

## **Grammar Teaching and Learning in English Language Class: Students' View**

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### **Abstract**

Grammar, which differs in structure among languages, plays an important component in language acquisition. Grammar proficiency is essential for clear communication since it improves understanding and coherence. Therefore, mastering English grammar is essential to EFL study. This study explores the students' view on the importance of grammar in language acquisition in detail and how EFL students evaluate the teaching and learning of grammar. A qualitative method was used, including open-ended questionnaire, and interview, to better understand students' perspectives. The results support the participants' understanding of grammar's significance and reinforce the idea that grammar teaching is essential. The findings of this study further highlight the need to combine explicit and implicit teaching strategies within grammar teaching and learning, acknowledging the mutually beneficial nature of both methods. These strategies further emphasise the critical role that technology and the internet play in language learning. These results together offer educators knowledge for developing effective grammar teaching strategies that correspond with students' viewpoints and academic objectives.

**Keywords:** *Explicit grammar teaching; grammar teaching; implicit grammar teaching*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Grammar exists in all languages, and each grammar is unique. Grammar is key for producing coherent sentences, making it the most important component of learning a language (Thornburry, 1999). Communication is possible between people who speak the same language because they have an innate understanding of the grammar system, or the rules for creating meaning, in that language. For instance, students who are native English speakers are already familiar with English grammar. They are able to identify the sounds of English words, their meanings, and the various ways that words may be combined to form coherent sentences. Hence, students who are not native English speakers must learn and master English grammar in order to be able to communicate in English.

Grammar continues to play a big part in English language learning. Several linguistic abilities, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are based on grammar proficiency (Widodo, 2006). For instance, using grammar in speaking and listening will

improve comprehension of the communication. Together with speaking and listening, grammatical proficiency in writing is essential. The reader will have trouble understanding the information presented in the text if the author uses poor grammar in his writing. For the reader to comprehend the author's writing more thoroughly, they also must be proficient in grammar.

It is necessary to teach grammatical aspects in order to improve language acquisition as it is one of the components of communicative competence. Nevertheless, in the realm of language education and learning, there has been intense debate about the role of grammar teaching (Ellis, 2006). For instance, Krashen (1982) claims that there is no requirement for cognitive awareness because language is only acquired unconsciously by students. Krashen argues that formal instruction in grammar learning only results in an improvement in deliberately acquired competence, which can only serve as a monitor. Hence, while only the acquired system is capable of generating spontaneous speech, the learnt system is employed to verify what is being said. Implicit grammar instruction is built on this concept. The goal of implicit instruction is to set up the circumstances such that students may deduce the rules subconsciously. On the other hand, according to White (1987), learners cannot simply learn grammatical characteristics by being exposed to understandable material; instead, explicit teaching is required. This idea serves as the cornerstone of explicit grammar instruction. Explicit instruction entails teaching a specific rule during the learning process and encouraging the learners to build metalinguistic awareness of that rule. The end result is internalising the pattern without having their attention on it.

In order to use language effectively and accurately, explicit grammar instruction emphasises learning the rules of grammar with a specific goal in mind. The grammar-translation approach, which is a key method in traditional grammar instruction, teaches grammar explicitly. It helps students understand the target language by studying its grammar. By examining closely how sentences are built, students can understand the text better (Al-maamari, 2021). Emphasis is placed on awareness, purpose, and controllability in the grammar-learning process in explicit grammar instruction, which achieves the goal of mastering grammar by studying grammatical rules. On the contrary, the term implicit grammar teaching describes instructional strategies that place a strong emphasis on students learning grammar in a way that comes easily to them in real-world contexts. Implicit grammar instruction primarily uses the inductive reasoning approach and inculcates grammatical principles via the communicative use of language. This is widely implemented in communicative teaching. By using this strategy, language is taught without focusing only on grammar and using various activities to teach it subtly (Thompson, 1996).

Previous research studies with various designs and paradigms have been conducted to explore about teaching and learning grammar. Nazari (2013) revealed that students who received explicit instruction did better in grammatical structure than those who had been exposed to implicit instruction. Additionally, they showed to be more accurate in identifying and correcting grammatical errors. Moreover, a case study was conducted by Guci & Drajadi (2019) to find out the preference of Indonesian English students attending senior high school regarding grammar teaching instruction. The result shows that the students prefer implicit teaching strategies to facilitate the natural acquisition of the language. Komara & Tiarsiwi (2021) explored how learners perceive grammar learning. The findings of their study demonstrated that Indonesian EFL students believed that grammar was challenging yet necessary to learn and master. The teachers'

influences and the English school textbook were both cited by learners as major barriers to understanding grammar. Besides, learners were more inclined to select flexible learning strategies, particularly technology-based grammar instruction. Meanwhile, Wangchuk et al., (2021) carried out a survey on how Bhutanese teachers perceive and teach grammar in higher secondary schools in Bhutan. According to survey results, formal grammar instruction is necessary for learners to eventually grasp a foreign or second language. This belief was shared by most Bhutanese instructors. The survey further revealed that most people think grammar is best taught explicitly. A preference for a more thorough approach to grammatical concerns is also indicated by the instructors' comments regarding the significance of systematic practice of grammatical aspects and thorough error correction.

In the classroom, choosing which grammar teaching strategy to use is crucial. Without a plan, teachers would apply a method that does not relate to or interest students. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions is essential because it affects how a teacher or lecturer will manage the class. It is important to consider how students perceive the instruction to assess how effective it is (Chen & Hoshower, 2003). Since teachers already know how students see them, they may assess their own teaching, restructure how they present content in class, and determine which lessons students liked and disliked. This study aims to find out how students of English as Foreign Language perceive grammar teaching in classrooms.

## **METHOD**

Descriptive qualitative research was employed by the researcher. The descriptive qualitative research, according to (Moleong, 2010), is a study that clarifies how to comprehend the phenomena of the research topic, behaviour, perception, motivation, action, etc., holistically and the method of summarizing the result in the form of words and sentences. The approach is employed because the research is focused on a specific educational phenomenon, specifically the teaching and learning of English grammar. The study subject did not get any treatments. The occurrences were not altered; they were only seen and described. The data were gathered from students in the English Education Department of the Faculty of Universitas Tidar through questionnaires and interviews.

The students of the English Education Department of the Faculty of Universitas Tidar served as the subjects of all data collection through interviews and questionnaires. As many as 42 EFL students from the English Department of Universitas Tidar who were enrolled in their fourth semester served as the participants of the study. They were selected as the participants because they have successfully completed six credits of university-level grammar courses.

In this investigation, there were two instruments employed. To get a sense of how the students felt about studying and teaching grammar, there was an open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The use of an open-ended questionnaire gave participants greater freedom to voice their opinions, and a semi-structured interview was utilized to confirm the earlier findings from the questionnaire. The purpose of the questions was to understand what the students thought about grammar in general, grammar learning, and grammar instruction. Experts evaluated the questionnaire's questions before distribution. The questions were as follows:

Table 1. The questions of questionnaire and interview

Item numbers	Questions
1	What is grammar? What do you think about grammar?
2	Must grammar be taught in language learning? Why/why not?
3	Is there any difference between the grammar teaching and learning process before and after you study in English Education Department? Explain.
4	What do you learn in grammar class?
5	Tell me your success/unsuccess experience in learning grammar.
6	Amongst these methods, which one helps you improve grammar competence best? Explain.
	a. Implicit grammar teaching and learning
	b. Explicit grammar teaching and learning
	c. Both implicit and explicit grammar teaching and learning

Before distributing the questionnaire and conducting the interview, the concept and difference of implicit and explicit grammar learning were explained to the participants.

The EFL learners' viewpoint on grammar instruction and learning was described in the data analysis using qualitative description. While doing a thorough analysis of the data, the researcher looked carefully at each information to find recurring themes, topics, concepts, and conceptual patterns.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Two instruments, an open-ended questionnaire and an interview, were used to gather the data needed to answer the question of the study. A description of the students' view towards the teaching and learning of English grammar was the goal. After gathering information from an interview and a questionnaire filled out by the students, the findings from the two instruments were organised and developed. Table 2 below presents the responses of the participants to the questionnaire.

Table 2. The responses to the open-ended questionnaire

Questions	Responses
1. What is grammar? What do you think about grammar?	<p><i>"Grammar is a rule of a language. I think English grammar is difficult and complicated."</i></p> <p><i>"Grammar studies the structure of sentences. It hard to learn."</i></p> <p><i>"Grammar is used to make, sentences. I thing English Grammar is difficult and need more understanding."</i></p>
2. Must grammar be taught in language learning? Why/why not?	<p><i>"Yes ofc. Since that if someone doesn't learn grammar at all he would have a problem to learn English with good and fluently sentences."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, because grammar is a basic of English language, so if the grammar didn't taught in school the student just know about the meaning of the word in English without knowing about the rules to using those word."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, this needs to be studied because this is a reference where students must study it so that we are familiar with the word formation process. Words are units of language that have one meaning or meaning"</i></p>
3. Is there any difference between the grammar	<p><i>"Before studying in EED, when my teacher teach grammar, I cannot clearly understand because it is not clear if that is grammar or not, the material is mixed with the other. I cannot learn grammar just by</i></p>

teaching and learning process before and after you study in English Education Department? Explain.	<i>read it myself and do the exercise, I need someone teach me clearly about grammar. After studying in EED, I can understand a little about grammar."</i>
	<i>"Yes, before the teacher teach, I think grammar is about recitation, bit it turns out grammar is all about practice"</i>
	<i>"No, there's no difference"</i>
4. What do you learn in grammar class?	<i>"We learn about how to write sentence in right and proper way"</i>
	<i>"Correcting the type of sentence or text used and concluding what sentence is used in a text."</i>
	<i>"I learn a lot of them. Just like the structure of language, including, sentence structure, tenses, etc."</i>
5. Tell me your success/unsuccess experience in learning grammar.	<i>"Explanations that are clear can be understood and explanations that are too fast are difficult to understand."</i>
	<i>"When the lecturer's explanation was not clear, I taught myself via Youtube and it was easier to understand"</i>
	<i>"When teacher explain the formula in tenses I'm understand, but when it come to practice I often get the wrong answer"</i>
6. Amongst these methods, which one helps you improve grammar competence best? Explain.	<i>"I can learn grammar naturally"</i>
	<i>"Because if explicitly it will be easier to understand because the information explained is explained in a more structured and grammatical manner."</i>
a. Implicit grammar teaching and learning	<i>"I think we need to combine two of those method so all the students with difference understanding can understand grammar more efficiently"</i>
b. Explicit grammar teaching and learning	
c. Both implicit and explicit grammar teaching and learning	

The interview result showed the same response given in the questionnaire. The students stated that grammar is difficult and that it is important to learn it in English class. Furthermore, they believe that learning it would help them communicate better and express ideas clearly. The responses indicated that the participants were aware of the importance of grammar in language learning. They stated that language's grammar was a set of rules that controls how sounds, words, phrases, and other components were combined and interpreted, and it needed to be learnt and taught in grammar class. Furthermore, they said that they learnt structure in grammar class. The students also agreed that grammar needed to be learnt and taught as it was important. This supports Zhang's (2009) finding that it is impossible to stress how important it is to include grammar training when teaching English as a second language. English grammar is the basic of the language, yet it does not come spontaneously; rather, it takes intentional teaching and learning.

In relation to the way the students learnt and the teachers taught them before and after they joined English Education Department, based on the responses in the interview and questionnaire, most of the students said that the lecturers explained the material in more detailed way. Meanwhile, some students claimed that there was no difference in the grammar teaching and learning process. Besides, based on the response, most of the students acknowledge that their grammar was improved when explicit or both implicit and explicit grammar teaching and learning were implemented.

The lecturers should consider this finding when designing grammar teaching and learning activities for the students. To make the students have better grammar mastery, the lecturer should not leave explicit grammar learning; however, he/she can apply both explicit and implicit one. The importance of using both approaches was highlighted by Zheng Ling (2015). In his research, he states that both of these teaching approaches are worthwhile, and it is possible to choose and mix them in a way that best utilizes each approach's specific advantages. In addition, it is possible to use both explicit and implicit grammar teaching at the same time; these options do not conflict with one another. Instead, they reflect two methodologies for teaching English that are appropriate for a variety of resources and students.

Meanwhile, in the interview, the participants responded the same as they did in the open-ended questionnaire. When they explored more about their experience, the students said that besides learning with their lecturers, they learnt grammar through YouTube as well to support their learning and to get better comprehension. This shows that the students have the ability to independently acquire knowledge. They use technology as a tool and the internet as a resource to succeed in their English learning.

It is clear from the research findings that the students are aware of how crucial it is to understand grammar for language acquisition. The study further demonstrates that the students believe that employing both explicit and implicit grammar teaching strategies improves students' grammatical competence. Moreover, the students show their enthusiasm in utilising technology such as YouTube to enhance their learning beyond the classroom, showing their independence in education. This illustrates their ability to use resources independently to enrich their educational experience. These results demonstrate how important it is to use technology and a variety of teaching strategies to improve students' language learning and facilitate effective grammar teaching.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study shows that the students perceive grammar as important in language learning by defining it as a set of guidelines governing language components' combination and interpretation. In addition, they agree that classes specifically designed to teach and acquire grammar should be used. With explicit or a combination of explicit-implicit teaching techniques, the majority of students reported that their grammatical competency had improved. As a result, educators should think about combining these strategies when developing efficient grammar teaching and learning. They need to employ both approaches for their own benefits. Besides, the students do not only depend on in-class learning but also independently use tools like YouTube to improve their knowledge. This demonstrates how they may use the internet and technology to facilitate self-directed learning. In the end, the study emphasizes the significance of combining explicit and implicit teaching strategies, admitting that they complement one another and are appropriate for a variety of learning environments and students.

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