Effect of Explicit and Implicit Pedagogical Instructions in the Acquisition of Definite, Indefinite and Zero Articles

Muhaammad Rizwan[†] and Sumaira Akhtar[†]

[†]M.Phil, Applied Linguistics University of Management and Technology Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

The focal point of this study is to see the impact of two pedagogical approaches namely explicit and implicit in acquiring grammatical accuracy specifically with regard to English articles. The nature of the study is quantitative and the researcher makes an experiment using comparison group design by employing acceptability judgment questionnaire comprising ten multiple choice items. The population of this study is 40 10th grade male students taken from Educators Elite Campus Lahore, Pakistan using simple random sampling scheme. These students were divided into two groups each comprising twenty students. A pretest was taken before giving instructions in order to assess their proficiency level with regard to English articles usage. After that, Group A students received explicit type of instructions on English articles (definite, indefinite and zero articles) and group B received implicit type of instructions for two weeks. T-test was employed to compare the performance of two groups. It was observed that in the posttest the group A that received explicit type of instructions showed better results than the group that received implicit type of instructions. The higher mean score refers to the better performance in the posttest. The study draws the conclusion that teachers should use explicit way of instructions to develop grammatical accuracy in ESL and EFL learners to make them proficient.

Keywords: Pedagogical approaches, grammatical accuracy etc.

Introduction

In the field of second language acquisition, there has long been a polemical but interesting issue for the last few decades among researchers and language instructors regarding grammar instruction coupled with the issue if grammar instruction is necessary for ESL learners, that is to say, the focal point in this debate has been on two significant questions: whether grammar instruction is indispensable and how grammar instruction should be given to ESL learners.

On account of the controversy among researchers and teachers regarding these two issues grammar instruction went through certain ups and downs. Consequently, the focus is no longer on the necessity of grammar instruction rather on the explicit-implicit approaches and the teaching of grammar has captured more attention of the researchers and teachers. Numerous empirical studies have been conducted to resolve the issue which pedagogical approach is better in the teaching of grammar and explicit-implicit approaches have been the centre of the debate going on among language theorists and researchers (Gao & Dai, 2004; Scott, 1989; Scott, 1990; Tian, 2005; Zhou, 1989). A number of empirical studies have also been conducted if there is any interface between explicit grammatical knowledge and implicit on

(Green & Hetch, 1992; Gao & Dai, 2004; cited in Xiao-fei & Tian, 2008; Zhou, 1989).

What is grammar and what is its main goal? To Rob Bastone (1994), it is a formal mechanism and dynamic resource employed both by users and learners in different ways and times to signal meanings. Huang (2005) is of the view; the prime object of grammar instruction is to develop linguistic competence in learners so that they may utilize it as a tool for comprehension, create oral and written discourse in an efficient, effective and appropriate manner. In the field of SLA, there is diversity in the approaches to facilitate second language learners in different contexts e.g. three-fold proposal of Ellis (1994) to engage ESL learners to rely on the requirements of the situation of learning: providing formal rules in an explicit way of instruction, selective explicit learning with regard to searching for information and then the testing of hypotheses, or implicit or unconscious-automatic way of acquiring structural material derived from experience of specific instances.

On the other hand, Winitz (1996) proposed four types of approaches in connection with L2 grammar instruction: the explicit in the learning of target language structures, implicit way of L2 learning structures, implicit way in the learning of L2 structures, implicit coupled with explicit learning of the target language structures and a

preliminary phase of implicit instruction to acquire target language structures for the enhancement of explicit learning of formal rules.

Any piece of creative writing produced by ESL learners, according to Sinclair (1991, cited in Master, 2002, p.332), there are three things that give the impression that the writer is going through the process of second language learning: tense and aspect, subject-verb agreement and the use of articles (a, an, the). In the process of L2 learning, the most difficult and most challenging thing for ESL learners is to comprehend a concept in its totality that does not actually exist in their first language. Learning the skill and proficiency to use English articles is such an obstacle for Pakistani learners of English because their first language is Urdu that has no definite article system and this is the reason that they face a lot of difficulties in this domain. Even the most competent learners having ability to use complicated grammatical structures cannot use article system accurately. Why does the English article system appear them to be so challenging and intricate? The researcher has some assumptions in this regard:

1) Pakistani ESL learners' first language being Urdu that has no equivalent article system as compared to the English language.

2). The learners just try to convey their meaning keeping in mind verb forms, subject- verb agreement and other grammatical features of text and do not pay heed to the accurate usage of articles. That is why, they are not aware of the errors committed in articles usage.

3) In English language classrooms in Pakistan especially at school level which is the focus of this study, rules regarding articles are not the focus of teachers' attention. So the learners do not try to know how to use articles consciously and in an accurate way.

4) It is worthy to mention that it is difficult for learners to know which remedial work is required on their part for amelioration even if they become aware of their errors regarding articles. But for the guidance of the teacher and formal rules, no amelioration may be possible.

Mostly the students at school level are least aware of the usage of articles, though their usage of English articles is correct in the material crammed from help books. If they are assigned some unseen sentences to supply correct articles, they will not be able to perform this activity in a right way. Directed by the aforementioned assumptions, the researcher conducted an experimental study along with the notion whether explicit or implicit type of grammar instruction in the accurate usage of articles is effective for second language learners. In explicit type of instruction, learners focus on learning some rules during the process of their learning and develop metalinguistic awareness towards the rules; it is a deductive process. In implicit type of instruction, learners are supposed to deduce the rules without being aware of them, that is why, it is inductive process which focuses on incidental learning. In order to see the impact of these two approaches, I have selected one

grammatical aspect namely definite, indefinite and zero articles usage. This study is conducted on 10th grade male students of Educators Elite Campus Johar Town Lahore, Pakistan.

Background

It widely believed that instruction is prerequisite for foreign language learning. In Pakistan, English is not the native language rather it is an official language. Though it is taught as a compulsory subject from school levels in our education system yet it has often been observed that majority of teachers do not focus on grammar rather they prefer to teach the lessons, stories etc. in English medium schools. In other words, we may say that they focus genres and follow product approach and believe that the students can learn grammar on their own from the texts they are taught, that is why, genres and speaking skill are more focused. The result is that the students have to confront problems in the domains of grammar and the commit errors in and outside classrooms. Having identified the errors of learners, the teachers can adopt one of the two widely known pedagogical approaches namely explicit and implicit.

Statement of the problem

It has often been observed that most ESL learners at English medium schools confront problems in using English articles (definite, indefinite and zero articles). They can memorize sentences to which they are exposed and their usage of articles is most of the time accurate in this regard. But they commit errors in the same level of unseen sentences when given to them to supply correct articles. It means that they lack grammatical accuracy and the problem lies in the pedagogical approach through which they are taught because the teachers believing that the students can learn grammatical knowledge on their own without formal instruction what is generally termed as implicit knowledge. Therefore, they focus more on genres and consequently the students go on committing errors in their writing skills. This study is actually an investigation into the best suitability of the pedagogical approach opting for explicit or implicit instructional approach.

Objectives of the Study

The prime object of the study is to provide empirical data on the impact of explicit-implicit instructions to ESL learners at school level in order to enhance their ability in using articles. This study has been conducted to give long term benefits to teachers and learners and this is the reason this study has been conducted at school level because this can assist the students when they pass out school for higher studies, they can perform in a good way. It is equally beneficial for ESL and EFL teachers as it can assist them in knowing what type of instruction is better

for the learners at school levels; it can make the students realize the significance of the accurate usage of articles. Above all, this study is going to help the upcoming teachers in their adoption of pedagogical approaches.

Significance of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to make learners proficient in using English articles in an accurate way. Generally it is well thought-out that articles are of less importance in English language syntactic structure but the reality is otherwise. Inability to use articles in an exact way creates numerous ambiguities in oral and written discourse; therefore the importance of articles usage cannot be disregarded.

Research Questions:

1) Do ESL learners who receive explicit type of instruction in acquiring English   articles perform in a better way than those receiving implicit type of instruction?
2) How far implicit type of instruction leads ESL learners towards grammatical   accuracy   in   acquiring accurate usage of English articles?

Literature Review

The object of this study is to disclose the effect of explicit and implicit approaches in getting grammatical accuracy on the part of ESL learners. Therefore it is worthwhile to define explicit and implicit approaches, their significance and usefulness, their comparison with each other, explicit and implicit knowledge and the interface debate between these two pedagogical approaches.

What is Explicit Approach?

In the domain of SLA, multifarious definitions have been provided by the researchers in connection with an explicit approach. Ellis (1994) enumerates that explicit learning means "conscious searching, building and then testing the hypotheses: assimilating a rule following explicit instruction". To Dekeyser (1995) formal instruction is explicit if grammatical rules are explained in instructional treatment, it is a deductive process and if learners are directed to attend to particular forms and make an effort to generate the rules on their own, it is an inductive process. According to Williams (1998) explicit learning refers to a situation in which the learners have the intention to learn something and become aware of what they have learnt. The view of Rosa and O'Neill (1999) is based on cognitive psychology; they explain explicit learning as "the condition in which learners are instructed to look for rules underlying the input". Furthermore, Winitz (1996) defines explicit way of acquiring grammatical knowledge as a process of learning a language in which second language grammatical rules are learned formally. Therefore, an explicit way of instruction

involves the rules of language that give demonstration of language rules straightforwardly or stimulates learners to find the rules on their own (Catherine, 2003 as cited in Kong, 2005). An explicit approach may be defined as a conscious way of searching for the rules of language (Robinson, 1997).

Why an Explicit Approach?

Numerous research studies have investigated various lucid merits and significant functions of conscious way of learning in SLA (Green & Hecht, 1992). In his Monitor Theory, Krashen (1982) opines that "learned grammatical principles function to edit or monitor language output that has been generated by acquired rules" (as cited in Winitz, 1996, p.3). Moreover, "conscious learning is only available as a monitor to modify an utterance after it has been initiated by the unconscious acquired system" (krashen, 1982, p.4, as cited in Green & Hecht, 1992). According to Schmidt (1995) "explicit conscious noticing is necessary to subsequent learning, and therefore learners in all conditions who claimed to have noticed rules should outperform those who do not" (as cited in Robinson, 1997,p.56). It goes beyond any speck of doubt that an explicit approach can assist learners not only in drawing their attention but also pedagogical grammar is absolutely and vividly defined. Explicit grammar instruction specifically with regard to purely communicative driven approaches may provide three significant portions of the grammar lesson: explicit way of grammar instruction preferably at the outset of the lesson, activities of communication that contain a number of usages of the instructed form and the activities that direct learners' attention to the grammar form instructed and then encountered communicatively (Doughty & Williams, 1998).

Furthermore, explicit instruction can be helpful for learners in acquiring high degree of accuracy in the target language; it can also activate their metalinguistic knowledge of the target language structures (Fotos, 2002). Finally, if the learners do not receive explicit instruction, they go on using incorrect forms (fossilization) constantly (Klapper & Reese, 2003). It   is important to mention here that second language learners can get benefit from explicit instruction approach over implicit meaning focused approach or over approaches that are purely communicative-driven.

In SLA, the experimental studies that were conducted over the past few years made an investigation into the comparative impacts of an explicit versus implicit approach. In these studies, there is found an acknowledgement, usefulness and superiority of explicit instruction over implicit way of instruction (Cadierno-Lopez, 1992; Van Patten & Cadierno, 1993; Dekeyser, 1997; Rosa & O'Neill, 1999; Spada, 1997). The outcomes of these empirical studies indicate that explicit instruction hasproved to be more effective in terms of quantity, accuracy and progress rate than implicit instructional

approach in so far as classroom-based instructional settings are concerned. So a lion's share of the research has provided evidence that L2 learners' rate of using correct forms is greatly enhanced when they receive explicit explanation of grammatical rules (e.g. Sheen, 2003; Klapper & Reese, 2003).

Implicit Versus Explicit Knowledge

Though numerous researchers in recent times have made an investigation into what type of relationship is found between two types of linguistic knowledge namely explicit and implicit knowledge and how second language learners attain this sort of linguistic knowledge and organize it in the brain yet it is generally agreed that in the process of L2 learning, knowledge of grammar is assimilated both implicitly and explicitly (Bialystok, 1981; R.Ellis, 1993). It is said that in second language acquisition domain L2 learners may possess two types of linguistic knowledge in a separate and independent way. According to Bialystok (1981) the disparity that is found between explicit and implicit knowledge has a long and well-accepted history. To Reber (1993) there is no absolute disparity between implicit and explicit knowledge, but he agrees that the differences that are found between these types of knowledge have great significance to draw the distinction because it serves as an important theoretical construct.

Explicit Knowledge

Explicit knowledge refers to the knowledge which is conscious and analyzable in its nature (Bialystok, 1981; R.Eliis, 1993). It is enumerated with regard to awareness that refers to conscious mental representations that a learner forms; this knowledge is "analyzed", "abstract", and "explanatory" (R.Ellis, 1984, p.84). On account of its being analyzable, it can be divided into various categories (R. Ellis, 1994) and organized (Bialystok, 1981). This knowledge is also related to second language grammar and its rules can be consciously recognized by second language learners in an analyzed form to report to report their metalinguistic knowledge (Ellis,2004). Explicit knowledge with regard to second language is associated mostly with the process that involves efforts and at times it is deemed to be synonymous for declarative knowledge (Hulstijin, 2005). Rod Ellis (2005)   is of the view, explicit knowledge of L2 has some peculiar traits: it is conscious, declarative, the rules of L2 learners are mostly imprecise and wrong; it is accessible through controlled processing, any task related to language when appears to be difficult to the learners may exploit explicit knowledge and above all it is learnable.

Implicit Knowledge

On the contrary, the nature of implicit knowledge of L2 is that it is intuitive and automatic; it can be accessed in a rapid way and it can be used in an unplanned language activity (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). It cannot be claimed that implicit way of knowledge acquisition is a total failure; there are cases where learning has taken place but not acquisition. Even the most competent learners have been able to master a small subset of L2 grammar rules (as cited in Cadierno-Lopez, 1992).

Implicit knowledge is also information that is usable in automatic and spontaneous language tasks but it based on what the native speaker's competence is comprised of (Brown, 2000). We can determine implicit knowledge by examining how the learners make use of it in oral and written language (Ellis, 2005). It is a sort of knowledge of which development is apart from awareness of the mechanisms that are involved in its development (N.Ellis, 1993). There has occurred debate for a long time about the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge and particularly about the usefulness and importance of explicit knowledge to the L2 learner who is instructed through it. For a long period, researchers and teachers have been questioning if the process of learning lends itself to explicit knowledge development and if it assists the learners in their actual production of language (Alderson et al, 1997; Green & Hecht, 1992; Han & Ellis, 1998; Seliger, 1979). This debate related the significance of explicit knowledge in connection with instructed learners is reflected is reflected in the various language pedagogical methodologies that were employed in the last century. The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) laid great emphasis on deductive learning and it was widely used until the Second World War (as cited in Tucker, 2007).This approach was based on the concept that explicit knowledge can be helpful in fluency (N.Ellis, 1993).

Theories of Implicit Learning IPA Theory

The IPA (internal processing algorithm) theory proposed by Pawel Lewicki (1986) explains the attainment and utilization of knowledge acquired in an implicit way. It deals with the representation of memory and the co-variation that exists between two or more events in the environments. It is assumed that IPAs that are constructed refer to the process which is omnipresent and utterly unconscious process (Lewicki, 1986, p. 29). It is difficult to conjecture the time, place and the way through which a cognitive algorithm is formed. The idea stated in the IPA theory is that an IPA if once developed is not subjected to change or control by employing conscious processes. For the discovery of the existence of an IPA, there is only one way and that is the direct and systematic observation of one's behavior such as preferences, emotions, phobias etc. Thus IPAs are personal and can be brought under control through what we find sad, funny and emotionally appealing; it means that each IPA holds the characteristic of being constant in its state of functional readiness (Lewicki, 1986).   Defining the internal processing algorithm (IPA) theory, Corballis

(1998) states that it has no generativity because IPAs do not comprise of components rather of wholes that can be reunited in order to create varied responses and this is the reason they do not hold creative capabilities. So one thing is quite obvious from the description given above that there is found fixity in the IPAs and new responses in any context are not ever performed by utilizing implicit knowledge.

The IPA theory resides doubt about the interactions that are claimed to be found between the processes involving implicit-explicit learning. Since IPA theory stresses the fact that its aspects such as acquisition and later operation in their totality constitute its distinctive central feature and the IPA is an unconscious process. So from this theoretical approach regarding implicit learning it can be safely drawn the epilogue that no synergistic impacts can be found between these two modes of leaning (Lewicki, 1986, p. 32).

Abstractionist Theory

The claim put forward by abstractionist theorists is that it is through the induction of rules governing the domain of a complex structure and not the conscious reflection which causes the occurrence of implicit knowledge (Reber, 1989). There area number of studies that have demonstrated transfer and these studies are cited by these theorists as an evidence to support this view (Knowlton & Squire, 1994; Mathews et al., 1989; Reber, 1969). Transfer refers to the ability of applying knowledge in a continuous and accurate way when there occurs a change in the surface structure before the testing phase but the underlying rules do not change (Reber, 1969). The belief held by abstractionist theorists is that in transfer ability process the underlying rules are learned from the grammar and these rules do not display just surface structure similarities (Mathews et al., 1989; Reber, 1969). The contention of abstractionist theorists at the outset was that implicit learners acquire implicit knowledge because they have unconscious mental representation of rules that are used by the researchers to create letter strings. So it was believed that this representative knowledge was acquired, stored and then employed to guide responses (Reber, 1969).

In so far as the concept of generativity with regard to the knowledge acquired implicitly is concerned, the abstractionist theory in sharp contrast to the IPA theory accepts this notion. The abstract rules that create a mental representation, the occurrence of special examples (Manza & Reber, 1997) and partial memories (Mathews, 1991) can be useful in the recombining, manipulation of rules and memories to create new stimuli. This is the real essence of generativity and creativity that was put forward by Corballis (1991).

As to the possible interactions between explicit-implicit learning, the abstractionist theory displays a green signal to it. Both Reber et al. (1980) and Mathews et al. (1989) have made experiments to investigate such interactions. Reber et al. drew the conclusion from his experiment that the participants if exposed first to explicit training and thereafter to implicit training would display the best performance. On the contrary, Mathews et al. proved from his experiment that the participants if exposed to implicit training and then followed by explicit one would show the best performance. It is most likely that the varying outcomes of these two experiments are due to the fact that different methods and different grammars were used to undertake the experimental processes. But the conclusion drawn by these experiments approves the idea that the combination of implicit-explicit training methods brings about better performance.

Exemplar Theory

The exemplar theory was proposed by Brooks and Vokey (1991) in connection with implicitly acquired knowledge. Brooks stressed the idea that when a learner is debunked to a representative stimulus from a structured domain, the memory stores the exemplars that are committed to memory. So the surface structure of the strings of letter is stored in the memory in an exact way as it is received in the process of training and no conscious attempt has to be made for abstract recording. When the process of testing goes on, the learners while observing a string compare it with the strings already stored in the memory. The letter string is considered as grammatical if the learners decide on their own that a testing string has close affinity with the strings stored in the memory. However, if they do not find any similarity between the testing and stored string, they deem it to be ungrammatical.

According to the exemplar theorists, the concept of generativity with regard to novel strings of letter is not feasible. The explanation lies in the fact that the exemplar theory stores and encodes whole strings of letters precluding it from meeting as is claimed by Corballis (1991) in his definition of generativity. Since whole letter strings are only stored in the memory, no individual components are there to recombine in order to produce new strings of letter. Moreover the exemplar theory prognosticates about the existence of an interaction to-be found between explicit mode of learning and implicit mode of learning. It is through encoding that explicitly acquired knowledge may affect the way we encode stimuli that influences the implicitly acquired knowledge (Whittlesea &b Dorken, 1993). But the mode of learning in an implicit domain can never affect the mode of explicit learning as it solely produces data base strings in the memory. Therefore, the exemplar theory makes the prediction about the interaction between implicit-explicit learning modes but in one direction only.

Interface Debate

The claim of interface hypothesis is that explicit knowledge can be converted into implicit knowledge by

practicing specific features of second language (Ellis, 2005, p.54). The connections between implicit and explicit knowledge of second language have been investigated with regard to three cognitive perspectives: there is no interface position; there is strong interface position and there is weak interface position. As for the first position of interface supported by Krashen's (1982) Monitor Theory of SLA, it is based on the concept that explicit and implicit knowledge are two separate ideas; it strongly rejects the idea that explicit knowledge can be converted into implicit one. According to Andringa (2005) the no interface position is the outcome of the parallelism that is found between first and second language.

The weak interface position is based on the idea that implicit and explicit knowledge are systems that stand poles apart, but formal instruction can be beneficial if it is timed in an appropriate way so that it may bring about to make explicit knowledge into implicit one; it can only be possible when the learner is ready developmentally (Andringa, 2005). According to the strong position of interface, explicit or learned knowledge can not solely be derived from implicit knowledge but it can also be converted into implicit or acquired knowledge; it can automotize the learners in using new rules through practice (Cadierno-lopez, 1992; Ellis,2005). But there is found disagreement among the supporters of this interface position; they raise the questions what kinds of practice is required to facilitate the learners in a better way in order to transform explicit knowledge into implicit one and whether it is a mechanical practice or it needs to be communicative in nature (Ellis, 2005).

In a nutshell, automotization processes are stressed by the strong interface position whereas the weak interface position shows some probability related to the interface between explicit and implicit knowledge but it posits certain constraints. The no interface position describes explicit and implicit as two separate systems of knowledge (George, 2008).

Significance of Accurate Usage of Articles

The English article system causes numerous problems for the ESL learners whose first language does not have an equivalent article structure. In so far as Pakistani ESL learners are concerned, their first language is Urdu which is article less language and this is why they mostly commit errors in this domain. Various techniques and approaches are employed to overcome this difficulty: countability, identification of the specific usages of articles in English etc.

Though the errors occurring in the use of articles do not put any impediment in communication process, a lot of learners perhaps have the feeling that the effort they have to do in learning the article system accurately is greater than the benefits they can gain. However, in so far as academic writing is concerned, a high degree of accuracy is required on the part of ESL learners; accurate usage of article system indicates not only the writer's

language competence and mastery but the exactness of thought and expression. While writing the imperfect control of the writer on articles may reflect imperfect knowledge of the target language structure and the impression goes that that the writer does not have adequate grasp of his subject (Master,1997, p. 216).

To Hewson (1972, P. 131), in English discourse, there are ten most frequent words including definite and indefinite articles. According to Sinclair (1991, in Master, 2002, p. 332) *the* is the most frequent word and *a* is the fifth most frequent word. It means that the frequency of definite and indefinite articles puts a wide-ranging impact on speech styles, expression and proficiency and ensures increased level of accuracy on the part of ESL learners.

Learners almost use articles in a random way (Yamada & Matsuura, 1982, in Butler, 2002, p. 216).   The concept held by a few teachers is that English article system is too intricate to acquire for the learners; no formal rules can be taught in this regard (Krech & Driver, 1996). On the contrary, (Master, 1997, p.216) opines that formal instruction may put a positive influence and a lot of teachers provide rules to the learners about the accurate usage of articles. Swales and Feak (1994) are of the view, the use of articles is frequently engaged with academic writing but it seems to be difficult to formulate certain rules.

The English Article System

Articles are actually the determiners that not solely affect the meaning of the noun but also make it lucid by showing which thing is being pointed at (Alexander, 1998, p. 55). Thomson and Martinet (1986, pp. 15-22) classify English articles into two categories, *definite* and *indefinite*. However, Quirk and Greenbaum (1987) make one more addition in the category, *zero* article. The English article system appears to be difficult to ESL learners; one of the most appropriate to teach articles is the notion of countability (Butler, 2002, p.745). Nouns can be divided in English in two categories, *countable* and *uncountable.* But the problem still rests with fact that a few of English nouns can be either countable or uncountable in accordance with their meaning such as *experience* (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973, p. 61). So the concept of countability is fundamental, it is not an easy one to overcome the problem in a straight way.

Having identified a noun being countable or uncountable, its user should then decide if an article is required in a sentence or a phrase; it follows that the second criterion to determine the article usage is definiteness. Though there are languages that contain the notion of definiteness yet they do not have article system e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Urdu etc. (Ramsey, 1987, p. 66). Hawkin (1978, p. 130) describes that the definite article informs the hearer that the thing that is referred to is a shared set member; it guides the learner to have an access to the right set to relate the referent. The study of Liu and Gleason (2002, p. 16) indicates the fact that the

students at the outset perhaps overuse the article in spite of the instructions being given to them and eventually this overuse is overcome. Liu and Gleason (2002, p.5) go on to say that there may be generic and non-generic use of *the* and non-generic use that is also termed as "cultural use" is most tedious for the learners.

The indefinite articles, *a, an* being restricted to singular and countable nouns are perhaps less difficult than definite article *the.* Bickerton (1981, p. 147) states that "indefinite really means presumed unknown to the listener". Therefore, indefinite articles are used with those nouns that are not mentioned before and also with generic nouns. They may also be used with uncountable nouns (Master, 1997, p. 225) for a "boundary-creating effect" as for instance, "high-grade steel" that refers to steel of good quality. But the identification issue is a problem for ESL learners whether a noun belongs to the countable or uncountable category (Master, 1997, p. 218).

The zero articles may also be problematic for the ESL learners. For instance, Master (1997, p. 221) divides the zero articles into two: the zero article and the null article. The zero article is phonetically null and it is used before uncountable and plural nouns such as "sand" (There was sand on the beach everywhere).   The use of Null articles is connected with singular countable nouns and proper nouns. Another additional problem caused by the null article for the learners is its frequent use in scientific writing (as in "use of this experiment implies…"). But for the purpose of this research study, zero article   refers to Master's "zero" and "null" article; its use lies in the situation where a definite or indefinite article is not used.

There are situations where the probability of the usage of a definite or an indefinite article lies. Hewson (1972, p. 73) presents the following instances: "A table is a useful article of furniture" and "The table is a useful article of furniture". The first is the typical on and the second instance is general and universal. The construction Article + Noun + of with reference to definite or indefinite is used where something has already been mentioned as a singular occurrence or part of a whole as in "as a result of this".

Methodology

The nature of this study is quantitative; there are two experimental groups of equal number of participants. One group received explicit type of instructions and the other one received implicit instructions.

Research Design

It is an experimental study and the researcher has used comparison group design in which the participants were randomly assigned to both groups with treatment differing among the groups. I took a pretest and then a posttest after treatment to compare their performance in both the tests.

Population and Sample

I selected forty participants using simple random sampling scheme from The Educators Elite Campus Johar Town, Lahore. The entire population comprised 10th grade male students and their ages ranged 15-17 years. They were divided into two groups and each group comprised twenty students in all. These participants studied English as a compulsory subject from grade one and it was expected that they possessed the necessary knowledge about the English language, however, their proficiency level was lower as compared to the higher classes.

Instrument

In order to examine the ability of 10th grade male students of The Educators Elite Campus Johar Town Lahore, regarding definite, indefinite and zero articles, I used a questionnaire of acceptability judgment that comprised ten multiple choice items. It was a pen pencil based test and the students were not put under any time pressure; they were allowed to take as much time as they needed. The items for pretest and posttest were composed by the researcher in one go and then they were randomly divided for pretest and posttest lest the pretest items should become easy and the posttest items should become complex because this may affect the results of the study.

Procedure

This study focuses on the implicit-explicit debate concerning one of the most advantageous pedagogical techniques in case of English article acquisition for ESL learners. In order to judge the proficiency level of the participants, a pretest comprising ten multiple choice items was conducted, but before that some demographic information was taken by the researcher regarding age, gender, grade etc. in his face to face interaction with the participants. After the pretest, the selected forty students were divided randomly in two groups and they were given treatment regarding the usage of definite, indefinite and zero articles for two weeks in which group A received instructions in an explicit way and the group B received instructions in an implicit way. After that, the students were taken posttest by using a questionnaire of acceptability judgment based on ten multiple choice items that were related to the accurate usage of English article system.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data was collected numerically and analyzed statistically by using SPSS 16. As this study uses comparison group design, T-test was used to get results which have been presented in the bar given below in which the mean scores secured by explicit group and implicit group have been compared to assess which sort of instruction has been better for 10th grade ESL learners in grammar accuracy. The highest mean score of one group in comparison with the other indicates better performance in the posttest.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
pos_test	Equal variances assumed	4.701	.036	5.339	38	.000	2.40000	.44956	1.48991	3.31009
	Equal variances not assumed			5.339	32.017	.000	2.40000	.44956	1.48429	3.31571
pre_test	Equal variances assumed	.203	.655	.897	38	.375	.55000	.61291	-.69077	1.79077
	Equal variances not assumed			.897	36.882	.375	.55000	.61291	-.69201	1.79201

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Explicit	20	8.9000	1.07115	.23952
	Implicit	20	6.5000	1.70139	.38044
Pretest	Explicit	20	6.4500	1.76143	.39387
	Implicit	20	5.9000	2.10013	.46960

Group Statistics
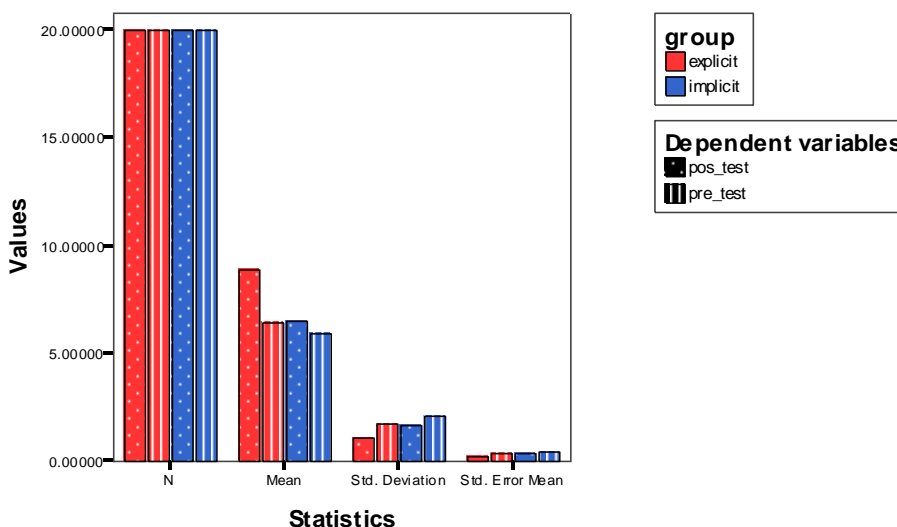
The table given above shows that in the pretest, the mean score of explicit group is 6.4500 while the mean score of implicit group is 5.900 which is less than the mean score of explicit group. The Standard Deviation of implicit Group in pretest is 2.10013 and the Standard Deviation of explicit Group in pre test is 1.76143. The pretest was conducted to check the proficiency level of the participants. In the posttest, situation is different, in posttest the mean of explicit group is 8.900 and the mean of implicit group is 6.500. The Standard Deviation of implicit Group in post test is 1.7039 and the Standard Deviation of explicit Group in post test is 1.07115.

In this bar we can see the difference between the explicit and implicit group. There is not much difference regarding the learners' performance in the pr-test but in the post- test we can see that the explicit group shows greater improvement and more significant results in posttest than the implicit group. The analysis clearly shows that the explicit group is performing better after receiving treatments. The explicit group received conscious knowledge and instructions regarding the use of articles. They were told the rules directly and in a formal way. So they had enough knowledge about the rules and it was easy for them to respond to questionnaire. This stands in complete harmony with what is said by Spada (1997) that explicit instructions show better results. My first research question 'Do ESL learners who receive explicit type of instruction in acquiring English articles perform in a better way than those receiving implicit type of instruction'? is right

because the findings of the study provide an ample proof of it. The other research question is negated as it proved to be insignificant and the findings don't support its validity.

Recommendations

This study was conducted at school level regarding the effect of implicit and explicit instructions in grammar accuracy. But it is suggested that a longitudinal study at intermediate and graduation level can show lasting benefits as it will involve different grade and age group. I restricted this study to only one grammatical aspect that is English articles; it is also suggested that involving other complex grammatical areas such as tense and aspect, subject-verb agreement, participles, gerunds etc. would allow to assess the validity of explicit and implicit approaches in the grammar pedagogy. It is expected that this study can be beneficial for both ESL and EFL learners. According to Doughty and Long (2003) it is essential that SLA, applied linguistics and implicit and explicit knowledge theories should go forward for in-depth inquiries and particularly their priorities should be:

1) Measurement: ameliorated operationalizations in connection with implicit and explicit knowledge, learning and instruction in the class domain.
2) Content –validity: multifarious categories of implicit and explicit knowledge about language must appropriately have representation in the learning of different studies and instructional regimes.
3) Individual differences: the assessment of implicit and explicit aptitude differing among individuals.

Concluding Statement

This study was conducted to assess the impact of two polemical pedagogical approaches, implicit and explicit for English grammar pedagogy and for this object two groups of 10th grade ESL learners were randomly selected. The findings of the study indicate that the group receiving explicit instruction with regard to the English articles system performed in a better way in the posttest as compared to the group receiving instructions in an implicit way. From the findings of this study, it can be suggested that the ESL and EFL teachers at school level should adopt explicit way of instruction in English grammar pedagogy to make learners competent in English language skills.

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Appendix A	**Appendix B**

Questionnaire for Pretest

Questionnaire for posttest

Choose the right choice of Definite, Indefinite and Zero articles from the options given below each sentence.

1. His brother needed ------ bottle of pineapple nectar.

(a) an (b) the (c) a (d) none of these

2. Ladies love to possess ornaments of ------ gold and silver.

(a) an (b) the (c) a (d) none of these

3. Your crony is facing ------ unusual problem these days.

(a) the (b) an (c) none of these (d) a

4. England is counted as ------ European country in the world.

(a) an (b) none of these (c) the (d) a

5. Ali and ------ Imran ran away to save their lives from earthquake.

(a) the (b) a (c) none of these (d) an

6. ------Switzerland is more beautiful than any other country.

(a) an (b) the (c) a (d) none of these

7. ------ Epilepsy is a dangerous malady but curable.

(a) the (b) none of these (c) a (d) an

8. This is ------ culprit who slew his uncle on the road.

(a) none of these (b) the (c) an (d) a

9. They purchased ------ new house to live in ten years ago.

(a) an (b) the (c) a (d) none of these

10. Shahid Afridi played ------ unnecessary shot in the second ODI.

(a) the (b) an (c) a (d) none of   these

Choose the right choice of Definite, Indefinite and Zero articles from the options given below each sentence.
1. ------- gold of Swat is very famous in Pakistan for its purity.

(a) none of these (b) a (c) an (d) the

2. The teacher caught the naughty boy by ------ ear to penalize him .

(a) the (b) an (c) none of these (d) a

3. He had to wait ------ hour for the sake of his job.

(a) an (b) none of these (c) the (d) a

4. Amir and ------ Ameen are fast friends and assist each other in difficulty.

(a) a (b) an (c) none of these (d) the

5. He heard ------ noise of the slogans of mob protesting against government.

(a) an (b) a (c) the (d) none of these

6. We went to ------ river Ravi for picnic yesterday.

(a) an (b) none of these (c) the (d) a

7. ------ wisdom is a gift of God for mankind.

(a) the (b) a (c) an (d) none of these

8. The Himalayas are ------ highest mountains in the world.

(a) an (b) the (c) none of these (d) a

9. The Dawn is ------ famous newspaper for its authentic news and columns.

(a) the (b) an (c) a (d) none of these

10. They are of ------ opinion that corruption in Pakistan is at its culmination.

(a) an (b) the (c) none of these (d) a