

# Turkish Academics' and Students' Views of English Grammar Teaching: Explicit or Implicit?

Elif SARI

School of Foreign Languages, Karadeniz Technical University  
PO box 61080, Trabzon, Turkey  
E-mail: [elifsari@ktu.edu.tr](mailto:elifsari@ktu.edu.tr)

Oktay YAĞIZ

English Language Teaching Department, Atatürk University  
PO box 25240, Erzurum, Turkey  
E-mail: [yoktay@atauni.edu.tr](mailto:yoktay@atauni.edu.tr)

M. Yavuz KONCA

English Language Teaching Department, Atatürk University  
PO box 25240, Erzurum, Turkey  
E-mail: [mykonca@atauni.edu.tr](mailto:mykonca@atauni.edu.tr)

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out Turkish academics' and students' beliefs about the role of grammar teaching and their preferences for grammar instruction approaches (i.e. explicit or implicit). By comparing the views of these two groups, it attempts to reveal whether teachers and students have common and different perceptions towards the phenomenon of L2 grammar instruction. For this purpose, a two-stage study was designed. 49 Turkish academics teaching English at a state university in Turkey took part in the first stage. Their views about the role and way of grammar teaching were obtained mainly through a four-point Likert-type questionnaire, which consisted of 29 items with three sections (viz. Explicit instruction, Implicit instruction, and General attitudes to the teaching of grammar). The same questionnaire was adapted in a way that makes it possible to attain the views held by students. In the second stage, this questionnaire was applied to the students who were learning English as a foreign language at the same school. Open-ended questions were also added to teacher and student questionnaires in order to obtain the reasons for their preferences. The quantitative data were analysed and both groups' replies were statistically compared. Results showed that Turkish academics and students give great importance to grammar instruction, and they favour explicit grammar instruction rather than implicit grammar instruction.

**Keywords:** English grammar teaching, explicit grammar instruction, implicit grammar instruction, academics' views, students' views.

## 1. Introduction

Grammar instruction in language learning has been a prominent subject of language acquisition research and discussion for at least 40 years. Although the importance attributed to grammar instruction has changed in relation to the language teaching methods, a conclusion that grammar instruction leads to high levels of linguistic competence (Ellis, 2002). In 1960s, due to the popularity of the grammar translation method, grammar teaching was dominant. (Ling, 2015). However, with the advent of communicative language teaching and "natural" methods, grammar started to lose its importance, and grammar took a "zero position" (e.g., Krashen, 1982, as cited in Ellis, 2002) with an assumption that teaching grammar does not correlate with acquiring grammar. The findings of more recent studies showed that teachers regard grammar teaching as an essential and indispensable component of language teaching and learning. Thus formal instruction is still prevalent in language classrooms (Borg, 2003).

Although there are many different grammar teaching strategies, there are essentially two basic approaches, namely explicit vs. implicit grammar instruction (Scott, 1990). Sheen (2002) claims that "the debate revolves around the degree to which the teachers need to direct learners' attention to understanding grammar whilst retaining a focus on the need to communicate" (p. 303). According to Ellis (2009) "implicit instruction is directed at enabling learners to infer rules without awareness" (p.16) whereas "explicit instruction involves some sort of rules being thought about during the learning process" (DeKeyser, 1995, as cited in Ellis, 2009, p.16). Along with rule scope, rule reliability and salience, abstractness and distance are the most important factors that make explicit or implicit instruction more effective than the other (DeKeyser, 2008). Those who believe that implicit instruction is more superior to explicit instruction argued that explicit teaching is likely to preclude fluency as in explicit teaching "language becomes the object rather than the means of discussion"; however, in implicit teaching, "the aim is to add attention to form to a primarily communicative task rather than to depart

from an already communicative goal in order to discuss a linguistic feature” (Doughty & Varela, 1998, p. 114).

The study of teachers’ beliefs and how their beliefs affect their practices in their classes has emerged as a major area of investigation in the last 15 years (Phipps & Borg, 2009). A number of studies have been conducted on teachers’ and students’ general views of the role grammar instruction plays in English language teaching (ELT) and their preferences in regard to grammar instruction approaches. Some of these studies investigated teachers’ and students’ views individually (Al-Kalbani, 2004; Farrell, 2005; Hahn, 2006; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Loewen et al., 2009; Thu, 2009; Male, 2011; Dikici, 2012; Azad, 2013; ThiĐiêp, 2013; Kaçar&Zengin, 2013; Uzun, 2013; Bardakçı, 2014; Başöz, 2014;Nesic&Hamidovic, 2015) while the others studied both two groups in order to reveal whether some discrepancies emerged in a comparison of student and teacher beliefs. The findings of these studies demonstrate certain discrepancies between teachers’ and students’ preferences.

Brindley’s (1984, cited in Burgess and Etherington, 2002) research within Adult Migrant Education in Australia found teachers more in favour of communicative activities, while students preferred more formal, explicit grammar teaching. Schulz (1996) investigated student and teacher beliefs regarding the benefit of a Focus on Form in language learning at the University of Arizona, and concluded that students are favourably disposed toward a Focus on Form, regardless of what language students study. The discrepancies between student and teacher perceptions are more pronounced on the items related to error correction. Schulz’s (2001) study inquiring the cultural differences in Colombian and U.S. foreign language students’ and teachers’ perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback in FL teaching indicated relatively high agreement between students as a group and teachers as a group across cultures. Nevertheless, a number of discrepancies were evident between student and teacher beliefs within each culture particularly dealing with formal grammar instruction.

In their investigation of differences in EFL teacher and student perceptions regarding the role of grammar instruction and error correction in improving English language competency on high school teachers and students from five schools in Taiwan, Liao & Wang (2009) deduced that most students held a positive view towards these two issues, and students held generally favourable attitudes toward a focus on form in foreign language learning. On the other hand, teachers reacted more negatively to grammar instruction than the students.

By comparing the perceptions held by the teachers and the students in two different universities, Landolsi (2011) indicated that both teachers and students appreciated the value of grammar. However, some discrepancies existed between the teachers and the students. That is to say, students were more in favour of the statements that the study of formal grammar was essential to the mastery of a second language and their communicative ability would rapidly improve if they studied and practiced the grammar of the language.

Saraband Yousefpoori-Naeim (2011) compared teachers’ and their students’ opinions on the role of grammar and error correction in language learning in a number of private institutes in Tehran and found that, in the broadest sense, both teachers and students are generally in favour of grammar instruction and the use of error correction in the classroom. However, the results further show that the students are more strongly inclined toward grammar and error correction in comparison to their teachers.

Valeo and Spada (2015) investigated the views of teachers and learners in second and foreign language contexts regarding the timing of grammatical instruction, conceptualized as a distinction between isolated and integrated form-focused instruction. Results of the study showed that teachers and learners shared a similar instructional preference. The results also indicated a distinct preference for integrated over isolated FFI across groups (i.e., teachers and learners) and contexts (i.e., ESL and EFL). Üstünbaş (2016) carried out a replication study of Valeo and Spada (2015) at a state university in Turkey and reached similar findings which showed that both EFL learners and teachers were in the same camp and they preferred integrated form-focused instruction rather than the isolated one.

When the previous studies are reviewed, it is seen that limited number of studies were carried out to investigate the perceptions and preferences of teachers and students towards grammar instruction in the context of EFL teaching in Turkey although it continues to be one of the most controversial topics. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this gap in the related literature by investigating the academics’ and their students’ views of grammar instruction and their preferences for either explicit or implicit grammar instruction at the school of foreign languages of a state university in Turkey. That is to say, the purpose of this study is to investigate and compare Turkish academics’ and students’ general views towards the role of grammar instruction and their preferences in relation to explicit or implicit approach in grammar instruction in the context of English as a foreign language at preparatory school in order to see whether the teachers and their students agree about grammar teaching. As Schulz (1996) stated it might well be wise to explore the fit of learner and teacher beliefs in order to increase student commitment to and involvement in the instructional process. The study also aims at revealing whether academics’ and students’ attitudes towards English grammar teaching differ according to their gender. In line with these purposes, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What are Turkish academics’ and students’ general views of grammar instruction?

RQ2. What are their preferences for explicit or implicit grammar instruction?

RQ3. What are their reasons for their preferences for either explicit or implicit grammar instruction?  
 RQ4. Do the teachers and their students agree about grammar instruction and grammar instruction approaches?

With the purpose of finding answers to these questions, a two-stage study was designed: in the first stage teacher views were collected, in the second stage students views were collected, and after that the results obtained from both groups were compared.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Design and Instruments

The study was predominantly quantitative in design because the data were collected mainly through questionnaires in order to reveal academics' and students' views and preferences about grammar instruction. The questionnaire used in the present study was a four-point Likert-type attitude scale (totally disagree = 1, disagree = 2, agree = 3, totally agree = 4), adapted from Al-Kalbani (2004, cited in Başöz, 2014), who had designed the instrument based on the studies of Burgess and Etherington (2002); Schultz (2001); and Wang (1999). The questionnaire items were examined by the researchers in terms of their appropriateness to the context of the study and it was found that the items were all applicable. The items on the teacher questionnaire were then rewritten to reflect student perspective. The only difference between teacher and student questionnaires was word order, which means that items on teacher questionnaire were teaching-related while the same items were learning-related on student questionnaire. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the questionnaire was found to be .73 for teachers and .77 for students which reflects good reliability. The questionnaire consisted of 29 statements grouped into three sections, viz. Explicit instruction (Statements 1-11), Implicit instruction (Statements 12-17), and General attitudes to the teaching of grammar (Statements 18-29). The study was also qualitative because one open-ended item was added to the teacher questionnaire in an attempt to understand the reasons for their preferences for either explicit or implicit grammar instruction (*Which method of grammar instruction – explicit or implicit – would you consider more appropriate in the context of teaching English as a foreign language at preparatory school? Give at least two reasons why you think so.*). On student questionnaire, the participants were asked to complete the sentences like “I think learning grammar is/is not important to improve my English because...”, “I prefer to learn grammar through my teacher’s explanations because...” and “I prefer to figure out grammar rules on myself because...” in order to get a better understanding of their views. As the students’ levels of English proficiency were pre-intermediate and intermediate, the questionnaire was conducted in English.

### 2.2. Participants and Setting

49 Turkish academics teaching English at the School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey and their 220 students voluntarily participated in the study. They have been selected as the participants of the study because of convenience since one of the researchers teaches in the same institution. The students have to complete one-year long preparatory program at the Department of Basic English in order to be accepted to their departments because they could not succeed in the proficiency examination, which they took at the beginning of the academic year. This preparatory program is compulsory for the students who will have 30 % of some courses in English in their departments whereas it is optional for students in other departments. The students were separated into three levels (elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate) based on their scores from the proficiency exam. Of 840 students of the program, 220 were randomly selected as the participants, 150 male and 70 female. Additional demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Academics

Variable	Category	Frequency	TOTAL	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	25	49	51,0
	Female	24		49,0
Age	25-35	15	49	30,6
	36-45	30		61,2
	More than 45	4		8,1
Teaching experience	1-5 years	6	49	12,2
	6-10 years	6		12,2
	More than 10 years	37		75,5
Educational degree	B.A.	39	49	79,6
	M.A.	10		20,4

Table 2. Demographic Data of the Students

Variable	Category	Frequency	TOTAL	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	150	220	68,2
	Female	70		31,8
Age	17-22	192	220	87,2
	23-28	28		12,7
Level of English	Pre-intermediate	149	220	67,7
	Intermediate	71		32,3

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained were descriptively analysed. Paired samples *t* test and independent samples *t* test were conducted to determine which grammar instruction approach (explicit or implicit) they prefer and to see whether their gender has any effects on their views of grammar instruction and grammar instruction approaches. The responses to the open-ended questions were qualitatively analysed too.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The results of the study present the frequency and percentage of participants' responses with reference to the different questions and the results of statistical analyses shown as follows:

Table 3. Academics' General Views of English Grammar Instruction

N= 49	Totally Disagree/ Disagree (%)	Agree/ Totally Agree (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
18. I believe that students' language improves quickly if they study and practice English grammar.	34.7	65.3	2.67	0.65
19. Students generally like the study of grammar.	51.0	49.0	2.53	0.86
20. Grammar study is the basis of fluent English.	81.6	18.3	1.97	0.69
21. There should be more formal study of grammar in the English language class.	61.2	38.7	2.34	0.63
22. Grammar study is effective for fostering students' English writing ability.	2.0	97.9	3.12	0.48
23. Grammar study is effective for fostering students reading ability.	16.3	83.7	2.89	0.54
24. Grammar study helps students to get high scores on the English examination.	16.3	83.7	2.97	0.55
25. Grammar study slows down students' English communicative competence.	49.0	51.0	2.53	0.79
26. Grammar study is the basis of students' listening ability.	91.9	8.1	1.91	0.57
27. Grammar study is the basis of speaking ability.	79.6	20.4	2.02	0.69
28. Learning grammar is not very beneficial as students can't apply grammar knowledge to spontaneous conversations with others.	53.0	47.0	2.51	0.73
29. Giving students more opportunities for communication practice leads them to naturally understand English grammar.	20.4	79.6	3.12	0.72
Overall			2.55	

The percentages and mean scores, as shown in Table 3, reveal that Turkish academics generally have a moderately positive view of grammar instruction as they rated the importance of teaching grammar with a mean of 2.55 which shows that they see grammar instruction beneficial for English language teaching. They believe that teaching grammar is effective on learners' general language improvement (item 18, 65.3%). Furthermore, they overwhelmingly agree that grammar study is effective for fostering students' English writing ability (item 22, 97.9%) and reading ability (item 23, 83.7%). However, they disagree that grammar study is the basis of fluent English (item 20, 81.6%), listening ability (item 26, 91.9%) and speaking ability (item 27, 79.6%). The responses to these items show that academics believe that there is a close link between learners' writing, reading ability and their grammatical knowledge, but there is not such a close link between learners' listening, speaking ability and their grammatical knowledge. The academics' agreement and disagreement on the item 25 are similar to each other. Nearly half of the academics (51.0%) agree that grammar study slows down students' English communicative competence, but nearly the other half disagree (49.0%) about this assumption. More than half of

the academics disagree that learning grammar is not very beneficial as students cannot apply grammar knowledge to real life conversations with other people (item 28, 53.0%). In addition, they mostly agree that giving students more opportunities for communication practice leads them to naturally understand English grammar (item 29, 79.6%). Based on this finding, it can be concluded that Turkish academics believe that grammar instruction is important for students' linguistic competence, but it is more beneficial if grammar teaching is integrated with communicative practices. They also disagree that there should be more formal study of grammar in the English language class (item 21, 61.2%). Turkish academics predominantly support the view that grammar study helps students to get high scores on the English examination (item 24, 83.7%).

Table 4. Students' General Views of English Grammar Instruction

N= 220	Totally Disagree/ Disagree (%)	Agree/ Totally Agree (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
18. My language improves quickly if I study and practice English grammar.	6.4	93.6	3.39	0.64
19. I generally like the study of grammar.	42.8	57.2	2.55	0.91
20. Grammar study is the basis of fluent English.	50.4	49.6	2.53	0.91
21. There should be more formal study of grammar in the English language class.	69.1	31.9	2.15	0.82
22. Grammar study is effective for fostering my English writing ability.	10.9	89.1	3.17	0.67
23. Grammar study is effective for fostering my reading ability.	32.7	67.3	2.75	0.81
24. Grammar study helps me to get high scores on the English examination.	5.9	94.1	3.40	0.64
25. Grammar study slows down my English communicative competence.	70	30	2.12	0.90
26. Grammar study is the basis of my listening ability.	65.9	34.1	2.18	0.83
27. Grammar study is the basis of my speaking ability.	48.2	51.8	2.47	0.81
28. Learning grammar is not very beneficial as I can't apply grammar knowledge to spontaneous conversations with others.	50.5	49.5	2.48	0.96
29. If I have more opportunities for communication practice, I can naturally understand English grammar.	22.3	77.7	3.05	0.85
Overall			2.75	

Table 4 shows that Turkish students, like their teachers, have a positive view of English grammar instruction. The overall score of their responses to the items related to the role of grammar instruction indicates that they attach importance to grammar instruction more than their teachers do (2.75 vs. 2.55). A considerable majority of the students believe that learning English grammar plays a crucial role in their language improvement (item 18, 93.6%). They find grammar knowledge effective on their writing (item 22, 89%) and reading ability (item 23, 67.3%) whereas they disagree that learning grammar is the basis of their listening ability (item 26, 65.9%). As for speaking skill, students do not show a strong agreement towards the role of grammar instruction (item 20, 49.6% and item 27, 51.8%). They generally like the study of grammar (item 19, 57.2%), but 69.1% of them do not seem to think that there should be more formal study of grammar in the English language class. They show a strong agreement that grammar study helps them to get high scores on the English examination (item 24, 94.1%). Students' views about the fact that having more opportunities for communication practice helps them naturally understand English grammar show a great similarity to their teachers' (77.7% for students and 79.6% for teachers).

Table 5. Paired Sample T-Test for the Comparison between Academics' Views of Explicit and Implicit Grammar Instruction

Dimension	Mean	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Explicit Instruction	3.02	.395	3.218	.002
Implicit Instruction	2.74	.363		

Table 6. Paired Sample T-Test for the Comparison between Students' Views of Explicit and Implicit Grammar Instruction

Dimension	Mean	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Explicit Instruction	3.16	.42	14.36	.000
Implicit Instruction	2.49	.45		

According to the results of paired samples t-tests, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between both academics' and their students' views towards explicit and implicit grammar instruction ( $p=.002$ ,  $p=.000<0.01$ ). Comparing the mean scores of explicit grammar instruction and implicit grammar instruction led to the conclusion that not only Turkish academics but also their students are in favour of explicit teaching grammar, since explicit grammar instruction received higher rating with a mean of 3.02 for teachers and 3.16 for students. In addition, the mean scores show that students favour explicit grammar instruction more than their teachers. Table 7 and 8 present the percentages and mean scores of participants' responses to each item related to explicit grammar instruction.

Table 7. Academics' Views of Explicit Grammar Instruction

N= 49	Totally Disagree/ Disagree (%)	Agree/ Totally Agree (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Through my explanations students are more able to understand English grammar.	2.0	98.0	3.36	0.52
2. Students learn English grammar better when I give them explanations of grammatical rules before they do the exercises.	10.2	89.8	3.20	0.61
3. Giving students grammar explanations is not helpful.	12.2	87.8	3.26	0.67
4. I believe when I give students explicit grammar explanations they will not forget the learnt grammar easily.	34.7	65.3	2.69	0.68
5. My explicit teaching helps students to understand English grammar.	8.2	91.8	3.12	0.52
6. Students can improve their grammatical accuracy through frequent practice of structures in the classroom.	6.1	93.9	3.26	0.56
7. Students need conscious knowledge of grammar in order to improve their language.	26.5	73.5	2.81	0.63
8. Explicit discussion of grammar rules by students is helpful for them.	16.3	83.7	2.95	0.61
9. Comparison and contrast of individual structures is helpful for students to learn grammar.	10.2	89.8	3.08	0.53
10. Teaching grammar produces language knowledge which students can use in natural communication.	40.8	59.2	2.65	0.72
11. Students need to be consciously aware of a structure's form and its function before they can use it proficiently.	32.7	67.3	2.83	0.68
Overall			3.02	

The highest mean score related to the explicit instruction (3.36) belongs to the item 1. 98% of the academics hold the belief that through their explanations students are more able to understand English grammar, because they believe that students need conscious knowledge of grammar in order to improve their language (item 7, 73.5%) and students need to be consciously aware of a structure's form and its function before they can use it proficiently (item 11, 67.3%). Item 2 and 3, which present the similar view with item 1, are also agreed by a great majority (item 2, 89.8% - item 3, 87.8%). Turkish academics are mostly in agreement that explicit discussion of grammar rules by students (item 8, 83.7%) and comparison and contrast of individual structures are helpful for students to learn grammar (item 9, 89.8%). In addition, 93.9% of the academics think that frequent practice of structures in the classroom is beneficial for improving students' grammatical accuracy (item 6, 93.9%). The findings show that academics view that students need conscious knowledge, explanation and frequent practice of grammar structures in order to improve their language.

Table 8. Students' Views of Explicit Grammar Instruction

N= 220	Totally Disagree/ Disagree (%)	Agree/ Totally Agree (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I can understand English grammar better through my teacher's explanations.	15	85	3.26	0.80
2. I learn English grammar better when my teacher gives me explanations of grammatical rules before I do the exercises.	5	95	3.47	0.60
3. My teacher's explanations about grammar are helpful for me.	6.8	93.2	1.43	0.68
4. When my teacher gives me explicit grammar explanations I will not forget the learnt grammar easily.	17.3	82.8	3.09	0.79
5. My teacher's explicit teaching helps me to understand English grammar.	7.8	92.3	3.34	0.63
6. I can improve my grammatical accuracy through frequent practice of structures in the classroom.	14.1	85.9	3.24	0.77
7. I need conscious knowledge of grammar in order to improve my English.	20	80	3.02	0.80
8. Explicit discussion of grammar rules with my classmates is helpful for me.	45	55	2.52	0.90
9. Comparison and contrast of individual structures is helpful for me to learn English grammar.	3.6	96.4	3.46	0.59
10. Learning grammar produces language knowledge which I can use in natural communication.	53.2	46.8	2.36	0.86
11. I need to be consciously aware of a structure's form and its function before I can use it proficiently.	3.2	96.8	3.49	0.59
Overall			3.16	

Most of the students agree that their teachers' explanations about English grammar are useful for them to understand the rules (item 1, 85%, item 3, 93.2% and item 5, 92.3%). 95 % of them agree that they need explicit explanations before they do the grammar exercises, and 85.9 % of them agree that frequent practice of structures in the classroom helps them improve their grammatical accuracy. A great majority of the students hold the belief that comparison and contrast of individual structures is helpful to learn English grammar (item 9, 96.4%), and conscious knowledge of structure is necessary to use it proficiently (item 11, 96.8%). However, 53.2% of them disagree that learning grammar provides them with the necessary knowledge which they can use in natural communication.

Table 9. Academics' Views of Implicit Grammar Instruction

N= 49	Totally Disagree/ Disagree (%)	Agree/ Totally Agree (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
12. I am confident that students can figure out the grammatical rules by themselves, without my explanation.	85.7	14.3	2.10	0.42
13. I prefer asking students to figure out the rules from a discussion with classmates.	51.0	49.0	2.53	0.64
14. I believe when my students figure out the grammatical rules by themselves they can remember these rules for a long time.	30.6	69.4	2.83	0.65
15. Students learn grammar successfully if it is presented within a complete text.	12.2	87.8	3.00	0.57
16. Students can learn grammar through exposure to language in natural use.	26.5	73.5	2.95	0.76
17. Participating in real-life tasks with language is the best way for students to develop their grammatical knowledge.	20.4	79.6	3.04	0.73
Overall			2.74	

In regard to implicit grammar teaching the overall mean score is 2.74. This shows that Turkish academics teaching English at preparatory school do not strongly oppose to teaching grammar implicitly. 69.4% of the academics believe that giving students the chance of figuring out the grammatical rules by themselves enables them to remember these rules for a long time (item 14). However, they do not believe that students can figure out the grammatical rules by themselves, without teacher's explanation (item 12, 85.7%). In this case, we can infer that Turkish academics believe that figuring out the grammatical rules by themselves is better for students, but they are not able to do this on their own without teacher's explanation. This is may be because of the poor level of preparatory school students. They predominantly agree that students learn grammar successfully if it is presented within a complete text (item 15, 87.8%). This finding shows that Turkish academics do not believe the effectiveness of teaching grammar in isolation. They also agree that students can learn grammar through exposure to language in natural use (item 16, 73.5%), and participating in real-life tasks with language is the best way for students to develop their grammatical knowledge (item 17, 79.6%). These findings indicate that academics mostly in agreement that practice of structures should be incorporated with real-life oriented tasks and communicative activities which expose students to language in natural use.

Table 10. Students' Views of Implicit Grammar Instruction

N= 220	Totally Disagree/ Disagree (%)	Agree/ Totally Agree (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
12. I am confident that I can figure out the grammatical rules by myself, without my teacher's explanation.	90.9	9.1	1.59	0.70
13. I prefer to figure out the rules from a discussion with my classmates.	88.6	11.4	1.72	0.69
14. When I figure out the grammatical rules by myself I can remember these rules for a long time.	39.5	60.5	2.71	0.87
15. I learn grammar successfully if it is presented within a complete text.	47.3	42.7	2.52	0.84
16. I can learn grammar through exposure to language in natural use.	21.4	78.6	3.17	0.85
17. Participating in real-life tasks with language is the best way for me to develop my grammatical knowledge.	13.6	86.4	3.21	0.78
Overall			2.49	

The overall mean score of students' responses to the items indicates that they are less in favour of implicit grammar instruction than their teachers (2.49 vs. 2.74). They do not believe that they can figure out grammar rules by themselves (item 12) or through a discussion with their classmates (item 13). However, they agree that they can remember the rules for a longer time if they figure out them by themselves (item 14, 60.5%). Like their teachers, Turkish students believe that exposure to language in natural use (item 16, 78.6%), and participating in real-life tasks with language (item 17, 86.4%) are effective in learning English grammar. In contrary to their teachers, students disagree that presenting grammar within a complete text is a successful way of grammar teaching (item 15).

#### 4. Qualitative Findings

In an attempt to understand the academics' and students' reasons for their preferences for either explicit or implicit grammar instruction, one open-ended item was added to the teacher questionnaire (*Which method of grammar instruction – explicit or implicit – would you consider more appropriate in the context of teaching English as a foreign language at preparatory school? Give at least two reasons why you think so.*). According to their responses, those who preferred explicit grammar instruction had the following reasons:

- Implementation
- . "Students may not be able to discover grammar rules by themselves or it may take them longer to understand grammar."
  - . "Implicit instruction may lead to misunderstandings. It may take too long time to correct these misunderstandings."
  - . "Explicit instruction is more practical for teachers, because s/he can check whether their students understood the rules through numerous exercises after having given explicit explanation."
  - . "It is easy to teach and test grammar through explicit instruction."
  - . "It is easy for teachers to know what they will teach and to find out if the students have got them properly through explicit teaching."
  - . "In explicit grammar teaching, it is easier to correct students' errors."



- . *“Explicit instruction is important for forming a reliable basis.”*
  - . *“If the rules are obvious for students, they will be able to go further step by step.”*
  - Confidence and Motivation
    - . *“Being aware of the structures of target language gives way to feel much more confident for learners with the assistance of explicit grammar instruction.”*
    - . *“Our students expect to learn grammar explicitly. When they have the opportunity to compare and contrast their mother tongue and target language, they are confident that they are learning.”*
    - . *“Students do not believe that they are learning when they are taught implicitly.”*
    - . *“If the students can’t understand the rules by themselves, they may be demotivated.”*
    - . *“When students spend too much time to find out grammar rules by themselves, they may get bored and less motivated.”*
  - Habits
    - . *“Explicit grammar teaching is appropriate to our students’ profile.”*
    - . *“Our students are accustomed to explicit teaching because at high schools teaching is generally explicit.”*
    - . *“Our students lack the necessary pre-existing knowledge in order to discover grammar rules by themselves.”*
  - Assessment and Evaluation
    - . *“Explicit grammar teaching is appropriate in our school, because the assessment and evaluation is based on grammar knowledge.”*
    - . *“Too much grammar knowledge is required in the exams.”*
  - Those who preferred implicit grammar instruction gave the following reasons:  
Retention
    - . *“Implicit grammar teaching lets the students learn English grammar by eliciting, and thus students do not forget the rules easily. If the students discover the rules by themselves, they will remember them for a long time.”*
  - Confidence and Motivation
    - . *“When the students discover rules by themselves, their self-confidence increases making them more willing to learn language.”*
    - . *“When the students are active in learning process, they are motivated.”*
  - The Role of Students
    - . *“If the students figure out grammar rules by themselves, they feel responsible for their own learning which makes them more active.”*
  - Communication
    - . *“Giving intensive explanations about grammar slows down language reflexes and fluency causing students to think about what structures they are using and why. In fact, when we speak our native language, we do not think or talk about the language, we just use it.”*
    - . *“Grammar should be taught through exposure to language in natural use, because language is learnt to convey the meaning we want.”*
    - . *“Even if students know numerous rules about English grammar, they are not able to put them into practice in real life.”*
- Students’ responses to the items *“I think learning grammar is/is not important to improve my English because...”* demonstrated that they see the study of grammar as an indispensable element in language learning. They mostly agree that learning grammar is important because it is necessary to use a language properly. They also believe that they need to learn English grammar because in their departments they will have to use it in official correspondences. Only a few respondents stated that learning grammar is not important as they learn English for communicative purposes and they do not use most of the grammar rules they learn while speaking. The students who responded to the item *“I prefer to learn grammar through my teacher’s explanations because...”* expressed the following opinions:
- Implementation
    - . *“I find it easy to learn grammar through my teacher’s explanations.”*
    - . *“I can learn grammar rules properly through my teacher’s explicit explanations; otherwise I may misunderstand some of them.”*
    - . *“I can understand English grammar better and more quickly when my teacher explains them.”*
    - . *“It is more difficult and time consuming to discover grammar rules by myself.”*
    - . *“When my teacher explains the basic grammar rules, I can improve them through practice.”*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. <i>“My teacher’s explicit explanations prevent our misunderstanding.”</i></li><li>. <i>“My teacher knows the best way to teach me grammar.”</i></li></ul>
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. <i>“When my teacher explains grammar rules, I will remember them for a long time.”</i></li></ul>
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. <i>“I feel confident when my teacher gives me explicit explanations before I do the exercises.”</i></li><li>. <i>“If I know grammar rules, I feel confident when I read, write and speak in English.”</i></li><li>. <i>“When my teacher gives explanations to me about grammar, I am confident that I have got the correct knowledge.”</i></li></ul>
Student Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. <i>“I am not proficient enough to figure out English grammar without my teacher’s explanations.”</i></li><li>. <i>“I can’t understand grammar on myself because English grammar is very different from my native language.”</i></li></ul>
Student Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. <i>“Even if I figure out grammar rules on myself, I need my teacher’s explanations to crosscheck them.”</i></li><li>. <i>“I want to hear explanations from my teacher because I don’t know how to reach the correct information.”</i></li><li>. <i>“I need my teacher’s explanations because English grammar is very different from the grammar of my native language.”</i></li></ul>
Exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>. <i>“I can get higher marks in the exams if my teacher explains grammatical structures and we practice them in the class.”</i></li><li>. <i>“Grammar knowledge is important to get high marks in our exams.”</i></li></ul>

Very few students responded to the item *“I prefer to figure out grammar rules on myself because...”*, and all of them gave the same reason. They expressed that they learn English as a tool for communication, therefore learning grammar in isolation is not helpful for them; and they believe that they can learn grammar better if it is presented through communicative activities and real-life tasks.

## 5. Conclusion

This study has attempted to explore Turkish academics’ and their students’ general views towards the role and importance of grammar instruction and their preferences for either explicit or implicit grammar instruction in EFL teaching/learning context at the preparatory school of a state university in Turkey. The results obtained from the teacher and student questionnaires show that both Turkish academics and their students have a positive view of grammar instruction. They believe that grammar instruction is an important part of language teaching and it cannot be thought separate from language teaching process. According to their points of view, grammar knowledge is especially crucial for reading and writing skills whereas they do not perceive such a strong link between grammar and speaking or listening skill. Students hold a stronger belief that grammar knowledge is essential to use a language properly.

With regard to their preferences for explicit or implicit grammar teaching, not only academics but also students seem to favour explicit grammar instruction over implicit grammar instruction. Academics stated that explicit explanation of grammar rules is indispensable as the students of preparatory school lack the background to be able to discover grammar rules by themselves, and they are accustomed to explicit instruction because of the education system in Turkey. Students supported this thought through their responses to the open-ended items. They also expressed that hearing the rules explicitly help them feel more confident and motivated. However, they disagreed that there should be more formal study of grammar in language classes which shows that students are satisfied with the grammar study provided for them at preparatory school.

The participant academics believe that teaching grammar rules in isolation is not effective for retention and fluent communication. Explicit grammar teaching should be integrated with real-life oriented tasks and communicative activities. Students should be exposed to language in natural use. This finding is also supported by that of Spada (1986, cited in Ellis, 2002) who concluded that formal instruction may work best in promoting acquisition when it is linked with opportunities for natural communication.

The overall findings of this study suggest that Turkish academics and their students agree about the role and way of grammar instruction at the School of Foreign Languages which was selected as the setting of this study. This finding has a crucial importance because if teachers and students share similar thoughts in language learning classes, it is possible to meet students’ needs; and by this means it is easier to increase students’ motivation to language learning. Seeing that teachers’ and students’ views about grammar teaching are

compatible at the School of Foreign Languages, the possibility of meeting students' needs seems to be quite high.

The findings of this study suggest that grammar teaching should not be considered separate from language teaching. Teachers should explicitly explain structure to their students especially when they feel that the rules are difficult to understand by themselves. In addition, frequent practice of grammar rules in class can be helpful for students. On the other hand, both teachers and students agree that teaching grammar in isolation of context is not efficient for meaningful learning. Therefore, teachers should integrate grammar topics with real-life tasks, and encourage their students to take part in conversations in natural setting.

It was also underlined that exams are mostly based on grammar knowledge. The content of exams should be revised in a way that makes it possible to assess students' productive skills as well as their grammar knowledge if the purpose is to teach language for communication.

The findings of this study are restricted to the views of 49 academics and 220 students at the preparatory school of a Turkish state university. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize these findings to other universities. Due to the lack of similar studies at university level, to conduct further research studies with similar samplings will make English courses more effective and more reliable research implications for pedagogy.

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### Notes

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