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The Role of Contextualized Explicit Grammar Teaching on Iranian Learners' Accuracy in Writing in Online vs. In-person Classes

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Abstract

Recent research has highlighted the fact that explicit focus on language forms including explicit grammar instruction is likely to direct learners' attention to pertinent grammatical structures and can result in their grammar structure noticing and acquisition. This study examined contextualized the explicit grammar teaching method in school. In this research 160 learners and eight teachers took part. The study was carried out in two different contexts (online and in-person). There were four experimental groups (n=80), and four control groups (n=80). The contextualized explicit grammar teaching method was employed as the treatment for the experimental groups. Contextualized grammar practices were provided using different images, videos, and copies. Explicit grammar exercises were also available at the conclusion of every instructional session. The control groups did not receive the treatment but received implicit grammar instruction instead. A quasi-experimental and a qualitative method were employed. A pre-test, three post-tests, and an unstructured interview were conducted. The data analysis was carried out using SPSS 24 software. The increased performance of the experimental groups on the post-test revealed the effectiveness of the treatment. The unstructured interview uncovered the observed differences between the teachers in teaching contextualized explicit grammar in online versus in-person classes. It was argued that the improvement in learners' grammar learning in the experimental groups stemmed from the utility of explicit contextualized grammar instruction for empowering them to notice the functions of the examined structures and to relate them to their background knowledge. The findings of this study can aid teachers in choosing a suitable instructional approach that can assist learners' accuracy in writing.

Keywords: Explicit Grammar Teaching, Implicit Grammar Teaching, Accuracy, Online Classes, In-Person Classes.

1. Introduction

The importance of teaching grammar has sparked a lot of debate throughout the evolution of instruction (Macaro et al., 2018; Wei, 2018). This topic has raised the interest of pedagogues to the point where it has divided them with one group prioritizing it and the other dismissing it. In language education, grammar instruction is still a contentious topic. Finding out how to teach grammar has piqued the interest of both researchers and educators (Janusik & Varner, 2020). Various approaches to grammar have brought about a wide range of methodologies. According to a recent study, the Focus on Form, Focus on Forms, and Focus on Meaning approaches evidently differ (Wang, 2023). Burgess and Etherington (2002) argued that Focus on Forms is an approach to language that emphasizes forms rather than content. On the other hand, Focus on Form expects the learners to concentrate mostly on meaning and communication. In the latter situation, the emphasis in the classroom is mainly on communicating meaning, with no explicit regard for forms.

According to Krashen (1981), learners acquire a language entirely by subconscious acquisition. He believes that formal education can only act as a watchdog because it promotes intentionally learned competence. As for the monitor theory, the learned system is utilized to verify the information being conveyed, while only the acquired system allows for spontaneous communication (Farrokhi et

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al., 2023). Others, on the other hand, believe that explicit instruction is essential (e.g. Tegegne & Kelkay, 2023; Villabona & Cenoz, 2022; Yonan et al., 2022). However, they do not accept the typical grammar teaching pedagogy, which teaches learners decontextualized grammatical structures. Drills and practices were used to present and manipulate forms in the traditional model of grammar instruction. Current research no longer backs up this traditional model (Schurz & Coumel, 2023). This is not to say that grammar instruction is not beneficial. In order for the target forms to become imprinted in their interlanguage, learners need to encounter, process, and employ them in a variety of ways. Research indicates that using the contextualized explicit grammar method provides a long-lasting knowledge of form, and increases the accuracy of learners. According to consciousness-raising theory, teachers should merely strive to call learners' attention to the grammar's crucial characteristics rather than expect them to grasp it right away (Ranalli, 2001).

Recently, implicit and explicit grammar teaching has been a subject of great discussion (Pawlak, 2021). Explicit and implicit language instruction are two extensively utilized approaches for teaching and learning a second language by teachers (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). In 1967, as a grammar experiment, this distinction was first proposed (Ling, 2015). Since then, the effectiveness of these two methods has been the subject of heated debate (Bo & Lim, 2023). Ellis et al. (2009) believe that implicit teaching provides learners with situations that enable them to infer rules without realizing them. The pattern will be internalized without their attention being directed to it. Explicit instruction, on the other hand, comprises teaching a specific rule and helping learners acquire metalinguistic awareness of that rule during the learning process (Dekeyser, 1995, as cited in Ellis, 2009).

A large body of research has been undertaken to discover which instructional technique is more effective in teaching and learning grammar (e.g., Bahraman & Movahed, 2021; Zheng, 2015) though there is still little consensus among researchers in this field, and results have been contradictory, demanding further research. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate whether contextualized explicit grammar teaching enhances learners' accuracy in writing and examine how this method of instruction affects students' writing accuracy in online versus in-person classes. Furthermore, the teachers' attitudes and perspectives about the differences in teaching contextualized explicit grammar in online versus in-person classes are also taken into account (Dobakhti et al., 2023).

2. Review of the Related Literature

2.1 Explicit and Implicit Grammar Teaching

The term 'grammar' can be interpreted in a variety of ways. According to Francis (1954, p. 299), grammar is "used to refer to three different things". The first thing it refers to is a collection of formal rules through which words in a language are ordered to communicate meaning. The second meaning indicates that when grammar is taught as a scientific discipline, it becomes a field of linguistic study focused on describing, analyzing, and constructing formal language patterns. Finally, through the third definition, grammar is regarded as a linguistic etiquette with a focus on usage from the third and final perspective.

Researchers have also provided a variety of definitions and characteristics for grammar. Some regard it as a set of rules, some as an internalized system, and others as abstract knowledge (Walenta, 2018). However, the researchers agree upon the necessity of grammar for conveying meaning and information, regardless of the emphasized feature.

When learners are able to use correct grammatical structures in the right context, they have mastered grammar (Hedge, 2014). Nevertheless, whether grammar needs to be taught explicitly or implicitly is still a point of contention. Both explicit and implicit grammar teaching and the comparison of these two methods of teaching are briefly described below (Orfan et al., 2021).

The explicit approach begins with a rule presentation and continues with examples of how the rule is applied. The learner engages with the grammar rule by studying and manipulating examples (Eisa, 2020). It is more technical and focuses on teaching the learner proper speech production and grammar and entails memorization in which practice is governed by rules (Orfan, 2020). Explicit grammar rules are provided to learners to help them form correct sentences (Ling, 2015). This method gives the teacher direction and control over the language lesson.

According to some studies, learners must pass standardized assessments based on a pre-determined grammar syllabus because 1) explicit grammar instruction is required; 2) studying grammar satisfies one's intellectual curiosity; 3) learners learning a second language can edit or 'monitor' their own work using explicit grammar rules; and 4) to properly formulate their own output, learners require explicit grammar rules. In a study, Ghapanchi and Sabouri (2013) agreed with this concept and found that the experimental group had dramatically higher mean achievement test scores than the control group. The following are some additional benefits of explicit grammar instruction:

It's direct and to-the-point, which saves time. Many rules, particularly formal rules, can be explained more quickly and simply than using examples. Therefore, more time will be available for practice and application.

It verifies many learners' expectations regarding classroom learning, especially for analytical learners.

It enables the teacher to deal with linguistic points as they arise rather than expecting and preparing for them in advance.

The more dynamic of the two approaches to grammar instruction is implicit instruction. This method of instruction emphasizes language fluency rather than accuracy, with active learner engagement and interactive learning activities. In this approach, learners are exposed to activities aimed at helping them identify and internalize grammar patterns through simulated real-life situations within the classroom environment. For learners, implicit teaching empowers them, promotes a more natural learning environment, and also emphasizes learner autonomy and independence. As in L1 acquisition, implicit instruction transforms the input into the intake (Birsén, 2012). This approach has yielded the following advantages.

- Learners are immensely motivated. Sessions are more enjoyable, and learners are more engaged in their studies. Learners are urged to pay more attention to meaning than to form in a tacit way. Learners are generally 'allergic' to the use of grammatical terms. The method instructs learners on how to correct their mistakes in an appropriate manner.

It reduces boredom, which is often associated with explicit grammar instruction, and increases learners' belief in their ability to communicate using the language.

Learners subconsciously absorb the language's inherent grammar rules to use it properly.

2.2 Explicit vs. Implicit Feedback

There has been much debate regarding which of the two grammar teaching approaches (explicit vs. implicit) is more effective (Akramy, 2020). The difference between L1 and L2 acquisition has sparked this debate. Some argue that learning L1 is implicit and based on experience rather than explicit rules, while others argue that learning L2 is aided by the learner's awareness and knowledge of grammatical rules (Ling, 2015). The effectiveness of either method of grammar instruction drew a lot of attention in the late twentieth century. The distinction between grammar accuracy and fluency has prompted researchers to reconsider grammar teaching methods conceptualized by language teachers.

In Sopin's (2015) study of teachers' opinions about classroom grammar instruction, all participants believed that grammar instruction and accuracy are crucial in learning. According to Sopin (*ibid.*), in the meantime, the majority of respondents (84%) supported explicit instruction, and 64% agreed that implicit instruction made it more difficult for learners to understand grammar. Nonetheless, all respondents agreed that grammar teaching in the classroom should be contextualized, with specific rule instruction presented in an acceptable manner (*ibid.*).

Direct language education in the classroom exemplifies the explicit instructional approach to explicit language teaching (Hui-ling & Talley, 2016). To put it another way, Brown (2000) argues that explicit language education involves input processing to evaluate whether the input data contains regularities and, if so, whether concepts and rules can be employed to capture these regularities. According to Ling (2015), in implicit teaching and learning, learners have no idea what they're learning or who they're learning from, making it challenging to construct and verify knowledge. Esteki (2014) believes that implicit knowledge is considered a procedure that can only be observed when second language learners interact, whereas explicit knowledge cannot be witnessed directly.

The traditional language teaching methods mostly focused on language form, with the teacher explaining grammar rules and drilling them into learners through rote practice (Pawlak, 2020a). This approach prioritizes grammar over other language aspects. The audio-lingual approach, which combines both negative and positive reinforcement when a learner is learning the rules of a language, is one example of this method. This practice eventually wears the learners out, and while being able to produce excellent language forms on paper, the learners persist in making mistakes when speaking the language in its natural setting (Rhalimi, 2012). Thus, the learners cannot effectively communicate in instances where fluency trumps accuracy.

Besides, some teachers feel that learners may learn a second language without being taught grammatical rules directly (Pawlak, 2020b). This strategy, which is comparable to the ways in which children acquire their mother tongue, is centered on the unconscious utilization of language rather than conscious learning methods that lead to poor language fluency (Rhalimi, 2012). It emphasizes language use, not its strict application; the emphasis is on meaning and context rather than on form. In this method, contextualized language instruction is preferred over strict grammatical rules and language forms for its activities and exercises.

The learner gains procedural knowledge of grammar from implicit instruction, whereas declarative knowledge is gained from explicit instruction. The latter promotes conscious and active grammar learning (Schmidt, 1990), whereas the former, as in an L1 acquisition, converts input into intake. Both methods of instruction lead to the automatization of grammar, so it is important to choose wisely (Zarrinjooei et al., 2023). Learners who are having difficulty learning a second language should be given explicit instruction. They can understand the logic behind the grammatical structure of the language they are studying if they follow a particular set of grammatical rules. Freeman (2003) views grammar as a dynamic process or skill rather than a static body of information, aiding both explicit and implicit grammar acquisition. However, the extent to which grammar acquisition contributes to second language acquisition remains a subject of ongoing research.

One of the primary challenges with implicit and explicit grammar teaching is the extent to which grammatical knowledge can be retained (Zhang, 2015; Yilmaz & Granena, 2021). Tode (2007) examined the effects of two teaching modes (explicit and implicit) on the acquisition of the auxiliary verb "to be" among three groups of Japanese high school students early in their studies. Students who received explicit instruction demonstrated significant short-term improvements, while those who received implicit instruction showed no progress. Additionally, learners who received implicit instruction did not perform better than those who received no instruction at all.

According to Robinson and Feng (2016), utilizing both explicit and implicit grammar instruction can enhance students' writing abilities. Their study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of direct grammar instruction in improving overall writing quality. Two fifth-grade teachers and 18 students participated in their survey. The Self-Regulation Strategy Development (SRSD) approach was employed, wherein teachers explained the goal of the strategy and provided assistance as needed until students could independently apply the strategy. Depending on students' errors in the pre-test, the teachers targeted various grammatical skills. Post-test results revealed significant improvement in students' scores after four months. While four students scored lower on the post-test and five scored the same, nine students scored higher. The study concluded that the students' writing quality improves when teachers analyze their work, identify common errors, and plan targeted lessons to address specific weaknesses.

The function of explicit and implicit feedback is another part of implicit and explicit teaching efficacy (Shiu et al., 2018). Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen (2009) evaluated the influence of implicit and explicit feedback on the test performance of adult Iranian learners and how implicit and explicit feedback impacts the learning of developmental early/late target elements. The findings indicated that explicit feedback can more significantly contribute to adult intermediate learners' linguistic growth than implicit feedback, and they recommended that teachers integrate metalinguistic explanations into their lessons.

In another study by Zhuo (2010), the impact of explicit and implicit recasts on the learning of the plural noun suffix '-s' was examined among 63 low-proficiency Chinese primary school students. All the students received communicative, task-based training, but were divided into three groups: implicit recast, explicit recast, and no feedback. Surprisingly, both the implicit and no recast groups performed better than the explicit recast group, with the implicit recast and no recast groups achieving comparable results. This conclusion is ascribed to the idea that learners saw implicit recasts as ambiguous, resulting in implicit recasts being equally as effective

as no recasts. According to the author, explicit recasts are superior to implicit recasts for conveying negative evidence and stimulating grammatical improvement.

2.3 Teachers' Knowledge and Education

It's also necessary to consider the basic education of teachers while modifying the typical classroom. Teacher education also necessitates the fostering of critical thinking in teachers' professional lives, in addition to pedagogical education (Zohrabi & Khalili, 2023). Pre-service teacher preparation programs should aid student teachers in taking charge of their professional growth by helping them view teaching as much more than a method or job (Wang et al., 2022). The ability to analyze and articulate one's thoughts should be taught to student teachers.

Both pedagogical information and practical, real-world classroom uses of the knowledge should be part of a student teacher's initial education (Parhamnia & Farahian, 2021). Additionally, when exploring how this pedagogical material could improve their teaching practices, student teachers should be encouraged to develop critical thinking abilities. They will be able to have more control over how they teach languages due to this practice (O'Dowd & Dooly, 2021). For instance, they might be tasked with analyzing grammar teaching methods and sharing their conclusions with fellow student teachers following a study on the development of explicit and implicit language knowledge and grammar teaching techniques. Thus, the student teachers will have the opportunity to watch a real lesson. They can talk about and compare their observations of how the theories they've learned are applied in real-life situations. This will gradually cause a transformation in the psyche and cognition of these student teachers, preparing them to teach with a more practical approach (Fullwood et al., 2018). It takes time to change teaching methods because it necessitates a shift in the teacher's thoughts and beliefs (Borg, 2005). It's impossible to make a significant difference in classroom applications in a single day. The teacher's cognition is influenced by both professional pedagogical knowledge as well as the application of that knowledge.

To have a good understanding of the subject, the student teachers must conduct research on both the theory and practice of pedagogy. Furthermore, their declarative understanding of language must be improved (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021). This declarative knowledge should only be utilized for scholarly reasons; otherwise, the student teachers will excessively emphasize grammar teaching over other language aspects. Thus, institutes that train student teachers need to instill critical thinking in their minds.

Nero (2005), a linguist, believes that language education places too much emphasis on language form and accuracy, limiting the language teaching methods in the classroom. Therefore, learners may consider it difficult to put into practice the learned materials and improve their fluency. Accordingly, Nero (2005) suggests a larger framework that includes language teachers' awareness of their students' knowledge and identities as well as language as a form. This framework is named LIAD, standing for Language Identity, Awareness, and Development. Both teacher identity and knowledge should be incorporated into this framework to foster language learning and teaching. Change in language classrooms will demand new paradigms in the development of language acquisition theories, as well as an emphasis on the teacher-learner identity and teacher-pedagogical training.

3. Research Questions

In order to conduct the current study, the following research questions were posed.

RQ1: Is there any relationship between contextualized explicit grammar teaching and the enhancement of learners' accuracy in writing?

RQ2: How similar is the effect of contextualized explicit grammar teaching in online and in-person classes?

RQ3: What are the differences observed by teachers in teaching contextualized explicit grammar in online versus in-person classes?

4. Methodology

4.1 Design of the Study

This study was carried out using the quasi-experimental method and unstructured interview. The quasi-experimental design was used to answer research questions 1 and 2. The unstructured interview was employed to answer research question 3. The accuracy level of learners' writing tasks was compared and examined in two different groups and two different situations. There were 4 experimental groups receiving the treatment (2 online classes and 2 in-person classes), and 4 control groups (2 online classes and 2 in-person classes) not receiving the special treatment. The study's independent variable was the grammar teaching method and the dependent variable was the learners' degree of accuracy in writing.

4.2 Participants

In this study, 160 male and female adult learners in 8 intact classes were selected through convenient sampling. Eight male and female teachers with about seven years or above of teaching experience also participated in the study. The research was conducted in a language institute in Tabriz, Iran, and the learners were allocated into classes based on the institute's placement test.

Table 1 represents the learners' characteristics including their age and gender. As demonstrated in the table, there were 107 female and 53 male learners in the 18-23 age range. The teachers' characteristics which involve their gender, age, level of education, and experience of teaching are also indicated in Table 2. According to this table, 4 female and 4 male teachers aged from 23 to 31, took part in the study. Two of the teachers had B.A. degrees and the other 6 had M.A. degrees. Furthermore, they had 7 to 10 years of teaching experience.

Table 1. Learners' Characteristics (N=160)

Gender / Age	Categories	N (%)
Gender	Female	107 (66.87%)
	Male	53 (33.13%)
	Total	160 (100%)
Age	18 – 19	43 (26.87%)
	20 – 21	52 (32.5%)
	22 – 23	65 (40.63%)
	Total	160 (100%)

Table 2. Teachers' characteristics (N=18)

Gender / Age	Categories	N (%)
Gender	Female	4 (50%)
	Male	4 (50%)
	Total	8 (100%)
Age	23 – 25	2 (25%)
	26 - 28	3 (37.5%)
	29 - 31	3 (37.5%)
	Total	8 (100%)
Level of Education	B.A.	2 (25%)
	M.A.	6 (75%)
	Total	8 (100%)
Experience of Teaching	7 – 8 years	5 (62.5%)
	9 - 10 years	3 (37.5%)
	Total	8 (100%)

4.3 Instruments

4.3.1 Contextualized Grammar Practices

Contextualized grammar practices were provided using different images, videos, and copies. These practices included conversational cloze practices, role play, conversational exercises, sentence-making practices, controlled writing activities, and information gap activities.

4.3.2 Explicit Grammar Practices

These activities were provided at the end of the book as an exercise page.

Sample 1:

2B

a Complete the sentences with a verb in the past continuous.

I was eating dinner, so I didn't answer the phone. (eat)

- I took this photo when my wife _____ in the yard. (work)
- He met his wife when he _____ in Japan. (live)
- They _____ for us when we arrived. (not wait)
- _____ she _____ a coat when she went out? (wear)
- The sun _____ when I left for work. (shine)
- What _____ you _____ at 7:30 last night? (do)
- I _____ when you gave the instructions. (not listen)
- We _____ TV when you called. (not watch)

b Put the verbs into the simple past or past continuous.

She arrived when we were having dinner. (arrive, have)

- I _____ my arm when I _____ soccer. (break, play)
- _____ you _____ fast when the police _____ you? (drive, stop)
- It _____ when we _____ the restaurant. (arrive, leave)
- I _____ the game because I _____. (not see, work)
- When you _____ me, I _____ to my boss. (call, talk)
- We _____ in the library when we _____. (study, meet)
- _____ they _____ in Tokyo when they _____ their first baby? (live, have)

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Sample 2:

6A

a Write sentences and questions with *will* / *won't*. Use contractions where you can.

- 1 it / be easy to pass. *It won't be easy to pass.*
- 2 I think they / lose the game
- 3 the meeting / be long
- 4 she / get the job - she's not qualified
- 5 you / see him at work later
- 6 I don't want to go. it / be impossible to park
- 7 you / like that book
- 8 I think she / love the present I bought her
- 9 there / be a lot of traffic in the morning
- 10 you / find a good job, I'm sure
- 11 everything / be OK, so there's no need to worry

6B Complete with *will* + a verb from the list.

be [2] get like pass snow

- 1 A Do you think the traffic will be bad?
B No, because it's a holiday today.
- 2 A Do you like this band?
B Yes, I think they _____ famous one day.
- 3 A Is this a good movie?
B Yes, I'm sure you _____ it.
- 4 A Do you think it _____?
B No, it's not cold enough.
- 5 A What do you think I _____ for my birthday?
B I don't know. What did you ask for?
- 6 A I'm so worried about the exam!
B Don't worry. I'm sure you _____.

4.3.3 Writing Test 1

To ascertain the consistency of the participants' proficiency level at the beginning of the study, a writing test was designed by the researchers (see Appendix A). This test included three parts: an essay writing part, a contextualized conversational grammar part, and a sentence-making part. In order to ensure content validity, the content of the test was simulated with the learners' previous semester's grammar lessons.

4.3.4 Writing Test 2

Another writing test was carried out to examine the effectiveness of the contextualized explicit grammar instruction method (see Appendix B). Like writing test 1, writing test 2 had 3 parts: an essay writing part, a contextualized conversational grammar part, and a sentence-making part. In order to ensure content validity, the content of the test was simulated with the learners' previous semester's grammar lessons.

4.3.5 Unstructured Interview

An unstructured interview was conducted to find out about the teachers' experiences and observed differences using the contextualized explicit grammar instruction method in their online and in-person classes (see Appendix C).

4.4 Procedures

The accepted grammar teaching method in the mentioned institute was the implicit grammar teaching method and all of the learners were taught through this method. Before starting the instruction with the special treatment (contextualized explicit grammar teaching method), a pre-test was given to all of the participants to ensure the homogeneity of the learners' proficiency level regarding accuracy in writing.

In the next stage, the experimental groups were instructed using the contextualized explicit grammar teaching method, while the control groups continued to be taught using the implicit grammar teaching method and they didn't receive the special treatment. The instruction included 9 sessions of 30 minutes in a course which was held for 14 sessions, and each session for 90 minutes.

After completion of the instruction, a post-test was given to examine the effectiveness of the treatment and to compare the outcomes of the treatment in two different situations (online vs. in-person classes). The results of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using an independent samples t-test in SPSS software to answer research questions 1 and 2. The teachers were interviewed to share their experiences and observed differences in their classes, and the results of the interview were used to answer research question 3. In order to conduct the interviews, the researchers made the participants aware of their content and structure and informed them that they intended to record the interview sessions. Moreover, they transcribed the interview sessions using Sonix software. Lastly, they utilized thematic analysis to extract the main codes and themes in the interview data.

4.5. Data Analysis

To investigate the potential correlation between contextualized explicit grammar instruction and improvements in learners' writing accuracy, as well as to compare the effectiveness of this instruction in online versus in-person classes, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Additionally, the teachers' interviews were transcribed and analyzed to explore any observed distinctions in teaching contextualized explicit grammar across online and in-person settings.

5. Results

5.1 Research Question 1

The first research question aimed to investigate the relationship between the contextualized explicit grammar teaching method and the enhancement of learners' accuracy in writing. In order to answer this question and other research questions, first it was required to ensure the homogeneity of the learners' proficiency level in writing accuracy at the beginning of the study. As reflected in Table 3, in order to test the homogeneity of variances, Levene's F test was run. Since the *p*-value for Levene's test in both online and in-person groups are greater than .05 (.104 and .395 respectively), the null hypotheses are retained and it can be concluded that there aren't any differences between the variances. Furthermore, since the *p*-value of the t-test for both groups is more than .05 (.701 and .785), it can be inferred that the null hypotheses cannot be rejected. Therefore, there aren't any significant differences between learners' initial proficiency in writing. So, the participants of the experimental and control groups were homogeneous in writing proficiency level at the beginning of the research and the probable changes in the performance of the learners after instruction cannot be related to initial differences.

Table 3. Independent Samples T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	Df.	Sig.(2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. error Difference
Writing Pre-test Online	Equal Variances Assumed	2.699	.104	-.385	78	.701	-.100	.260
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			-.385	74.568	.701	-.100	.260
Writing Pre-test In-person	Equal Variances Assumed	.732	.395	-.273	78	.785	-.075	.274
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			-.273	77.418	.785	-.075	.274

Table 4 indicates that the accuracy in writing for control groups (N = 80) was determined through the mean value of online (M = 12.53) and in-person group (M = 12.83), and also the standard deviation of online (SD = 1.28) and in-person group (SD = 1.27). On the other hand, the accuracy in writing for the experimental groups (N = 80) was obtained through the mean value of online (M = 12.63) and in-person group (M = 12.90), and also the standard deviation of online (SD = 1.03) and in-person group (SD = 1.17).

Table 4. Group statistics

		Group Statistics				
Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Writing Pre-test Online	Control Group	40	12.53	1.281	.203	
	Experiment Group	40	12.63	1.030	.163	
Writing Pre-test In-person	Control Group	40	12.83	1.279	.202	
	Experiment Group	40	12.90	1.172	.185	

In Table 5, Levene's F test was run to test the homogeneity of variances. The *p*-value of Levene's test for the online group (.579) is greater than .05, therefore the homogeneity of variances is assumed. On the other hand, the *p*-value of Levene's test for the in-person group (.025) is less than .05 and, as a result, the homogeneity of variances is not assumed. The independent samples T-test results also indicate that the observed *p*-value (.000) is less than .05. The null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected and with a 95% confidence interval, it was assumed that the experimental groups had a significantly larger mean than the control groups.

Table 5. Independent Samples T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	Df.	Sig.(2-Tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. error Difference
Writing Post-test Online	Equal Variances Assumed	.310	.579	-12.762	78	.000	-4.025	.315
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			-12.762	77.336	.000	-4.025	.315
Writing Post-test In-person	Equal Variances Assumed	5.237	.025	-12.104	78	.000	-3.600	.297
	Equal Variances Not Assumed			-12.104	68.692	.000	-3.600	.297

According to Table 6, the mean value of the online control group was 13.30 and its standard deviation was 1.344. Furthermore, the mean value of the in-person control group and its standard deviation were 13.60 and 1.057 respectively. With regard to the experimental group, Table 6 shows that the mean value of the online group was 17.33 and its standard deviation was 1.474. Moreover, the mean value of the in-person group and its standard deviation were 17.20 and 1.556 respectively.

Table 6. Descriptive Group Statistics

		Group Statistics			
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Writing Post-test Online	Control Group	40	13.30	1.344	.212
	Experiment Group	40	17.33	1.474	.233
Writing Post-test In-person	Control Group	40	13.60	1.057	.167
	Experiment Group	40	17.20	1.556	.246

Based on the statistical findings, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the contextualized explicit grammar teaching method and the enhancement of learners' accuracy in writing.

5.2 Research Question 2

The contextualized explicit grammar teaching method was employed in two experimental groups, namely in an online and in an in-person class. To show the similarity statistically, three delayed post-tests were conducted, which showed improvement in values. Table 7 shows the effect of instruction in two different situations. The online experimental group's pre-test mean value was 12.63, and the average of post-tests increased to 17.33. Similarly, the in-person experimental group's pre-test mean value was 12.90, which increased to 17.20 in the post-test average value. Consequently, the effect of contextualized explicit grammar teaching was similar in online classes and in-person classes.

Table 7. Descriptive Group Statistics

		Group Statistics			
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Writing Post-test Online	Control Group	40	13.30	1.344	.212
	Experiment Group	40	17.33	1.474	.233
Writing Post-test In-person	Control Group	40	13.60	1.057	.167
	Experiment Group	40	17.20	1.556	.246

5.3 Research Question 3

To delineate the observed differences in teaching contextualized explicit grammar in online classes versus in-person classes, all of the teachers were interviewed. All of them believed that this method eased the process of learning and they were satisfied with the novel method. The transcription of the interviews from four teachers is provided below:

Teacher 1 (Online Class): *The students understood the grammar part better, they felt more confident. It took less time to explain the grammar. But providing context in an online class was quite difficult.*

Teacher 2 (In-person Class): *Me and my students enjoyed grammar time for the first time, I started the lesson with telling a story (preparing the required context), then I made tangible examples and finally I talked about grammar rules. I had no difficulties while teaching this method.*

Teacher 3 (Online Class): *I believe that this method of teaching is more effective especially in teaching grammar. After the first time using this method of instruction one of my students said that he wasn't confused after teaching grammar for the first time.*

Teacher 4 (In-person Class): *I applied the instruction but I didn't expect this much outperformance in my students' accuracy in writing. I always nagged about my learners' lack of attention to grammar parts. After implication of this method, their outperformance in writing was completely sensible.*

6. Discussion

The issue of whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly enthralled scholars and teachers, particularly in SLA. Both strategies are supported by a considerable body of evidence. Hence, there isn't a clear-cut answer to the debate on teaching grammar explicitly or implicitly. This is based on a variety of criteria, including the teacher's experience and the pupils' competence. Furthermore, teachers may require development and training throughout their careers to stay current with contemporary grammar teaching techniques.

The current study aimed to address three research questions outlined previously. Prior to addressing these questions, a pre-test was selected and administered to all the participants to ensure homogeneity among the study participants. Based on the pre-test results, the null hypothesis, which posited no significant difference in the learners' writing accuracy at the outset of the research, was upheld.

Following the completion of the instruction, all of the participants were examined by a post-test. The increased mean of the experimental groups in comparison to the control groups in the post-test led to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and inferring a meaningful relationship between contextualized explicit grammar teaching and the enhancement of learners' accuracy in writing. These findings are in line with the results of the studies that were conducted by Tode (2007), Zhang (2015), Yilmaz and Granena (2021), Yonan et al, (2022), and Zarrinjoei et al. (2023). These studies reported that explicit training leads to notable short-term improvements in comparison to implicit instruction.

The second research question was considered to explain the similarity or dissimilarity of the effect of contextualized explicit grammar teaching in two different situations (online vs. in-person). The comparison of the statistical findings revealed that both of the experimental groups had increased mean accuracy of their writing in the post-test, so it can be suggested that the effect of employed grammar instruction was similar in both situations. These results support the results of the studies that were conducted by Nazari (2013), Wei (2018), Villabona and Cenoz, (2022), Wang et al. (2022), and Wang (2023). These studies stated that the explicit technique proved to be a well-known methodology to students as well as a practice of organizing and evaluating the content they had already learned.

The third research question concerned the teachers' experiences and observed differences in using this method. An unstructured

interview was conducted and the teachers were free to share their experiences with the researchers. The teachers who took part in this study believed in the effectiveness of this method and found it useful.

According to the findings, grammar is an important component of learning for all educators. It is a framework that helps language function, it is at the heart of language, and it is a necessary component of language learning. Herein, the majority of the respondents tend to prefer explicit grammar teaching. They explain why grammar should be directly taught using drills and rote-memorization procedures, why explicit instruction is time-saving, and why grammar is not learned spontaneously and should be taught individually.

They also believe that detailed instruction can assist students in becoming accurate users who can use grammar correctly both in and out of the classroom. These findings corroborate the results of the studies that were carried out by [Gotsch and Stathis \(2008\)](#), [Rashid et al. \(2010\)](#), [Parhamnia and Farahian \(2021\)](#), [Pawlak \(2021\)](#), and [Schurz and Coumel \(2023\)](#). These studies asserted that teachers maintain that learners should be directly taught grammar and writing rules.

Most of the pre- and in-service teacher training, as well as available course books, have encouraged teachers to move away from traditional grammatical rule teaching and toward more communicative and participatory methods ([Birsen, 2012](#)). In many regions of the world, the latter places a greater emphasis on how to utilize grammar rather than a pure understanding of grammar. On the other hand, teachers continue to believe that explicit grammar teaching is superior to implicit grammar instruction in practice. This shows that, despite the introduction of implicit grammar teaching, educators believe that explicit grammar instruction is more useful in language courses.

Although most teachers believe that explicit teaching is more effective in their classrooms, they are not opposed to employing implicit instruction to teach grammar. When it can help students learn, they believe that teaching grammar implicitly is necessary ([Orfan et al., 2021](#)). According to [Burgess and Etherington \(2002\)](#), these teachers do not appear to favor explicit grammar instruction over implicit instruction. According to [Rodriguez \(2009\)](#), proficient language teachers have long understood the advantages of employing repetition, error correction, and even exercises in the classroom.

As previously stated, language teachers' prior experiences and institutional requirements significantly influence this. Boredom and hatred, which students often feel when grammar is taught explicitly, can be eliminated through contextualized grammar teaching activities ([O'Dowd & Dooly, 2021](#)). Students are motivated by the contextualized grammar approaches, and they see an immediate application. This method gently encourages them to recognize and correct their own errors ([Macaro et al., 2018](#)). Students can also learn patterns subconsciously and apply them in their everyday uses. Students are more eager to use abstract rules for communicative purposes, as opposed to the monotony that occurs when they are explained in isolation from context. Furthermore, students are encouraged to place a greater emphasis on meaning rather than form ([Janusik & Varner, 2020](#)).

[Sopin \(2015\)](#), in a study, investigated teachers' views about grammar instruction in the classroom and reported that 100% of the respondents believe that grammar teaching/accuracy is crucial in education, which is consistent with the findings of the present study. According to [Sopin \(ibid.\)](#), while 84 percent of respondents supported explicit instruction, 64 percent agreed that implicit instruction made it more difficult for them to understand grammar. Nonetheless, he claims that all respondents reached a consensus that grammar instruction on the one hand should be contextualized and on the other hand it must appropriately provide clear instruction of the principles ([ibid.](#)).

7. Conclusion

There is always a debate about whether to employ explicit or implicit methods of instruction in teaching grammar. Different scholars have various ideas, some agree upon explicit instruction while others are advocates of implicit grammar instruction. All of these researchers write about the pros and cons of their decisions and propose reasons for so doing. Recently some scholars have moved toward contextualized explicit grammar teaching. In this method the learners benefit both from context learning and rule learning, starting with context and moving toward rules ([Zohrabi & Bimesl, 2022](#)).

The present study has investigated the effects of such a method in two different situations. According to the findings of this study, the examined method was effective in both online and in-person situations. The unstructured interview also showed that the teachers of the study agreed with the outcomes. It is advised that the teachers can use this method and investigate its outcome in their classes.

The present study was conducted in Tabriz, Iran, future studies can collect data from different regions or various countries. The participants of the present study had Turkish and Farsi language backgrounds, future researchers can also focus on participants from different language backgrounds. Participants from a range of educational backgrounds, such as elementary, secondary, public universities, and other institutions, could be included in a future study to provide comprehensive insights. Teaching observation, which allows the researcher to witness real-life classroom practices that may mirror their own opinions, might be included in a future study as well. Finally, since retention is such a hot topic in this discussion, additional long-term research is needed to evaluate if the benefits of explicit grammar education can be sustained over time.

Appendix A

Writing Test 1:

Part One: An Essay Writing

1. "Talking about Yesterday: Simple Past vs. Past Continuous" - Practice using both tenses to describe activities from yesterday, like "I watched TV" (simple past) and "I was watching TV when you called" (past continuous).
2. "Story Time: Writing Past Tense Narratives" - Write short stories using simple past and past continuous to describe actions and events. For example, "Yesterday, I played with my friends at the park. While we were playing, it started to rain."
3. "My Daily Routine: Using Simple Past and Past Continuous" - Describe your daily routine using both tenses, such as "I woke up at 7 a.m. (simple past) and "I was eating breakfast when the phone rang" (past continuous).
4. "Picture Perfect: Describing Past Events in Photos" - Describe past events shown in pictures using simple past and past continuous. For instance, "She danced at the party" (simple past) and "He was playing guitar while she was singing" (past continuous).
5. "Interview Time: Asking and Answering Questions in the Past" - Practice asking and answering questions about past activities,

like "What did you do last weekend?" (simple past) and "What were you doing at 5 p.m. yesterday?" (past continuous).

Part Two: Contextualized Conversational Grammar

Topic: Sharing Weekend Adventures

Teacher: Good morning, class! I hope you all had a wonderful weekend. Today, we're going to practice talking about our weekend adventures using the simple past and past continuous tenses. Who would like to start?

Sarah: (Raises hand) I'll go first! Over the weekend, I ____ (watch) ____ a movie with my family.

Teacher: Sounds fun, Sarah! Now, let's add some detail using the past continuous. John, what were you doing while Sarah was watching the movie?

John: Well, while Sarah was watching the movie, I ____ (play) ____ soccer with my friends at the park.

Teacher: Great! Now, let's keep the conversation going. Emily, what did you do on Saturday morning?

Emily: On Saturday morning, I ____ (bake) ____ cookies with my mom.

Teacher: Yum, that sounds delicious! And Sam, what were you doing around lunchtime on Sunday?

Sam: Around lunchtime on Sunday, I ____ (help) ____ my dad fix the car in the garage.

Teacher: Fantastic! It sounds like you all had interesting weekends. Keep practicing using the simple past and past continuous to share your adventures with each other.

Part Three: Sentence Making Part

Topic: Favorite Hobbies

1. Sarah enjoys painting in her free time.
2. While Sarah was painting, John was practicing playing the guitar.
3. Emily likes reading mystery novels on rainy days.
4. Sam loves playing soccer with his friends at the park.
5. Sarah and John often go hiking together on weekends.
6. Emily was knitting a scarf for her grandmother's birthday last Sunday.
7. Sam and his friends were watching a movie marathon at his house on Saturday night.
8. Sarah and John were baking cookies for a school fundraiser last Friday.
9. Emily was gardening in her backyard while listening to music yesterday.
10. Sam was skateboarding at the skate park with his cousin last weekend.

Encourage students to construct sentences about their favorite hobbies using both the simple past and past continuous tenses, incorporating details and activities they enjoy doing in their leisure time.

Appendix B

Writing Test 2:

Part One: An Essay Writing

1. "Daily Routines: Simple Present vs. Present Continuous" - Describe your typical daily routine using the simple present tense, then compare it to what you are doing right now using the present continuous tense.
2. "My Favorite Activities: Simple Present vs. Present Continuous" - List your favorite hobbies and interests using the simple present tense, then describe what you are currently doing related to one of those activities using the present continuous tense.
3. "Around the House: Simple Present vs. Present Continuous" - Describe household chores you regularly do using the simple present tense, then talk about what you or someone in your family is doing at this moment using the present continuous tense.
4. "At School: Simple Present vs. Present Continuous" - Discuss your school schedule and activities using the simple present tense, then mention what your teacher or classmates are doing during a specific class using the present continuous tense.

Part Two: Contextualized Conversational Grammar

Topic: Daily Routines: Simple Present vs. Present Continuous

Teacher: Hey everyone! Imagine you're all hanging out after school, sharing stories about your day. Let's practice talking about our daily routines using the simple present and present continuous tenses.

Sarah: (Starts) Alright, guys, every morning, I wake up at 7 a.m. and then ____ (eat) ____ breakfast with my family before heading to school.

Teacher: (Encouraging) Great start, Sarah! Now, John, what about you?

John: Well, right now, I ____ (work) ____ on my math homework, but usually, after school, I ____ (play) ____ basketball with my friends at the park.

Teacher: (Nodding) Nice multitasking, John! Emily, how about your evenings?

Emily: In the evenings, I usually ____ (study) ____ for exams, but today, I ____ (watch) ____ my favorite TV show while I ____ (do) ____ my homework.

Teacher: (Smiling) Sounds like a relaxing evening, Emily! Sam, what about your weekends?

Sam: On weekends, my family and I often ____ (go) ____ hiking in the mountains, but this weekend, we ____ (plan) ____ to have a barbecue in our backyard.

Teacher: (Impressed) That sounds like a lot of fun, Sam! Now, let's keep the conversation going. Sarah, what do your parents usually do in the evenings?

Sarah: My mom ____ (cook) ____ dinner while my dad ____ (read) ____ the newspaper.

Teacher: (Encouraging) Great examples, Sarah! Keep practicing, everyone. It's a great way to improve your English skills!

Part Three: Sentence Making Part

Topic: Family Activities

1. Every weekend, Sarah's family (go) for a bike ride in the park.
2. Right now, John's family (watch) a movie together, but usually, they (play) board games on Friday nights.
3. Emily's family (visit) her grandparents every Sunday, but today, they (prepare) dinner for a family gathering.
4. On holidays, Sam's family (travel) to different cities, but this summer, they (stay) home and plan to have a staycation.
5. Sarah's mom (cook) dinner while her dad (read) a book in the living room every evening.

Encourage students to construct sentences about their family activities using both the simple present and present continuous tenses, using the above sentences as models.

Appendix C

The Unstructured Interview:

****Interviewer:**** Good [morning/afternoon/evening], [Teacher's Name]! Thank you for taking the time to chat with me today. I'd like to start by asking about your experiences with teaching grammar in both online and in-person settings.

****Teacher:**** Good [morning/afternoon/evening], [Interviewer's Name]! I'm happy to share my experiences with you.

****Interviewer:**** Great! To begin with, could you tell me about your approach to teaching grammar in your online classes?

****Teacher:**** Certainly! In my online classes, I've found that incorporating contextualized explicit grammar instruction has been quite effective. I often provide clear explanations of grammar rules and then present examples within relevant contexts, such as in short stories or dialogues. Additionally, I utilize interactive exercises and multimedia resources to engage students and reinforce their understanding of the grammar concepts.

****Interviewer:**** That sounds like a comprehensive approach. Have you noticed any differences in student engagement or comprehension compared to your in-person classes?

****Teacher:**** Yes, there are definitely some differences. In my online classes, I've observed that students tend to engage more actively with multimedia resources and interactive exercises. They also have the flexibility to review materials at their own pace, which can be beneficial for reinforcing their learning. However, I've also noticed that maintaining students' attention and participation can sometimes be a challenge, especially during longer online sessions.

****Interviewer:**** That's interesting to hear. How do you adapt your teaching methods when transitioning from online to in-person classes?

****Teacher:**** When teaching in-person classes, I often incorporate more hands-on activities and group discussions to promote interaction and collaboration among students. I also find that using physical materials, such as flashcards or manipulatives, can be helpful for reinforcing grammar concepts. Additionally, I try to create a dynamic and engaging classroom environment by incorporating games, role-plays, and real-life scenarios into my lessons.

****Interviewer:**** It sounds like you're able to leverage the strengths of each format to create effective learning experiences for your students. Are there any specific challenges you encounter when implementing contextualized explicit grammar instruction in both online and in-person classes?

****Teacher:**** One challenge I face is ensuring that the contextualized examples I provide are relevant and engaging for students across different learning environments. In online classes, I rely more on digital resources and multimedia materials, whereas in-person classes allow for more spontaneous interactions and opportunities for real-life language use. Balancing these different approaches while maintaining consistency in instruction can sometimes be a challenge.

****Interviewer:**** That makes sense. Lastly, do you have any tips or strategies for other teachers who are looking to incorporate contextualized explicit grammar instruction into their online and in-person classes?

****Teacher:**** My advice would be to prioritize clarity and relevance in your instruction. Provide clear explanations of grammar rules and demonstrate how they are used in authentic contexts that are meaningful to your students. Additionally, try to leverage the strengths of each learning environment by using a variety of instructional strategies and multimedia resources. And finally, don't be afraid to experiment and adapt your approach based on the needs and preferences of your students.

****Interviewer:**** Thank you so much for sharing your insights and experiences with us, [Teacher's Name]! It's been incredibly informative.

****Teacher:**** You're welcome, [Interviewer's Name]! It was my pleasure. If you have any further questions or would like additional resources, feel free to reach out anytime.

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