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The Outcomes of the Different Degrees of Explicitness in Teaching Grammar in a Second Language

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The Outcomes of the Different Degrees of Explicitness of Teaching Grammar

in a Second Language

by

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Abstract

The past decade has witnessed a revived interest in grammar teaching in foreign and second language learning contexts, as seen in the many publications on the issue, including those demonstrating the importance and benefits of grammar instruction on students' language acquisition (Liu & Jiang, 2009). One side has supported the traditional approach of teaching grammar with rules, while the other has been open to new approaches in teaching grammar that are less explicit and less rule-based. This brings up a question of which strategy is more effective to use when teaching English as a second language, specifically to college students specifically. This question led me to perform a meta-study, which is a collection and analysis of studies that have already been performed. The different studies involved students of different environments, backgrounds, and classroom settings, allowing me to compare strategies and analyze which worked better in different situations, and to look for an explanation as to why that was the case. According to Kim (2014), in the late 1960's, L1 composition theorists presented criticism of the "traditional approach" of teaching English that focused on acquiring formal accuracy. They challenged the assumption that writing is only a matter of arranging sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. They viewed writing as a product of a complex, recursive process, in which the focus is placed on the process rather than on the product. This caused classroom instruction that focused on correctness to be considered ineffective and promoted the belief that studying grammar solely would not lead to improved writing. The topic of the importance of grammar focus in English courses is ongoing both in L1 and L2 writing. Some researchers claim that all students benefit from grammar instruction, while others point out that allowing students to identify their own grammar rules in writing is more beneficial than basing the entire writing instruction on grammar corrections. Kim (2014) states that regardless of the position researchers or teachers take on this debate, all agree that more research is needed. The present meta-analysis of ten research studies provides a place to analyze these confusing and conflicting beliefs all together. The findings lead to the conclusion that certain strategies work better in different environments, and there is no telling which strategy to use or at what time to use it. There is proof that there are benefits to using both strategies, whether more or less explicit.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Researchers in the field of language learning have long studied the role that grammar plays in ESL programs. The present meta-study compares various methods of teaching grammar in writing. Methods are placed on a 5-point spectrum based on explicitness, with 1 being the most explicit and 5 the least. Teaching methods on the scale, from 1 to 5, include Copyediting, Grammar Rules inside Examples, Grammar Rules Independently, Fill-in-the-blank Paragraphs, and no grammar no translation. For this particular study, I collected research from studies teaching writing in English as a second language to university students. With this investigation, teachers have one specific resource to compare studies in order to get better clarity of the effectiveness throughout different programs.

The history of the emergence of different grammar programs, according to Celce-Murcia, started in the mid- 1970s. A failure of form-centered approaches (similar to the explicit approach) to second language teaching led to the emergence of the communicative approach (similar to the implicit approach). Celce-Murica predicts that there will be another look at the role of grammar, as it is being neglected in the communicative approach as a valid component of language. Learners will move beyond superficial, everyday communication (similar to the implicit approach) to the expression of experiences, thoughts, and ideas that can only be expressed through extended discourse, which may not be in the lesson plan (similar to an immersion program) (Celce-Murcia, 1990).

My interest in this topic stems from one of my master's classes, Pedagogical Grammar for ESL Teachers. During several class periods, I wondered whether or not breaking down the sentences and strictly teaching grammar in the form of rules would best benefit the student who

is studying English as a second language. The rules may cause students to just memorize them, and later have trouble when it comes to applying the language in real-world conversations. After all, accuracy in grammar use is one aspect of "knowing a language."

But is explicit teaching of grammar the best way to achieve this? I chose to research a variety of grammar teaching methods and compare their effectiveness by how well students were able to accurately use grammar in their writing. Through this study, I hope to develop a better understanding of the different outcomes of each method of grammar teaching, along with the strengths and weaknesses of each, in order to improve my own teaching of grammar, as well to educate current and future teachers who are implementing their own language programs.

Therefore, I will investigate ten different research studies that fall along the explicit-implicit spectrum in my pursuit to discover the outcomes of grammar teaching from the different levels of explicitness. A meta-analysis will be used as the method of research. This meta-study analyzes specific factors: sample size, participant age, length of testing, method of testing, what was tested, and degree of immersion in the context tested. It then compares the results in order to reach a conclusion as to why certain grammar programs were ranked as more successful than others.

The outcomes and results that are indicated do not dictate that one program is right or better than any other; however, the results supply an idea of the outcomes of each program and help determine which program is better in certain circumstances to achieve specific learning goals for students. McKeon states, "Several variables influence the kind of programs that will be designed to operate in any given district: student population to be served, individual student

characteristics, and district resources" (1987). Teachers need to take these factors into

consideration as well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review is composed of five sections. The overview takes a look at the early stages of TESL curriculum development and how it has evolved. Sometimes the best way to move forward is to look back to see how far something has come such as the English language. The main motivation behind comparing these different teaching methods was to find a pattern, whether it be one of success or of failure. The entire second section goes on to explain the ESOL curriculum with specifics of where and how it has been taught to different people and in different places, comparing and contrasting the methods. Just as with the other subjects- math, reading, science, and social studies- TESL is versatile and capable of being taught anywhere across the world. Section 3 dives into the different environments where TESL instruction is currently being taught, including the different people and places that can have an effect on the delivery. The fourth section explores the inequalities in TESL programs and some of the challenges that are faced. After analyzing the strict curriculum that teachers are required to follow in the classroom, I finally discuss why teachers and students are choosing to learn another language and what benefits the knowledge of an additional language brings to the real world. Taking the studies full circle from the beginning to present-day of learning a second language, helps to explain how far it has come. I chose this topic in order to learn from others, which teaching methods are successful and which have been unsuccessful, in order to be more successful myself.

Early Stages of TESL

Looking back to the starting point of ESL teaching, we tend to be grateful at how far we have evolved in teaching students the English language.

Frith (1973) explains the early stages when immigrant children comprised about 50-75% of the school population in Montreal. The instruction in the schools was English, but the language in the homes and playgrounds varied among Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Chinese, Armenian, and Arabic.

According to Frith (1973), the language needs of immigrant children from multi-lingual backgrounds on the island of Montreal were not being met. Teachers used basal readers and the traditional subject-oriented curriculum to teach children to read a language which they had not really learned to speak. The teachers did not know how to deal with planned language lessons, but knew how to teach reading, so this is what they taught. In order to achieve some measure of success and to survive in this situation, the children soon learned to parrot phrases, memorize words and sentences, and thus this is how they read.

Eventually the school in Montreal decided to offer a course of TESL as an elective so that graduating students could give effective instruction to the immigrant children in their classrooms. There was no specific curriculum as there is now, but it broadly covered some linguistics (Frith, 1973).

It is incredible to see TESL evolve from an elective course for prospective teachers to now having teachers taking over the instruction and teaching it all around the world to a wide variety of students. In turn the quality of ESOL classes has improved as the training of teachers has developed.

ESL Grammar Curriculum

Farrell and Bennis (2013) present a case study that investigated and compared the stated beliefs and classroom practices relating to language teaching of one experienced and one new

teacher. The paper states, "What teachers say and do in their classroom are governed by what they think, and…teachers' theories and beliefs serve as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made. The beliefs teachers hold not only shape teachers' pedagogy but also shape classroom interactions" (Farrell & Bennis, 2013, 173). During the span of the lesson, teachers make several interactive decisions that influence lesson outcomes. This interactive decision-making, as Farrell notes, "constitutes a major part of teachers' classroom behavior, especially when unexpected classroom events emerge" (Farrell & Bennis, 2013, 174). I included this study because it shows that although we are testing grammar curriculum throughout this study, there is no way to duplicate it completely. To further emphasize, while teachers do have curriculum to follow, they set the tone on how the students interact and communicate with one another. In an ESL class, specifically, teachers control the environment with teaching cues, classroom management, and positive reinforcements to get the students to learn far beyond what the curriculum has planned.

Research indicates that the beliefs which teachers hold are not always reflected in their actual classroom practices because of the constraints of classroom reality (e.g., Farrell & Bennis, 2013). This statement strongly suggests that teachers need to make sure their teaching of the curriculum aligns with their pedagogy. For example, if a teacher is given specific lessons on how to implement grammar in their classroom, but they do not feel like that is the best way for the information to reach their students specifically, then they should definitely modify the information to fit the different learning styles of their students.

Different Learning Environments

In the present day, students are learning English worldwide, from the United States to Europe, to all across the world.

We have come so far as to host students from other countries inside our own country for a temporary amount of time in order for them to get a hands-on experience with the English language. However, with this come some complications.

Hwakyun Mok interviewed nine Korean international students in an upper Midwest University in the U.S. Mok (2015) found factors in the study that caused the Korean students to change who they were in the U.S. compared to outside the U.S. The factors include: having English nicknames, voluntary participation, language barriers, procedures, individualism, gender roles, racism, and future goals.

An example of a difficulty includes new-found freedom in classes that is hard to adjust to. The simple fact is that the students are not used to the freedom that the U.S. allows to share their own opinions. This privilege can sometimes lead to feelings of confusion and uncertainty.

Some students also feel anxiety and depression inside and outside the classroom because of the language barrier. They have difficulties communicating with peers and friends because of common miscommunications. This can definitely lead to success or failure inside the classroom.

English Education Inequality

Just as with most things, there are inequalities when it comes to ESL classes. The inequality portion comes in when all teachers grade differently, especially when grading students in the students second language. Teachers got together in a workshop and agreed that, "What is desirable is to control the grammar, lexicon and style of a student's theme, so that in writing he

will practice the materials that are being dealt with at the moment in the course itself" (NCTE, 1966).

In other words, teachers agreed that grading should be focused on the skill at hand. For example, if the lesson is on grammar, then the grammar should be graded; if the lesson is on lexicon, then the lexicon should be graded.

A good teaching strategy would include rewriting. "It seems wise to have students rewrite their compositions (following a conference, or following a private marking of the theme with symbols keyed to the text but, though the teacher does not want to waste time on points not yet taught, he still cannot allow errors on such points to slip by entirely without comment, for he dare not allow the student to rewrite them, thus practicing errors. At the same time, the teacher does not want to kill enthusiasm by marking too much. Thus, there is all the more reason for controls" (NCTE, 1966).

This article makes a great point that grading be consistent and in parallel to the lesson of the day. The group also decided that they should have follow-up meetings and further research to make sure they are fair with their students' grades. This act should be happening in all schools to make sure teachers are working together to make grading as accurate as possible, despite different teacher beliefs. Many schools have only 1 ESL teacher; therefore, teachers in different school districts should form an organization in which they meet up and discuss their school's standards and the different teaching strategies they use inside their classrooms. This could only bring more benefits to students and teachers alike. This is often done through conferences such as TESOL.

Reasons to Learn English

In language classes, as in math classes, reading classes, science classes, social studies, and all other classes, there is purpose. Why must these students learn English?

William D. Conway (1976) explains the importance of language beyond the curriculum. The debate unit used in his TESOL classes was born from the need to add variety and interest to a course which emphasized grammatical review for freshman students (TOEFL 350+). He liked to combine the prospect of actual, meaningful conversation in a TESOL classroom, with library research, documentation, and written reports. He developed goals based on the four basic linguistic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Research topics chosen by Conway's students included whether or not abortion should be legalized in America, whether marijuana should be legalized, and if foreign students should be allowed to work to support their education while in America. The topics chosen are relatable to the TESL students directly or indirectly, making them good choices.

The result of the debate included a friendly, yet competitive finish. There were also many laughs, while memories were made.

This exercise shows that in order to participate in one's society, students should be able to form their own opinion on matters, and then fight for that opinion. Often one must be able to fight for it in English.

The debate also demonstrates the power of teaching students a second language and how motivating it is to see students as they continue to grow into adults and take their learning outside the classroom. Second language learning is not only a subject that is being taught, but a skill that directly transfers to students' everyday lives.

In the end, the positives do outweigh the negatives in teaching students a second language, and we need to shift our focus to the power it brings to our students' lives.

<div align="center">**Research Question**</div>

The research question below focuses on the outcomes of grammar-teaching programs along the explicitness spectrum:

What are the different outcomes along the explicitness spectrum of grammar teaching programs for second language learners of English?

**Second Language Acquisition through
the Most Explicit Side of Grammar**

I first address the *most* explicit side of grammar teaching. This involves student interaction with a grammar teacher and also working with grammar rules that include examples in context. On the five-point scale, copyediting is ranked 1 and working with grammar rules with examples is ranked 2 in terms of explicitness.

In the study done by Zhou (2009), there were four parallel semi-structured interviews and recall sessions in which learners were tested and copyediting was given regarding instruction in which students voiced their opinions on the usage of grammar. In this study, 15 learners participated in a multi-year project with four parallel semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall sessions outside of class while attending EAP courses. At the beginning of each interview, learners answered a few general questions about their goals for improving writing for use in their future studies at university and for their future careers or occupations. Following the interview, they responded to 16 questions regarding their goals for language improvement in these specific areas: types of writing, composing processes, grammar, and organization. In the discussion for

improving language in writing, learners voiced concerns in three areas: grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The types of grammar that they wished to improve were improving knowledge and skills in using various parts of speech and sentences. A few participants said that they wanted to improve every aspect of grammar.

One student stated that she could do grammar exercises, but she could not apply the rules to writing. Instead, she said that she turns to using simple sentences to not mess up her grammar. This indicates that changes in grammar instruction need to be made. A good suggestion that Zhou (2009) made for teachers was to work with the students to set goals on their grammar and to leave some sort of feedback.

Kim's (2014) study includes some history of the traditional approach to introduce us to confusing and conflicting beliefs about grammar instruction. She writes:

Beginning in the late 1960s, L1 composition theorists presented criticism of the traditional approach that focused on acquiring formal accuracy, as they challenged the existing assumption that writing is basically a matter of arrangement of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. Therefore, from this we viewed writing as a product of a complex, recursive process, in which the focus was placed on the process rather than on the product. Growing out of this idea was that classroom instruction that focused on correctness was ineffective and studying grammar does not lead to improved writing (Kim, p. 2, 2014).

This debate is ongoing both in L1 and L2 writing, as some researchers claim that all students benefit from grammar instruction, while others assert that allowing students to identify their own grammar rules in writing is more beneficial than basing the entire writing instruction

on grammar corrections. Kim states that regardless of the position researchers or teachers take on this debate, they all agree that more research is needed.

With that said, Kim performed her study with two ESL students. For two days, the data collected came from thinking-aloud protocols from four videotaped writing sessions, analysis of written products, and information gathered from a number of audio-taped interview sessions with the students. The participants performed two different writing tasks, which they were expected to revise on their own. Kim did not have any evidence that supported the low or high end of explicit instruction; however, she mentions in her results that focusing on form does not hurt, so we *should* find a way to include it:

> One of the most important findings of this study was that explicit direction to focus on grammar in revision did not lead the two ESL writers to concentrate on formal aspects of writing. It did not inhibit their abilities to produce texts that are complex and rich in ideas. The protocol analysis and interviews did indicate that focus on grammar is still necessary for helping these second language students to improve their writing (Kim, p.11, 2014).

Kim concludes by stating that in order to provide content and grammar instruction effectively, ESL writing teachers can address grammar errors in students' writing by using their real samples as much as possible. She suggests that providing students with certain grammar instruction right before a rewriting activity will allow students to focus on one aspect of grammar at a time (Kim, 2014).

Spada's (2014) study tested four intact classes of intermediate level adult learners ages 18 to 65. Two of these classes received integrated instruction, while the other two classes received

isolated instruction. All of these classes were issued instruction for a total of twelve hours over

three days, which makes four hours of instruction per day. The integrated lessons paired

communication with content-based activities, while the isolated lessons were separated from the

communication instruction. Spada discovered that both integrated and isolated instruction

benefited students over time. However, the study showed that error correction tasks (ECT) are

seen to be better for learning explicit knowledge because there is more of a focus on *meaning*,

while oral production tasks (OPT) are better for learning less explicit knowledge in speech

because there is more of a focus on *communication*. The learners who were in the isolated

classes performed better on the ECT portion of the post-test, while the learners in the integrated

classes performed better on the integrated portion of the post-test. The findings revealed that if

the overall goal is to improve grammar explicitly, then written tasks are more beneficial than oral

tasks.

Second Language Acquisition through
**   the Less Explicit Teaching of Grammar**

Moving up the spectrum, we come to the less explicit side of teaching

grammar. Instruction in this category involves grammar rules, paragraphs with blanks, in that

order.

In a study performed by Sinha (2014), 23 college students were tested on whether they

would perform better on definite articles with sentences in isolation versus sentences with blanks

that were included in paragraph form. These two studies specifically tested the student's use of

definite articles. The students increased their scores from 47.83% to 78% when target sentences

were embedded in paragraphs, supporting the effectiveness of this level of explicit teaching (Sinha, 2014).

A study done by Ismail (2010), had similar results after implementing a model for the students to use called the CCCC (Confrontation, Clarification, Confirmation, Consolidation) model. This study tested 44 female ESL students who were all obtaining bachelor's degrees in different fields in the facility of education in order to become elementary school teachers in the U.S. This study tested the CCCC model and the effects of this form of interaction during the process of learning grammar within the framework of the model. The CCCC model is an example of less explicit instruction because it is paired with less context than usual. The results showed that the students liked this CCCC model; however, the students did not believe that mastering the grammar rules was a necessity for communicating with the language. They were able to communicate without first perfecting the grammar. In the questionnaires at the competition of the study, they stated that they could communicate effectively without mastering the language. Therefore, grammar competence does not seem to be the sole determine of success or failure of communication in a language. The goals of the lesson may be applied to make the decision of whether or not the focus is on improving grammar. If it is, then they can choose to use this CCCC model.

Farrell and Bennis (2013) studied a smaller sample size of two teachers with background surveys, three observations, and pre- and post-interviews over a one-week period and made some interesting discoveries. One background survey, three one-hour non-participatory observations, and 30 minute pre- and post-lesson interviews were collected. One finding of the study was that, "Rules that are discovered are retained longer in comparison to rules that have been presented

explicitly by the teacher" (Farrell & Bennis, 2013). The researchers concluded that allowing

room for less explicit interaction will produce more meaningful results in the long run. For

example, a rule that is stated by a teacher may be learned by students only because they are told

to learn it, but a student discovering something independently will remember the experience of

reaching the answer. Also, in the study, "Teachers often do not teach what they believe in

because of time restraints or student needs that naturally happen in the classroom" (Farrell &

Bennis, 2013). This finding mentions how teachers often do not get to everything in their lesson

plan on a given day because of factors in the classroom that they may have confronted, such as

student questions, extra problems, confused students, or higher-level thinking questions. These

are only a few of the examples of natural occurrences that are not explicit ways to learn, but

happen on a daily basis.

The study done by Liu and Jiang (2009) involved 244 participants and the collection of

several types of data. The data included students' corpus research projects and reflection papers,

teachers' lesson plans and teaching journals, and a post-study assessment survey. This study

tested the effectiveness of the use of corpora in grammar instruction, which is centered around

data-driven learning. Examples of activities were provided in the study. One activity relates to

concordance data used to help students understand the usage difference between "uninterested"

and "disinterested". The students were expected to place the correct word in the blank. Another

activity was used at the south-central U.S. university to help students address the

lexicogrammatical errors they made in their writing. When instructors noticed errors in their

student's writing, which they believed students should be able to correct with the help of corpus

data, they would mark the errors and have students work on them during class in a computer lab.

Data consisted of students' work, including corpus search assignments, grammar exercises, written reports about their corpus data analyses and findings, and reflections on their corpus studies of lexicogrammar, instructor's teaching logs, and students' and teachers' post-study questionnaires.

Results identified some beneficial effects, some challenges, and some useful strategies, in addition to factors that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with corpus. There was enhanced language awareness and better command of lexicogrammatical rules and patterns, and a greater appreciation of the importance of context in lexicogrammatical choices; the instruction also promoted discovery learning and made learning more interesting and effective. However, there were challenges as well. Students felt overwhelmed with the number of examples generated by their searches and the time required for going over and analyzing the data. Some students felt they did not learn anything from corpus searches or there was a lack of easy access to corpora, due to the limited number of computers with a corpus search program and Internet connection available to the students. This study supports the use of grammar teaching with textual support, which lands on the more explicit side of the scale.

Second Language Acquisition through
the Least Explicit Teaching of Grammar

The last three studies analyzed, by Giridharan, Hartshorn. Liu and Jiang, involved no grammar or translation, the least explicit type of grammar instruction on the spectrum.

Giridharan (2012) gave unfavorable numbers in the study of 206 participants. Giridharan states, "Academic writing is often perceived as overwhelming mainly due to ESL learners' lack of grammatical and vocabulary competency" (Giridharan, 2012). According to Giridharan,

instruction has moved away from a traditional "product" approach to a "process" approach, where instructors work with students on their written drafts and provide feedback for continuous improvement. The process stages include generating ideas, drafting, revising, and editing (Giridharan, 2012).

For Giridharan's study, four writing components were investigated: attitudes towards academic writing tasks, planning, writing paragraphs and essays, and students' evaluation of their own writing. Students were given a Likert scale and an open-ended questionnaire asking about their writing abilities in a second language, while working with this drafting system. Teachers identified gaps in the students' writing and recorded their reflections, and the students received a form at the end of each day to evaluate their skills.

Results specifically focusing on grammar showed that only 31.5% of students were confident in their grammar abilities. Based on teacher self-evaluation, this is not an acceptable level of student confidence regarding any of their abilities. We should have a greater focus on grammar to boost students' levels of confidence (Giridharan, 2012). This means it is beneficial to employ specific grammar exercises that are explicitly focused on grammar improvement before students are asked to practice that grammar in context.

Hartshorn's study (2010) tested 47 high-proficiency students for a longer period of time with ten-minute compositions and multi-draft papers, to focus on written corrective feedback (WCF). One group was taught using WCF (treatment group), while the other group was presented the traditional approach to process writing. Results showed that WCF had a large impact on improving the mean accuracy scores of those students in the treatment group compared with those in the control group. Therefore, the group receiving instruction based on

the traditional approach to process writing improved in terms of writing fluency and writing complexity. It is conceivable that as students try to write more accurately, the fluency and complexity of their writing may be inhibited slightly. Focus is less on whether or not grammar is effective and more on how it can be incorporated.

WCF is defined as having two essential elements that we believe many students may need in order to maximize their opportunity to learn to write more accurately. "These elements are feedback that reflects what the individual learner needs most, as demonstrated by what the learner produces, and a principled approach to pedagogy that ensures that writing tasks and feedback are meaningful, timely, constant, and manageable for both student and teacher" (Hartshorn, p.87, 2010).

The fact that the WCF treatment group improved in their mean accuracy but declined in terms of fluency and complexity shows that practice with no grammar no translation, even combined with WCF, is not enough to improve student's grammar because the substance of the writing will suffer. Similarly, free writing needs to be included with more explicit instruction such as grammar exercises.

Diaz's study (1986) was with a smaller group of low-proficiency students over a semester. They were tested in a process-oriented classroom with journals, free writing, formal writing, in-class writing, and questionnaires. "Strategies and methodologies used included: free writing, peer writing groups, peer discussions on grammar and syntax, teacher conferences, student choice of topics, rehearsal and invention strategies, emphasis on purpose and audience, and daily process journals" (Diaz, p.1, 1986). The scores of the participants increased, showing

that these writing strategies were beneficial in support of the less explicit teaching method for

low proficiency students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This meta-study looks into ten studies previously done on grammar-teaching styles and effectiveness. The ten studies are: Diaz, 1986; Farrell & Bennis, Canada, 2013; Giridharan, China, 2012; Hartshorn, 2010; Ismail, Malaysia, 2010; Liu & Jiang, 2009; Sinha, 2014; Spada, 2014; Zhou, 2009. I chose the ten studies in an effort to find a pattern in teaching grammar to students learning a second language. In order to pick the right studies, I had to weed through several of the studies that had similar concepts. The goal when choosing the right studies to compare, was to find the studies that incorporated several different components for me to compare and contrast. Of the studies, some had less students than others, some had stricter grammar teaching, some had studies that ranged for weeks, while some ranged for a day. Despite all the differences, the constant was that all the studies dealt with students learning English at the college level.

Five-Point Degree of Explicitness Scale

Throughout my research, I noticed that the amount of context that was paired with instruction varied between the studies. The more context, the more explicit the instruction was rated. The word "explicit" means to be stated clearly, leaving no room for confusion or doubt. When context and/or rules were used to improve accuracy in grammar, the instruction was seen as being more clear or "explicit".

All of the research studies identified in the literature search were coded by me; therefore, no coder agreement was estimated. The scale that I devised to compare the explicitness of the grammar instruction in the studies has five-points with 1 being the most explicit and 5 being the least explicit. No grammar or translation and fill-in-the-blank paragraphs are at the 4 and 5

positions; grammar rules alone and grammar with examples are lower at numbers 2, 3 and four; and copyediting is the most explicit on the bottom at 1.
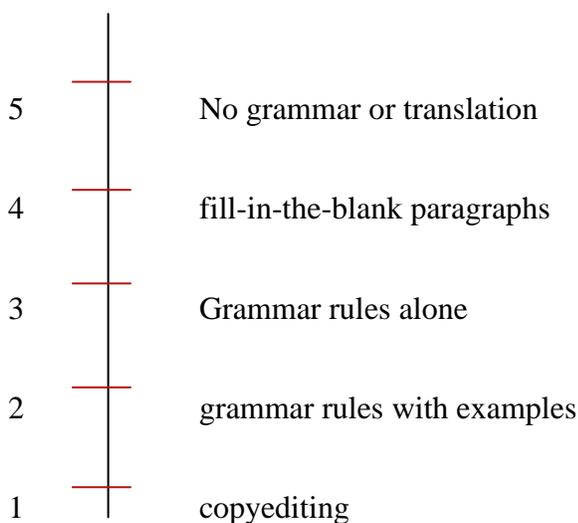

5	No grammar or translation
4	fill-in-the-blank paragraphs
3	Grammar rules alone
2	grammar rules with examples
1	copyediting

Figure 1. Five Point Scale of Explicitness of Grammar Instruction

Procedure

In this meta-study, I analyze 10 previously-conducted research studies. All of the research was done at the college level in the United States. This provides some consistency in the research so that it can all be compared. I note and compare four elements in each: level of proficiency, explicitness in grammar instruction, time frame of data collection, and the number of people that were tested in the research.

Level of Proficiency

The first element focused on ranking the students by their level of English proficiency on a scale from 1 to 3, with 1 being the beginner level and 3 being most proficient. Each study

stated the level of proficiency of the participants in the introduction to their study. The studies of

Giridharan, Kim, and Diaz all tested participants at Level 1. The studies of Ismail, Spada, and

Liu & Jiang all tested participants at the intermediate Level 2. Participants in the studies of

Farrell & Bennis and Hartshorn were at the high level. Sinha's and Zhou's studies tested all

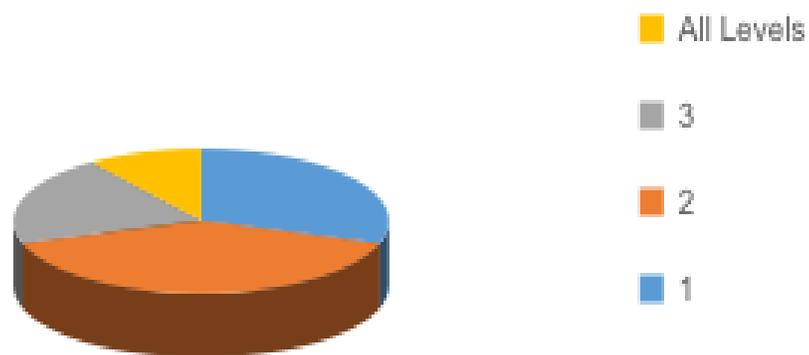levels together. This information is illustrated below in Graph I and is again included in Table 1.

Figure 2. Proficiency levels of the students in all the studies.

Table 1

Level of Proficiency Table

Author	Diaz	Farrell & Bennis	Giridharan	Hartshorn	Ismail	Kim	Liu & Jiang	Sinha	Spada	Zhou
Level of Proficiency	1	3	1	3	2	1	2	2	2	All levels

Note: 1 being least proficient to 3 being the most

Contextualization of Grammar Instruction

The content that was used to test the participants provided crucial data on several aspects involved in determining the participant's success rate, such as their ability to learn from various types of instruction. The degree of context immersion was based on a 5-point scale, with the lower degree being the copyediting and the higher end being no grammar no translation. Various researchers focused on specific methods of grammar instruction. Giridharan and Zhou tested the success of copyediting on the student's writing. Ismail tested the success rate of giving grammar rules with examples. Kim, Hartshorn, and Diaz all tested their participants' success with no grammar or translation; while Sinha, Spada, Farrell & Bennis, and Liu & Jiang tested two or three methods together in their studies to compare the effects. Graph 2 shows that the degree of context immersion that was tested covered all levels of the spectrum. Table 1 also illustrates that half of the studies tested a control group alone, while the others tested a control group versus a treatment group.
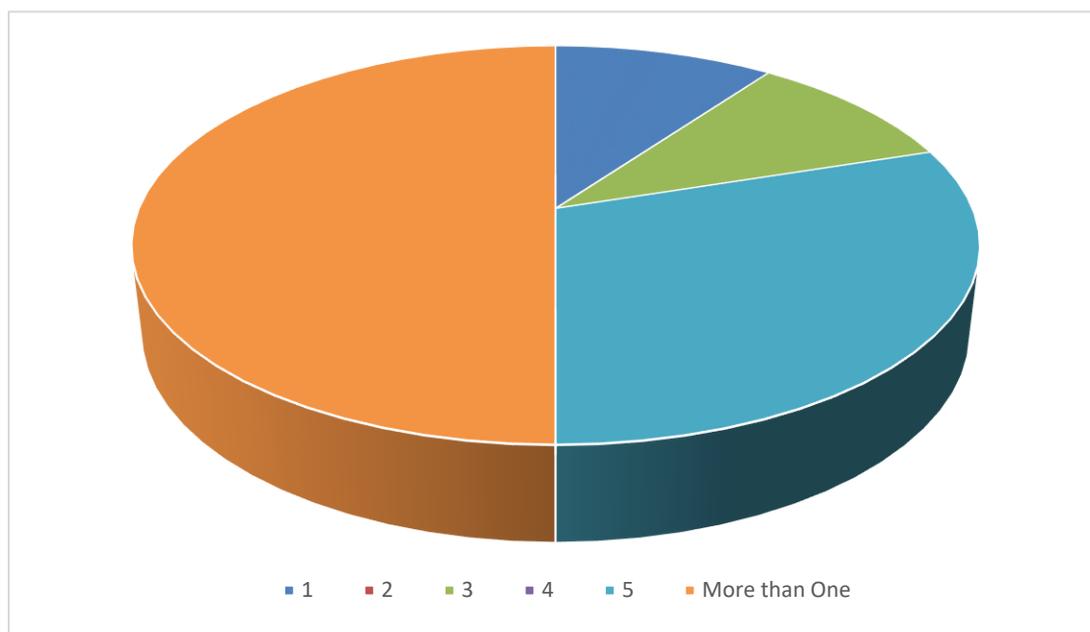
Figure 3. Degree of Context Immersion of all the studies. 1-copyediting; 2-grammar rules; 3-grammar rules with examples; 4-fill-in-the-blank paragraphs; 5-no grammar or translation

Table 2

Degree of Context Immersion Table

Author	Diaz	Farrell & Bennis	Giridharan	Hartshorn	Ismail	Kim	Liu & Jiang	Sinha	Spada	Zhou
Degree of Context Immersion	5	3, 4, and 5	5	5	3	1, 5	3, 5	3,4	4,5	1

Note: 1-copy-editing; 2-grammar rules; 3-grammar rules w/examples; 4-fill-in-the-blank paragraphs; 5-no grammar or translation

Time Frame of Data Collection

Another element involved in the meta-study was the time frame during which data was collected in each study. This time frame ranged from days to years. The studies of Giridharan, Kim, and Sinha lasted a few days; the studies of Spada and Farrell & Bennis lasted weeks; Ismail's study lasted two months; the studies of Hartshorn, Liu & Jiang, and Diaz spanned a semester; and Zhou's study lasted two years. These times frames can be seen in Graph 3 and Table 1.
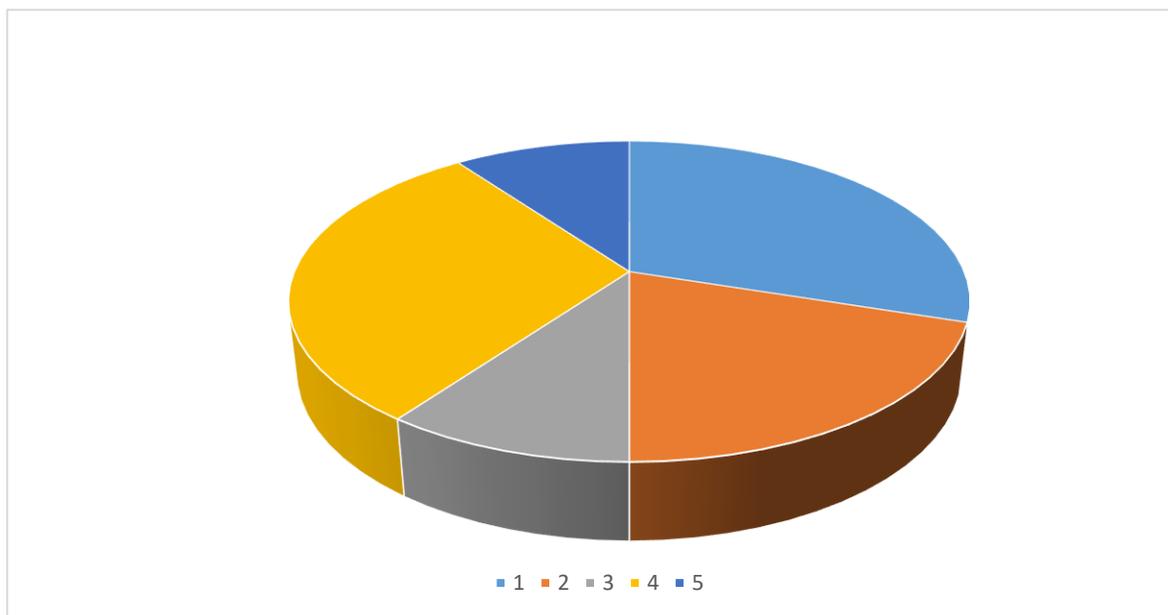

Figure 4. The time frame that the studies extended. 1-few days; 2-weeks; 3-semester; 4-months; 5-years

Table 3

Time Frame and Data Collection Table

Author	Diaz	Farrell & Bennis	Giridharan	Hartshorn	Ismail	Kim	Liu & Jiang	Sinha	Spada	Zhou
Time Frame of Data Collection	4	2	1	4	3	1	4	1	2	5

Note: 1-few days; 2-weeks; 3-semester; 4-months; 5-years

Number of Participants Tested in Each Study

The final scale measures the number of people who were involved in the study. This is a four-point scale, with 1 being up to twenty people and four being over sixty people. Kim, Zhou, and Farrell & Bennis each had 1-20 participants in their study (1); Sinha and Diaz had 21-40 participants (2); Ismail and Hartshorn had 41-60 participants (3). The studies that included more than 60 participants were Giridharan, Spada, and Liu and Jang (4). Graph 4 shows the numbers of people who were tested in the studies.
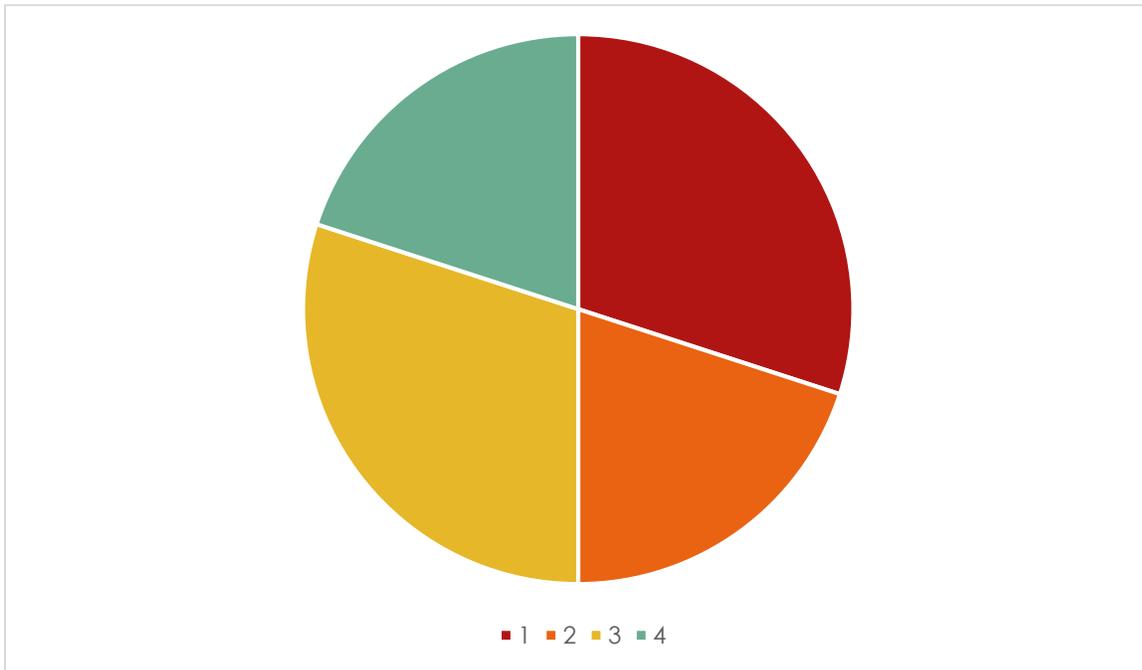
Figure 5. The number of people that were included in the studies. 1- 1-20 participants; 2- 21-40 participants; 3- 41-60 participants; 4- 60 + participants

Table 4

Number of People Tested Table

Author	Diaz	Farrell & Bennis	Giridharan	Hartshorn	Ismail	Kim	Liu & Jiang	Sinha	Spada	Zhou
# of People tested	3	2	4	3	2	1	3	1	4	1

*Note:*1- 1-20 participants; 2- 21-40 participants; 3- 41-60 participants; 4- 60 + participants

The use of these four elements: level of proficiency, explicitness in grammar instruction, time frame of data collection, and number of participants in each study allows us to find patterns in the data in order to draw our conclusions. Through analyzing this selection of studies, we hope to gain insight into the effects of various grammar teaching methods on ESL students. Thus, I chose a wide range of studies to facilitate analysis and comparison of different student proficiency levels, data collection time frames, and group sizes. If outcomes vary, we can infer the reason by examining which variable in the study was different than another. Vice versa, if outcomes are similar, we can look and see what the pattern means.

Table 5

Comparison of Studies Table

Level of Proficiency (Refer to Table 1 Page 29)	Degree of Context Immersion (Refer to table 2 page 31)	Time Frame of Data Collection (Refer to Table 3 page 33)	Number of People tested (Refer to table 4 page 34)
1	5	4	3
3	3,4, 5	2	2
1	5	1	4
3	5	4	3
2	3	3	2
1	1,5	1	1
2	3,5	4	3
2	3,4	1	1
2	4,5	2	4
All levels	1	5	1

Materials

As this is a meta-study, I have selected ten studies to analyze. I have specifically chosen studies that include students who are studying English as a second language. The ten studies employ various methods of grammar instruction, ranging from explicit to implicit. I have chosen to report on this wide variety of studies in order to assist teachers in formulating the grammar teaching plan that will be most successful for them.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection was completed, I began to analyze the data. Because my original chart was grouped in the order of the author's last names, I created a new document reorganizing the outcomes of all the studies into two main outcomes: improved or did not improve. Then through word search on the Word document, I was able to find patterns and themes for each research question which enabled coding. Coding the data requires looking for recurring patterns or themes that are pertinent to the research questions. For every theme that emerged, I color-coded terms or phrases that were similar. To make the coding process easier for me to analyze, I created a new document and grouped each color-coded theme.

The data analysis in the study involved coding the results into two main charts. I used the first test to measure the amount of interaction in the study and the resultant improvement or non-improvement, and the other test to measure whether the use of exercises or no grammar no translation resulted in improvement or non-improvement.

Chapter 4: Results

As illustrated below, with both types of instruction there were students who did not improve, but overall, students were most successful when they interacted with the instructor and when they were practicing their grammar through the use of writing.

Table 6

Interaction vs. no Student-Teacher Interaction Table

Type of study	Improved	Did not improve
Interaction	6 studies	2 studies
No interaction	2 studies	0 studies

Chart 1 compares the studies in which there was teacher-student interaction versus studies with no teacher-student interaction. Teacher-student interaction refers to the act of the teacher calling on the students to engage, versus the style of lecturing the students with grammar rules. In the chart, it is evident that the students were most successful when there was teacher-student interaction in the classroom. I have ten studies. There was three times more improvement when the teachers interacted with their students directly, versus no interaction.

Table 7

Grammar Exercises vs. Grammar in Writing Table

Type of study	Improved	Did not improve
Exercises	2 studies	1 study
Writing	6 studies	1 study

From looking at the data that I gathered, I concluded that even though there will be students who do not improve, they have a better chance of succeeding when they have the chance to practice writing in English. This also shows that both grammar exercises and grammar writing instruction can improve the student's grammar, but one seems more important to incorporate.

Therefore, I decide to display Chart 2 on a *specific* teaching method. I tested teacher-student interaction versus non-interaction. From the chart, you can see that with both methods there were students who succeeded; however, more were successful when the teacher and student were interacting.

With the ten studies in the chart, I compared them at a different angle for further analyzation. There was about triple the success when the instruction involved writing exercises, versus just isolated exercises.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Teachers need to think about their goals for their learners in order to develop the best program for success. The intention of this meta-study is not to find the answer to which program is the best, but rather to analyze and present the different outcomes of grammar instruction programs that fall along the spectrum from the most explicit to the least explicit. With this investigation, teachers can get a clearer picture of the often confusing and conflicting results that are seen throughout the different programs. The current meta-study provides a place where several studies can be compared

Overall, the results support that students show improvement along the spectrum of the explicitness of grammar instruction, regardless of the type of grammar that they receive. The variables to keep in mind are the use of different exercises and different teaching styles that varied among the studies. The two instructional methods that were further discussed in this specific meta-analysis were grammar exercises and no grammar no translation.

Today the variability of teaching can range, depending on the rules of the school's curriculum; however, teachers should keep in mind the success of letting the students have a chance to write freely.

The teaching style that was further analyzed was the degree of teacher-student interaction. Of course, different students will connect with different teaching styles, but a teacher should definitely stay in communication with each student individually to teach most effectively.

Conclusions

The main focus of this study was to collect data from ten studies regarding the explicitness of teaching English as a second language and the success of the student's English

education. Findings from the study show that the explicitness can be illustrated on a five-point scale, from explicitly teaching grammar through rules, to implicitly teaching English grammar through no grammar or translation.

From the literature review, we learned that by incorporating the proper writing strategies in the spectrum from most explicit to least explicit, instructors can help students develop better grammar skills in their writing. Both strategies can be used, however, with strict limitations on curriculum in certain schools, teachers should feel the need to air-tight their curriculum and focus on the most-effective method. There are several pointers and strategies they can use from this thesis in order to improve their grammar curriculum. For example, interacting with students with a writing/lecturing lesson is shown to be more effective than stating certain grammar rules on the board and having the students memorize them.

This analysis of multiple studies has identified concerns of ESL learners regarding their academic writing skills, including attitudes towards writing tasks, planning and organizing, grammatical competence, and student ability to evaluate their own work. Students feel more confident when practicing their grammar skills through writing. Not to mention, several students enjoy writing and grammar engaging exercises. Students also voiced that they feel less pressure when teachers write comments and corrections, versus making them memorize grammar rules. Students said that they like to have the control of evaluating their own work, which I recommend teachers find ways to add in opportunities like this throughout the curriculum.

It has also voiced weaknesses of ESL writing instruction and has suggested approaches and techniques for enhancing academic writing skills for ESL learners. Targeted activities to improve grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph structure that must be used in ESL

instruction were mentioned in the individual studies. For example, free-writing and calling on students to give answers verbally were two methods that improved both the confidence and performance of student's learning a second language, which teachers should consider implementing.

Instructors must know their individual learners' differences based on their prior and current knowledge and their writing ability. For instance, even though having more verbal activities inside the classroom may improve performance, not every child feels confident in talking aloud. Teachers need to be aware of which students may benefit from more writing-based exercises and which to push more verbally, without affecting them negatively where they lose all confidence to participate.

Through these studies, I highly recommend providing context with grammar rules to strengthen the learners' grammar in writing English as a second language. This study proved students are significantly more successful with more context. Not to mention, it helps when the instruction is connected to everyday life, and the students are practicing using the language as they would in the real-world.

Limitations

The limitations may include the volume of data that was limited to 10 studies of college students in freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years. Looking at students in elementary, middle, or even high school may provide a different outcome than the one stated above, however, it helped me to narrow in on my data of college level students.

Secondly, because I have only analyzed studies and now collected the data and did not have the opportunity to perform the tests myself, there could have been different results by

implementation. How would the students have performed if they had learned the material from myself directly? Also, how would the results have changed with implementation of different learning styles? I trusted the implementation that was previous done in the studies that I reviewed.

Lastly, another limitation is my own personal bias when collecting and analyzing the data. Without intention, I may have influenced participants' responses through my own interpretation and emphasis on certain topics during the coding process. Moreover, there may be various interpretations of each participant response, depending on who analyzes the data. Thus, I ask the reader to trust my personal judgement in presenting accurate data with appropriate analysis in order to trust my recommendations from the study.

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