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The Knowledge Base of Bilingual EFL Teacher Cognition in Grammar

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Abstract

In foreign language education, research into grammar teaching has focused more on 'how to teach' than 'what to teach'. However, given the fact that teachers are the major mediators of what and how students learn and that, in contrast to an ESL context, explicit grammar teaching becomes inevitable in an EFL context, teacher cognition in grammar knowledge base assumes greater importance. This study examined the knowledge base component of bilingual EFL teachers' cognition in grammar, that is, teacher knowledge of grammatical concepts which are compatible with modern linguistics and considered essential for explicit grammar teaching. A grammar awareness test was administered to bilingual EFL teachers from colleges and universities. The data was coded and submitted to statistical analysis. The findings of the study revealed that two areas – identification of word function and style differentiation of grammar usage – remained the most problematic. It is suggested that teacher cognition be enriched by incorporating linguistic insights into language teacher education for better teaching performance and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Language education, Grammatical concepts, Teacher cognition, EFL context

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1. Introduction

In the field of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), grammar typically constitutes a major component of language education, and much of the research effort has been devoted to it (Borg & Burns, 2008). In an EFL context, grammar teaching is mostly explicit and mainly "involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it" (Ellis, 2006, p. 84). This definition implies what a grammar teacher must know: (a) grammar teacher must be able to understand and explain grammatical concepts (Ellis, 2006). That is, teacher metalinguistic understanding encompasses not only declarative knowledge (the knowledge regarding grammatical content) but also procedural knowledge (the ability to work with this knowledge) (Moseley et al., 2005).The declarative knowledge should unite the concepts from traditional grammar and modern linguistic theory. The procedural knowledge should go beyond the traditional rules of thumb and involve linguistic reasoning employed to describe the language reality, for instance, constructing an analogous example of a given sentence, topicalizing constituents or verifying whether a certain element can be omitted (Van Rijt et al, 2019) ; (b) teacher metalinguistic knowledge must include both formal and functional aspects of grammar because learners need to know not only how to form constructions and what they mean, but when to use them in appropriate contexts as well (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016; Spolsky, 2002). Grammar teacher needs to be able to analyze how lexical items and structures come together to make meaningful relations; (c) grammar teacher must be scrupulous about his/her understanding of both subject matter and its instruction because teacher cognition mediates between learner and subject matter, and thus bears directly on learner understanding (cf. Borg, 2003; Larsen-Freeman, 2000a; Mullock, 2006; Richards, 1994; Shulman, 1987).

Although upgrading teacher knowledge base is central to enriching grammar teaching, teachers in general tend to adopt traditional grammar's rules of thumb (cf. Berry, 2015) instead of recent linguistic insights which challenge the static nature of traditional grammar (Van Rijt & Coppen, 2017), and could prove invaluable to grammar teaching by providing teachers with a deeper understanding of issues of learnability (Hudson, 2004; Hudson & Walmsley, 2005; Rankin & Whong, 2020; Spolsky & Hult, 2010; Mulder, 2007, 2011; Giovanelli & Clayton, 2016; Van Rijt & Coppen, 2017). A main reason for the existing gap between linguistic theory and grammar education is that grammar teachers encounter terminological proliferation in linguistics, thus viewing it as 'abstruse and irrelevant' (Hudson, 2010, p. 53). The observation that a great variety of grammatical terms and their inconsistent use limit clarity on matters of metalanguage has led many to express the need for a common metalanguage for grammar education (e.g. Hudson, 2007; Macken-Horarik, Love, & Unsworth, 2011; Mulder, 2011). Consequently, language teaching faces the paradox of aiming at enabling learners to use the target language accurately, meaningfully and appropriately under the communicative paradigm, but sticking to the traditional form-focused approach consisting of decontextualized parsing exercises. This mismatch between the language education and linguistics needs to be addressed for improving grammar teaching practice. In line with this, researchers have argued that bridging the gap between linguistic theory and L1 grammar education can solve the problem of a limited conceptual understanding of grammar (e.g. Hudson, 2004; Mulder, 2010; VanRijt &

Coppen, 2017). The relevance of such studies can extend well to grammar teaching in an EFL context. For instance, the linguistic concepts of valency/argument structure and semantic roles can be used to distinguish between obligatory and non-obligatory syntactic elements in a sentence (i.e., the difference between complements and adjuncts).

When modern linguistic theory is turned to for enriching traditional grammar, the question arises which concepts are suitable for this enrichment. Different linguistic schools (e.g. generative linguistics, cognitive/construction grammar, SFL) emphasize different aspects of sentence-level linguistics, holding different views on language acquisition and structure. To avoid adhering to any one particular linguistic school, and to benefit from the full width of modern linguistic theory, Van Rijt and Coppen (2017) have conducted a Delphi study among linguistic experts from different backgrounds. Notwithstanding the breadth and depth of modern linguistics, the study limited the investigation to the syntax-semantics interface because traditional, form-focused school grammar is mainly located at this level, both in L1 grammar education (cf. Watson 2015) and in L2 contexts (cf. Graus & Coppen, 2015). The study provided a consensus among linguistic experts, identifying 24 important concepts both for linguistics and for educational purposes: word order, syntactic functions, constituent structure, main syntactic categories (NP/VP/AP/PP), complementation /modification, negation, recursion, word structure, predication, definiteness, semantic roles, idiomatic connections, sentence types, modality, agreement, case, locality, information structure, aspect, compositionality, grammaticalization, tense, animacy and valency. Van Rijt et al. (2018) argue that a better conceptual understanding of grammar can be achieved by making these (theory-neutral) metaconcepts the target of gram-mar learning and instruction, with the important caveat that these concepts should not be used to completely replace the traditional grammatical terminology, but that they should instead be related to concepts from traditional grammar education (see also Mulder, 2010).

1.2. The current study

Although there is some clarity on what linguists consider important, the question remains which concepts grammar teachers draw on and how 'linguistic' these concepts are (cf. Van Rijt, de Swart & Coppen, 2019). Grammar teachers' knowledge base has been at the forefront of research in language teacher cognition, which aims at "the unobservable dimension of language teaching" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). This research line has emphasized the relevance of grammar teachers' cognition to learners' development of grammar skills (Borg, 2015). Although the collective research efforts within this domain have contributed critical insights into language-teaching mind (see Borg, 2019; Burns, Larsen-Freeman & Edwards, 2015; Li, 2020), limited progress has been achieved in addressing certain areas (Larsen-Freeman, 2000a; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015; Pawlak, 2007). Despite its relevance, grammar teachers' metalinguistic knowledge base including both formal and functional aspects has received little attention in EFL contexts. Most of the studies on language teacher cognition have been conducted in a monolingual situation and little attention has been paid to bilingual context which, the researcher assumes, has its own pedagogical implications. In the Pakistani context, bilingual teacher cognition has gone almost unnoticed, and consequently there is a lack of concrete framework in the field of language teacher education, which seriously constrains our

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ability to make informed proposals about how the development of EFL teachers can be effectively supported. In response to this gap, the present study intends to explore the bilingual EFL teacher cognition about knowledge base in English grammar with the aim of answering the following questions:

1. What is the typical cognition of bilingual (Urdu and English) EFL teachers in grammar knowledge base?
2. Which aspect of bilingual EFL teachers' grammar knowledge base is stronger than others and which one is weaker than others?

2. Teacher Cognition and Grammar

Teacher cognition refers to the knowledge base and belief system which a teacher brings to the classroom (Borg, 1998a, 2003, 2013, 2015; Burns & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2002; Woods, 1996). Teacher cognition research is about understanding what teachers think, know and believe, and its primary concern, therefore, lies with the unobservable dimension of teachers' mental lives (Borg, 2006a). The key factor in the growth of this research tradition has been the realization that since teachers are the major mediators of what and how students learn, we cannot properly understand teaching without understanding the thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs that influence what teachers do (Borg, 2009), and teachers cannot become change agents unless an inner change takes place in them at belief level (Siddiqui, 2007). Given that teachers make instructional choices by drawing on a complex and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs, the key questions addressed in teacher cognition research, according to (Borg, 2003), include (a) what do teachers have cognitions about?, (b) how do these cognitions develop?, (c) how do they interact with teacher learning?, and (d) how do they interact with classroom practice?

The study of teacher cognition as a tradition of research in language education is a recent development (Borg, 2006b). Research studies on language teacher cognition assume that an explicit understanding of language structure is essential for effective teaching, and suggest the need for developing trainees' declarative knowledge about language because knowledge base informs pedagogical practice due to symbiotic relationships between teacher cognition and classroom practice (Andrews, 1999; Borg, 1998a, 2001, 2003, 2015; Breen, 2001; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Freeman & Richards, 1996; MacDonald, Badger & White, 2001; Peacock, 2001; Richards, Ho & Giblin, 1996; Shuib, 2009). Turning to language teacher cognition about grammar, the studies by Borg (1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2001), and Johnston and Goettsch (2000), among others, describe real classroom events and use them as the basis of discussions with teachers through which teachers' emic (i.e., insider) perspectives on grammar are made explicit. Teachers' knowledge of grammar as well as how confident they are about that knowledge influence the instructional decisions they make when teaching it (Borg, 2001; Andrews, 2007). Borg (2001) compared two experienced EFL teachers and found that one teacher was generally confident in his own knowledge about grammar, and this was reflected in his willingness to conduct impromptu grammar work. The second teacher rarely conducted

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grammar work unless he was prepared. A fear of not knowing the answer, triggered by a negative experience much earlier in his career, was the main influence behind this stance. There seems to be a general consensus among language teachers that formal teaching of grammar contributes to the learners' language proficiency (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Chia, 2003), yet many studies question the teacher cognition about grammar in EFL contexts. Andrews (1994) concluded that more than 50% of the trainees had inadequate levels of grammatical awareness. Shuib (2009) came up with the similar findings in his study of primary school teachers' grammatical awareness. The study revealed that the primary school teachers had gaps in their knowledge of grammar, especially in metalanguage production and error correction tasks. Myhill (2010) points to a need for development of metalinguistic knowledge in English language teachers and for further research on student acquisition of such knowledge.

Much current research, as Borg (2003) points out, has been conducted with native speaker teachers working with small groups of motivated adult learners. In contrast, there is a little insight into non-native settings where English is taught by non-native teachers to large classes of learners who may not be studying the language voluntarily. Also, overlooking non-native English-speaking teachers in non-native settings narrows down the scope of teacher cognition research because they constitute the majority of the world's English language teachers (Canagarajah, 2005).This results in a significant imbalance in the existing knowledge base concerning EFL teaching. The present study was conducted in an EFL context in Pakistan where English qualifies official status and is used extensively in all the major domains of power: in government matters, in legal system, in defense forces, in media, in education, etc. (Mansoor, 2005; Shibli, 1983). Despite all the efforts for ELT provision, there is no well-defined and explicit statement about the English teacher cognition, which reveals a serious gap in EFL teacher education (see Tahir, 2015; Siddiqui, 2007). Consequently, the efforts, though sincere yet oblivious of cognitive dimension and its implications for teacher education, may leak out through this gap, resulting in high training deficit. In this context, for maximizing teacher education outcomes, an explicit statement about the English teacher cognition typical of our bilingual teaching needs to be documented. Such a statement will help see 'what is' and 'what ought to be' for effective ELT practices.

3. Method

Since the questions of the present study aim to explore the extent of the research problem, quantitative research design was deemed relevant (see Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). In line with the spirit of quantitative design (see Creswell, 2009), the variables were measured on test instrument and the numbered data was analyzed using statistical procedures by means of SPSS. The participants of this study comprised 40 bilingual EFL teachers teaching at college/university levels in Lahore, Pakistan. The researcher purposely selected 5 universities and five colleges so as to be representative of each of the top, average, and below average-ranked institutions in terms of teaching capacity, student academic background and resource support. The anonymity of these institutions was preserved to avoid any imminent problem. The participants had teaching experience between five and ten years. The sample consisted of those teachers who willingly participated in the study.

To explore the typical cognition of bilingual EFL teachers in grammar awareness, a grammar test was employed as data collection instrument. The test adopted Andrews' theory of grammatical awareness (1999) and adapted content from Alderson and Horák (2010). Andrews states that grammatical awareness comprises four types:

Type 1: ability to recognize metalanguage

Type 2: ability to produce appropriate metalanguage terms

Type 3: ability to identify and correct errors

Type 4: ability to explain grammatical rules

The present researcher added to this list the fifth dimension which, he assumes, is necessary in view of the communicative nature of language:

Type 5: ability to make sociolinguistic use of grammar

Sociolinguistic use of grammar includes knowing how to use grammar rules for a range of functions, and knowing how to vary the use of grammatical structures according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal style). Since the Labov's (1966) work on sociolinguistic variation, a vast amount has been learned about the social distribution of expressions. The test designed for data collection comprised five tasks:

Task 1 intended to test respondents' ability to produce metalanguage at word level. It provided respondents with one sentence exemplifying fifteen different word categories (for instance, finite verb, adverb, determiner, etc). The respondents had to select all possible examples of each category from the given sentence.

Task 2 comprised ten items, each consisting of a sentence. The respondents had to underline the word(s) in the sentence according to the labels given against each sentence. The purpose of the task was to test respondents' ability to recognize metalanguage at phrasal level.

Task 3 sought to test respondents' ability to identify different words with the same grammatical function. It consisted of five items. Each underlined word in a stem sentence had to be tallied with one of underlined words in the optional sentences, which had the same grammatical function as that of underlined word in the stem.

Task 4 aimed at testing respondents' ability to identify and correct errors in the given sentences. The respondents were also asked (a) to rewrite the faulty part of the sentences correctly, and (b) to explain the grammatical rule thought to be broken. This task consisted of ten items.

Task 5 intended to test respondents' ability to use grammar appropriately in the given situation, keeping in mind the sociolinguistic dimension of language. Respondents had to choose between formal and informal sentences, and then produce formal/informal version. This task aimed at the style differentiation of grammar structures.

Table 1 Structural overview of grammar awareness test

Section	Task	Item type	Item number	Points	Time (minutes)
I. Metalanguage: word	1	Blank filling	15	30	10
class & phrase type	2	Underlining	10	20	
II. Form-function relation	3	MCQ	05	10	05
III. Error identification	4	Blank filling	10	20	10
& rule explanation					
IV. Sociolinguistic use	5	MCQ	05	10	10
		Blank filling	05	10	
Total:			50	100	35

The test does not claim to include all the aspects of English grammar in the test. As the value of a test really depends on the inferences one draws from the score, this test did mirror the aspects of grammar awareness required of an academic study. Test items were carefully selected so that they might indicate overall proficiency of respondents in grammar. The administered assessment demonstrated enough evidence of construct validity. Based on the performance, the respondents were classified on the continuum of excellent to very weak (Mansoor, 2005). Each section of the test was timed properly but after pilot work, it was decided to let the respondents take the test at their convenience because it was not possible to put teachers from different institutions under the same test conditions. However, they were requested not to consult any help book on grammar so as to ensure reliability of the test. The evaluation criterion was adapted from Mansoor (2005) as given below in Table 2:

Table 2 Marking Scheme for Grammar Awareness Test

Excellent = 80% and above	Demonstrates understanding of the grammar at an advanced level with very few errors.
Very good = 79 - 70%	Shows above average performance. Certain areas of syntax are weak.
Fair = 69 - 60%	Demonstrates average understanding of form and function
Weak = 59 - 50%	Limited achievement. Evidence of major misconceptions or gaps
Very weak = 49% and below	Demonstrates extremely limited knowledge of grammar structure.

Tasks	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Mode	Range	St. Deviation
Word class	10.00	29.00	18.8750	19.0000	17.00	19.00	4.03629
Phrase type	8.00	20.00	13.1500	13.7500	14.00	12.00	2.64381
Form-function relation	.00	10.00	4.6000	4.0000	4.00	10.00	1.87835
Error identification & rule explanation	2.00	15.50	9.3625	9.0000	8.00	13.50	2.66503
Sociolinguistic use	5.00	19.50	9.3125	9.0000	8.00	14.50	2.50304

4. Results

The data was coded and submitted to statistical analysis using SPSS. In order to explore teacher cognition on various aspects of grammar, the scores were computed in percentages if the number of items on the areas investigated was not identical. Statistical techniques such as measures of tendency, variability and relative positions were used as and when required. Table 3 below presents the mean score for overall test performance by teachers.

Table 3 Mean score for overall test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Mode	Range	St. Deviation
Total Score Obtained	40	38.00	70.00	55.2750	55.0000	47.00	32.00	7.23148

As displayed in Table 3, the mean score for the overall test is 55.28, which is a little above the 50% of the total test score. The middle value in the score set is 55, that is, half of the scores lie below 55 and half above 55. The frequent value is 47. This shows that the test scores are clustered around the values which are below or a little above 50 (half of the total test score). This tendency in the test scores reflects two facts: 1) the distribution of scores is close to normal, i.e. most of the scores are close to the mean and relatively few scores tend to one extreme or the other (see Table 3 above for skewness and kurtosis values) on the whole, the respondents' performance in this study remained below average. It should be pointed out that the variance of scores between the respondents is quite large (minimum: 38, maximum: 70). Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents (57.5 %) are in the range of 51-60, as can be seen in Table 4 which presents distribution of teachers by range of scores for overall test.

Table 4 Mean scores for individual grammar tasks

The teachers who scored between 50 and 70 constitute 80 % of the total sample and those who scored less than 50 constitute 20% of the sample, yet most are at a moderate level. 77.5% of the sample has scored less than 60.

N 40	Items	Marks	Range	Frequency	Percent
Word class	15	30	0 - 10	1	2.5
			11 - 20	23	57.5
			21 - 30	16	40
Phrase type	10	20	0 - 10	7	17.5
			11 - 20	33	82.5
Error identification & rule explanation	10	20	0 - 10	30	75
			11 - 20	10	25
Form- function relation	05	10	1 - 5	25	62.5
			6 -10	15	37.5
Sociolinguistic use	10	20	0 - 10	35	87.5
			11 - 20	05	12.5

Table 5 Percentage distribution of teachers by range of scores for overall test

Arrange	Frequency	Percentage
31 - 40	01	2.5
41 - 50	07	17.5
51 - 60	23	57.5
61 - 70	09	22.5
Total	40	100

There is also a clear variation in the mean scores among the five tasks. As displayed in Table 5, the mean score for identification of grammatical categories is 18.87, the mean score for phrase type and syntactic functions is 13.15, syntactic form-function relation in sentence 4.60, error identification and rule explanation 9.36, and formal and informal choices 9.31.

The performance in the areas of error correction and formal informal choices is more or less equal. Most of the respondents were able to identify the errors and formal or informal choices but failed outright to explain grammatical rules violated and reason for formal or informal choice. To help understand the teachers' test performance on individual grammar tasks, Table 6 below displays the results in terms of score range, frequency and percentage:

Table 6 Percentage distribution of teachers' test scores by individual grammar tasks

As displayed in Table 6 above, except first two individual tasks, the teachers' performance remained far below 50 % of the individual task scores. 75 % scored between 0-10

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in error identification and rule explanation, 62.5 between 1-5 in identifying word function in sentences, and 87% between 0-10 in formal and informal choices. Many of the respondents scored what may be termed 'below the passing marks', suggesting that their English may well lack accuracy as well as better choice of expression tailored to the context.

5. Discussion

The standard of ELT in Pakistan has been a matter of great concern. One of the related issues is the language awareness of teachers, i.e. the explicit knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively. This explicit knowledge about language is an important part of any second language teacher's language awareness (Andrews, 1999). So, teachers must be aware of certain grammatical fundamentals in order to help students recognize error patterns.

One of the aims of this study was to document the nature and level of the bilingual EFL teachers' grammatical awareness. As per test results, the mean score for teachers' overall test performance was 55.27 which was a little above the 50% of the total test score. A vast majority of the teachers performed below average and exhibited a limited knowledge of grammar. This inadequacy is a grave concern because the knowledge of grammar serves as the foundation of language and is an important asset a teacher should have at his disposal. Generally explicit grammatical awareness helps a language teacher to select and present the pattern in accordance with pedagogical purpose, provide corrective feedback on learners' use of language, and judge the source of errors and react accordingly. These professional obligations can only be performed efficiently if language teacher himself/herself is grammatically proficient. For a clear view of teachers' knowledge base of grammar, the mean scores of their performance on individual tasks were compared. Below is presented the task-by-task discussion.

Task 1: Word class

Metalinguistic knowledge begins with the introduction of word classes. Word classes explain how a word is used in larger instances of language. They are the fundamental building blocks of linguistic expressions in natural human languages. Today an increasingly important role is assigned to the information that is specified in the lexical entry of a word in the lexicon (see Jackendoff & Audring, 2020), both in formal and in functional approaches to grammar, because this awareness indeed helps one use words correctly (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016). That is why the task of identification of word-level categories was included in teachers' grammar awareness test. The focus remained on the morphosyntactic aspects of words.

The test results showed that on the task of identification of word categories, most of the teachers could not perform well. This task consisted of 15 items with total marks 30. The mean score remained 18.88. Though this was the highest mean score as compared to those of other tasks, and seemed to be the easiest task, yet the performance could not measure up to any reasonable standard. The problematic areas for most of the teachers were to distinguish between past participle and passive verb forms, and finite and nonfinite verbs. There are three possible explanations for this low level of proficiency: first, most of the teachers use local, simplified

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version of reference grammar books which are naively confined to eight parts of speech and a few other terms peculiar to traditional grammar. They are not aware of the latest and explanatorily adequate concepts of modern syntax; second, most of the teacher's learning of grammatical categories seems to be based on the memorization of grammatical items, not as the raising to consciousness of the ways these items operate in the target language; third, due attention is not given to the intensive teaching of grammatical categories along with their combinatorial properties. Due to these inaccuracies, external or internal, as well as their obvious lack of professional commitment to upgrade their knowledge, the teachers remain unable to perform as is expected of them as language teachers.

Task 2: Phrase type

Task 2 was included in the test to assess teachers' metalinguistic knowledge of phrase types and their syntactic functions in a clause/sentence. Traditionally phrase is seen as part of a structural hierarchy, falling between clause and word, several types being distinguished, e.g. noun phrase, verb phrase, prepositional phrase, etc. The term is used in grammatical analysis to refer to a single element of structure typically containing more than one word and lacking the subject-predicate structure typical of clauses. As to grammatical relations, they refer to the relationship between a linguistic form and other parts of the linguistic pattern in which it is used. The terms head, subject, object, complement, etc. refer to these types of syntactic functions (Crystal, 1997; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). The knowledge of phrase types and their syntactic functions are essential to characterize the initial stage of analysis for understanding internal structure of sentence.

The mean score for phrase type and grammatical relations was 13.15, median was 13.75 and mode was 14. So, the results showed that 47.5% of the teachers got more and 52.5% less than 50% of the marks. Most of the teachers performed averagely. Most problematic areas were complement, adjunct and adjective phrase. It is interesting to note that most of the teachers could not underline the types of phrase properly, e.g. when they were asked to underline noun phrase or prepositional phrase, they did as follows:

1. <u>Everyone</u> in the house had been asleep at the time. (NOUN PHRASE)
2. They rarely go <u>out in the evening</u>. (PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE)

This sort of response suggests that the respondents were not sure about the well-defined boundary of a phrase. They were trying to define phrases only on the basis of noun or preposition, without any understanding of the internal structure of a phrase, i.e. head word as well as its dependents. When asked, the teachers who took test in the researcher' presence replied that since this aspect of grammar was not required for the exams, they didn't teach it. It implies that they were teaching grammar to testing, and their teaching as well as knowledge base was suffering from the negative washback of exam requirement. In other words, their proficiency was limited to the 'abridged version' required to help students pass exam.

Task 3: Form-function relation

Task 3 was meant to test teachers' ability to identify different words with the same syntactic functions. The task was not to assess any metalinguistic knowledge, but it was concerned with the application of the knowledge. To know is one thing and to apply what you know is another because application needs both knowing and understanding.

When we speak or write, we don't just put the words down on the page at random. We organize them in certain ways to convey meaning. The rules by which we arrange words to convey meaning are called syntax. Different words, depending on where they are in the sentence perform different functions in a sentence. As observed by Huddleston (1996), in addition to assigning the syntactic units to syntactic classes, it is also important to assign them to syntactic functions, accounting for the grammatical role of units within the construction immediately containing them. Syntactic functions make a very obvious contribution to the meaning so that *Ali phoned Ahmad* (with *Ali* subject and *Ahmad* obje*ct*) means something quite different from *Ahmad phoned Ali* (with *Ahmad* subject and Ali object).

To explore this aspect of teachers' grammar awareness, a 5-item task carrying 10 marks in total was employed. The mean score of teachers' performance on this task is 4.60, the lowest mean score as compared to other tasks. The test results showed that this was the most difficult task for the teachers where a vast majority performed below average. A close examination of teacher performance on individual task items revealed that most of the teachers were weak at assigning syntactic units to syntactic functions most probably because they were unable to analyze the syntactic properties of the given units. Secondly, their frequent errors suggest that most of the teachers ignored the fact that grammatical likeness is often not an all-or-nothing matter but a matter of degree, and that we cannot expect to be always able to find in one item all the conditions required for inclusion in a category. In other words, they could not make distinction between prototypical and non-prototypical examples of a category.

Task 4: Error identification and rule explanation

This task aimed at discovering teachers' ability to identify the grammatical error at sentence level, supply correct version, and then explain the rule violated. In other words, it was exclusively concerned with our bilingual EFL teacher's error analysis skills - recognition and elimination of error. 'Language error is an unsuccessful bit of language' and 'error analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language' (James, 2001). It means that error analysis is a methodology for dealing with data for error treatment. The bilingual FL teachers' knowledge of error analysis is a must for grappling with foreign language learners' difficulties.

To explore teachers' error analysis skills, a 10-item task carrying 20 marks in total was employed. The mean score of teachers' performance on this task remained 9.36, median 9.00 and mode 8.00. The difficulty level of test items in this task was not too high, yet a vast majority's performance remained below 50% of the total marks. The explanation is not hard to find. During test marking, the researcher came to find a consistent pattern emerging in teachers'

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performance on this task. Most of them succeeded in identifying error and producing correct version of the given sentence but failed to explain the rule violated in the sentence structure. Here they had weak cognition in grammar. With this weak level of awareness, how come they can minimize or eliminate the error incidence in learners' language output - detecting, locating, describing, classifying, profiling and diagnosing errors?

Another slippery area for teachers was what is called the thematic system of English clauses. The study revealed that it was easier for teachers to detect error in kernel causes (the most basic clauses with simple subject-predicate structure), but difficult in non-kernel clauses especially with thematic variation such as '*Never before had I been asked to accept a bribe*' instead of 'I *had never been asked to accept a bribe before*'. Thematic variants have the same propositional content but differ in the way it is' packaged' as a message (Huddleston, 1996). We select one rather than another from a pair or larger set of thematic variants depending on which part of the message we wish to give prominence to. For this purpose, subject-verb inversion, thematic reordering and cleft sentences are commonly-used methods. FL teachers must be aware of this aspect of grammar so that they may inculcate this special use of language in their learners.

Task 5: Sociolinguistic use

In view of the communicative nature of language, the ability to make sociolinguistically appropriate use of grammar is essential for effective communication. Grammar interacts with meaning, social function, or discourse - or combination of these - rather than standing alone as an autonomous system to be learned for its own sake. Sociolinguistic use of grammar includes knowing how to use grammar rules for a range of functions, and knowing how to vary the use of grammatical structures according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal style). Task 5 was about stylistic differentiation in English. In sociolinguistics, style is a variety of language which is associated with a social context and level of formality (Trudgill, 1992). Styles can thus be arranged on a continuum from very formal to highly informal or colloquial. In English stylistic differentiation can be signaled by lexical as well as syntactic differences. Style shifting reflects language user's sociolinguistic competence. It follows that our bilingual EFL teachers must have the ability to move along the continuum of styles as the formality of a situation changes.

To test this aspect of teachers' grammar awareness, a 10-item task carrying 20 marks in total was employed. It was about the identification of formal/informal choice. The mean score of teachers' performance on this task was 9.31, mode median 9 and mode 8. So, the results demonstrated that the majority of teachers' performance was below average. Most of them could neither explain reason for their formal/informal choice nor convert formal choice into informal and vice versa. Again, this proved to be one the weakest areas of our teachers' grammatical awareness. The possible explanation is that they had never approached grammar from sociolinguistic point of view. Language is a cultural phenomenon and in our EFL instruction, neither for learners nor for trainee teachers, this aspect of English has any 'room'.

In short, the general findings in the present study indicated that our EFL teachers had gaps in their knowledge of grammar and these gaps must have serious effects on their teaching. Although it is not denied here that there were individual respondents who performed well in the test, on the whole considering what various scholars had said about effective language teaching, majority was somewhat ill-equipped to deal with grammar in their lessons.

6. Conclusions

Following conclusions are based on the findings of the research study:

1. The findings of this study are a micro-reality which provides a window into the collective cognition of our bilingual EFL teachers in grammar knowledge. The study shows that our bilingual EFL teacher's cognition is overall weak which is one of the main factors considerably responsible for our present teaching standard of English language. It is so because a teacher' weak cognition acts as a weak filter and strong cognition as a strong filter through which instructional judgments are made. Overall, our teachers' cognition in grammar knowledge has certain gaps which need to be improved for better language teaching outcomes. Below average performance in the area that provides structural foundation of a language is indeed to be a matter of great concern for all stakeholders - language learners, parents, ELT trainers and policy makers. The study also puts a big question mark before the usability of pre-service as well as in-service ELT training programmes offered in our institutions. In the light of the research results, this study cannot overlook the ELT training deficit which is definitely a loss to economy if the desired results are not achieved.
2. The test results show that most of the teachers perform better in metalanguage and this aspect of their grammar knowledge seems to be stronger than other aspects. However, their overall performance is below average. Most of our teacher's grammar knowledge is limited to traditional concepts of English grammar, and they are not aware of the modern approaches in syntax, with the result that they may not be able to raise proper linguistic awareness among his/her students.
3. A vast majority of our teachers could not explain ungrammaticality of the incorrect sentences. Also, they were not aware of the stylistic differentiation of grammar usage and their performance on Task 5 in the test reflects their weak pragmatic awareness. These illustrate the loopholes in grammar cognition typical of our language teachers.

In view of the findings that our bilingual EFL teachers have serious gaps in their cognition about grammar, a grammar awareness module based on the principles of modern syntax along with pragmatic intervention must be made obligatory for all EFL teachers, prospective as well as practising. This module must especially target the knowledge base component of English grammar. The point is that teacher's understanding of the subject matter plays a key role in learner's understanding of it (Shulman, 1987). Teacher' subject matter knowledge (SMK), according to Shulman, includes both *substantive* and *syntactic* structures of a discipline. The former pertains to the ways in which concepts and facts of a discipline are organized, and the

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latter refers to the ways of establishing new knowledge and determining the validity of claims within a discipline. The grammar awareness module for teachers must be comprehensive enough to include the above-mentioned aspects of grammar subject matter, apart from the insights from language processing and error analysis for pedagogical decisions. Teachers have to raise their 'standard bar' before they raise learners' language awareness.

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