# AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE AVAILABLE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN EFL CLASSROOMS AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN KURDISTAN: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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## 1. ABSTRACT

This paper is an extract from a Ph.D. dissertation on the impact of teacher cognition on pedagogical practices: a psychosocial study of Kurdish EFL teachers at universities in the Kurdistan region. Various aspects of life in the twenty-first century have already seen tremendous changes including pedagogical practices and language teaching methodologies. Adjustments in education and language teaching are unavoidable since new realities need adaptation.

The classroom in the $21^{st}$ century ought to be leaning towards learner-centered classes and involving the learners to shoulder the responsibility for teaching and learning processes. In that way, learners might be better prepared for life after graduation. Thus, the pedagogical practices should go side by side with the requirements of the century. Therefore, teachers should be cognizant of the effective pedagogical practices that fit the era. This study aims at investigating the available pedagogical practices by tackling five essential themes including $21^{st}$-century education and skills, interaction and communication, facilitation and guidance, error correction and teachers' patience, and learner autonomy at three selected English departments in Kurdistan universities as to have an insight into the reality of the EFL classes at the university level. One hundred forty-nine students at three public universities have been targeted using Likert-questionnaire of 16 questions to collect data. Several findings have been drawn, including the infrequent availability of what is commonly referred to as 21st-century skills within the targeted EFL classrooms.

*KEYWORDS:* Pedagogical practices, Interaction and communication, $21^{st}$-Century skills, Teacher cognition,

## 2. INTRODUCTION $21^{ST}$ CENTURY EDUCATION AND EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN EFL CLASSROOM

**21**$^{st}$-century education recommends enriching the students with a necessary bunch of skills which are defined by Robles (2012, p. 457) as 'character traits, attitudes, and behaviors-rather than technical aptitude or knowledge' and ... 'are the intangible, non-technical, personality-specific skills that determine one's strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator'. Promoting those skills in the teaching process ought to be of great importance as they assist individuals to survive in the global and technological world outside the classroom (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Schleicher, 2012). Some various classifications and frameworks draw special attention to various $21^{st}$-centuries skills; however, what is commonly researched are creativity and problem-solving skills, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Erdoğan, 2019; Lai & Viering, 2012).

These skills ought to be promoted through various effective strategies which are also considered important to be effective for teaching in what is called the 'post-method era' (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The era works to change the classroom to be a place where students are participants and hold part of the responsibility in the successful teaching and learning process. Among those strategies is what is called 'maximize learning opportunity' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Allwright (1984) asserts that learning opportunities are created through cooperation and interaction between teachers and students. Such cooperation and interaction can be enhanced through 'input, output, interaction, feedback, rehearsal, language understanding, and learning understanding' (Crabbe, 2003, p. 21).

Research in the field of target language learning concentrates on the significance of interaction and negotiated interaction in target language between second language learners and their interlocutors. In his input hypothesis, Krashen (1985) hypothesizes that when interacting with language learners, competent speakers can modify their language to make the input comprehensible. Building on this and the significance of interaction for language development both, Hatch (1992) and Long (1981) argue that for learners' language development modifying the input alone is not enough and might not be sufficient without the modification of the 'interactional structure of conversation'. Furthermore, one of the prerequisites of second language learning ought to be the language learner's involvement in modified and negotiated meaningful interaction with native or competent speakers. Negotiated interaction is clarified by Long (1996, p. 418) as 'the process in which learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived comprehension, thus provoking adjustments to linguistic form, conversational structure, method content, or all the three until an acceptable understanding is achieved'. Such adjustments and modifications in the process of negotiated meaning can be achieved using modification devices or feedback strategies such as 'comprehension and confirmation check along with clarification requests', for instance, 'Do you understand me? Is that what you mean? and can you say that again? Or huh?' (Long, 1981, p. 260). These devices are presumably used once the interlocutors are in need to sort out the communication problem (Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018). Long (1996) claims that the development of language learning is facilitated once the negotiation for meaning occurs in oral interaction. Similarly, Mackey (1999) presents evidence for successful comprehension as a result of interaction modification and negotiation for meaning.  These devices are not the only ones that teachers or interlocutors can depend on for the sake of negotiated and modified interaction, there are feedback strategies that might assist the process (Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018). Lyster & Ranta (1997, p. 45) designate six teacher feedback strategies as 'explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, repetition' which are regarded as enhancing negotiated interaction between teachers and students and at the same time effective in terms of language development. Teachers can use these strategies for both 'didactic' feedback, which is aimed only at linguistic accuracy, and 'communicative' feedback, which is aimed at rectifying a communication problem (Ellis, 2012). Moreover, the effectiveness of feedback strategies can be checked based on the student's response, in other words on the students' uptake. Based on Ellis' study, Nava & Pedrazzini (2018) find that students use the teachers' corrective feedback gradually, and with the 'reinforcement' of the teachers, the students' uptake might be of two sorts, first the repaired one that the feedback focused on, second the unrepaired utterance that needs further feedback by the teacher. In terms of learners' age, younger learners make use of corrective feedback which is explicit, clarification, requests, and metalinguistic. However, adult learners can make use of almost all types of corrective feedback as they are more analytical and able to understand the implicit feedback that is not directly correcting or signal the mistake in the student's utterances (Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013).

Apart from the above mentioned factors, the classroom management types and the number of students participating can contribute to the student's involvement in interactive activities (Tsui, 2001). Additionally, the type of tasks in which students are involved also plays a significant role in motivating the students to take part in the interaction, according to the research findings, two-way activities that require information exchange in both ways for task completion require more negotiation than one-way tasks with unidirectional information flow (Pica, 1996). Likewise, 'closed' activities resulted in more meaningful negotiation, more conversational adjustment, and more learner speech adjustments toward the target language than 'open' tasks with less limited information sharing (Pica, 1996; Plough & Gass, 1993).

Additionally, teachers who engage students on the merits of their message are more likely to generate genuine negotiated engagement in class, in other words, the topic of the interaction and the message behind should be familiar to students and this can be facilitated by allowing the students to choose the topic of the interaction (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Similarly, according to Hatch (1978), students' self-selected topics provide an excellent foundation for interactional opportunities. Slimani (1989) asserts that in a classroom where the students nominate a topic,

even when everything else is guided and selected by the teacher, the motivation, feeling of freedom, and achievement are most probably created in the students, as they are given partial control over what is happening in the classroom, and consequently it will probably lead to the language development of the learners. Ellis (1992) sheds light on the importance of allowing the learners to choose the topic by stating that it leads to (a) modifying the linguistic complexity of the input to the learner's level, (b) creating better possibilities for negotiating meaning when a communication challenge develops, and (c) stimulating the learner's more extended and sophisticated production. Even though students ought to be motivated to participate when they select topics of their interest, teachers should still be aware of the fact that there are silent students who refuse to participate at any cost as they are of two types those who '..experience less anxiety and are better to 'let in' the input that their fellow learners have secured for them" (Ellis, 1999, p. 246) and those who are super anxious and feel that speaking in their developing language is stressful and, as Krashen (1985) states, may slow-down processing the input.

Thus, teachers are expected to select classroom activities, instructional strategies, or procedures considering the students' interests, responses, sentiments, and learning styles to provide an anxiety-free atmosphere to decrease the number of silent students (Horwitz, 2000). Additionally, Gregersen & Horwitz (2002) assert that teachers should be patient and assure the learners that making mistakes is part of the learning process to minimize the level of anxiety. Consequently, attempts to lessen the anxiety of the learners lead to increase motivation among the learners to take part in the activities and develop their language and communication skills which are the required skills of the era (Yan & Horwitz, 2008).

Apart from being patient, language teachers should be well-prepared, and knowledgeable, and utilize multisource materials once attending the class (Ur, 2012) Similarly, Jacobs and Farrell (2003) argue that the purposes behind all the activities and topics taught should be explained as students and teachers see classroom events via their lenses. Besides, Jones and Cargile (2018)state that EFL teachers in the 21st century are facilitators of learning, they supply what is necessary to make the learning happen. Moreover, Hiver and Al-Hoorie (2020) argue

that EFL teachers guide students in their language learning process by providing learning opportunities. Following those, teachers ought to enhance students' motivation and learning opportunities.

Among the other factors behind boosting students' enthusiasm are activities in pair or group work, 'discussion/ self-talk' and 'story-telling', to make them participate in class activities and consequently improve target language skills and 21st-century related skills as well (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Ur, 2012; Ahlquist, 2019). Ur (2012) adds to the significance of group work by stating that it encourages learner autonomy as learners are directing themselves and depend on their decisions for doing the tasks. For that reason, 'promoting learner autonomy' is regarded to be another effective pedagogical strategy for context-dependent target language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Autonomy in language learning is the capacity to direct one's learning and makes decisions on the objectives, learning methods, and implementation of one's language learning requirements (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). Thus, an autonomous learner is the one who makes those decisions. In language teaching, teachers should enable the learners to take the maximum amount of responsibility for what they need to learn and how to learn it (ibid). This enabling process includes providing them with the resources they need to learn on their own and educating them to adopt suitable techniques for achieving their learning goals, the learner's academic performance is then prioritized through strategic engagement (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Thus, an autonomous language learner knows his/her learning strategies, approaches the learning tasks actively at any cost, and is also an excellent guesser who pays attention to accuracy and fluency (Wenden, 1991).

In a way to foster learner autonomy, learners have to be taught how to learn. For that teachers have to make the learners familiar with the language learning strategies which provide crucial insights into what learners need to know and what they can do to plan and govern their learning, the most comprehensive set of learning strategies is regarded to be that of (Oxford, 1990) as it contains direct and indirect strategies. The direct strategy embraces memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, while the indirect consists of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. These strategies illustrate steps to be

taken by the learners themselves to increase their learning potential. Thus, training the learners to be able to use these learning strategies is essential for maximizing the chances for learner-centered classes.

Learner-centered education is one of the effective components of 21st-century education which is regarded as a reaction against the previous years' 'traditional, or transmitted' education view and it is based on a constructivist view of learning (Brophy, 1999; Dollard & Christensen, 1996). Based on constructivist learning concepts, the instructional objective in learner-centered classrooms is to establish a learning environment in which knowledge is co-constructed by the teacher and students rather than passed directly by the teacher. Brophy (1999, p. 49) states that in the learner-centered classroom, learners seek to make sense of what they are learning by comparing it to existing information and sharing it with others, thus the classroom is a 'learning community that constructs shared understanding'. Generally, learner-centered education refers to educational practices that transfer the focus of attention from the teacher to the learner from the teaching to the learning (Bilimoria & Wheeler, 1995; Weimer, 2002). Thus, teachers are supposed to question the attempts they make concerning their students learning rather than their own teaching. Learner-centered education, in its original sense, attempts to build learner autonomy and independence by placing responsibility for the learning journey at the disposal of the students (Reid & Ewing, 2018). This approach of pedagogy motivates students to participate thoroughly with the material, engage in discussion, and reflect on their progress (Weimer, 2002; Jabbour, 2013). Thus, they enhance communication and collaboration skills.

Teachers in the learner-centered classroom explicitly teach 'learning skills' including what to think about and how, how to solve problems, assess evidence, and generate hypotheses. Thus, the teacher strives to create a classroom environment that encourages critical thinking, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and communication skills, close personal connections with students, mutual respect, positive attitudes, and rule flexibility, as well as student self-discipline, self-determination, and independence (Garret, 2008) through using strategies such as 'reflective thinking', 'inquiry',

'exploratory discussions', 'role-playing', 'demonstrations', 'projects and simulation games' (Edwards, 2004). These strategies are considered to provoke students' 'intrinsic motivation' which is beneficial for preparing the students to be enthusiastic, self-reliant, responsible, and lifelong learners who can be shared with the power of the decision-making process which is a key principle in applying a learner-centered approach (Weimer, 2002; Brophy & Good, 2003).

The research investigates that when teachers have the absolute power and are the only authority to decide, the learners' motivation, aptitude, and enthusiasm for learning diminish, thus what teachers can do to have motivated, active and engaging learners is to share, not transfer, the power of decision-making concerning learning choices with the learners (Weimer, 2002). Power sharing benefits the overall atmosphere of the classroom and creates the sense that the class belongs to both teachers and the learners, this feeling prevents the learners from causing any trouble for the teacher and even being ready to fix if any happens (Johnson, 2000). Moreover, learners can be given the chance to practice their portion of power in selecting the assignments they prefer, in recommending the subjects to be covered in the classroom. Therefore, sharing the power and authority in decision-making with the learners can be controlled and limited and this will ease the fear that most educationalists have concerning the application of a learner-centered approach as they hold the traditional belief that teachers should have the absolute power and they are the source of knowledge; any deviation might result in chaos (Weimer, 2002).

Typically, in this field, empirical research examines a specific practice from the viewpoint of teachers. For example, Mori (2011) conducts a qualitative investigation focusing on teachers' perspectives on error correction and corrective feedback. Similarly, Borg and Alshumaimeri (2019)delve into the concept of learner autonomy by exploring the beliefs of a selected group of teachers. Additionally, Saleh (2019) surveys a group of teachers to explore their conceptions, implementations, and challenges related to the application of critical thinking in

EFL classrooms. However, this study takes a different approach by examining the students' perspective on the availability of various pedagogical practices, including 21st-century education and skills, interaction and communication, facilitation and guidance, error correction, teachers' patience, and learner autonomy.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This section is devoted to the methodology utilized in this study including the data collection tool and the targeted population.

**Data Collection Tool: Questionnaire**

In this study, the data-gathering tool is a questionnaire. According to Burton and Bartlett (2009), a questionnaire is a series of questions that respondents can answer. It may also be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The research found that a questionnaire can be an easy tool to use and assist the researcher. However, like all the other tools of data collection, it requires considerable time for reviewing and piloting (Basit, 2010). This paper considers this as the questions were revised by both the researchers and a group of jury members to check their accessibility and comprehensibility. The questionnaire in this study contains 16 items Likert-questionnaire. However, in the actual Ph.D. dissertation, other data collection tools have been used.

**The Sampling**

Students from three English language departments at three regional public universities have been selected. One hundred sixty copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the volunteer students. One hundred forty-nine responses were collected.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

The first phase in data analysis is to ensure that the obtained data is efficient and reliable. According to the instructions of the statistical program, Cronbach's alpha values if the data ranges between 0.6 and 0.7, it is regarded as appropriate and efficient for scientific purposes.
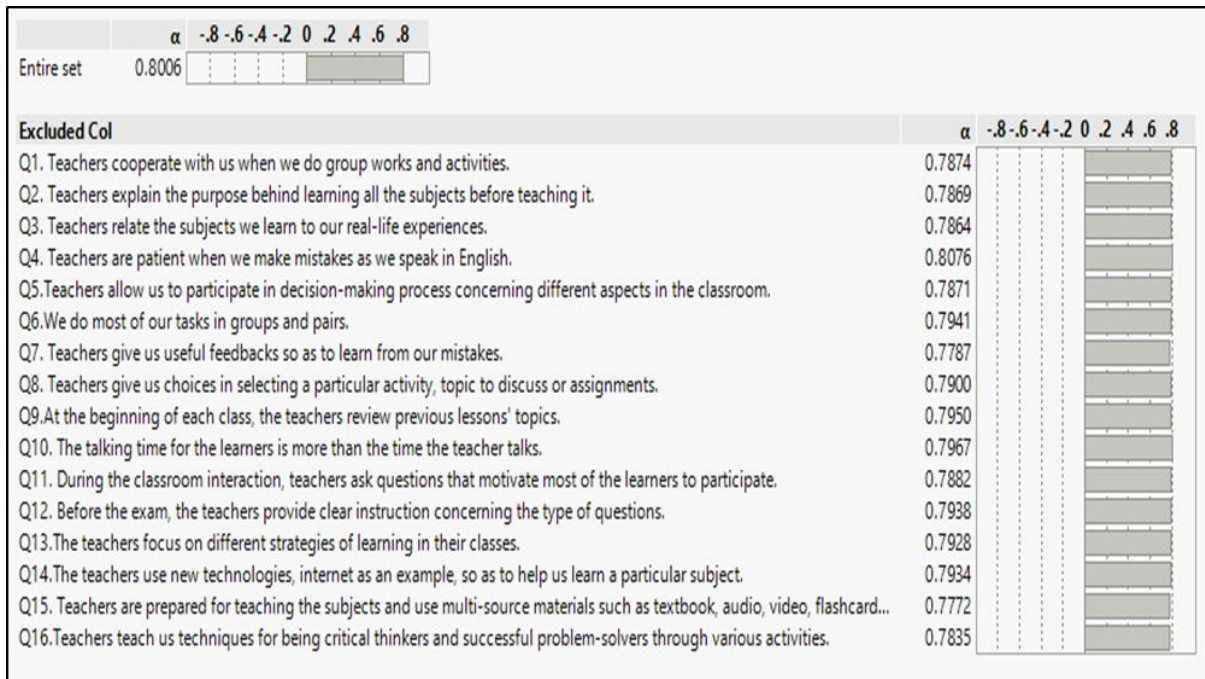


**Fig. (1):** The value of the reliability coefficient for the internal consistency of each variable.

Based on Figure 1, the values fall within the permissible scope, the data seems to be reliable and efficient for all study variables, thus it is suitable for statistical analysis and scientific research.

As the main purpose of this study is to investigate the pedagogical practices available at EFL classes, the items in the questionnaire are questioning five essential themes including 21st-century education and skills, interaction and communication, facilitation and guidance, error correction and teachers' patience, and learner autonomy at three selected English departments in Kurdistan universities. The questions are not sequenced based on the themes; however, they

are randomly distributed this is for the sake of avoiding careless responses.

A five-point Likert scale was used to rate the frequency of the occurrences of the practices. The answers were coded as Never (1), Rarely (2), Occasionally (3), Frequently (4), and Always (5). JMP-Pro 16 was used for the statistical analysis of the data including a combination of descriptive statistics, one-sample t-test, and P-value.

**Table (1):** Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for 21st-century education and skills

| Variables | Sections | Responses | | | | | Statistical Indicators | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Always | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-values | P-value |
| 21st-century education and skills | 3. Teachers relate the subjects we learn to our real-life experiences. | 16 | 43 | 55 | 27 | 8 | **3.22** | 1.037 | 37.844 | 0.0001* |
| | 11. During classroom interaction, teachers ask questions that motivate most of the learners to participate. | 17 | 49 | 48 | 30 | 5 | **3.29** | 1.022 | 39.277 | 0.0001* |
| | 14. The teachers use new technologies, the Internet as an example, to help us learn a particular subject. | 16 | 43 | 44 | 37 | 9 | **3.13** | 1.095 | 34.953 | 0.0001* |
| | 15. Teachers are prepared for teaching the subjects and use multi-source materials such as textbooks, audio, video, flashcards…). | 25 | 47 | 34 | 33 | 10 | **3.30** | 1.183 | 34.012 | 0.0001* |
| | 16. Teachers teach us techniques for being critical thinkers and successful problem solvers through various activities. | 8 | 39 | 48 | 29 | 25 | **2.84** | 1.151 | 30.102 | 0.0001* |
| Overall 21st-century education and skills | | | | | | | **3.154** | 0.705 | 54.627 | 0.0001* |

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for all the questions on 'the 21st-century education and skills' variable, in which:

• The overall weighted mean of '21st-century education and skills' is 3.154, and the standard deviation is 0.705 with a significant p-value of 0.0001, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the learners are generally at the 'occasionally' employed level of utilization for all questions tackling the '21st-century education and skills' variable.

• The mean scores for questions 16,14. 3, 11, and 15 are equal to 2.84, 3.13, 3.22, 3.29, and 3.30, with their standard deviations of 1.151, 1.037, 1.095, 1.022, and 1.183, respectively. Also, since the questions' p-values are less than 0.05, which is the significance level, students' responses indicate that teachers 'occasionally' follow activities and pedagogical practices that go side by side with what the century requires.

**Table (2):** Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for interaction and communication

| Variables | Sections | Responses | | | | | Statistical Indicators | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Always | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-values | P-value |
| Interaction and Communication | 1. Teachers cooperate with us when we do group work and activities. | 26 | 54 | 43 | 18 | 8 | **3.48** | 1.082 | 39.303 | 0.0001* |
| | 6. We do most of our tasks in groups and pairs. | 15 | 48 | 50 | 34 | 2 | **3.27** | 0.97 | 41.129 | 0.0001* |
| | 10. The talking time for the learners is more than the time the teacher talks. | 11 | 16 | 50 | 38 | 34 | **2.54** | 1.171 | 26.513 | 0.0001* |
| | 11. During classroom interaction, teachers ask questions motivating most learners to participate. | 17 | 49 | 48 | 30 | 5 | **3.29** | 1.022 | 39.277 | 0.0001* |
| | 15. Teachers are prepared for teaching the subjects and use multi-source materials such as textbooks, audio, video, flashcards…). | 25 | 47 | 34 | 33 | 10 | **3.30** | 1.183 | 34.012 | 0.0001* |
| Overall Interaction and Communication | | | | | | | **3.176** | 0.6857 | 56.533 | 0.0001* |

Table 2 depicts the descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for all the questions checking the 'interaction and communication' variable, in which:

• The weighted mean of the 'Interaction and Communication' variable is 3.176, the standard deviation is 0.6857, and the p-value is less than 0.05. It indicates that all the questions related to 'interaction and communication' are 'occasionally' employed during class activities.

• The mean score of question 1 is 3.48, with a standard deviation of 1.082 and a small p-value of 0.0001. It shows that teachers 'frequently' assist students with activities they do in groups.

• The mean scores for questions 10,6,11 and 15 are 2.54, 3.27, 3.29, and 3.30, with standard deviations of 1.171, 0.97, 1.022, and 1.183, respectively. Their p-values less than the significant level of 0.05, indicating that the students assert the occasional occurrence of satisfactory chances that enhance interaction and communication.

**Table (3):** Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for Facilitation and guidance

| Variables | Sections | Always | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-values | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Responses** | | | | | **Statistical Indicators** | | | |
| Facilitation and guidance | 2. Teachers explain the purpose behind learning all the subjects before teaching them. | 18 | 43 | 41 | 38 | 9 | **3.15** | 1.119 | 34.397 | 0.0001* |
| | 3. Teachers relate the subjects we learn to our real-life experiences. | 16 | 43 | 55 | 27 | 8 | **3.22** | 1.037 | 37.844 | 0.0001* |
| | 9. the teachers review previous lessons' topics at the beginning of each class. | 29 | 44 | 50 | 24 | 2 | **3.50** | 1.024 | 41.674 | 0.0001* |
| | 12. Before the exam, the teachers provide clear instructions concerning the type of questions. | 16 | 46 | 47 | 29 | 11 | **3.18** | 1.097 | 35.398 | 0.0001* |
| Overall Facilitation and guidance | | | | | | | **3.262** | 0.691 | 57.619 | 0.0001* |

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for all the questions checking the 'facilitation and guidance' variable, in which:

• The overall weighted mean of the 'Facilitation and Guidance' variable is 3.262, and the standard deviation is 0.691 with a significant p-value of 0.0001, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the responders of the learners are generally at the occasionally utilized level for entire questions on 'Facilitation and Guidance'.

• The mean score of question 9 is 3.50, with a standard deviation of 1.024 and a small p-value of 0.0001. It shows that the participant students declare that their teachers 'frequently' remind them of the previously explained topics before they move to anything new.

• The mean scores for questions 2, 12, and 3 are 3.15, 3.18, and 3.22, with standard deviations of 1.119, 1.097, and 1.037, respectively. Furthermore, since their p-values are less than the significant level of 0.05, it is an indication that the students at the occasionally utilized level with what these questions check. In other words, students' responses indicate that their teachers 'occasionally' teach considering the life of the students outside the classroom and they infrequently clarify assessment-related issues.

**Table (4):** Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for error correction and teachers' patience

| Variables | Sections | Always | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-values | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Responses** | | | | | **Statistical Indicators** | | | |
| Error correction and teachers' patience | 4. Teachers are patient when we make mistakes as we speak in English. | 60 | 42 | 30 | 10 | 7 | **3.93** | 1.140 | 42.058 | 0.0001* |
| | 7. Teachers give us useful feedback to learn from our mistakes. | 14 | 37 | 43 | 42 | 13 | **2.98** | 1.124 | 32.365 | 0.0001* |
| | Overall error correction and teachers' patience | | | | | | **3.453** | 0.8879 | 47.472 | 0.0001* |

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for all the questions checking the 'error correction and teachers' patience' variable, in which:
• The overall weighted mean of the variable 'Error correction and teachers' patience' is 3.453, and the standard deviation is 0.8879 with a significant p-value of 0.0001, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the student's responses are generally at the 'frequently' employed level of use for all of the questions under the stated variable.

• The mean score of question 4 is 3.93, with a standard deviation of 1.140 and a significant p-value of 0.0001. It illustrates that the teachers are frequently understanding and patient if students make mistakes when speaking English in class.
• The mean score of question 7 is 2.98 with a standard deviation of 1.124 and small p-values of 0.0001, which is less than the significant level of 0.05, indicating that the teachers 'occasionally' give the learners valuable feedback to learn from their mistakes and improve their skills.

**Table (5):** Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for learner autonomy

| Variables | Sections | Responses | | | | | Statistical Indicators | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Always | Frequently | Occasionally | Rarely | Never | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-values | P-value |
| Learner autonomy | 5. Teachers allow us to participate in the decision-making process concerning different aspects of the classroom. | 40 | 46 | 33 | 21 | 9 | **3.58** | 1.197 | 36.553 | 0.0001* |
| | 6. We do most of our tasks in groups and pairs. | 15 | 48 | 50 | 34 | 2 | **3.27** | 0.970 | 41.130 | 0.0001* |
| | 8. Teachers give us choices in selecting a particular activity, topic to discuss, or assignment. | 11 | 31 | 50 | 39 | 18 | **2.85** | 1.111 | 31.333 | 0.0001* |
| | 13. The teachers focus on different strategies of learning in their classes. | 5 | 27 | 61 | 42 | 14 | **2.78** | 0.965 | 35.163 | 0.0001* |
| | Overall learner Autonomy | | | | | | **3.121** | 0.644 | 59.119 | 0.0001* |

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics and one-sample t-test for all the questions under the learner autonomy variable, which:

• The weighted mean of the variable 'learner autonomy' considering all the questions is 3.121, and the standard deviation is 0.644 with a small p-value of 0.0001, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the students are at the 'occasionally' utilized level.

• The mean score of question 5 is 3.58, with a standard deviation of 1.197 and a small p-value of 0.0001. It shows that most of the students who answered rated that teachers frequently provide them with chances to make decisions in the classroom.

• The mean scores for questions 13, 8, and 6 are 2.78, 2.85, and 3.27, with standard deviations of 0.965, 1.111, and 0.970, respectively. Since their p-values are less than the significant level of 0.05, the indication is that the teachers occasionally refer to available learning strategies, and the students are infrequently given chances to choose activities and topics to discuss in the classroom.

As the selected variables are interlinked, explaining how strongly pairs of variables are related to each other is important. That is why the correlation coefficient was used to show the relationship between each pair of variables including '21st-century education and skills, interaction and communication, facilitation and guidance, error correction and teachers' patience, and learner autonomy'. The strength and directions of the correlation coefficient are depicted in Figure 2.
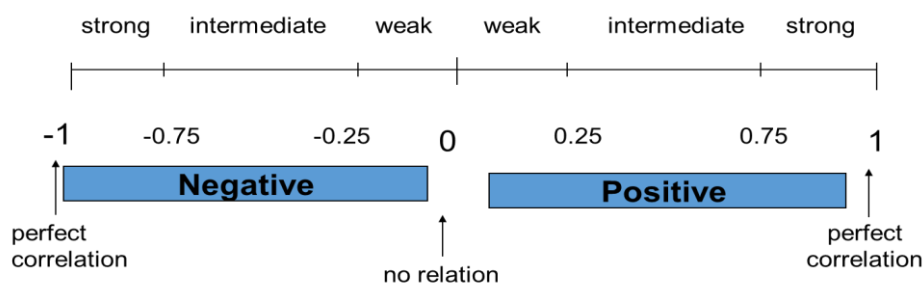


**Fig. (2):** The Strength and Direction of the Correlation Coefficient

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**Table (6):** Correlation Matrix Between Variables

| Variables | 1. 21st-century education and skills | 2. Interaction and communication | 3. Facilitation and guidance | 4. Error correction and teachers' patience | 5. Learner autonomy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. 21st-century education and skills** | 1 | 0.7224 | 0.6497 | 0.382 | 0.5813 |
| **2. Interaction and communication** | 0.7224 | 1 | 0.4362 | 0.341 | 0.6665 |
| **3. Facilitation and guidance** | 0.6497 | 0.4362 | 1 | 0.3175 | 0.5033 |
| **4. Error correction and teachers' patience** | 0.382 | 0.341 | 0.3175 | 1 | 0.3466 |
| **5. Learner autonomy** | 0.5813 | 0.6665 | 0.5033 | 0.3466 | 1 |

Table 6 illustrates the power of correlation between the available variables. As a result, all the correlation coefficient values between all pairs of variables show an intermediate level with a positive direction of association between them, in such a way that the 'interaction and communication' variable has a higher positive and moderate correlation with '21st-century education and skills' which is 0.72. In other words, the more interaction activity in the class the more 21st-century education and skills are enhanced. Furthermore, the variable 'interaction and communication' positively correlated with other variables including 'facilitation and guidance, error correction and teachers' patience, and learner autonomy' with coefficient values of 0.44, 0.34, and 0.67, respectively. This indicates that increasing the chances for interaction and communication leads to the enhancement of facilitation and guidance from the teachers, error correction chances, higher tolerance from the teachers, and most importantly increasing the chances for learner autonomy.

The 'facilitation and guidance' variable has the highest positive correlation with '21st-century education and skills' which is 0.65, and the lowest positive correlation, 0.35, with 'error correction and teachers' patience'. Moreover, 'learner autonomy' has the highest and lowest positive correlation with 'interaction and communication' and 'error correction and teachers' patience' variables, with 0.67 and 0.35. respectively. Likewise, the '21st-century education and skills' variable has the highest positive correlation with 'Interaction and communication' which is 0.72, and the lowest

positive correlation with 'error correction and teachers' patience' which is 0.38.

Thus, the above results show that the available variables are strongly correlated in a way that the enhancement of any variable will positively affect the other. Thus, once teachers follow effective practices chances for improving the required skills of the century will be increased.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The targeted students are questioned concerning the available pedagogical practices which are grouped under five essential variables as discussed below.

**The 21st-Century Education and Skills**

The mean score of this variable is 3.15 indicating that the students 'occasionally' experience any practices that are related to 21st-century education. This might be regarded as a weak point concerning EFL classrooms as being taught in a way that targets the century's required skills is of great importance for survival in the world outside the classroom (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Schleicher, 2012).

**Interaction and Communication**

The mean score of this variable is 3.17 indicating that the students 'occasionally' have chances for interaction and communication. Interaction and communication ought to be enhanced by following various practices including allowing the learners to choose the topics of discussion (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), two-way activities, and closed activities (Pica, 1996; Plough & Gass, 1993), pair work or group work activities (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Ur, 2012) and considering student's interests and learning style (Horwitz, 2000). This is because

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interaction and communication are fundamental in the process of language learning (Ellis, 2012).

**Facilitation and Guidance**

The mean score of this variable is 3.26 indicating that the students are 'occasionally' being guided by their teachers. However, facilitating the learning process and guiding students are essential duties that teachers ought to perform frequently. Teachers can be facilitators by explaining the purposes behind all the activities and topics they teach (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). Additionally, teachers should acquaint the students with language learning strategies to aid them find their path in the language learning journey (Oxford, 1990).

**Error Correction and Teachers' Patience**

The mean score for this variable is 3.45, suggesting that the student's responses indicate a frequent utilization level for the two questions associated with this variable. However, one of the questions has an average score of 2.98, indicating that teachers seldom provide corrective feedback to students. This lack of feedback is undesirable since various types of feedback promote interaction and positively influence the language learning process (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Nonetheless, according to the student's responses, the teachers demonstrate patience and often overlook students' mistakes. This is considered a positive occurrence and reflects the teacher's adherence to effective practices (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

**Learner Autonomy**

The mean score of this variable is 3.21, indicating that students experience occasional feelings of autonomy. The cultivation of learner autonomy is crucial as it enables students to become successful decision-makers, a vital skill in 21st-century education (Ur, 2012). Teachers should encourage students to engage in various forms of autonomy by involving them in decisions regarding topic selection, assignment choices, and even material selection (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). Furthermore, the practice of learner autonomy signifies a departure from the traditional perspective of education, which viewed learning as the mere transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. Instead, it embraces a constructivist approach that recognizes learning as a collaborative process involving both students and teachers (Brophy, 1999; Dollard & Christensen, 1996).

Consequently, the integration of these variables within EFL classrooms tends to foster a learning environment that equips students for the demands of the current century. Furthermore, increasing opportunities for implementing any of these practices enhances the likelihood of implementing the others, as evidenced by the correlations outlined in Table 6.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion the following can be concluded:

• Teachers occasionally follow pedagogical practices that the 21st century requires.

• Interaction and communication activities are occasionally provided for the learners.

• Teachers occasionally provide facilitation and guidance in various tasks in the classroom.

• Teachers are quite patient when learners make mistakes. However, they occasionally provide the students with positive feedback to learn from.

• Teachers occasionally consider aspects to enhance learner autonomy.

• The required skills of 21st-century education are enhanced once chances for communication and interaction, learner autonomy, facilitation and guidance, error correction, and teachers' patience are enhanced through effective pedagogical practices.

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