

Teaching Grammar in non-Western Educational Settings: an Enquiry on Evidenced-Based Teaching Approaches

Joseph George Mallia

The Language Centre
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT, U.K.

Abstract

Educators teaching English, or via English worldwide are often subject to highly contrasting ideas on ‘the best teaching practices’ to use, particularly for grammar pedagogy. Four different nationality groups of learners and three diverse groups of educators of English from non-Western educational institutions were included in the study. A questionnaire was administered to enquire on preferences for grammar pedagogical instruction which was presented in various combinations or alternatives of: explicit or implicit instruction, deductive or inductive pedagogy, and with or without local cultural contextualization. In all learner groups there was a strong preference for explicit vs. implicit, deductive vs. inductive and local contextualized vs. foreign/non-contextualized pedagogy. Therefore among groups there was no significant difference in the proportion of deductive choices and proportion of inductive choices ($p = 0.09$), no significant difference in the proportion of deductive choices and proportion of delayed deductive choices ($p = 0.18$), no significant difference in the proportion of explicit choices and proportion of implicit choices ($p = 0.16$), no significant difference in the proportion of local context choices and proportion of other/no context choices ($p = 0.74$), and no significant difference in the proportion of explicit deductive choices and proportions of explicit inductive choices across all groups ($p = 0.051 \geq 0.01$, Bonferroni correction). Paradoxically, among the educator groups, there was a significant difference in all the above proportions ($p = 0.00$, $p = 0.00$, $p = 0.00$, $p = 0.01$, $p = 0.00$, respectively). Descriptive statistics suggest the difference rests mainly with educators that have undergone substantial Western-type ‘communicative language training’. Exposure to exogenous forms of grammar pedagogy may influence educators more than learners, accentuating differences between educators’ grammar-teaching practices and learners’ expectations in non-Western educational scenarios; this study found a significant difference between learners’ and educators’ pedagogical choices for teaching grammar ($p = 0.00$).

Key words: deductive and inductive pedagogy, explicit and implicit pedagogy, grammar teaching and learning, teaching with local culture and contextualization

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Introduction

The need for evidence-based, culturally sensitive pedagogy

Educators teaching English or via English worldwide are often subject to highly contrasting, and sometimes even contradictory ideas on ‘the best teaching practices’ that they are to adopt. Perhaps no other aspect of English language teaching has been more contentious than the important area of grammar pedagogy. Consequently, educational and classroom practices that are based on evidence within research as being effective are under increasing focus of educational entities and institutions worldwide (e.g. see Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2014).

Yet paradoxically, educational scenarios where a single pedagogical approach is allowed and even encouraged to predominate are still evident, often ignoring the essential tenet of whether it is based on any underpinning theory, or evidence of its efficacy. In addition to the need for evidence-based pedagogy, the need for cultural ‘appropriacy’ of the pedagogical approach is also critical, hence: “...the importance of adapting evidence-based pedagogies to local institutional conditions and to the cultural expectations shared by students and teachers about how to interact in the classroom” is paramount (Hong Pham & Renshaw, 2015; p.256).

A further point for consideration is the increasing diversity of student representation within contemporary classrooms, emphasizing the need for educators need to display proficiency with a variety of such evidence-based practices and pedagogies to meet this growing challenge (Arthur-Kelly & Neilands, 2014; Ashman & Elkins, 2012). For example, even in traditional, apparently ‘linguistically homogenous’ societies such as Upper Egypt, learners of English in the same classroom may come from diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds: Nubian students, growing up with and learning Nubian, their mother-tongue (L1), exclusively through aural and oral experience. Conversely, Arab classmates are raised in an environment where L1 (Arabic) is readily available in both oral and written forms. This may result in differences in the preferred methods of learning English between the ethnic groups, and hence the need for variety of evidence-based pedagogical instruction within the same classroom (Mallia, 2013a). Therefore educators increasingly need a broader repertoire of evidence-based practices and pedagogies that are also culturally appropriate.

Challenges for evidence-based, culturally-sensitive pedagogy

While the need for evidence-based pedagogies that are also culturally sensitive is clearly evident, a handful or perhaps even just a single teaching approach has come to global dominance. Possibly one of best-known contemporary pedagogical scenarios where a single teaching approach has been indiscriminately promoted around the world involves Communicative language teaching (CLT). CLT is largely implicit, where:

"Implicit learning is acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations...Knowledge attainment can thus take place implicitly (a nonconscious and automatic abstraction of the structural nature of the material arrived at from experience of instances)....". (Ellis, 1994; p.1f)

CLT, by its strong proponents, has been increasingly presented as being the whole and complete solution to language learning (Baxter, 2003), yet the strongly-promoted and popular teaching strategies stemming from inner-circle countries (i.e. equivalent to native speaker or native speaker-like countries) may or may not be compatible with the teaching reality in outer-circle and expanding-circle countries in the rest of the world (Ramanathan, 1999). However, having a 'one size fits all' strategy may ignore diverse student needs, in addition to underestimating the importance of the culture of teaching and culture within teaching round the world (Mallia, 2015a).

Disappointing results with CLT and the gap between it and the realities of teaching English as a foreign language in countries round the world strongly suggest that policy makers and educators may need to decide locally as to how and in what form CLT might be adopted successfully (Wei, 2011). Indeed, an 'ideal' teaching model in one society may not necessarily be so in others, and "...a culturally nuanced perspective raises questions about how teaching and learning are understood in different contexts, and about whether... a 'western' construct inappropriate for application in all societies and classrooms" (Schweisfurth, 2011; p. 425).

Yet for teachers of English around the world "...there is an assumption in international TESOL training that the western academic setting is the default backdrop against which teachers teach. In most cases, the teaching environment of the international student-teacher is very different from the western setting" (Raqibuddin, 2003; p.283). The situation for international learners of English is also similar: "... learners' preferences, if not aligned with CLT, are often surrounded by a negative connotation, i.e. too traditional and backward looking, (and) this is certainly at times unwarranted" (Mallia, 2015b; p.61).

Exploring pedagogical preferences in the classroom

The growing concern about the lack of theoretical underpinning of CLT (e.g. see Dörnyei, 2009) has therefore heightened the importance of utilizing evidence-based pedagogies, or at least adopting these alongside CLT where the later approach is already firmly entrenched. The simultaneous use of any teaching strategy other than CLT is often pitted against CLT, leading educators to believe that only one approach or the other, but not both, can be legitimately practiced; this is not so (Mallia 2015b; Spada, 2007; Lock 1997) and opportunities exist for the use of more than one compatible approach for teaching English.

While concerns with teaching approaches with weak theoretical underpinning such as CLT clearly exist, acceptance towards other approaches at the classroom level by both teachers and learners of English is still highly uncertain. Therefore enquiring and assessing their acceptance and preference of evidence-based pedagogy is addressed in this paper, in particular explicit and implicit instruction, deductive and inductive instruction and the use of 'local', socio-cultural contextualization for learning new language.

The focus in this paper is on an explicit form of pedagogy, Explicit Teaching (ET) in contrast to implicit CLT. ET is "a systematic method of teaching with emphasis on proceeding in small steps, checking for student understanding, and achieving active and successful participation by all students" (Rosenshine, 1987; p. 34). The instructional strategy of ET is effective for all learners, and additionally is also able to differentiate for diverse learning needs (Hattie, 2009); it may therefore be a suitable choice for diverse teaching conditions and cultures around the world. In contrast, implicit instruction such as CLT may make several assumptions

for example about the culture *of* teaching and learning is similar worldwide to that present in many Western countries (Mallia 2015c). For example, taking for granted that critical thinking, autonomous learning etc., and the culture *in* teaching, where teaching language embedded in Western educational scenarios and backgrounds, that may be less familiar and hence less successful in non-Western social environments (*ibid*, 2015c).

The paper will also explore the preference of learners and educators for deductive and inductive instruction. Deductive teaching involves the use of metalinguistic information presented explicitly by the teacher to the students at the onset of the lesson. This generally involves the provision of specific language rules, demonstrating how the new structures are formed and a breakdown of their components, and illustrating the type of contexts where they can be used (Al-Kharrat, 2000). Conversely, teaching via an inductive approach is based on a bottom-up strategy that gives learners greater responsibility for their own learning. Students discover, with varying degrees of guidance from the teacher, the target language and induce the rules themselves. For example, grammatical rules are not given and instead, carefully selected materials illustrating the use of the target language within a context are supplied (Mallia, 2015a).

Finally, this paper will also explore the use of familiar or ‘foreign’ cultural context and values. Discussions about the reasons for meaningfully embedding language learning in a context that aids learners by using a more meaningful local socio-cultural context is not new (Mallia, 2014b) and justifications may include increasing the motivation for learners, and creating a positive attitude and sense of ‘self-identity’, in addition to technically facilitating the meaning and use of new language. It therefore appears to be clear that “...the teaching paradigm should encapsulate, or be encapsulated by, the local culture and reality which is often starkly divergent from many Western countries where ‘global’ teaching paradigms are nurtured and developed” (Mallia, 2015c; p.267). Yet this remains elusive, and is not necessarily so. For example, Pathan *et. al* (2016) detail:

Syllabus contains materials which are not related to the learners’ culture and sometimes, they are very odd. It is also very difficult to teach and explain certain culturally sensitive issues included in the syllabus. The syllabus is biased and certain aspects show bias and racism towards particular type of people...which is not good for learners and in forming their attitudes, opinions and characters (p.27).

Explicit Teaching: evidence based pedagogy

ET is “an unambiguous and direct approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures” (Archer & Hughes, 2011, p.1) and is one of several evidence-based pedagogies (Zundans-Fraser & Auhl, 2016). Cook and Cothren Cook (2013) precise that “Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are instructional techniques that meet prescribed criteria related to the research design, quality, quantity, and effect size of supporting research, which have the potential to help bridge the research-to-practice gap and improve student outcomes” (p.71). There are varying criteria accepted by researchers and policy makers as to what is considered to be evidence-based (e.g. see Cook *et al.*, 2009). Pedagogical practices may be considered to be evidence-based are when the accompanying studies demonstrate: “ (a) the use of a sound experimental or evaluation design and appropriate analytical procedures, (b) empirical

validation of effects, (c) clear implementation procedures, (d) replication of outcomes across implementation sites, and (e) evidence of sustainability” (Kerr & Nelson, 2006; p. 86).

There are also varying criteria accepted by researchers and policy makers as to what is considered to be explicit instruction, embedded within ET. For example, Norris and Ortega (2000) characterize explicit instruction by the inclusion of “rule presentation”, or if participants are “directly asked to attend to particular forms and to try to arrive at metalinguistic generalizations on their own” (p.437). Therefore explicit instruction can be either explicit deductive or explicit inductive, respectively. Specifically, “Deductive teaching involves the use of metalinguistic information presented explicitly by the teacher to the students at the onset of the lesson”, and in “Inductive teaching...Grammatical rules are not given, and instead, carefully selected materials illustrating the use of the target language within a context are supplied” (Mallia, 2014a; p.222) For example, an empirical study that contrasted the performance of two adult learner groups while learning the same grammatical item via explicit deductive or explicit inductive instruction showed that both teaching strategies were generally equally efficient (*ibid*, 2014). This possibly suggests the explicit element of instruction was more relevant to the positive outcome of learners’ performance than the inductive or deductive element.

Empirical studies supporting the widespread successful use of ET include the Missouri Mathematics Effectiveness Study (Good & Gouws, 1979), where more students showed improvement in standardised tests when teachers utilized explicit, whole class instruction. In another paper using multilevel modelling techniques, Muijs and Reynolds (2000) found that teacher behaviours were able to explain between 60% and 100% of pupils’ progress on the Numeracy tests and the “...time spent teaching the whole class was found to be related to effective teaching behaviours and thus indirectly to pupil progress” (p.273). Mortimer *et.al.* (1988) examined 50 primary schools in a Junior School Project that also showed a significant positive relationship between the times teachers spent communicating with the whole class and overall learner achievement. Gautier and Dembele (2004), based on a follow-through project of 70,000 pupils drawn from 180 schools showed that ET yields better performance of basic skills but also cognitive and affective skills.

Research objectives

The previous sections have explored how issues may be present when adopting pedagogical practices without an evidence-base, and with the assumption that teaching and learning in the classrooms of various cultures around the world is similar. As an alternative, or alongside popular teaching practices such as CLT, the possible advantages of an evidence based approach, ET has also been suggested.

An initial study, using a similar questionnaire on Sudanese learners of English has already been reported (Mallia 2015b). An analogous study will be extended to other groups of learners, and also teachers of English. This paper therefore examines (i) non-Western teachers’ and learners’ preferences for explicit pedagogy (e.g. ET) versus implicit pedagogy (e.g. CLT), and (ii) the use of local cultural context versus the more generic ‘Western’ cultural backdrop found in many course books and teaching materials. Specifically the purpose of this paper was therefore to enquire on teachers’ and learners’ preferences for pedagogical practices associated with English grammar, and by starting the lesson with:

- (1) the new grammar rules, then look at the book for examples (Western), and then do exercises and activities to practice: i.e. *explicit deductive pedagogy with worked examples*;
- (2) the new grammar rules, then go directly to do book exercises and activities to practice them: i.e. *explicit deductive pedagogy*;
- (3) the new grammar rules, then discuss many examples using local culture and life, followed by practice via exercises and activities that use the grammar in local, familiar life-situations: i.e. *explicit deductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context and worked examples*;
- (4) focussed tasks and exercises, such as a gap-fill, using 'Western situations', where they have to use the new grammar, then the students find the rules themselves: i.e. *explicit inductive pedagogy*;
- (5) focussed tasks and exercises, such as a gap-fill, using 'local cultural situations', where they have to use the new grammar, then the students find the rules themselves: i.e. *explicit inductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context*;
- (6) activities and games in class so students can notice the way new grammar is made and used without discussing the rules: i.e. *implicit inductive pedagogy*;
- (7) activities and games in class, so students produce and notice the new grammar, and the teacher later helps them understand the rules: i.e. *implicit, inductive pedagogy with subsequent explicit deductive pedagogy*.

Method

Participants and courses

The educators in all groups were chosen from courses in which the researcher was involved in, namely pedagogical training for the educators. The learners were also familiar with the researcher: directly as their tutor (South Sudan groups), or as a 'familiar' face' via participation within the educational establishments hosting the other learner groups. Both educator and learner groups were therefore chosen as convenience samples, but all participants in the courses took part in the questionnaire and therefore no sampling within groups was necessary. All participants were adult, i.e. eighteen years of age or over, and all participants within the group were of the same nationality. A wide cross-section of socio-cultural backgrounds was present across all groups.

All participants were reasonably familiar with the researcher conducting the study as research activity was 'naturally' embedded within an on-going course for all groups, reducing the possibility of bias within the group by encouraging easy communication between the researcher and the researched, generating valid questionnaire responses. The similarity of circumstances across groups also helped reduce the possible introduction of bias.

Participants were not randomly selected from their respective general population as results were not aimed for extrapolation beyond the participating group. For example, Sudanese teachers training at the Sudan University for Science and Technology (SUST) may not necessarily be representative of all postgraduate trainees in all universities across Sudan. Results therefore should cautiously (not automatically) be interpreted in a broader Sudanese context. The same is true for all other groups. However, differences or similarities in pedagogical choices evidenced within this study among different groups are valid and allow objective analysis.

Educator groups

Although not tested for English language proficiency, most of them appeared to fall into the Common European Framework's Common Reference Level of 'proficient user' C1 band, i.e. effective operational proficiency or advanced level.

Strong CLT educators

The educators in this group received several teacher-training courses with a strong emphasis on CLT methods. Explicit and deductive approaches are generally absent from these courses, with implicit and inductive approaches being promoted as 'contemporary' and 'cutting-edge'. At the time of the study, participants were frequenting one of a series of teacher-training workshops organized by a well-known international British charity in Setif, Algeria, and in which the researcher also participated as a workshop trainer. It should be noted that the questionnaire administered during this training workshop strongly highlighted both the benefits of the 'communicative language teaching' and also other pedagogical options.

The educators in this study hailed from wide areas across north and north-eastern Algeria, rural and urban. Both neophyte teachers and those with over twenty years experienced participated in this study, in addition to teachers with teacher training and an 'inspector role' for local English teachers.

Balanced CLT educators

The 'balanced CLT educator' group in this study encompassed postgraduate educators following a Masters course in English at the Sudan University for Science and Technology in Khartoum, Sudan. They came from different rural and urban areas of Sudan, some were neophyte teachers, and many had moderate to substantial but also varied teaching experience. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the module entitled 'Teaching English: aspects of classroom management', embedded in adapting these in accordance to different cultural norms and needs, and with ample contrasts between Western and non-Western societies such as Sudan. In addition to being exposed to inductive, deductive, explicit, and implicit strategies, and the exploration of cultural preferences and contexts, the group was encouraged to critically consider the pragmatic utility of 'established' practices such as those associated with CLT in their own local classroom realities.

Weak CLT educators

Another group of educators were Sudanese teachers of English working in various private schools and educational centres in Khartoum. While all had an undergraduate degree in English and moderate to substantial and fairly varied teaching experience, none had access to professional development course held by international bodies. It is unlikely that this group would have had any specific, focussed training or exposure to CLT methods, or even to structured explicit methods. The educators' pedagogical rationale here followed more likely reflects '...a system of teaching that is not accountable, poorly defined (if at all)...' (Mallia, 2015c; p. 270).

Learner groups

All learners were tested for English language proficiency, and they fell into the Common European Framework's Common Reference Level A2 (way stage or elementary), B1 (threshold or intermediate) or B2 (vantage or upper intermediate).

The Sudanese learners in this study were attending 'in-house' general English courses organized by a British charity organization, with all language instructors having a Cambridge Certificate in teaching English to speakers of other languages (CELTA) as a minimum teaching qualification. Learners were of a predominantly average or above average social background, urban-based, and with a good overall level of education. In addition to having completed secondary school level schooling, many also had a graduate, and some even post-graduate level of education. The institution has a strong bias in favour of CLT with all instructors being strongly encouraged to use this as their sole or main pedagogical approach.

The South Sudanese learners in this study also attended general English courses organized by the British charity, but were exposed to implicit, explicit inductive and explicit deductive approaches. Learners were of a varied social background and with a highly variable level of education. They were also of varying ethnicity: Achioli, Didinga, Dinka, Murle, Nuer and Toposa, among others. Most had not completed (and some not even started) secondary school level schooling, as they belonged to the 'lost Boys of Sudan': generally orphans separated from their families as a result of the systematic attacks in the southern part of the country and often conscripted by the Southern Sudanese forces as soldiers (Gettleman, 2012; Tisdall, 2013). A few learners had however had attended secondary school, and others still (post-war) reached a graduate level of education, generally conducted in English in Uganda.

Egyptian learners in this study were Berber (Siwa Oasis) or Nubian (Aswan, Gharb Aswan, Geziret is-Sehel, Gharb is-Sehel) and hailed from specific localities where the researcher has conducted extensive research, as opposed to having an educator role with these learners. Learners were of a varied social background, mainly rural (with the exception of Aswan) and having completed their school education.

The Somali learners in this study were all asylum seekers in Malta and attending or in the process of attending general English courses. Learners were of a varied social background and with a highly variable level of education. Although residing in Malta, most only had educational experience from their own country. Some had up to a year of EFL education via educators having some experience of CLT, in addition to other largely 'non-principled' pedagogical approaches.

Measurements and procedure

All learners and educators in the study were given the same written questionnaire to answer. In addition to the identical written instructions, each of the seven pedagogical options was explained orally to all groups by the same researcher, highlighting (without technical jargon) the differences between explicit and implicit, deductive and inductive and contextualized and non-contextualized teaching and learning. No reference to possible advantages or disadvantages relating to any option were stated or implied to safeguard against the introduction of bias into the study.

Participants were told to circle one option only, specifically that which they felt best related to the teaching of grammar specifically within their own community. They were not given advanced warning of the nature of the questionnaire so as to discourage group discussion prior to its administration to the groups which could lead to the introduction of bias. Participants answered the questionnaire under supervision and in groups of 15-45 individuals. Dialogue was

not allowed and response sheets were immediately collected in the same session that the questionnaire was presented, therefore eliminating the possibility of opinion-sharing.

Descriptive statistics (counts and percentages) were developed for the four learner groups (Egyptian, Somali, South Sudanese and Sudanese), and for the three educator groups (Algerian State School educators; Sudanese educators of English following an M.A. course; Sudanese educators). Counts and proportions were also computed after participants' option answers were grouped according to whether they reflected a preference for explicit instruction (questions 1-5), implicit instruction (questions 6-7), instruction with local contextualization (questions 3,5,6,7), instruction with Western or no contextualization (questions 1,2,4), immediate deductive instruction (questions 1-3), immediate inductive instruction (questions 4-7) and deductive instruction, i.e. immediate or following inductive instruction (questions 1-3, 7).

The level of significance used in the study (alpha level $\alpha=0.05$) was adjusted with the Bonferroni correction (Shouki and Edge, 1996) to buffer possible Type I error due to having multiple dependent variable (outcome) measurements on the same study population of learners and educators. These were as follows:

[A] The proportion of seven pedagogical choices (dependent variable or outcome) of (1) All learners vs. all educators, (2) All learners vs. 'strong' CLT educators, (3) All learners vs. 'balanced' CLT educators, and (4) All learners vs. 'weak' CLT educators. Due to the four tests measured on the same groups, a conservative alpha level $\alpha=0.0125$ was used for the equivalency of $\alpha=0.05$ actually reported in the study; Pearson's Chi-squared test was used Martin *et al.* (1987).

[B] The proportion of seven pedagogical choices (dependent variable or outcome) of (1) Sudanese learners vs. 'strong' CLT educators, (2) Sudanese learners vs. 'balanced' CLT educators, and (3) Sudanese learners vs. 'weak' CLT educators. Due to the three tests measured on the same groups, a conservative alpha level $\alpha=0.02$ was used for the equivalency of $\alpha=0.05$ actually reported in the study; Yates chi-squared test was used due to the small sample size of some of the factors (*ibid*, 1987).

[C] The proportion of seven pedagogical choices (dependent variable or outcome) of (1) deductive vs. inductive, (2) deductive vs. delayed deductive, (3) explicit vs. implicit, (4) local context vs. other context/no context and (5) explicit deductive vs. explicit inductive. Due to the five tests measured on the same groups, a conservative alpha level $\alpha=0.01$ was used for the equivalency of $\alpha=0.05$ actually reported in the study; Yates chi-squared test was used due to the small sample size of some of the factors.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics, namely the counts and percentage of respondents in each group for each of the seven teaching approaches under study are reported in Table 1a.

Somali learners, previously used to traditional teaching methods but having 'communicative' teaching strategies when learning English around the time of this study

preferred to have explicit, deductive pedagogy with worked examples (31.3%) or explicit, deductive pedagogy with examples and a relevant cultural context (33.7%). Egyptian and Sudanese learners also had similar preferences, specifically 29.4% and 44.4% of Egyptian learners, and 27.4% and 42.9% Sudanese learners, respectively. In addition, 16.7% of the Sudanese learners, who were all concurrently attending a private institution that used only 'communicative' teaching strategies, also chose implicit, inductive pedagogy with subsequent explicit, deductive pedagogy. South Sudanese students exposed to both explicit and implicit teachings strategies markedly preferred explicit, deductive pedagogy with examples and a relevant cultural context (56.6%).

Most 'strong CLT' educators in this study, who were frequenting a training workshop with international instructors offering mainly inductive 'communicative' teaching strategies, preferentially chose explicit, inductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context (29.1%) and implicit, inductive pedagogy with subsequent explicit, deductive pedagogy (29.1%). They also were the sole group that gave relatively little importance to the use of local cultural context for embedding the teaching of grammar (57.75%, versus 'balanced CLT' educators 62.75% and 'weak CLT' educators, 76.09%).

Most 'weak CLT' educators in this study, following home-country training workshops that advocated mainly explicit instruction, preferred explicit, deductive pedagogy with worked examples (29.43%) or explicit, deductive pedagogy with examples and a relevant cultural context (44.1%). Most 'balanced CLT' educators in this study educators, following an M.A. course in a local university with local and international instructors and that had a balanced exposure to both explicit and implicit teaching strategies showed similar choices to the previous Sudanese educator group, with preferences of 17.1% and 51.4% respectively; but they also chose, even if to a lesser extent, explicit, inductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context (11.4%) and implicit, inductive pedagogy with subsequent explicit deductive pedagogy (11.4%).

Statistical analyses

The differences in the seven pedagogical choices offered to learners and educators in this study are summarized in Table 1b. Of particular interests is that the 'all learners' group pedagogical choices were significantly different to the 'all educator group' ($p = 0.00$) and also to the 'strong CLT educator group' ($p = 0.00$). The pedagogical choices of the 'Sudanese learners group', learning English in an institution advocating a strong CLT approach, were significantly different to the 'strong CLT educator group' ($p = 0.00$).

Differences in proportions after participants' answers, after grouping according to whether they reflected a preference for explicit instruction (questions 1-5), implicit instruction (questions 6-7), instruction with local contextualization (questions 3,5,6,7), instruction with Western or no contextualization (questions 1,2,4), immediate deductive instruction (questions 1-3), immediate inductive instruction (questions 4-7) and deductive instruction, i.e. immediate or following inductive instruction (questions 1-3, 7) are in reported in Table 2 for the learner groups, and Table 3 for the educator groups.

There was no significant difference among learner groups in the proportion of deductive choices and proportion of inductive choices ($p = 0.09$), no significant difference in the proportion

of deductive choices and proportion of delayed deductive choices ($p = 0.18$), no significant difference in the proportion of explicit choices and proportion of implicit choices ($p = 0.16$), no significant difference in the proportion of local context choices and proportion of other/no context choices ($p = 0.74$), and no significant difference in the proportion of explicit deductive choices and proportions of explicit inductive choices across all groups ($p = 0.05$; not significant as due to the Bonferoni correction, a p-value of 0.01 must be observed to report a significance at $p = 0.05$ and the null hypothesis rejected).

There was a significant difference among educator groups in the proportion of deductive choices and proportion of inductive choices ($p = 0.00$), a significant difference in the proportion of deductive choices and proportion of delayed deductive choices ($p = 0.00$), a significant difference in the proportion of explicit choices and proportion of implicit choices ($p = 0.00$), a significant difference in the proportion of local context choices and proportion of other/no context choices ($p = 0.01$), and a significant difference in the proportion of explicit deductive choices and proportions of explicit inductive choices across all groups ($p = 0.00$).

Discussion

Perhaps one of the most significant observations that can be drawn, and one of the key factors behind this study, is the widely-held assumption that all people everywhere will benefit from minimally-guided teaching approaches such as CLT. All learner groups did not feel implicit, inductive approaches such as CLT met their learning needs. Indeed, as David (1990) highlights:

“CLT failed to realise that, although the goal of language may have been communication, it did not necessarily follow that a communicative teaching strategy...was universally acceptable. Research has indicated that there are many teaching and learning strategies and styles (p.73).

CLT, constructivist learning (Jonassen, 1991; Steffe & Gale, 1995), and other minimally-guided approaches such as discovery learning (Anthony, 1973; Bruner, 1961); problem-based learning (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Schmidt, 1983), inquiry learning (Papert, 1980; Rutherford, 1964), and experiential learning (Boud *et al.*, 1985; Kolb & Fry, 1975) have been actively promoted as the ‘better’ and ‘progressive’ teaching approaches internationally. This was fully justifiable, as the structures and relations that constitute human cognitive architecture had not yet been mapped, as has happened in contemporary times. Yet for learners, as Kirschner *et al.* (2006) state “...there is no evidence that presenting them with partial information enhances their ability to construct a representation more than giving them full information” (p.79).

Another outcome of this study is the unanimous appeal among learners of using local cultural contexts for embedding the teaching of grammar. Interesting, educators with the highest-levels of CLT training found the issue of use of local or foreign cultural contexts of less importance, possibly because the use of locally-produced textbooks with the inclusion of both local culture and more ‘international’ topics failed to tally with CLT, even if for reasons other than cultural context. For example, see *Spotlight on English, Book Three* (Arab *et al.*, 2005) and *Spotlight on English, The Second English Course Book* (Bouhadiba *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, educators in institutions around the world with training emphasizing CLT often make use of

‘standardized’ textbooks produced in Inner-circle countries using an international’, rather than ‘local’ cultural backdrop.

The other salient feature of this study is the unanimous preference for learners to be educated via an evidence-based practice, namely Explicit Teaching. Indeed, several other studies show both the preference for, and the benefits of ET. For example, the seminal paper by Norris and Ortega (2000) gave solid credence to the positive effects of explicit instruction. However, some concerns have been raised, such as if the evaluation of learners’ performance included sufficient free production of the target language. But Ellis (2002) provides an analysis that found that form-focused instruction did lead to gains on free production tasks in some cases, even if many variables were at play (e.g. the type of target structure and the duration of the treatment). Additionally, studies have been conducted in which some type of free production measure, such as picture-cued storytelling and description tasks was utilized, and ET was found to be highly effective (e.g. see Spada & Tomita, 2010).

In addition, the seminal 1970s’ report on primary schooling of ORACLE project - educators labelled as ‘*class enquirers*’ spent four times longer using whole-class interactive teaching (as also done in ET) than ‘*individual monitors*’ (as encouraged by CLT), generating the greatest gains in maths and language (Croll, 1996; Galton *et al.*, 1980). Analogously, Hattie (2009) pedagogy with a ‘*teacher as activator*’ approach, having dynamic teacher-student interaction appears to be more effective than approaches with the ‘*teacher as facilitator*’ where the teacher has a less prominent role. Indeed, stronger learner gains are registered when teachers spend more time actively teaching and interacting with the whole class (Rosenshine, 1979).

The four dissimilar learner groups in this study, even when exposed to CLT, all had a common denominator, i.e. remarkably similar pedagogical preferences: primarily that for ET. Hence the majority in all groups chose explicit teaching to implicit teaching, deductive to inductive approaches, and the use of a familiar socio-cultural context.

Interestingly, even learners attending English courses with mostly/exclusively CLT practices (Sudan group) also preferred explicit teaching, when given the choice (specifically contextualized explicit teaching). Their choice coincided with Sudanese educators that did not preferentially use CLT, and not with the CLT approach adopted by the native and non-native educators (including Sudanese nationals) within the institution. Not surprisingly, ET was met with great enthusiasm and participation of these learners, for example when given this opportunity during replacement of ‘regular’ instructors (using mainly CLT approaches) with and instructor using ET. Therefore notwithstanding having educators, pedagogy and textbooks skewed towards CLT, learners in this elite establishment had similar requirements (when asked) as learners from other groups with modest socio-economical backgrounds and/or frequenting educational scenarios where CLT was one pedagogical option used, or even used very infrequently.

ET therefore appeared to be highly favoured among non-Western learners of English in this study. Its success may be linked to its core characteristics: an unambiguous and direct approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures, and clear, upfront instructor-fronted teaching with emphasis on proceeding in small steps, checking for

student understanding, and its versatility in its instructional strategy reaching all learners and catering for diverse learning. Indeed, ET appears to instil a sense of security for the learner, primarily related to knowing exactly what the target language is. For example: what the form, meaning and use are for a grammatical item; the denomination, connotation, register, synonyms and antonyms for lexis, etc.

ET also creates learner security in that it makes clear - upfront – as to what needs to be achieved, the steps involved, and instructions on how to self- check and peer-check progress, in addition to await timely instructor checking. ET, therefore truly empowers the learner by favouring a healthy learner-educator interface, rather than not be ‘learner-centred’ (in the cliché sort of way). Embedding new language in familiar cultural contexts may give an added sense of security, in addition to its practicality.

Differences among educators were observed in this study, with educators operating in an environment with a strong CLT bias were inclined to favour it, and other educators that had weak or balanced understanding of CLT favouring explicit, deductive approaches, i.e. the same pedagogical preferences as learners. Indeed, this study also suggests that the difference among educators rests mainly with those that have undergone substantial Western-type ‘communicative language training’. Only these preferred implicit teaching to explicit teaching, and inductive to deductive approaches; they also preferred explicit inductive to explicit deductive, and preferred delaying the explicit deductive phase during mainly inductive lessons. Paradoxically, the pedagogical choices of ‘highly-trained’ educators (with only CLT training) were in net contrast to those favoured by learners in this study.

The ‘strong CLT’ educators in this study were frequenting a training workshop with international instructors offering mainly inductive ‘communicative’ teaching strategies, may have influenced their choices as they are seen to be ‘progressive’ and ‘modern’. In such educational environments not adhering to CLT (and implicit, inductive practices) has a negative connotation (Mallia, 2015b).

Conversely, ‘weak CLT’ educators in this study did not have such pressures and chose mainly explicit, deductive pedagogy. This may reflect their perception of how their learners learn best, but it may also be a reflection of ‘weak CLT’ educators’ lack of familiarity, and confidence with CLT.

Most ‘balanced CLT’ educators in this study, those having good exposure to CLT, ET and other pedagogies, also mainly chose explicit, deductive pedagogy. To a lesser extent they chose explicit inductive, but also implicit, inductive pedagogy...with the condition that a subsequent explicit deductive phase was present. Therefore perhaps if educators are exposed to a broader repertoire of pedagogies, and without the pressure of having to conform to ‘modern’ approaches, they may embrace a broader variety of classroom teaching practices. However, an ‘explicit phase’ – generally at the start of the lesson (but also possibly further along) seems to be of paramount importance to educators in the examined non-Western educational scenarios, and it was also the primary choice for their learners.

Conclusions

Non-Western learners of English in this study generally prefer explicit, deductive teaching approaches even when offered the possibility of implicit, inductive approaches such as CLT. They also value and prefer the use of a culturally relevant and familiar context for embedding the teaching of grammar.

Non-Western educators of English in this study also generally prefer explicit, deductive teaching approaches even when familiar with implicit, inductive approaches such as CLT. They also value and prefer the use of a culturally relevant and familiar context for embedding the teaching of grammar. However, educators operating in an environment with strong, implicit, inductive approaches, and where it is presented as ‘*the* contemporary and superior approach’ claimed to prefer and preferentially use these approaches. These educators also indicated that the use of local cultural contexts is of relatively little importance.

Exposure to exogenous forms of grammar pedagogy may influence educators more than learners, accentuating differences between educators’ grammar-teaching practices and learners’ expectations in non-Western educational scenarios. This is a possible cause of concern due to the increasing trend of ‘international’, ‘Western’ teacher-training packages being progressively disseminated and promoted further afield in culturally-diverse areas around the world. It is an area that therefore requires further research.

Table 1a. Preferred pedagogical approach for grammar education

Approach*	Learner groups (n**, [%^])				Educator groups (n**, [%^])		
	Somali	Egyptian	South Sudanese	Sudanese	Algerian	Sudanese	Sudanese (university)
1	63 [31.2]	45 [29.4]	18 [17]	46 [27.4]	1 [1.3]	10 [29.4]	6 [17.1]
2	10 [5]	7 [4.6]	16 [15.1]	8 [4.8]	1 [1.3]	3 [8.8]	1 [2.9]
3	95 [33.7]	68 [44.4]	60 [56.6]	72 [42.9]	15 [19]	15 [44.1]	18 [51.4]
4	1 [0.5]	5 [3.3]	2 [1.9]	6 [3.6]	11 [13.9]	1 [2.9]	1 [2.9]
5	1 [0.5]	3 [2]	2 [1.9]	4 [2.4]	23 [29.1]	2 [5.9]	4 [11.4]
6	6 [2.97]	3 [2]	2 [1.9]	4 [2.4]	5 [6.3]	1 [2.9]	1 [2.9]
7	26 [12.9]	22 [15.4]	6 [5.7]	28 [16.7]	23 [29.1]	2 [5.9]	4 [11.4]
Group totals***	202 [100]	143 [100]	106 [100]	168 [100]	79 [100]	34 [100]	35 [100]

Table 1b. Educators and learners: differences in preferred pedagogical approach for grammar education

Group contrasted proportions	Yates' χ^2	p-value	Significance $\alpha = 0.05$
all learners vs all educators	110.171	0	yes [^]
all learners vs strong CLT educators	178.783	0	yes [^]
all learners vs balanced CLT educators	12.416	0.053	no [^]
all learners vs weak CLT educators	2.413	0.878	no [^]
Sudanese learners vs strong CLT educators	71.360	0	yes ^{^^}
Sudanese learners vs balanced CLT educators	5.564	0.434	no ^{^^}
Sudanese learners vs weak CLT educators	2.382	0.881	no ^{^^}

*Approach: 1. *explicit deductive pedagogy with worked examples*; 2. *explicit deductive pedagogy*; 3. *explicit deductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context*; 4. *explicit inductive pedagogy*; 5. *explicit inductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context*; 6. *implicit inductive pedagogy*; 7. *implicit, inductive pedagogy with subsequent explicit deductive pedagogy*.

** n = counts of individuals in the group choosing the approach; [^] % = counts expressed as a percentage of the learner groups

*** Total number of participants in each group

[^] Bonferroni correction, 4 tests for $\alpha = 0.05$, setting is $\alpha = 0.0125$ for a significant difference (all learners)

^{^^} Bonferroni correction, 3 tests for $\alpha = 0.05$, setting is $\alpha = 0.02$ for a significant difference (Sudanese)

Table 2

Approach categories*	Broad approach category**	Learner groups (counts)				χ^2	p-value	Difference $\alpha = 0.05^{\wedge}$
		Somali	Egyptian	South Sudanese	Sudanese			
1, 2, 3	a. deductive	168	120	94	126			
4, 5, 6, 7.	a. inductive	34	33	12	42	6.631	0.085	no
1, 2, 3	b. deductive	168	120	94	126			
7	b. delayed deductive	26	22	6	28	4.856	0.183	No
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	c. explicit	170	128	98	136			
6, 7	c. implicit	32	25	8	32	5.228	0.156	No
3, 5, 6, 7	d. local context	128	96	70	82			

1, 2, 4	d. other context/none	74	57	42	60	1.26 2	0.73 8	No
1, 2, 3	e. explicit deductive	168	120	94	126			
4, 5	e. explicit inductive	2	8	4	10	7.78 4	0.05 1	No
Group totals		202	143	106	168			

Table 3

Approach categories *	Broad approach category**	Educator groups (counts)			χ^2	p-value	Difference $\alpha = 0.05^{\wedge}$
		Sudanese (university)	Sudanese	Algerian			
1, 2, 3	a. deductive	25	25	17			
4, 5, 6, 7.	a. inductive	9	5	62	46.112	0	Yes
1, 2, 3	b. deductive	25	25	17			
7	b. delayed deductive	4	2	23	24.496	0	Yes
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	c. explicit	30	31	51			
6, 7	c. implicit	4	2	28	15.743	0	Yes
3, 5, 6, 7	d. local context	28	19	66			
1, 2, 4	d. other context/none	8	14	13	8.747	0.01	Yes
1, 2, 3	e. explicit deductive	25	25	17			
4, 5	e. explicit inductive	5	3	34	32.248	0	Yes
Group totals		34	33	78			

*Approach: 1. *explicit deductive pedagogy with worked examples*; 2. *explicit deductive pedagogy*; 3. *explicit deductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context*; 4. *explicit inductive pedagogy*; 5. *explicit inductive pedagogy with relevant cultural context*; 6. *implicit inductive pedagogy*; 7. *implicit, inductive pedagogy with subsequent explicit deductive pedagogy*.

**Broad approach categories: a. *difference in the proportion of deductive choices and proportions of inductive choices across all groups*; b. *difference in the proportion of deductive choices and proportions of delayed deductive choices across all groups*; c. *difference in the proportion of explicit choices and proportions of implicit choices across all groups*; d. *difference in the proportion of local context choices and proportions of other/no context choices across all groups*; e. *difference in the proportion of explicit deductive choices and proportions of explicit inductive choices across all groups*

^ Bonferroni correction, 5 tests for $\alpha = 0.05$, setting is $\alpha = 0.01$ for a significant difference

About the Author:

Joseph Mallia has a PhD in English with a focus on the differences in English learning strategies that reflect the influence of socio-cultural variance in language learning and teaching, particularly in the Arab World. Reflecting this, he has carried out teacher and trainer training in the MENA region and beyond. His current interests also include teaching English for academic and specific purposes, intercultural rhetoric and experimenting with the teaching of grammar within writing systems.

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