Explicit vs. Implicit Grammar Teaching in EFL Classrooms: A Literature Review

Hasan Ali Şahinkaya[1]

Sakarya University/Department of English Language Teaching/Sakarya, Turkey

Abstract: *This study aims to explore the effectiveness of explicit and implicit grammar instruction in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The primary objective of the study is to conduct an in-depth examination of the existing body of literature pertaining to explicit and implicit grammar teaching in EFL classrooms, providing valuable guidance to English language educators in their choice of the most suitable method for their students. In this manner, a multitude of articles and books have been examined, encompassing various aspects, including advantages, drawbacks, and other attributes associated with both explicit and implicit approaches to grammar instruction. The findings derived from this extensive review reveal that both explicit and implicit grammar teaching approaches yield positive outcomes, and each has its own efficiency, depending on various factors.*

INTRODUCTION

In the process of acquiring a second language, grammar assumes a pivotal role and is recognized as a fundamental component in EFL classrooms. The difficulty of learning and improving grammatical proficiency has been firmly established, especially when comparing it to other aspects of language acquisition. Akakura (2009) underscores the assertion that attaining mastery of any grammatical structure cannot be accomplished arbitrarily. Therefore, the provision of effective scaffolding strategies becomes a critical matter, potentially making the difference between success and failure in grasping grammar. Nevertheless, learners frequently encounter difficulties in this endeavour. It is commonly held that grasping grammar is not a straightforward task. Despite the extensive research conducted on grammar, learners continue to face numerous challenges in their grasp of grammatical principles. These considerations lead us to the inquiry regarding the optimal methods, namely explicit and implicit grammar teaching, for instructing grammar to learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

It has always been an issue and is still an ongoing puzzle that educators face in EFL classrooms: Should English grammar be taught explicitly or implicitly? A multitude of articles and books have investigated various aspects, including advantages, drawbacks, and numerous other attributes, associated with both explicit and implicit approaches to grammar instruction. Nevertheless, a consensus regarding the preferred approach to grammar instruction remains elusive. On one hand, proponents of traditional explicit grammar instruction coexist with non-interventionists who argue that language acquisition should ideally occur without explicit grammar instruction (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). On the other hand, there is still ambiguity surrounding which grammatical structures are most amenable to explicit instruction (Cook, 2016).

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1 Şahinkaya, H. A. Master's Student, hasanalisahinkaya@hotmail.com. 0000-0003-0574-2663

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This study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the two primary approaches to grammar instruction, namely explicit and implicit methods; in addition, to offer guidance to English language educators in the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for making informed choices regarding the most suitable instructional approach for their students. To accomplish these aims, the research entails an extensive review of diverse articles addressing these topics and their implications for learners. Accordingly, the investigation explores the discourse surrounding explicit and implicit grammar teaching to provide valuable insights for educators, helping them make informed teaching choices.

LITERATURE REVİEW

Role of Grammar in Language Teaching

Beginning with a clear definition of grammar is a valuable initial step in comprehending the teaching of grammar. According to Higgs (1985), grammar can be described as a system that transforms meaning into language. Crystal (2004) asserts that grammar serves as the fundamental structure enabling us to communicate effectively. Increased awareness of its mechanics empowers us to better assess the significance and efficiency of our language usage, enhancing precision, identifying ambiguity, and utilizing the full expressive potential of the English language. This understanding benefits not only English instructors but educators in any field, as teaching fundamentally involves comprehending and conveying meaning.

The timing and extent to which grammar should be taught to language learners have continuously been subjects of debate. According to Ellis (2006), grammar teaching encompasses various teaching methods that direct learners' focus toward particular grammatical structures, enabling them to either comprehend these structures in a conscious, analytical manner or employ them in their understanding and production of language, ultimately internalizing the knowledge. Rutherford and Sharwood (1988) suggest that grammar instruction has frequently been closely linked with teaching foreign languages, underscoring the significance of grammar in the process of language acquisition. Celce-Murcia (1991) contends that grammar went through phases of being highly significant in language teaching, followed by a period of reduced emphasis, and eventually regained a position of increased importance over the last twenty-five years.

Nassaji and Fotos (2004) put forth four compelling reasons underscoring the indispensable role of grammar in language instruction. Firstly, it is argued that learners must actively identify and recognize the target grammatical forms in the language input, as this is crucial for acquisition; otherwise, input is processed purely for comprehension, neglecting the specific linguistic forms that need to be internalized. Another reason is that empirical evidence from morpheme studies suggests that language learners progress through identifiable developmental stages. Research that compares individuals who receive formal instruction and those who learn a language in natural settings consistently (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Pica, 1983) shows a parallel order of acquiring grammatical morphemes. As third reason, it is indicated that instructional methods that prioritize communication exclusively, without considering grammar, are insufficient. Several research (Harley & Swain, 1984; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991) underscore the necessity of some focus on grammatical forms for achieving high levels of accuracy in the target language, indicating that purely communicative language teaching is insufficient. Ending with the last reason, the clear positive effects of grammar instruction in the second language classroom are well-established. This conclusion is rooted in an extensive body of evidence, encompassing a multitude of laboratory and classroom-based studies, as well as comprehensive reviews of instructional impact assessments spanning the past four decades (R. Ellis, 1985, 1994, 2001b, 2002; long-Freeman & Long, 2014; Long, 1983, 1988, 1991).

The significance and role of grammar in second language teaching cannot be overstated. Grammar serves as the crucial foundation upon which effective communication is constructed, providing the essential structure that allows individuals to organize their words and ideas, ensuring the clear and meaningful conveyance of messages.

Beyond being a mere set of rules, grammar constitutes the core component of a language, influencing various language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and vocabulary. Furthermore, it plays a vital role in shaping other linguistic aspects, such as meaning and function (Abune, 2019). As proposed by Cook (2016), grammar acts as the computational system that bridges the gap between sound and meaning, a seemingly straightforward yet indispensable concept for effective communication. Batstone (1994) underscores that the absence of grammar would hinder our ability to navigate the intricate landscape of language since it provides the rules governing the construction of meaningful language units. Consequently, in the process of acquiring a second language, the teaching of grammar takes on paramount importance, especially when natural acquisition methods are limited. It serves as the key to unlocking proficiency in a foreign language and promoting successful communication.

In conclusion, the role of grammar in language teaching and second language acquisition is undeniably significant. It serves as the foundational structure upon which linguistic competence is built, empowering individuals to convey their thoughts and ideas clearly and meaningfully. The ongoing debate about the timing and extent of grammar instruction, as well as the varying methods employed, underscores its continued significance. The comprehensive body of evidence presented by researchers further solidifies the positive impact of grammar instruction on language learners. Grammar is the cornerstone of language, guiding the path toward achieving linguistic competence in second language instruction and promoting effective communication in a foreign language. It serves as a foundational element in both spoken and written communication, with its mastery being essential for effective language use. However, the challenge of learning and enhancing grammatical proficiency, especially when compared to other aspects of language acquisition, is well-established. Traditional grammar-teaching methods have often proven inadequate, and learners continue to face difficulties in grasping grammatical principles. To address these challenges, this study aims to investigate whether explicit or implicit grammar instruction is more effective in facilitating second language acquisition. By delving into implicit and explicit knowledge in EFL classrooms, we can gain a better understanding of which type of formal instruction is most beneficial for learners to achieve grammatical proficiency in second language acquisition.

Explicit and Implicit Knowledge

A significant differentiation revolves around the kind of knowledge acquired through grammar instruction. Implicit knowledge refers to an intuitive and abstract understanding of language (De Graaff & Housen 2009), which is learned subconsciously through real communication. It is the key to using language fluently and accurately in spontaneous situations, without the need for conscious formulation of language output. Implicit knowledge can be associated with procedural memory, responsible for skills like speaking a language (Cook 2016). It's important to note that implicit knowledge and procedural knowledge are not synonymous (DeKeyser 2009). On the other hand, according to Ellis (2008), explicit knowledge is characterized as being conscious, declarative, irregular, and inconsistent when compared to implicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge enables the learner to analyse, make generalizations, and apply reasoning when dealing with various grammatical structures (De Graff & Housen 2009). Consequently, both implicit and explicit knowledge collectively contribute to predicting overall language proficiency. However, the impact on general proficiency can vary depending on whether different grammar structures are acquired as implicit or explicit knowledge (Ellis 2006).

The connection between explicit grammatical knowledge and implicit grammatical knowledge and how they impact the development of second language knowledge has drawn significant attention from researchers in the field of second language acquisition. As noted by Ellis (2006), and Nassaji and Foto (2011), explicit knowledge is gained through deliberate, controlled processes that occur within the declarative memory, while implicit knowledge is acquired through processes that are less conscious or even subconscious. According to Ellis (2008), instruction is considered implicit when its aim is to facilitate learners in deducing rules without their conscious awareness. Consequently, implicit teaching is characterized by not explicitly presenting or instructing rules, with the expectation that learners will analyse the input to determine if it can be formulated into a rule (De Graaff &

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Housen, 2009; Hulstijn, 2005). Table 1 illustrates the significant differences between explicit and implicit language instruction.

Table 1. *Key Characteristics of Implicit and Explicit Knowledge (Ellis, 2008, as cited in Aydin, Rahmanpanah, & Mohseni, 2023)*

Characteristics	Implicit knowledge	Explicit knowledge
Awareness	The learner is intuitively aware of linguistic norms.	The learner is consciously aware of linguistic norms.
Type of knowledge	The learner has procedural knowledge of rules and fragments.	The learner has declarative knowledge of grammatical rules and fragments.
Systematicity	Knowledge is variable but systematic.	Knowledge is often anomalous and inconsistent.
Accessibility	Knowledge is accessible using automatic processing.	Knowledge is accessible only through controlled processing.
Use of L2 knowledge	Knowledge is typically accessed when the learner is performing fluently.	Knowledge is typically accessed when a learner experiences a planning difficulty.
Self-report	Non-verbalizable.	Verbalizable.
Learnability	Potentially only learnable within the critical period.	Learnable at any age.

As seen in the table below, implicit and explicit knowledge in language teaching exhibit significant differences in several key aspects. Implicit knowledge is characterized by learners' intuitive awareness of linguistic norms, often acquired without conscious reflection. It involves procedural knowledge of language rules and fragments and maintains a degree of systematicity. Implicit knowledge is accessible effortlessly through automatic processing and is typically used when learners employ the language fluently and spontaneously. However, it is challenging for learners to verbalize or describe their implicit knowledge, and it may primarily be acquired within the critical period of language development. In contrast, explicit knowledge involves the conscious recognition of linguistic norms, resulting in declarative knowledge of grammatical rules and fragments, which often display anomalies and inconsistencies. Access to explicit knowledge requires controlled, conscious processing and is typically employed when learners encounter planning or articulation difficulties. Explicit knowledge is more easily verbalized and learned at any age, making it accessible for self-reflection and analysis.

To conclude, explicit and implicit knowledge each possess distinctive characteristics that can be effectively incorporated into the teaching of grammar in EFL classrooms. Some results of many research indicate benefits in employing explicit techniques in language teaching. The utilization of explicit methods in the context of foreign language classrooms seems to yield better results (Ellis, 2008; Spada & Tomita, 2010). Nevertheless, a definitive preference between the two approaches remains undetermined, and there is no conclusive verdict on which one should be favoured over the other. Therefore, we need to explore explicit and implicit grammar teaching in detail.

Explicit and Implicit Grammar Teaching

One of the main elements of a language has always been grammar. All languages have their own grammar rules and structures. Sheen (2002) asserts that the endeavour to formulate the most effective approach for instructing grammar poses a significant challenge. According to Akakura (2009) each grammar structure cannot be acquired with the same method. For this reason, to determine the most effective approach to teaching grammar, extensive research and various methodologies have been employed. Among these, explicit and implicit grammar instruction stand out as two widely acknowledged yet contentious methods. Consequently, the ongoing debate in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom revolves around whether grammar instruction should be carried out implicitly or explicitly. Hammerly (1975) points out that the usage of implicit and explicit approach in terms of grammar teaching is one of the most stimulating and questionable topics. Despite being very disputable, the two approaches are the major ones that most grammar teaching methods based on. Therefore, they are commonly used in EFL classrooms. Without a doubt, teachers' lesson plans yield varying outcomes depending on the chosen topic or instructional approach. Consequently, these disparities lead to the adoption of diverse teaching methods (Deng & Lin, 2016). In any case, it is reasonable to assert that these differences have a positive influence on students' comprehension of grammar.

Explicit grammar teaching has its roots dating back to 1967 when the concept of "explicit learning" was initially introduced through experiments involving finite state grammar (Ling, 2015). Despite being categorized as an older approach, explicit grammar instruction continues to hold significance and relevance in language education. According to Krashen (1982) this approach's main aim is that educators should explain the topic clearly and learners should find practice chance until the rule is fully understood. Explicit grammar teaching puts emphasis on learning grammatical rules on purpose to become more efficient and accurate in language use. Nunan (1994) expresses that explicit teaching method can happen only when students learn the rules deliberately and teachers should give specific information. There are some procedures of a grammar lesson that is taught explicitly. Erlam (2003) emphasizes the importance of beginning the lesson with a deductive explanation of the grammar pattern rules, considering this as the initial rule in explicit grammar teaching. On the other hand, there are three important steps during the acquisition of explicit grammar structures. Nazari (2013) defines these steps as encounter, process, and use. She explains that students should know and use these three steps to make the grammar structure a part of their interlanguage. According to Altun and Dinçer (2020), explicit grammar teaching has a lot of advantages for students' development not only in grammar but also in different aspect of language, such as writing and accuracy. Additionally, Bhatia (1997) and Widodo (2006) both advocate for the positive impacts of explicit grammar instruction on different aspect of language, contending that it plays a significant role in enhancing students' communication skills.

The traditional approach to language instruction centres on the teacher's emphasis on language structure by elucidating grammar rules and reinforcing them through repetitive exercises. In this method, grammar takes precedence over other facets of the language (Alenezi, 2019). Explicit grammar teaching involves the direct instruction of language rules, which is why it is the most well-known method for explicit learning. Nevertheless, in contemporary education, explicit grammar teaching goes beyond the confines of traditional grammar instruction, representing a broader concept distinct from conventional grammar learning methods (Pehlivan & Seckin, 2022).

Implicit teaching, on the other part, is also a preferred research subject for grammar teaching in EFL classrooms. Implicit grammar instruction is often regarded as the more dynamic of the two approaches. This teaching method prioritizes language fluency over accuracy and accomplishes this by actively involving learners in interactive activities. Implicit instruction promotes learner independence and fosters a natural environment for second language acquisition. Furthermore, it converts input into intake, mirroring the process seen in first language

acquisition (Birsen, 2012). Krashen (1981) explains the importance of implicit teaching by expressing that there is no need to acquire a language consciously because there are other ways to learn a language, not just one.

In grammar teaching, the implicit approach seeks to infer grammar rules subconsciously. Implicit grammar teaching depends on the idea that while learning grammar, students must be naturally acquired through situational scene (Ling, 2015). The focus is on the meaning instead of the grammar rules. In reading classes, particularly, text comprehension serves as a means for instructors to impart grammar rules indirectly. Within this process, offering feedback becomes an essential element for students to grasp the structures of the presented grammar patterns. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that mere exposure to the content can also be sufficient for learners to internalize these forms. On the other hand, implicit instruction also yields a positive impact on communication skills. Proficient and confident verbal expression serves as evidence of implicit language proficiency, contributing to enhanced fluency and self-assuredness in a learner's communication. Another beneficial outcome of implicit knowledge is its capacity to foster the student habit formation. Sik (2015) explains it by giving the reason that activities in implicit teaching are done until the structure usage becomes a self-acting performance. As indicated, implicit instruction undeniably contributes positively to students' skill development. According to Dekeyser (1995) student' metalinguistic awareness works out since they do not focus on a specific rule.

By juxtaposing explicit instruction and implicit instruction, their fundamental disparities can be discerned more distinctly. While implicit instructions are flexible and dynamic, explicit instructions are seen as technical, memorization, drilling and rule-governed (Alenezi, 2019). In implicit instructions learner are expected to be efficient in language fluency whereas the learners are expected to produce their own speech correctly in explicit instructions. According to Ling (2015) explicit grammar rules are necessary for learners to formulate correct output. Another attribute of explicit instruction pertains to the role of the instructor within the classroom setting. The instructor is the main source of information, and in the centre acts like a conductor who gives rules and directions. On the other hand, in implicit instruction the role of the instructor is transferred to the students. In the classroom where learners come to the forefront, the involvement and interactivity of the learners is necessary. As a result, implicit instruction educates them to become independent and autonomous learners. Like acquiring the first language (L1), input is converted into intake in implicit grammar instruction (Birsen, 2012). In addition to the distinction in the instructor's role, the manner in which the instructor presents himself or herself in the classroom varies significantly between explicit and implicit teaching. In explicit teaching, instructors typically take the lead and directly present information to students during lessons, whereas in implicit teaching, the presentation approach can differ (Erlam, 2003). The grammar rule is introduced by the instructor at the end of the lesson (Seliger, 1975) and students try to discover the rule (Robinson, 1996; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999) but the rules are never explained directly by the instructor (Shaffer, 1989). While the instructor draws attention to the rule as soon as possible in explicit instruction, the given task gets attention instead of the rule in implicit teaching (Hulstijn, 2005; Norris & Ortega, 2000). According to Alenezi (2019) both explicit and implicit teaching methods result in automatization, that's why, which method to implement in the classroom needs attentive consideration. Also, Cook (2016) explains that the main issue is to connect conscious understanding of a rule to the ability that can use it. In this context, explicit teaching method should be used on learners tend to learn consciously and have second language acquisition difficulty. In order to understand the grammar form of the language, maybe, strict rules can be seen as the key point for the learners. Larsen-Freeman (2003) explains that both in explicit and implicit grammar acquisition grammar should be accepted as a skill or dynamic process instead of a static area of knowledge.

The ongoing discussion regarding whether to incorporate explicit or implicit grammar teaching in the EFL classroom likely stems from the distinct characteristics and merits associated with each method. Consequently, some research endeavours to analyse the comparative aspects of these methods, while others focus on determining the superiority of one over the other. The debate over which method is more effective in teaching grammar has also

created some assertions on L1 and L2 acquisition differences. Some linguists assert that L1 acquisition is not gained from explicit rules, but through the experiences while using the language. On the other hand, some linguists claim that L2 acquisition is much different. Acquisition of L2 needs noticing and knowing the grammar rules by the learner. (Krashen, 1982; Long 1988; Schmidt 1990).

In summary, both approaches exhibit distinctions and unique advantages. When instructing grammar in an EFL classrooms, both explicit and implicit instruction can contribute to the effectiveness of English language teaching. Achieving this can be facilitated by employing appropriate methods tailored to the learners' needs and conducting research on instructional approaches.

Previous Studies about Explicit and Implicit Grammar Teaching

The efficacy of instructing based on the principles of both explicit and implicit instruction has long been a subject of debate spanning several decades (Aydin, Rahmanpanah, & Mohseni, 2023). In consequence, extensive research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of grammar teaching instructions, particularly pertaining to explicit and implicit methods.

Akakura (2012) conducted a study examining the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction on explicit and implicit knowledge among participants with L2 proficiency levels ranging from B2 to C1, as per the CEFR framework. The research primarily focused on English generic and non-generic articles. Findings from this study revealed that explicit grammar instruction had a positive impact on both implicit and explicit knowledge. However, explicit knowledge acquisition was more pronounced in the context of ungrammatical exemplars of the target structure, whereas implicit knowledge continues to improve even further at the delayed post-test, showing no signs of deterioration over time.

In a similar vein, Ebadi, Saad, and Abedalaziz (2014) conducted research that encompassed participants with L2 proficiency levels at the B1 range according to the CEFR framework. This study covered a broad spectrum of target structures for ESL learners, including modals, past tense -ed, present perfect, comparatives, and unreal conditionals. The investigation demonstrated that explicit instruction, coupled with explicit corrective feedback, significantly benefited both implicit and explicit knowledge.

One of the subjects under investigation is the distinction between fluency and accuracy in grammar, which has prompted researchers to reevaluate their approaches to grammar instruction. The study about the attitudes of teachers towards grammar instruction in the classroom, carried out by Sopin (2015), showed that grammar teaching and accuracy have a significant role in English language teaching. Sopin (2015) underlines that all of the respondents agreed on the importance of accuracy and grammar. According to the study, the rate of the respondents in favour of explicit teaching is %84. In addition, %64 agreed on the difficulty in learning for the students with implicit grammar instructions.

On the contrary, a study conducted by Soleimani, Jahangiri, and Gohar (2015) investigated how implicit and explicit grammar instructions affect the implicit knowledge of simple past tense in English. The results showed that both implicit and explicit groups got very similar results in the tests. According to Soleimani, Jahangiri, and Gohar (2015) in acquisition of implicit knowledge of L2, explicit grammar instructions have no superiority comparing to implicit instructions.

In a study conducted by Ling (2015) among English major students at the tertiary level, the effectiveness of explicit and implicit grammar teaching methods was investigated, with a focus on Chinese students. The study also explored the use of multimedia teaching and English newspapers in grammar instruction. Ling's findings revealed that explicit teaching resulted in students who could construct accurate grammar sentences but struggled with

basic English communication, whereas implicit teaching fostered more interactive students with greater proficiency and accuracy in output. Ling's conclusion suggests that either teaching approach can be chosen judiciously, emphasizing the absence of a substantial difference between the two methods. Furthermore, the study highlights that explicit and implicit grammar teaching are not entirely distinct approaches but rather complementary methods contingent upon various factors.

Another study by Naderi (2018) investigated the impact of explicit text-based and implicit emoticon/emoji-based feedback on EFL learners' grammar knowledge development. Three groups, including a control group, received English verb instruction, while two experimental groups used separate Telegram groups for feedback – one explicit and one implicit, with the control group receiving no feedback. Post-test results, supported by analysis, showed significant effects of both feedback types on grammar knowledge, with explicit text-based feedback performing better. Interviews with some participants revealed a preference for explicit text-based feedback.

Altun and Dinçer's (2020) research explores the effectiveness of implicit and explicit teaching approaches concerning grammar and writing skills. The study involved 40 intermediate-level Turkish students aged between 18 and 20. After an eight-week period, the explicit group achieved higher scores compared to the implicit group. While the progress of the implicit group during this period was commendable, the explicit group outperformed them, particularly in writing scores. This outcome was attributed to the positive impact of explicit grammar instruction on their writing skills, ultimately demonstrating the success of the explicit teaching method.

Michaud and Ammar (2023) examined the impact of explicit grammar instruction on implicit and explicit knowledge, focusing on the French subjunctive tense. Their study included participants with L2 proficiency levels spanning from B1 to B2, according to the CEFR categorization. Contrary to the sequence of instruction, whether explicit instruction occurred before, within, or after a task, their findings consistently indicated a positive effect on both types of knowledge. Explicit instruction, in the form of deductive Focus on FormS, was found to be effective in enhancing both explicit and implicit knowledge in their research.

A recent study by Nejadansari, Moeen, and Dabaghi (2023) aimed to explore the impact of implicit and explicit grammar teaching, facilitated through teacher scaffolding, on the enhancement of speaking motivation and self-efficacy among pre-intermediate EFL learners in Iran. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the research involved 90 ESP students from architecture and art programs at Azad University of Yazd, who were divided into explicit, implicit, and control groups. The findings revealed that the use of scaffolding techniques, coupled with both explicit and implicit grammar instruction, had a significant positive influence on the self-efficacy and motivation of Iranian pre-intermediate EFL learners. Importantly, the study demonstrated that the effectiveness of scaffolding techniques was consistent regardless of whether explicit or implicit grammar instruction was employed, underscoring their substantial impact on learner self-efficacy and motivation.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of explicit and implicit grammar teaching in EFL classrooms has been a topic of ongoing debate, and the studies discussed in the literature review provide a nuanced view. Some studies, such as Akakura (2012) and Ebadi, Saad, and Abedalaziz (2014), suggest that explicit instruction has a positive impact on both explicit and implicit knowledge. These findings imply that explicit grammar instruction can be beneficial for learners, particularly in terms of acquiring a clear understanding of grammar rules. However, the effectiveness of implicit instruction is also evident in some studies, like the one conducted by Soleimani, Jahangiri, and Gohar (2015), which found that both implicit and explicit groups achieved similar results in tests. This suggests that the choice between explicit and implicit methods should consider various factors, including learner preferences and goals.

The choice between explicit and implicit grammar teaching is influenced by a range of factors. Ling's (2015) study highlights the importance of considering learners' specific needs when selecting an approach. Explicit instruction may be more suitable for students who need to construct grammatically accurate sentences, while implicit teaching can foster greater interactive proficiency. Naderi's (2018) research further demonstrates that the type of feedback provided can impact the development of grammar knowledge. Additionally, Altun and Dinçer's (2020) study underscores the positive impact of explicit grammar instruction on writing skills, indicating that the instructional context can play a significant role in the decision-making process.

Another important point to recognize is that explicit and implicit grammar teaching are not mutually exclusive; rather, they can be considered complementary methods. The research by Ling (2015) and Nejadansari, Moeen, and Dabaghi (2023) suggests that the choice between these approaches should be flexible and based on the specific learning objectives and context. The study by Michaud and Ammar (2023) even indicates that explicit instruction can be effectively incorporated at different stages of instruction, highlighting its adaptability and the potential for combining elements of both approaches. This complementary nature of explicit and implicit teaching allows for a more comprehensive approach to grammar instruction in EFL classrooms.

The choice between explicit and implicit grammar teaching methods is a complex and contentious decision for educators in the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Both approaches have distinct characteristics and unique advantages. The exploration of explicit and implicit grammar instruction sheds light on their unique attributes. According to Bhatia (1997) and Widodo (2006), explicit teaching emphasizes clear presentation of grammar rules and systematic practice, contributing to learners' accuracy in language use. Akakura (2009) rightly emphasizes that mastering grammar structures is not a random process, requiring deliberate strategies to support learners. On the other hand, implicit teaching focuses on fluency and language use in context, aligning with Krashen's (1981) assertion that language acquisition often occurs without conscious grammar learning. Implicit teaching's dynamic nature fosters learner independence and mirrors the natural processes of first language acquisition (Birsen, 2012). Additionally, implicit teaching has the added benefit of habit formation (Sik, 2015).

As one of the key objectives of this study is to elucidate the distinctions between explicit and implicit grammar instruction and provide valuable guidance to English language educators in selecting the most suitable method for their students, it is evident that there is no definitive answer to the question of whether grammar should be explicitly or implicitly taught. Instead, the more pertinent inquiry is, "When should explicit or implicit grammar instruction be preferred?" This decision depends on a multitude of factors, including the educator's knowledge base and the proficiency level of the English learners. Furthermore, educators must consider how their own knowledge, professional experience, and institutional requirements influence their approach to grammar instruction. Continuous self-development and training to stay up to date with educational innovations should be essential components of an educator's career. Flexibility in teaching approaches is also crucial, enabling educators to meet the evolving needs of their students effectively.

In conclusion, the choice between explicit and implicit grammar teaching methods is nuanced and complex, and the best approach may vary depending on the context and the specific needs of the learners. As the field of language education continues to evolve, educators should remain open to adopting a diverse range of strategies and approaches to ensure that they provide the most effective and tailored instruction to their students. For these reasons, further research will be needed to understand the nuanced character of the explicit and implicit grammar teaching methods in EFL classrooms, shedding more light on the intricacies and subtleties of each approach and helping educators make informed decisions about which method to employ in different teaching situations.

Declarations on Ethical Standards

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