Universal Grammar and Second Language Learners

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of Universal Grammar as a model of second language learning by shedding lights on its basic concepts, theoretical considerations, the learning of syntax and vocabulary, and some problems facing UG-based studies (concerning learning and teaching).Some teaching implications are also. A receptive test is administered to 62 university -level students to investigate the availability and resetting of pro-drop parameter in their English (a non pro-drop language) which is different from Arabic (a pro-drop language).Male students were able to reset the properties this parameter better than females which significant role of sex in resetting parameters. Also, the subjects of the test were capable of resetting the properties of this parameter (missing subject, subject-verb inversion, and extracted embedded subjects) different, which reflects that they were unable to perceive these properties as a unified parameter.

1. Introduction

Directly opposed to the behaviourist position is an alternative approach proposed by N. Chomsky; he argued that, as mentioned in Akmajian ,et. al (2001:479), language acquisition cannot be accounted for without positing a linguistically specific system of principles and parameters that every healthy child is genetically endowed with, a system known as Language Acquisition Device (abbreviated as LAD) . In specific words, Chomsky in the 1980s developed, as stated in Fortos (2001:269), a radically different way of looking at grammar[1] which has become popular in recent years; a grammar tries to see what human languages have in common because of the nature of the human mind. This is **Universal Grammar**[2], or **UG**. Cook (2001:34) affirms that

> *Universal Grammar (UG) sees the knowledge of a grammar in the mind as made up of two components: 'principles' that all languages have in common and 'parameters' on which they vary. All human minds are believed to honour the common principles that are forced on them by the nature of the human minds that all their speakers share. They differ over the settings for their parameters for particular languages.*

Ellis (1994:429-435) proved that the theory of UG, as proposed by Chomsky, constitutes the best theory of grammar currently available, because it achieves both descriptive and explanatory adequacy. One of the principles of UG is *structure dependency*. It means that knowledge of language relies on knowing structural relationships in a sentence rather than looking at it as a sequence of words. Furthermore, one of the parameters in UG which may vary, within certain limits, from one language to another, is the *head parameter*. It concerns the position of heads within each phrase: in English, the head is first in a phrase, e.g.: *in my car* (prepositional phrase), whereas in *Japanese*, the head is last, e.g.: *Nihon ni* (Japan in)(see Richards et al., 1992:392-93). The principles and parameters involved are couched in terms of the framework familiar in Chomskyan work of the 1980s, usually known as Government/Binding Theory, or GB. The grammar for a particular language consists of a list of parameter settings rather than of the principles themselves; English has a grammar with the head parameter set one way and with the *pro-drop parameter* set another way; Japanese or Arabic has a grammar with parameters set differently; both incorporate the same language principles. Each is one of the finite number of grammars possible in human languages by setting the parameters of UG in particular ways; human languages are limited to the "finitely many (in fact relatively few) possible core grammars"(Chomsky, 1982:17).

2- UG Model of SL Learning

Much of the work on UG in second language learning has been conducted within the GB framework. Since then, there have changes in linguistic theory; some properties that were determined by principles in GB are handled differently under the Minimalist Approach (or Program). Parameters have gradually become more constrained, being largely associated with variation in the lexicon. In the Minimalist framework, the

computational system is 'given' by UG[3] and is invariant. What varies is properties of the items that enter into the computation (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:258ff).

2.1 Basic Concepts

Some basic concepts of this learning model[4] are mentioned below:

- It is a knowledge model that emphasizes the importance of the individual mind in L2 learning.
- It stresses language as part of the mind.
- It links L2 to current ideas about language and language learning.
- It sees learning as setting parameters from the actual sentences the learners encounter.
- Learning in this model has one side to it, i.e., knowledge, and it makes a distinction between two types of knowledge-the natural or universal knowledge, which is acquired through the faculty of language and the knowledge of language, which can be learnt by other faculties of the mind.

2.2 Theoretical Considerations

According to this model, Cook (2001:117) states that

> ***Learning in the UG model is a straightforward matter of getting the right input. In this theory language input is the evidence out of which the learner constructs knowledge of language. Such evidence can be either positive or negative****.*

Cook (ibid.) gives examples and an explanation of what he means by "positive evidence" and "negative evidence". His argument is as follows: 'The train leaves London at five' is the actual sentence that the learners hear. This is an example of the "positive evidence", which, according to Cook, is sufficient to show the learners how to deduce facts about English grammar. In other words, the information provided by this example allows the learners to deduce that in English "subjects come before verbs; and verbs come before objects and prepositions come before nouns." The other type of evidence is the negative one. Cook argues that:

Negative evidence has two types. Because learners never hear certain kinds of sentences, say sentences without subjects in English such as 'leaves', they deuce that English sentences must have subjects...The other type of negative evidence is correction: 'No you mustn't say you was here' you must say 'you were here'…Negative evidence can be used to work out what does not occur in the second language but might be expected to occur if it were like the first(ibid.).

For instance, Arabic learners listening to English realize on the basis of the sentence input that English doesn't have subjectless sentences, called nominal sentences in Arabic, but their languages do. Finally, Imssalem ,in her observations on the possibility of applying this model to Libyan students, noticed that the input could be made more learnable by highlighting various sentences of the language (2001:213).The researcher goes further to develop Cook's representation of this model of learning by adding Imssalem's view on L2 grammar:
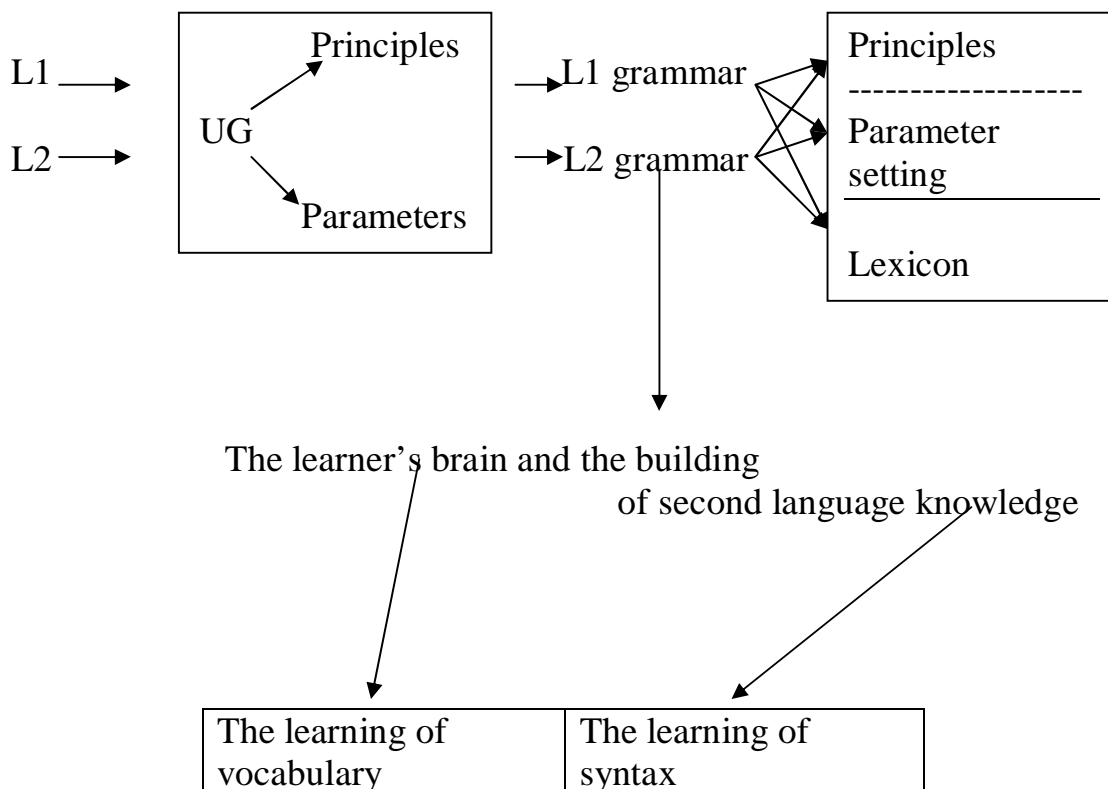
Three points can be stated concerning this diagram:
- i-   Through her work on Libyan students, Imssalem believed that principles should be initiated fully in L1 grammar, but

parameter settings could be revised as far as L2 grammar acquisition is concerned.

ii-   The researcher himself finds out ,after consulting the relevant literature , that Lexicon is added only in the final version of UGF ,namely the Minimalist Programme, especially when Chomsky himself starts believing that "language leaning is now reduced to the learning of the properties of vocabulary" (see Cook,2001:184).

iii-   The sources for L2 grammar are more than those for L1 grammar, "since students nowadays tend to have more than one second language" (Akmajian, et. al. ,2001:218).

UG also provides basis for markedness. The degree of markedness depends on whether a feature is part of the "core" or the "periphery". The core features are those that are governed by UG while peripheral features are those that are not. Core features are considered "unmarked" because they require minimal evidence for acquisition, learning ,and even teaching, whereas peripheral features are considered "marked" because they require much more substantial evidence. Parameter settings can be ordered according to how marked they are. Thus, linguists, like Hymas (cited in Ellis,1994:432) consider pro-drop to be unmarked in relation to non-pro-drop.

2.3 The Learning of Syntax

The L2 learning of syntax has turned out to be wider and deeper than anyone supposed. Teaching has to pay attention to the internal processes and knowledge the students are subconsciously building up in their minds. Learners start from their L1 setting-not from scratch. For example, Arab learners might assume initially that subjects are not needed; adding particles can do negative and interrogative and verbs must have particular conjunction as a marker of subject-verb concord. They have access to the systems of principles and parameters via their L1, i.e., Arabic.

Principles and Parameters Theory puts grammar on a different plane from anything in language teaching. Hence teachers will not find any quick help with carrying out conventional grammar teaching from such forms of grammar. But they will nevertheless understand better what the students are learning and the processes through which they are going.

Two key studies in this respect were Zobl & Liceras (1994) and Goldschneider & Dekeyser (2001) where a unified theoretical account of the L1 and L2 morpheme orders .They switched attention from description to explanation, drawing on insights provided by Chomsky's Principles & Parameters Model of UG, by focusing on the factors that accounted for the accuracy order (see Ellis,2005:76).

2.4 The Learning of Vocabulary

Vocabulary learning is central to language acquisition, whether first, second, or foreign. Although vocabulary has not always been recognized as a priority in language teaching, interest in its role in L2 learning, as stated by DeCarrico (2001:285-87) has grown rapidly in recent years. According to Cook, "grammar provides the overall patterns, vocabulary the material to put in the patterns" (2001:37). The learning of vocabulary does not mean learning individual words one at a time and knowing only their dictionary meaning or pronunciation. Learning how they behave in a sentence is also involved. Cook (ibid.: 119) adds that

> *It is not just a matter of the beginner in English*
> *learning the syntax, function and meaning of .*
> *He plays football', it is learning that in English*
> *the verb 'play' needs to be followed by a noun*
> *phrase.*

Even the acquisition of grammatical morpheme such as past tense (-ed) is considered a matter of acquiring the phrases within which these morphemes can function and these parameter settings that go with them

As mentioned above, the Minimalist Programme introduces some ideas concerning the central importance of vocabulary in language acquisition and learning. L2 learning is thus acquisition of L2 lexical entries with their associated parameter settings. This is clear in the following parameters (Cook, 1996:318-25,347) :

1- The *lexical parameterisatin hypothesis* which claims that parameters are part of the lexicon.
2- The *functional parameterisation hypothesis* is that who are attached to functional phrases, which have their own entries in the lexicon: the lexicon is thus an extended system with entries of two types.
3- *Inflection-driven*. Grammatical inflections are added in the lexicon and 'checked' in the syntax.

2.5 Problems Facing the Methodology of UG-Based Studies

SL researchers need to address several methodological issues concerning the methodology of UG-based studies, or learning and/or teaching principles and parameters:

i- How to ensure that the learners (or subjects) have the requisite level of L2 proficiency to demonstrate whether or not a particular principle is operating in their interlanguage grammar. Many of the principles identified and developed by UG grammarians, Like Chomsky, White, and Cook involve complex sentences, and can therefore be expected to manifest themselves in the later stages of development.

ii- The need to rule out the effects of the L1. If learners act in accordance with UG, this might be because they have direct access to its contents, as the head parameter for Arabic learners and pro-drop for English learners, or because they have indirect access through their L1. Thus, as Ellis (ibid.:443) believes, it is very necessary to investigate learners with L1s that do not manifest the specific principles in question. Luckily, this is possible, as the literature has proved, because not all UG principles operate in all languages on the one hand, and studies done concentrated on one principle or parameter in two or three languages as in Zobl & Liceras (1994) and Goldschneider & Dekeyser (2001) studies on the other. For example the principle of Subjacency does not operate in Wh-questions in languages like Chinese, Japanese, Korean ,and even Arabic. Thus , if learners of these languages manifest it, this provide clear evidence that they (i.e., learners) are acting in accordance with UG constraints- showing that they are obtaining knowledge of this principle through formal instruction.

iii- The most controversial methodological issues in UG-based studies concerns what kind of L2 data to collect. This is problematic because of the need to obtain information about learners' competence rather than their ability to perform specific structures. There is also the difficulty of obtaining samples of language use that contain the kinds of complex sentences or structures needed to investigate most principles and parameters. For both these reasons, elicited data and tests, as Ellis (ibid.) stated, have been preferred.

3. Teaching Implications

According to Cook (1991:185), this model has three teaching implications as far as classroom teaching is concerned:

- There is no need to teach principles because they are universal and exist in all human languages.
- We should design optimum input for triggering parameters.
- The teaching of vocabulary items with specifications of how they can occur in grammatical structures is important.

Although this model provides some insight into language teaching, its application to classroom teaching is very limited. The act of trust, that providing single sentence input, or highlighting groups of unrelated sentences which are similar only in structure, helping the learner to construct a grammar that fits the word order 'facts' of English, is unobtainable. To Katamba (1993:8-10)this model assumes that the L1 and L2 learners make very clever guesses or hypotheses about the rules of the grammar(syntactic, morphological ,and phonological properties)being acquired on the basis of rules already acquired after experience of a particular language. This idea is illustrated when Cook (op.cit.) examines The Cambridge English Course *Changes* (Swan &Walter, 1984), and argues that everything necessary to set the parameter for the absence of subjectless sentences and the presence of dummy subjects such as *it* and *there* in English are introduced in the first weeks of the course. He finds in the above course the following:

- Unit 5: 'There's an armchair in the living room'
- Unit 7: ' There's some water in the big field'
- Unit 9: 'It rains from January to March'
         ' It' ll cloud over tomorrow'
          'There will be snow'
- Unit 10: 'It's a man'

Imssalem (2001:215) doubts that this type of input provides enough information for the learners to predict the structure of the language. The only information that it might provide, she affirms, is that these structures exist in language. Also this type of input cannot provide the unconscious knowledge that the learners need in order to put language into use. And this suggests that L2 acquisition is the product of an interaction between the learners' internal mechanisms and the input, forming as Ellis (2005:71) states, learner's "interlanguage". Cook (2001:183f) tries to supplement an answer to a raised question: "What could parameters mean for teachers and teaching?" From the above-stated example, he believes, including the researcher himself, , that this theory of UG allows the students to find out whether the setting should be "pro-drop" or " non-pro-drop". It is hard to imagine language teaching not reflecting these two

aspects of the "pro-drop parameter" , just as it is ,likely to say, hard for any small sample of speech not to use all the phonemes of English. Furthermore, pedagogically speaking, this type of input is characteristic of a descriptive grammar, where the sentence is the basic unit. To Imssalem (opcit.), many learners' errors are attributer to this type of input. Cook has affirmed this idea earlier as follows:

> ***The UG principles are not learnt; the parameters
> setting probably need little attention. Any view of
> the whole L2 learning system has to take on
> board more than UG. Classroom L2 teaching
> must also include many aspects of language that
> it does not cover*** (1991:84).

Thus, as the UG in the student's mind is so powerful, there is comparatively little for teachers to do. Quite advanced students still differ from native speakers when the first and the second language have different settings for parameters. Hence, teacher's awareness of parameter resetting can be very helpful. Also, syllabuses for language teaching that use grammar need to accommodate such basic syntactic rules, i.e. "pro-drop" and "non-pro-drop" settings, if only to indicate to teachers which areas they can avoid teaching.

4- A Receptive Test

4.1 Administration of the Test

The present study tries to investigate the application of UG to SLA by testing its availability in L2 learners. An often cited example of such a parameter is the "pro-drop parameter", which specifies that languages vary regard to whether they allow the deletion pronouns in subject position, together with related phenomena such as inversion of subject and verb. For Iraqi learners, English does not have pro-drop [- PD] because a subject is required for every sentence and the subject cannot be inverted with the verb in declarative sentences. However, Arabic, which as a pro-drop language [+PD], allow empty subjects and subject-verb inversion in declarative sentences, does utilize the parameter.

The receptive test is a copy of L. White (1985) used to test the availability of this parameter in Spanish learners of English, since Spanish is [-PD] parameter. This test consists of (30) items: (17)

items are incorrect, while the other (13) are correct. Only incorrect sentences will be treated and analyzed (see Appendix below).Testing was carried out by means of a grammaticality judgment task (or GJT) Subjects were given a list of (30) items: (17) are incorrect and the other (13) are correct. To White (1985:53) the decision as to correctness versus incorrectness of the test sentences was the experimenter's. The subjects are asked to read the test carefully and then tick two choices ; one for the two options 'correct' and 'incorrect' while the other for the other two options 'sure' and 'not sure'.

There were six ungrammatical sentences with missing subjects (or null-subjects), for example:

 - John is greedy. Eats like an animal. (No. 22 in the test)

Of these six sentences, two had expletive *it* missing, while the rest required personal pronouns such as <u>he</u> and <u>she</u>. There were five sentences with ungrammatical subject-verb inversion, for example:

-    Slept the baby for three hours. (No. 13 in the test)

There were two ungrammatical sentences where the subject of an embedded clause had been questioned, with the complementizer *that* in its position, for example:

 - Which movie do you think that will be on TV this evening? (No. 19 in the test)

In addition, there were three grammatical sentences with *that* correctly omitted , on the assumption that Arabic subjects might actually insert that in such cases, for example:

-    Who do you believe will be the next president of the USA?(No. 28 in the test)

Three modifications are made on White's version:
i-   White's version consists of (31) items with two options: correct or incorrect. In the present version, the number is decreased to (30) only.
ii-   White asked her Spanish subjects to correct the incorrect, while in this study students are asked to select if they are sure

or not sure of their ability of correcting the incorrect sentences ,as Valero-Garćes did (1997:151ff).

iii-   Some words are replaced, like using (an animal) instead of (a pig).

4.2 The Subjects

For this purpose, a receptive test is administered to 62 University- level students in the Department of Translation, in 3/3/2009. The male and female subjects are from the first three stages in the department .The reason behind this selection is related to the types of courses which make the learners in use of both their native and second languages, namely, Arabic and English, respectively. The following table illustrates the description of he test's subjects:

Table (1): Description of the Test's Subjects

Year / Sex	First	Second	Third
Male	9	10	10
Female	13	10	10
Total	22	20	20
	62		

4.3 Test's Validity and Reliability

Like other researchers adopted this test, the face validity and content validity are already obtained. Nevertheless, two experts are asked to judge the face validity of the used test. For reliability, the following Kuder-Richardson Formula is used (Valette, 1977:53):

$$\text{Reliability coefficient} = 1 - \frac{M(n-M)}{N(SD)^2}$$

where : M =mean , N = number of items, and SD = standard deviation.

By applying the statistical process, the value of reliability was found to be (0.686) with a correlation coefficient of (66.03) which indicates clearly that the test is highly reliable.

4,4 Hypotheses of the Test

Two hypotheses are set for this test:

Hypothesis No (1): Iraqi university level Female and male students will be different in resetting this parameter, which reflects the role of sex.
Hypothesis No (2):   Since the three properties of this parameter are different, Iraqi university-level students will reset these properties (missing subjects, subject-verb inversion, and extracted embedded subjects) differently.

4.5 Analysis and Results

The tables and figures below show clearly the performance of subjects in the three categories of pro-drop parameter. MS Excel and SPSS version (14.0) are used.

Table (2): Subjects' Actual Performance for Null - Subject Incorrect
            Sentences

S/Y	Op	Correct		Incorrect		Sure		Not sure	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
2	1st	4	5	9	4	7	2	2	2
	2nd	7	2	3	8	2	7	1	1
	3rd	2	5	8	5	5	5	3	0
4	1st	6	6	7	3	4	2	3	1
	2nd	1	0	9	10	3	6	6	4
	3rd	2	2	8	8	3	7	5	1
8	1st	3	3	10	6	9	5	1	1
	2nd	4	2	6	8	5	7	1	1
	3rd	3	2	7	8	5	7	2	1
21	1st	6	3	7	6	7	5	0	1
	2nd	3	3	7	7	5	5	2	2
	3rd	4	3	6	7	4	6	2	1
22	1st	6	6	7	3	4	2	3	1
	2nd	4	3	6	7	2	2	4	5
	3rd	3	1	7	9	5	7	2	2
30	1st	5	3	8	6	7	4	1	2
	2nd	3	1	7	9	5	7	2	2
	3rd	4	1	6	9	6	8	0	1
Total		70	51	128	123	88	94	40	29
%		18.8	13.7	34.4	33.1				
Total		372 (100%)							

Figure (1): Representation of Incorrect Option for Female and Male
Subjects for Missing Subject
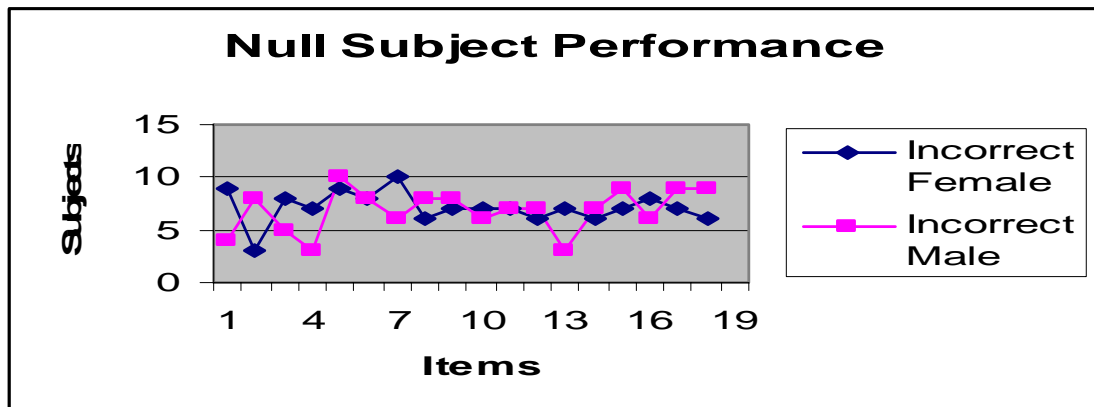
Table (3): Subjects' Actual Performance for Subject-Verb Inversion
Sentences

Op S/Y		Correct		Incorrect		Sure		Not sure	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
5	1st	1	2	12	8	9	3	3	5
	2nd	4	3	6	7	2	6	4	1
	3rd	4	3	6	7	6	7	0	1
11	1st	4	2	9	8	5	4	4	4
	2nd	4	1	6	9	1	5	5	4
	3rd	2	3	8	7	6	7	2	0
13	1st	2	1	11	9	9	7	2	2
	2nd	4	2	6	8	6	8	0	0
	3rd	2	0	8	10	7	10	1	0
15	1st	2	2	11	8	10	4	1	4
	2nd	1	0	9	10	5	9	4	1
	3rd	1	1	9	9	6	9	3	0
27	1st	5	3	8	7	7	2	1	5
	2nd	3	1	7	9	2	3	5	6
	3rd	2	3	8	7	5	6	3	1
Total		41	27	123	123	85	90	38	34
%		13.3	8.5	39.1	39.1				
Total		314 (100%)							

Figure (2): Representation of Incorrect Option for Female and Male
Subjects for subject- Verb Inversion
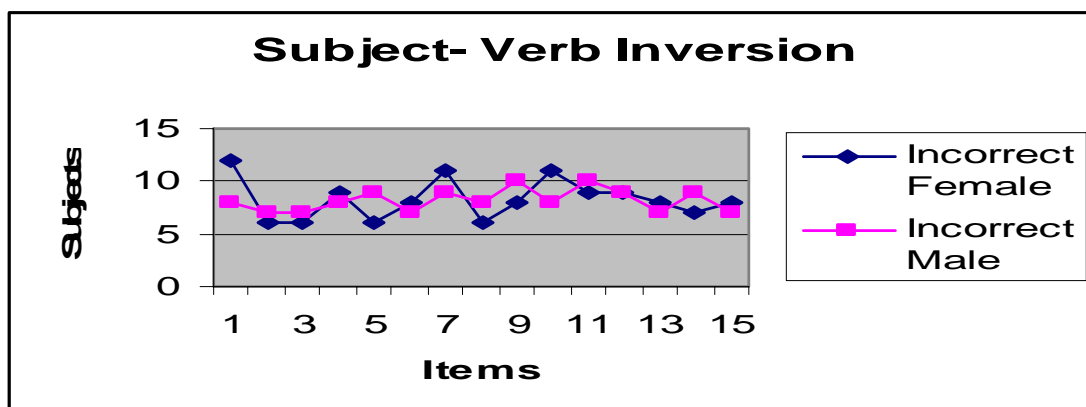
Table (4): Subjects' Actual Performance for Extracted Embedded
Subjects Sentences

S/Y	Op	Correct		Incorrect		Sure		Not sure	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
10	1st	11	5	2	4	1	3	1	1
	2nd	4	4	6	6	3	5	3	1
	3rd	7	9	3	1	2	1	1	0
17	1st	9	1	4	8	3	6	1	2
	2nd	6	2	4	8	3	5	1	3
	3rd	4	3	6	7	4	6	2	1
18	1st	7	4	6	5	4	5	2	0
	2nd	2	1	8	9	4	9	4	0
	3rd	5	3	5	7	3	5	2	2
19	1st	9	5	4	4	3	3	1	1
	2nd	7	3	3	7	2	5	1	2
	3rd	10	6	0	4	0	3	0	1
24	1st	11	7	2	2	2	0	0	2
	2nd	8	8	2	2	1	1	1	1
	3rd	5	8	5	2	3	2	2	0
28	1st	13	4	0	5	0	4	0	1
	2nd	6	8	4	2	2	1	2	1
	3rd	7	10	3	0	2	0	1	0
Total		131	91	67	83	42	64	25	19
%		35.2	24.4	18.1	22.3				
Total		372(100%)							

Figure (3): Representation of Incorrect Option for Female and Male
Subjects for subject- Verb Inversion
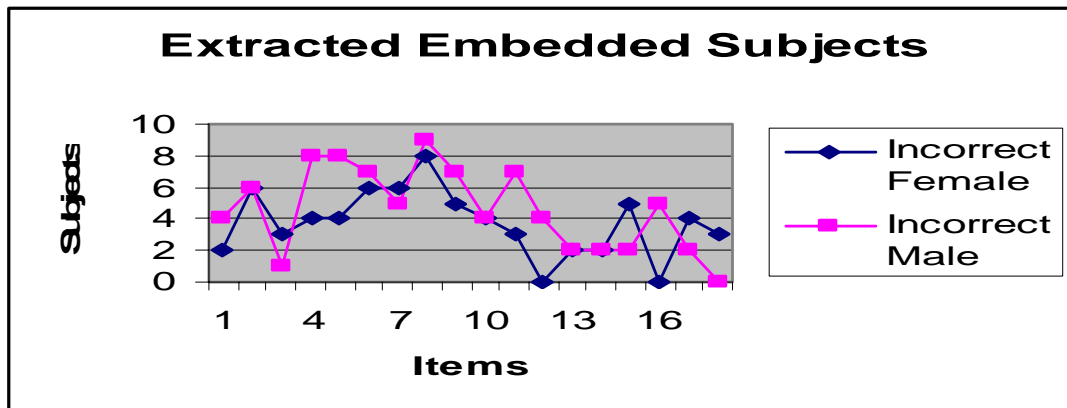
The following tables sums up the statistical analysis of the incorrect
options in the above three tables:

Table (5): Descriptive Statistics

Pro-drop / sex	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Missing subject Female	18	3,00	10,00	7,1111	1,52966
Missing subject Male	18	3,00	10,00	6,8333	2,06512
S-V Inversion Female	15	6,00	12,00	8,2667	1,94447
S-V Inversion Male	15	7,00	10,00	8,2000	1,08233
Extr-Embbed Female	18	,00	8,00	3,7222	2,10896
Extra Embbded Male	18	,00	9,00	4,6111	2,70379

Table (6) : One-Sample Test

Pro-drop / sex	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Missing subject Female	19,723	17	,000	7,11111	6,3504	7,8718
Missing subject Male	14,039	17	,000	6,83333	5,8064	7,8603
S-V Inversion Female	16,466	14	,000	8,26667	7,1899	9,3435
S-V Inversion Male	29,343	14	,000	8,20000	7,6006	8,7994
Extr-Embed Female	7,488	17	,000	3,72222	2,6735	4,7710
Extra Embbded Male	7,236	17	,000	4,61111	3,2666	5,9557

Table (7): Test for Model Goodness of Fit

Chi-Square	Value	1,441
	df	1
	Sig	,230
Log of Determinant of	Unconstrained Matrix	2,252
	Constrained Matrix	2,345

Under the parallel model assumption

Table (8): Comparison of female and Male Percentages

Year	Missing Subject				Subject-Verb Inversion				Extracted Embedded			
	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%
1st	48	37.5	28	22.7	51	41.4	40	32.5	18	26.8	28	33.7
2nd	38	29.6	49	40.4	35	28.4	43	35	27	40.2	34	40.9
3rd	42	32.9	46	36.9	39	30.2	40	32.5	22	33	21	25.4
Total	128	100	123	100	123	100	123	100	67	100	83	100

The following points can be revealed from this table:
1- 2nd Male subjects were able to reset this pro-drop parameter than other stages .This reflects that study has partial role in resetting parameters as far as the subjects of the study are concerned.

2- Generally speaking, Male subjects were better than Female subjects in the parameter under study.

3- For missing subjects :
  i-   1st Females were better than males.
  ii-   2nd Males were better than Females.
  iii- 3rd Males were better than Females.

4- For subject –verb inversion:
  i-   1st Females were better than Males.
  ii-   2nd Males were better than Females.
  iii- 3rd Males were better than Females.

5- For Extracted Embedded subjects:
  i-   1st Males were better than Females.
  ii-   2nd Males were better than Females.
  iii- 3rd Females were better than Males.

6- Sex has proved to be significant in resetting this parameter since Males were able to identify the incorrect options better than Females , which reflect their success to reset this pro-drop parameter from their Arabic (a pro-drop language) into English (as a non pro-drop language). This leads to conclude that Arabic parameters influence relatively Iraqi learners of English as a second language at least for a while, leading to transfer errors.

7- With reference to Tables (2, 3, and 4), Iraqi university- level students are able to reset this parameter partially since the percentages of correct options are considerable.

8- With reference to Tables (2, 3, 4, and 8), Iraqi university – level students are able to reset missing subjects and subject-verb inversion better than the third part of this parameter , namely extracted embedded subjects. Thus, the subjects of the study did not appear to see the three properties as a unified parameter.

9- With reference to Tables (2 , 3, and 4), Males were able to correct these incorrect sentences better than Females. This supports the study conclusion concerning the role of sex in resetting parameters.

Conclusions

1- This approach to grammar affects the nature of interlanguage – the knowledge of the second language in the learner's mind. This will present few limits on how learner's interlanguage grammars

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develop Their source (of knowledge) might be partly the learners '
L1, partly their learning strategies, partly other sources.

2- Vocabulary should be taught not as tokens with isolated meanings, but as items that play a part in the sentence by dictating what structures and words they may go with in the sentence.

3- Linguists agree that the application of UG in classroom teaching is limited.

4- Iraqi university-level students are capable of resetting the three properties of the pro-drop parameter differently, which reflects in turn that they are unable to perceive these properties as a unified parameter. This proves the validity of the second hypothesis of the test.

5- Male students proved to be better in resetting this parameter than Females which reflects in turn that sex has played a significant role in this issue. This proves in turn the validity of the first hypothesis of the test.

6- Resetting Arabic non pro-drop parameter into an English version is not such difficult task even results proved the existence of transfer (or interference) errors.

Notes

1- Pinker (1994:238f) states that Chomsky's Universal Grammar is like an archetypal body plan or common plan of syntactic, morphological, and phonological rules and principles, with a small set of varying parameters. An example is the ***Pro-drop parameter*** (Cook, 1996:348):
Pro-drop parameter
whether a language allows null subject or not
-depends on whether INFL is proper governor (GB)
-depends on morphological uniformity (B)
-depends on whether affixes are generated in the syntax or in the lexicon (MP)
See Katamba (1993:56,158f).

2- UG is sometimes substituted by "mental grammar" (see Fortos, 2001: 269).Katamba(1993:9,)states that UG is a system containing "a finite set of switches, each one of which has a restricted number of positions".

3- Pinker, commenting on Chomsky's recent theories, states that most of the key features of Syntactic Structures approach have now been abandoned; deep structure has shrunk and virtually disappeared and the idea of transformation has been abandoned; while language is still regarded, in a broad sense, as a generative process. Chomsky has

moved from a system which placed exclusive emphasis on syntax to one which begins to recognize the importance also of lexicon, moving from the transformational-generative approach to Government / Binding to Principles and Parameters (1994:85-114).

4- In the 1980s, researchers raise more UG-specific questions: Is UG available or accessible to L2 learners? In other words does interlanguage show evidence of being constrained by principles of UG? A number of principles were investigated, such as *Subjaceny*,the *Empty Category Principle (ECP)* and *Binding Principle A*. The assumption was that if you can show that a particular UG principle operates/does not operate then this generalizes to other principles, hence to UG availability/non-availability in general. (White, 1989:40-43). White's own opinion is that UG is an answer to a bigger question: what are natural language grammars like?

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Appendix
The Receptive Test

Stage :   Sex:

Dear Student,

　　Please read the following sentences carefully, and then state whether they are correct or incorrect. If incorrect, state whether you are sure to be able to correct them or not as in the following example

- John was able help them in this problem.

 a- correct　　　　b- incorrect　　　　c- sure　　d- not sure

ex	a	

1- They had been here for three years.
2-We will be late for school if don't take this bus.
3- Mr. Jones was a very intelligent merchant.
4- Seems that Fred is unhappy.
5- The policemen didn't know when did escape the prisoner.
6-David will marry Nancy next month.
7- Looking for their faults is very difficult.
8-My sister is very tired because came home late last night.
9- That movie made Jane afraid.
10- Who do you think will win the race?
11- There looked a stranger man through the window.
12- Helping others is important.
13- Slept the baby for two hours.
14-The troubles that the baby did last night were amusing.
15- Walked the boy very far.
16- He kept them outside the house.
17-Who did you say that arrived late?
18- Which man did she hope would marry her?
19- Which movie do you think that will be on TV this evening?
20-Which books do you prefer?
21- Francis is in trouble because did not do his homework.
22- John is greedy. Eats like an animal.
23- Stop doing these things, boys!
24- What program did you say that John watched last night?
25-Keep silent , please!
26-I did a good job in the exam.
27- The mailman came. Have arrived three letters.
28- Who do you believe will be the next president of the USA?
29- Stay in home ,please!
30- Is raining very hard today.

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