to help*. This is in addition to its use for implying possibility as in *You could finish the paper today* in which the speaker is demonstrating a possibility and offering a proposal without intending to exert pressure on the mover. Its epistemic and metaphoric extension indicates that the data offer diminished backing for conclusions while other proofs propose various conclusions. For instance, *The Court could find in our favour*, implies that the speaker has some strong justifications. Additionally, the opposing party has a strong case too. Thus the speaker is unable to predict with any degree of certainty the result of the court hearing.

The root or socio-physical meaning of *may* in figure (3h) is mainly concerned with the idea of potential obstacles being removed by outside powers. The outside authority is represented by the larger figure in the diagram opening and ushering the actor out of the door and consequently permitting the actor, who is depicted by the smaller figure in solid lines, to act and carry out activities as in *You may leave whenever you are finished*. Moreover, its extended metaphoric or epistemic use implies that nothing prevents the speaker from drawing conclusions, but nothing forces them to reach these conclusions either. For example, in the case of the previous example *The court may find in our favour*; the speaker thinks there is a possibility the court will decide in their favor due to the lack of evidence preventing them from such conclusion, but equally thinks it will not as there is not strong proof opposing this conclusion either.

Finally, the socio-physical sense of *might* as portrayed in fig. (3i) is similar to the diagram of *may* but is in dotted lines as an indication of being the past form and consequently the weak version of *may* which is the present form and in solid lines. Its strength is diminished and eased as in *I might want to take a walk, but I'm really not sure*; which shows that there is a possibility the actor or the speaker, depicted as the smaller figure in dotted lines wants to go for a walk or *You might want to try another approach* where an outside authority, i.e., the speaker who is represented as the larger figure in dotted lines removing the barriers for the actor, is suggesting or allowing the actor to do some actions. *Might* also has its metaphoric extension or epistemic reasoning as nothing prevents the speaker from making conclusions and nothing compels them to reach these conclusions either. For example, in *The court might find in our favour*, the speaker assumes it's possible that the court will rule in their favor, but it's equally probable that it won't as the speaker has no solid grounds for predicting the final result.

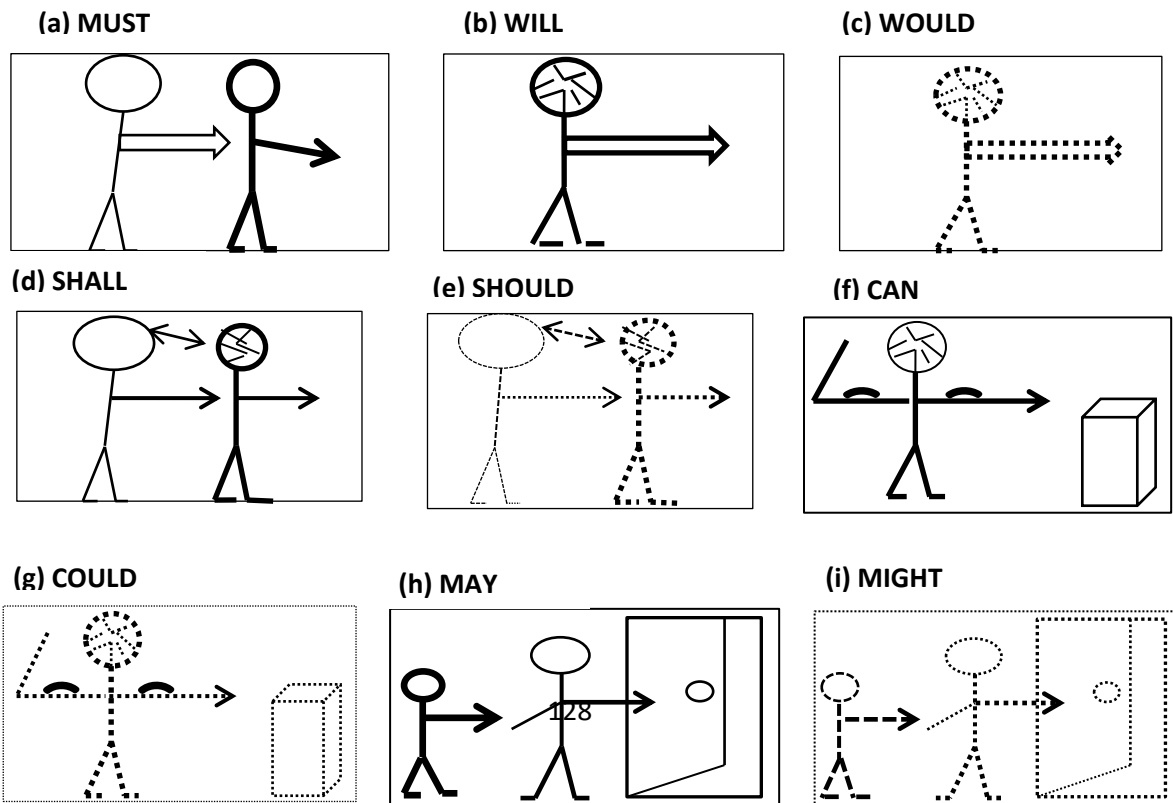


Fig. 3: diagrammatical representations of modal auxiliary verbs adopted from (Tyler 2012; Tyler, Mueller& Ho 2010)

3.3 Passivization

The connection between a speaker and the situation they conceptualize and depict entails focus changes and the use of imagery. Language speakers are required to identify and distinguish between the participants, i.e., agent or patient, of a transitive situation when describing an event. The speaker must implicitly choose which participant to focus on and select a language structure from a variety of structural choices to express that perspective choice while developing a structure (Langacker 1987). For instance, (Chen and Oller 2008, p. 387) explains that speakers can use active voice and depict an event from the agent's point of view as in "The bees were chasing the dog" or use a passive voice and portray the situation from the viewpoint of the patient as in "The dog was being chased by the bees".

To generative grammar, the analysis of the relationship between active and passive sentences simply pertains to the derivation of the passive from the active through a transformational process which involves changing the places of both subject and object nominals as well as the insertion of the so-called empty grammatical elements of *be*, *-ed* and *by*. Passivization is portrayed as the advancement of a direct object to subject position. Thus passive sentences are consequently ascribed similar structures to the ones that underlie their active counterparts as in the examples of (1)(a) and (1)(b) which are taken from (Langacker 1991, p.200).

1. a. *The cat chased the rat.*

b. *The rat was chased by the cat.*

According to the CG framework and (Langacker 2002), language expressions are inherently subjective and the passive structure is an autonomous construction that is not derived from the active structure through a transformation. The selection of passive in lieu of active is based on meaning and is fundamentally contingent upon the dynamic construal of participant roles in a standard transitive series of events. Hence, both previously mentioned passive and active sentences, *The dog was being chased by bees* and *The bees were chasing the dog* are not precise synonyms of each other. In the active sentence, the focus is on the agent (the bees) and they are placed in the subject position. However, the passive sentence emphasizes the patient (the dog) and occupies the subject position. This according to (Shibatani 1985) and (Dixon 1991 as cited in Chen& Oller 2008, p.388) can be observed in that the utilization of a passive structure highlights the recipient of a transitive occurrence while concurrently diminishing the significance of the

agent's role since passive and active clauses convey alternative construals of the highlighted action.

The CG description of the meaning of the two voices characterizes the *subject* as a main relational figure and regards the *object*, which typically denotes the second most important participant in a clause, as a secondary clausal figure. The subject's characterization highlights its strong connection with the reference point in the reference point cognitive model. This is due to the fact that both entities are highly noticeable and capture the attention of the speaker or listener easily. Therefore, CG posits that they are both equal and that the subject serves as a point of reference, enabling mental engagement with the entirety of the relational context represented in the clause (Langacker, 2008, p.83).

As regards the use of either the active or passive voice in English, Langacker (1991, 2008, p.384) explains that when the focal prominence linked to topicality and reference points is placed on the agent, the subject position is occupied by the agent. This results in the agent being more prominent than the object and the rest of the clause, leading to the formation of an active sentence. However, in cases where certain circumstances, such as the patient's high topicality, deem them more significant than the agent, the patient is placed in the subject position to increase their focal prominence and establish them as a reference point. This results in the formation of a passive sentence.

Idealized cognitive models (ICMs) as proposed by Lakoff (1997) are used in cognitive linguistics to analyze various linguistic structures which are considered to be cognitive constructs formed in the human mind through repeated patterns of life experiences. The reference point model, as illustrated in Figure 7 is one of the above-mentioned models. It consists of the conceptualizer (C), who represents the speaker or the listener and is responsible for establishing a cognitive connection with the target of conception (T). This connection is typically characterized by the speaker/listener's focus being directed towards the target, as indicated by the dashed arrows representing the mental path. The central idea of the model posits that the conceptualizer navigates a mental route towards a comparatively non-prominent entity, namely the target, by way of a fairly prominent constituent, denoted as the reference point (R). The target is located within the conceptual realm known as the domain of the reference point (D), which can be reached easily soon after the reference point has been conceptualized.

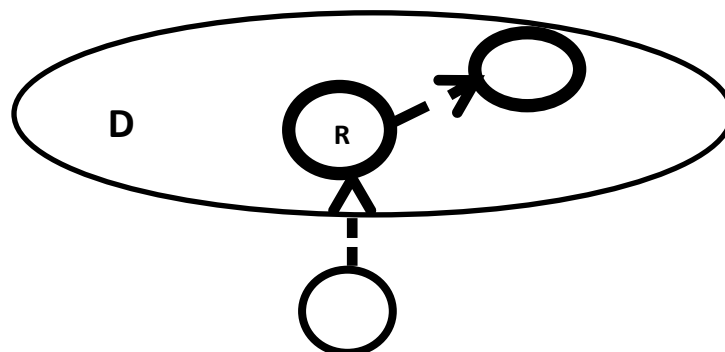


Fig. 4: The reference point model (Langacker, 1999, p. 174)

Only the reference point is prominent enough to enable mental contact with the target which is less prominent. The model as described by Langacker (2008, p.84), utilises the cognitive process of invoking the notion of one entity to create mental contact with another. This model is effectively employed in CG to provide insightful explanations for various grammatical structures, including passivization. For instance, in *the cat's fleas*, the *cat* is assigned cognitive prominence as the reference R, while the *fleas*, which are not visible to the naked eye, are designated as T (Maki 2003; Langacker 1991).

Now, the usage of both voices are explained through analyzing a pair of example sentences; *The enemy destroyed the city* and *The city was destroyed by the enemy*, taken from Lobeck and Denham (2014, p. 105). First, the active sentence *The enemy destroyed the city* is illustrated in Figure (5) which has depicted the process by which the conceptualizer establishes mental connection with *The enemy*, the doer, who serves as a prominent reference point. This mental contact is represented by the thick arrows in the figure. Consequently, the process facilitates a transition of focus towards the entirety of the portrayed scenario, which is graphically depicted by the elliptical representation of *The enemy's* dominion, and the slender arrow symbolizing the interaction between the two primary entities involved in the event. The participant denoted as

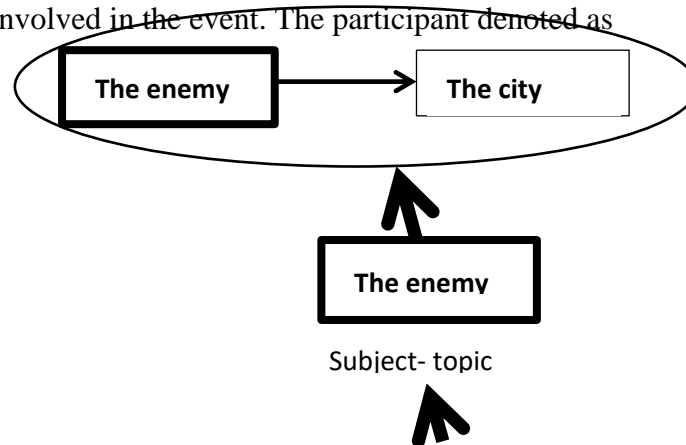


Fig. 5: The CG view of the use of reference point model in active voice adopted from (Bielak et al, 2013, p. 587)

The enemy is demarcated by a bold boundary, signifying its heightened significance in relation to the other participant and the overall context. This is attributed to its role as both the topic and subject, granting it additional salience.

However, the second and passive counterpart of the active example, i.e., *The city was destroyed by the enemy* has been illustrated in Figure (6). This figure exhibits a notable resemblance with the previous one, albeit with a significant variation in which the initial establishment of the conceptualizer's mental connection is facilitated through *the city*,

which takes the place of *the enemy*, the instigator, as the point of reference and subject, owing to its heightened focal prominence as the topic. Subsequently, focus is directed towards the entirety of the situation, which pertains to the realm of *the city*. The phrase *the city* is enclosed within a bold-lined box to signify its prominence and significance as a reference point.

The explanations presented within the preceding paragraphs and diagrams offered insights into understanding the meaning of both voices, i.e., active and passive via the reference point model of CG. They further discussed the factors governing the choice between using one of them without the other.

4. Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

It is worth mentioning that the current study comprises part of a larger PhD quasi-experimental study that was conducted at the University of Garmian, college of Education, Department of English during the first and second semester of the academic year 2022-2023 and has originally investigated the impact of Cognitive Grammar instructions on the performance and achievement of Kurdish undergraduate EFL students in terms of teaching the English tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. The study has used mixed methods for its data collection, i.e., quantitative and qualitative tools, namely pre- and post-tests, a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. Its participants were 54 Kurdish EFL university junior students who had already been randomly divided by the department at the start of the academic year into two equal groups. The researcher randomly chose one of them as the control group and the second one as the experimental group. Both control and experimental groups had a twelve-week teaching course based on specially designed traditional grammar instructions and Cognitive Grammar instructions respectively. The course was taught by the researcher himself, which was preceded by a pretest and followed by a posttest in order to measure any possible differences that occurred after the teaching session in the performance of the

students in either group, which could be attributed to the effectiveness of the aforementioned pedagogical grammar instructions. However, the current paper has depended solely on the attitude questionnaire and has consequently restricted itself to analyzing its data to assess the attitude and opinions of the students in the experimental group after receiving the twelve-week CG instruction-based treatment towards the application of CG to teaching the grammatical phenomena mentioned above.

4.2 Instruments

The present paper has used a questionnaire as a quantitative method to collect its data as quantitative data refers to that type of data that can be assigned numerical values and are collected via tools like questionnaires. The attitude questionnaire used for the present study has been adapted from Li and Yi (2020) and Lhadon and Wangmo (2022) and has been used in previous studies to assess individuals attitudes following a treatment period towards the writing skills. It includes 19 items in total that cover affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of attitude. It consists of a 5-point Likert scale valued from 1-5 as follows: Strongly Disagree (SD) 1, Disagree (D) 2, Neutral (N) 3, Agree (A) 4, Strongly Agree (SA) 5. Prior to its administration, the questionnaire was piloted with a sample of 12 students from the same stage who had been chosen as the pilot study participants only. This was to make sure the statements were straightforward and easy to understand. Apart from a request for the questionnaire items to be read out in their L1 when completing them, no other concerns were reported and were consequently deemed valid to be administered to the sample of the study.

4.3 Sample of the study

The participants of the study were the 27 English-majored junior students of the experimental group from the English department, College of Education at the University of Garmian. They were studying the module of English syntax as a part of the department's curriculum. Their age ranged from 21 to 22 years and had been studying English for similar amount of times. Their gender has not been taken into account as a study's variable.

4.4 Reliability

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher used the reliability statistics of Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire. Thus, the reliability score of the 19 items in the questionnaire was (.695) which is considered acceptable according to Alpha's score guideline and consequently shows that the questionnaire is reliable and that its items are consistent and correlated as shown in table (1) below.

Table (1): Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the attitude questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.695	19

4.5 Data analysis and discussion

The data collected through the attitude questionnaire was analyzed descriptively using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 26). The data was fed to the computer programme to find the overall mean score and standard deviation of all items in the questionnaire as well as for each item separately for the purpose of their analysis and discussion. Table (2) below, presents the overall mean score and standard deviation of the items of the questionnaire.

Table (2): Overall mean score and standard deviation of the attitude questionnaire

No. of respondents	No. of items	Mean	Std. Deviation
27	19	3.7680	.37735

Moreover, table 3 below, shows the mean score and standard deviation of the set of items in the questionnaire that deal with the affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of the students' attitude.

Table (3): Overall mean score and Standard deviation affective, behavioural& cognitive aspects of the respondents' attitude

Questionnaire variables	No. of respondent	No.of items	Mean score	Std. Deviation
Affective aspect of attitude	27	6	3.5062	.41726
Behavioural aspect of attitude	27	6	4.0247	.52441
Cognitive aspect of attitude	27	7	3.7725	.58131

The result and numerical figures representing the above mentioned statistical measures revealed that the students in general had a positive attitude towards the application of CG to teaching the English tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs and generally expressed a high degree of agreement with the statements in the questionnaire

According to the value and range of the Likert scales shown in table (3) below, the overall mean score of the questionnaire lies in the range of agreement with the statements of the questionnaire and consequently indicating the respondents' positive attitude towards the application of CG.

Table (4): Likert scale value and range of the questionnaire items

	Value	Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00 - 1.79
Disagree	2	1.80 – 2.59
Neutral	3	2.60 – 3.39
Agree	4	3.40 – 4.19
Strongly Agree	5	4.20 – 5.00

This can mean that the participants in general had positive feelings and tendencies towards CG, and believed that the teaching method they experienced was encouraging and had developed their grammatical knowledge, and were mentally ready to embrace the CG-based teaching instructions in the future.

The study further presents the respondents’ attitude towards each statement of the questionnaire in the form of three tables showing the mean score and standard deviations for each item. The tables include the items that cover the affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of attitude separately.

Table 5: Statistical analysis of affective aspect of attitude statements.

Statements		Participants answers					Statistical indicators		
		SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean scores	Standard deviation	
Affective aspect of attitude	1	I feel more confident of my knowledge in English grammar (tense, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs).	3	14	7	2	1	3.5926	.93064
	2	I am more interested in English grammar now.	6	7	13	1	0	3.6667	.87706
	3	I feel motivated to participate in my grammar classes.	5	10	6	6	0	3.5185	1.05139
	4	The learning atmosphere is relaxing and I feel comfortable.	4	6	13	3	1	3.3333	1.00000

5	When the teacher directs me, I feel less fearful and anxious of grammar (tenses, passivization and modals).	7	10	6	3	1	3.7037	1.10296
6	I would like the teacher to continue this teaching model of teaching English grammar in the future.	4	7	9	5	2	3.2222	1.15470

The above table shows the mean score and standard deviation for statements 1-6 along with the rate of respondents' answers to each item.

The mean score (MS) of the first item 'I feel more confident of my knowledge in English grammar (tense, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs) is (3.5926) with a standard deviation (SD) of (.93064). The result further shows that the majority of the learners; (51.85%) agreed and (11.11%) strongly agreed with the statement and that they felt more confident in their knowledge of tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. However, only a small portion (11.11%) disagreed with the statement while (25.93%) remained neutral. This can be an initial positive sign of the respondents' satisfaction of CG approach they were exposed to in teaching the above-mentioned grammatical phenomena.

The MS of the second item 'I am more interested in English grammar now' is (3.6667) and its SD is (.87706). Only a small fraction (3.70%) disagreed with the statement while the rest of the respondents were equally divided on two equal parts with (48.15%) each, between been neutral on one side and agreeing on the other. This could be interpreted as a positive result of the CG based teaching instructions to almost half of the students that made them express their extra interest in English grammar although a similar number of respondents preferred to choose neutral.

The MS and SD of the third statement 'I feel motivated to participate in my grammar classes' are (3.5185) and (1.05139) respectively. The result reveals that the majority of the students (55.56%) have expressed agreement with the statement while (22.22%) of them disagreed and (22.22%) remained neutral. Given that motivation is pivotal to the language learning process, motivating language learners would be a desirable result that any teaching approach would aim for. Thus this result could again demonstrate the usefulness of the CG-based teaching method for teaching English tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs.

The MS and SD of the fourth statement 'The learning atmosphere is relaxing and I feel comfortable' are (3.3333) and (1.00000) respectively. A total of (22.22%) of the respondents agreed and (14.81%) strongly agreed with the statement while a total of

(14.81%) disagreed. However, (48.15%) of them remained neutral and were unable to agree or disagree that the learning atmosphere is relaxing and comfortable. Their exposure to a completely new way of approaching the meaning of grammatical phenomena combined with visual aids and diagrammatical descriptions for a limited period of time might have been the hindrance that caused the high number of respondents to remain neutral.

However, the MS of item 5 “When the teacher directs me, I feel less fearful and anxious of grammar (tenses, passivization and modals)” is (3.7037) and its SD is (1.10296) which is an indication of the students’ positive attitude. The result also shows that the majority of the respondents (62.97%) agreed with the statement while only (14.81%) disagreed and a total of (22.22%) remained neutral.

The MS of item 6 “I would like the teacher to continue this teaching model of teaching English grammar in the future” is (3.2222) and its SD is (1.15470). The results further show that (40.74%) of the respondents agreed with the statement while a total of (25.93%) disagreed and (33.33%) of them neither agreed nor disagreed. The reason why the statement has not gained the approval of majority of the students could be that it would be better for them to continue with the traditional method of teaching and not be distracted for the remaining year left before they graduate.

The section now turns into the analysis of the statements that deals with the behavioural aspect of attitude shown in the table (6) below.

Table 6: Statistical analysis of behavioural aspect statements

Statements			Participants answers					Statistical indicators	
			SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Behavioural aspect of attitude	7	I have made substantial progress in English grammar, particularly with regard to the tenses, passive sentences and modal auxiliary verbs.	4	14	7	2	0	3.7407	.81300
	8	I am able to clearly explain tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs now.	4	5	16	1	1	3.3704	.92604
	9	I learned some useful grammar strategies in the class.	12	10	3	2	0	4.1852	.92141
	10	I plan to think about meaning first when studying grammar in the future.	16	9	2	0	0	4.4444	.84732

1	1	I am now more familiar with and can write different types of sentence structure quite easily.	7	9	6	5	0	3.6667	1.07417
1	2	I can distinguish between passive and active structures in English better than I did before.	21	5	1	0	0	4.7407	.52569

The above table shows the mean score and standard deviation to the statements 7-12 along with the rate of respondents' answers to each item.

The MS and SD of item (7) "I have made substantial progress in English grammar, particularly with regard to the tenses, passive sentences and modal auxiliary verbs" are (3.7407) and (.81300) respectively which show the students positive attitude. The result also shows that (66.66%) which is the majority of the students agreed with the statement, while (7.41%) of them disagreed and (25.93%) were neutral.

The MS of item 8 "I am able to clearly explain tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs now" is (3.3704) and its SD is (.92604). In addition, the result indicates that (33.33%) of the students agreed with the statement while (7.40%) of them disagreed and a total of (59.26%) of them remained neutral.

The MS of statement 9 "I learned some useful grammar strategies in the class" is (4.1852) and its SD is (.92141). This is a reflection of the students' positive attitude as the result reveals that the majority of them (81.48%) agreed with the statement. Only (7.41%) disagreed and (11.11%) remained neutral.

The MS and SD of item 10 "I plan to think about meaning first when studying grammar in the future" are (4.4444) and (.84732) respectively. This is a strong sign of the respondents' positive attitude as the absolute majority of them (92.59%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement while only a fraction of (7.41%) of them disagreed. This can be an indication that the students have generally appreciated the effectiveness of CG's emphasis on meaning and conceptualization in studying language and grammatical structures.

The MS of item 11 "I am now more familiar with and can write different types of sentence structure quite easily" is (3.6667) and its SD is (1.07417). The result again shows that the majority of the respondents, (59.26%) agreed with the statement, however, (18.52%) of them disagreed and (22.22%) of them remained neutral.

Moreover, the MS and SD of item 12 "I can distinguish between passive and active structures in English better than I did before" are (4.7407) and (.52569) respectively. The result further reflects the students' positive attitude as (96.30%) of them which is an absolute majority, agreed with the statement while (3.70%) of them remained neutral and

no reported disagreements. The section now turns its focus onto the analysis of the last part of the questionnaire, i.e., the statements that cover the cognitive aspect of attitude in table (8) below.

Table 8: Statistical analysis of the cognitive aspect of attitude statements

Statements		Participants answers					Statistical indicators		
		SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean scores	Standard deviation	
Cognitive aspect of attitude	1 3	The teacher's method of teaching encourages me to understand tenses, passivization and modals better.	4	12	10	1	0	3.7037	.77533
	1 4	I can get timely help and encouragement from the classmates and the teacher.	16	5	6	0	0	4.3704	.83887
	1 5	The teacher's consistent feedback and suggestions help me to understand better.	4	11	11	1	0	3.6667	.78446
	1 6	The peers' consistent feedback and suggestions help me to understand better.	11	3	8	4	1	3.7037	1.26536
	1 7	This kind of teaching has helped me to become an independent learner.	7	8	6	5	1	3.5556	1.18754
	1 8	This kind of teaching has developed my ability to communicate and make arguments accurately.	7	6	12	2	0	3.6667	.96077
	1 9	This kind of teaching has improved and developed linguistic accuracy in my writing.	6	11	7	3	0	3.7407	.94432

The above table shows the mean score and standard deviation of the statements 13-19 along with the frequency of respondents' answers to each item.

The MS of the item 13 "The teacher's method of teaching encourages me to understand tenses, passivization and modals better" is (3.7037) and its SD is (.77533). The results show that (59.25%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, however, a total of (37.04%) remained neutral and only (3.70%) disagreed. This again can be interpreted as a sign of the usefulness and effectiveness of CG teaching instructions applied to teaching the grammatical phenomena found in the statement.

The MS and SD of item 14 “I can get timely help and encouragement from the classmates and the teacher” are (4.3704) and (.83887) respectively. The result also indicates that the majority of respondents (77.78%) agreed with the statement. Only (22.22%) of the students remained neutral and no disagreements.

The MS of the item 15 “The teacher’s consistent feedback and suggestions help me to understand better” is (3.6667) and the SD is (.78446). The result reveals the agreement of (55.55%) which comprises the majority of the students with the statement, However, a fraction of (3.70%) disagreed and (40.74%) remained neutral.

The MS and SD of the item 16 “The peers’ consistent feedback and suggestions help me to understand better” are (3.7037) and (1.26536) respectively. The findings suggest that the majority of the respondents (51.85%) agreed with the statement while (18.51%) disagreed and a portion of (29.63%) of them remained neutral.

Further, the MS of the item 17 “This kind of teaching has helped me to become an independent learner” is (3.5556) and the SD is (1.18754). The results also show that the majority of respondents (55.56%) agreed with the statement while (22.22%) of them remained neutral and (22.22%) disagreed. This finding indicates the positive attitude of the students and the effectiveness of CG pedagogical instructions as learners’ independence is one of the important goals that teaching methods in general attempt to achieve.

The MS of the item 18 “This kind of teaching has developed my ability to communicate and make arguments accurately” is (3.6667) and the SD is (.96077). A total of (48.15%) of the students agreed with the statement while (44.44%) of them were neutral and only (7.41%) disagreed. This shows the students’ positive attitude toward CG and their confidence in its teaching instructions in developing their communication skills.

Finally, the MS and SD of item 19 “This kind of teaching has improved and developed linguistic accuracy in my writing” are (3.7407) and (.94432) respectively. This finding shows that more than (62.96%) which is the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement. Only (11.11%) of them disagreed and (25.93%) remained neutral. This can be a further indication of the students’ acknowledgement and appreciation of the effectiveness of CG approach that helped their writing accuracy increase.

4.6 Discussion

Following the presentation and analysis of the data collected from the 27 participants in the experimental group via the attitude questionnaire, this section will discuss the findings and attempt to provide insights and logical justifications for them.

The findings obtained from the questionnaire suggest that a significant majority of the students expressed positive attitudes and had favourable perspectives after receiving the twelve weeks CG based teaching course of the English tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. This could be observed in the overall mean score (3.7680) of the questionnaire and the mean scores of each of its statements that covered the affective,

behavioural and cognitive aspects of attitude which is considered a positive attitude indicator as well as their agreements shown in their responses to most of the statements presented to them.

The reasons behind the students' positive attitude displayed after receiving the CG treatment could be multi-faceted. As a novel applied method of teaching grammatical elements, the aforementioned pedagogical approach might have attracted the students' attention due to its novelty and made them express their appreciation of it. Moreover, the characteristics distinguishing CG descriptions of grammatical phenomena from traditional descriptions of the same elements might have had a crucial role too. Thus, the extra focus the meaning had received during the mentioned course must have been effective and benefitted the students to make the majority of them state that their confidence of their grammar knowledge had increased and were more interested in grammar then.

Other characteristics of CG such as the frequent utilization of visual representations of meaning and diagrammatical explanations to describe the grammatical elements and not concentrating on the rules in a traditional way could have also contributed to their agreement to the item "I feel motivated to participate in my grammar classes" as well as "When the teacher directs me, I feel less fearful and anxious of grammar (tenses, passivization and modals)".

Furthermore, the agreement of the absolute majority of the students with the statement "I can distinguish between passive and active structures in English better than I did before", is strong evidence of their approval and embrace of the pedagogical method tried, i.e., the CG approach, in teaching them passive differently. The respondents have reacted positively to the CG's postulate that meaning determines the choice between passive and active in speech situations and that a passive is an autonomous construction and not a mere derivation from an active structure. The students' endorsement and acceptance of the centrality of meaning have become further evident when an overwhelming majority of them strongly agreed to the statement "I plan to think about meaning first when studying grammar in the future".

In the light of their responses, another factor behind the students' positive attitude towards the CG treatment could be the learning environment the approach had created. This environment has been praised by the respondents as been relaxing, comfortable and encouraging where they can get timely help from their classmates and the teacher. It can also be deduced that the group's motivation and increased interest in English grammar could be partly resulted from this type of environment as the findings in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) suggest that classroom environment could play a pivotal role in fostering students' motivation and raising their learning achievement.

In addition, the impact and the effectiveness of the CG treatment on the students' oral and writing performance is visible through their responses to the statements "This kind of teaching has developed my ability to communicate and make arguments accurately" and

“This kind of teaching has improved and developed linguistic accuracy in my writing” as a significant majority of the students agreed with both of them. Thus, this type of productivity can only be ascribed to a teaching and learning atmosphere which is interactive and exposes students to authentic and meaningful content and actively engaging them in the learning process.

In light of the results from the questionnaire and the positive opinions and favourable perspectives shown by the majority of students, it can be concluded that the respondents generally had positive attitudes towards the application of CG to teaching grammar, especially the grammatical elements of tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. The finding can further suggest that the CG based teaching method is effective in that it can foster students’ motivation and interest in learning, raise their oral and written academic performance, create a less fearful classroom atmosphere and providing students with insights to analyze and understand the structure and meaning of grammatical elements.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The finding in general suggests that the participants had a positive attitude towards the application of CG to teaching English tenses, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. This is reflected in the overall mean score (3.7680) of the questionnaire which shows a high level of agreement with the questionnaire’s items. It can be concluded that the CG pedagogical instructions had a positive impact on the affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects of the Kurdish junior EFL students’ attitude based on their responses to the statements covering those traits. Their mean scores were 3.5062, 4.0247 and 3.7725 for the mentioned aspects respectively which all lie in a high agreement range with the items. It can also be concluded that CG had a positive effect on the confidence of students in English grammar especially in tense, passivization and modal auxiliary verbs. The CG approach has also affected the students’ learning motivation and grammar classroom participation positively. Moreover, the cognitive approach has been a positive factor in basing comprehension of grammar on conceptualization as the respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they will study grammatical structures in the future in terms of their meaning.

Due to the limitations of the current study regarding setting, the number, participants and the duration of its teaching treatment, it can be recommended that further research studies to be conducted using the CG approach to teaching extra grammar topics with larger populations and possibly for longer periods of time before being able to generalize the findings to a wider context. In light of the aforementioned concluding points, it can also be recommended that the CG approach be incorporated into teaching grammar instructions at the tertiary level.

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