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**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF EXPLICIT
GRAMMAR IN THE LEARNING PROCESS OF EFL**

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Presented by

YAZMIN MENDEZ SALAZAR

Thesis director

DRA. LETICIA ARACELI SALAS SERRANO



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This Thesis has been read by the members of the committee of

Yazmin Mendez Salazar

**Consequently, it is considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment
of
the requirement for the degree of**

LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

Thesis Advisor

Dra. Leticia Araceli Salas Serrano

Committee Member

Dra. Teresa A. Castineira Benítez

Committee Member

Dra. Elizabeth Flores Salgado

Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the LEI students' perceptions about having explicit grammar lessons. English grammar has a pivotal position in language learning. It is also considered the basis of a series of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). During the last years teaching grammar has been a controversial topic. Teachers include in the lesson activities related to grammatical structures, what this research seeks is to know what students think about this situation. The participants were nine students at *Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP)* in *Facultad de Lenguas*. To collect data for this study a questionnaire was employed by the instrument. The data was analyzed, research findings showed that students agreed with the importance of grammar in this major. Grammar teaching is essential for students because they are going to be teachers, it is necessary to acquire the basis of language. In this case grammatical structures, so LEI students who are soon to be teachers, can share the knowledge throughout the teaching the rules of language.

Keywords: Explicit Grammar, Importance of grammar, Traditional Grammar, Learning language activities.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to the most special person in my life, who has been present in every single step. My mother Lidia Salazar Galindo. She has been my motivation in the whole process of this study. I want to thank her for every sacrifice she made for giving me a good education and making my dream come true of being a teacher. Without her, this goal would have not been possible to achieve. Thanks for every time you do not let me down. You are my principal motivation, my inspiration. I love you so much.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Grammar, as an important element of language learning, has played a significant role in the mastering of a language. All the skills of language such as listening, speaking, reading and writing cannot be enhanced without a solid knowledge of grammar. However, in the process of language teaching, people's attitude towards grammar has gone through many changes, some people even hold the view that communicative ability is the end of language, therefore, as long as it doesn't influence communication, sentences with some grammatical mistakes can also be accepted. Therefore, grammar has been put in a less important position and some teachers even neglect grammar teaching in classroom language teaching.

There is no doubt that communication is the most important purpose of language learning, however, what kind of attitude an English learner should possess towards grammar learning determines a language learner's overall development of language proficiency and accuracy level. The problem is when some teachers get the class boring and they just focus on grammatical structures, this is the reason why students are not interested in learning grammar when they are acquiring a second language, minimizing the importance of this subskill.

Grammar knowledge is the basis of comprehending language, it is an indispensable element in improving listening skills. Some grammatical knowledge such as the mood, tense and aspect and even the conditional clauses and the parts of speech

could play an important role in the comprehension of the listening materials. Without a good knowledge, the listeners' confidence in comprehending the materials will also be influenced. From this aspect, it can be seen that language is a complete system that cannot live without any parts.

1.1 Justification

This study pretends to know the perceptions of EFL students according the grammar teaching in a second language. This is due to many students not considering that grammar is a key feature to use the language correctly even if they are not a native speaker. It is significant to highlight that Grammar is the basis for getting a better structure of the language using the sentences properly. This research topic mainly goes to the people who are preparing to be an English Language Teacher.

1.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of the research was to explore LEI student's perceptions about having explicit grammar lessons during the courses of target language in the major of English language teaching.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions were developed to guide this research:

1. What is the purpose of teaching grammar in most lessons during an English course (TL4)?
2. What are TL 4 students' perceptions about having explicit grammar lessons?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having explicit grammar lesson according to students?

1.4 Relevance of the study

This research aims to explore students' opinions about the role of explicit grammar in the English lessons, how grammar is presented and the importance of this ability in the learning process. The findings of this study are expected to help teachers from the context under investigation, to make their grammar lessons more successful and effective according to use grammar in a more productive way. This because today developing an appropriate understanding of grammar is essential and using of this manner students can communicate their ideas effectively verbally and in writing.

1.5 Conclusions and overview of the study

The goal of this chapter was to describe the problem, where some points were discussed about having explicit grammar lessons. Besides that, the aim of the project was to acknowledge and explore the LEI students 'perceptions after having extensive grammar lessons in their first courses of the career. The research questions were also highlighted as well as the justification of the study. Finally, relevance of the investigation was mentioned too.

This study contains five chapters: the first chapter describes the purpose of the research, outlining the problem and the research questions. The second chapter explains the literature review. The third chapter describes the methodology. The fourth demonstrates the results of the instrument. The last chapter outlines a conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature about the role of explicit grammar in the learning process of EFL students, explaining the meaning and the importance of some concepts like: the importance of English, meaning of grammar, and the teaching of grammar in EFL. Additionally, it recounts the significance of grammar as well as the objective and how grammar is presented in the teaching of English.

2.2 The importance of English

Ilyasova (2020) argues that in the global world the importance of English cannot be denied and ignored since English is the most common language spoken everywhere. English is one of the most used languages in the world. Even outside of countries like the USE and the UK, many people can speak and understand English. An estimated 1 billion people worldwide speak English. Many countries have English as their official language and others as their secondary language.

Ilyasova (2020) currently refers that English is an useful and even necessary language to know. As such, it is the primary language of not only countries actively touched by British imperialism, but also many business and cultural spheres. Learning English is important and people all over the world decide to study it as a second language. Many counties include English as a second language in their school syllabus. As a matter of fact, children start learning English at a young stage because it is the language of

science, aviation, computers, diplomacy and tourism. Which allows chances of getting a job.

Furthermore, it is common to see a young person speak or study at least one language besides the mother tongue. Rao (2019), states that the English language is spoken all over the world and it has the status of global language. English is the language widely used in the field of scientific research, education, business, the internet, travel and tourism, media, newspapers, medicine, engineering, information and technology.

2.3 Meaning of grammar

According to Chang (2011) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English with Taiwanese Translation, grammar is referred to as "study or science of, rules for, the words into sentences (syntax), and the forms of words (morphology)". The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines grammar as "the study of use of the rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences." In fact, grammar is "multi-dimensional" (Batstone, 1994) and has multi-meanings. It is generally thought to be a set of rules for choosing words and putting words together to make sense.

Every language has grammar. (Brumfit, 2000) considers that language is a building, the words are bricks, and the grammar is the architect's plan. One may have a million bricks, but do not make a building without a plan. Similarly, if a person knows a million English words, but he does not know how to put them together, then he cannot speak English. In other words, grammar is a framework to describe languages.

On the other hand, giving another definition of grammar, it is a system for the construction of language. Widodo, (2006) states that grammar is a full description of the form and meaning of the sentences of a language may be understood to be a full

description of the form and meaning of the sentences of the language or else it may cover only certain, variously delimited, parts of such a description.

2.4 The teaching of grammar in English

Teaching grammar is to show how language works. Accurate teaching of grammar guides learners how to use the language correctly. Azar (2007) highlights the significance of teaching grammar as: One important aspect of grammar teaching is that it helps learners discover the nature of language. Without grammar, we would have only individual words or sounds, pictures, and body expressions to communicate meaning. Grammar is the weaving that creates the fabric (Azar, 2007).

To establish precise sentences, grammar knowledge is essential. In another idea about why teaching grammar is important Ellis writes: Grammar Teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it meta-linguistically and / or process it in comprehension and / or production so that they can internalize it Ellis, (2006)

When language learners think of grammar instruction, they often recall lectures of lengthy explanations about grammar points; boring grammar drills, and translation exercises. Perhaps no other aspect of language learning has been as controversial as teaching grammar. For many years, researchers and teachers have argued over whether we should even teach grammar. In spite of the long-standing grammar debate, the fact remains that we do not use language without grammar. Perhaps, then, the problem is not grammar itself, but the ways that grammar has been taught and learned.

Early approaches to foreign language instruction, including the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), often taught grammar separate from the larger contexts in which language is used. While these approaches were often effective for developing a

receptive (reading) knowledge of a language, they sometimes failed to provide students with the ability to use language communicatively in speaking and writing. As a result, a number of approaches to language instruction since Audiolingualism (ALM) have focused on developing communicative competence. Communicative competence does not mean an absence of grammar instruction but rather grammar instruction that leads to the ability to communicate effectively.

2.5 Significance of teaching grammar

In the language teaching several teachers are conscious about the significance of teaching grammar. Nevertheless, students are not completely convinced about the extensive grammar lessons, if this will be useful in order to use the language. However, in the words of Morenberg, (2002) “Doing grammar is not concerned with making you a “correct” speaker or writer, it is concerned with making you aware of the structure of the English language. It takes the view that grammar is the structured system that underlies our language and that the basic unit of language structure is the sentence. For us, then, doing grammar means studying the structured system that is the English language.” (p.3).

“A grammar of a language” is a book written about it. The word “grammar” is often used to refer to the book itself –school children may often ask “May I borrow your grammar?” It is obvious, of course, that a grammar in this sense means a grammar book, a book about grammar, but there is a real danger that even if this is accepted, it may still be thought that, even if the grammar is not the book itself, it is at least what is in the book. But in this sense the grammar of the language is no more than the grammar as presented by the author of the book: DeCarrico, (2000)

2.6 Objective of teaching grammar

In brief, grammar represents one's linguistic competence. Grammar, therefore, includes many aspects of linguistic knowledge, which are: semantics, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. For that reason, teaching grammar is one of the main aspects when it is teaching a language. DeCarrico, (2000) supports:

“When you study grammar, you learn to analyze language by breaking sentences into separate pieces in order to focus on individual parts that function together to convey meaning. But the study of grammar presented here does not end with learning about structures and functions within the sentence but rather uses the sentence as a starting point for exploring how grammar can be used in discourse to achieve more effective communication” (p. 1)

Throughout the history of the language teaching grammar has played an important role in the learner. We now believe that it is not good teaching practice to base a class on the teaching grammatical patterns. We want to emphasize communication first, that is, the spontaneous use of the language rather than learning about the language. Thus, there is no reason to introduce a point of grammar simply because it has been listed in the school curriculum. That is not to say that there is no role for grammar in the modern classroom. On the contrary, the need is as great as ever, especially when it comes to developing editing skills. What we have finally realized is that grammar is a tool for expressing meaning and for this reason should be taught in the second language courses.

2.7 Grammar in context

Mart (2013), establishes that in foreign language acquisition accurate understanding of the language structures is the key part so teaching grammar is an essential aspect of foreign language instruction. There has always been a debate about the most effective

way of teaching grammar. Grammar instruction through context positively affects the learners' competence to use grammatical structures accurately in language skills. It is always useful for learners to see how language works in sentences or paragraphs; therefore, teaching grammar in context will give learners opportunities to see how grammatical structures function in sentences. Teaching grammar in context will help learners to acquire the nature of the language which will facilitate their understanding of the language.

Teaching grammar is to show how language works. Accurate teaching of grammar guides learners how to use the language correctly. Azar (2007) highlights the significance of teaching grammar as the one important aspect of grammar teaching is that it helps learners discover the nature of language, i.e., that language consists of predictable patterns that make what we say, read, hear and write intelligible. Without grammar, we would have only individual words or sounds, pictures, and body expressions to communicate meaning.

Grammar is the weaving that creates the ability to understand structural sentences. (Azar, 2007), says that in order to establish precise sentences, grammar knowledge is essential. In another idea about why teaching grammar is important Ellis (2006) says that Grammar Teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it meta linguistically and / or process it in comprehension and / or production so that they can internalize it.

Teaching grammar will help learners to understand the nature of language. Azar (2007) notes down the benefits of grammar teaching as: —One of the principal benefits of GBT (Grammar-Based Teaching) is that it helps students gain an understanding of grammar concepts: concepts such as subordination and coordination; concepts of

expressing time relationships through the use of verb forms; concepts of nouns and adjectives, subjects and verbs, clauses and phrases.

Students can understand grammar concepts with simplified terminology, with a minimum of metalanguage and grammatical analysis, and even without definition of key terms such as noun or verb (Azar, 2007). With a good knowledge of grammar, the relationship between grammatical concepts gets clear. Being aware of this relationship facilitates understanding the language.

2.8 Grammar as a need

It is important that in the process of learning a second language learners do not lose the main aim, which is to acquire the language effectively. The main objective when people learn a second language is communication. Hudson and Walmsley, (2005) claim that it is essential that the teacher should not lose sight of the learner's goal in the task at hand. It means that the teacher must be aware of what students need.

In the process of learning a second language, the level of a student can be defined in several ways, grammar can play an important role to measure the level of the language that the learner has. Hudson and Walmsley (2005) mention that the progress that the second-language learner makes can be considered from a number of different perspectives. The kind of progress that is perhaps most familiar to language-teaching professionals is the kind that can be measured by means of some sort of test, the most common example being one that tests, usually in discrete-point fashion, the learner's "knowledge" of certain target-language structures.

A further reason for the popularity of grammar sessions may be located in the special situation in which our students find themselves. For a learner of English in a non-English-speaking environment, a major need is to get adequate exposure to English and

experience of using English, and what happens in the classroom should be designed to cater for that need. Our students, on the other hand, may feel that they already have more exposure to English than they comfortably handled: they are to be sure, “acquiring” English in Krashen’s sense (Krashen 1982), but that acquisition tends to be haphazard and to leave them feeling confused. In this situation a preference for grammar is in effect a plea for help in overcoming confusion and it is incumbent on us as language teachers to do things in response to it.

Mart (2013) advocates that to be an effective language user, learners should study grammar because grammar skills will help learners to organize words and messages and make them meaningful. Knowing more about grammar will enable learners to build better sentences in speaking and writing performances. A good knowledge of grammar helps learners to make sentences clear enough to understand. Improper use of grammar will not convey meaningful messages. To establish effective communication, learners need grammar skills; therefore, without grammar, speech gets meaningless. Grammar is an essential aspect to communicate effectively. Moreover, grammar simply is creating well organized reading and writing performances

2.9 Types of grammar

Some linguistics are quick to remind us that there are different varieties of grammar. For example, Nordquist (2018) mentions that One basic distinction worth making is that between descriptive grammar and prescriptive grammar (also called usage). Both are concerned with rules but in different ways. Specialists in descriptive grammar (such as most editors and teachers) try to enforce rules about what they believe to be the correct uses of language.

According to Nordquist (2018), some types of grammar in the English language teaching are mentioned and explained below: **Descriptive Grammar-** It refers to the language structure. This type of grammar is mostly used by speakers and writers. It can be defined as the set of rules of language based on how it is used actually. There is no right or wrong in Descriptive Grammar; **Prescriptive Grammar-** It also refers to the language structure (same as descriptive) but the only difference is that it is based on how the language should be used. In this type of grammar, right and wrong language is also there. So, these rules are actually a standard set of rules of grammar; **Comparative Grammar-** It is defined as a branch of linguistics in which the comparison and analysis of grammar structures of the language are considered. Comparative grammar is also known as Comparative Philology.

Besides of, **Generative Grammar-** It is a part of linguistic theory and it is one of the most influential. It is usually defined as a set of rules that describes the structure of the native speaker's language. It includes the study of the sound pattern (which is called Phonology), morphology, semantics and syntaxes; **Mental Grammar-** Mental Grammar, also called Competence grammar & linguistic competence, is the Generative grammar which is stored in the human brain, that allows the person (speaker) to produce the language which can be understood by another person; **Performance Grammar-** It is actually used to indicate the actual usage of the language in concrete situations. So, it is used to describe both comprehension and production of the language.

Finally, the last types of grammar in words of Nordquist (2018), **Traditional Grammar-** The set of rules which describes the structures of the language in which it is usually taught in schools are known as Traditional Grammar. Generally, traditional grammar is prescriptive because it focuses on the distinction between what people thought to do with the language (structure) and what they are actually doing; **Transformational Grammar-** It is the theory of grammar that focuses on the construction of language by phrase and

linguistic structures. Transformational grammar is also known as TGG (Transformational – generative – grammar); the last type is **Universal Grammar**- The system of categories, operations and principles shared by all languages are considered to be innate.

2.10 How grammar is presented

Besides, the main goal in grammar teaching is to enable learners to achieve linguistic competence and to be able to use grammar as a tool or resource in the comprehension and creation of oral and written discourse efficiently, effectively, and appropriately according to the situation. Celce-Murcia (2015) agrees that grammar should never be taught as an end in itself but always with reference to meaning, social function, or discourse or a combination of these factors. In other words, teachers are required to have a knowledge of linguistics, because teaching grammar as meaning and discourse entails a knowledge of syntax.

There are several ways to describe grammar according to Richards (1996). “One approach sees grammar as a set of rules which specify all the possible grammatical structures of the language. In this approach, a clear distinction is usually made between grammatical sentences and ungrammatical sentences.” (p. 1). “Another approach sees language first and foremost as a system of communication and analyzes grammar to discover how it is organized to allow speakers and writers to make and exchange meanings.” (p. 1),

As Richards (1996) mentions in the second approach the learning of a language by the analysis of grammar allows one to have a better competence in communication through rules that the speaker is used in the process of office speaking and dealing with a better understanding of the message.

2.11 Grammar translation method

Chang (2011), supports that in the nineteenth century, the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method. Grammar-Translation Method began in Germany, or more accurately, Prussia, at the end of the eighteenth century and established an almost impregnable position as the favored methodology of the Prussia Gymnasien after their expansion in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The Grammar-Translation Method was an attempt to adapt these traditions to the circumstances and requirements of schools. Its principal aim was to make language learning easier. The central feature was the replacement of traditional texts by exemplary sentences. Grammar-Translation was the offspring of German scholarship, the object of which, according to one of its less charitable critics, was to know everything about something rather than the thing itself.

Widodo (2006) defines Grammar translation as the classical method since it was first used in the teaching of the classical language, Latin and Greek. The origin of this method lies in an attempt to teach languages by grammar and translation where the learners have to gather knowledge of foreign languages by studying a number of grammatical rules and applying this knowledge to the interpretation of texts with the use of a dictionary. Through the study of the grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that familiarity would help them speak and write their native language better. The principal aim of the grammar translation method was to make language learning easier and the central feature was the replacement of traditional texts by exemplary sentences. The key features of the Grammar translation method are as follows:

- Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
- Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
- Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
- Grammar provides the rule for putting words together and instructions often focus on the form and inflection of the words.
- Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early
- Little attention is paid to the content of the texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
- Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
- Little or no attention is given to pronunciations.

Language teachers have used the grammar-translation method for many years. It is one of the most traditional methods in foreign language teaching that was originally used to teach languages and literatures such as Latin and Greek. This method involves very little spoken communication and listening comprehension. The primary skills to be improved are reading and writing skills. Its main characteristics are: learners should learn the grammatical rules of the target language and apply them in translating from one language into the other; learners should learn vocabulary through direct translation from the native language; learners should read in the target language and then translate directly in the native language. The popularity of the grammar-translation method began to decline in the 19th century because of the importance of and demand for developing oral communication. Nevertheless, traces of this method can be found in some practices today, especially in courses where reading and translation are key skills to develop in order to take a proficiency test.

2.12 Functional grammar

In the process of learning of a second language, the teaching of grammar has had some controversy about if this is useful to learners or not, however, in words of Djurayeva, et al., (2020) grammar can be seen as a function, and they say that functional grammar is a way of looking at grammar in terms of how grammar is used. In the field of linguistics, the main alternative to functional grammar is formal grammar, which is concerned with the ways in which our genes constrain the shape of our grammars, and thus constrain what we can and cannot say. Functional grammar is not genetically oriented to our neurophysiology in this way. Rather, it focuses on the development of grammatical systems as a means for people to interact with each other. Functional grammar sees grammar as shaped by, and as playing a significant role in shaping, the way we get on with our lives. Its orientation is social, in other words, rather than biological.

Seen as a function, grammar can be beneficial for the learning of the student. Accordant with Richards (1996) there is an approach called functional, where he explains that it has to take into account at some stage of the process of learning a language the way in which the learner is acquiring the second language. For him language is a system of communication and analyzes grammar to discover how it is organized to allow speakers and writers to make an exchange of meaning.

2.13 Traditional grammar

In the experience of a language learner, pedagogical grammar is always likely to be a combination of content and process. However, it is important to recognize that different kinds of combinations of content and process will be appropriate at different stages of second language development-make, indeed, be dictated by different levels of target language competence. Ahmad, (2016). Therefore, Grammar teaching is seen as

establishing the “correct way of speaking and writing. With the communicative approach in which language is viewed as an instrument of communication, it has become clear in language teaching that grammar is seen as a tool or resource to be used in conveying meaning and comprehending other people’s messages.

As Williams (1999) mentions “The chief goal of traditional grammar is perpetuating a historical model of what supposedly constitutes proper language. Those who teach traditional grammar have implicitly embraced this goal without recognizing that many of the assumptions that underlie school grammar are false.” (p. 5) Throughout the history of language teaching grammar has been a model which is the basis of acquiring knowledge of a language.

Traditional grammar is prescriptive according to Williams (1999), it focuses on the distinction between what some people do with language and what they ought to do with it according to a preestablished standard. Williams (1999) says too that “In nearly every instance, school grammar is traditional grammar. It is concerned primarily with correctness and with the categorical names for the words that make up sentences. Thus, students study grammatical terms and certain “rules” that are supposed to be associated with correctness.” (p.5). As seen, each school has a particular method to teach grammar, unconsciously following a traditional model which deals with the students to learn rules and grammatical structures in the sentences.

2.14 The use of grammar in a communicative way

In words of Thornbury (1999), In English language teaching, the teaching of explicit grammar has been both a benefit and a danger for some teachers. Some experts agree that teaching extensive grammar is boring for students and only promotes artificial language. On the other hand, other studies expose that teaching extensive grammar may

be beneficial for some students depending on their learning styles. The issue remains whether it is possible to improve communicative competence by teaching extensive grammar lessons. If grammar instruction is deemed appropriate for a class, the teacher's next step is to integrate grammar principles into a communicative framework, since the fundamental purpose of language is communication.

Unfortunately, grammar is often taught as isolated, unconnected sentences that give a fragmented, unrealistic picture of English and make it difficult for students to apply what they have learned in actual situations." Celce-Murcia, (2015). In other words, if a grammar lesson is taught in an appropriate way, the communicative competence will be less complex for learners to acquire.

Given the preceding perspectives and as communication is a goal of a second and foreign language instruction, it is obvious that grammar is now part of language teaching. In this new role, according to Celce- Murcia, (2015), grammar instruction should be content-based, meaningful, contextualized and discourse-based rather than sentence-based.

Communicative competence does not mean an absence of grammar instruction but rather grammar instruction that leads to the ability to communicate effectively. So, what does "teaching grammar communicatively" mean? It means that grammar instruction and lessons are not limited to introducing a grammar item or items, having learners do controlled exercises, and then later assessing students on their ability to understand grammar items. It means designing grammar lessons to include a communicative task or activity.

In addition, a communicative grammar lesson might start in very much the same way as a traditional approach with presentation of a grammar item and examples,

followed by controlled exercises to practice the grammar item. However, a communicative grammar lesson does not stop there. Following the presentation and practice stages, a communicative grammar lesson gives students the opportunity to practice the target grammar. Thus, the beginning stages of a communicative grammar lesson often focus on accuracy while fluency becomes more important during the practice stage. Communicative grammar practice has often focused on speaking activities; however, writing activities are also an important and valid way to practice using grammar communicatively.

2.15 Conclusion

The various topics discussed here set out the theoretical foundations for this investigation. The discussion of the selected topics has help us recognize some strategies and skills required in teaching grammar lessons. The following chapter will present the methodology use to gather the data for this study., which also describes the research context, the participants, the instruments and the data collection procedures.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how students perceive they acquire a lot of explicit grammar in the previous English courses and how this can influence their development of learning a second language. As it is indicated, this chapter includes the research methodology of the project. In this section the research design is outlined, as well as the research method, the context, the description of the participants, the instruments used, the methods for the data collection, the research process, and the type of data analysis.

3.2 Research design

For the purposes of this research a case study method was conducted. Qualitative approach was employed to gather data. According to Creswell, (2015) “qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore. Some of its characteristics are: exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon. Also, having the literature review play a minor role but justifying the problem and finally, stating the purpose and research questions in a general and broad way so that the participants’ experience.

3.3 Method

For this research a case study method was conducted. Case study method is a specific field of research method. Field studies are investigations of phenomena as they occur without any significant intervention by the investigators. According to Brown (2008) the

case study does not claim any specific data collection methods, but “focuses on holistic description and explanation”. Within this focus, the case study can be further described as particularistic, heuristic, or descriptive. This case study seeks to recognize some points of view about what students think about the use of explicit grammar in the process of learning a second language.

3.4 The context

The development of this research was carried out at the *Facultad de Lenguas* at *Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla*, at the *Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés* (LEI). The entry profile in LEI enables students to comprehensive training of professionals in the linguistic, communicative, sociocultural, technological and labor competencies required to promote intercultural communication in various languages to face the challenges of the globalized world.

Moreover, the program enables LEI students in the area of teaching and translation of foreign languages, technical, scientific and cultural information generated in other languages for better performance in their professional life and as a means to enter with better and greater opportunities in the labor market, contributing to the enrichment cultural and, finally, design, execute and evaluate English as a foreign language and Spanish as a foreign language courses for the general public living in other countries

3.5 Participants

Participants belonged to the semester-program at the LEI major where students are expected to finish the career in four or four and a half years. Participants are all Mexican, their ages were from 20 to 25 years old. All the participants were all Spanish native speakers.

Participants in this research were ten students, seven females and three were males. They were taking the fourth semester of their Bachelor's program. For that reason, I choose these students because they were at the beginning of the courses and this is the period where teachers teach a lot of explicit grammar.

3.6 Students' characteristics

This section describes students' characteristics (name, pseudonym and age).

Table 1- The participants

Name	Pseudonym	Age
Ruben	Rub	21
Luis	Lu	24
Lizeth	Liz	19
Liliana	Lili	21
Nahomi	Naho	20
Cynthia	Cyn	21
Mariana	Mari	25
Lorena	Lore	20
Alexia	Ale	20
Rodrigo	Rodri	21

The participants who contributed in this research agreed with use a pseudonym and express their responses as they answered in the instrument. There was not any problem with their personal information was mentioned in this research

3.6 The instrument

As it was mentioned before, the instrument was a questionnaire with nine open questions. This questionnaire was applied to ten students in the class of target language IV. It was applied to know some perceptions of the participants about explicit grammar lessons of their previous courses of target language in the major.

The questions pretend to know what students think about how the grammar lessons are taught and what kind of activities teachers use to teach grammatical rules. There are also some questions in which they express their points of view about how they would like to teach grammar in the future as English Teachers. For example; students describe if grammar was essential to learn a second language in their lessons (See Appendix 1).

3.7 Data collection procedure

The data collection in this research was throughout a questionnaire with open questions. This was chosen due to some perceptions of the participants.

The instrument was applied on February 11th 2020 in the Facultad de Lenguas de la Benemérita Universidad de Puebla. The group was in the Target Language IV class at 4:00 pm. I asked the teacher from the class if she was allowed to apply the instrument in her class, and without any problem she accepted the request. The time needed to complete the questionnaire was 20 minutes, so I gave them a set of photocopies. However, 6 students did not answer the instrument, their responses were not useful for my study. From that way, I decided not to use their responses for my research. In total there were 19 students that answered the questionnaire. However, there were just 10 students taken into account for this research. The more relevant answers were considered.

3.8 Data Analysis

With the obtained results, the study concludes that students think that explicit grammar is essential to learn a second language. They believe that teaching explicit grammar could be a factor to determine communication in a second language. Additionally, most of the participants mentioned that they expect to learn explicit grammar in their courses with the objective to have knowledge of the language.

3.9 Conclusions

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research method used to answer the research questions, procedure, study participants, data collection, and data analysis by the application of an instrument used by the instrument. In chapter IV, the study results are presented.

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results, a questionnaire was carried out to analyze LEI students' perceptions when having explicit grammar lessons in their English courses. In this section, the results are described on how participants perceive their explicit grammar lessons in their major.

4.2 Results of the questionnaire

The strategy includes nine questions related to the LEI students' perceptions about having explicit grammar lessons. In the table below, the analysis of the participants' answers to each question as well as the interpretation of them are presented and explained.

4.2.1 Importance of learning grammar

The primary purpose of learning grammar is to improve the four skills and get a better communication. This table shows the participants' answers of the first question, which has a relation about the importance of learning grammar in a second language course.

Table 2: Importance of learning grammar

	Yes	No	Why?
Ruben	X		“...because if you know grammar you can use the language in an appropriate way and avoid mistakes”
Luis	X		“it contains the basic rules and it becomes easier to learn”
Lizeth	X		“in that way students can get a better understanding”

The first question is related to the importance of learning grammar when it is acquiring a second language. Participants described their perceptions according to their own experiences. All of them answered that learning grammar is essential to acquire a second language. Ruben mentioned in his answer “if you know grammar you can use the language in an appropriate way and avoid mistakes”. Supporting Ruben’s answer Mart (2013), establishes that in foreign language acquisition accurate understanding of the language structures is the key part so teaching grammar is an essential aspect of foreign language instruction. In conclusion, grammar is a key factor to use the language in a proper way.

4.2.2 Perceptions on explicit grammar

Sometimes learners expect to learn something more just grammar. They want to practice the language. However, for achieve this. It is necessarily having a basis for getting a good communication. This table shows the answers of the participants mentioning their perceptions about what they expect to learn in English courses.

Table 3: Perceptions on explicit grammar

Why?

Ruben	“...because is very important to be a good teacher in the future and as I will finish the major soon, I need learn grammar to can be a good teacher”
Liliana	“...because in the future I am going to teach grammar and for all my career I need it”

The second category is according to what students expected to learn in the course. If they expected to learn a lot of grammatical structures or not. The main answers were that they expect to learn grammar because as Ruben and Liliana mentioned in their answers, as future teachers they need to get knowledge of grammar to teach students later. Related to the Ruben and Liliana’s answers, Azar (2007) notes down the benefits of grammar teaching as: —One of the principal benefits of GBT (Grammar-Based Teaching) is that it helps students gain an understanding of grammar concepts: concepts such as subordination and coordination; concepts of expressing time relationships through the use of verb forms; concepts of nouns and adjectives, subjects and verbs, clauses and phrases.

In summary, as teachers it is essential to learn grammar to share the knowledge with students suitably.

4.2.3 Learning grammar as a factor to have a good communication

Without learning grammar is almost impossible to have a basis of the language. That is why the importance of learning grammar for communicate with other people in a correct way. This table mentions the perceptions of participants about having a good communicative competence by learning grammar.

Table 4: Learning grammar as a factor to have a good communication.

	Why?
Cynthia	“I think is enough if our speaking is good to communication”
Mariana	“if you know the grammatical structures you know all the rules so you can communicate with another person”
Lorena	“...because I think that vocabulary is the most important”
Ruben	“...because the grammar is the essence of the language”
Alexia	“...because when you want to say something, we need to use grammatical structures”
Lizeth	“...that is a way you use a very properly the skill”

In this section, the category refers to the consideration of if students think that grammar could be a factor to determine a good communication in the second language. In the words of Lorena, the vocabulary is the most important to get a good understanding

of the language, however, as Alexia mentioned in her answer, “when you want to say something we need to use grammatical structures”. Supporting Alexia’s answer, DeCarrico (2000) argues that the study of grammar does not end with learning about structures and functions within the sentence but rather uses the sentence as a starting point for exploring how grammar can be used in discourse to achieve more effective communication. Closing this section, this author considers that it is important to learn grammar structures to get better communication in a second language.

4.2.4 Background grammar courses

Before studying LEI, some students took different kind of English courses. In this question, the participants mention some features about how grammar has been taught in their English lessons

Table 5: Background grammar courses.

	Why?
Cynthia	“...we work in grammar most of the time, writing letters, essays and the teachers always help us to grow up”
Ruben	“...with exercise and practice”
Alexia	“...present simple, past, future, all conditionals”
Lizeth	“...well, it is always the same, only explanation and exercises”
Rodrigo	“...conditionals, present, progressive future”
Nahomi	“...by the student book”

In category, the participants described how grammar has been taught in their previous English courses. Most participants agreed that their teachers focus on teaching topics of grammar such as: conditionals, future tense, etc. After that, they have to answer some exercises. Additionally, Andriani (2021) comments that English grammar has a pivotal position in language learning. Furthermore, it is also considered the basis of a series of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). That is why the importance of teaching those kinds of topics, like; present tense, conditionals and modals.

4.2.5 Grammar activities in target language courses

Participants mentioned some activities they practiced in the target language fourth lessons. This table describes the main grammar activities that participants had during their target language courses.

Table 6: Grammar activities in target language courses

	Answers
Cynthia	“Writings texts, making stories and essays, to see how good we were in grammar”
Mariana	“...only the book”
Lizeth	“...always an explanation and some exercises”

In the fifth category, most of the participants mentioned that the common activity in English class was working with the book, for these participants it would be better to speak all the time and practice some grammar. Nevertheless, DeCarrico, (2000), describes the grammar of a language as a book written about it. The word “grammar” is often used to

refer to the book itself, that is why the importance of working with the textbooks during the course.

4.2.6 Grammar as an essential skill in an English course

Learners are required to notice grammar in order to make sense of language in context presented through listening and reading tasks. This table shows the answers of participants where they mention if they have had grammar lessons in all their English courses.

Table 7: Grammar as an essential skill in an English course

Cynthia	“I have never had an English class without grammar activities”
Alexia	“Grammar is always part of the class”
Lizeth	“Some teachers sometimes center the class in speaking ability but the main of lessons are related with grammar activities”

These participants agreed, they have had English lessons without grammar. For some participants the class was effective. However, Chang (2011), remarks that curricula for English Majors require that grammar teaching should be arranged as part of the program. As one of the required courses, grammar has been taught to English majors in universities and colleges for years.

4.2.7 Strategies to teach grammar

Students need to learn grammar, but the real question is how to teach it in ways that do not bore them out of their minds. This table mentions the different strategies that participants' teachers have used to teach grammar in their previous courses.

Table 8: Teachers' use of strategies to teach grammar

	Why?
Luis	“It is good to have teachers that teach grammar as it is very important”
Nahomi	“Because she knows how to teach grammar to us”

This category refers to the points of view of the participants about how their teachers teach grammar in their lessons. Related to those answers, Morenberg (2002) considers that doing grammar is not concerned with making you a “correct” speaker or writer, it is concerned with making you aware of the structure of the English language. In conclusion, when teachers have a basis of grammatical structures correctly, they can share that information to students in a proper way.

4.2.8 Grammatical structures as an important factor to teach a second language

Teaching grammatical structures is necessary to start with an English course. This table shows the perceptions of participants about what they think about grammar and if this could be an important factor to teach a second language.

Table 9: Grammatical structures as an important factor to teach a second language

	Why?
Mariana	“...because I suppose that for the teachers is the most important”
Ruben	“---because the grammar is essential”
Luis	“it is hard to teach a language without rules”

The answers are contradictory for this issue. For most of the participants, teaching without grammar can be possible with a good method. Azad (2013) argues that grammar has always been an important issue in second and foreign language learning and teaching. It is also an area of some controversy as there is much debate regarding its role in language learning and teaching. Some hold the view that grammar is not essential for second/foreign language learning and therefore have a ‘zero position’ regarding grammar teaching. On the other hand, some view that grammar is necessary for second/foreign language learning. After much debate, grammar is now reestablished in language teaching and there is now consensus among the theorists, language teachers and practitioners that some formal instruction on grammar is necessary in L2 classrooms.

4.2.9 Expectations in the future teaching courses of a second language

During the English teaching courses teachers going learning new strategies for teaching grammar. This table shows the expectations of participants about what they expect to teach for their future jobs as teachers.

Table 10: Expectations in the future teaching courses of a second language

- Ruben** “...to help the students to get a better knowledge”
- Alexia** “...sometimes it is more useful explaining in this way”
- Liliana** “...it is important for the formation to the students”

In the last question for most of the participants the answer is “yes”. They highlight the importance of including grammar lessons during a second language course. Indeed, as Debata (2013) asserts, when we come to learn a new language like the English language, we need to study its grammar; the importance of grammar cannot be ignored or neglected. Because to communicate in a clearer and more effective manner we have to study grammar.

4.3 Discussion of the results

Richards (1996) points out that language is a system of communication so grammar has to be analyzed to discover how it is organized to allow speakers and writers to make and exchange meanings. At this point this author agrees with some of the participants with their point of view about the importance of grammar to produce communication.

DeCarrico (2000) argues that “when you study grammar, you learn to analyze language by breaking sentences into separate pieces in order to focus on how individual parts function together to convey meaning.” Some participants answered that as teachers they have to study grammatical structures necessarily because it is a need for them within their jobs.

Morenberg (2002) emphasizes that, “doing grammar is not concerned with making you a “correct” speaker or writer, it is concerned with making you aware of the structure of the English Language”. In the words of this author, he agrees with what most of the participants mentioned in their answers, describing grammar as a tool to construct meaning of the communication they produce by using the language.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the instrument. Among the most important results were; importance of learning grammar, perceptions on explicit grammar, learning grammar as a factor to have a good communication, background grammar courses and grammar activities in target language courses.

According to the results obtained from the instrument, some of the most relevant findings were that grammar is an important factor to learn a second language. Being the key to producing correct communication in the second language. If grammar rules are taught properly, the understanding is clearer and the meaning of the messages are more effective. This is what most of the participants said and what they agreed with some authors mentioned in this study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction:

This chapter summarizes the final findings of the study as well as presenting the answers to the guiding research questions by addressing what participants said about having explicit grammar lessons during the major. Furthermore, the major key findings, contributions of the study and limitations will be discussed. Finally, directions for future research and general conclusions will be present.

5.2 Summary of the study:

This study was carried out with the intention of finding out what LEI students at the faculty of the language think about explicit grammar lessons. Many students think that teaching grammar is not essential for the acquisition of a second language, however for the students who will be teachers it is quite important to learn grammar in a correct way being the basis for starting to teach the language. Additionally, the study emphasizes if learning grammar is a factor to determine good communication in the second language. As well as the most activities are applied in the courses and how grammar is presented. Finally, if the future teacher should teach or not explicit grammar during the second language courses.

5.3 Answers to the research questions

The research questions addressed for this study were as follows

5.3.1- RQ1 What is the purpose of teaching grammar in most lessons during an English course?

The main purpose of teaching grammar is that students use the language correctly for communication. As Cynthia mentions in her answer “it is the art of speaking and writing a language correctly”. As Cynthia says some other participants agree with this theory about the importance of learning explicit grammar. That is because when someone learns grammar from the beginning of a course of languages, he could have the basis for creating communication in an appropriate way. Supporting Cynthia's answers, Chang 2011 considers that grammar, which is an indispensable part of a language, is so important that the teachers and students have always attached great importance to grammar teaching and learning.

5.3.2- RQ2 What are students' perceptions about having explicit grammar lessons?

Most of the perceptions of the students that participated in this study were that grammar is an essential tool to create communication in a second language. This is possible because of the correct use of grammatical structures that allows a better understanding of the meaning when someone tries to communicate a message in the second language. In the case of Mariana, she remarks “the teachers are not prepared to teach grammar, someone only uses the book”. As she mentions, many teachers just focus on the activities of the book. For Mariana some teachers are not prepared to teach grammatical rules. This becomes a serious problem because as Ling (2015) establishes, “explicit grammar teaching can make students more profoundly understand the grammatical items, and it has a strong systemic. Besides, students will keep clear when studying the grammar

concepts". Therefore, the importance of having explicit grammar lessons is an issue that should be taken into account when it is acquiring a second language.

5.3.3- RQ3 What are the advantages and disadvantages of having explicit grammar lessons according to students?

There are some advantages and disadvantages that students think are important, mainly because they are going to be teachers. According to Widodo (2006), for most teachers of English, the priority of teaching grammar is to assist learners to internalize the structures/rules of language, taught in such a way that they can be used for communication both written and spoken. This statement agrees with some of results of the participants, concluding that learning grammar is a key factor that determines a good level of the language.

On the other hand, Widodo (2006) also mentions that in the case of teaching grammar, a teacher may feel frustrated when learners are taught grammatical items separately. Students may become good at grammar; however, when told to write and speak, they often make grammatical mistakes. This case is very challenging to solve. So, this could be a disadvantage because the use of grammar is confused if it is not learnt properly. There are some other disadvantages like the poor learning of vocabulary for example because sometimes teachers just focus on grammatical structures ignoring the acquisition of more vocabulary or listening skills.

5.4 Summary of key findings.

One of the main key findings was that most students agreed that explicit grammar instruction is essential because a good knowledge of grammar can help students develop

their critical thinking skills. This is because students are required to analyze the grammar rules, understand their meaning and apply them in different situations. This can help students develop a deeper understanding of the language and improve their critical thinking skills. When grammar is taught well, it can make a significant difference to a student's literacy development.

The second key finding is determining if grammar is a factor to have a good communication in the second language. Many students answered that grammatical structures are required when it shares a message, to speak in a clearer and more effective manner we have to study grammar. For the person who has an unconscious knowledge of grammar, it may be sufficient for simple language use. But the persons who wish to communicate in the artistic manner with well-defined structures must go for the greater depth of understanding and proficiency that the study of grammar offers.

The third finding is about the common activity's teachers use in their lessons. According to participants, the main activities when they are learning grammar are the book exercises and the traditional method of translation, by memorizing rules, explaining grammatical structures, and consequently responding to a series of exercises. In that way they practice what teachers already explained and they use the grammar topics as: future tense, conditionals, or modals in a proper way.

In addition, participants realized that one important aspect of grammar teaching is that it helps learners discover the nature of language. Without grammar, we would have only individual words or sounds, pictures, and body expressions to communicate meaning. However, a few students did not agree that focusing just on grammar is the correct teaching, students also have to develop their listening and speaking skills. The

truth of this is that if there is no good background of grammar the understanding could not be satisfactory.

5.5 Contributions of the study:

With the answers of the participants and my own experience, grammar teaching is really significant for us, as teachers we have to get a good level of the language and we also need to have a better pronunciation. Learning grammar helps us to get the basis to achieve this level. Talking about certifications is hugely important to get knowledge of grammar because it is the main aspect included in those kinds of tests. Besides, it is helpful to get good writing, helping us to construct better sentences and in a correct way. Another skill that is beneficial for learning grammar is speaking, that is because of the structure of the message to communicate in another language it is using properly.

5.6 Limitations of the study:

During the process of this research emerged several situations that limited the progress of the investigation. For instance, getting physical material was not possible, due to the appearance of a social problem in the world. I refer to the COVID-19 pandemic. In my situation I prefer working with physical material, but it was impossible to get access to this kind of material, so I had to adapt my abilities working just online.

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Appendix- The instrument



Universidad Benemérita Autónoma de Puebla

Facultad de Lenguas

Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés



Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer the following questions according with your own experience

1. Do you think grammar is essential to learn a second language? Yes _____ No _____

Why? _____

2. Do you expect to learn a lot of explicit grammar in this course?

Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

3. Do you consider grammar could be a factor to determine good communication in the second language?

Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

4. How grammar has been taught in your previous Target Language courses?

5. What are the common activities that your teachers use during your grammar lessons?

6. Have you had an English class without grammar?

7. Do you like teacher how teach you explicit grammar?

Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

8. Do you consider that future teachers can teach a second language without teaching grammatical structures?

Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

9. As a future English teacher will you teach explicit grammar lessons?

Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

This information will be collected for the process of my investigation. In case you have questions, you can contact me by my email account: yazmensal@gmail.com