

Two approaches to the teaching of grammar and their implications

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This study originated from the research work conducted at Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL), and its purpose was to find out which of the grammar teaching methods could be applied when teaching it to university students. For this, the grammar teaching approaches were roughly divided into explicit grammar presentation based on old methods such as grammar translation, rules-learning, error correction methods, etc., and alternative, implicit ones of which the main target was to raise student's consciousness and their ability to study language and its grammar in a communicative way. The analyses of data obtained from the questionnaires showed that students see more value in traditional grammar presentation although they are in favor of such non-traditional activities as games, grammar through jokes exercises, and other alternative activities as well; however, the results of the final test carried after a six week classroom grammar teaching revealed inappropriateness of using pure traditional or pure alternative grammar teaching methods. Thus, the paper concludes by suggesting a combined approach to grammar teaching excluding pure explicit and implicit methods and techniques in classroom grammar presentation.

Keywords: Alternative Approach; Explicit Teaching; Implicit Teaching; Consciousness-Raising; Grammar Teaching

1. Introduction

This paper is the outcome of the research work recently conducted at Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL) as an attempt to apply a new grammar teaching approach to a first year University students notwithstanding the old approaches that had been applied for many years and which have been outdated because of their obsolescence and mismatches towards the new trends in modern English grammar presentation.

Grammar is no doubt an integral part of any language. One can hardly master a language accurately without learning its grammar. Language is rule-

governed behavior (Rutherford, 1988, p. 1), so without grammar language would certainly be chaotic (Batstone, 1994, p. 4). The importance of grammar in language teaching has also been mentioned by different scholars (Bley-Vroman 1988; Harmer 1991; Shepherd et. al 1984; Stranks 2003, etc.) who find that grammar is an immensely pervasive phenomenon, and that the development of grammatical competence has an important role in second or foreign language acquisition. Thus, we do not only have to show students what language means, we also have to show them how it is used. (Harmer, 1991, p. 56)

Speaking about the importance of grammar learning, the ways of its teaching should also be defined clearly. Shepherd et al. (1984), for example, are concerned with the question of the extent of grammar elements that are learnt and taught overtly and independently of the various other features of a language. Still, we do not know exactly if grammar should be taught independently or there are some different approaches to its teaching that can provide a good mastering of the language.

Nowadays, when grammar teaching methods have passed such a great way and have been substituted one by another, we can hardly stick to the methods applied at the end of the twentieth century without taking into account any of the progress that took place in all spheres of life and, particularly, in the education system as well. Today, when we deal with international students in our classes, there is no doubt that we cannot use such outdated grammar teaching method as grammar translation which presumes the use of the mother tongue in the class. Thus, we should think carefully which grammar teaching methods to apply in order to achieve productive results.

When talking about the approaches to grammar teaching the question of inductive or deductive grammar teaching methods becomes one of the most crucial ones. The terms explicit and implicit are often substituted by traditional and alternative or deductive and inductive grammar teaching, where the former denotes a conscious analytic awareness of the formal properties of the target language, whereas implicit means an intuitive feeling for what is correct and acceptable. (Bialystok, 1978, p. 70)

Before conducting this research work I have set several important questions which became the main objectives of the project. First of all, I wanted to learn the students' opinion on the importance of grammar and the ways it should be presented in class. Secondly, I wanted to know which way of grammar teaching might give fruitful results, i.e. pure traditional (explicit) method of grammar teaching, or an alternative (implicit) one. It was also important for me to see the reaction of students on both methods and finally, to analyze their results obtained from the final test specially designed to get answers to my questions.

The first part of this work starts with a brief description of the general importance of grammar teaching in EFL classes for adults which later opposes traditional grammar teaching approach to alternative or ungrammatical one. It then gives an account of a survey which was conducted at Azerbaijan University of Languages with several groups of first year students on grammar teaching. The paper concludes with a discussion on the most appropriate method to be used in the present day English grammar classes.

2. Importance of, and approaches to, teaching EFL grammar

The question of grammar teaching takes a primary role not only in general language teaching process but it is also particularly highlighted in curricula and textbooks used in all institutions where English language is taught. Since grammar cannot be divorced from language teaching and it occupies a considerable part in it, we should emphasize the indisputable importance of grammar teaching in present day English language classes.

Alongside with the importance of the grammar itself, one of the most crucial questions is the ways and methods of its teaching. During the last two centuries different methods of grammar teaching have been applied to the English language (EFL) classes which were displacing one another from time to time. Thus, today, for example, we can speak about communicative or task based approaches to grammar, whereas, not long ago teachers mostly focused on a grammar-translation method. Such a multiple approach to grammar teaching may cause confusion both for teachers and textbook writers, who often get lost while choosing the correct method of grammar presentation.

However, in this work, I would like to speak about two main approaches to grammar teaching, i.e. deductive and inductive approaches, where the former one may be substituted by such terms as explicit or traditional grammar teaching method, and the latter is sometimes called implicit or alternative approach to grammar teaching. Thus, these two methods are often a matter of confusion for teachers as they do not know for sure whether to make students learn grammar rules by heart which is simply to liken it to mathematical formulas, or to totally avoid grammar teaching by making students infer the grammar from different activities without pointing out on grammar terms and rules. Concerning this, Larsen-Freeman (2012, p. 264), on the one hand, speaks about grammaring as a proper goal of grammar instruction that provides an accurate, meaningful and appropriate use of grammar construction, whereas, Krashen (1992, p. 409), for example, considers language to be too complex to be deliberately taught and learned pointing out that the effect of grammar teaching is peripheral and fragile. Consequently, such a dual approach to grammar teaching should be a matter of investigation in order to define which of the methods will be more appropriate in present

day grammar teaching, and for this we need to reveal what each of the methods denotes.

Thus, what do we mean by traditional grammar teaching? If we go back to the nineteenth century, we may remember that Henry Sweet was the supporter of “complete grammar assimilation” and “learning grammar by heart”. He suggested learning paradigms and syntactic rules which are part of the grammar translation method. Later in the twentieth century, Sharwood-Smith (1988) lists a number of techniques used by teachers and textbook writers. One of these techniques has always been used in traditional grammar teaching which points out and explains the construction by the use of grammatical terminology. However, today, a lot of teachers have faced the fact that a great percentage of the learnt grammar rules happens to be learnt in vain as students know the rules but do not necessarily apply them when communicating. If we remember the situation from our own teaching experience, many teachers will agree that while teaching English language tense forms students usually acquire only those that more or less correspond to the forms existing in their mother tongue; as it usually may happen with the past simple tense form and the present perfect tense form where the later has no correspondence to such languages, for example, as Azerbaijani or Russian. Both the past simple and the present perfect tense forms are translated in these languages in the same way, i.e. by means of the same verbal construction which is used to express the action in the past. Thus, very often, students ignore the present perfect since they often find no connection of this form with that of their mother tongue and at the same time the perfect construction seems to be much harder than the construction of the past simple tense. Hence, in this case, the present perfect tense remains in the students’ mind as mathematical formula, or simply disappears from their mind because, when necessary, they cannot use it appropriately. Due to this, we should think deeply on the diversity of methods that will favorably work in order not only to be able to successfully teach simple present or simple past which may correspond to many of students native languages, but also to teach such ‘complicated’ tenses as perfect, perfect continuous, and other useful grammar phenomena as well. These grammar processes may not be found, for example, in many Slavic, Turkish, and even some of the European Languages, but are very important for reproduction of fluent English. Consequently, a traditional approach to grammar teaching often provides a robot-like rule learning which later cannot be properly used in real life situations, i.e. alongside with understanding or memorizing, the learner should use his/her intuition and the ability to infer the information. Thus, why should we spend time on teaching something that will not be used in real language production? On the other hand, it is a known reality that the use of traditional methods seems easy for some EFL teachers since they have an access to readymade

syllabi, textbooks, and other materials which are still designed with the preference on traditional grammar teaching method.

Nevertheless, today, apart from the traditional method of grammar teaching, we can also refer to alternative ways. Larsen-Freeman (2012) suggests that grammar instruction needs not only to promote awareness in students but also to engage them in meaningful production. So, there has been a tendency to lay stress on the natural language learning ability that every human being has, irrespective of color or class. (Sharwood-Smith, 1988, p. 55) Such tendency is vastly spreading year after year in the field of language learning and especially in English grammar learning. The idea of avoiding traditional grammar explanation is imposing on teachers the creation of misunderstanding and often wrong approaches to the whole process of grammar teaching itself. Such new trend in present-day grammar teaching performs under the heading 'conscious-raising approach', and presumes the response of the students to language by noticing particular features of grammar and by coming to the conclusion that can help them organize their perception of language (Palacios 2007, p. 4). Thus, According to Rutherford (1988, p. 107), 'by consciousness raising we mean the deliberate attempt to draw the learner's attention specifically to the formal properties of the languages'. This scholar also points out that in this case formal grammar has a minimal or even non-existent role to play in language pedagogy.

In order to speak about the conscious-raising ability of an adult learner, it is important to compare them to a child learner. There were a lot of research works concerning the ability of both adults and children to learn grammar and foreign languages in general which concluded that both of them have different approaches to it. The fact that a young child may not have a hypothetical possibility to the same degree, that is, learning via explicit knowledge, puts him/her at a disadvantage when compared with the mature learner (Sharwood-Smith, 1988, p. 52), whereas adult foreign language learning is much more like general adult learning than it is like child language development (Bley-Vroman, 1988, p. 19). Thus, it is quite clear that at a definite age the ability of acquiring any sort of information fades away giving way to such abilities as learning, comparing, analyzing, understanding, contrasting, etc. which are particularly important for foreign language learners in an adult age.

Chalker (1984, p. 7) says that rules are somewhere there in the language more or less ready formulated, waiting to be dug up, and it may be quite natural to learn languages in a purely intuitive manner. However, how long will it take to amass a sufficient amount of implicit knowledge and the appropriate skills for using it? (Sharwood-Smith, 1988, p. 52) One may agree that when learning a foreign language in an adult age, it might be too hard to

acquire the whole 'course of grammar' without any explanation by just making some inferences or using intuition. Thus, the danger of pure alternative method is that grammar may be presented as a collection of fragments (Chalker, 1984, p. 7), and not as a whole course. Hence, two main approaches 'traditional and alternative' seem to be opposing each other, both of which having their pros and cons.

3. Research goals and questions

The present research work has the following purposes: first of all, it investigates the impact of grammar teaching methods on the ability of students to acquire the proposed grammar patterns either in implicit or explicit way or the both. Secondly, it seems extremely important to analyze students' responses concerning the general importance of grammar and its teaching in EFL classes. Finally, the ultimate goal for this research is to provide insights and implications for the use of both implicit and explicit grammar teaching approaches which later will give us ground to build more feasible university curricula for EFL classes. The above purposes give rise to the following research questions:

1. What will be the reaction of students in terms of classroom participation in groups taught implicitly and in groups taught explicitly?
2. According to the final test, which of the groups will obtain better results: those taught pure explicitly or those taught pure implicitly?
3. How do students feel about general grammar teaching as one of the main parts of EFL teaching?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Seventy two students at the Faculty of English Language Philology at Azerbaijan University of Languages participated in the study. The age of the students ranged from 18 to 20 years; 85 percent of them were female. The level of the students varied between B1 and B2 according to CEFR (*Common European framework of references 2001*). The participants were quite aware of being under the experiment and were very collaborative and enthusiastic to have several grammar classes which were out of their curriculum. Although the selected grammar was taken from level B2 textbooks, according to the AUL curriculum the selected grammar themes were supposed to be taught in the third term and were not included into the program of the second semester. Still, the level of the selected grammar was not that high and could be easily grasped by students. The grammar samples were selected according to the level of its significance in English language grammar and CEFR as well,

and later on could be substituted by any other grammar patterns since the main target of the work was directly the determination of the students' reaction on each method of grammar teaching and particularly the investigation of the final results that could show which approach worked better.

4.2. Materials

Several instruments were used in the experiment: 1) a general pre-test that covered the questions on five major grammatical themes (the present perfect versus present perfect continuous, the passive, the conditionals, the future perfect versus future perfect continuous and direct versus indirect speech) was given at the beginning of the project. 2) According to the test results two grammatical topics, i.e. conditionals and the future perfect continuous were selected for the experiment since these were the grammatical topics that the students were not aware of. Hence, the material was designed in two ways, i.e. implicitly and explicitly. 3) A final test targeted at revealing the comprehension of both conditionals and the future perfect tense by two groups both taught explicitly and implicitly. 4) Finally, student's questionnaire (see appendix 1) revealed the student's attitude towards general grammar learning and the importance of grammar in EFL classrooms.

The pre-test consisted of fifty questions and included 5 main grammatical topics (ten questions per each topic). Each question had four possible options with only one correct answer. The questions in the test were designed in the following way: the first six questions were on the present perfect versus present perfect continuous tense, this was followed by questions on passive constructions, the next six questions were on conditionals and then six questions on future perfect vs. future perfect continues; finally six more questions covered direct speech vs reported speech.

The materials were designed on two grammatical subjects, i.e. the conditionals (first, second and third) and the future perfect continuous. One and the same grammatical topic was formed in two different directions: traditional grammar teaching that presumed grammar patterns via Power Point presentation, exercises, listening activities, etc., and the alternative way which comprised games, exercises and communication activities, video activities, etc.

The final test consisted of two grammatical themes which were previously taught in class and included forty questions that covered the conditionals and the future perfect continuous. The questions were designed in direct order, i.e. twenty five questions (from one to twenty five) on conditionals, fifteen questions (from twenty six to forty) on the future perfect continuous tense form. The format of the questions was multiple choice, that is, each question

had three answer choices with only one correct answer.

The students' questionnaire was organized according to four main sections. The first one contained three questions on the importance of grammar; the next six were concerned with the students' opinions on different possibilities to avoid strict grammar rules learning. Questions from ten to twelve referred to the importance of the deductive approach; and the last three emphasized the importance of the inductive approach. In general there were fifteen questions to be evaluated according to a five point scale where 5 meant a full agreement on the matter and 1 meant full disagreement on it.

4.3. Procedures

The idea to conduct this research project struck me while I was working on literature review for the second part of my PhD thesis. The more I was getting into the grammar teaching approaches, the more I became interested in the results that could be obtained after teaching one and the same grammatical patterns to the students of the same level but in two different ways. The data collection was carried out at Azerbaijan University of Languages in the second term of the academic year 2013-2014 and lasted for six weeks. Thus, the most appropriate groups to be selected for the experiment were the first year university students since they were in the process of acquiring grammar. Seventy two students were divided into six groups of twelve students in each. Later on the six groups were divided into two subgroups: those three groups to be taught implicitly and other three to be taught the same grammar patterns but explicitly.

The first step of the research project was the administration of a grammar test that could reveal the grammatical topics that had not been previously taught to those students. Students were given an hour to complete fifty questions with multiple answers. Having analyzed the students' answers, the new topics happened to be the *conditionals* and the *future perfect continuous*. Resting upon this, four extra (out-of-curriculum) classes were set for each group. Two classes were to teach the *conditionals*, whereas other two targeted on teaching the *future perfect continuous*.

In order to simplify the description of the groups, I will provisionally call them *explicit groups (EG)* groups and *implicit groups (IG)*. Thus, *EG* were presented the grammar in a traditional way, i.e. with complete grammatical explanations, naming each of the patterns by its name, whereas *IG* had to elicit the grammatical patterns using their consciousness-raising abilities. It should be pointed out that the duration of every lesson was an hour. Consequently, in total, each of the six groups had 4 hours of classes. As already mentioned, the main concern of this study was to conduct an experiment whose main purpose was elicitation of the best approach to grammar teaching. In *EG* I

tried to follow the strict deductive approach by giving the students, first of all, direct grammar rules preceded by the name of the topic written on the board. The rules were given in the form of patterns and samples (see the examples in appendix 2). The reaction of the students to such an approach was very positive since it was an ordinary method of grammar presentation to them. Later, the students successfully fulfilled the tasks eliciting the already learned patterns.

When it came to the teaching of *IG* in inductive way I had to face much unexpected and even unfavorable reaction. At first, I did not mention any grammar topic and did not give even a hint on any previously learnt grammar rules. We started from the game on *conditionals* where the students had to walk around the class in order to find the second halves of the first, second and third conditional sentences that they had already been distributed. Instead of eight minutes for this activity, the students spent fifteen minutes, but still the results were very unsatisfying. Later on, after all sentences were brought together, the students tried to elicit the grammatical patterns, but they immediately got stuck between the second and the third conditional. Nearly seventy percent of the group was completely unaware of what was happening in the class, even if they tried to be as much involved as they could. Still it was quite evident that such an approach could only confuse them. However, this reaction did not stop me from going till the end: all grammar that was supposed to be taught happened to be taught, however, the students' answers and exercise results were still vague, unsure and almost wrong. No doubt that I was completely unsatisfied with such reaction of the students which showed that the inductive method brought me and the student to nothing positive. It was even useless to wait for the final test in order to see the results since they were already completely disappointing. On the other hand, I totally understood that students are not accustomed to such grammar presentation and that they preferred an overt explanation rather than eliciting something they have no idea about. Moreover, I completely realized that it was impossible that the inductive method did not work at all. Thus, in order to bring these two possibilities together, I decided to mix the methods and present them in a new way to the same groups of students which earlier I had taught inductively. Thus, we started from the games and exercises again; however, this time, after the activities, I informed the students about my grammar intentions and particularly of those grammar patterns that I wanted them to acquire. The students immediately started eliciting the patterns comparing them to the grammar rules they already knew. The picture had totally changed: students became more enthusiastic and inspired; the answers and exercises happened to be much more meaningful and reasonable. It was particularly evident while working on future perfect continuous. Working with the timeline graphs and pictures (see the example

in appendix 2) gave them a chance not only to learn new grammatical tense form but also to revise other tenses and to be able to differentiate their structure and usage on real examples. Still, even if the mixed method worked much better than the inductive approach, I was quite sure that *EG* would show higher results in their final test.

At the end, a final test on both grammar patterns was given. The students were given an hour to complete forty questions on targeted grammar. Later on, they were asked to tick fifteen questions in twenty ten minutes, evaluating the answers according to a five point scale where five was the highest mark.

5. Data analysis

The current work carries out the analysis of two types of data. First of all we will analyze the results obtained from the final test, secondly, the analysis of the students' questionnaires will be carried out.

Final test data

The first level is to check the final test of each of the students and to sort the works out according to the groups they belonged to (*EG* and *IG*). In order to calculate the percentage presented in the table 1, I applied to the quantitative approach and got the general numbers.

Table 1

The Results Each Group Obtained from the Students Final Test

EG	Out of 100 %	Total	IG	Out of 100 %	Total
Group 1	53		Group 1	74	
Group 2	51		Group 2	82	
Group 3	62		Group 3	79	
55.3%			78.3%		

Thus, the total points of each of the students, first in *EG* and then in *IG*, were added and the total number was divided by the number of students participating in each of the group. In this way I could see which of the groups, i.e. *EG* or *IG* scored more. Thus, according to the table 1, it can be clearly seen that those groups that were taught in a mixed way scored more than those which were taught in a pure explicit (deductive way). If we try to elicit a general number from each of the group type, we will get a total 55.3% for *EG* and 78.3 % for *IG*. The numbers were obtained after adding the general scores of the each group and dividing it by three. It should be pointed out that at this stage we do not deal with the comparison of purely deductive (explicit) and purely inductive (implicit) ways of teaching grammar since in the process of the experiment due to the fact that the students could not manage with a purely inductive grammar presentation, we had to employ a new way of

grammar teaching which involved the traits of both implicit and explicit grammar teaching.

Hence, the total percentage of *EG* is more than twenty percent lower than the total percentage of *IG*, provided that *EG* have faced nothing new but an ordinary explicit grammar explanation and drillings.

Questionnaire Data

Before presenting the data it should be stressed out that the percentage in each question type is obtained by the multiplication of the points the students gave for each question and then division of the total number to the number of students.

Questions 1, 2, 3: Questions on the importance of grammar

Regarding the general importance of grammar itself, there is a slight contrast between the answers. Most of the students admit the indisputable importance of the grammar for correct English. They identify it as the basis of fluent English and some students even consider it to be the main instrument that enables the learner "to see the structure of the language that helps in achieving the accuracy". The total result shows that 77 percent of students support the importance of grammar in the present-day language teaching.

Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9: Questions on the possibility to avoid strict grammar rules learning

It is quite evident that most of the students agree that strict grammatical rules learning looks like learning a mathematical formula and that there is no point in learning by heart the detached grammatical rules without any understanding of their ways of usage, since sooner or later these rules will fly away. Still, the majority of students consider grammar learning to be an inseparable part of language learning and they fully agree that grammar should not be learnt separately but in a context so that it gives them a feeling for the language and its four main skills. Thus, 73 percent of students think that grammar should be learned together with other language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, or listening but not as a separate language area.

Questions 10, 11, 12: Questions suggesting the deductive approach to grammar teaching

Apart from the importance of grammar in language teaching, one of the crucial matters was the understanding of the students' preferences on the way they would like grammar to be taught to them, i.e. whether it should be taught inductively or deductively. Questions from 10 to 12 were constructed in the way to identify if grammar should be taught in an overt, i.e. deductive way. The striking point was that the answers on this matter were very

different to the answers on the possibility of avoidance of strict grammar rules learning. Thus, 92 percent of students agreed that grammar should firstly be explained by a teacher in an open way and only after that it may be put into practice.

Questions 13, 14, 15: Questions suggesting the inductive approach to grammar teaching

According to the answers obtained from questions from 10 to 12, there is even no need to emphasize that the inductive way of grammar presentation seemed very distant to students. Most of them disagree that teachers should not spend time on grammar explanation and they even do not find those explanations to be boring and useless. When it comes to games, the students' opinions are divided: some of them maintain that games are a good way of presenting grammar whereas others find them completely useless and even not appropriate for adult teaching.

The percentage of the questionnaire items is presented in the Table 2 below:

Table 2

Importance Students Give to Grammar and Approaches to Teaching it

ITEM	%
Questions 1, 2, 3: Questions on grammar importance	77
Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9: Questions on possibility to avoid strict grammar rules learning	73
Questions 10, 11, 12: Questions suggesting deductive approach to grammar teaching	92
Questions 13, 14, 15: Questions suggesting inductive approach to grammar teaching	48

Thus, according to the table 2, most of the students keep to the idea that grammar is important, whereas most of them also think that strict grammar rules should be avoided. In total, the most expected answer is the rejection of inductive approach, which has scored 48 percent in all.

6. Results and discussion

In this section, the results of each question are presented and followed by a discussion.

Research Question 1: What will be the reaction of students in terms of classroom participation in groups taught implicitly and in groups taught explicitly?

Initially, the idea to teach grammar to the groups in two different ways, i.e. implicit and explicit, did not become totally possible since the implicit method

of grammar presentation failed from the very beginning and had to be substituted by a mixed grammar teaching method which combined both the deductive and the inductive grammar teaching approaches in itself. The reaction of *EG* was very good since the method was absolutely familiar and ordinary for the students. The grammar was presented in the explicit way when the teacher presented the rule and the patterns, and explained the use of the rules, which was accompanied by the drillings and exercises in a traditional way, using such techniques as gap filling exercises, multiple choice, sentence merge, questions and answers provoking student's knowledge on earlier learnt grammar rules, i.e. the activities were designed in accordance with the CEFR (2001, p. 152).

Unlike the *EG*, the situation in *IG* was much more complicated. From the very beginning the students got confused. All the attempts of the teacher to elicit the understanding of the taught material was equal to zero. Students were proposed different activities such as games, communicative tasks, etc., where they had to demonstrate their awareness of the previously seen patterns. However, every pronounced sentence was accompanied by mistakes.

Thus, the overall view of the classes in *IG* was quite expected because it was affected by the fact that the students were not accustomed to such a new way of being taught since they always expected the teacher to reveal the grammar intention in order to do some kind of grammar association and visualization. Later I will try to explain these ideas and their meaning for learners of AUL.

Research question 2: According to the final test, which of the groups will obtain better results: those taught pure explicitly or those taught pure implicitly?

The results of the final test show that *EG* students got total 55.3% whereas *IG* students obtained 78.3%. The unexpectedness of the results comes out from the fact that during the class, students taught in deductive way seemed to be fully aware of those grammatical patterns that were presented in an overt and explanatory way. Their reaction on tasks and activities seemed to be quicker than in those groups that were taught half implicitly, half explicitly. Another important point was that *IG* students managed to complete the final test 10 minutes earlier than groups *EG* students which also points on their better acquisition of the target grammar in a mixed way rather than in a pure traditional way. The general observation proved once again that apart from the general understanding of the grammar such important ability as retaining this grammar in the mind plays an important role in language learning.

Concerning such terms as I happened to use before, i.e. *association* and *visualization* of grammar, the experience of working with university students gives me ground to assume that L2 students usually consider grammar as a

sequence of rules built in their minds. This sequence begins from the simplest grammar patterns to the most difficult ones. We can clearly see this sequence of grammar analyzing the division of grammatical themes by levels proposed by CEFR. Hence, resting upon this, when we broke this sequence in *IG* class, the students were lost in the questions what they main grammar target was. Next, it should be pointed out that language learning in Azerbaijan starts from elementary school where the learners are accustomed to an explicit way of language presentation. That is why, such a sharp change to a new wave made them feel confused. Such kind of experiment made most of the teachers, especially general English language teachers and English grammar teachers in particular reconsider their approaches to teaching. The most important step in the whole project was the realization of the idea to teach students in a mixed way, i.e. to try out both explicit and implicit methods which have been later discussed by the university teachers and viewed as a new possible way in the teaching methodology.

Research question 3: How do students feel about general grammar teaching as one of the main parts of EFL teaching?

Along with the written questioning, the teacher had a chance to have some oral discussions with the groups on the importance of grammar teaching itself and the ways of it to be presented. Thus, as could be seen from the table 2, the students prefer explicit grammar teaching to an implicit one. When it comes to the general importance on grammar teaching and avoiding strict grammar rules teaching, the students' answers seem to be very vague, since there is a very slight difference in the obtained percentage. This urged us to have an oral questioning the main target of which was eliciting the ideas of students on the importance of grammar learning and particularly rules learning. The oral questioning shows that most of the students are keen on grammar explanation. According to the answers it seems extremely hard to elicit grammar out of the context and for some students it is even impossible to continue the already existing sequence of rules which had been established in their minds before. As it comes to the teaching of grammar rules, students are very positive about grammar learning, however they do not agree with rules learning which reminds them a useless knowledge not to be used in a real life communication. Hence, talking about grammar learning it should not equate with rules learning but new ways and approaches that have to be applied for this.

Thus, comparing pure explicit and pure implicit methods of grammar presentation and practice, it should be mentioned that alongside with the strict grammar rules and explanations students should be given a chance to do their own inference and associations which will let them not only understand the pattern and remember it for a short period of time, but by

means of elicitation and inference be able to come to some definite conclusions retaining the gained knowledge in the mind which will not fly away in a short period of time. On the other hand, it is not completely possible to let students elicit all the grammatical patterns that are taught to them. The fact that a pure implicit approach had failed in the experimented classes once again proves that such a new form of grammar presentation, first of all, may confuse students, and they may simply get lost. First of all, a pure alternative approach cannot work because it should be imposed to students from their childhood, but not in the second term of university life when they already have a clear view of grammar, hence it is hard to face with some constructions that are not explained to them. Secondly, students should totally be aware of grammatical topics and patterns that the teacher wants them to acquire. This should be done in order to continue building the already existing ideas that will let students understand the sequence of the subject of grammar; otherwise, grammar may appear in mind in the form of chopped fragments.

7. Conclusion

The whole process has shown that, first of all, dealing with university students who have created for themselves a certain way of acquiring the language. It is no longer a surprise to see that a totally implicit method of grammar teaching did not work at all; also there are some reasons explaining some disadvantages of pure explicit method as well. Thus, in order to show the pros and cons of each of the methods I would like to go into some details beginning from inductive method.

- First of all, the students selected for the experiment have always been taught in a deductive way beginning from their primary school up to the present, and a drastic change to an implicit method could not be accepted in such a short time.
- Secondly, it has been a question of study for a long time that the ability of adults to elicit information at a certain age becomes weaker, giving way to such sophisticated abilities as learning, understanding, parsing, analyzing, etc., unlike a child who can easily acquire the language by means of elicitation.
- Thirdly, the inductive method of grammar presentation could easily be applied to language course students of elementary and beginner levels who had never dealt with language learning before and had nothing to compare. However, as we deal with the adults who already found their way to master grammar, it will be weird to burst into their world of already established strategy of grammar learning (i.e. traditional grammar learning) by making them forget about previously learnt grammar rules and asking to infer it from all tasks and activities that

are supposed to be done during the lesson. It is not for nothing when Sharwood-Smith (1988, p. 52) says that it is notoriously difficult to deny adult learners explicit information about the target language since their intellectual maturity as well as their previous teaching/learning experience makes them cry out for explanations.

- Finally, we, have no rights to break the already existing sequence of grammar ideas in students' minds and to make them guess what we want them to acquire. These are the possible explanations that may justify such a failure of inductive method.

Nevertheless, there are also some factors that did not let the deductive method play safe.

- Today, when the language borders are so transparent, i.e. the language learning materials are available both in software and paper, when it became possible to pick up language by communicating with the native speaker of English, or, when students merely can acquire the language elsewhere, there is no need to instruct them like robots. Students must be given a chance to think on their own and sometimes to be able to infer this or that information by themselves.
- A fully deductive method looks like a routine, i.e. all new grammar patterns start from strict explanations and continue with drillings and other activities. Such kind of approach may bring to discouragement and boredom.
- Moreover, the same teaching method may seem so monotonous that a large percent of information may simply drop from students' mind, as happened in my case. At first sight, the patterns taught in class seemed to be quite clear and understandable for students; however, as it came to the test, the students got lost in the bulk of recently learned rules and structures, which brought to insufficient test results.

These are just some of the reasons that may explain the disadvantages of such pure methods as inductive and deductive.

Concerning the students' general opinion on grammar learning, the results show that today students seem to get lost in the question whether to learn grammar and its rules as it is an important component of language learning, or to avoid grammar by substituting it by some different language skills. This fact is not surprising since, on the one hand, students realize that 'grammar free' language learning deprives them from being fluent and accurate; on the other hand, students seem to be bored with the monotonous grammar rules and drillings. When it comes to the approaches that may be used to present grammar, still a lot of learners are keen on overt teachers' explanations and

prefer doing grammar exercises than playing the grammar games the main target of which is sometimes vague and unclear.

Thus, the whole experiment shows that grammar is still very important in the curriculum programs and cannot be divorced from them. At the same time, it became evident that inductive way as a pure method of grammar teaching should be avoided in classes and especially in those classes where students are accustomed to grammar explanations. However, the main results obtained from the teaching experiment and the final test shows, that in order to increase the interaction of the approaches and techniques used in the class first of all, we should increase the motivation to the learning of grammar, and secondly, which is the most important, to raise the level of students' grammar understanding and acquisition.

All in all, the general outcomes must be considered preliminary since there are a lot of factors that prevent this work from being really conclusive. First of all, the number of students was very limited and it is quite possible that in other groups the results could be much better or vice versa. Secondly, it would be much easier to work in regular-curriculum groups than to be a guest instructor, so that more time and opportunity could be allotted to go into depth of the intended project. Moreover, the grammar topics selected for the project cannot be considered sufficient, as we cannot teach all grammar in the same way, and definitely, each teacher must select approaches for presenting this or that grammar patterns.

In total, the project can be considered to be a good jerk in further investigations in this direction. The main conclusion is that, today, due to some previously mentioned factors, the teaching of grammar needs some combinations of its teaching approaches in order to be more appealing and productive for students. Consequently, neither pure explicit grammar teaching nor pure implicit grammar teaching method can be considered satisfactory. So, the teachers should think of alternative ways that can improve the general state of present-day grammar teaching to accelerate and ameliorate the level of grammar knowledge which is so important for language learning and by this build a bridge to the future where we may think about avoidance of grammar teaching in general.

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Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire

Please rate the statements according to the 5 point scale:

5- fully agree; 4- agree; 3- not sure; 2- disagree; 1- totally disagree

Questions on grammar importance

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Grammar is necessary for correct English. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Grammar is always important and is a basis of fluent English. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Grammar is necessary to enable you see the structure of the language and hopefully to achieve accuracy. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Questions on possibility to avoid strict grammar rules learning

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 4. Strict learning of grammatical rules become something dead looking like mathematical formula | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Although grammar is always important, it happens too often that you learn rules and they remain theory. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. There is no point to learn grammatical rules. Anyway, they will fly away. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Grammar is a good compliment to other ways of learning, but the most important way is to speak English and to be exposed to English in different ways. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Grammar is important but the main emphasis should be on the active use of four language skills, i.e. reading, listening, writing and speaking. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. It is extremely important to learn the language in real situation so that you get a feeling for the language that is really your own. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Questions suggesting deductive approach to grammar teaching

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 10. Grammar rules should always be learned by heart. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. To understand grammar, first, I need teacher's explanation, examples, and drilling exercises. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. I prefer the teacher to explain the rules as deeply as possible, so that I can make a list of notes in my copybook. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Questions suggesting inductive approach to grammar teaching

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 13. It should be better if the teacher didn't spend so much time for grammar explanation. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. Eliciting grammar from the context is more interactive than listening to the boring teacher's explanations of grammatical rules. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. Games are so good for understanding grammatical patterns. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Thanks a lot for your assistance!

Appendix 2

Sample grammatical patterns and exercises using deductive approach:

CONDITIONALS

Zero Conditional: If it rains, I will not go out.

First Conditional: If you invited me to your birthday party, I would be so happy.

Second Conditional: If you had told me the secret, I would have helped you.

I wish & If only

- Use *wish* (+that) or *if only* + simple past/ past continuous to express regret about the present or the future.

Example: *All political parties **wish they had** more women. (=But they don't have more women)*

- Use *wish* (=that) or *If only* + past perfect to express regret about the past.

Example: I **wish that we'd introduced** the system 100 years ago. (= but we didn't introduce it then)

Tasks!

I. Find the best variant

1. If only they introduced/'d introduced/were introducing the quota system earlier! It would have been so much better.
2. She must be wishing she *tells/ 'd told/ told* the truth at the start.
3. If only we *are able to/ can/ could* get more women interested in politics.
4. I wish I *am living/live/was living* in a country like Denmark.
5. I wish you *don't vote/ didn't vote/ hadn't voted* for her!
6. She's probably wishing she *is /were/had been* the prime minister.

II. Rewrite the sentences beginning with the words given

1. I really regret eating so much.

I wish _____

2. I'd love to have more money.

If only _____

3. I'm sorry that I can't help you.

I wish _____

4. It's a shame you're not here.

I wish _____

5. It's a real pity that I listened to him.

If only _____

III. Connect the parts

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. ___ If you don't sleep enough, | a. people can't hear you |
| 2. ___ If the oven is too hot, | b. you will feel tired |
| 3. ___ If you study hard, | c. you will get sunburned |
| 4. ___ If you eat too much, | d. you will get fat |
| 5. ___ If you stay in the sun too long, | e. you will get good grade |
| 6. ___ If you work out, | f. you will get stronger |
| 7. ___ If you speak too quietly, | g. the food will burn |

IV. Put the verb in the brackets into the correct form

1. If I go out with my friends tonight, I(not watch) the football match on TV.
2. If I(have) a lot of money, I would donate some part to orphans.
3. She (come) to our party, if she hadn't been on holiday.
4. If you had switched on the lights, I(fall) over the chair.
5. It wouldn't surprise me if I(know) the answer.
6. If she hurries, we(not miss) the train.
7. I would be so happy if she(be) to her birthday party! Diana will be there.
8. If only you (can) hear what I tell you!
- 9.. Some people wish they (fly)
10. I (open) the door if I had known his being a theft.

Sample grammatical patterns and exercises using inductive approach:

I. Read the text and answer the questions

Leyla is a very lucky girl. She always plans everything in advance and achieves all her goals. Last year she finished her school and started preparing for University. This year she has *entered the AUL* and feels very proud of it. Leyla has a lot of plans for the next year (2015). First of all, in January, she will go to

a *6-months computer course* and learn the main computer programs. Leyla knows that by the end of 2015 she *will be working in a mobile company*. She also knows that by the mid of 2015 *she will have finished her computer course* and will have got her certificate. She is also going to participate in an international language competition, 2015, for 2nd year University students as by that time *she will have been studying at AUL for 2 years*.

- 1) Does Leyla study at school now?
- 2) When did she enter the University?
- 3) When will she start her computer course?
- 4) Will she attend computer course at the end of 2015?
- 5) Will she be studying at University in 2015?
- 6) When will she finish studying at University?
- 7) By 2016, how long she will have been studying at University?

Now, let's create Leyla's timeline

2013 2014 2015 2016

II. Choose the best picture to each of the sentence and analyse it!



Finished action



Action in progress

- 1) I will come to the party tomorrow.
- 2) By November you will have been studying here at AUL for more than 1 year.
- 3) By this time next year I will have finished my studies in London.
- 4) I will be waiting for you at the bus station at 5 p.m. tomorrow.

