

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION**

**By
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A thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Education

**Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
Thunder Bay, Ontario**

May 2005

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-16412-9
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-16412-9

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Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude goes to Dr. Fiona Blaikie, my supervisor, for her wise guidance, constructive criticism and advice, positive feedback, and patient editing of the thesis. Her optimism, understanding, constant encouragement and support throughout this process will be remembered.

To Dr. John O'Meara, my committee member, I extend my sincerely appreciation for his patience, valuable suggestions, encouragement, and meticulous edition of this thesis.

I am also grateful to the five participants and Ms. Diana Mason, who helped me with my thesis.

Finally, I thank my family for their love, support, and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions that teachers of English as a second language (ESL) have regarding grammar instruction in ESL classrooms. The participants are five ESL teachers in ESL programs in Northern Ontario. The design of the study is qualitative. The primary method of data collection is based on focused questions via an interview guide (Patton, 2002).

Background

With more than ten years experience teaching at the university level in China, I chose this study topic, which is inspired by my own professional experiences and interest in the area of second language teaching. With China's commencement of an "open-door" policy to the world during the late twentieth century, the demand for English teaching and learning increased sharply in China. "Nearly all trades and professions need people who have attained foreign language proficiency in varying degrees" (Liu, 1995, p. 3). By the early 1980s, English was taught from the elementary level to the university level.

However, there continue to be problems centered around how to teach English effectively in China. A significant problem is how to teach ESL grammar. For several decades prior to the early 1980s, traditional grammar-based teaching approaches (the Grammar-Translation Approach, the Audiolingual Teaching Approach, and the Situational Teaching Approach) dominated the English classroom in China. In the English teaching and learning classroom, Chinese English teachers spent most of their time on explanation and analysis of grammar points and rules, and exercises such as multiple-choice questions and fill in the blanks. Students

memorized these grammar rules and did many grammar exercises which were isolated from meaningful conversations in context (Liu, 1995). Few meaningful communicative opportunities were provided for students (Chastain, 1988). Consequently, most students understood grammar forms well, and many might have received high marks in examinations on grammar, but they tended to lack communicative competence. In other words, they had difficulty expressing what they wanted to fluently and appropriately in both conversation and writing in daily life (Swain, 1998).

In the middle 1980s, the Communicative Teaching Approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) was introduced in China. This teaching approach moved attention from explicit grammar instruction to fostering learners' communicative competence. Students who were taught via the Communicative Teaching Approach were more likely to express themselves in the classroom and could express themselves more fluently than the students who were taught via the grammar-based approaches. However, in the Communicative Teaching Approach, they made more grammar mistakes both in speaking and writing. Consequently, there continues to be a debate regarding how to teach English most effectively.

Rationale

A search for more exemplary ways of teaching second or foreign languages is revealed in the history of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). There have been many debates about which teaching approach improves language learning in the English as a second language classroom. Central to these debates is the role of grammar instruction and how much attention should be paid to grammar instruction in second language teaching and learning. This debate has existed in the literature for more than a century (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). Some educators

(Hulstijn & Graff, 1994; Ellis, 1997; Chastain, 1988) support the view that a more explicit approach to grammar instruction is effective in promoting language learning. Others ((Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Krashen, 1985, 1987) argue that grammar instruction is less important because such knowledge can be acquired in the course of developing conversation skills in the communicative-based approach.

A number of theories and empirical research (Krashen, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1987) published since the 1990s reveal that teaching linguistic forms in isolation from communication fails to improve the learner's English language fluency. Only using a communicative approach, on the other hand, may limit development of the learner's linguistic accuracy (Swain, 1998; Buczowska and Weist, 1991; Doughty, 1991; Ellis, 1990b; Lightbown & Spada, 1990). Therefore, many scholars (Takashima, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Long & Robinson, 1998; Doughty & Varela, 1998) continue to explore the possibility of teaching grammar in a way that will help students develop grammatical competency in spontaneous speech. A combined approach could result in the attainment of an appropriate balance between grammar and expression.

More recently, according to Doughty and Varela (1998), Spada (1997), and Swain (1998), literature and experimental studies reveal that grammar teaching within the context of meaningful communicative practices enhances the learner's proficiency both in accuracy and fluency. However, there exists little qualitative research on the role of grammar instruction as perceived by English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in front line teaching.

Teachers implement different instructional methods, which are mainly based on educational theories, their beliefs and teaching experiences, in order to improve students'

effective learning. Some researchers (e.g., Long, 1991; Spada, 1997; Swain 1998) suggest that the balance between grammar instruction and communicative approaches may improve ESL learning. We need to know whether teachers agree with this position.

In this study, I investigate ESL teachers' perceptions of grammar instruction based on their beliefs and teaching experiences in ESL classrooms. The findings may increase interest in effective strategies for grammar instruction in ESL classrooms. As the scope of this study is both academic and practical, it is also intended to provide useful data and theory for both second/foreign language researchers and teachers.

Research Design and Methodology

The primary method for data collection was via interviews, utilizing a general interview guide (Patton, 2002). An interview guide was prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued when each person was interviewed. The main research question is: "What are ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar instruction?".

Definition of Terms

Focus on Form Instruction

Focus on Form Instruction is an approach to second language teaching and learning. This teaching approach refers to combining grammatical form within the context of meaningful or communicative practice in order to improve learners' language proficiency with accuracy and fluency (Long, 1991).

Focus on FormS Instruction

Focus on FormS Instruction refers to traditional grammar teaching with a focus on the elements of grammar, in isolation from context or communicative activity. In Focus on FormS,

the primary organizing principle of course design is the accumulation of individual language element, for example, forms such as verb ending in “s” or agreement features, or even functions such as greetings or apologies (Long, 1991).

Limitations

A limitation of this research study is that data collection has taken place in one part of Northern Ontario with a small number of participants. Therefore, the findings may not be broadly generalizable, but may be transferable to similar settings.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the role of grammar instruction in second language acquisition approaches (SLA), focusing on the Grammar-Translation Approach, Audiolingual/Situational Language Teaching Approach, and Communicative Teaching Approach. In the second section, I examine the central debate about the role of grammar instruction in ESL. In the third section, I discuss the Form Focused Instruction Approach in the second language classroom.

Overview of the Role of Grammar Instruction in Approaches to Teaching Second Language Acquisition

The Role of Grammar Instruction in the Grammar-Translation Method

From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century and inherited from the teaching of Latin, the Grammar-Translation Approach (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) has been the most popular method of foreign language teaching in Europe and North America. Even today versions of it still exist in many countries around the world (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Chastain, 1988).

As the name of this approach implies, that is, grammar-translation method, we should be aware of the important role grammar instruction plays. The goal of this approach is to foster students' reading and writing abilities in the target language by focusing on teaching rules and vocabulary from bilingual lists of words which are included in the reading text (Rivers, 1981). Grammar is taught deductively by means of explanations. Students are engaged in sentence translation or text translation. In addition, students typically are required to state the rule. Most

classroom time is devoted to reading and translation activities. Little attempt is made to communicate orally in the target language (Chastain, 1988).

Role of Grammar Instruction in Audiolingual Method

The Audiolingual Method (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) was introduced as a component of the “Army Method” used during World War II when the U.S. government was developing programs aimed at training learners to attain conversational proficiency in a variety of languages for working overseas during and after World War II.

The aim of the Audiolingual Method is to train the student to speak fluently and listen efficiently. Theoretically, this method is based on structural linguistics (Richards and Rodgers, 2001), in which language learning is focused on the phonemic, morphological, and syntactic systems of language. In this method, learning language involves mastering the building blocks of the language and learning the rules by which these basic elements are combined from the level of sound to the level of sentence. In this way, language learning is developed by repetition of basic structures provided by a teacher as a model. This method is also based on behavioral theory (Skinner, 1957), which conceives of learning as a process of changing behavior through the use of external reinforcement to generate conditioned responses to selected stimuli. Learning is regarded as a mechanical task. Memorizing dialogue and performing drills are central in this approach. There is little grammatical explanation. The explanation of grammatical structures in dialogue and oral patterns is provided as a summary. Students are not encouraged to use language to express their own ideas because this approach’s intention is to develop correct grammar habits and have learners’ avoid making language errors (Chastain, 1988).

Situational Language Teaching and the Role of Grammar Instruction

Situational Language Teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) is an approach developed by British applied linguists from the 1930s to the 1960s. The impact of this approach on language courses survives today (Harley and Viney, 1978; Hubbard *et al.*, 1983; Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

The situational method aims to develop a practical command of four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The theory of this method is based on British “structuralism” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Speech is viewed as the basic element of language. Structure is viewed as being at the core of speaking ability. Oral practice of controlled sentence patterns occurs in controlled situations (Pittman, 1963). The units of text usually start with a situation title, and utterance in dialogue usually stems from the theme or centre of interest (Chastain, 1988). This approach stresses the formation of correct language habits. Repetition and substitution activities, such as choral repetition and drills, are emphasized and used as means to promote language learning (Pittman, 1963).

The Role of Grammar Instruction in the Communicative Approach

The Communicative approach began in the 1970s. Recognizing the inadequacy of the traditional Grammar-Translation Approach, and also of structural methods with their emphasis on meaningless pattern drills and repetition, this approach is based on a theory that language is a system of communication (Richards and Jack, 2001). Four skills for language teaching are to develop “communicative competence” (Hymes, 1972; Sauvignon, 1983).

Hymes (1972) defines communicative competence as the ability to communicate appropriately in varying social contexts. Sauvignon (1983) indicates that communicative

competence is a dynamic, interpersonal trait that depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons who share some knowledge of a language in the context. Canale and Swain (1980, Canale, 1983) divide *communicative competence* as four categories: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence includes the “knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology” (Canale and Swain, 1980, p. 29).

Discourse competence was defined as the ability to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres. Sociolinguistic competence indicates the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language in different sociolinguistic contexts.

Strategic competence refers to one's capability of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication when communication breakdowns occur. Bachman (1990) proposes another model of communicative competence, which he called “language competence.” Language competence is further divided into two subcategories: organizational competence (grammatical competence, textual competence) and pragmatic competence (illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competences).

In the Communicative Approach (Richards and Rodgers, 2001), the focus moves away from grammar as the central component of language learning to make the classroom an authentic meaningful communicative language learning environment. This approach posits that letting the learner engage in task activities provides a better context for practicing language than grammar-focused instruction. Students are encouraged to express their own ideas by participating in meaningful communicative and social aspects of language, but a formal grammatical system is

not exclusively concerned. It is believed that learning classroom activities involved in meaningful and authentic communicative activities promotes learning. Error correction plays a less significant role in this approach.

The Debate about Grammar Instruction

While the need for formal grammar instruction was not challenged until the seventies, during the latter half of the twentieth century, a variety of views on grammar instruction developed which continue to influence language teaching and learning. The core of the debate focuses on whether or not second language instruction should emphasize grammatical form in the second language classroom (DeKeyser, 1998).

Views Limiting Grammar Instruction

Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model (1982, 1985) is the best known language learning theory. In it Krashen asserts the limiting nature (or 'effect') of grammar-based approaches in second language acquisition (Gascoigne, 2002). Krashen's Monitor Model is composed of five hypotheses: Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Natural Order Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, and Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985).

Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis Learning lies at the core of all the hypotheses in Krashen's theory, and this hypothesis is the most widely known among linguists and language practitioners. According to Krashen (1985, 1987), there are two independent competencies in second language performance: acquisition and learning. He distinguishes the *language acquisition process* from the *language learning process* for a second language.

‘Acquisition’ is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the way in which children acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language-natural communication-in which speakers concentrate not on the form of their utterances, but on the communicative act. That is, they concentrate on what to say instead of how to say it.

‘Learning’, on the other hand, is the product of formal instruction, and it comprises a process which results in conscious knowledge about the language, for example, knowledge of grammar rules. According to Krashen (1985), it is ‘acquisition’ but not ‘learning’ that plays the central role in second language performance. Learning will not lead to rapid, fluent, natural communication in another language. Furthermore, error correction affects only learning and not acquisition; it may lead the learner to rethink or adjust conscious rules.

Natural Order Hypothesis The Natural Order Hypothesis is based on first language acquisition research (Dulay and Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975) that shows grammatical structures are learned in a predictable order. Krashen (1985) claims that in spite of individual acquisition elements, such as the learners' age, language background and conditions of exposure between first language (L1) and second language (L2) not being exactly the same, the natural order for first and second language acquisition order is strikingly similar.

Monitor hypothesis According to Krashen (1985), acquisition plays a major role in fluency, while learning functions to “monitor” or “edit” the language being produced through acquisition. The “monitor” acts in a planning, editing, and correcting function only when three specific conditions are met: first, the second language learner has sufficient time; second, the second language learner focuses on form or thinks about correctness; and, third, the speaker

knows the rule. Krashen indicates that overuse of the monitor will tend to interfere with the flow of thinking and produce hesitation in speech:

Our fluency in production is thus hypothesized to come from what we have 'picked up', what we have acquired, in natural communicative situations. Our 'formal knowledge' of a second language, the rules we learned in class and from texts, is not responsible for fluency, but only has the function of checking and making repairs on the output of the acquired system. (Krashen and Terrell, 1983 p. 30)

Input hypothesis Krashen (1982, 1985) states that acquisition takes place best when people understand input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. He refers to this with the formula “ $i + 1$.” The “ i ” represents current competence; “ $i + 1$ ” refers to one step “a little beyond” (Krashen, 1987) the current stage of linguistic competence. With the help of context, knowledge of the world and extra-linguistic competence, the language learner can understand language containing “ $i + 1$.” Krashen (1982, 1985, and 1987) declares that, when a sufficient meaningful communicative input is provided, the necessary grammar is automatically acquired.

Affective Filter hypothesis Krashen (1985) states that a number of “affective variables” play a facilitative role in second language acquisition. These variables include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. In contrast, Krashen asserts that low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can form

a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. As for error correction, Krashen asserts that overt error correction of speech has a negative impact on students' motivation to try to express themselves.

In short, in Krashen's Monitor Model second language competence is acquired unconsciously by focusing on the content and context of the message rather than on grammar forms. Grammar instruction and correct feedback, on the other hand, are less important and should be limited in the second language classroom (Krashen, 1982, 1985, 1987).

Krashen's Monitor Model has had a large impact on all areas of second language research and teaching since the 1980s (Barasch and James, 1994:1), which "led to the adoption of the 'strong version' of a communicative approach to language teaching—one which is defined exclusively in terms of the provision of meaningful comprehensible input with no attention to language form or error correction" (Spada, 1997, p. 74).

Views Supporting Explicit Grammar Instruction

A number of theories and empirical research have argued that there are significant weaknesses in Krashen's proposals. Those theories and research support placing greater emphasis on grammar instruction. McLaughlin (1987) cites cross-cultural research on morpheme studies which indicate that L1 acquisition heavily influences L2 acquisition when the L1 cultural and linguistic background is different from the target language. For instance, Korean children showed poor performance on the definite/indefinite articles in morpheme studies of

English as a second language acquisition because there is no equivalent to these in the Korean language. On the other hand, Spanish children did not demonstrate poor performance in this area as there are equivalent articles in the Spanish language. Ellis (1997) shares a similar view of Krashen's natural order hypothesis. He claims that not all learners follow the "nature order" as Krashen asserts, and the order varies somewhat according to the learners' first language. Ellis further asserts the need to consider the sequence of acquisition. Ellis (2002) suggests that students who experience explicit grammar instruction as part of their learning achieve a higher level of grammatical accuracy than those who do not. Williams and Evans (1998) also suggest that explicit instructions have a more positive effect than implicit instruction.

Krashen (1985) holds that comprehensible input best facilitates second language acquisition. However, research has shown that "comprehensible input" is not sufficient to improve language proficiency. Harley, Allen, Cummins, and Swain (1998) found that French immersion programs appear to succeed better in promoting receptive French skills, but not expressive ones. They concluded that this finding may be caused by the ample comprehensible input in French immersion classrooms, and by considerably less opportunity for comprehensible output (Cummins and Swain, 1986). Swain and Lapkin (1995) in their Output Hypothesis argue for the importance of output. Swain (1985), having studied English-speaking children in a French immersion program, concluded that:

Comprehensible output... is a necessary mechanism of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input. Its role is, at minimum, to provide opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use, to test out hypotheses about the target language, and to

move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of language to a systematic analysis of it. (1985, p. 252)

Krashen (1985), in his Monitor Model, argues that, instead of teaching students grammar rules, the instructor should provide sufficient meaningful communicative activities. In this way, grammatical accuracy can be induced without any conscious learning. However, this view has been significantly refuted by empirical research findings (Hammerley, 1987; Swain, 1998; Buczowska and Weist, 1991; Doughty, 1991; Ellis, 1990). For instance, Swain and Lapkin (1982) carried out French immersion studies in Toronto and Ottawa. The results of their longitudinal study reveal that immersion students seem to have lower literacy skills than learners who were provided with grammar instruction, in spite of the fact that they outperformed the English-only program learners in some language skills. Hammerley (1987) reviewed six studies to investigate the effect of the French immersion approach. He finds that French immersion students tend to speak a convoluted language that is neither correct English nor correct French. He suggests that any method that fails to emphasize structure before communicative activities is like putting the cart before the horse: the result will be learners who are “successful but grammatically inaccurate communicators” (Richards, 1985, p.152).

Current Views on Grammar Instruction

Focus on Form Instruction Approach

As discussed earlier, for years second language researchers have debated about whether or not to pay attention to linguistic form. Some (e.g., Brumfit, 1980; Littlewood, 1981; Johnson,

1982, Krashen 1985, 1987) argue that the most effective method to develop language learning in the classroom is through communicative activities. It is assumed that by activities such as role play, problem-solving, exchange information gaps and so on, learners are provided sufficient comprehensible input and can develop communicative and linguistic competence (Noburoshi and Ellis, 1993). However, the problem is that the lack of grammar instruction in communicative activities has often produced students who communicate well but lack grammatical competence (Ellis, 1982). Others (e.g. Cadierno, 1995; Ellis 1998) have claimed that effective second language instruction involves explicitly teaching the rules of the target language. However, according to Sorace (1985), grammar instruction produces students who know a lot about language but cannot apply what they know to spontaneous speech. Recent research on the role of communicative interaction suggests that neither communicative activity alone nor purely focused-on-grammar instruction is adequate for learning a second language. The findings of studies on French Immersion and naturalistic acquisition (Swain and Lapkin, 1986; Harley, 1992), in which teachers separate grammar instruction from meaning or exclusively content-based activities without reinforcing grammatical points in their language classrooms, suggest a need for balancing grammatical instruction and developing learners' communicative competence in second language acquisition programs.

Terrell (1991), VanPatten and Sanz (1995), Swain and Lapkin (1996), and Doughty and Williams (1998) have revealed the benefits of connecting grammatical form to meaning during primarily communicative tasks instead of using exclusively traditional grammar-only approaches or purely communicative language teaching. Dekeyser (1998) proposes that "some kind of focus on form is useful to some extent, for some forms, for some students, at some point

in the learning process” (p. 42). Long (1991) holds that the advantages of focus on form are that it speeds up the rate of learning, affects acquisition processes in ways possibly beneficial to long-term accuracy, and appears to improve the ultimate level of attainment. Brown (2000) asserts that focus on form instruction in conscious rule learning can help develop communicative competence in a second language classroom.

Long (1991) distinguishes between “focus on forms” and “focus on form.” “Focus on formS” refers to traditional grammar teaching with a focus on the elements of grammar, in isolation from context or communicative activity. With “focus on formS,” the primary organizing principle of course design is accumulation of individual language elements (for example, forms such as verb endings or agreement features, or even communicative functions such as greetings or apologies).

“Focus on form,” on the other hand, refers to putting aspects of “focus on formS” into meaningful or communicative activities. Long (1991) asserts that “focus on form...overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (p. 45-46). Long and Robinson (1998) claim that “focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features—by the teacher and /or one or more students—triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production” (p. 23).

In the focus on form approach, learners “notice” the linguistic features in meaningful communicative contexts. Batstone (1996) indicates that “noticing” works in this way: for whatever reason (for example, frequency), if learners pay attention to the form and meaning of

certain language structures, this activity contributes to the internalization of the rule. Ellis (2002) points out the following:

Learners acquiring language through a natural approach often experience fossilization. Certain errors do not get better despite a significant amount of experience with the target language. Perhaps once learners develop communicative sufficiency they do not make progress in accuracy. Noticing helps rectify this by helping learners 'notice the gap'. They recognize that the language features noticed are different from their current language. ...Remember, according to this theory, the primary nature of explicit knowledge is to develop awareness of rather than production of target forms. Hence, teachers ought not to grade students on accurate use of these forms in spontaneous speech. Hopefully, this awareness will help learners notice target forms in future input and facilitate the eventual acquisition of these forms as implicit knowledge. (p. 29)

Strategies Regarding Focus on Form Instruction

The major strategies in focus on form instruction are input-based strategies, communicative or meaningful output strategies, corrective feedback strategies, and allowing optimal time to provide focus on form instruction.

Input-Based Strategies

Cross (2002) summarizes the strategies of paying attention to certain grammar features in input: explicit instruction (instruction explaining and drawing attention to a particular form), frequency (the regular occurrence of a certain structure in input), perceptual salience

(highlighting or underlining to draw attention to a certain structure), and task demands (constructing a task that requires learners to notice a structure in order to complete it).

Doughty and Williams (1998) propose two methods of input to get learners to notice a form in input: the implicit method and explicit method. According to Doughty and Williams (1998), the implicit method refers to the teacher's drawing learners' attention to grammar forms without learners' becoming aware of what specific feature has been targeted. The purpose of this method is to minimize interrupting the flow of interaction during learners' communication practices (Lightbown, 1998). Implicit methods can vary in a number of ways. Williams and Evans (1998) suggest providing learners with flood input and visual input enhancement in order to draw learners' attention to linguistic features.

In flood input, numerous exemplars of grammatical feature are provided to draw learners' attention to linguistic features. Visual input enhancement refers to highlighting the target feature in order to draw learner's attention to it.

Typographica is another implicit input strategy. It refers to the use of italics, bolding, and enlargement of the linguistic features. White (1998) investigated the effectiveness of drawing learners' attention to the linguistic features. He concluded that, although implicit input instruction is effective for learners' awareness of specific grammar features, some types of input, such as input flooding sometimes are not maximally effective. The reason, according to Lightbown (1993), is that it is difficult to lead students' attention to the fact that "what they [are] saying is not what they meant to say" (p. 719) when the types of input are too implicit. In other

words, the input techniques which the teacher intentionally targets to the students are too generalized or equivocal to be understood by students.

Explicit input, according to Ellis (1994c), refers to the teacher's emphasizing some particular language features by explaining and analyzing grammar rules in order to direct learners' attention to specific grammatical features, and having them use these features.

Ellis (1999) and White (1998) hold that, when the structure is complex, numerous implicit methods for input may be effective or even more effective than explicit, but such input may be less effective when the structure is easily explained.

There is another type of grammar instruction called input processing instruction. According to Cadierno (1995), VanPatten and Cadierno (1993), and Ellis (1995, 1999), in this approach, learners are required to listen or read (input) some designed materials in which many examples of specific target structures are included. Students are encouraged to achieve conscious awareness of how these target features are used and to understand their meaning. In other words, in this structure-input activity, learners are encouraged to make form-meaning associations. Collentine (1998) asserts that "a grammatical item's communicative value is high when the interpretation of a sentence depends on properly interpreting the meaning of that item" (p. 576-587).

VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) present the evidence that input processing instruction promotes the intake of grammatical forms. They conducted a series of studies investigating the effectiveness of input process on English learners' acquisition of Spanish. They found that using

explicit instruction followed by input process is more effective than using explicit instruction alone.

Communicative function or meaningfulness in the output

According to Cumming (1990), Swain and Lapkin (1995), and Swain (1998), output (speaking and writing) plays an important role in second language acquisition. McLaughlin, Rossman and McLeod (1983) indicate that one of the functions of output is that it provides the opportunities both for the practice of one's linguistic resources (e.g., grammatical knowledge) meaningfully and for the development of using those linguistic resources automatically.

Swain (1995) states that there are three learning functions involved in producing output: a noticing function, a hypothesis-test function, and metalinguistic function. According to Swain (1995), a noticing function means that output may lead learners to notice the target linguistic features and the gap between what learners want to say (or write) and what they can say (or write) precisely in the target language.

The hypothesis-test function (Swain, 1995; Schachter, 1984) refers to learners using grammatical components that they have learned by speaking and writing, and then receiving feedback from teachers, peers, or other sources (e.g., dictionaries) to test whether they can use this grammatical component correctly in the meaningful context. Consequently, they can modify what they have spoken and written, and then reprocess. The third function, meta-talk, refers to learners' conscious reflection on their own speech or writing in target language.

There are various techniques of output in noticing grammar features in second language classrooms. Swain and Lapkin (2001) promote engaging students in collaborative dialogue in solving linguistic problems encountered in communicative tasks. A dictogloss task is one of the

output techniques which can achieve the goal of noticing and using the linguist features in communicative context. According to Wajnryb (1990), a dictogloss task refers to a procedure which encourages learners to reflect on their own output. In this process, a teacher reads a short text to learners at normal speed. Students write down words and phrases as they hear them, and then work together in small groups to reconstruct the text in writing. Finally, learners are required to analyze and compare the differences between their final writings and the original text.

Kowal and Swain (1994) claim that dictogloss tasks lead students to notice some grammatical forms and rules. They also claim that it leads to awareness of the relationship of the forms and rules to the meaning when learners work with peers and try to reconstruct the text as part of the tasks. Swain states (1998) that dictogloss tasks help the learners to discover the gap between what they know and what they need to know. She maintains that a dictogloss task is an effective way to develop native speaker-like performance.

Doughty and Williams (1998) support the view that negotiation tasks are ways to engage learners in output that attracts feedback from a peer interlocutor. In negotiation tasks, learners negotiate with each other in order to understand the meaning via clarification, confirmation, modification, and repetition of utterances. In this negotiation task, the instructor can draw the language learner's attention to both target linguistic forms and meanings, and lead the learner to overcome communication difficulties in the target language (Ellis, 1985; Berducci, 1993; Pica, Young and Doughty, 1987).

Doughty and Williams (1998) propose that consciousness-raising tasks deliberately direct learners to attend to form. For example, learners work interactively in small groups to solve

grammar problems. Fotos (1993, 1994) studied the effectiveness of consciousness-raising tasks in traditional foreign language classes. In this task, learners worked in small groups interactively to solve grammar problems in English. The findings reveal that learners pay more attention to target language features in consciousness-raising tasks than in purely communicative tasks.

Corrective Feedback

According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), corrective feedback refers to various responses that learners receive when they use the target language incorrectly.

Corrective feedback facilitates second language development. Corrective feedback provides learners with opportunities to notice differences between output and input through negotiation of meaning (Long, 1996). Doughty and Williams (1998) hold that the provision of corrective feedback is a useful way of getting learners to notice the differences between the target language and their own utterances.

According to Kowal and Swain (1997) and Doughty and Varela (1998), there are a number of different techniques of providing corrective feedback. These include teacher corrections and learner corrections, and may be implicit or explicit. In terms of implicit correction, the teacher may correct the learners' grammatical errors by repetitions, recasts, and clarification requests. As well, the teacher may use intonation and facial expressions as responses indicating lack of clarity in a learner's utterances (e.g., the teacher raises an eyebrow when a learner makes a grammatical error) in order to draw the learner's attention to non-target-like grammatical forms.

For explicit corrections, teachers explicitly provide grammatical explanation or overtly correct learners' utterances. Lightbown and Spada (1999) provide an example of explicit

feedback correction. When a language learner says, “he go to school everyday” (p. 171), the teacher may correct overtly by stating “no, you should say goes, not go” (p. 171), and follow with metalinguistic information, for example, “don’t forget to make the verb agree with the subject” (p. 171-172).

Additionally, the teacher may correct errors that learners make individually. Or, if the errors are specific or made by most learners, teachers may correct such errors for the whole class. As well, students may correct grammatical errors by themselves. Peer correction, for example in groups, is another effective form of error correction (Kowal and Swain, 1997).

Carroll and Swain (1993) conducted a study to investigate the effects of different types of feedback in adult Spanish-speaking learners of English. This study revealed that both implicit and explicit types of corrective feedback are beneficial to language learning. However, explicit methods of correction are more effective than implicit methods. Furthermore, according to Carroll and Swain (1993), explicit instruction combined with an explicit explanation is more helpful than simply telling a learner that he or she made a mistake.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) suggest the need for teachers to utilize various types of feedback, particularly those that lead to student-generated repair, which is viewed as a negotiation of form. The types of feedback they discuss include elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, and repetition of error. Lyster and Ranta (1997) assert that the negotiation of form is important, engaging learners more actively by helping them to draw on what they already know, rather than providing learners with correct forms.

Optimal Time to Provide Focus on Form Instruction

Nassaji (2000) proposes two strategies that will integrate grammar form and communication: “by design” and “by process.” In the “by design” method, the teacher designs in advance which forms will be focused on. The teacher can select forms based on students’ interlanguage needs or their common problems in grammar and on the basis of theoretical criteria. Once the forms have been selected, the tasks of communication are followed. Another method of integrating form and communication is “by process.” In this method, the teacher draws students’ attention to grammatical form during communicative activities. Students use grammatical forms they have learned during communicative activities, and thus grammatical form becomes part of natural communication without breaking the flow of communication or distracting the learners from the meaning they are carrying out (Nassaji, 2002).

Spada (2003) describes two strategies for the timing of using focus on form instruction. One is separation from communicative practice, that is, when there is a focus on form before or after communicative practice. Another strategy is integration of grammatical instruction with communicative activities.

Those who support separation of grammatical instruction from communicative activities argue that “integration” may interrupt the flow of interaction and reduce the students’ motivation to further communication when grammatical instruction is provided during students’ communication (VanPatten, 1989; Lightbown, 1998).

Ellis (2002) points out that “we [should] teach grammar separately, making no attempt to integrating it [grammar form] with the task-based component (except perhaps, methodologically

through feedback)” (p. 32). VanPatten (1990) reported that learners have difficulty in focusing on form and meaning at the same time.

Lightbown (1998) argues that, in separate lessons, “learners can be provided with some specific metalinguistic information and explanations of problematic linguistic features. They can also be taught a set of nonverbal signals that the teacher can use to draw their attention to the formal features of what they have just said, as well as-or instead of-to its meaning in a communicative activity” (p. 194).

Those who support integration insist that integration of grammatical form into communicative practice draws the learners’ attention to the grammar forms, and they can apply those forms in later communicative activities.

In an empirical study in an ESL science class, Doughty and Varela (1998) investigated the feasibility and effectiveness of incorporating grammar forms into content-based communicative language classrooms. The findings support the effectiveness of integrating focus on form in communicative classrooms. Day and Shapson (1991) conducted a classroom study in a French immersion program. Students were given explicit instructions and error corrections were encouraged in their cooperative activities. This study shows both immediate and delayed benefits for writing.

In addition, White et al (1991), Spada and Lightbown (1993), Lyster (1994), and White (1998) investigated the effectiveness of using grammatical form together with communicative activities in French immersion and intensive ESL programs. Although these studies differ in

several ways, the results of learning outcomes indicate that attention to language form within the context of communicative practice benefits learners' accuracy and fluency, as well communicative abilities.

Celce-Murcia (1985, 1991, 1992) maintains that the learner's age and goals in studying a foreign or second language play an important role in when and how much grammar instruction to provide. Celce-Murcia suggests that grammatical knowledge is more important for adults than for children. She indicates only those who are young, prepubescent learners, and those with easy access to native-speaking peers and sufficiently meaningful input can learn a second language with native-like proficiency and accuracy without formal grammar instruction. For post-pubescent adolescents and adults who learn a foreign or second language, it may be difficult to achieve higher proficiency in the target language if no formal grammar instruction is provided.

In addition to age, Celce-Murcia (1985, 1991, and 1992) proposes that learners' goals, such as survival communication, vocational uses, and professional uses, make a difference in instruction. For instance, teaching listening and reading skills for beginning level children may not require much grammar instruction. On the other hand, teaching literate young adults in college who are at intermediate level of language proficiency, and hope to engage in further academic study, grammar instruction is important to help them continue with their studies successfully.

Throughout history there have been changes and innovations in second language teaching approaches. From the mid-nineteenth century to present, the role of grammar in second language teaching has swung back and forth like a pendulum. The Grammar-Translation Approach emphasizes explaining grammar rules; the Structural-Based Approaches (Situational Language

Teaching and the Audiolingual Method) stress pattern, drills and repetition, and little attention is paid to grammar explanation. In Communicative Approaches grammar learning is immersed throughout meaningful and authentic communicative activities. In the Focus on Form Approach there is recognition of the importance of grammar instruction in second language acquisition, and a balance between grammar instruction and communicative activities. In spite of all these approaches, no single method is suited to all learners and in all situations. Through the development of linguistic and psycholinguistic theories, as well as documented ESL teachers' experiences and enhanced practices, language researchers and teachers will be able to provide more effective support in second language teaching and learning in different contexts.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine ESL teachers' perceptions of grammar instruction in their teaching. The approach is qualitative; data were collected via interviews. The constant comparative method (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003) was used for data analysis.

Theoretical Foundation of Research Design and Methodology

Qualitative research exists in the social sciences to enable researchers to understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live (Patton, 2002). Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) argue that the goal of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants within a particular social and institutional context is largely lost when textual data are quantified. Creswell (1998) states that "qualitative research is an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of materials" (p. 13).

Qualitative research occurs in natural settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) where the researcher "gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively focused on the meaning of participants and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language" (Creswell, 1998, p.14).

Qualitative research takes an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Most qualitative research describes and analyzes people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions (Schumacher & NcMillian, 1993). Researchers "are interested in how different people make sense of their lives and are concerned with discovering the meanings experienced by those who are being researched and with understanding their view of the world rather than that of the researchers" (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998, p.7). In addition, according to Patton (2002), qualitative research methods facilitate a wealth of detailed

information about people and cases, which increases the depth of understanding of the cases and situations.

Research Design

Since the primary purpose of this research is to explore ESL teachers' perceptions of grammar instruction, the methodology and characteristics of qualitative research complement the purpose of this study. By using this approach the researcher established a holistic portrait of participants' beliefs, teaching experiences, and thinking about ESL teaching by enabling the participants to express themselves in their own words, enabling the researcher to gain a deep understanding of ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of grammatical instruction in their teaching.

Participant Selection/Entry

Introduced by colleagues, I contacted five ESL teachers in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I explained the purpose, nature of the study, and ethical considerations to them, and invited them to be research participants. Participants were selected specifically to represent a number of different ESL programs. Criteria for selection were that each of the participants had an ESL teaching certificate, and had at least five years ESL teaching experience in Canada.

Setting

Each interview was conducted at the participant's office or home, whichever was more convenient.

Time Frame

Each interview was audio-taped and took approximately one hour.

Methodology

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection in this study was semi-interviews which were conducted using a general interview guide (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) describes the advantages of this method as follows:

The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus, the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined. (p. 343)

Probe questions were included in each question to encourage the flow of the response, and to explore what each participant was trying to say.

Research Question

The main research question is as follows:

What are ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar instruction?

The guided interview questions are as follows:

1. a. How long have you taught ESL?
 - b. What level/levels of students have you taught?
2. Do you think it is important to include grammar instruction in ESL classrooms or not? Why or why not?
3. What methods do you usually use in grammar instruction? Could you please provide some examples?
 - a. Do you analyze and explain grammar?
 - b. Do you let learners learn grammar via communicative practice?
 - c. How do you enable learners to learn grammar features?

4. Give me some examples of the best/worst ways to teach grammar. Please provide reasons.
5. What is your preferred method for teaching grammar?
 - a. Do you teach grammar separately from (before or after) communicative practice?
 - b. Do you integrate it with communicative activities?
 - c. Do you teach it according to learners/ needs?
6. How do you select the contents of grammar instruction? Why do you do so?
 - a. Do you teach grammar items by following the text?
 - b. Do you select grammar items from other resources?
7. Do you pay attention to grammar error correction?
 - a. Do you employ correction? Do you do this implicitly or explicitly?
 - b. Do you employ student correction? Do you do this individually or through peers?
 - c. Do you employ some other teaching methods?
8. In your opinion, what is the role of grammar instruction in ESL teaching?

Each participant was interviewed about one hour. The interviews were recorded on audio tape, and the content was transcribed after each interview. Notes were taken during the interview process.

Following each interview, theoretical and methodological notes were taken. A research log was kept to document the research process, decision-making, and note emerging categories/themes, and reflections while the investigation was ongoing.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, I used the constant-comparative method (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003) to analyze the data and determine patterns and themes. The constant comparative method “is designed for multi-data sources, which is like analytic induction in that the formal analysis

begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of data collection” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 66).

By reading back and forth through the interview transcripts, the data were analyzed to find recurring patterns that emerged. Content analysis involved identifying codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

I began the analysis of the data analysis by coding transcribed interviews. In the data, I searched for regularities and patterns with keywords and phrases being chosen to represent these regularities and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Coding was an ongoing process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Throughout the data collection process, preliminary codes were developed.

After data collection was completed, preliminary codes were defined. Ongoing analysis of data, codes, and categories promoted development of a comprehensive system of themes for the research.

Research Ethics: Considerations

Prior to conducting interviews, the purpose of the study and ethical considerations was explained to each participant in this study. A cover letter (see Appendix A) explaining relevant ethical issues was provided to each interviewee. A letter of consent (See Appendix B) was signed by each participant who agreed to participate. Risks, benefits, and participation in the study were explained as follows:

Voluntary Participation All participants were informed that they were volunteers and could withdraw at any time from the study.

Risks and Benefits There were no potential risks of physical or psychological harm to the participants. The primary benefits were that the findings might increase a participant's interest in effective strategies for grammar instruction in the ESL classroom.

Anonymity and Confidentiality All participants were assured that the data they chose to provide, as well as their identities, would be kept anonymous and confidential.

Dissemination of Results A copy of the research findings will be available in the Faculty of Education Library at Lakehead University.

Storage of data In accordance with the ethics guidelines published by the Senate Research Ethics Board of Lakehead University (January, 2001), the data obtained during interviews will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Three themes based on the research questions emerged from the data: (1) general perceptions of grammar instruction; (2) major strategies for grammar instruction; (3) providing feedback. In the first section of this chapter I present profiles of the participants. In the second section I present the findings of the study. In the last section I interpret the findings.

Participant Profiles

Participants in this study were five English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in Thunder Bay. Each participant has at least five years ESL teaching experience in Canada. All participants stated that teaching grammar is important to them. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms are used.

Anna

Anna has ten years ESL teaching experience. She started to teach English in 1994. She said, “my students are at all levels: from younger students to college and university students.” She also has international teaching experience. She has taught in Asia, including Taiwan and South Korea; Eastern and Western Europe, including Russia and Germany. Now she teaches at a community college in Northern Ontario, Canada.

Bob

Bob has taught ESL for fourteen years. Bob has taught large grammar-drill-based classes, individual conversation classes, ESL movie-based classes, high school, and college classes. He taught ESL in Taiwan for two years and in mainland China for one year. Most of his teaching experience has been in Canada. Now he teaches in a community college.

Carla

Carla taught German as a foreign Language first. Then she taught French as a Second Language before she taught ESL. She has taught ESL students at the elementary school level since 1993. In the last five years Carla has worked with principals and teachers developing ESL courses in Nepal.

Debby

Debby has taught ESL for approximately seven years. She had taught adult ESL classes offered through a local school board for two years. Then she taught adults in the pilot LINC program (a federally funded language instruction program for adults who have landed immigrant status in Canada, with a focus on survival in a new country) for approximately three years. Now she teaches college students in a community college. All students that she has taught have been at beginning and intermediate levels.

Ella

Ella has taught ESL for eleven years. She started her ESL teaching in 1993. She worked with students from Grade 1 to Grade 12 for three years. Then she taught adult ESL classes for another three years. Since 1999 she has taught a pilot LINC program for adults at intermediate and advanced levels of ESL. Within this program, she also uses computer software to augment the classroom experience.

Research Findings**General Perceptions of Grammar Instruction**

The first theme describes English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers' general perceptions of grammar instruction. While each participant has had different experiences

teaching ESL, all participants share some similar values about the benefits of grammar instruction, and similar opinions regarding the factors impacting grammar instruction.

The Values and Benefits of Grammar Instruction

Values

All five participants in this study expressed their belief in the importance of grammar instruction. Anna states that grammar is part of language, and that grammar should be taught. She explains her attitude thus:

I think grammar plays an important role because language is whole. It includes reading, writing, speaking and listening; it includes vocabulary, grammar, discourse, function and interaction. Grammar is part of language. (Interview 1, Anna)

Debby shares a similar opinion of the importance of grammar instruction. She believes that grammar is the foundation of language:

I think grammar instruction is very important because grammar is a foundation of language. Students who want to learn a language need to learn the rules first. An ESL teacher doesn't need to explain the rules all the time, but ESL teachers need to let students know what the structure is. (Interview 4, Debby)

Carla also expresses her view about the necessity for grammar instruction. She maintains that students need to know grammar so that they know how to communicate effectively. If teachers do not teach grammar, students are confused about whether their speaking and writing is correct or not.

Grammar instruction is necessary because students need to know why we use *an* instead of *a* before the word *examination*, when we use capital and what an adjective is. They need to know how to speak and write correctly. If grammar is not taught, students may not be sure whether their speaking and writing is right or wrong. (Interview 3, Carla)

Ella shares a similar point of view to that of the other participants:

In my opinion, grammar is important. Students need to know the rules and they need to know how structures work. Grammar is important because it makes it possible for us to understand the meaning of sentences and to talk about language appropriately. (Interview 5, Ella)

Benefits

All ESL teachers in this study assert that students benefit by learning grammar. Anna believes that grammar instruction enables students to learn language accurately and, thus, improves the fluency of speech.

Obviously, a lot of people learn better if they have some grammar background. Grammar learning can help students learn language accurately. ESL teachers might not expect the students to be 100% accurate, but I don't think ESL students can have fluency without some degree of accuracy. If a student has difficulty in understanding grammar, it may affect accuracy of communication. (Interview 1, Anna)

Bob believes that learning grammar enables students to learn language more quickly and more efficiently.

The role of grammar instruction is to give the students an understanding of the mechanics of the English language. So, if they [students] understand the mechanics, they may be able to learn more quickly and more efficiently. (Interview 2, Bob)

Anna and Bob assert that learning grammar not only improves accuracy and fluency of the spoken and written language, but that it also helps students learn language at a more rapid pace.

The ESL students need to know grammar so that they are able to speak, read, and write accurately. Then they can learn language more quickly, speaking more fluently. Thus, their language skills improve. (Interview 4, Debby)

Learning grammar can help students recognize the sounds of English words, the meanings of those words, and the different ways of putting words together to make meaningful sentences. Also, knowing about grammar helps students understand what makes sentences and paragraphs clear, interesting, and precise so that students can learn language faster and better. (Interview 5, Ella)

Factors Impacting Grammar Instruction

Participants discuss major factors that might impact upon grammar teaching strategies. These factors include the student's age, learning goals, academic background, and cultural background.

Student's Age

Anna, Bob, Debby and Ella indicate that the student's age impacts upon grammar instruction strategies. Anna maintains that she uses different instruction strategies to teach children and adults.

When I teach children, I don't analyze grammar rules because I don't think that children are aware of grammar rules. But I teach rules to adult students because they can understand these rules. (Interview 1, Anna)

She recalled her own experience in learning Korean while she taught ESL in South Korea. She notes that, as an adult student, she found that learning grammar rules helped her understand the meaning of sentences.

Carla uses different grammar strategies according to the student's age:

For the younger students at the elementary level, I teach grammar informally. Those younger students do not understand what grammar terms are; they do not identify grammar structures. At secondary or university level, I include more formal grammar instruction because students understand those sentence structures. (Interview 3, Carla)

Learning Goals

All the participants contend that learning goals impact upon grammar instruction. Students have different learning goals: some newcomers want to learn basic English in order to communicate in everyday situations; others pursue learning English to find a job in Canada; some intend to pass examinations, and others hope to further their academic studies. ESL

teachers have to take into consideration students' learning goals and use different instructional methods. Anna states:

If students want to take examinations, they need to study grammar more seriously because grammar components may be included in the examinations. I explain and analyze grammar. If it is a conversation class, students do not want to deal with grammar, I do not analyze grammar. I just skip the grammar parts. I may focus on the use of one particular grammar point. (Interview 1, Anna)

Debby states that students have different learning goals that impact upon teaching strategies:

ESL students in the college usually want to have further academic studies. They usually want to include more grammar instruction. Adult students have their goals mostly for survival English—how to buy something in the store; how to make an appointment with doctors; how to talk to their children's teachers. They also learn English for getting a job. So, we teach grammar, but not as much as to college students. (Interview 4, Debby)

Academic Background

Ella holds that students coming from different educational backgrounds also impact teaching strategies:

Some students came to Canada with very high educational backgrounds. Those students really want to learn grammar rules and sentence structures. I think for the ESL students, the more educated [education] they have in their own countries, the more they want to know and learn more complicated grammar. So, all those factors contribute to using a variety of approaches to grammar instruction. (Interview 5, Ella)

Cultural Background

Anna, Bob, Debby, and Ella agree that students who come from different countries have different cultural backgrounds. These different cultural backgrounds impact upon grammar instruction strategy. Anna states:

I found that Asian students wanted to speak correctly all the time. They were very nervous about their errors. If they were not confident, they didn't want to speak unless they thought they were going to be correct. I thought that really hindered their leaning.

A person is not going to produce perfect language the first time. It takes time to practise another language. I think I need to really build the trust of my Asian students before they feel more comfortable to ask questions. (Interview 1, Anna)

Anna notes that students with Eastern and Western European cultural backgrounds also have different views about grammar instruction and learning:

When I was in Russia, I found that the Russians focused on more accuracy, compared to western European people. Eastern Europeans want to learn both grammar and fluent speech in English; but western Europeans preferred more fluency and communication. It seems that the further west you go, the less concern with grammar there is. (Interview 1, Anna)

Anna describes her views on grammar instruction for students who come from Latin America:

Latin Americans may not really want to focus on a lot of grammar components. They want to be more communicative and to do more fun things. They are not shy about mistakes. They are more relaxed. (Interview 1, Anna)

Bob describes the differences between European students and Asian students:

Most of the Asian students have learnt many grammar forms before they came to Canada. The problem for most of them is speaking English. But for European students, like Italian, French, the grammar and vocabulary are a little easier for them in general except Russian students. But for Asian countries, the grammar is totally different from English. (Interview 2, Bob)

Major Strategies for Grammar Instruction

All participants state that the grammar instruction strategies they use include integrating grammar into communicative activities, comprehensible input (having students notice and understand grammar in the situation or context), and comprehensible output (having students use grammar in meaningful communicative contexts).

Integration

All participants state that they integrate grammar instruction within meaningful communicative contexts. Anna states that it is important to introduce grammar in a context. She describes her own French learning experience, and concludes that separating grammar from communicative activities is ineffective:

When I took French as my Second language, my French teacher taught much grammar. Grammar was separated from speaking and writing. I could not really speak in French at all. And I found that only learning grammar was very boring as well. I found that if taking grammar separately from communicative activities, students might understand the rules, but they might not be able to actually speak and write. When I teach my ESL students, I try to integrate grammar into communicative activities and apply grammar in everyday life. Being able to do so, it must be more rewarding and motivating and students will retain more grammar. (Interview 1, Anna)

Debby also integrates grammatical features into communicative activities:

I would like to introduce certain grammar points in activities. So it's not just a dry introduction. Once I introduce it, we do some control exercises. We do oral practice with grammar we have just learned, and then have some written work. Then, students ask questions about grammar to be sure that that they have understood. Then we follow up with group work or task-based work, in which some grammar features are purposely included. In this way, students are trying to understand specific grammatical features that are being introduced to them; they have chances to practice them; they have chances to ask questions, and finally to practice in communicative activities. (Interview 4, Debby)

Besides using the teaching strategies mentioned above, Bob notes that he also uses English songs to introduce grammar. He states, "I have students to listen to an English song first, and then I explain the lyrics including grammar. Some songs repeat a certain phrase over and over. It is easy for students to remember grammar. Students have fun." (Interview 2, Bob)

Carla claims that she teaches grammar integrated within meaningful communicative activities. She maintains that there are many activities that can be used in grammar instruction. Carla's favorite grammar instruction strategy are writing, listening, and reading comprehension activities. She elaborates on her listening activities:

With younger children, I have a picture and ask these younger students to add something to this picture, colour something, or to complete a picture. For example, I might ask them to draw a nose on a snowman, draw a pair of black shoes, and draw buttons. This will tell me whether students understand what I am talking about. (Interview 3, Carla)

Comprehensible Input

When asked how to make students notice specific grammar features, all participants use comprehensible input strategies (introducing grammar in situations or in contexts and following with grammar explanation and analysis). Anna cites how she teaches the Present Simple Tense as an example:

I talk about my routine including the Present Simple Sentences: I get up at seven every day. I drink milk in the morning. I talk about vocabularies that students need to express their ideas. Thus, I can get them to talk about their yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily routine. Then, I might point out some examples of what they used and put them on the board about the Present Simple Tense. I tell them, “Okay, what is this tense? It is Present Simple Tense.” Then I explain what the rules of Present Simple Tense are, how to make it with the third singular as *he likes...*, *I like...*. After that, I talk about how the Present Simple Tense is used for a habit, routine, and things don’t change. (Interview 1, Anna)

Carla explains how she teaches the Present Past Tense:

When I teach the Past Tense, I would talk about things I did yesterday. And I provide simple sentences, “Yesterday morning I got up at six thirty. I had breakfast at seven. I drove to school. The weather was not good yesterday.” I relate the story and my talk in the past. I also have written examples depending on the age of the students, and ask the students to come up with the grammar rules. I might ask students to provide some examples to make sure whether they understand this tense and whether they can use it. (Interview 3, Carla)

Debby’s approach to introducing grammar is as follows:

Before class, I write grammar points that I am going to teach on the board. I also write a few examples of the grammar points. When students come in, these [grammar points and examples] are behind me. I talk something from daily life which includes grammar points on the board. Then I ask students questions according to what I have talked about where grammar points are included. I am expecting the correct response. (Interview 4, Debby)

Bob approaches grammar instruction by first providing reading material, then asking students to figure out grammar rules, and finally explaining the grammar rules:

I provide the students with reading materials including specific grammar rules. Students preview [the reading materials] before class. In the class I let them figure out grammar. Then I write the grammar points on the board and explain. Sometimes I use English songs to introduce the grammar points. For example, sometimes a verb tense is repeated over and over again in a song. It is fun, when we introduce grammar in a song. (Interview 2, Bob)

Ella prefers to draw students' attention to grammar features by having students listen to a short conversation which includes grammar points she intends to teach, followed by an explanation:

When I teach the Present Perfect Tense, I would have a short conversation for students to listen to. I might take on two roles in the conversation. I might say, "How long have you been in Thunder Bay?" "I've lived here for ten years. I moved here in 1994." So, this short conversation has the Present Perfect Tense and the Simple Past Tense. Then I talk about the structures and explain them. (Interview 5, Ella)

Comprehensible Output

All participants agree that they use comprehensible output strategies, e.g., have students practice specific grammar features in meaningful communicative contexts after they have understood specific grammar features. They believe that students need more time to practice grammar in communicative activities. Anna states:

After students are aware of grammar, students are required to do more work to practice grammar. We do listening, speaking, and reading exercises. And if they have understood grammar, students will do a wider range of communicative activities where they have to use the grammar learned in class. (Interview 1, Anna)

Debby expresses similar ideas. She describes her teaching method as follows:

After explaining grammar features, we do oral and written practices using grammar that students just learned. Then we start to discuss the extra questions about grammar that the students may have, to make sure whether the students have understood grammar. We

follow up with group work or pair work. There they follow some listening and discussing work and do writing work and then review. I do find it's important to actually talk about your grammar and have chances to try to understand the rules, and to use them in communicative exercises. Also, we do a lot of partner or group activities, where one would perhaps ask questions and the other would respond. The group could help each other and teach each other when they work together. (Interview 4, Debby)

Carla provides her students with “writing, listening, and reading comprehension activities” to practice grammar. Carla also finds using pictures to teach grammar effective:

In the listening activities with younger children, for example, I have a picture and ask a younger student to add certain things to a snowman, or draw a button, draw a pair of black shoes. (Interview 3, Carla)

Bob indicates that the grammar instruction strategies he uses are similar to many English teachers. He also mentions his favorite teaching strategy:

I tell a story where certain grammar points we've learned are included. Then, I asked students to rewrite this story in their own words. Some grammar points they learned must be included in their writings. Students work in groups or individually. Then follow up with sharing their writing and discussing with peers. After that, we discuss their writing and grammar in the class. (Interview 2, Bob)

Ella prefers to provide students with tasks to practice grammar after students have understood grammar. She states:

The students may be asked to make a conversation using the Simple Past Tense or complete a written exercise in groups or with partners. They have to talk about it with each other first in order to produce the spoken or written work. (Interview 5, Ella)

Ella also has students practice grammar in an authentic environment if it is possible. She provides an example:

When I teach sentence patterns like: “would you like this...?”, “I would like ...” and “should I have this...?” and so on, I tell students that we may use these sentences in the restaurant. I give the vocabulary related to a restaurant. After students are familiar with these expressions, we may go to the restaurant and practice these patterns. (Interview 5, Ella)

Correction of Grammar Errors

In discussing feedback, participants mentioned four aspects: the importance of grammar error correction, when to correct grammar, who should correct grammar, and approaches to correcting grammar.

Importance of Grammar Error Correction

All participants acknowledge that they correct students' grammar errors. When asked to explain the importance of grammar error correction, Anna responded:

If the students have the basis of the language, correcting grammar errors will make writing and speaking more effective. Students will be able to understand the corrections being made, and they can put them in their minds smoothly and apply them correctly. (Interview 1, Anna)

Bob responded:

I think it's important because students need to identify their grammar errors. Their English skills will not improve if they never noticed their errors. For students who want to learn English language, it's better to correct their errors than to have the errors passed over. (Interview 2, Bob)

When to Correct

While all participants recognize the significance of grammar error correction, most of them acknowledge that they do not correct students' grammar errors all the time. They believe that excessively correcting students' grammar errors with other students in class might hinder students' talking and make students lose face. They state that different situations affect when to correct students' errors. It may depend on what the teaching goal is, whether there are a majority of students who make errors or only one or two, and how often grammar errors are made. For example, Anna states:

If I focus on just one tense, then I will correct the error right away. If my teaching goal for the teaching activity is fluency, the only part that I correct is if the errors hinder the communication. Sometimes, error corrections may be delayed if it's not my teaching goal. If there is only one student who makes errors, I will tell this student "Okay, come and talk to me after class." I didn't correct student grammar errors all the time. Grammar errors do not mean that the students don't know or understand grammar. It just needs time to practice. (Interview 1, Anna)

Carla notes that "when grammar errors occur repeatedly, I correct them at the moment by supplying the correct model" (Interview 3, Carla). Debby's approach is relaxed:

If it's the grammar components that we just introduced, I will correct them right away. But if we have not covered them yet, I may just tell them the correct version, or I may just leave it. Sometimes, I don't worry about it [students' making errors]. It takes time for students to use grammar correctly. (Interview 4, Debby)

Carla does not stop students' talking to correct their grammar errors when her students are telling her something exciting:

If, for example, a student comes to you and tells you about an exciting movie he saw last night, and the student continually makes the same grammar errors, I would not interfere with the conversation. I would not correct the student's grammar errors. This is because that might make the students stop talking. But I would make notes of the grammar mistakes that happened in the conversation. I would bring up those points at a later time. (Interview 3, Carla)

Bob has some different opinions on when to correct grammar errors. He states that he corrects students' errors all the time, even when students are talking or having a conversation:

I correct students' error once I hear it. Usually the students in the beginning don't like it. You should explain why you are doing so. You tell them not to feel bad. If a person makes mistakes, that's "Ok." If a person does not make mistakes, he or she wouldn't be here. So my job is to help out. (Interview 2, Bob)

Who Should Correct Grammar Errors?

When asked who corrects students' grammar errors, all participants responded that they use the following three strategies: (1) teacher correction; (2) student correction; and (3) teacher-

student correction, which means that a teacher works together with students to correct students' grammar errors.

Bob prefers student-self correction, although he also corrects students' errors by himself:

Sometimes, I myself correct students' grammar errors. But frequently, I prefer to push students to correct individually or correct each other. (Interview 2, Bob)

Occasionally, Debby corrects students' errors, but, most of the time, she encourages student correction, which enables students to review what they have learned:

I may not always correct students' errors by myself. Most of the time, I expect students to correct each other, such as peer correction. [This is] because student correction encourages them to go back and think. It forces them to think about what they have learned. (Interview 4, Debby)

Ella uses teacher correction, student-correction, and teacher-student correction strategies. She stresses that student correction reinforces students' using a correct way to express themselves:

Sometimes, I correct the errors, but I prefer to engage student correction. For example, we sometimes correct exercises as a group: students read aloud their responses, and I, or other students, offer corrections as required. Students' correcting is an effective way because it gives the students a chance to experience the right way as opposed to the wrong way. (Interview 5, Ella)

Anna expresses a view similar to Ella's:

Sometimes I do correct their errors. As well, I make students correct each other when we are taking up exercises or I'll correct one student's exercise, and then he corrects everybody else. This helps to reinforce the corrections. (Interview 1, Anna)

In a large class, Carla asks students to correct grammar errors for each other, followed with teacher-student correction. In a small group, Carla herself corrects students' errors.

In a large class, when my time is limited, sometimes, students will correct each other. Then I go through sentences together with students. And students can learn from their mistakes. I myself correct their errors in a small group. (Interview 3, Carla)

Types of Correction

Participants use various types of grammar correction strategies based on students' needs, teaching goals, class time, and the teacher's energy. Anna responds to students' errors by asking clarification questions: "excuse me?" or "are you sure?" However, if there are lots of students making the same mistakes, she explains how to correct the grammar errors. But she also acknowledges that "sometimes, you don't have time for that [explanation]."

Bob states that he uses the explicit correction strategy. That is, he directly points out students' grammar errors and provides correct forms. Most of the time, he elicits a self-correct response from students by asking questions and changing his tone. He states:

It's a combination of the explicit and implicit correction. Tell them directly what is wrong and how to say it correctly. Most time, I won't say "what's wrong?" I just tell them how to say it. So if a student says, "I go to the movie yesterday?" I say: "when?" with raising the tone. Now they know. If they want an explanation, I do more. I don't have to tell this student that he should use past tense *went*. He has just learned it. (Interview 2, Bob)

Debby repeats students' ill-formed utterances (speech), raising her voice or using facial gestures to highlight students' grammar errors. She also asks questions, such as "is that correct?" or "is that the way we say it?" to elicit the correct form. She never says, "oh, that's wrong" (Interview 4, Debby). She explains, "I don't want them to lose face in the oral contexts in front of other students in class." But she points out the errors to students in their writing:

She never uses only one method to correct students' errors. She explains:

Implicit correction does not bother students, but explicit instruction provides students with a clearer understanding. So I am always in the middle. (Interview 4, Debby)

Ella responds to students' errors with different strategies. In the speaking exercises, Ella corrects errors by herself immediately or she makes notes of errors and then asks students to

discuss and correct errors in group. In the writing assignments, Ella points out students' errors and asks students to rewrite their work in a correct way:

As students are speaking, I sometimes repeat the sentence or phrase that contains an error in the correct way. At times, I make notes of speaking errors as the students are speaking, and then we work as a group to discuss and correct them. I mark students' exercises done by the students by circling or pointing out errors, and then I ask the students to make the corrections. I frequently use this method with the students' writing assignments. The students then must rewrite their work to produce a good error-free copy. (Interview 5, Ella)

However, Carla's error correction strategies provide examples and explicit corrections:

I do not change the level of my voice nor explain why a mistake was made. I provide examples and explain why a certain word should have a capital, and give the students some practice exercises. If the student only has one or two errors, I explain why this is wrong, and probably provide a short explanation they need. (Interview, 3, Carla)

Table 1. Categories and Themes

THMES	CATEGORIES	CODES	EXAMPLES
General Perceptions of Grammar Instruction	Values and Benefits	Values	"I think grammar plays an important role....grammar is part of language."(Anna)
		Benefits	"Learning grammar can help student learn language faster and better."(Ella)
	Factors Impacting Grammar Instruction	Student's Age	"When I teach children, I don't analyze grammar..., but I teach rules to adult students." (Anna)
		Learning Goals	"ESL students in the college usually want to have included more grammar instruction. We teach grammar (for adult students), but not as much as college students."(Debby)
		Academic Background	"... for the ESL the more educated in their countries, the more they want to know and learn more complicated grammar."(Ella)
		Cultural Background	For European students, the grammar and vocabulary are a little easier in genera except Russian. But for Asia countries, the grammar is totally different from English."(Bob)
Major Strategies for Grammar Instruction	Integration		"I try to integrate grammar into communicative activities and apply grammar in everyday life."(Anna)
	Comprehensible Input		"When I teach the Present Perfect Tense, I would have a short conversation for students to listen to....This short conversation has the Present Perfect Tense... Then I talk about the structures and explain them." (Ella)
	Comprehensible Output		"I tell story where certain grammar points we've learned are included. Then I asked students to rewrite this story in their own...students work in groups or individually. Then follow up with sharing their writing and discussing with peers. After that, we discuss their writing and grammar in the class."(Bob)
Correction of Grammar Errors	Importance of Grammar Error Correction		If students have the basis of the language, correction grammar errors will make writing and speaking more effective." (Anna)
	When to Correct		"If it's the grammar components that we just introduce, I will correct them right away. But if we have not covered them yet, I may just leave it."(Debby)
	Who Should Correct		"Sometimes, I myself correct students' grammar errors. But frequently, I prefer to push students to correct individually or correct each other." (Bob)
	Types of Correction		"As students are speaking, I sometimes repeat the sentence or phrase that contains an error in the correct way. At times, I make notes of speaking, and then we work as a group to discuss and correct them."(Ella)

Interpretation of Findings

General Perceptions of Grammar Instruction

Values and Benefits

Participants articulated the values and benefits of grammar instruction. All five participants perceive that grammar instruction plays an important role in ESL teaching and learning because grammar is a part of language, and people who want to learn language must learn grammar. The participants in this study believe that grammar instruction enables students to understand the meaning of language better. It improves students' language proficiency, and enhances accurate communication. The participants contend that grammar instruction helps students learn language more quickly and more effectively. These findings are supported by Ellis (2002) and Richard (2002), who argue that teaching grammar is part and parcel of language teaching. Grammar instruction within communicative tasks can enable learners to communicate meaningfully and accurately, thereby enhancing their communicative competency and second language fluency. Ellis (2002) points out that grammar instruction helps language learners to achieve advanced levels of grammatical competence. Ebsworth and Schweer (1997) indicate that grammatical instruction improves language accuracy and accelerates second language acquisition. Hammerley (1987) suggests that using any method that fails to emphasize structure before communicative activities is like putting the cart before the horse.

Factors Impacting Grammar Instruction

The participants believe students' ages impact upon their approaches to grammar instruction. For instance, Anna does not teach grammar rules to children because children might not be aware of the grammar rules in general. But she does teach grammar to adults. Celce-

Murcia (1985, 1991, and 1992) maintains that grammatical knowledge is more important for adults than for children. Celce-Murcia holds that young learners can learn a foreign or second language with native-like proficiency and accuracy without formal grammar instruction.

According to Celce-Murcia, adults who learn a foreign language without any formal grammar instruction during the basic stage can only stay at an intermediate or low-intermediate level and are unable to achieve proficiency in the target language.

Participants also note that students' learning goals and academic backgrounds impact upon their teaching approaches. Debby maintains that college students usually seek further study. They usually want more grammar instruction. Adult students usually learn basic English in order to communicate in their daily lives. Consequently, Debby explains much more grammar to college students than to adult students (Interview 4, Debby). Anna mentions that she analyses grammar to students who are intending to take a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) in which grammar is included. But she does not analyze grammar when she teaches a conversation class. These findings are consistent with Celce-Murcia's (1985, 1991, 1992) finding that students' learning goals make a difference in instruction. She states that, when providing listening and reading skills for beginning level children, teachers may not provide much grammar instruction. She suggests that grammar instruction is important for the college students at the intermediate language level, since they hope to pursue further academic study. In addition, Ella believes that the higher academic background that students have, the more they want to learn grammar (Interview 5, Ella). This finding is supported by Celce-Murcia's (1985, 1991, 1992) research which suggests that the stronger an educational background the learner has, the more the person focuses on language form (grammar), and vice versa. Grammar instruction

is more important for advanced language level students than for beginning level language learners.

Anna, Bob, Debby, and Ella state that cultural backgrounds impact their approaches to grammar instruction. They believe that students who come from different countries bring different cultural backgrounds. Different cultural backgrounds mean that grammar instruction must be approached differently. Anna states that students want to speak correctly all the time. They are very nervous about their errors. They don't want to speak until they feel confident enough to speak correctly. Anna hopes to build the trust of her Asian students in order to encourage them to talk. Anna maintains that Latin American students require more communicative activities rather than focusing on grammar, while eastern European students like grammar instruction more than western students do.

These findings are consistent with McLaughlin's (1987) cross-cultural research conclusion that first language (L1) acquisition heavily influences second language (L2) acquisition when the L1 cultural and linguistic background is different from the L2.

Major Strategies of Grammar Instruction

Integration

All participants state that they integrate grammar instruction in meaningful communicative contexts. For example, Anna states, "it is important to introduce grammar within a context and the situation of a large picture. I try to integrate everything [grammar] into a context which is relevant to everyday life. In this way students are more rewarded and motivated and will retain more grammar knowledge" (Interview 1, Anna). Anna notes that, if grammar is separated from communicative activities, students might understand grammar rules but they

might not speak and write in an appropriate way. Debby states her approach to grammar instruction as follows: first, she introduces certain grammar points in a context related to daily life, and then explains grammar to her students; finally, she has students use grammar by providing meaningful communicative activities in group work or in small group (Interview 4, Debby). This finding is in harmony with previous research (e.g., Doughty and Williams, 1998; Fotos and Ellis, 1991; Lyster, 1994; Spada and Lightbown, 1993; and White, 1998). These researchers investigated the effectiveness of using grammatical form together with communicative activities in French immersion and intensive ESL programs. The results of learning outcomes indicate that methods for integrating grammar instruction with communicative language learning (Focus on Form) enable language students to recognize target grammar features in context and develop accuracy in their use, as well improve their communicative abilities.

Comprehensible Input

Comprehensible input refers to any message that language learners can understand. According to Richards (2000), input refers to “language sources that are used to initiate the language learning process. Textbooks and commercial materials, teacher-made materials, and teacher-initiated classroom discourse all serve as input sourced in language classes” (p. 35-50). Krashen (1985, 1987) claims that language learners acquire a language only through “Comprehensible Input”--understanding the message conveyed with the help of the situational content, extra-linguistic information, and knowledge of the world. Grammar is acquired naturally in the way that children acquire their first language (e.g., without overt instruction) through communication. However, other research (e.g., Doughty and Williams, 1998; Ellis,

1994; Robinson, 1996) shows that language learners should pay attention to both meaning and specific grammar features at input age. Donato (2002) suggests that comprehensive input refers to helping language learners discover grammar rules (and notice grammar rules) and then understand grammar rules through meaningful context or situation.

Anna, Bob, Debby, and Ella maintain that they draw students' attention to specific grammar features by having students read, listen, or use the context of everyday life knowledge, and then explain and analyze the grammatical features. For instance, Bob maintains, "I give the students reading materials and ask them to preview them before class. In class I let them figure out grammar. Then I write grammar points on the board and explain. Sometimes I use English songs to introduce grammar points" (Interview 2, Bob). Ella prefers to have students listen to a short conversation first, followed by an explanation of the grammar included in that conversation. These findings also confirm Cadierno's (1995), VanPatten and Cadierno's (1993), and Ellis's (1995, 1999) discussions of *input processing instruction*. This term refers to the hypothesis that learners are required to listen or read (input) material in which examples of specific structures are included. Students are encouraged to achieve conscious awareness of how these grammar features are used and to understand their meaning. In other words, learners are encouraged to make form-meaning associations.

Only one participant mentions that he sometimes uses the implicit approach while introducing grammar features. The other four participants use explicit-deductive instruction, which indicates overtly drawing attention to specific grammatical features by directly pointing them out, and explaining the particular grammar features to students. Anna states that, when she teaches the Present Simple Tense, she explains the rules of the Present Simple Tense, how to

make it with the third singular as *he likes...*, *I like...*. She tells students when and how to use Present Simple Tense after introducing a certain grammar rules regarding Present Simple Tense. The reason that most participants use explicit-deductive strategy may be that some types of implicit input may be too difficult to lead students' attention to the fact "what they [are] saying is not what they meant to say" (Lightbown, 1993, p.719). White (1998) concludes that, although implicit input instruction is effective for learners' awareness of specific grammar features, some types of input may not be very effective.

Comprehensible Output

All participants state that they provide their students with adequate opportunities to practice specific grammar features within meaningful contexts after they have understood these features. Their students use grammar features in listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. Debby encourages her students to write and speak using grammar they've learned. Ella asks students to make conversation with specific grammar in it. She also takes her students to a restaurant to practice specific sentence patterns learned in class, patterns which can be used in restaurants. These findings are in accordance with Schachter (1984), who holds that comprehensible output may provide the opportunity to test hypotheses: learners use some grammar items they have learned by writing and speaking (output), and get feedback as to whether they can use grammar items correctly in meaningful contexts. Swain (1998) states that comprehensible output may lead learners to "notice that they do not know how to say (or write) precisely the meaning they wish to convey" (p. 67). It may push learners to express ideas more precisely, coherently, and appropriately. Cummins and Swain (1986) hold that comprehensible output is essential for second language acquisition. Swain (1985) studied English-speaking

children in a French immersion program, and concluded that comprehensible output provides opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use, to test out hypotheses about the target language, and to move learners from a purely semantic analysis of language to a systematic analysis of it (1985, p. 252). McLaughlin, Rossman, and McLeod (1983) indicate that one of the functions of comprehensible output is that it provides opportunities for meaningful grammar practice and for the development of using that grammar accurately and automatically.

The participants' students practice grammar they have learned in group work and with partners in order to talk, encourage in discussion and negotiation, and to help each other. Debby engages her students in partner or in small group activities. One student asks questions, the other responds. Students help each other and teach each other. Her students do written exercises in groups, in which they discuss what and how they are going to write about before producing their writing work. Bob tells a story and asks students to reconstruct the story in groups, so that students in groups have to discuss the story and make sure what they have heard is correct. They also are aware of grammar during their talking and writing. These findings support Doughty and Williams's (1998) idea that negotiation tasks engage learners in comprehensible output that attracts feedback from a peer interlocutor. Doughty and Williams (1998) propose that having students working interactively in small groups help students solve grammar problems. Fotos (1993, 1994) supports the effectiveness of having learners work in small groups interactively to solve grammar problems in English. Kowal and Swain (1994) suggest that dictogloss tasks (e.g., students work in pairs or small groups to reconstruct a text read aloud by a teacher) promote second language learning by making learners aware of gaps in their own expressions, which they

would subsequently seek to fill; raising their awareness of the links among forms, function, and meanings; and providing them with opportunities to obtain feedback.

Participants also noted that integrating grammar into meaningful communicative contexts creates a positive learning environment which is beneficial to language learners. Because of her own French learning experience years ago, Anna strongly supports integrating grammar into communicative contexts. In the French class, her teacher translated French into English and students just learned grammar. Grammar was always separated from speaking and writing in this class; consequently, Anna found that the class was very boring, and she could not speak and write in French at all. Anna believes in learning grammar first, and then using it in communicative activities, such as an everyday life situation, will be more rewarding and motivating, and that students can retain grammar longer. Ella mentions that integrating grammar features into communicative activities attracts students' learning interests. She recalled one of her ESL classes: after students learned the sentence patterns "Would you like this...?" and "I would like..." in class, she took students to the restaurant nearby and encouraged them to use these sentence patterns there. Carla provides listening activities with pictures for the younger children, a practice which tests whether they understand the grammar and arouses their learning interest. Bob finds that students enjoy learning grammar through singing and studying the lyrics of English songs. These findings are consistent with Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis, which asserts that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. In contrast, Krashen holds that low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition.

Correction of Grammar Errors

Importance of Correct Feedback

All participants correct students' grammar errors. They believe that correct feedback enables students to identify their grammar errors, to modify their utterances (speech), and to express ideas correctly. Doughty and Williams (1998) hold that corrective feedback is a useful way of getting learners to notice differences between the target language and their own expressions. Carroll and Swain (1993) and Higgs and Clifford (1982) maintain that correction of grammar errors is important in second language instruction. Error correction pushes language learners to modify their nontargetlike production (inaccurate speaking and writing) (Pica, 1992; Swain, 1985, 1995), and often produce more targetlike output (accurate speaking and writing) (Lyster, 1998a, 1998b; Oliver, 2000), which, in turn, may promote language fluency (DeKetser, 1998; Swain, 1985, 1995).

When asked about when they correct students' grammar errors, four participants state that their timing depends on whether students' grammar errors hinder communication; whether grammar errors are made repeatedly; whether grammar errors are related to newly introduced grammar components; and whether there is enough time in class to correct errors. Anna, Carla, Debby, and Ella perceive grammar errors as a part of the learning process so they do not correct every single mistake all the time. They note that overemphasizing grammar errors might lead students to fear making errors and inhibit their expression of ideas. They maintain that making errors does not mean that students don't know or understand grammar. Students need time to practise, which up to a point, supports Krashen's (1985) Monitor Hypothesis, which asserts that

the acquisition of grammar takes place naturally if instructors provide learners with sufficient communicative opportunities to use the language.

Bob has different views on error correction. He states that it is his responsibility to help students speak and write correctly. Bob corrects students' errors all the time.

Who Should Correct Grammar Errors

According to Kowal and Swain (1997) and Doughty and Varela (1998), grammar correction strategies may include teacher corrections, learner corrections, and teacher-student correction. The participants assert that they correct students' grammar, but frequently they encourage students to self-correct or use teacher-student correction strategies. The findings are consistent with Kowal and Swain (1997), who assert that teachers may correct students' errors for the whole class or individually. As well, students may correct grammatical errors by themselves. Kowal and Swain (1997) hold that peer correction in groups is also an effective strategy to error correction. Lyster and Ranta (1997) suggest the need for teachers to utilize various types of feedback, particularly those that lead to student-generated repair.

The participants believe that the benefit of students' self-correction is to go back and think about what they have learned and to give students a chance to experience the right way as opposed to the wrong way. This finding is in accordance with Calve's (1992) and Allwright and Bailey's (1991) recommendation that teachers should give time and priority to peer-repair and self-repair for grammar correction. Chaudron (1988) suggests that self-repair will more likely develop learners' abilities to monitor their output.

Types of Correction

All participants report that they use implicit correction (a teacher avoids tending to evaluate students' grammar errors directly and explicitly) and explicit corrections (a teacher directly points out what grammar errors students have made, and tells them what the correct forms are and explains the reasons). This supports Kowal and Swain's (1997) and Doughty and Varela's (1998) views about grammar correction strategies. Carroll and Swain (1993) conducted a study to investigate the effects of different types of feedback in adult Spanish-speaking learners of English. The results of this study revealed that both implicit and explicit types of corrective feedback were beneficial to language learning.

Participants in this study tend to use more implicit correction strategies. Anna states that she responds to students' grammar errors by asking "Excuse me?" or "Are you sure?" to elicit students' correct expression. Although Bob points out where a student has made an error, most of the time he uses implicit correction strategies. Debby corrects a student's errors by repeating what the student has said or uses facial gesture to have a student notice the error. These practices are not consistent with Williams and Evans's (1998) and Seehouse's (1997) view that explicit correction is more effective than implicit correction. Kowal and Swain (1997) and Doughty and Varela (1998) state that second language teachers should correct learners' grammatical errors by repetition, recast, and clarification requests. As well, the teacher may use intonation and facial expressions as responses indicating confusion in learners' utterances (e.g., the teacher raises an eyebrow when grammatical errors made by learners occur) in order to draw learner's attention to non-target-like grammatical form.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Conclusion

All participants in this study articulate the value and benefits of grammar instruction. They note that grammar instruction plays an important role in ESL language teaching. Grammar instruction enables students to improve language proficiency, to communicate accurately and fluently, and to learn language more quickly and more effectively. These findings support previous claims about the important role of grammar instruction in second language acquisition (Ellis, 2002; Richard, 2002; Ebsworth & Schweer, 1997; Terrell, 1991; Hammerley, 1987). The findings of this study contradict Krashen's claim that it is not important to learn grammar in ESL (Krashen, 1984).

The findings of this study encourage a model for grammar instruction. These findings confirm that grammar instruction plays an important role in the acquisition of English as a Second Language. Grammar is a part of language and should be taught in ESL classes. As well, students' ages, learning goals, academic backgrounds, and cultural background should be taken into consideration when ESL teachers are choosing grammar instruction strategies.

When asked what strategies are used to teach grammar, all the participants advocated integrating grammar instruction into meaningful communication. Participants suggest grammar be introduced within a context, followed by explanation of the grammatical point in question. The participants state that integrating grammar features into communicative activities (focus on form instruction) not only improves students' language accuracy and fluency, but also motivates them to learn.

All participants in this study report that they correct students' grammar errors. While sometimes participants correct students' error by themselves, most of the time, they also encourage students to correct their grammar errors individually or with peers, or they ask students to work together with their teachers to correct grammar errors. This finding suggests that grammar correction contributes significantly to students' language competencies. ESL teachers are encouraged to guide their students to correct grammar errors and restructure their interlanguage.

Participants do not correct students' grammar errors all the time. They note that overemphasizing grammar errors may lead students to feel less confident in expressing themselves. As well, participants try to avoid correcting students' errors bluntly in the presence of other students in class in order to protect their students' dignity. These findings reveal that ESL teachers should try to make students feel more confident about expressing themselves and use positive evaluation in response to students' grammar errors. Students are then led to develop their awareness of specific types of errors in using language and ultimately to communicating their ideas accurately and fluently.

Recommendations for Further Study

It would be useful to conduct a mirror study by examining ESL students' perceptions of grammar teaching and learning. Such an examination would increase knowledge about ESL teaching if it were applied to effective grammar instruction methods for students from different cultural backgrounds, linguistic backgrounds, ages, and learning styles. Moreover, further studies need to be carried out regarding whether first language (L1) grammar teaching methods help second language (L2)

grammar instruction. It is also important to explore methods for teaching grammar using multi-media technologies.

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APPENDIX A: GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. a. How long have you taught ESL?
 - b. What level/levels of students have you taught?
2. Do you think it is important to include grammar instruction in ESL classrooms or not? Why or why not?
3. What methods do you usually use in grammar instruction? Could you please provide some examples?
 - a. Do you analyze and explain grammar?
 - b. Do you let learners learn grammar via communicative practice?
 - c. How do you enable learners to learn grammar features?
4. Give me some examples of the best/worst ways to teach grammar. Please provide reasons.
5. What is your preferred method for teaching grammar?
 - a. Do you teach grammar separately from (before or after) communicative practice?
 - b. Do you integrate it with communicative activities?
 - c. Do you teach it according to learners/ needs?
6. How do you select the contents of grammar instruction? Why do you do so?
 - a. Do you teach grammar items by following the text?
 - b. Do you select grammar items from other resources?
7. Do you pay attention to grammar error correction?
 - a. Do you employ correction? Do you do this implicitly or explicitly?
 - b. Do you employ student correction? Do you do this individually or through peers?
 - c. Do you employ some other teaching methods?
8. In your opinion, what is the role of grammar instruction in ESL teaching?

APPENDIX B: A SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

THMES	CATEGORIES	CODES	EXAMPLES
General Perceptions of Grammar Instruction	Values and Benefits	Values	"I think grammar plays an important role... grammar is part of language."(Anna)
		Benefits	"Learning grammar can help student learn language faster and better."(Ella)
	Factors Impacting Grammar Instruction	Student's Age	"When I teach children, I don't analyze grammar..., but I teach rules to adult students." (Anna)
		Learning Goals	"ESL students in the college usually want to have included more grammar instruction. We teach grammar (for adult students), but not as much as college students."(Debby)
		Academic Background	"... for the ESL the more educated in their countries, the more they want to know and learn more complicated grammar."(Ella)
		Cultural Background	For European students, the grammar and vocabulary are a little easier in genera except Russian. But for Asia countries, the grammar is totally different from English."(Bob)
Major Strategies for Grammar Instruction	Integration		"I try to integrate grammar into communicative activities and apply grammar in everyday life."(Anna)
	Comprehensible Input		"When I teach the Present Perfect Tense, I would have a short conversation for students to listen to....This short conversation has the Present Perfect Tense... Then I talk about the structures and explain them." (Ella)
	Comprehensible Output		"I tell story where certain grammar points we've learned are included. Then I asked students to rewrite this story in their own...students work in groups or individually. Then follow up with sharing their writing and discussing with peers. After that, we discuss their writing and grammar in the class."(Bob)
Correction of Grammar Errors	Importance of Grammar Error Correction		If students have the basis of the language, correction grammar errors will make writing and speaking more effective." (Anna)
	When to Correct		"If it's the grammar components that we just introduce, I will correct them right away. But if we have not covered them yet, I may just leave it."(Debby)
	Who Should Correct		"Sometimes, I myself correct students' grammar errors. But frequently, I prefer to push students to correct individually or correct each other." (Bob)
	Types of Correction		"As students are speaking, I sometimes repeat the sentence or phrase that contains an error in the correct way. At times, I make notes of speaking, and then we work as a group to discuss and correct them."(Ella)

APPENDIX C: COVER LETTER

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. I am conducting this study for the Master of Education degree. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Fiona Blaikie of the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University.

The purpose of this study is to investigate English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers' perception of the role of grammar instruction. To accomplish this goal, I would like to invite you to participate in an interview, focusing on your perceptions of the role of grammar instruction in your ESL teaching. Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be taped recorded. I am request a second short interview with you for follow up or clarification purposes.

As a participant in this study it is important that you understand and agree to the following:

1. You are a volunteer and can withdraw at any time from the study.
2. There is no risk of physical or apparent psychological harm to participants in this study. The primary benefit to you may be an increased interest in ESL teaching and learning.
3. The data you provide will be anonymous and confidential.
4. A copy of the finding will be housed in the Faculty of Education library.
5. Information obtained during interviews will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a period of seven years and then will be destroyed.

Thank you very much for your cooperation this request. If you have any questions at any point during the study, please feel free to contact me or my thesis supervisor by email.

Sincerely,

Lan Zhong

Lan Zhong: lzhong@lakeheadu.ca
Dr. Fiona Blaikie: fblaikie@lakeheadu.ca



APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the study by Lan Zhong, on investigation ESL teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar instruction. The purpose of this study has been explained to me, and I understand the following:

1. I am a volunteer and can withdraw at any time from the study.
2. There is no risk of physical or apparent psychological harm involved in this study.
3. The data I provide will be anonymous and confidential.
4. A copy of the finding will be available in the library at the Faculty of Education.
5. Information obtained during interviews will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a period of seven years and then will be destroyed.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Lan Zhong

Date