

THE ROLE OF EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT GRAMMAR TEACHING IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: THE CASE OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. Grammar teaching remains one of the most important and controversial issues in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). While some researchers support teaching grammar through direct explanation of rules, others believe that indirect learning through dialogue and interaction is more important. This article discusses the role of explicit and implicit grammar teaching in English language teaching and highlights the importance of these approaches in developing students' grammatical competence and communicative skills. The study is related to the Uzbek education system, where the importance of communicative language teaching and international standards such as the CEFR is increasing. The article argues that combining explicit grammar teaching with communicative activities creates a more effective learning environment for Uzbek students. It also draws on practical examples from Uzbek schools.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, grammar teaching, explicit learning, indirect learning, communicative language teaching, form-oriented approach, Uzbek education system, English language teaching.

Introduction

Grammar plays a central role in learning a second language because it helps students communicate effectively and meaningfully. However, researchers and educators have long debated how grammar should be taught. While some scholars believe that grammar rules should be taught through direct explanation, others argue that grammar is acquired naturally through communication and interaction. According to Ellis (2006), grammar teaching remains one of the most controversial issues in second language acquisition, as there is no single best method for teaching grammar effectively. In modern language education, especially in Uzbekistan, this issue has become even more important due to educational reforms and the increased emphasis on communicative competence.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undergone major changes in the foreign language teaching system. English is taught from primary school onwards, and many schools and universities have introduced CEFR based teaching. As a result, teachers are required not only to teach grammar rules, but also to develop students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through communicative activities.

This article discusses the role of explicit and implicit grammar teaching in SLA and explains why combining these approaches is particularly effective in the Uzbek education system.

Explicit Grammar Teaching

Explicit Grammar Instruction refers to the direct teaching of grammatical rules and structures. In this approach, teachers explicitly explain grammatical rules, provide examples and allow students to practice through exercises.

Ellis (2006) states that explicit knowledge refers to the conscious understanding of grammatical forms and rules. Students can use this knowledge to control and improve their speech. For example, an English teacher might explain the structure of the Present Perfect tense and then ask students to do exercises with “have” and the third form of the verb.

In many schools in Uzbekistan, explicit grammar teaching is still widely used. Teachers often focus on grammatical explanations because students need grammatical precision for CEFR, IELTS, and university entrance exams. For example, Uzbek students often learn tenses, conditionals, passive voice, and modal verbs according to rules.

Ellis (2006) argues that explicit grammar teaching helps students to understand grammatical forms and better understand language structures.

Similarly, Nassaji and Fotos (2004) note that explicit teaching develops students’ conscious understanding of grammar and increases language accuracy.

For example, when Uzbek students are learning the difference between the Past Simple and Present Perfect tenses, direct explanation helps them better understand the time expressions and usage situations. Without explicit explanation, many students may continue to make grammatical mistakes because these structures do not exist in the Uzbek language in exactly this form.

However, there are some limitations to explicit grammar teaching. Students may know the grammar rules theoretically, but have difficulty applying them fluently in real-life communication.

This situation is also often observed in Uzbek classrooms: students perform well on grammar tests but have difficulty speaking English fluently.

Implicit Grammar Teaching

Implicit grammar teaching is based on the natural acquisition of grammar through dialogue, interaction, and meaningful activities, rather than direct explanation of rules. In this approach, students acquire grammar rules naturally through the process of using language, rather than consciously.

According to Nassaji and Fotos (2004), grammar teaching is more effective when it is linked to communicative activities. Students gradually develop grammatical competence through discussions, role-playing, problem-solving tasks, and group work.

Ellis (2006) also argues that communicative interaction helps to naturally internalize grammatical structures. For example, students can acquire question structures during classroom interviews or conversation activities.

Communicative language teaching in Uzbekistan has become more popular since the introduction of educational reforms and the CEFR standards. Many English teachers now use pair work, presentations, debates, and speaking exercises. For example, instead of teaching the future tense only through written exercises, a teacher might ask students to talk about their future plans.

During this activity, students will naturally use the following sentences:

“I will study abroad.”

“I am going to become a doctor.”

Through repeated interaction, students begin to acquire grammar more naturally and fluently.

Communicative activities help students connect grammar with meaningful language use (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004).

However, relying solely on a communicative approach may not be sufficient for all learners. In particular, Uzbek learners at the beginning and intermediate levels need explicit explanations to understand complex grammatical structures.

Integrating Explicit and Implicit Grammar Teaching

Contemporary SLA research shows that combining explicit and implicit grammar teaching is more effective than using a single approach. Ellis (2006) argues that grammar teaching should include separate grammar lessons and communicative activities.

This integrated approach is particularly important for Uzbekistan, as students need to develop communicative competence as well as grammatical accuracy. While explicit teaching helps to understand grammatical rules, communicative activities allow for the application of these rules to real-life situations. For example, an English teacher might first explain the rules of conditional sentences and then organize a conversation activity based on sentences like the following:

“If I had a million dollars, I would travel around the world.”

“If I were the president, I would improve education.”

In this way, students learn to apply grammar in a meaningful way, rather than just memorizing it.

Ellis (2006) argues that a form-oriented approach allows students to focus on grammar in meaningful communication, which in turn develops both fluency and accuracy in language learning.

Furthermore, corrective feedback also plays an important role in integrated grammar teaching. When students make grammatical mistakes during communication, teachers can provide feedback indirectly or explicitly. According to Ellis (2006), corrective feedback helps learners notice their errors and improve language accuracy over time.

For example:

Student: *She go to school every day.*

Teacher: *She goes to school every day.*

Such feedback helps learners recognize grammatical forms while maintaining communication.

Grammar Teaching and Educational Reforms in the Uzbekistan

In recent years, the Uzbek education system has undergone major reforms in foreign language teaching. English has become one of the most important subjects in schools, universities, and private educational centers.

The government encourages communicative language teaching, student-centered learning, and international standards such as IELTS and CEFR. As a result, grammar teaching is gradually moving from traditional memorization methods to communicative approaches.

However, some challenges still exist in Uzbek classrooms.

In some schools, teachers and students are accustomed to traditional methods, so more emphasis is placed on grammar translation and writing exercises. In rural areas, limited resources and large classes make it difficult to organize communicative activities.

Therefore, combining explicit and implicit grammar teaching is one of the most practical solutions for the Uzbek education system. Explicit teaching provides students with the necessary grammatical foundations, while communicative activities develop fluency, confidence, and real-life language skills.

Conclusion

Grammar teaching plays an important role in second language acquisition. Explicit grammar teaching helps students understand grammatical rules and develop language accuracy, while implicit teaching builds communicative competence through meaningful communication.

Ellis (2006) and Nassaji and Fotos (2004) argue that grammar teaching should not be based solely on rules or solely on communication. Rather, effective language teaching requires a balanced integration of these two approaches.

This integrated approach is particularly important in the Uzbek context, as modern educational reforms aim to produce grammatically correct and communicatively active learners.

By combining grammatical explanations with communicative activities, Uzbek teachers can create more effective and engaging English lessons.

References

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