

Explicit and Implicit Grammar Instruction in English Writing

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The Asian Conference on Education & International Development 2018
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The present study aims to explore the experimental assessment of different instructional approaches (i.e. explicit and implicit grammar instruction) in English writing. Specifically, it seeks to investigate whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly in English composition classes in Taiwan, and which option can help students enhance their grammatical accuracy more effectively after a period of teaching. A quasi-experimental research design was carried out in comparing two treatment groups who were 7th graders in two English classes in a junior high school. Results showed that students in the explicit teaching group improved more and received higher scores in a posttest and delayed posttest, as they made fewer grammatical errors in comparison with the group in which grammar was implicitly taught. Metalinguistic awareness tended to play an important role in grammar learning. In addition, there was a discrepancy between students' and teacher's perceptions of explicit and implicit grammar instruction. Implications for writing pedagogy and awareness-raising are discussed.

Keywords: explicit grammar instruction; implicit grammar instruction; English writing; quasi-experimental research; awareness-raising

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, there have been several arguments about the different possible approaches to teaching grammar in EFL contexts. Grammar instruction is a controversial issue among teachers, curriculum designers, and language practitioners. Some teach grammar explicitly; others teach it implicitly; and still others probably do not want to teach or talk about it in class at all. Until now, English teachers still face the issue of deciding the best approach to improve their students' grammatical accuracy. If grammar has been viewed as a taboo by some people, it has also been appreciated and supported by some others. Insights into the issues of how best to teach grammar in second language (L2) writing classrooms or, indeed, whether to teach grammar at all in composition classes, continue to be of great interest and concern to teachers and researchers alike.

There has been a continuing argument in the current curricula regarding how to meet schools' language requirements (Chang, 2011). In Taiwan, it is generally assumed that with years of learning English language in classrooms, students should have some basic knowledge of grammar. However, it is evident that many students still struggle with their grammar and are weak in using it accurately, especially in their writing compositions. In view of the problem in learning grammar mentioned above, therefore it is important to explore how to best teach students to use grammar accurately.

This paper attempted to contribute to the body of research, with the aims of exploring which one (explicit or implicit grammar instruction) is better to help students learn to use grammar accurately for academic purposes, and discovering the effect of two instructional treatments in the school context. As grammar is an area that affects all writing teachers and their students, it is important that the literature should be augmented by research studies conducted in different parts of the world. In the past, the large majority of published grammar research has been conducted in L1 and ESL college contexts, and in English-dominant countries, particularly the US and UK. Empirical research carried out in other contexts, especially under-represented contexts such as elementary level and EFL contexts, will be a welcome addition to the field. In other words, research that explores explicit and implicit grammar instruction in writing in different contexts and ages is very much needed in order to add new knowledge to the current research base on the effectiveness of grammar teaching and learning.

Literature Review

Explicit grammar instruction

The debate between the effectiveness of implicit and explicit grammar instruction persists in the past literature. In particular, whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly is still controversial (Ellis, 2008, 2012, 2015).

Referring to *Implicit and Explicit Knowledge in Second Language Learning, Testing and Teaching*, Nazari (2013) pointed out that explicit grammar instruction "involves teaching a certain rule during the learning process and encouraging the learners to develop metalinguistic awareness of that rule" (p. 157). Explicit grammar instruction

comprises drawing student attention to a particular learning objective in a highly structured situation without referring to context. More specifically, grammar is taught in a logical order guided by the teacher through demonstration, explanation and practice. Grammar rules are presented before any examples are given. The aim of explicit instruction is to introduce a new grammatical concept, offer guidance for understanding rules, and provide students with specific instruction through modeling, which gives them opportunities to develop an understanding through practice (Ellis, 2008). Ellis (2008) stated that explicit instruction is conscious, declarative and only accessible through controlled processing in planned language use. Grammar is potentially learnable at any age and consequently, and language rules could be performed automatically if the sequences are sufficiently practiced. Explicit instruction makes students recognize ungrammaticality, since it not only activates their prior knowledge of the target structures, but also raises their awareness of the target grammar form (e.g., Ellis, 2012, 2015; Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Major affordances and constraints of explicit grammar instruction are summarized in Table 1 (Ellis, 2008, 2012, 2015).

Table 1: Affordances and constraints of explicit grammar instruction

Affordances of explicit grammar instruction	Constraints of explicit grammar instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conscious learning • in a more structured way • straightforward rules • practice through grammar drills and exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-communicative learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rule memorization • generally without enabling individualized understanding • generally without providing authentic, contextualized learning

Implicit grammar instruction

As opposed to explicit instruction that involves teaching grammar rules during the learning process and facilitating students to develop metalinguistic awareness of the rules, implicit instruction aims to give students opportunities to infer the rules without being consciously aware of them and most importantly, internalize the rules naturally without having attention focused on them (Ellis, 2009). The idea that grammar can be learnt implicitly comes from Krashen (1985, 2013). He rebutted any statements that attempt to advocate the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction. As suggested by Krashen, explicit grammar instruction as contributing to SLA is controversial. Spontaneous use of grammar rules is the outcome of a series of an independent process of acquisition, which occurs subconsciously through exposure to input.

An important issue of explicit grammar instruction is whether it results in successful internalization in learning grammar rules. Krashen's input hypothesis (1985) maintained that students learn a language by understanding messages, not through understanding form, and that comprehensible input plays a crucial role for language acquisition. Specifically, he argued that given comprehensive input and wide-ranging opportunities for meaningful communication in class, grammar could be learnt naturally and automatically through different exposure. The aim of implicit grammar instruction is to introduce grammar in a student-centered manner, to give students

instruction with various examples and exposure without teaching students grammar rules, and to let students build their own schemas for understanding and applying rules by themselves.

Major affordances and constraints of implicit grammar instruction are summarized in Table 2 (Ellis, 2008, 2012, 2015).

Table 2: Affordances and constraints of implicit grammar instruction

Affordances of implicit grammar instruction	Constraints of implicit grammar instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subconscious learning • more contextualized and authentic • more communicative • in a more natural situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult for some students to deduce rules • problems of misinterpreting rules • tending to be unstructured

It should be recapped here that there are distinctions between explicit and implicit grammar instruction. The focus of explicit grammar instruction is on the forms, rather than on the meaning. On the other hand, implicit grammar instruction gives no attention to the forms and explanation of grammatical rules, and the primary concern of teaching activity is on communication of meaning.

To conclude, so far, in the practice of English language teaching, teachers still face the issue of how to best improve their students' grammatical competence. Nonetheless, as people from different contexts may have a different learning preference, it is therefore necessary for teachers to vary their method to optimally teach students. For instance, in Mainland China and Taiwan, although there is an increasing trend toward implicit grammar instruction such as designing more communication-oriented teaching activities, its effect, especially on grammar learning, is still uncertain concerning whether it is effective in developing learner's grammatical accuracy. Thus, teachers may need to consider reverting to explicit grammar instruction. Therefore, in light of different approaches to teaching grammar (explicit and implicit grammar instruction), it would be useful to examine the effect of these approaches on students' performance in writing narrative compositions. It would also be interesting to explore which approach would lead to better improvement of students' grammatical accuracy.

Research Method

Research aims and questions

The present study aims to explore approaches to teaching grammar so as to find ways to improve students' grammatical accuracy, which is generally tested in school and internationally-recognized standardized exams, such as the TOEFL, IELTS and SAT. In this study, the simple past tense and the past continuous tense in the student textbook were selected as target grammar rules because the students had to learn these in junior high school, as stipulated by the Taiwan Ministry of Education. They play an important role in narrative writing, especially in describing past events. The research questions in the present study are as follows.

1. Do explicit grammar instruction and implicit grammar instruction have different effects on students' performance in grammatical accuracy in narrative writing?
2. If there is an effect, which teaching approach can lead to better improvement on students' performance in grammatical accuracy in writing?
3. Does the improvement sustain over a period of time?
4. What are grammatical errors that students make in narrative writing?
5. What are students' and teacher's perceptions of explicit grammar instruction and implicit grammar instruction?

Research design

The design of the study was a quasi-experiment (i.e. treatment group 1 and treatment group 2). Data were collected in 2016 from students' pretest, posttest and delayed posttest scores, and also from follow-up semi-structured interviews with students and teacher. The study was conducted over a 4-month period (from pretest to posttest: 3 months; from posttest to delayed posttest: 1 month). Since it was conducted in a junior high school setting, students were already grouped into different classrooms. It was at this stage that students were required to learn past tense in the curriculum guidelines set by the Taiwan Ministry of Education (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2005). All of the research subjects were 7th graders between 12 and 13 years old (Mean: 12.4 years; SD: 0.8 year). Before entering junior high school, they had studied English as a compulsory subject in elementary school for 4 years. They had started to learn English in third grade in elementary school (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2005). Their previous study in elementary school mainly focused on learning basic vocabulary, rather than sentences.

As this study was quasi-experimental in nature, the researcher formed the classroom groups to be studied, treatment group 1 (explicit grammar instruction) and treatment group 2 (implicit grammar instruction). Two classes were selected at random by a draw to be assigned to use one of these two approaches to teaching grammar. The number of students in each class was between 40 and 42 and their English language proficiency varied. It is noted that for the purpose of this study, only 35 students were selected from each class. In order to avoid any bias in the study, for each class, the researcher chose the students from the class register list after excluding those who did not meet the requirements of the study as follows. First, students from English-speaking countries or who had studied there over six months or a semester were excluded from the study. They were also identified through interviews about the language(s) used at home and at school. Second, the students who were absent during pretest, posttest and delayed posttest were also excluded from the study. In other words, the students who did not participate in pretest, posttest and delayed posttest were eliminated from this study. The final number of students was 70 (explicit grammar instruction group: 35; implicit grammar instruction group: 35).

Instructional activities

For a full understanding of the theoretical framework for the treatments (explicit and implicit grammar instruction) adopted in this study, a comprehensive review of Ellis' studies (2008, 2012) is essential. In brief, for explicit grammar instruction, learning the form is the major concern, and the instructional focus is on the grammatical structure. Selected forms are taught by the presentation and direct explanation of

grammar rules, followed by the giving of examples. Students usually practice the form in output tasks. Thus, in the present study, regarding the teaching of grammar, in treatment group 1, the students were directly explained the use of rules of the simple past tense and the past continuous, and learned how grammar rules worked, with some reference to linguistic terminology. They were also provided with examples of the rules in a linguistic and functional manner (Ellis, 2012) so as to be able to confirm their conclusions when they had questions about whether or not their answers were correct. In addition, the students were provided with direct feedback. In other words, the teacher underlined errors and made corrections, referring to the rules.

With regard to implicit grammar instruction, according to Ellis (2008, 2012), the major focus is on understanding the meaning of the text, rather than the rules. A lot of practical usage examples from authentic materials in real life situations containing the grammatical structure are given as input. The meaning of the text is the major concern. Students may deduce rules by themselves from the examples. Grammar discovery is part of the task-based activity and no grammatical rule is discussed. Thus, in the treatment group 2, the students learned through less conscious or subconscious processes (Celce-Murcia, 2002; Krashen, 1985, 2013). The activities of teaching grammar were communicative and meaning-focused in order to let the students produce the target grammar and get feedback on the productions, but the feedback was given indirectly. The teacher wrote the number of errors that the students had made using the target grammatical structure, but did not provide corrections, thereby leaving it up to the students to find and fix them on their own.

The students were taught according to the guidelines (Housen & Pierrard, 2006) in Table 3 and lesson plans in Table 4. Having done related activities in either explicit or implicit grammar instruction, the students needed to write on a narrative topic requiring them to use the target grammatical structure (i.e. past tense forms) and to make an individual decision on the tense feature in each sentence. It should be noted that to avoid the possibility of teacher effects on the results, the same regular teacher taught these two groups.

Table 3: Grammar instruction guidelines: treatment group 1 (explicit) and treatment group 2 (implicit)

Explicit grammar instruction	Implicit grammar instruction
directs attention to target forms and caters to intentional learning of the forms, as students are mainly focused on forms	attracts attention to target forms and caters to the incidental acquisition of the forms, as students are mainly focused on meaning
is predetermined and planned (e.g., as the main focus and goal of a teaching activity)	is delivered spontaneously (e.g., in a communication-oriented activity)
is obtrusive (interruption of communication of meaning)	is unobtrusive (minimal interruption of communication of meaning)
presents target forms in isolation	presents target forms in context
uses metalinguistic terminology (e.g., rule explanation)	makes no use of metalanguage
involves controlled practice of target forms (only focusing on teaching and eliciting production of target forms)	encourages free use of target forms
gives explicit feedback	gives implicit feedback (e.g., “Please try again.”)

Table 4: Grammar instruction lesson plans: treatment group 1 (explicit) and treatment group 2 (implicit)

Pretest (20 mins)	
Explicit grammar instruction	Implicit grammar instruction
(3 months; 12 sessions) (Meeting for this experiment once a week, lasting 45 mins)	(3 months; 12 sessions) (Meeting for this experiment once a week, lasting 45 mins)
I. Introduction and sentences illustrating the rules and patterns (form-focused) (15 mins)	I. Introduction and sentences without illustrating the rules and patterns (meaning-focused) (15 mins)
II. Practice session: Pair work: explicit feedback given (e.g., grammar errors corrected directly and immediately) (20 mins)	II. Practice session: Pair work: implicit feedback given (e.g., grammar embedded in the feedback naturally and frequently) (20 mins)
III. More drills: Rules and patterns repetition (10 mins)	III. More exposure: Communication-oriented activities (10 mins)
Posttest (20 mins)	
1 month	
Delayed Posttest (20 mins)	

Data sources and data analysis

The narrative compositions written by the students in pretest, posttest and delayed posttest were major data sources. In order to avoid repletion effect, the students were assigned to write narrative compositions to describe what had just happened yesterday in these three tests.

The writing prompt was: *Please describe what happened to you yesterday. You have 20 minutes to write.* The rationale for selecting the prompt for this grammatical focus was that on the one hand, learning how to write well about something happening in the past is important. On the other hand, the prompt asked them to write something familiar to them, so that high engagement could be expected. The simple past tense and the past continuous tense in students' compositions were analyzed by gauging their grammatical accuracy. Specifically, the improvement in performance on the writing was evaluated based on verb form (including spelling) accuracy. Grammatical accuracy was chosen for measure of writing effectiveness as it is commonly tested by English or high school entrance exams in Taiwan.

To measure the students' performance, an obligatory count procedure was adopted to analyze the data. The method used for the obligatory count procedure was that the number of correct use of the simple past tense and the past continuous tense was divided by the number of obligatory occurrence (when the students referred to the past event). In other words, the number of correct use from each test for each student in each treatment group was calculated respectively from the three tests. The data were documented on spreadsheets according to explicit and implicit instruction treatment groups. The scores were calculated and tabulated as follows.

$(\text{Number of correct use} / \text{Number of obligatory occurrence}) \times 100\% = \text{Score } (\%)$

As for Target-Like-Use (TLU) analysis, inter-rater agreement between the researcher and the research assistant in pretest, posttest, delayed posttest, improvement between pretest and posttest, and improvement between pretest and delayed posttest was 100%. The measure of intra-rater reliability was reached as the researcher coded the same data subset in pretest, posttest, delayed posttest, improvement between pretest and posttest, and improvement between pretest and delayed posttest again about four weeks after each inter-rater reliability measure was reached. Intra-rater agreement was all 100%. These results show that inter-rater agreement and intra-rater agreement were high.

Raw scores were submitted to independent samples t-test to explore if there were any differences between the two groups in pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest. The results of treatment group 1 (explicit grammar instruction) were then compared with those of treatment group 2 (implicit grammar instruction).

After the end of the last teaching session (the 12th session), follow-up semi-structured interviews with students and teacher were conducted in their first language (Mandarin Chinese) in order to obtain more specific information about what they perceive regarding explicit and implicit grammar instruction. Each interview (focus group student interview and individual teacher interview) lasted about 30 minutes. As for the analysis of interview data, attention was particularly paid to the question how they could be systematically analyzed. For instance, student responses were rendered in a more objective fashion rather than that of impressionistic. It was ensured that students' responses were analyzed unselectively instead of picking out some salient examples.

Findings

To answer the first research question, based on the findings of the students' written data, both teaching approaches showed positive effects, with different degrees of improvement. There was a reduction in the students' written production errors. However, compared with the implicit teaching group, the explicit teaching group showed a greater reduction in their written production errors. For each group, grammar mean scores are presented in Figure 1.

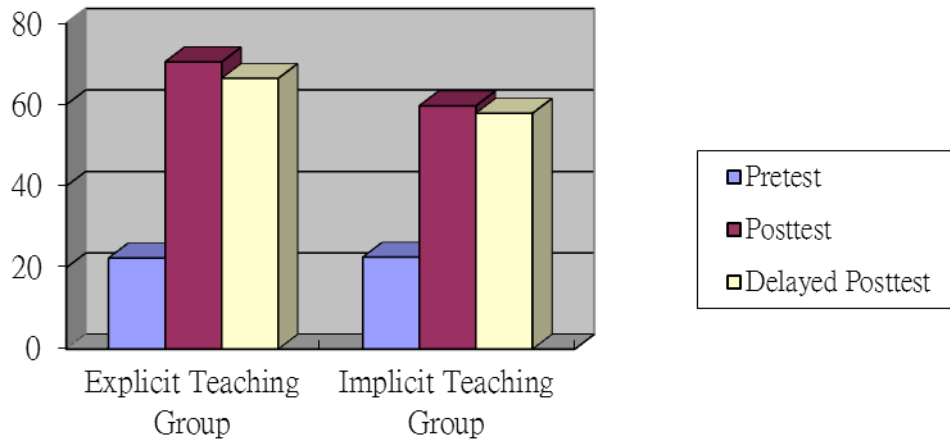


Figure 1: Grammar mean scores for the three tests in each group

The second and third research questions can be answered from the improvement in each group. Analysis of the improvement for each group is shown in Tables 6, 7 and 8 as follows.

Table 6: Pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest (independent samples t-test)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	DF	p
Pretest						
Explicit teaching group	35	22.34	2.35	-0.43	68	0.67
Implicit teaching group	35	22.57	2.06			
Posttest						
Explicit teaching group	35	70.46	2.38	19.07	68	0.00*
Implicit teaching group	35	59.71	2.33			
Delayed posttest						
Explicit teaching group	35	66.43	2.57	14.52	68	0.00*
Implicit teaching group	35	57.86	2.37			

Note: *An alpha level of .05 was chosen as the significance level.

In order to test homogeneity of the two groups, as Table 6 shows, in the independent samples t-test, there were no significant differences in the pretest between explicit and implicit teaching groups at the very beginning of the study ($p=0.67$). Nevertheless, after different forms of grammar instruction, the two teaching groups differed

significantly in the posttest ($p < .05$) and delayed posttest ($p < .05$). Compared with the students in the implicit teaching group, the students in the explicit teaching group received higher scores not only in the posttest, but also in the delayed posttest.

In addition, based on the findings in posttest and delayed posttest, the students' improvement sustained over a period of time. The explicit teaching group outperformed the implicit teaching group in both immediate and delayed posttests. In comparison with the group that grammar was implicitly taught, the students in the explicit teaching group tended to be more aware of the importance of correct grammar usage during writing.

Finally, both explicit and implicit teaching groups showed a moderate decrease in their delayed posttest, a month after the treatment. It is noted that the explicit teaching group showed a higher percentage of decrease, 4.03%, while the implicit teaching group showed a lower percentage of decrease in performance that is only 1.85%. Nonetheless, the grammar mean score in the explicit teaching group (66.43%) was still higher than that in the implicit teaching group (57.86%).

Table 7: Improvement between pretest and posttest (independent samples t-test)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	DF	p
Explicit teaching group	35	48.12	3.58	13.97	68	0.00**
Implicit teaching group	35	37.14	2.96			

Note: **An alpha level of .05 was chosen as the significance level.

Table 8: Improvement between pretest and delayed posttest (independent samples t-test)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	DF	p
Explicit teaching group	35	44.09	3.89	10.40	68	0.00**
Implicit teaching group	35	35.29	3.15			

Note: **An alpha level of .05 was chosen as the significance level.

As shown in Tables 7 and 8, the two teaching groups differed significantly in improvement between pretest and posttest ($p < .05$) and improvement between pretest and delayed posttest ($p < .05$). In other words, when compared with the implicit teaching group, the explicit teaching group showed the most improved performance in grammatical accuracy in narrative writing. In addition, the students in the explicit teaching group also improved more in both posttest and delayed posttest.

Students' perceptions of grammar instruction

Since the debate of explicit-implicit grammar instruction is an important one in SLA, students' perceptions of this issue can provide a good indication of their orientation. As shown in student interviews, no matter whether students were in the implicit or explicit grammar instruction group, they tended to expect the teacher to present grammar points explicitly. One representative example is given as follows:

I would like to learn grammar from one-sentence examples. Learning grammar from authentic texts without explicit grammar instruction is difficult for me as

there are a variety of grammars appearing in texts that I did not encounter before. A lack of explicit grammar instruction makes me feel insecure. Also, I find the explanation of specific grammar rules useful. I think that the major grammar instruction in Taiwan, in case of English grammar in particular, is explicit. My expectation is that the teacher could provide direct explanation of rules. (Student 5)

The finding revealed that explicit grammar instruction is favored by students due to their feelings of security. They saw the explanation of grammar rules as useful. It might also be linked to students' prior language learning experience in Taiwan and they were accustomed to it. If grammar was taught implicitly, students might not feel at home, particularly without giving the explanation and having practice of grammar rules.

Teacher's perceptions of grammar instruction

In addition to student interviews, the teacher was asked to comment on the role of grammar instruction and the kind of instruction which might be more beneficial for students. As pointed out by the teacher, students could learn grammar more effectively in implicit grammar instruction, which is to some extent different from students' perceptions. She understood the value of learning language as real communication and tended to support this approach for pedagogical reasons of her own. For instance, the following comment from the teacher indicates her favor for an implicit approach to grammar teaching:

I think that students can increase their communication competence at the university. Their grammar can improve when they have had implicit grammar instruction and their sub-consciousness is awakened. In other words, I think when compared with explicit grammar instruction, in implicit grammar instruction students can pick up grammar and learn grammar more extensively from meaningful exposure to the language.

Based on the interview data, it may be reasonable to conclude that the teacher feels that implicit grammar instruction may increase communication competence and is favored by her. However, it should be noted that as shown previously in student interview data, there are some concern for students about lack of enough explanation of rules for the development of grammar, something which could be linked to communicative tasks.

Discussion and Conclusion

Explicit versus implicit grammar instruction

The study demonstrates the existing controversy among researchers about the roles of explicit and implicit grammar instruction in helping students to overcome grammatical errors. The finding indicated that when compared with the implicit teaching group, the explicit teaching group showed the most improved performance in narrative writing. This parallels Spada and Tomita's (2010) findings, revealing that explicit instruction positively contributes to students' grammar knowledge. Although in the present study, implicit grammar instruction did have a positive effect on

enhancing students' grammar accuracy in writing, students in the explicit teaching group tended to learn rules of the simple past tense and past continuous tense more firmly and did better in posttest and delayed posttest, as it is important to have grammatical knowledge in order to express one's intended meaning precisely in writing.

Despite the fact that in this study modest progress was made by the implicit teaching group, implicit grammar instruction still has its place. However, it may be regarded as an alternative method in Taiwan. For Chinese learners, one possible reason is because students may not be able to translate effectively without explicit detailed and systematic grammatical knowledge. If students know why and how rules work, they may avoid the violation of incorrect grammar rules.

Students' and teacher's perceptions of grammar instruction

Interestingly, the study shows that there is a disparity between students' and teacher's perceptions of explicit and implicit grammar instruction. Such a mismatch is that students are more in favor of systematic, explicit grammar instruction, while the teacher prefers communicative activities. This incongruence between students' and teacher's perceptions suggests that when teachers make decisions in grammar instruction, they may need to take students' needs and concerns about lack of explicit grammar learning into consideration. Students' preference for grammar instruction may not accord with implicit instruction, but teachers may be able to utilize students' perceptions to make adjustments in their courses and to be open in talking to students about their teaching activities.

Based on the interview data, it is also possible to make some claims concerning students' and teacher's beliefs about grammar teaching and learning. The teacher tended to have positive comments on the explicit grammar instruction. This result is contrary to Nan's (2015) study. Being a spokesman for grammar teaching instructors, Nan argued the positive aspect of explicit grammar instruction which "will empower the English learners with the potential and enthusiasm for inquiry learning and active learning" (p. 82). Nonetheless, in the present study, the teacher's preference for implicit grammar instruction may indicate that she is inclined to use authentic texts and real-life tasks for practice within communicative or skills-based work to facilitate students' learning (Başöz, 2014; Yoo, 2016).

However, comments from students suggest that the authentic materials were difficult for them to learn. The level of the readings could have made it harder for them to learn language forms implicitly because of the content's difficulty. In addition, although students seem to favor more explicit grammar instruction, there does not appear to be a bias against decontextualized presentations of grammar. On the student side, they tend to perceive that it is relatively easy for them to learn if grammar is taught explicitly. They indicated that their grammar errors need to be explicitly pointed out and corrected; or they cannot 'learn' from their errors. This might be due to their need and expectation of detailed explanations of specific grammar rules and sense of feeling security (Weger, 2013). The result is to some extent in line with Nazari (2013) study, stating that generally speaking, learners who "are informed of the grammatical rules...feel more comfortable, self-confident and motivated in the classroom" (p. 161).

Implications of the study

There are several areas in grammar instruction that can be considered for future research. First, further studies can be conducted to explore which specific grammatical features benefit more through explicit grammar instruction than others do, so as to get to know which aspects to focus on. In other words, in writing pedagogy, it could be helpful for teachers to be aware of which aspects of explicit grammar instruction are more successful and less successful. Most importantly, they also need to consider what explicit grammar instruction is relevant to the target text and context of communication. For example, in terms of teaching simple past tense and past continuous tense, as there is no tense system in Mandarin Chinese, it may not be easy to teach simple past tense and past continuous tense implicitly since there is no counterpart of the tense present in students' native language.

In addition, as different students may have different ways to learn grammatical rules, it is important to ensure that teaching activities are appropriate, so that students' awareness can be raised. Students' needs for grammar learning may not coincide with the methods employed in implicit grammar instruction, but teachers may include more integrated, skills-based grammar activities in their courses to make learning more meaningful. Nevertheless, it is noted that teachers may also need to be explicit in informing students the grammar-orientation of these activities in order that they are appreciated as fulfilling students' wishes.

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