



Optimizing Conversation Analysis (CA) to Develop EFL Prospective Teachers' Syntactic Proficiency

By

Dr. Bahaa Eddin El-Sayed El-Naggar

Professor of Curricula and Instruction
(TEFL)

Faculty of Education
Zagazig University

Dr. Muhammad Hassan Ibrahim

Professor of Curricula and Instruction
(TEFL)

Faculty of Education
Zagazig University

Aminah Ahmad Marzouq

TEFL Assistant Lecturer - Faculty of Specific Education

Optimizing Conversation Analysis (CA) to Develop EFL Prospective Teachers' Syntactic Proficiency

By

Dr. Bahaa Eddin El-Sayed El-Naggar

Professor of Curricula and Instruction
(TEFL)

Faculty of Education
Zagazig University

Dr. Muhammad Hassan Ibrahim

Professor of Curricula and Instruction
(TEFL)

Faculty of Education
Zagazig University

Aminah Ahmad Marzouq

TEFL Assistant Lecturer - Faculty of Specific Education

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to develop EFL prospective teachers' English syntactic proficiency through conversation analysis (CA). The participants were (80) prospective teachers in the Section of English in the Faculty of Specific Education. They were divided into two groups: the experimental group was taught through CA, and the control group was taught through the traditional method. The researcher prepared and used the following instruments: a questionnaire for identifying the most important components and sub-components of English syntactic proficiency required for the EFL prospective teachers; a syntactic proficiency test to measure the participants' pre-post performance in English syntactic proficiency. T-test was used to analyze the data of the test. Black's formula was used to measure the effectiveness of CA in developing English syntactic proficiency. Results of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group students in English syntactic proficiency wholly and dimensionally. CA proved to be effective in developing English syntactic proficiency.

Introduction

The field of curricula and methodology has witnessed theories which sparked both for proficiency-oriented teaching and for communication competence. The proficiency concept was said to guide teachers in regard to course objectives and course content and help determine learning outcomes. Language proficiency is not a one-dimensional construct but a multifaceted modality consisting of various levels of abilities and domains. One may feel confusion regarding the entire concept of *proficiency*, *proficiency-based teaching* and *proficiency tests*, because some of the notions of communication competence and language proficiency are used interchangeably (Anderson & Timbs, 2016; Iyldyz, 2007; Saif, 2012).

Proficiency is abstractly interpreted as ‘communicative competence’ and includes ‘linguistic competence’ within ‘communicative competence’ (Canale & Swain, 1980). Communicative competence includes grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity, vocabulary diversity, and aspects of spoken or written discourse structure, e.g. coherence and cohesion. Proficiency is also described in terms of competence in a redefined way, suggesting ‘organizational competence’ which includes morphology, syntax, vocabulary, cohesion and organization and ‘pragmatic competence’ which includes the ‘sociolinguistic competence’. The sociolinguistic competence empirically supports ‘linguistic’, ‘pragmatic’ and ‘sociolinguistic’ competences as the components of the so-called ‘communicative proficiency’ (Bachman & Palmer 1996).

That’s to say, language proficiency is a unitary construct; it comprises multiple constructs (Bachman & Palmer 1996; Cummins, 2001). Therefore, current concepts of proficiency tend to include components of language competence or contexts of language use.

Language competence can be interpreted as including linguistic, discourse, and sociolinguistic competences (Butler, 2004).

Ultimately, language is a linguistic activity (written or spoken) which consists of several components: *pronunciation* (phonology and phonetics of sounds), *morphology and lexis* (words and their parts), *grammar and syntax* (structure), *semantics and discourse* (conversation and utterances), *pragmatics* (usage and its rules), *fluency* (ease of speech, confidence, coherence, and speed), and *topicality* (themes and ideas) (Bygate, 2001; Dugas, DesRosier & Gaskell, 2010). Language proficiency is abstractly a linguistic proficiency which is interpreted in terms of linguistic competence. Linguistic competence, in its turn, entails knowledge of formal aspects of language code, such as the formal features of sounds phonetically and phonologically, words lexically and morphologically, syntactic patterns, and semantic interpretation (Butler, 2004).

Research into complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) as basic dimensions of second language performance, proficiency and development has received increased attention in SLA (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder, 2012). In the recent functional linguistic literature, the notion of syntactic complexity and similar concepts, such as “knowledge”, “complexity”, “maturity”, “ability”, “development” and “proficiency” have received considerable attention (Mondorf, 2003; Wasow and Arnold, 2003). Operationally, all these terms could be considered synonymous and subsumed under ‘syntactic complexity’ since they all basically refer to syntactic structures which necessitate increased parsing and processing effort (Szmrecs’anyi, 2004).

Syntactic knowledge refers to the knowledge “of sentences and their structures” (Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 2003:118).

“Syntactic complexity (syntactic maturity or linguistic complexity) refers to the range of forms that surface in language production and the degree of sophistication of such forms”. It is the elaboration and variation of syntactic patterning (Ortega, 2003: 492). Others refer to syntactic complexity as the grammatical or syntactic weight of a text in terms of involving varied and sophisticated structures (Wasow & Arnold, 2003).

Syntactic complexity of a given context could be established by counting linguistic tokens that can be considered telltale signs of increased grammatical subordinateness and embeddedness, such as (i) subordinating conjunctions (for instance, *because, since, as, when, that, though, after* etc.), and (ii) WH pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which*). In addition, tokens to be included in the index should also include (iii) verb forms, both finite and non-finite, and (iv) noun phrases (Givon, 1999; Ortega, 2003).

According to descriptive/behavioristic language teaching, language is a fundamental part of total human behavior which could be dismantled into structurally related elements for encoding of meaning, the elements being phonemes, morphemes, words, structures, and sentence types. Learning the language consists of mastering the language elements and learning the rules by which these elements are combined. It also claimed that language learning is a process of imitation, practice, reinforcement and habit formation and that children would shape their knowledge through various schedules of reinforcement (Brown, 2000; Richards and Rogers, 2001; Schmitt, 2002).

Successful and efficient foreign language learners have to be equipped with an acceptable level in syntactic complexity. This is why many foreign language learners study a foreign language wishing to become fluent and accurate including using a range of sophisticated

syntactic structures (Iwashita, 2010). It has been considered an important construct in second language teaching and research, as development in syntactic complexity is an integral part of a second language learner's overall development in the target language (Iwashita, 2010; Ortega 2003). It has been considered an important construct in second language teaching and research, as development in syntactic complexity is an integral part of a second language learner's overall development in the target language (Lu, 2010).

In addition, developing syntactic complexity proved to be beneficial in improving and promoting foreign prospective teachers' FL performance and accuracy. One of its basic functions is reading comprehension skills acquisition. It plays a fundamental role in comprehensibility of a given text and readability of an elicited material, either written or spoken (Housen, Kuiken, and Vedder, 2012; Robinson, 2005).

Measuring the oral and written production of the EFL prospective teachers in the pilot study, the researcher found that the students showed deficiencies/weaknesses in identifying the structures and functions of plain phrases and/or clauses. They failed in using coordination and subordinateness correctly. When they used them here or there in their production, they use them incorrectly and unsuccessfully.

EFL literature, to the best of the researcher knowledge, comprises few studies which dealt with syntactic knowledge. Some of these studies tackled syntactic proficiency/knowledge as an independent factor to develop other aspects and domains of language, while other studies attempted to develop and improve syntactic knowledge for EFL learners. Investigation of syntactic complexity in learner language has a long tradition in L2 writing studies. More recently, a growing number of SLA

studies have examined syntactic complexity through analyzing speech samples (Iwashita, McNamara, & Elder, 2001).

Concerning Egyptian EFL students, Zaki (2010) tried to develop syntactic complexity by conducting a Study whose purpose to investigate the development of complex syntax across three proficiency levels of EFL learners through oral expository discourse. An exploratory quantitative design was used. A number of syntactic structures were targeted to measure fluency, grammatical accuracy, and syntactic complexity.

Motallebzadeh and Babae (2012) conducted a study to developing syntactic component of EFL learners' writing proficiency through e-portfolio assessment. The study findings also showed that if e-portfolio assessment is integrated into EFL curriculum, it might create a learner-centered environment. Furthermore, it is implied that such features of blended-learning environment as ease of posting compositions, online evaluation, and self-assessment can facilitate learning.

Tůma and Tomáš (2013) investigated the development of syntactic complexity in students' (n=18) written discourse using a learner corpus in the context of a blended course of English whose target level was the CEFR A2 level. In this theory-driven descriptive case study, student texts written in specially devised online discussion tasks were used as a basis for compiling a small-scale learner corpus. At the end of the course, students used less coordination, more subordination and longer clauses, which indicate the development of syntactic complexity.

Chen (2014) conducted a study on Vocabulary, Syntactic Knowledge and Reading Comprehension: the Perspective of College EFL Students. The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that

syntactic knowledge is as important as vocabulary knowledge on second language reading comprehension

Nofal (2016) to investigate the role of syntax in developing the EFL and ESL students' higher order thinking skills (HOTS): Application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation / judgment as stated in Bloom's taxonomy. The researcher maintains that syntax, as the study of the internal structure of sentences, is an effective tool to develop our students' HOTS, if it is taught adequately and appropriately and if HOTS are internalized within and applied by the faculty members, as all activities and instructional material of this course involve critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving and decision making, all of which include HOTS stated in Bloom's taxonomy.

Among all of EFL learners, EFL prospective teachers are the most crucial ones, because they will be responsible for teaching English language to other learners throughout education stages. These prospective teachers study in Sections and Departments of English where they are being prepared to teach English as a foreign language. The mission of these Departments and Sections is to cultivate student mastery in English language/literature and translation. Hence, and according to FOE Enhancement Project, the first standard for teachers of English at pre-service stages states:

“The newly qualified teacher should understand the English language system, including syntax, morphology, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics, and apply this knowledge to teaching”.

Now that the participants of the present study are EFL prospective teachers who are supposed to teach English to primary pupils afterwards, their syntactic proficiency should be developed and enhanced. Accordingly, the present study attempted to do so through optimizing conversation analysis (henceforth CA) as one of the latest approaches.

Started by sociologists Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff in early 1970s as a ‘naturalistic observational discipline that could deal with the details of social action rigorously, empirically and formally’, Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA) aims to “describe, analyze, and understand talk as a basic and constitutive feature of human social life” (Sidnell, 2010, p.1).

Conversation Analysis “is the systematic analysis of the talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction: talk-in-interaction”(Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008:23). CA is defined as the study of “the sequential structure of talk-in-interaction in terms of interlocutors’ real-time orientations to the preferential practices that underlie, for participants and consequently also for analysts, the conversational behaviors of turn-taking and repair in different speech exchange systems” (Markee, 2000:25).

CA methodology seeks to understand how conversations are organized, the rules by which they are governed, and in this light it is understood that conversation works around “a local management system” where meaning is exchanged and mutual comprehension accomplished. Human conduct is not defined theoretically but is understood in the analysis of “situationally invoked” instances. Theory is not created *a priori* but is approached as contextually derived social actions that are organized locally. This, of course, means researchers using CA to analyze data do so without initial research questions; instead findings are arrived at through analysis of the data themselves (Rylander, 2004).

Conversation analysis as a methodological approach combines analysis of linguistic resources with analysis of interaction. The analysis of linguistic resources is informed by techniques developed within linguistics. That’s because people use language to warrant their

perspective, position or point of view in everyday conversations in forms of “disagreeing”, “arguing”, “contesting”, “accusing“, “defending”, “criticizing”, and any other disputatious activity (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008, 213; Walker, 2004).

The analysis of interaction is grounded in the principles of conversation analysis which are: conversation has structure, it has its own autonomous context, CA has a detailed transcription system and a highly empirical orientation, and the analysis is bottom-up and data driven (Seedhouse, 2011).

It is not too much to say that CA for SLA has been moving from the periphery to the center in the field of SLA research (Larsen-Freeman, 2004). There are four sites of potential learning are presented: (1) teachers framing the beginning of a sentence and providing a slot for learners to complete it; (2) providing opportunities for new words to be repeated; (3) framing these at the start and end of a sequence; and (4) code-switching to ensure understanding of an item-to-be-learned. All four occur within a single segment of a beginners’ class in EFL (Gardner, 2012, p. 234).

In CA, classroom talk is categorized as a type of institutional talk, which is different from ordinary conversation (Markee, 2000; Seedhouse, 2004). The basic framework of traditional CA, in which the object of study has been ordinary conversation, is employed in the analysis of institutional talk, but also different assumptions are applied. There are three basic features in institutional talk:

- 1- Institutional interaction is goal-oriented. The interaction is organized in the way it orients to the institutional goal.
- 2- Institutional interaction is often affected by “social and particular constraints on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand”.

3- Institutional interaction “may be associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts”. It is argued that, because of such features, each type of institutional interaction has a unique fingerprint (Heritage 1995, p.409).

In the case of L2 classroom settings, CA assumes that the classroom interaction is to be rationally designed in such a way that it orients to the institutional goal, which is the learning of L2. There are three properties which constitute the unique “fingerprint” of L2 classroom interaction: 1) “Language is both the vehicle and object of instruction”; 2) “There is a reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction”; and 3) “The linguistic forms and patterns of interaction which the learners produce in the L2 are potentially subject to evaluation by the teacher in some way” (Seedhouse, 2004, pp. 183-4).

However, CA oriented researchers have demonstrated that CA methodology can provide new insights into aspects of teacher-student talk which are inaccessible when utterances are prematurely removed from their sequential context and coded according to a set of predetermined categories such as a simple IRF/IRE cycle (Markee, 2000; Seedhouse, 2004, 2005).

To the best of the researcher knowledge, there are very few studies which employed CA as an approach to develop any of English language domains/aspects. CA has been used, in most times, as a tool for analysis for the sake of analysis itself.

Qi and Tian (2010) attempted to teach EFL speaking through basis for conversation analysis as a discourse approach. Both studies assured predictive potential of CA in EFL teaching/learning. Barraja-Rohan (2011) used conversation analysis (CA) to help teaching interactional competence in English to adult second language learners from lower to

intermediate levels. It is therefore suggested that a CA-informed pedagogical approach can help to teach interactional competence or competencies, by using materials designed for that purpose.

Skuse (2012) applied conversation analysis (CA) to interaction within an EFL class information gap task. The research aims to investigate the role of repair sequences and the dynamic and complex nature of language classroom discourse. The results show that repair sequences and their subsequent discourse within the task generally provide opportunity for negotiation for meaning and modified input, which by extension, provides opportunity for language learning; and that the collaborative nature of classroom discourse provides much opportunity for learning, and that turns within the discourse may function simultaneously on a number of levels and facilitate both the forming and renewing of the language classroom context. The research also shows that CA can add to our understanding of the social nature of SLA.

Matsui (2014) made an analysis to examine the interaction between the students and himself and to reflect how the teacher can improve and create a safe atmosphere for student's learning opportunities. The conclusion was that to conduct communicative language course, conversation analysis is an effective way for both students and teachers to understand their tendency of utterances. It will lead teachers to change strategies to improve and create communicative language courses. At the same time, in communicative language courses, teachers sometimes can also be in the position of sharing their ideas rather than teaching. It is because this will also make students feel safe in the classroom and as a result it can encourage student's utterances.

Teng and Sinwongsuwat (2015) investigated the effect of integrating CA in teaching and learning English language in Thailand. It is concluded that CA can be used as a teaching tool to raise awareness of the mechanisms of conversation, which are potentially critical to a successful interaction, but often go unnoticed by both teachers and learners. This paper also posits that CA can serve as a diagnostic tool for examining talk and identifying problems that can hinder students from achieving targeted communicative teaching and learning goals. It is recommended that English teachers be trained to deploy CA in conjunction with CLT so as to increase students' overall communicative competence.

Wanphet (2015) employed a Conversation Analytic (CA) method to explore EFL teachers' nonverbal gestures during the elicitation stage: when they elicit new words and language structures from students. An analysis reveals that (1) EFL teachers' gestures serve many pedagogical and interactional functions: managing student behavior, regulating interaction ,involving students', explaining language features, evaluating students' responses ,and showing EFL teachers' expectations for students' language production; (2) functions of EFL teachers' gestures sequentially correspond to the students ' responses placed on the immediate preceding turns; and (3) students not only listen to what the EFL teacher says but also interpret and later react, both verbally and nonverbally, to the teachers' gestures.

Accordingly, the present study attempted to employ CA approach to develop EFL prospective teachers' syntactic proficiency.

1- Statement of the Problem

In the light of the aforementioned argumentation along side with the findings of the pilot study, the problem of the present paper can be stated in the following statement: the EFL prospective teachers show deficiencies/weaknesses in English syntactic proficiency. Accordingly, the problem of the study can be stated in the following main question:

“What is the effectiveness of conversation analysis (CA) on developing the EFL prospective teachers’ English syntactic proficiency?”

This main question can be sub-divided into the following questions:

- 1- What are the English syntactic proficiency components and sub-components required for the EFL prospective teachers in the Section of English in the Faculty of Specific Education?
- 2- What is the actual performance of those students in that linguistic proficiency?
- 3- To what extent can a CA-based programme develop English phonological, syntactic, and morphological proficiencies and meta-linguistic awareness for the EFL prospective teachers in the Section of English in the Faculty of Specific Education?

2- Purpose of the Study

The present paper attempts to achieve the following aims:

- 1- Developing the syntactic proficiency for the EFL prospective teachers in the Section of English in the Faculty of Specific Education.
- 2- Investigating the effectiveness of CA in developing the dependent variables of the present study.

3- Significance of the Study

The present study may be:

- 1- Useful to the field of EFL teaching/learning in making use of new approaches such as CA.
- 2- Useful to English syntax and grammar course designers for adult learners throughout planning and proceeding such courses.
- 3- Helpful for the English prospective teachers in the Faculty of Specific Education to know how to effectively communicate and successfully perform in their classrooms using new strategies and techniques.
- 4- Helpful for EFL teachers/learners to raise their language awareness and to overcome some linguistic difficulties which often encounter them while teaching/learning English language.

4- Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to:

- 1- EFL prospective teachers in the Section of English in the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University.
- 2- Some of the sub-components of the syntactic proficiency. The present study was delimited to the following syntactic proficiency sub-components:
 - Identifying simple sentence elements and clause patterns.
 - Parsing Phrases: noun phrases, verb phrase, adjective phrases and adverb phrases.
 - Parsing Clauses: noun clauses, adjective clauses and adverb clauses.
 - Reducing subordinate clauses into phrases.
 - Parsing Sentences: complex and compound sentences.

5- Instruments of the study

- 1- A questionnaire of English syntactic components and sub-components required for EFL prospective teacher (Prepared by the researcher).
- 2- A syntactic proficiency test (Prepared by the researcher).

6- The Hypotheses of the study

The present study hypothesized that:

- 1- There would be statistically significant differences between the means of the treatment group students in their performance on the pre-post assessments of Syntactic Proficiency test wholly and dimensionally favoring the post-assessment.
- 2- There would be statistically significant differences between the means of the treatment group students and the control group in their performance on the post-assessments of Syntactic Proficiency test wholly and dimensionally favoring the treatment group.
- 3- The CA-based programme would be effective in developing English syntactic proficiency wholly and dimensionally.

7- Definition of Terms

In the light of the aforementioned theoretical basis, it becomes clear that the terms syntactic “knowledge”, “complexity”, “maturity”, “ability”, “development” and “proficiency” are used interchangeably in EFL literature. However, the present study adhered to the term “proficiency”. Accordingly, the procedural definitions of the present study variables can be coined in as follows:

Conversation Analysis

It is an approach to discourse dealing with the linguistic analysis of conversation as a highly ordered phenomenon in order to discover what the linguistic characteristics of conversations are and how conversations are used in ordinary life (Liddicoat, 2011, p.12).

Operationally, it is a linguistic systematic analysis consisting of formal successive procedures traced and optimized by the EFL prospective teachers to detect, decode and elicit the linguistic features of a conversation in terms of phonological, syntactic, and morphological resources; and also to analogize, categorize and encode them in a form of targeted linguistic logs.

Syntactic proficiency

Syntactic knowledge (syntactic maturity or linguistic complexity) refers to the range of forms that surface in language production and the degree of sophistication of such forms in terms of length of production unit (e.g., T-units, clauses, verb phrases and sentences), amount of embedding, subordination and coordination (Ortega, 2003, 492).

Operationally, it is operationally defined as the EFL prospective teachers' linguistic ability to identify, analyze, synthesize, parse and use the structures of different kinds of phrases and clauses. It is their ability to produce language characterized by syntactic maturity and sophistication in terms of successfully using of coordination and subordination and a good average length of sentences.

8- The Procedures of the study

The present study followed the following procedures:

- 1- Reviewing the literature and previous studies pertinent to English syntactic proficiency for EFL learners generally and for EFL prospective teachers particularly.
- 2- Reviewing literature and previous studies related to optimizing conversation analysis (CA) in EFL teaching/learning generally.
- 3- Preparing a checklist of English syntactic proficiency components and sub-components and submitting it to jury members to validate it.
- 4- Designing an instructional CA-based programme and submitting it to jury members to validate it.
- 5- Selecting the study participants randomly from fourth year students 2015/2016 in the Section of English in the Faculty of Specific Education and dividing them into two groups: an experimental group and a control group.
- 6- Preparing an English syntactic proficiency test and validating it.
- 7- Administering a pretest to the two groups.
- 8- Administering the CA-based programme to the experimental group.
- 9- Administering a posttest to the two groups.
- 10- Comparing the results of the pretest and the posttest.
- 11- Conducting the suitable statistical analysis for the collected data to test the study hypotheses and to examine the effectiveness of the programme.
- 12- Providing results, discussion and interpretation.
- 13- Providing conclusions and recommendations.

9- Results of the study

The researcher carried out the suitable statistical analysis to come up with the results of the current study. The study hypotheses were verified and assured by suitable statistical techniques as follows.

1- The first hypothesis stated: “There would be statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental group students in their performance on the pre-post assessments of the English syntactic proficiency test wholly and dimensionally favoring the post-assessment”. For verifying this hypothesis, T-Test for paired samples was computed (see Table 1).

Table (1):

Results of (T-test) of the Pre- and Post-Mean Scores of the Experimental Group in Overall EFL Syntactic Proficiency and in its Components

EFL Syntactic Proficiency	Experimental Group	N	Mean	St Deviation	T. Value	Sig.
Identifying simple sentence elements and clause patterns	Pre-	40	2.44	.4103	49.41	0.01
	Post-	40	8.48	.5228		
Parsing Phrases: noun phrases, verb phrase, adjective phrases and adverb phrases.	Pre-	40	2.36	.3500	53.82	0.01
	Post-	40	8.56	.4583		
Parsing Clauses: noun clauses, adjective clauses and adverb clauses.	Pre-	40	2.14	.1384	51.19	0.01
	Post-	40	8.54	.4546		
Reducing subordinate clauses into phrases	Pre-	40	2.08	.1871	51.19	0.01.
	Post-	40	8.24	.5188		
Parsing Sentences: complex and compound sentences	Pre-	40	2.11	.1483	56.43	0.01
	Post-	40	8.32	.4565		
Total	Pre-	40	11.13	.7679	99.17	0.01
	Post-	40	42.32	.8292		

As illustrated in **Table (1)**, the mean scores of the experimental group students in the post-assessment of EFL syntactic proficiency components are higher than those of the pre-assessment, where **t-value** is **(49.41)** for *Identifying simple sentence elements and clause patterns*, **(53.82)** for *Parsing Phrases*, **(51.19)** for *Parsing Clauses*, **(51.19)** for *Reducing subordinate clauses into phrases* and **(56.43)** for *Parsing Sentences*. Each of these values is significant at the **0.01** level of significance. These differences can be attributed to the CA-based programme which the experimental students have experienced.

As shown in **Table (1)**, besides, the mean score of the experimental group students in the post-assessment is higher than that of the pre-assessment in the overall EFL syntactic proficiency, where **t-value** is **(99.17)** which is significant at the **0.01** level of significance. Therefore, this hypothesis is assured. These differences can be attributed to the CA-based programme which the experimental group students have received.

1- The second hypothesis stated: “There would be statistically significant differences between the means of the experimental group students and the control group students in their performance on the post-assessment of the English syntactic proficiency test favoring the experimental group”. For verify this hypothesis T-Test for independent samples was computed (see **Table 2**).

Table (2)

Results of (T-test) of the Post-Mean Scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group in Overall EFL Syntactic Proficiency and in its Sub-Components

EFL Syntactic Proficiency	Groups	N	Mean	St Deviation	T. Value	Sig.
Identifying simple sentence elements and clause patterns	The Experimental	40	8.48	.5228	38.15	0.01
	The Control	40	2.66	.4770		
Parsing Phrases: noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases and adverb phrases.	The Experimental	40	8.56	.4583	39.82	0.01
	The control	40	2.91	.5530		
Parsing Clauses: noun clauses, adjective clauses and adverb clauses.	The Experimental	40	8.54	.4546	43.21	0.01
	The control	40	2.56	.4082		
Reducing subordinate clauses into phrases	The Experimental	40	8.24	.4565	43.68	0.01
	The control	40	2.88	.3841		
Parsing Sentences: complex and compound sentences	The Experimental	40	8.32	.5188	41.15	0.01
	The control	40	2.76	.3835		
Total	The Experimental	40	42.32	.8292	91.18	0.01
	The control	40	13.77	.8860		

As illustrated in **Table (2)**, the mean scores of the experimental group students in the post-assessment of EFL syntactic proficiency components are higher than those of the control group, where **t-value** is **(38.15)** for *Identifying simple sentence elements and clause patterns*, **(39.82)** for *Parsing Phrases*, **(43.21)** for *Parsing Clauses*, **(43.68)** for *Reducing subordinate clauses into phrases* and **(41.15)** for *Parsing Sentences*. Each of these values is significant at the **0.01** level of significance. These differences can be attributed to the CA-based programme which the experimental group students have experienced.

As shown in **Table (2)**, besides, the mean score of the experimental group students in the post-assessment is higher than that of the control group in the overall EFL syntactic proficiency, where **t-value** is **(91.18)** which is significant at the **0.01** level of significance. Therefore, this hypothesis is assured. These differences can be attributed to the intensive speaking proficiency programme based upon the CA-based programme which the experimental group students have received.

2- The third hypothesis stated: “*The CA-based programme would be effective in developing English syntactic proficiency wholly and dimensionally*”. For verifying this hypothesis, Black s Formula was applied to compute the gain ratio (see **Table 3**).

Table (3)

*Results of Gain Ratio of the Experimental Group
According to Black' Formula*

EFL Syntactic Proficiency	Experiment al Group	N	Mean	Total Score	Gain Ratio
Identifying simple sentence elements and clause patterns	Pre-	40	2.44	10	1.3
	Post-	40	8.48		
Parsing Phrases: noun phrases, verb phrase, adjective phrases and adverb phrases.	Pre-	40	2.36	10	1.3
	Post-	40	8.56		
Parsing Clauses: noun clauses, adjective clauses and adverb clauses.	Pre-	40	2.14	10	1.4
	Post-	40	8.54		
Reducing subordinate clauses into phrases	Pre-	40	2.08	10	1.3
	Post-	40	8.24		
Parsing Sentences: complex and compound sentences	Pre-	40	2.11	10	1.4
	Post-	40	8.32		
Total	Pre-	40	11.13	50	1.3
	Post-	40	42.32		

As illustrated in **Table (3)**, the gain ratio of the experimental group in EFL syntactic proficiency components are satisfactory, where **gain ratio** is (1.3) for *Identifying simple sentence elements and clause patterns*, (1.3) for *Parsing Phrases*, (**1.4**) for *Parsing Clauses*, (1.3) for *Reducing subordinate clauses into phrases* and (**1.4**) for *Parsing Sentences*. Each of these values is *satisfactory*. These differences can be attributed to the CA-based programme which the experimental students have experienced.

As shown in **Table (3)**, besides, **gain ratio** of the experimental group in the overall EFL syntactic proficiency, where **gain ratio** is (1.3) which is *satisfactory*. Therefore, this hypothesis is assured. These differences can be attributed to the CA-based programme which the experimental group students have received.

Discussion and Interpretation

Statistical treatments and quantitative analysis showed that the experimental group students' post-performance is significantly better than their pre- performance in the EFL Syntactic Proficiency wholly and dimensionally. For more validation, the post-performance means of the experimental group were compared to those of the control group favoring the experimental group the syntactic proficiency test wholly and dimensionally.

In relation to EFL Syntactic Proficiency levels, comparing the means of the experimental group students in the pre- and post-assessments showed that these students moved from the first level of EFL Syntactic Proficiency, i.e. **Limited**, to the fifth level of linguistic Proficiency, i.e. **Proficient**. However, the control group students remained in the first level, i.e. **Limited**.

These significant differences may be attributed to the implemented CA-based programme. It was constructed upon the CA approach with so many learning tasks and activities carefully selected, structured, arranged, and integrated within the content and context. This context, accordingly, specified the roles of both the teacher (the researcher) and the learners (the prospective teachers) in the classroom. The result of Syntactic Proficiency development is consistent with those of (Zaki , 2010; Motallebzadeh and Babae, 2012; Tůma and Tomáš; 2013; Chen, 2014; Nofal, 2016) who assured

that employing new approaches and strategies are significantly effective in developing and improving syntactic knowledge/proficiency.

Additionally, the CA-based programme proved to be effective in developing some of English language domains, in the present study was *Syntactic Proficiency*. This result was consistent with those of Qi and Tian, 2010; Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Skuse, 2012; Matsui, 2014; Teng and Sinwongsuwat, 2015; and Wanphet, 2015 who assured great predictive potential of CA in developing language proficiency.

10- Conclusion

In the light of the statistical analysis of the results and their discussion, the researcher came up with the following conclusions:

- 1- Teaching EFL Syntactic Proficiency deliberately through specific instructional programmes brings about valuable learning outcomes. The prospective teachers involved in the sample achieved progress in their Syntactic Proficiency wholly and dimensionally.
- 2- Optimizing CA approach within EFL classroom contexts incorporate the two kinds of motivation: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is related to surrounding climate within the group itself and among all groups; intrinsic motivation is related to the internal feeling of each learner him/herself. Both kinds of motivation are arisen through communication/interaction leading the students to learn and at the same time to perform activities and tasks with each other within a group. Groups, in turn, compete with one another.

- 3- Providing EFL students with opportunities and materials through integrating communicative/interactive activities and tasks with a linguistic content yields dual learning outcomes. It helps them get the targeted content in an interesting way and communicate/interact during getting it using it at the same time to achieve some communicative/interactional learning purposes. This leads, finally, to long-term effect of language learning.
- 4- CA approach is of great predictive potential and promising contribution in EFL teaching and learning. It is a behaviorally-based approach; it is a learner-centered approach exploiting the foreign language in its real-life situations/interactions to teach/learn the targeted language content through some conversational learning activities and tasks urging students to converse/participate and accordingly learn; and then, no learning without conversation/participation.
- 5- CA is one of the most highly systematic and ordered approaches in tackling EFL teaching/learning. Accordingly, it necessities carrying out certain structural strategic teaching/learning procedures which should be followed carefully and consciously; otherwise an EFL learner cannot make use of the learning materials and opportunities which CA offers.
- 6- Strategic teaching - i.e. teaching using strategies and strategic learning - i.e. learning through strategies - make it easy and short enough to effectively learn and steadily achieve progress in EFL learning generally and Linguistic Proficiency particularly.
- 7- Planned specification of roles of both the teacher and the learners greatly contributes to effective teaching/learning. Once

a learner knows what he/she should do to learn, he/she will logically and normally learn without much effort or difficulty.

- 8- Strategy training is greatly effective in helping in/directly learners to learn better by themselves.

11- Recommendations

In the light of the previous results and the pertinent literature, the researcher provided the following recommendations:

- 1- Teacher preparation programmes should include syntactic proficiency systematically integrated with/clearly parallel to Grammar courses in order to be taught deliberately, explicitly and focally.
- 2- Teaching and learning through proficiency levels and standards should be adopted replacing the traditional teaching and learning of EFL.
- 3- Several standardized assessments and reliable instruments should be provided for assessing different domains and levels of language proficiency such as that of the current study, i.e. syntactic proficiency.
- 4- Other instructional programmes based on CA-approach should be designed for and taught to EFL learners generally and EFL prospective teachers particularly.
- 5- CA approach indicates predicative potential in EFL teaching/learning; this approach necessitates teach/learn through systematic and deliberate steps, i.e. strategic procedures. Strategic competence, accordingly, should be paid more attention. EFL classrooms should be a theatre of strategy training or even instruction. It should be an urgent duty of the teacher to instruct his/her students to use strategies in their

learning. That's to say, they should monitor their learning and follow specific systematic steps that better help them achieve progress in any of language domains.

- 6- More attention should be paid for enriching EFL classrooms with various and multi-level activities and tasks integrated and interwoven within learning process.
- 7- Syntactic proficiency should be simply and gradually tackled and developed throughout pre-university levels.
- 8- Deliberate and explicit Conversation courses should be provided for all EFL students throughout all levels because conversation already exists all the time within any teaching-learning context.

References

- Anderson, G. and Timbs, S. (2016). Assessing and developing English Language Proficiency: A pilot project at Curtin University Sydney. In Purveyors of fine learning since 1992. *Proceedings of the 25th Annual Teaching Learning Forum*, 28-29 January 2016. Perth: Curtin University.
- Barraja-Rohan, A. (2011). Using conversation analysis in the second language classroom to teach interactional competence. *Language Teaching Research* October 2011 vol. 15 no. *Language Teaching Research*, 15(4), 479–507. Doi:10.1177/1362168811412878.
- Batchman, L. & Palmer, A. (1996). *Language testing in practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th Ed.). New York: Pearson Education
- Butler, Y. (2004). What Level of English Proficiency Do Elementary School Teachers Need to Attain to Teach EFL? Case Studies from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(2), 245-278.
- Bygate, M. (2001). Speaking. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp.14–20). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Canale, M., and Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language testing and teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47. doi:10.1093/applin/I.1.1
- Chen, K. (2014). Vocabulary, Syntactic Knowledge and Reading Comprehension :the Perspective of College EFL Students. *WHAMPOA - An Interdisciplinary Journal* 66(2014)39-52

- Cummins, J. (2001). *Language, power, and pedagogy: bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Dugas, D., DesRosiers, R., & Gaskell, T. (2010). *Speaking by Speaking, skills for social competence* (Audio book). [NetLibrary version].
- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2003). *An introduction to language*. Boston, MA: Heinle.
- Foster, P. & Wigglesworth, G. (2000). Measuring spoken language: A unit for all reasons. *Applied Linguistics*, 21(3), 354–374.
- Gardner, R. (2012). Conversation analysis and orientation to learning. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5(3), 229-244.
- Givón T. (1999). Markedness in grammar: distributional, communicative and cognitive correlates of syntactic structure. *Studies in Language*, (15/2): 335-370.
- Heritage, J., (1995). Conversation analysis: Methodological aspects. In: U. Quasthoff, U. (Eds). *Aspects of oral communication*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 391-418.
- Housen, A., Kuiken, F. and Vedder, I (2012). *Dimensions of L2 Performance and Proficiency: Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency in SLA*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. DOI: 10.1075/llt.32
- Hutchby, I. and Wooffitt, R. (2008). *Conversation analysis: Principles, practices and applications* (2nd ed.). Backwell Publishers Ltd, Polity Press: USA.
- Iyldyz, L. (2007). Rethinking Validity of the L2 proficiency Concept: Lessons for EIL. *Asian EFL Journal* 9(1), 4, 65-85.
- Iwashita, N. (2010). *Features of Oral Proficiency in Task Performance by EFL and JFL learners*. MA. Thesis. University of Queensland. Japan.
- Iwashita, Noriko, McNamara, Tim, & Elder, Catherine (2001). Can we predict task difficulty in an oral proficiency test? Exploring the potential of an information processing approach to task design. *Language Learning*, 21(3), 401–436.

- Liddicoat, A. J. (2011). *An introduction to Conversation Analysis* (2nd Ed.). London: Continuum.
- Larsern-Freeman, D. (2004). CA for SLA? It all depends ...*The Modern Language Journal*, 88(4), 603-607.
- Markee, N. (2000). *Conversation Analysis*. New Jersey: Routledge.
- Lu, X. (2010). Automatic analysis of syntactic complexity in second language writing. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 15.
- Matsui, E. (2014). *Having Their Opinion: Using CA (Conversation Analysis) to Explore Student Teacher Interaction*. St. Margaret's Junior Colleg. NII-Electronic Library Service, pp. 19-31.
- Mondorf, B. (2003). Support for More-Support. In Rohdenburg G. and Mondorf, B. (Eds), *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*: 251-304.
- Morvay, G. (2012) *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* Department of English Studies. *SSLT* 2 (3), 415-438.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/sslt.2012.2.3.8>
- Motallebzadeh, K. and Babae, M. (2010). *Developing Syntactic Component of EFL Learners' Writing Proficiency through E-portfolio Assessment*. Azad University, Torbat-e-Heidarieh, Iran.
- Nofal, K. (2016). The Role of Syntax in Developing the Higher Order Thinking Skills of EFL/ESL Students. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science* 5(2), 181-198. DOI:10.9734/BJESBS/2015/10231
- Ortega, L. (2003). Syntactic complexity measures and their relationship to L2 proficiency: A research synthesis of college-level L2 writing. *Applied Linguistics*, 4(24), 492-518.
- Qi, S and Tian, X. (2010). *Conversation Analysis as Discourse Approaches to Teaching EFL Speaking*. *Cross-cultural Communication* 6 (4), 90-103.

- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd Ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press
- Robinson, P. (2005). Cognitive complexity and task sequencing: Studies in a componential framework for second language task design. *IRAL (International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching)*, 43, 1-32.
- Rylander, J. (2004). Interaction in a Chinese as a Foreign Language Classroom: A Conversation Analysis Approach. *Second Language Studies*, 23(1), 67-144.
- Saif, S. (2012). On the Need for a New Model of Language Proficiency and its Implications for Language Testing: A Review of Pishghadam and Zabihi. *Iranian Journal of Language Testing*, (2)2, 120-125.
- Schmitt, N. (2002). *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Seedhouse, P. (2004). *The interactional architecture of the language classroom: a conversation analysis perspective*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Seedhouse, P. (2005). Conversation Analysis and language learning. *Language Teaching*. 38(4), 165-187.
- Skuse, G. (2012). *Conversation analysis approach to interaction within an English as a foreign language (EFL) class information gap task*. A dissertation submitted to the College of Arts and Law of the University of Birmingham
- Seedhouse, P. (2011). Conversation Analytic Research into Language Teaching and Learning. In Hinkel, E. (Ed.) *The Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, Volume II (pp. 345-363). Routledge.
- Sidnell, J. (2010). *Conversation Analysis- an introduction*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley- Blackwell.

- Teng, B. and Sinwongsuwat, K. (2015). Teaching and Learning English in Thailand and the Integration of Conversation Analysis (CA) into the Classroom. Published Paper, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Ya.
- Szmrecsányi, B. (2004). On Operationalizing Syntactic Complexity. *JADT: 7es Journées internationales d'Analyse statistique des Données Textuelles*. University of Freiburg, Germany.
- Tůma, F. and Tomáš, L. (2013). Syntactic complexity in EFL student writing: a learner corpus. In *English for Academic Purposes: Practical and Theoretical Approaches*, 14, 57-70.
- Walker, G. (2004). The phonetic design of turn endings, beginnings, and continuations in conversation. Published PhD Dissertation. Department of Language and Linguistic Science. University of York.
- Wanphet, P. (2015). A conversation analysis of EFL teachers' gesture in language elicitation stage ELIA 15, pp. 61-91 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12795/elia.2015.i15.04>
- Wasow T. and Arnold J. (2003). Post-verbal constituent ordering in English. In Rohdenburg G. and Mondorf B. (Eds), *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, pp. 119-154.

ملخص

استهدف البحث الحالي تنمية الكفاءة النحوية لدى الطلاب المعلمين باستخدام تحليل المحادثة. كانت عينة البحث قوامها (٨٠) من الطلاب المعلمين بشعبة اللغة الإنجليزية، بكلية التربية النوعية، وتم تقسيم العينة إلى مجموعتين، أحدهما مجموعة تجريبية قوامها (٤٠) طالب درسوا باستخدام مدخل تحليل المحادثة، ومجموعة ضابطة قوامها (٤٠) طالب درسوا بالطريقة التقليدية. واستخدمت الدراسة الأدوات التالية: استبانة بالمكونات الرئيسية والفرعية للكفاءة النحوية اللازمة للطلاب المعلمين، واختبار في الكفاءة النحوية لقياس أداء الطلاب المعلمين في الكفاءة النحوية. استخدمت الدراسة اختبار (ت) للمقارنة بين متوسطات المجموعتين، وكذلك معادلة (بلاك) للتحقق من فاعلية تحليل المحادثة. أسفرت نتائج الدراسة عن وجود فروق دالة إحصائية بين التطبيق القبلي والبعدي للمجموعة التجريبية في اختبار كفاءة التحدث لصالح التطبيق البعدي، وكذلك وجود فروق دالة إحصائية بين متوسطات المجموعة التجريبية والضابطة في التطبيق البعدي لاختبار الكفاءة النحوية لصالح المجموعة التجريبية، كما أسفرت النتائج عن فاعلية تحليل المحادثة في تنمية الكفاءة النحوية لدى الطلاب المعلمين بشعبة اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

تحليل المحادثة - الكفاءة النحوية.