Omani Students’ Perceptions of the Use and Applicability of Explicit Grammar Instruction in Communicative Language Teaching

By

*Sultan Mohamed Saaiyed Al Rushaidi*

Bachelor of Education in Teaching English Language

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Supervised by: Dr. DatBao
Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The research for this research received the approval of the Monash University Standing Committee for Ethical Research on Humans (Reference number: CF14/1225-201400549).
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Abstract

The role and importance of explicit grammar instruction (EGI) in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been a source of controversy in the last a few decades. Research that indicated the insufficiency of meaning-focused instruction has ignited a renewed interest in form-focused instruction to address the limitations of grammarless versions of CLT. However, there is a debate about how compatible the use of EGI in a communicative approach. As opposed to inner circle countries where EGI fell out of favor, research in Oman has shown that teachers strongly hold onto traditional grammar practices while paying little attention to CLT, although its implementation is demanded. It is of paramount importance, therefore, to understand the barriers to a successful combination of form-focused and meaning-focused instruction. Thus, this study sought to explore the perceptions of Omani students regarding the use and applicability of explicit grammar instruction in CLT, its impact on students' language proficiency, and its effectiveness in their language learning experience. A qualitative method to research was utilized to collect in-depth data and seek important insights. Participants were 23 college students who are studying English language teaching. The findings indicated that participants generally support the integration of EGI and do not believe that a moderate use of it would inhibit CLT implementation. They attributed the excessive use of EGI to other factors such as lack of time and resources, the demanding nature of CLT, and teachers' previous training in traditional grammar instruction. Moreover, participants expressed strong beliefs about the inadequacy of meaning-focused instruction in terms of helping students develop grammatical competence. They rather believe that it would more effective to combine both form-focused and meaning-oriented teaching. As for their learning experience, almost half of the participants indicated that a number of factors limited the effectiveness of EGI in their experience, such as the lack of communicative practice, teaching language structures without contextualization, and the lack of connectedness to the real world. Finally, participants preferred an inductive approach towards grammar instruction in CLT and indicated that learners should play a more active role in learning.

The study has pedagogical implications for teachers and curriculum developers regarding the choice of an appropriate grammar model and suitable instructional options.
Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction:

This chapter aims to introduce briefly the present study. First, it gives background information about the debate surrounding the use of explicit grammar instruction in Communicative Language Teaching. Second, the chapter describes the context of the study by giving an overview of English language teaching in Oman and then providing a rationale for the study. Third, it describes the statement of the problem and presents the main research questions. Finally, the chapter discusses the significance of the research, the research design, and the organization of the paper.

Key words: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), explicit grammar instruction (EGI)

Research background

The debatable role of grammar instruction in CLT

For decades since the 1970s, the role and importance of grammar instruction has been fluctuating dramatically as language-teaching methods moved from grammar-based to communicative-oriented practices due to three main factors: the inadequacy of traditional curriculum, developments in modern linguistics, and the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Prior to the advent of CLT, language teaching placed heavy emphasis on explicit grammar instruction (EGI), which refers to methods that establish the learning of grammar points as the main focus of the lesson. Students are conscious that the chief aim is the mastery of particular language structures. It might include the use of metalinguistic explanations, grammar translation exercises, repetition and memorization of grammatical structures, and other procedures that were defining characteristics of traditional approaches (see Macaro & Masterman, 2006). However, developments in modern linguistics, particularly in second language acquisition (SLA) research, have transformed perspectives on language teaching (Nunan, 1991). In addition, there was dissatisfaction with traditional approaches, as learners who
mastered grammatical rules failed to use the target language communicatively. Therefore, CLT was developed, as a methodology that caters for learners whose language needs could not be met in previous grammar-centered approaches (Richards, 2006).

Although CLT has become a term that refers to a wide spectrum of teaching methods, its general meaning can be comprehended by looking at its theoretical foundations and main objectives. One of the chief foundations is that "the primary function of language is for interaction and communication" (Ma, 2009, p. 40). Thus, classroom activities should be communication-centered and reflect the use of language in real life. Moreover, an important feature that distinguishes CLT from other approaches is its focus on developing students' communicative competence instead of improving their grammatical knowledge alone. Communicative competence consists of sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence in addition to linguistic competence that was the main focus in traditional approaches (see section 2.3.1 for in-depth discussion on communicative competence).

As far as explicit grammar instruction (EGI) is concerned, there is no consensus among CLT scholars about whether it should play any role in language teaching. While indirect grammar activities are sometimes included, Terrell (1991) notes that, "in most communicative approaches direct and explicit instruction has been accorded a somewhat peripheral position in the total course design" (p. 53). According to Ellis (1997), some versions of CLT exclude grammar instruction all together. Nonetheless, the absence of EGI has not been well received by language educators and has been a constant source of worry even for CLT advocates. This is at least partially due to the research that has shown that students who receive no grammar instruction do not attain high levels of grammatical competence (e.g. Harley, 1989; Scheffler, 2009; White, 1986). Moreover, Pica (2000) notes that research has demonstrated that CLT activities "have not been sufficient to bring learners to the levels of proficiency that many now require for effective English language use" (p. 5). As a result, there has been an ongoing debate on how to address such weaknesses and what role grammar instruction should be given in a CLT approach (see, 2.5 for in-depth discussion).

In 'English as a Foreign Language' (EFL) contexts, where CLT was also adopted as an alternative to traditional teaching methods, there has been a heated debate about the use of explicit grammar instruction (EGI). CLT implementation required teachers to avoid using explicit teaching and
establishing the learning of grammar points as the main objective of the lesson. Teachers are instead encouraged to use communicative activities and present language in meaningful contexts. However, the use of EGI is still highly predominant despite all the criticism. When teachers do not succeed in implementing CLT efficaciously, they revert to traditional grammar instruction although the curriculum is built on CLT principles (see e.g. Butler, 2011; Chang, 2011; Chung & Huang, 2009; Li, 1998; Ozsevik, 2010; Sakui, 2004). The following section provides a discussion about the implementation of CLT and the debate regarding EGI in Oman, where English is taught as a foreign language. The section then provides a rationale for the study.

The grammar debate in the Omani context

The centrality and predominance of explicit grammar instruction (EGI) has been a source of controversy ever since communicative-oriented 'Basic Education System' (BES) was introduced in 2000 as a result of educational reform. Prior to the advent of BES, EGI was playing an unquestionable role in the educational process. The new system, however, has called for a shift towards communicative-based language teaching. Nonetheless, recent research has shown that EGI survives well into the new millennium and continues to be the predominant method in language teaching, although its effectiveness has been questioned. In the following sections, I will give an overview of language teaching methodology in the Omani context and discuss the grammar debate in more details.

The transition from form-based to communicative-oriented language teaching

Since its inauguration in the 1970s until 2000, English was introduced to school students in the fourth grade. However, despite learning English for 9 years and receiving about 500 hours of instruction, almost 30 years after its incorporation, “it was found that students exiting the ELT system in Oman suffer from various inadequacies in their English language proficiency” (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011, p. 141). The gravity of the situation prompted the Ministry of Education to implement a reform plan by introducing Basic Education System (BES) in which English is taught from Grade 1. BES gave more importance to CLT, increased the overall hours for teaching English,
and integrated educational technology within ELT. BES introduced a new textbook series called *English For Me* (FEM), which is organized around topics and themes and based on a communicative and skills-based methodology. FEM gives equal weight to the four skills (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011). With regard to the time allocated for the English class, school students have 5-7 40-minute periods per week (Al-Jardani, 2012). As for the approaches adopted for teaching English, according to Al-Issa (2005a), the authors who provided guidelines for the Omani English curriculum "would like to see students taught English communicatively and managed as dynamic thinkers, language and knowledge manipulators, and active participants" (p.339). Since students do not have many opportunities to use English outside the classroom, teachers are required to provide more communicative and interactive activities inside the classroom (Al-Jardani, 2012).

Although the Omani English curriculum is based on a communicative and skills-based methodology, grammar teaching is actually integrated into the curriculum. CLT versions that do integrate some form of grammar instruction are called weak versions (Sakui, 2004). However, these weak versions are not the same as traditional grammar teaching. Grammar is not the focal point of *English For Me* (FEM). In CLT, many of the techniques of traditional grammar teaching are avoided in order to "emphasize classroom communication and discussion" (Pica, 2000, p. 5). In fact, the authors of the Philosophy and Guidelines for the Omani English Language School Curriculum point out that although grammatical competence is important, it does not need to be taught per se (Al Issa, 2005b).

**The predominance of EGI in the new educational system**

In recent years, there has been a heated debate about the disparity between the actual methods adopted by Omani teachers and the teaching principles that have been laid down by the curriculum authors. Despite the emphasis on CLT, almost ten years after BES implementation at Omani schools, Al-Jadidi (2009) points out that "grammar translation still seems to be the most widely used approach" (p.41). Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2011) also found out that teachers use Arabic (the students' native tongue) and ask students to memorize grammatical and lexical items. In addition, Al-Issa (2005a) noted that Omani trainee teachers use explicit grammar instruction and the students' L1. Al Mahrooqi (2012a) also reported a lack of communicative tasks in the Omani English classroom. Moreover, a study by Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011)
that investigated the perceptions of 90 Omani teachers regarding grammar teaching revealed interesting findings. This study is of particular importance because it investigated the perceptions of both male and female teachers who teach various levels, have different amounts of experience, and hold various degrees (Diploma, Bachelor's degree, and Master's degree). The study revealed that teachers believe that their students have difficulties improving their grammatical knowledge when activities solely focus on communication. Surprisingly, most teachers also believe that their students prefer EGI. All of these studies support the conclusion that EGI is still the main method used in the Omani English classroom and the adoption of a communicative methodology is yet to be realized. In principle, English language teaching in Oman is based on CLT; in practice, the use of direct grammar teaching and translation is the norm. It is worth mentioning again that CLT came as a reaction to methods that establish learning grammar structures as the main objective of the lesson.

The question that arises is why EGI is the predominant method that is used at the expense of CLT. There are several possible explanations. First, as noted before, the study by Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) indicated that students find it difficult to improve their grammatical knowledge when activities focus solely on communication. Therefore, there is some incompatibility between focus on form and focus on meaning instruction. However, this does not fully explain why only little attention is paid to communicative teaching. Another possible explanation suggested by the findings of the same study is that students prefer EGI. Thus, it can be assumed that teachers focus heavily on EGI because students benefit enormously from it and it can result in language acquisition. However, this assumption cannot be validated unless students' perceptions of EGI are investigated. The question whether students benefit from and prefer the use of EGI needs to be answered by the students themselves. In addition, it is important to investigate the extent to which the exclusive use of EGI is helping students to acquire the language. It is worth noting that several studies suggest that teachers use EGI at the expense of CLT because of cultural norms that clash with CLT principles and other factors such as teachers' unfamiliarity with the communicative approach (e.g., Hu, 2005; Ozsevik, 2010; Rao, 2002). Therefore, the heavy focus on EGI is neither grounded in a belief about its effectiveness nor because it is the students’ preferred method of instruction. Nonetheless, in order to avoid hasty and premature judgments, there is a need to investigate students’ perceptions.
Statement of the problem and the study objective

The adoption of CLT principles as the basis for the Omani curriculum requires an emphasis on communicative skills and the presentation of language in meaningful contexts. However, there is no or little realization of CLT principles in the teaching methods that are used in the Omani English classroom. Therefore, there is a need to explore the reasons behind the predominance of EGI in a CLT-based curriculum. Do Omani students perceive communicative-oriented teaching as incompatible with EGI? Do they prefer EGI and believe that a heavy focus on grammar results in language proficiency? Is this why English teachers spend most of the class time teaching grammar explicitly?

Unless such questions are answered, there will be a gap between theory and practice. The adoption of CLT principles is only theoretical if teaching practices do not emphasize communicative activities and the presentation of language in meaningful contexts. Previous studies such as the one by Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) focused on teachers' perceptions. Listening to teachers' voices is indeed vital, but the picture cannot be complete until students' voices are heard as well. In this study, I have chosen students who have finished their high school and are currently college students specialized in English language Teaching. I believe that those students can reflect deeply on their school experience as English learners and give valuable insights (see section 3.4 for more reasons behind choosing those participants). The following questions are the main questions that this research seeks to answer:

(1) What are the Omani students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction?

(2) What are the Omani students' perceptions of the use of explicit grammar instruction in Communicative Language Teaching?

(3) How useful was explicit grammar instruction in students' experience of learning English at Omani schools?

(4) What are the Omani students' perceptions of the best method of grammar teaching in a CLT-based curriculum?
Research design

Since the study aims to investigate Omani students' perceptions, a qualitative approach to research has been employed. The research participants in this study are Omani college students who experienced learning English in government schools. The data collection tool that has been used is a questionnaire with open-ended questions. As for the data analysis tool, thematic analysis method has been utilized.

Significance of the study

"It is important for teachers to discover their learners' feelings and beliefs about their language learning experiences and consequently to review and possibly change their teaching processes“ (Barkhuizen, 1998, p.86). There is a dearth of studies that explored students' perceptions of explicit grammar instruction in a CLT-based curriculum, particularly in the Omani context. Students' perceptions can be of great value in providing insights into their learning motivation and attitude towards CLT and are connected with teachers’ attitude towards explicit grammar instruction. Students’ perceptions can also generate important data about why explicit grammar instruction is predominant in a CLT-based curriculum. Moreover, information about students’ beliefs of explicit grammar teaching can help educators make decisions about the best approach to be used in teaching grammar.
Organization of the Paper

Chapter One: This chapter aims to introduce briefly the research and provides background information and discussion of the context in which the study is carried out. Then, the chapter provides a rationale for the study and presents the main research questions. Finally, it discusses the significance and the structure of the research.

Chapter Two: This chapter is a literature review of the major theories and developments in the field of linguistics that led to the criticism and disapproval of explicit grammar teaching. The chapter then discusses critically the theoretical justifications behind several claims in favor or against explicit grammar instruction in the light of more recent studies. Finally, there is a discussion on the place of grammar teaching in CLT.

Chapter Three: This chapter introduces the research methodology employed and provides the rationale for the choice of the paradigm, method, and data collection tool. It also thoroughly describes the selection and recruitment of participants, the setting, the ethical considerations, and the validity of the results.

Chapter Four: Presents the data analysis and the major themes that are identified after using a thematic analysis method. Then, the findings are presented and discussed in relation to the current debate about the use of EGI.

Chapter Five: Provides recommendations and suggestions for the appropriate approach to grammar teaching in a CLT-based curriculum based on the students' perceptions.
Chapter (2) Literature Review

This chapter first introduces the theoretical framework that guided the direction of the study. It then discusses the characteristics of traditional grammar approaches and the major research findings in the field of linguistics that had revolutionary implications for grammar teaching. The chapter then reviews critically the theoretical justifications behind several claims in favor or against explicit grammar instruction in the light of more recent studies. Finally, there is a discussion of how grammar can be approached in a CLT-based classroom.

2.1. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is shaped by developments in modern linguistics. There are two key notions that have guided the direction of the study: the interface and communicative competence. First, the interface issue in theoretical discussions of second language acquisition is related to the effects of explicit knowledge on implicit knowledge, i.e. the extent to which the facts students learn about the language affect their underlying competence (Ellis, 2009). The second notion is communicative competence which explains that language proficiency consists of more than linguistic competence. For example, it includes knowledge of how to use language appropriately. Most of the main research questions that this study seeks to answer have been formed in relation to these two notions. For instance, questions about the effects of EGI on language proficiency and whether linguistic competence is enough for effective language use (for in-depth discussion on these two notions, see sections 2.3.1 and 2.4.1). Finally, the notions have helped me refine the research goals and focus on the relevant issues that contribute to resolving the research problem (see, appendix 1)
2. 2. Characteristics of traditional approaches to grammar teaching

A full appreciation of the radical transformation that grammar pedagogy underwent in the second half of the twentieth century requires an understanding of the characteristics of traditional grammar teaching. Traditional approaches have been heavily influenced by the grammar-translation method, which was once the cornerstone of foreign language teaching. This method approaches language through analyzing its grammar rules and then applying and practising these rules through translating sentences and texts from the target language to L1 and vice versa. The major focus of this method was on reading and writing, while little or no emphasis was placed on speaking and listening. In addition, language structures were taught deductively and presented in a systematic manner (Richards & Rogers, 1986). Although the use of this method went into eclipse in the twentieth century, traditional grammar teaching retains some of its original features. For instance, many grammar classes are still deductive in nature, i.e. grammar rules are presented first and then followed by practice. Moreover, in a traditional grammar course, language points are taught systematically and selected according to usefulness, frequency, or a contrastive hypothesis, which posits that learners' L1 will influence their L2 acquisition. Therefore, it predicts the situations where students would make errors as a result of negative transfer from L1 (Nunan, 1991). In addition, traditional approaches posit that grammar needs to be presented from the very early stages of learning. Errors must be corrected immediately to prevent students from developing 'bad habits' (Ellis, 2002a). However, as shall be seen in the following sections, most of these principles were criticized and their effectiveness was questioned.
2. 3. The impact of modern linguistics on traditional grammar instruction

An examination of the impact of modern linguistics on language teaching is essential in order to understand the factors that led to the disapproval and criticism of traditional grammar instruction. It can be difficult for teachers to teach grammar effectively if they do not avoid the pitfalls of traditional approaches and develop an understanding of grammar that is purged of the errors and weaknesses of previous methods. Developments in modern linguistics have provided new insights into what constitutes effective language teaching. This section will focus on several developments that had revolutionary implications for grammar instruction and paved the way for Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

2. 3. 1. How did the concept of communicative competence question the centrality of grammar in language teaching methods?

The emergence of the notion of communicative competence in linguistics theory had a major impact on language teaching. Hymes (1972) originally developed the notion of communicative competence in response to Noam Chomsky's view of language competence as referring only to knowledge of grammatical rules. He explains, "A normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner" (p. 277). The notion of communicative competence was then expanded by many researchers. According to Richards (2006), communicative competence refers to the following:

- Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions
- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication)
- Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations)
- Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (p. 3)
The mastery of grammar rules was no longer seen as sufficient for effective and successful language use. As Richards (2006) points out, traditional teaching methods did not take into account the different elements that constitute communicative competence. The focal point of traditional teaching was grammatical competence. As a result, those who believed in the notion of communicative competence supported a switch from grammar as the foundational principle in organizing courses to "sets of situations, notions, functions, and/or speech acts (Connors, 1980, p. 330). Communicative approaches set communicative competence as the goal of language teaching. To conclude, many language researchers now agree that language competence involves more than mastering grammar rules. In order to help learners acquire competence in a second language, teachers need to focus on several aspects of the language such as the sociolinguistic aspect rather than grammar alone. In the Omani context, it is not clear what strategies are adopted by teachers in order to help their students acquire communicative competence. Studies indicate that the major focus of teachers is still on grammatical competence.

2.3.2. How did the primacy of speech influence traditional grammar instruction and the choice of grammar models?

One of the characteristics of the grammar-translation method and traditional approaches is the inferior position of spoken language and the negligence of teaching speaking skills. However, a central tenet of modern linguistics, which distinguishes it from traditional theories of language, is the primacy of speech over writing (Lyons, 1981). This development had several revolutionary implications for language teaching. First, it led to the increase in the teaching of spoken language (Wilkins, 1972). In addition, traditional grammarians were criticized because they focused solely on the language of literature and neglected everyday colloquial speech (Lyons, 1981). Therefore, the focus shifted to a grammar model that is based on language as it is used by society members. There was a need for grammar that would assist learners to speak and perform functions with the language. This development was a prelude to the emergence of new grammar models, particularly functional grammar that is "based on a pragmatic view of language as social
interaction" (Crystal, 1992, p. 148). A functional syllabus is based on communicative purposes for which the language is used (Thornbury, 1999).

In Oman, some elements of the grammar translation method are still characteristic of language teaching. However, given that communication is one of the primary reasons behind learning English in Oman and it is the spoken language that is usually used in communication, there is a necessity to choose a grammar model that is relevant to the students' language needs. Functional grammar might be an appropriate choice. As Ellis (2006) points out, "modern syllabuses rightly give more attention to the functions performed by grammatical forms" (p. 86).

2.3. Linguists' attitudes towards correctness and their impact on grammar instruction

A defining characteristic of traditional grammar teaching is its emphasis on prescriptive rules, i.e. what grammarians believe to be correct (Hall, 1960). However, linguists argue that what is correct is what can be attested in the native speakers’ use of the language. As Wilkins (1972) pointed out, "the linguist will accept whatever is most common usage" (p. 31). When linguists are asked questions, for instance about the usage of it's me, their typical answer would be it is normal and the great majority of people use it. This development caused a strong reaction against traditional grammar teaching. Language educators realized that such grammatical rules did not reflect the real use of language in everyday speech. Therefore, teachers were advised not to waste time and effort on grammar that has no relation to actual speech (Hall, 1960).

It is worth noting that Arabic grammar that is taught at Omani schools is largely prescriptive. Old dictionaries and grammarians are still treated as absolute authorities and many examples of common Arabic usage nowadays are deemed incorrect. English teachers' background of learning Arabic grammar can possibly have an influence on their attitudes towards correctness. This perhaps explains why Al Jadidi (2009) found differences between Arab and non-Arab teachers in Oman. The Arab teachers focused more on the teaching of grammar, while the non-Arab teachers "focus less on accuracy, grammar, and lexis than their Arabic-speaking counterparts" (p. 2). The transference of such attitudes may be a hindrance as students' main aim is to learn the language for practical purposes.
2.3.4. The concept of social acceptability and attitudes towards correct usage

Traditional grammar teachers exert a lot of effort to teach students to avoid incorrect language usage. Nonetheless, many of the so-called incorrect language structures are acceptable and commonly used among many members of the society, although their use has an appropriate time and place. Therefore, linguists say that such language structures should not be classified as correct or incorrect. They argue that there are no inherent qualities that make a particular language structure incorrect. Thus, the language learner should not be taught to condemn and avoid particular usages, but to use them when appropriate. For example, learners should not be taught that 'ain't' is wrong. Instead, they should be taught how and when it can be used appropriately. Grammar teachers should change their attitude towards what is common among people and never consider any particular usage that is common as incorrect, but as appropriate in one setting and inappropriate in another (Hall, 1960). As Richards (2006) points out, part of communicative competence is, "knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication" (p. 3).

2.3.5. Accuracy versus fluency

There are two main developments that led to a shift towards a focus on fluency rather than accuracy. First, the occurrence of errors is no longer seen as something that has to be stopped immediately through error correction, but as a natural part of the learning process (Lightbown & Spada, 1993). Secondly, in contrast to the traditional view that accuracy is developed through grammar practice, CLT advocates believe that grammatical accuracy will be naturally acquired as students engage themselves in meaningful communication. This point is indicated by Eskey (1983) when he said: “we used to believe that if students learned the forms, communication would somehow take care of itself. Now we seem to believe that if student somehow learn to communicate, mastery of the forms will take care of itself” (p. 319). These two developments encouraged language teachers to adopt fluency-based instruction. In CLT, as Richards (2006) indicates, “Accuracy activities such as drills and grammar practice were replaced by fluency activities based on interactive small group work” (p. 38).
2.3.6. How the research in SLA prompted the question of whether grammar needs to be taught

The arguments for the exclusion of grammar instruction do not come from the communicative competence model that has been discussed, nor do they come from the disfavor of prescriptive grammar, they actually stem from theories in second language acquisition (SLA). The following arguments were made in favor of a grammarless approach.

*Morpheme order studies and the natural order of acquisition*

There has been a fierce argument about the existence of a natural order of acquisition that has led to some scholars to question the effectiveness of grammar teaching. In the 1970s, several studies set out with the goal of discovering whether there is a natural sequence when a learner acquires a second language. Researchers who carried out these studies, which became known as morpheme order studies, concluded that there is a universal order of acquisition (Nunan, 1991). There is a certain accuracy order that is approximately the same for all learners regardless of their first language and whether or not they have been instructed formally in the language (Ellis, 1997). Such findings changed language researchers' views on grammar instruction. Nunan (1991) sums up the impact of the morpheme order studies by saying,

"One suggestion made as a result of the morpheme order studies was that we should abandon all attempts to grade syllabuses grammatically and to teach grammar systematically. Rather, learners should be immersed in communicative activities in which the focus is firmly on meaning rather than form" (p. 148).

*The influence of Krashen’s model on grammar teaching*

*The acquisition/learning dichotomy and the monitor hypothesis*

Ever since Krashen distinguished between learning and acquisition, there has been a debate about the role of conscious knowledge in language acquisition. According to Krashen (1981), the conscious process of learning cannot result in acquiring the language and the 'learned system' only acts as a monitor or editor. As Terrell (1991) indicates, Krashen believes that "current second language acquisition research supports the notion that an explicit knowledge of how
forms and structures function in the target language is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for their acquisition" (p.53). In short, grammar instruction is not conducive to language acquisition.

**Comprehensible input is sufficient for language acquisition**

One of the main hypotheses in Krashen's model of second language acquisition is the *input hypothesis*, which posits that, "the only necessary condition for successful L2 acquisition is that the learner understands input that contains the new structure" (Ellis, 1993, p.71). This hypothesis posits that there is no need to teach learners grammar because learners will naturally acquire it from comprehensible input (Ellis, 1993). Therefore, if teachers provide input that contains the new structures and which is just one step further from the learner's current language level, then comprehension and acquisition will take place (Lightbown & Spada, 1993).

**The affective filter hypothesis and the harmful effects of error correction**

The *affective filter hypothesis* has posed serious questions about potential harmful effects of error correction. A considerable part of traditional grammar teaching consisted of explicit correction of students' language errors. However, Krashen is against error correction. The fifth hypothesis in his model is the *affective filter hypothesis*. Lightbown and Spada (1993) explain that the affective filter is “an imaginary barrier which prevents learners from using input in the environment" (p. 28). Krashen (1982) contends that:

"A sure method of raising the filter is attempting to correct errors, especially in beginning stages and especially in spoken language! Error correction is, unfortunately, the profession's typical reaction to error, and in my view, it has been a serious mistake" (p. 74).

It is worth noting that Al-Badi (2009) conducted a study to investigate Omani school students’ motivation and confidence in speaking English and reported that “most of the case study subjects did not feel relaxed and they worried about making mistakes” (p.52). This indeed can be harmful and demotivating. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990) note, "constant, direct correction is not effective and it does not help to create a good class atmosphere" (p. 10).This is one of the weaknesses of traditional methods that emphasize error correction even in fluency activities.
2.4. Studies of explicit grammar instruction and the renewed interest in grammar

The unsettling nature of the debate surrounding explicit grammar instruction prompted researchers to investigate (a) whether explicit knowledge of language can become implicit knowledge or only it acts as a monitor (b) whether comprehensible input is sufficient for language acquisition (c) whether there are differences between learners who receive form-focused instruction and learners who do not. In the following sections, a summary of research findings will be reported and discussed.

2.4.1. The effects of explicit instruction on implicit knowledge

Language researchers, who attempted to provide theoretical justifications for using or avoiding explicit grammar instruction, have differed strongly on the role of explicit knowledge in language acquisition. Before going into details about the researchers' different positions, it is necessary to define what is meant by explicit and implicit knowledge. According to Brown (2007), explicit knowledge includes "facts that a person knows about language and the ability to articulate these facts in some way" (p. 302). While implicit knowledge is "information that is automatically and spontaneously used in language tasks" (p. 302). According to most SLA researchers, competence in an L2 is not a matter of explicit knowledge, but mainly implicit knowledge (Ellis, 2006). The literature shows no consensus on whether explicit knowledge can convert or facilitate the development of implicit knowledge. This issue is known among researchers as the interface issue (Ellis, 2009). There are three positions that can be recognized regarding this issue. The first position is known as the strong interface position. Dekeyser (1998), a major proponent of this position, maintains that if students have enough opportunities for communicative practice, their explicit knowledge converts to implicit knowledge. On the contrary, the noninterface position holds that explicit knowledge cannot be converted to implicit knowledge (Ellis, 2009). Finally, there is the weak interface position, which shows up in several versions. One version holds that "explicit knowledge can convert into implicit knowledge through practice, but only if the learner is developmentally ready to acquire the linguistic form (Ellis, 2009, p.21).
The three positions regarding the interface issue give support to different approaches to teaching grammar (Ellis, 2006). If explicit knowledge does become implicit knowledge, then explicit grammar instruction is indeed effective. However, if it cannot be converted to implicit knowledge, as the non-interface position posits, then there is little value in explicit grammar instruction. This latter position is advocated by Krashen (1993), who argues that the effects of grammar instruction on acquired competence are peripheral. However, there is no convincing evidence to support the non-interface hypothesis. Contrary to Krashen's claims, Ellis (2002b) reviewed 11 studies that investigated the effect of form-focused instruction and concluded that it does contribute to the acquisition of implicit knowledge. Moreover, Long's (1983) frequently cited review of research findings showed that grammar instruction is generally effective. In addition, Norris and Ortega's (2000) meta-analysis of 49 studies has confirmed the overall effectiveness of grammar instruction, providing further evidence in favour of grammar teaching. As noted earlier, Krashen argues that explicit knowledge of how language structures work only acts as a monitor. However, there is no sufficient evidence to support Krashen's claim. Ellis (2006) suggests that "explicit knowledge is used in the process of formulating messages as well as in monitoring" (p. 96). In short, there is now accumulating evidence to support grammar instruction.

It is important to note that even the strong version of the interface holds that explicit knowledge cannot convert to implicit knowledge without communicative practice. Ellis (2006) points out, "there is also some evidence that teaching explicit knowledge by itself (i.e., without any opportunities for practising the target feature) is not effective" (p. 96). Unfortunately, in the Omani context, this point seems to be neglected. Al-Mahrooqi (2012b) investigated the perceptions of 100 Omani students regarding the low English proficiency in Oman. The students complained that they "mostly sit passively in the classroom; there is little chance to practice speaking inside or outside class" (p. 266). This situation may render teachers' efforts to teach grammar useless since students do not have enough opportunities for communicative practice.
2.4.2. Questioning comprehensible input

As noted before, Krashen argues that if learners receive comprehensible input that contains the new structure, then acquisition will take place naturally. However, there is some evidence that comprehensible input alone is not sufficient for acquiring certain language structures and grammar instruction can indeed be helpful. In a frequently cited article, White (1987) provides some examples of situations where 'comprehensible input fails'. For instance, such situations occur "when the learner has made certain kinds of incorrect generalizations about the L2, or has wrongly assumed that L2 is like LI in certain respects" (p.96). Furthermore, Schmidt (1990) argues that "subliminal language learning is impossible, and that intake is what learners consciously notice" (p.149). Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, as it is often called, goes against the claim that grammar structures can be acquired unconsciously and suggests that learners need to notice, in one way or another, the grammatical structures in order to acquire them.

2.4.3. Instructed versus naturalistic learners, who outperform the other?

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that language learners who receive grammar instruction outperform learners in naturalistic learning, such as those in immersion programs, in terms of language accuracy. In immersion programs, the target language is used as the only medium of instruction (Crystal, 1992). A key premise of immersion programs is that students can learn a language well without studying grammar (Mulroy, 2004). However, as many language researchers have noted, despite notable success in acquiring fluency, immersion programme students do not achieve high levels of grammatical accuracy (e.g. Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2002; Harley, 1989; Scheffler, 2009; Thornbury, 1999). Kinberg, (2002, as cited in Mulroy, 2004) notes, "Where accuracy is concerned, immersion program students tend to lag behind their peers in more traditional programs" (p. 55).

In conclusion, it is clear from the above discussion that the arguments for grammar teaching outweigh the case against it. There is strong evidence that form-focused instruction is beneficial in language learning. This, however, does not mean that language teachers should go back to traditional grammar instruction. Instead, grammar instruction needs to be given a new role, which I will attempt to explore in the next section.
2.5. The need to explore the role of grammar teaching in CLT

Having discussed that researchers now believe that grammar instruction can indeed have an effect on L2 competence and CLT activities alone are not sufficient, the next logical question is how to teach grammar in CLT. A ‘focus on form’ (henceforth FonF) approach to grammar teaching was proposed to address the weaknesses of a grammarless CLT approach (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). Ellis (2006) defines FonF as an approach that involves "a focus on meaning with attention to form arising out of the communicative activity" (p. 100). However, a number of controversial issues should be examined before making any pedagogical decisions about integrating form-focused instruction into CLT. The first one is whether grammar teaching should be planned (proactive) or incidental (reactive). If planned instruction is to be adopted, four important questions arise. First, what grammar should we choose to teach and how to sequence it? Second, should grammar be intensive or extensive (one language structure at a time or several structures)? Third, how should teachers draw students' attention to the target structure (e.g. the degree of explicitness)? Finally, at what level should grammar be introduced to learners? If unplanned (reactive) grammar instruction is chosen, is it better to respond through implicit corrective feedback or explicit corrective feedback? In the following sections, an attempt is made to answer these questions.

2.5.1. Focus on form: Incidental or planned

Ellis et al. (2002) note that there are two kinds of FonF instruction, *incidental* focus-on-form and *planned* focus on form (also called reactive/proactive). Incidental FonF is a type of corrective feedback that is given during a communicative activity. It can be a response to students' requests for clarification or it can stem from a teacher's observation of persistent errors among students. In this type of instruction, the language structure that is taught is neither planned nor expected. On the other hand, in planned FonF, the language structure is predetermined and the communicative activity is designed in such a way as to elicit the target structure and bring students' attention to it. This type of instruction differs from traditional grammar instruction in two ways; meaning is still paramount and students are not initially aware of the focus on the
language feature to be taught (Ellis et al., 2002). The question which approach is more effective is a cause of disagreement. Obviously, reactive grammar teaching is necessary, since the teacher cannot anticipate every language structure that students might find difficult. Therefore, the dispute is rather about whether there is a real foundation for pre-selecting and grading grammar structures. This is the topic of the next section.

2. 5. 2. Does grammar instruction require selection and gradation?

The issue whether grammar needs to be taught systematically has been a source of controversy as several language scholars question the usefulness of pre-selecting and grading language structures. The selection process involves decisions about what to include, while gradation refers to the order in which the selected language features appear (Thornbury, 1999). As Nunan (1991) notes, selection traditionally was based on a contrastive hypothesis. However, usefulness and frequency are usually the main criteria for selection. As for gradation, language structures are ordered according to their complexity (Thornbury, 1999). However, the usefulness of these two processes has been questioned on several grounds. For instance, teaching easier language features before complex and difficult ones appears to be a rational choice. Nonetheless, there are features that are considered to be simple, but students fail to acquire and internalize them. Pienemann and Johnston (1987) point to this fact by giving the example of the third person 'S', which is easy to explain, but difficult to internalize. On the contrary, there are structures, which are considered to be very complex and placed at the end of grammar textbooks, but their application is easier and less confusing. This corresponds to the distinction made by Ellis (2006) between two 'senses' of learning difficulty, the difficulty to understand and the difficulty to internalize. He emphasizes that the difficulty to internalize has been neglected in syllabuses that only consider difficulty in terms of understanding. Moreover, objections were raised about the contrastive hypothesis because studies show that there is a certain accuracy order that is approximately the same for all learners regardless of their first language (Ellis, 1997). According to Nunan (1991), research has shown that the majority of errors made by either adults or children are not related to their mother tongue. In terms of frequency, Nunan also points out, "children acquiring a second language appeared to follow a predetermined order which could not be accounted for in terms of the frequency which the learners heard the language items" (p.
It can be concluded from this discussion that the basis for sequencing and grading grammar is questionable. Nonetheless, planning might take place as a result of teachers' observations of their students' errors or based on students' requests for explanations. Students do not progress in the same way or at the same speed. Therefore, some flexibility is needed, and teachers should be given the opportunity to plan their grammar teaching according to their students' needs, instead of following rigid syllabuses.

2.5.3. Should grammar instruction be intensive or extensive?

There is a controversy about whether students learn in a linear way, acquiring language features one by one, or they have the capacity to learn different features together. In intensive grammar instruction, the focus is on only one language structure per lesson. Whereas in extensive grammar instruction, several structures are covered within a single lesson (Ellis, 2006). Planned grammar instruction is usually intensive, while incidental FonF is often extensive. According to Nunan (2004), "Learners do not learn one aspect of the language perfectly one at a time. Rather, they acquire partial mastery of numerous items simultaneously. For curriculum developers and materials writers, this means that extensive recycling is required" (p. 114). This provides a basis for incidental FonF, where the teacher covers a wide variety of structures in a single lesson. However, intensive grammar teaching is also necessary because in incidental FonF, little attention is paid to each language structure and that might be insufficient. Therefore, as Ellis et al (2002) note, "planned focus-on-form is effective because it focuses learners repeatedly on the same form while they are communicating" (p. 422). To conclude, both approaches, intensive and extensive, should be adopted to achieve better results.

2.5.4. How should teachers draw students' attention to grammar in a communicative class?

Traditionally, the deductive method is used to present grammar points. However, since the main focus in planned FonF is on meaning, the teacher should attempt to draw students' attention to the grammar point without disrupting the communicative nature of the lesson. One proposal to achieve that is to teach grammar through consciousness-raising tasks (see Schmidt, 1990). There are different ways of doing that. For instance, it can be done through "input enhancement". This
is performed by altering the input in order to make certain language features very noticeable. It is believed that such manipulation of the input can have an effect on the students' grammatical development. One way of enhancing the input is through colouring the target language features to make them salient (Smith, 1991). Generally, a teacher can employ any suitable method to draw students' attention as long as the degree of explicitness is maintained at a particular level where meaning is not disrupted or neglected.

2.5.5. The best time for introducing grammar

The conception of grammatical rules as the first building blocks of language learning has been questioned in recent decades. As Ellis (2006) notes, there are two positions regarding the best time for introducing grammar. Some scholars still maintain that grammar needs to be introduced since the very beginning of learning a language (e.g. Ellis, N, 2005). However, other scholars argue that grammar should be introduced in later stages and learners initially are able to learn the language without grammar (e.g. Ellis, 2002a). The former position is influenced by a behaviorist perspective, which claims that errors must be eliminated from the beginning lest they become bad habits that can be difficult to replace. The latter position advances the argument that learners naturally start learning the language through memorizing or acquiring complete phrases and sentences (e.g. Hall, 1960). This is the position adopted by Ellis (2002a) who also argues that the first stage of language acquisition is 'naturally agrammatical'. The second position seems to be better founded since the claim that errors can become bad habits is difficult to sustain because errors are seen, especially by CLT advocates, as "a natural and valuable part of the language learning process" (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 80). In conclusion, teachers are faced with a conflict between the need to teach grammar as their learners commit errors and the need to avoid metalinguistic explanations that can make learning less enjoyable for children in the early stages. This conflict can be resolved only by understanding that mistakes are a natural part of language learning.
2. 5. 6. How can teachers provide corrective feedback in incidental FonF?

Corrective feedback in incidental FonF can be provided either explicitly or implicitly. In implicit feedback, students are not made aware that they have committed an error and correction is provided in an indirect way. On the other hand, explicit corrective feedback occurs "when a teacher clearly indicates that the learner has said something wrong and provides the correct form" (Ellis, 2001, p. 25).

Implicit corrective feedback:

In order to avoid lengthy and sometimes unnecessary metalinguistic explanations and direct correction that might increase students' anxiety, the use of implicit corrective feedback techniques can be recommended. A popular method is the use of a recast which is "a teacher's correct restatement of a learner's incorrectly formed utterance" (Nicholas, Lightbown & Spada, 2001, p. 720). There is a dispute about the effectiveness of recasts and other devices that give implicit feedback. The main argument against such devices is that learners usually pay attention to the content of the teachers' reformulated utterance and do not focus on the form since the teacher does not explicitly show that they are providing correction about grammar (Schachter, 1981). Nonetheless, there are some studies that suggested that recasts could have an effect on grammar acquisition (e.g. Long, Inagaki, & Ortega, 1998).

Explicit corrective feedback:

There are concerns that learners' inability to pay attention to form when receiving implicit feedback might prompt a need for more explicit correction. When an explicit metalinguistic explanation is provided, the student will certainly pay attention to the correct form. Ellis et al (2002) indicate that explicit corrective feedback is recommended if teachers "think that the student does not know the form or will have difficulty in identifying what the error" (p. 426). Otherwise, the implicit choice is better in order to avoid running the risk of embarrassing the learner or drifting away from a communication-based activity.
Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is clear that the usefulness of traditional approaches to grammar teaching has been re-examined after the advent of modern linguistics. The communicative competence model prompted language educators to review their beliefs about language competence and how it can be acquired. The interface issue led researchers to investigate the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction. All these developments led to the emergence of new approaches to grammar instruction. Deciding what approach to adopt can be a very difficult task indeed since each one has its merits and its weaknesses. However, these approaches should not be viewed as idiosyncratic or opposites, but as complementary in nature. A language teacher will need to plan, but sometimes, reactive instruction becomes a necessity. Extensive teaching and the coverage of several aspects of the language is effective, but an intensive focus on a particular language structure is likely to speed up the acquisition process. Teachers, who know their students well, can provide explicit corrective feedback to one student, and implicit feedback to another. A comprehensive understanding of several methods and techniques is characteristic of a well-equipped teacher who can respond to each situation in the most appropriate manner (see appendix (2) for a summary of approaches to grammar teaching).
Chapter (3) Methodology

Introduction

This chapter first introduces the research methodology employed and describes the theoretical framework and my positioning as a researcher. Secondly, it describes the selection and recruitment of participants and then provides a rationale for the choice of data collection tool and data analysis method. Finally, the chapter addresses the ethical considerations and the validity of the results.

3.1. Qualitative research approach

Since this study seeks to investigate students' perceptions of the use of explicit grammar instruction (EGI) in CLT, a constructivist position and a qualitative method have been utilized. Creswell (2005) explains that constructivism, as an ontological position, emphasizes "the importance of the participant's view" (p. 43). In qualitative research, "the researcher seeks to understand and portray the participants' perceptions and understandings of a particular situation or event" (Burton & Bartlett, 2009, p.22). Therefore, this method will help provide in-depth data and Omani students will be able to explain their perceptions and beliefs regarding the use of EGI and their feelings about how grammar should be taught. The type of qualitative research design that is used in this study is called grounded Theory Design. Creswell (2012) explains that researchers use this type “to generate a general explanation that explains a process, action, or interaction among people” and it is “grounded in the views of participants” (p. 21). In conclusion, the study attempts to provide explanations about certain trends in language teaching that are based on students’ views.
3.2. My role as a researcher

In this study, I have played the role of both an insider and outsider. I am an insider because I am a member of the group being studied. I have experienced learning English at Omani schools and completed a bachelor's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). I was trained as an English language teacher and worked as a trainee at an Omani school for one year. After graduation, I worked as a full-time teacher for one semester. This experience of learning and teaching English in Oman shaped my understanding and formed my perceptions of how language is learned and taught. However, when I came to pursue a Master’s degree at Monash University, I gained a new understanding and had a rich experience as I interacted with a different culture and experienced new ways of learning and teaching. My training at Monash made me see things in a different way and look at the situation in Oman from a new perspective. Therefore, I have approached the situation in Oman as an outsider who attempts to study the topic under investigation with objectivity.

3.3. Participants

Participants’ description

This study is concerned with English language teaching in Oman and thus all of the participants are Omani students. I have used purposeful sampling in which “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2005, p. 204). I have specifically chosen Omani college students whose major is English language teaching to be my participants. All of the participants study in the same college that I chose as the site from which I can have access to these participants. The participants are pursuing a bachelor degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and going to be English language teachers in the future. I believe that these students can give valuable insights about grammar teaching at Omani schools. In the following sections, I will describe the selection criteria, the rationale for selection, and the recruitment of participants.
Selection criteria

As a first step in the selection process, the following criteria were determined:

(1) Participants are Omani college students

(2) Participants experienced learning English at Omani schools

(3) Participants are students who are currently specialized in English language teaching

Rationale for the selection

Although the research is mainly concerned with English language teaching at Omani schools, there are three reasons why college students whose major is English language teaching were chosen. First, college students come from different regions of Oman, which is a vast country. Therefore, it is more likely that potential participants would be representative of the situation in Oman and would provide a broad range of views. Second, college students can reflect on their school experiences without being influenced by power relation issues, whereas school students can possibly be affected directly or indirectly. Finally, since students are currently studying different methods of language teaching at college, they have comprehensive understanding of such methods and their opinions and beliefs can be more informed.

Participant recruitment

In order to recruit the participants, I first went to meet the Head of the English Language Department in the college. After reading the explanatory statement and discussing the research methodology, he gave me permission to carry out the data collection. An invitation letter was posted on the college notice boards. In addition, the head of the English department told the teachers about the research and encouraged them to notify the students that there was an invitation letter posted on the notice boards. The invitation letter included my contact details, the objective of the study, the selection criteria, and the possible benefits for participants. I received many emails from students who were willing to participate. I immediately sent them the explanatory statement and the questionnaire. Out of the
29 students who received the questionnaire, 16 students replied in the first week. For those who did not return the questionnaire, I used a strategy proposed by Creswell (2012) which is to "send a postcard to the nonrespondents, reminding them to complete the questionnaire" (p. 391). After receiving the postcard, seven students responded. The total number of participants in this study is 23 students.

3.4. Data collection method

A questionnaire with open-ended questions

According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), the constructionist researcher tends to rely on qualitative data collection methods and analysis. The data collection method that was utilized in this study is a questionnaire. Although questionnaires are typically used to gather quantitative data, Dornyei (2007) points out that questionnaires can be used to gather qualitative data when they contain open-ended questions. The questionnaire used in this study was sent via email. Anderson (1998) notes that, "sending questionnaires via electronic mail (e-mail) is growing in popularity" (p. 190). The process involves sending the questionnaire via email as a computer file. The participant receives the email, completes the questionnaire on their computer, and sends the file back to the researcher. The questionnaire in this study included mostly open-ended questions as well as what Anderson calls comment-on questions. Such questions attempt to "elicit an extensive answer by posing a question and leaving space for the respondent to write a short paragraph" (p. 82). This type of questions was chosen because it is vitally important for in-depth understanding (Anderson, 1998). According to Patton (2002), "the purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (p. 20). The responses to questions can vary widely. As noted before, the literature provides various reasons why explicit grammar instruction is widely used in a CLT-based curriculum and there are so many variables involved in the educational system. All of that makes the selection of prior categories and the use of scales very difficult and perhaps inefficient. Therefore, as Creswell (2012) points out, the open-ended question, "is ideal when the researcher does not
know the response possibilities and wants to explore the options" (p. 387). In addition to the above, participants were invited to take part in a follow-up questionnaire (to read the questions, see the Appendix 4). The purpose of it was to pursue data in more depth and clarify inconsistencies. Several respondents were asked to elaborate and give detailed explanations of the views they expressed in the first questionnaire. The questions were based on their responses in the first questionnaire.

3.5. Thematic analysis as a data analysis method

As Creswell (2005) notes, in qualitative research, the data that is collected consists of words which the researcher describes and analyzes for themes. Thus, in this study, thematic analysis is applied as the data analysis method. I followed the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, in order to get a general sense, I read and re-read thoroughly the responses many times. This is also called a preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell, 2005). I highlighted key words and constructs that recur and took some notes. Second, I identified the segments of the text that recurred and were interesting. I then gave each recurring segment a code. Codes are "labels used to describe a segment of text" (Creswell, 2005, p. 238). The third step involved looking for themes. Themes differ from codes because they are broader and different codes may "combine to form an overreaching theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). The fourth step involved reviewing these themes. In this step, I revised and expanded the themes and looked for more support in the data for each theme. Braun and Clarke give some characteristics of what counts as a theme. According to them, one of the main properties of a theme is that it "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question" (p.10). It contributes to the answer of the research problem. Fifth, this step involves defining the theme by considering how it fits into the whole picture that the data analysis is describing. Finally, the themes and main conclusions are reported.
3.6. Ethical issues

An indispensable part of any good research is the way it addresses ethical issues. The most important ethical concerns in educational research are informed consent, power relationships, privacy, and harm (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). One of the main goals of the ethical standards is the protection of the human research participants. The first issue that goes under this category is informed consent where participants agree to take part without any type of coercion and are aware of the research purposes and the research methodology. In this study, the option of implied consent was utilized. In this type of consent, participants do not state explicitly their consent to participate, for example by filling in a consent form. However, their consent is obtained implicitly if they decide to participate. In this study, the fact that students completed and returned the questionnaire implies that they had consented to participate. As Berg (2001) points out, "implied consent is indicated by the subject taking the time to complete the lengthy questionnaire" (p.57). Participants had complete freedom not to return the questionnaire. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance that the participants’ consent is informed. The participants "must be informed of the nature and purpose of the research, its risks and benefits, and must consent to participate without coercion" (Anderson, 1998, p. 19).

In this study, the students received a copy of the explanatory statement that explains to them the aims and objectives of the research, the research methodology, possible benefits, and ensures them that privacy and anonymity are maintained. Moreover, informed consent can sometimes be a complicated issue because it appears that “very few participants have the same level of understanding of research as the researcher” (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 32). However, in this study, all of the participants are studying English language teaching. Therefore, understanding the topic, the research purposes, and the research methodology was not a difficult task for them. Moreover, the participants are between the ages of 19 and 23, and therefore, they are highly competent to give an informed consent.

Another important ethical concern is the issue of power relationships which does not actually amount to coercion, but it is where the participant cannot critique someone who has power over them since that can have a negative impact on their relationship (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). As far as the study is concerned, the questionnaire that is used is anonymous, and there
are no people involved in the data collection process except the researcher and the participants. Since the participants are directly contacting the researcher, nobody can have access to the students' answers except the researcher. Moreover, the study mostly asks the participants to reflect on their school experiences. There is no investigation about the college educational system and philosophy where students currently study. Therefore, the issue of power relations does not pose any threat to the honesty of the students' answers.

Finally, as far as harm is concerned, according to Atkins and Wallace (2012), it is “absolutely morally incumbent on the researcher to anticipate any possible harm, distress or change which might be experienced by the participant” (p. 32). Since this study involves answering an anonymous electronic mail questionnaire and the participants had the right not to complete it, there was no possibility that this research would cause any harm to the participants.

3.7. Validity

*A follow-up questionnaire and disconfirming evidence: procedures for ensuring validity*

In this study, I have applied two procedures in order ensure the validity of the research findings which are a follow-up questionnaire and disconfirming evidence. In qualitative research, the concept of validity refers to "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomenon and is credible to them" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 124). A qualitative study is interpretive in nature and has been described as a "personal assessment" that could be open to multiple interpretations by different researchers (Creswell, 2005). Nonetheless, I applied two procedures in order to ensure the validity of the research findings and to arrive at interpretations that reflect the participants' opinions and beliefs. The first one is a follow-up questionnaire. The rationale behind using it was to ask students to confirm the interpretations arrived by the researcher, and elaborate on their answers and clarify inconsistencies. This helped eliminating any misinterpretation of the results in the first questionnaire. The second procedure I used is recommended by Creswell and Miller (2000). It is called *disconfirming evidence*. After I have defined the preliminary themes of the study, I looked for evidence in the data that is "consistent with or disconfirms these themes" (p. 127).
I read and re-read the responses thoroughly in order to ensure that the interpretations are grounded in the data.

As for the generalizability of the study findings, Dornyei (2007) argues that the main goal of qualitative research is to "find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation" (p. 126). The chief purpose is not to find a representative sample. Nevertheless, Maxwell (1992) differentiates between internal generalizability and external generalizability. The former refers to generalizing findings within a group, whereas the latter is concerned with generalizing the findings to other groups or communities. In qualitative studies, internal generalizability is actually more important. The aim is not to generalize the findings to other groups of people or communities. Instead, the researcher searches for insights, illuminating views, and in-depth understanding which have implications for the group under investigation. The reason behind this divide between the quantitative and qualitative researchers is the philosophical position adopted. While the positivist view of the world accepts that there is a single reality, constructivism is more concerned with the context and the meaning that the participants ascribe to educational issues (Creswell, 2005). Therefore, this study aims for internal generalizability and the findings have implications for the Omani context.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed qualitative research methodology and provided a rationale for the choice of research approach, data collection tool, and data analysis method. It describes how the participants were selected and recruited. It also discussed the use of a questionnaire with open-ended questions as the data collection method. In addition, there was a discussion about thematic analysis and the steps involved in it. Finally, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the results were discussed.
Chapter (4) Discussion

Introduction

This chapter introduces the findings of the study and provides a discussion of these findings in relation to studies reviewed in the literature. The chapter includes five main themes that have emerged from the use of thematic analysis and contributed significantly to answering the research questions. Some of these themes contain several sub-themes. Given the importance of the study of affect, the first theme is related to Omani students' attitudes towards grammar in general. Then, the perceived benefits of EGI, its absence in the strong versions of CLT, and student's perceptions of its exclusive use are the topics discussed under the second theme. The third theme is about students' experience of learning English through EGI at Omani schools. The issue of why Omani teachers place heavy emphasis on grammar in a CLT-based curriculum will be explored under the fourth theme. The final theme is about students' beliefs and thoughts regarding the most effective approach to grammar teaching in a CLT-based curriculum. Under this theme, students' perceptions of integrating EGI into CLT and 'focus on form' approach will be explored.

4.1. Predominance of positive attitudes towards grammar in general

The analysis of the data shows that 17 out of 23 students have a strong conviction that grammar is essential, despite holding various perceptions and beliefs about language teaching methods and approaches to grammar instruction. Their answers indicate that they value grammar and consider it an integral part of language learning. For instance, Hud (only pseudonyms are used) said, "grammar is the soul of language", which indicates his belief of the centrality of grammar in language learning. Students gave several reasons why they feel grammar is important. Most students believe that grammatical knowledge helps them use the language accurately and avoid making mistakes. For example, Aaron stated, "There is a crucial need to learn grammar in the class to avoid grammatical mistakes while communicating with others." It is also worth noting that some students believe that learning grammar can lead to more confidence about one's linguistic
abilities. For instance: “*Without grammar, broken English can embarrass students and make them look uneducated*” (Job);

> "*Understanding the rules of the language with good explanation and more details eases the process of learning second language. Therefore, students will be more able to produce the correct form and that will give them more trust and good thinking of their abilities in producing the language*" (Jacob).

It is obvious from the above responses that knowledge of grammar is seen as necessary for confident language use.

**Discussion**

Exploring students' attitudes and feelings about grammar is very important for two main reasons: it is related to the study of *affect*, and it gives insights into what students expect in the classroom. First, the term *affect* refers to "a number of emotional factors that may influence language learning and use" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 16). Stern (1983) emphasizes, “The affective component contributes at least as much and often more to language learning than the cognitive skills” (p. 386). Therefore, it is important to investigate how students feel about grammar in general. Dykes (2007) pointed out that "the word grammar often invokes a negative reaction in both teachers and students" (p.3). There is a popular belief that students have unpleasant views of grammar because of the countless rules that are imposed on them and the fear of constant error correction. In fact, grammar teaching is sometimes associated with authoritarian teacher-centered classroom. Dykes stresses that teachers need to make sure that students have a favorable attitude towards grammar. In the case of Omani students, these negative connotations of grammar are almost non-existent. Students' responses show that grammar is held in high esteem. This finding confirms the point that has been made by Al Issa (2005b) who said, "Arab students of English value the role of grammar and see it as the most important part of language" (p. 9). He explains that this appreciation of grammar is a transferred attitude from the Arabic language class, where grammar is highly regarded. Furthermore, exploring students' attitudes in general gives insights into what they expect in a language class. It can be inferred from the findings that eliminating grammar instruction all together would be
against students' expectation and may be demotivating. For example, Rao (2002) found out that Chinese students showed a lack of motivation towards activities that included no grammar instruction. It is interesting to note that Thornbury (1999) considers the learner expectations of grammar teaching as one of the arguments for including grammar. He warns about the harmful consequences of neglecting students' expectations, "the teacher who ignores this expectation by encouraging learners to simply experience language is likely to frustrate and alienate them" (p. 17). Moreover, students believe that grammar can give them more confidence about their linguistic abilities. Such positive views and high motivation can make grammar teaching more successful. Nonetheless, as we shall see in the next section, students' appreciation of grammar does not necessarily mean that they view its acquisition as the main goal of language learning. In reality, they have various perceptions of what leads to and constitutes language competence.

4.2. Students' beliefs about the connection between explicit grammar instruction (EGI) and language proficiency

It is of paramount importance to explore how students view the main approach used to teach English in relation to the ability to use language competently. In this theme, I will report the findings related to Omani students' beliefs about the connection between EGI and language proficiency. It is divided into three sub-themes. The first one is about their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of EGI. The second one is about students' perceptions of the absence of EGI in the strong version of CLT and its impact on language proficiency. The final sub-theme is whether EGI alone can lead to language proficiency.

4.2.1. The effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction

EGI leads to accuracy and gains in language proficiency.

The analysis of students' responses indicates that almost 20 participants believe that EGI leads to gains in language proficiency. The most frequently mentioned reason is that EGI leads to accuracy and helps students to avoid mistakes. For instance, "direct grammar teaching improves the accuracy of my language and helps me avoid forming wrong sentences" (Saleh).
*EGI provides the necessary tools for sentence formation.*

The responses of several students show that they view grammar as 'a machine' for sentence formation. For instance, "Direct grammar teaching gives me the necessary knowledge by which I can put sentences together in a correct way and avoid confusing different things" (Lot). The following response also illustrates this point:

"I believe that teaching grammar directly is very essential in language learning since it gives the learner the basic elements to learn the language effectively. As a result, students will be able to construct sentences which are correct grammatically and avoid mistakes while communicating" (Moses).

### 4.2.2. The absence of grammar instruction in the strong version of CLT

Since students perceive EGI to be effective, what are the consequences of its absence in the English classroom? Students were asked about their perceptions of communicative lessons that include no EGI. CLT versions that exclude grammar instruction all together are called strong versions.

*Learners’ interlanguage would be deficient without paying attention to form*

Most students believe that a CLT version that pays no attention to form would not help students achieve high levels of accuracy. Despite acknowledging the effectiveness of CLT in terms of improving communicative skills, they indicate that the learners’ interlanguage would be deficient if learners receive no EGI. "Without knowing the grammar rules, students will not get the fundamentals to follow while they produce the language (John). The following response also illustrates this point:

"I think communicative lessons are good ones but still there is a gap. Learning will not be sufficient if teachers only pay attention to teaching the meaning and neglecting the form of the language. I also think that students will enjoy group work and communicating with each other in the class, but still their learning will lack something essential which is grammar. Once learners master the grammatical rules, then this will lead them to use English for communication and interacting with people" (Moses.)
Neglecting form-focused instruction may cause fossilized grammar.

Several students believe that without EGI, students might repetitively make the same mistakes. Thus, EGI is needed to prevent premature fossilization, which occurs when errors become permanent.

"Communicative lessons which focus solely on conveying a message in a particular situation without emphasizing the importance of the form will help students communicate with others but in broken English. Students may achieve high levels of speaking skills but keep making grammar errors" (Saleh).

"It is not enough to teach fluency without taking care of accuracy, there should be balance between direct grammar teaching and CLT. Learners’ mistakes are not corrected with CLT and therefore they will be made again and again if the teacher does nothing. There will be gap in the lesson and learners’ competency if there is a focus on CLT lessons without grammar" (Zechariah).

4.2.3. The acquisition of language proficiency through EGI alone

It is essential to know whether the exclusive use of a language teaching method is based on the assumption that it is the main path to language acquisition. In this section, I will report findings about students' perceptions of the exclusive use of EGI and whether it can alone lead to language proficiency. In Oman, as stated before, EGI is the dominant approach in English language teaching.

EGI leads to accuracy rather than fluency and exclusive grammar teaching remains insufficient

Although students believe that EGI is effective, the data analysis of their responses shows that they do not believe that EGI alone would lead to language proficiency. In addition, several students question the centrality of EGI in language teaching and even show dissatisfaction regarding the exclusive use of EGI at the expense of other methods in teaching English at Omani schools. Examples of their responses are "Language proficiency means the ability to use the language fluently and accurately. Using direct grammar method only cannot serve this aim. It may help students to become accurate but for sure not fluent" (Dhulkifi); “Focusing on teaching
grammar is not as important as focusing on communicative teaching, it is a secondary aim in the area of teaching" (Jacob); "Direct grammar teaching helped me to learn English to some extent, but it was not enough. Language proficiency cannot only be achieved by learning grammar(Moses); Language proficiency, in my view, involves a meaningful interaction, not studying fragmented or isolated linguistic items or concepts (Noah)

Discussion

The effectiveness of EGI and the impact of its absence on language proficiency

Students' perceptions of the importance of EGI support the growing body of evidence that confirms the effectiveness of EGI and its positive effects on language proficiency. As Ellis (2006) notes, "there is now convincing indirect and direct evidence to support the teaching of grammar" (p. 86). In addition, the findings indicate that Omani students believe in the strong version of the interface hypothesis and explicit knowledge of grammar indeed has effects on implicit knowledge. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with what has been discussed in the literature that many language researchers no longer support a strong version of CLT. "There are now strong theoretical reasons for claiming that the teacher’s role in a communicative task should not be limited to that of communicative partner, the teacher also needs to pay attention to form" (Ellis, et al, 2002, p. 430). Language researchers have shown that students who receive no grammar instruction do not achieve high levels of accuracy despite being 'immersed' in the language for several years (e.g. Harley, 1989; Scheffler, 2009). Therefore, the exclusion of grammar teaching cannot be justified, especially with students who expect some instruction on grammatical rules. In fact, although some versions of CLT exclude grammar teaching all together as Ellis (1997) points out, recent CLT approaches tend to include some form-focused instruction. Therefore, it is not surprising that some scholars perceive the exclusion of grammar as one of the most popular misconceptions about CLT (e.g. Thompson, 1996). Furthermore, the above findings suggest that the lack of explicit instruction might cause fossilized grammar. Several researchers have emphasized the need for grammar teaching to prevent stunted growth. For example, "formal instruction may serve to prevent fossilization" (Ellis, 1989, p. 324); "Without some attention to form, learners run the risk of fossilization" (Thornbury, 1999, p. 24). The findings, however, suggest the exclusive use of EGI cannot be the path that leads to language acquisition. This is the topic of the next section.

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The acquisition of language proficiency through EGI alone

The findings related to this sub-theme have questioned the centrality of grammar in the Omani English class and revealed that communicative competence is not addressed properly. First, although most students perceive EGI as an effective method, the findings reveal that they do not conceive of grammatical competence as being equal to language proficiency. Their responses show clearly that in order to for learners to use language effectively and successfully, they need more than knowing grammar rules. One conclusion that can be drawn from these responses is that Omani students have a good understanding of the concept of communicative competence. They feel the need for it and are aware of its absence. I have discussed in the literature review that many language researchers now believe that what enables learners to use the language effectively is communicative competence. Because of this new conception, modern language approaches set communicative competence as the goal of language teaching and the objective of classroom activities (Richards, 2006).

Traditional grammar methods have been criticized because they only focus on grammatical competence and do not pay attention to communicative competence. Advocates of grammar methods believe that grammatical competence would lead students to achieve proficiency in the target language. However, as some participants indicated, it is obvious that mastery of grammatical rules is not enough. In Oman, the focal point of teaching methods is grammar. One of the major questions of this research is whether Omani students prefer EGI and advocate the teachers' heavy focus on it. The above findings clearly suggest that students do not believe that EGI alone can help them acquire the language, despite acknowledging that it has some effect on language proficiency. Therefore, Omani teachers, by focusing on EGI alone, are not helping students to acquire other aspects of language that students crucially need in order to develop language proficiency. Some teachers erroneously believe that if goal of language teaching is communicative competence, then there is no need to teach grammar. However, this conception is not accurate because grammatical competence is part of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). In conclusion, there is a need to pay attention to other aspects of the language such as discourse competence and knowledge of communicative strategies that constitute language competency in addition to grammatical knowledge. In order to see the extent to which students' language proficiency has been affected by EGI, it was necessary to ask them about their experiences of learning English, and this is the topic of the next theme.

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4.3. Explicit grammar instruction as in students' language learning experience

The findings regarding the usefulness of EGI in students' experience revealed unexpected answers. While almost half of the students believe that EGI was beneficial, the other half believes either EGI was not helpful at all, or only to some extent. What was surprising and unexpected is that several students, who previously stated that EGI is an effective method, believe that they did not benefit greatly from EGI that is used at Omani schools. Therefore, there was a need for further investigation. A follow-up questionnaire asked these students to elaborate on their answers and explain why exactly the experience was not helpful. Various interesting insights were given about the situation inside the English classroom. The following responses demonstrate why EGI did not achieve the desired results for these students.

**Grammar rules were not applicable in everyday language.**

Several students complained about the inability to use the grammar they learned at school. Examples of such comments include, "most of grammar rules that I've learned via this method I don't actually use them in daily life" (Adam); "when I was a student in the school I learned many rules in which I had to memorize them and some of them I really do not use them in real communication" (David).

**Grammar knowledge did not help students while communicating.**

Some students believe that EGI did not help when it comes to communication: "Direct grammar teaching was not useful at all. Knowing grammar rules solely did not help in real situations where you need for communicative skills (Dhulkifl): "Direct grammar teaching was useful, but it did not prepare me for communication. When I wanted to communicate, I had to practice every day with people; studying grammar is different from communication with people outside" (Job).

**Grammar learning created boredom**

Some students felt that grammar teaching was boring and not very interesting. For instance, "Direct grammar teaching was not useful. It just makes me view the mastery of language just memorizing linguistic features or items. It was not interesting and I felt bored in the class" (Noah).
Grammar was taught through L1 (Arabic) without further practice. Several students explained that they were taught grammar rules in Arabic (their mother tongue) and they did not have enough opportunities to practise. "Rules were taught via Arabic. We had no chance to practice and use these rules in English situations" (Hud).

Discussion

Although EGI can be effective, as it was for half of the participants, its workability can be inhibited in certain situations. Those participants, who found EGI ineffective, provided several explanations of where and when EGI can fail. First, several students complained that grammatical knowledge did not help in communicative situations. Participants also complained that grammar was taught through L1 and there were not enough opportunities for practice. As noted in the literature review, language scholars who believe that explicit knowledge of grammar can convert to implicit (automatic) knowledge state that communicative practice is a condition for this conversion (Dekeyser, 1998). In other words, if students have no opportunities to practice the language structures they have learned in a meaningful context, it is difficult that they would acquire and internalize these structures. This might explain why students could not apply what they have learned in real-life communication. In addition, the responses of some students suggest that the rules where irrelevant and they did not use them in their daily lives. As discussed previously, the teaching of some rules, such as prescriptive or rules that are based on literary usages is not helpful. Modern syllabuses, as Ellis (2006) indicates, focus on functional grammar. Functional grammar is "based on a pragmatic view of language as social interaction" (Crystal, 1992, p. 148). Language functions include ordering, inviting, complaining, etc.

In conclusion, it is not contradictory that students who believe in the effectiveness of EGI simultaneously stated that their experience of learning English through this method did not bear fruit. There are certain conditions under which this method cannot work effectively. EGI can be an effective method if students are given enough opportunities for communicative practice and they are taught language structures that are relevant to their lives and can be applied. If rules are
explained in Arabic with no practice in English, EGI is not likely to help students improve their language. It is necessary for Omani teachers to take these points into consideration.

4.4. Students' beliefs about the difficulties that hinder CLT implementation and lead to the predominance of grammar teaching

One of the major questions of this research is why EGI is used widely at the expense of CLT. As we have already seen, students did not agree that EGI alone would lead to language acquisition. Therefore, there was a need to ask students why CLT is not fully implemented. Participants' responses provided rich information and explanations that contributed significantly to the answer of this question. However, it is important to acknowledge that participants are talking about the difficulties they believe their teachers experienced and their explanations may not correspond with the teachers' pedagogical intent behind using or abandoning one method or another. However, there were a number of difficulties that several students consistently pointed at and therefore they deserve to be given some attention. The following findings present the difficulties that hinder CLT implementation and lead to the predominance of grammar teaching in the Omani English classroom.

The demanding nature of CLT

Surprisingly, several participants believe that it easier to teach grammar because CLT is a more difficult and demanding approach. These participants gave the following explanations regarding teachers' use of EGI, "Teachers use the easiest way of teaching by only presenting the grammar rules and explaining them for the students, whereas, communication lessons need more effort from the teachers." (Shuaib): "I think that is due to the lack of creativity and because teaching grammar is easier than teaching communicative lesson"(Adam).
The lack of experience and understanding of CLT

Several students believe that teachers do not have enough experience in CLT and lack sufficient understanding and knowledge: "Teachers may not have a clear understanding about the CLT approach and how to use it in the classroom" (David);

"I think that some teachers are not proficient enough to teach communicative lessons. Others prefer to apply a grammar teaching method because they find it easier. Some teachers also think that CLT lessons require more time to explain than grammar teaching lessons and their plan is to finish in a due date, so they keep very hard to finish at that time" (Moses).

The assessment leads to grammar-oriented classroom.

Some students believe that the type of assessment that is used in the educational system is causing teachers to focus on grammar: "Methods of assessment which is mainly exams can give language knowledge an edge over performance" (Noah).

Grammar knowledge is required first before conducting communicative activities.

Some participants believe that students' language level does not allow for the use of CLT and they need some grammar first: "the reason behind the focus on direct grammar teaching might be because teachers feel that students need more grammar practice before communication practice" (Lot): "Because students need to know the rules first then apply them when they produce the language" (Jacob)

Lack of time and resources prevent communicative lessons.

Several students said that CLT could be time consuming: "Teachers prefer using grammar teaching rather that communicative language teaching because they save time by implementing grammar teaching" (Aaron). Students also indicated that there is a lack of materials: "Teachers might lack materials and resources to use communicative activities and indirect activities to teach grammar" (Solomon).
Discussion

The above findings show that there are many factors that cause teachers to focus exclusively on EGI and they are behind the ineffective implementation of CLT. One important conclusion that can be drawn from the findings is the possible inaccuracy of the claim that EGI in itself is hindering CLT implementation. The majority of students did not attribute the ineffective implementation of CLT to some inherent qualities that exist in EGI. Thompson (1996) emphasizes that the exclusion of explicit grammar instruction is not a necessary part of CLT. It is true that Omani teachers might be convinced of the effectiveness of EGI, but that is not the only reason behind their use of EGI at the expense of CLT. First of all, many Omani teachers, as participants pointed out, might have vague understanding of CLT and little experience in how to conduct CLT lessons. The same finding has been reported by Al Mahrooqi (2012a) who conducted a study to investigate how communicative skills are taught in Oman and she concluded, "most teachers are not well-trained to integrate communication skills, the Ministry of Education, colleges and universities need to provide professional development courses to demonstrate to teachers how this can be done" (p. 129). However, this might be the case with older teachers, while the younger generation is more likely to have been exposed to the CLT approach. Moreover, the findings suggest that teachers find it easier to teach grammar directly than using CLT. It is true that CLT demands high levels of proficiency in the target language. As Thompson (1996) points out, "CLT places greater demands on the teacher than certain other widely used approaches" (p. 13). Therefore, the use of EGI can be the only option for some teachers as they are unable to conduct communicative lessons. Furthermore, one of the difficulties in implementing CLT is how to assess students. The educational system in Oman is still using exams as the main method of assessment. Al Issa and AL Bulushi (2011) state that the assessment system in Oman has been criticized for

"overlooking the importance of evaluating performance, while at the same time training students to heavily focus on and work towards mastering content and achieving high grades through copying and memorization, which has had negative implications for teachers’ and students’ motivation and performance" (p. 150).
There has to be new ways of assessment that are suitable for a CLT-based curriculum. Otherwise, students as well as teachers may not see great value in CLT activities and will focus on what will be assessed in the exams. Moreover, some students also indicated that teachers avoid communicative activities because they are time-consuming. Using direct grammar teaching can save time and effort. Al Jadidi (2009) found out that some Omani teachers justified using Arabic to explain grammar because it can save them time. This is also consistent with the findings in Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam’s study (2011) who found out that Omani teachers believe that using authentic texts as time-consuming. Therefore, there is a need for a balance between what is required from teachers and the time they are given to teach. The Ministry of Education needs to take this point into consideration.

In conclusion, it is clear from the above discussion that EGI itself is not inhibiting the implementation of CLT. There are other factors that drive teachers to focus mainly on EGI at the expense of CLT. The obstacles can be removed by training teachers in CLT and providing them with sufficient time, suitable materials, and methods of assessment that are appropriate. The problem is not solved by neglecting or excluding grammar instruction all together. In the next section, we will see how students perceive the integration of EGI into CLT and whether this can address the limitations of a grammarless approach.

4.5. How grammar can be taught in a CLT-based curriculum

In this theme, which is divided into three sub-themes, I will report findings about students' perceptions of how grammar can be taught in a CLT-based curriculum. The first sub-theme is regarding the integration of EGI into CLT. Students provided various insights and opinions about how and for whom the integration of EGI can work best. The second sub-theme is about students' perceptions of 'focus on form' approach to grammar teaching and its integration into CLT. The third sub-theme is about the use of implicit grammar instruction.
4. 5. 1. Integrating explicit grammar instruction (EGI) into CLT

**EGI integration is effective and does not hinder CLT implementation.**

Most students have advocated the use of EGI in the CLT class. For instance,

“I think that the application of direct grammar teaching method in some cases do not obstruct the application of communicative language teaching method but the process becomes complementary and can overcome difficulties that may face the teacher and the student” (Idris).

“Grammar teaching should be included in lessons based on CLT method. The teacher should explain for students the rules that occur while speaking in the class. If any student makes a mistake while speaking, the teacher should explain and correct the mistake to avoid it next time. Teachers should allocate some time for teaching grammar not only teaching it accidentally” (Moses).

**Integrating EGI by using the inductive method (discovery approach)**

Unexpectedly, almost half of the students believe that EGI can be integrated into CLT using the inductive method. In this method, examples are given first and the students are encouraged to elicit language rules. This method sometimes involves explicit explanations of grammar, but they come after students elicit the rules. Although there was no mention of the inductive method in the questionnaire, students stated that they prefer this method of teaching grammar. Examples of their responses are "I think the most effective way is by putting learners in the situation and they have to guess the rule and then use it in similar situations" (Jonah): "I think teaching grammar inductively is a good way. This method gets learners to infer the rule and use their mind" (Moses). In addition,

“The best way to teach grammar is to include the use of games, activities and tasks that involve students in discovering the rules of grammar and give them practice on how these rules can serve communication in particular contexts and for particular language functions" (Solomon).
**EGI integration works well with adults, rather than children.**

It is interesting to note that the most of the students believe that explicit grammar instruction is more suitable for adults. Some participates stated that children can acquire language naturally and there is no need for explicit explanations of rules: "Direct grammar is suitable to teach for adults more than children; children need to get the language without rules as when they start learning their mother tongue" (Jacob). "The cognitive knowledge plays a vital role for it enables adult learners to compare and associate the grammatical structure of L2 with L1" (Saleh): "I think children acquire language naturally, more focus on grammar will not serve acquisition. For adults, it can be useful if good methods of grammar teaching are used" (Solomon):" I think so because children learn better unconsciously unlike adults who prefer more conscious grammar learning (Idris)

**EGI integration into CLT works better with advanced students.**

A few students believe that EGI works better with advanced students. "I think that integrating direct grammar with communicative activities can be effective in language learning especially with upper-level learners" (Dhulkifl)

**Context and the use of situations are important.**

It is interesting to note that most participants who advocate the use of EGI stressed the importance of context and teaching grammar using situations. "I think it is better to teach grammar in a context or through a situation" (Adam): "Teaching grammar directly is a good way with an emphasis on using it in a context" (Joseph); "I think teaching grammar through passages is very remarkable and thoughtful because the task is to figure out the rule and understand the paragraph" (Lot)

**Students need to be given sufficient practice.**

Some students emphasized the need for a lot of practice when integrating EGI: "The most effective way is integrating direct grammar teaching with CLT and giving the students the optimum amount of practicing L2 to be both fluent and accurate whenever they use it" (Saleh)
**Personalization of the language**

The personalization of the language is where students link the language to their own lives. It has been discussed previously that students felt that language rules where irrelevant and were not related to their lives. Some students confirmed this again by indicating that grammar should be relevant and they can use it to express their own ideas. For instance, "I think the best way to teach grammar is to present the grammar rule first and then to give students different examples from their own life. Also, to give the students the opportunity to use them in a context prepared in the classroom even by student or teacher (Shuaib)."

**Discussion**

The above findings suggest that students generally advocate the integration of explicit instruction into CLT, despite having diverse opinions and beliefs of what makes the integration successful. First, their choice of inductive method shows that they do not want to be passive learners who just listen to grammatical explanations. Instead, they want to be involved in discovering and inferring rules from examples and contexts. This finding is consistent with AL Mahrooqi (2012b) who investigated Omani students' perceptions of low language proficiency at Omani schools. She found out that "there is a lack of communicative tasks and so students mostly sit passively in the classroom" (p. 266). In addition, A Jadidi (2009) found out that some Omani teaches use teachings methods that make students passive. However, when she interviewed the students, they expressed disapproval of such methods. She concluded that students "clearly appreciated interactive styles of teaching that involved them personally in the English lessons" (p. 126). Students seem to dislike being passive in the classroom and it is important to note that modern language approaches are more student-centered. Sometimes, eastern students are described as passive receivers who sit quietly and passively in a classroom and expect the teacher to provide them with every detail of the lesson. Therefore, student-centered approaches are against students' cultural norms and cannot be applied. However, the above finding shows the contrary. Students prefer interactive styles of teaching and complain
about being passive. Unfortunately, teachers are choosing to adopt non-interactive methods without taking into consideration students' needs and preferences.

Moreover, students emphasized the importance of context when teaching grammar. This suggests that they do not benefit enormously from decontextualized grammar teaching. This finding confirms Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam's (2011) study that investigated Omani teachers' perceptions about difficulties in grammar teaching. The study found out that Omani teachers generally believe that their students do not prefer to learn grammar from one-sentence examples. As indicated in the literature review, the importance of contextualization has been stressed by many scholars. Lightbown and Spada (1990) conducted a study in which they found out that "form-based instruction within a communicative context contributes to higher levels of linguistic knowledge and performance" (p. 443).

Furthermore, the fact that some students mentioned that grammar rules should be linked to examples from their own lives is consistent with their previous answers. Previously, several students stated that they did not apply many language rules that they were taught because they were irrelevant to their daily communication. Teaching irrelevant rules is not helping students when they communicate. Several students mentioned that they prefer to learn grammar through real-life situations. They want to learn language structures that would help them when they use the language for everyday purposes. This is also related to the personalization of the language. One of the 'ten commandments' suggested by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) for motivating learners is the personalization of the learning process.

In addition, the findings show that students conceive of EGI as a more suitable approach for adults. They explained that adults have more developed cognitive and intellectual abilities than children have. Several scholars have pointed out that explicit grammar instruction is more appropriate for adults. According to Dykes (2007), prior to the age of 12 or 13, "children do not normally begin to think in abstract terms" (p, 3). He considers their underdeveloped cognitive abilities as a reason behind disliking grammar. Children may also feel bored quickly and may not enjoy analyzing grammatical structures. In addition, Celce-Murcia (1991) points out that adults need more grammar than children, "If the ESL learners concerned are young children, it is most likely that little explicit grammar instruction is needed; if the students are adolescents or adults, however, their learning may well be facilitated by some explicit focus on form" (p. 463).
Moreover, some students believe that young children can acquire the language naturally without grammar instruction. This is actually supported by the critical age hypothesis, which posits, "there is a time in human development when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning" (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 42). This critical period ends around puberty. Therefore, children are far more capable of achieving significant success when learning a second language even without grammar instruction because of their innate capacities that are still available (Lightbown & Spada, 1993). Grammar instruction, thus, should not be a major component in language teaching when it comes to children. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Omani school students have Arabic grammar lessons at a young age. In the Arabic grammar class, they are exposed to grammatical terminology such as object, verb, and subject. Therefore, understanding metalinguistic explanations about the English language may not be very difficult for them.

In conclusion, the integration of EGI into CLT can be an effective solution that addresses the limitations of CLT when it comes to improving students' accuracy. The findings also suggest that integrating direct grammar teaching into CLT does not mean that it should be the primary focus. There should a balance while integrating EGI that does not allow focus on form to outweigh focus on meaning. Grammar also needs to be introduced in meaningful situations and contexts in order for students to be able to apply what they learn. By taking all of these factors into consideration, there is a great likelihood that explicit grammar instruction would be effective.

4.5.2. 'Focus on form' instruction as an alternative approach

'Focus on form' (FonF) instruction is an approach to teaching grammar in which language structures are taught as they arise incidentally in a communicative lesson whose main focus is meaning. It is important to note that the above definition refers to incidental FonF instruction. Language researchers sometimes differentiate between incidental and planned FonF instruction. In planned FonF instruction, the linguistic feature to be taught is predetermined (Ellis, 2006). It is similar to traditional explicit grammar instruction, but the overall focus of the lesson is on communication and meaningful interaction.
The analysis of the data indicates that Omani students have diverse perceptions of FonF instruction. While most students have a favorable attitude towards it, several students expressed some worries that this approach may not be appropriate to the Omani context and cannot replace planned instruction of grammar. First, students who believe that FonF can be better than planned grammar instruction indicated that grammar is important when students need it: "I think that it is possible for focus on form instruction to be a suitable alternative because I think the explanation of grammar rules is only important when students face difficulties" (Idris). "I agree with focus on form instruction; if the students are able to communicate without needing the rules that is better" (Al-Yasa). As for students who expressed that incidental FonF is not appropriate, their reasons are stated below:

**Students prefer a more systematic way of grammar teaching.**

Some students believe that there should be a sequence when teaching grammar: "I think this way is not so good. To follow syllabus of rules is better than teaching grammar randomly" (John): "This method is not always of benefit. It is better to teach grammar gradually (simple to complex). Because some rules depend on others" (Zechariah)

**Students expect the teacher to highlight important and relevant language forms.**

"Focus on form instruction could be helpful at teaching grammar rules which students struggle with. This cannot be implemented easily on shy students, as they will find it difficult to tell their teacher that they have problem regarding certain rules. Accordingly, this method may work as a good alternative; however, students’ attitudes and behaviors should be considered" (Aaron)

"Teachers in Oman are referred to as the only correct source of information in class and it is the teacher responsibility to make sure that all students understand clearly all grammatical rules. Therefore, students will not focus on rules since the teacher paid no attention to them" (Solomon)
Discussion

The findings suggest that Omani students generally have a favorable perception of FonF, despite having some doubts about its suitability to replace planned grammar instruction. Some studies have shown that there is no significant difference between FonF instruction and explicit grammar instruction in terms of their effectiveness (e.g. Norris & Ortega, 2000). The major difference between incidental FonF and ordinary explicit grammar instruction is the pre-selection of language structures. EGI involves the selection of language structures, which is based on several assumptions. First, target language structures that are very different from L1 may be more difficult and deserves particular attention and treatment. In addition, language points are graded from easy to difficult, frequent to less frequent, etc. As discussed previously, the literature shows no consensus about whether incidental FonF can replace planned grammar teaching. It is a debatable issue whether the pre-selection is really effective since some scholars believe that L1 may not have any influence on L2 acquisition. Studies in second language acquisition showed that the order of acquisition is the same for all learners regardless of what language they speak as a mother tongue. Therefore, the sequence of language structures that is found in grammar books is actually not accurate (Nunan, 1991). However, some scholars have a different opinion. For instance, Dykes (2007) stated, "Because grammar is such a structured science, it is of the greatest importance that we teach it in a structured way" (p. 13). Nonetheless, this is controversial issue and this brief chapter does permit further discussion. Since teachers do not teach language structures sequentially in a FonF, it was not surprising that some students believe that grammar would be taught randomly. In addition, some participants believe that learners may not ask about grammar rules in a communicative lesson due to a feeling of shyness. Students' concerns about the applicability of FonF cannot be dismissed. Definitely, Omani students are accustomed to teacher-centered classes where the teacher explains the important things to be learned. Furthermore, the adoption of FonF will pose some questions about how to assess students. There has to be new ways of assessment since the language structures to be taught might not be the same for every class. In Oman, final exams usually come from the Ministry of Education and they are based on the textbooks used at schools. To conclude, it is necessary to take the above-mentioned factors into considerations before implementing FonF instruction in the Omani context. Teachers also can attempt to use more than one approach when teaching grammar instead of using only one approach. To compare the

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effectiveness of FonF approach with other grammar approaches in the Omani context can be the topic of future investigations.

4.5.3 The use of implicit grammar instruction

Implicit grammar instruction exposes students to multiple examples of a particular language structure without explicit explanations. Although there was no question about the implicit method, a number of students did mention it as a suitable approach for grammar teaching. For instance, "I encourage the use of indirect method. For example, communicative lessons can focus on a particular rule and expose students to it without feeling that it is a grammatical lesson" (Jacob): "I believe that some direct and indirect attention should be given for grammar in language class" (Solomon): "In my opinion, it's good way to teach grammar points in communicative lessons, what I mean that students use grammar points without paying attention to it consciously" (Elijah). Even those who have advocated explicit instruction believe that teachers should not restrict themselves to the use of one instructional option. Instead, both implicit and explicit instruction should be used according to students' needs.

Implicit grammar instruction leads to gains in language proficiency.

Several students indicated the effectiveness of implicit instruction: "the way of teaching grammar in direct or indirect way has an important impact on students' proficiency as it help them to develop their abilities in learning" (Shuaib)

Implicit instruction does not disrupt communicative activities.

"I believe that in CLT we can teach grammar indirectly so learners can learn grammar points without interrupting communication by too many explanations of rules. Rules can be embedded in the text and by time; students become familiar on how to use them in real conversation" (Adam)

Implicit grammar instruction works with children and low-level learners.

Some students explain that implicit instruction is more suitable for younger learners and those with less language proficiency. "I encourage the indirect or implicit teaching of grammar especially with young learners and lower-levels" (Dhulkifl):
Discussion

The findings indicate that most students did not mention the implicit approach to grammar teaching as their preferred type of instruction. However, several students did make a mention of its suitability particularly with young learners. As discussed before, explicit instruction may not work well with children because of their limited abilities to think in abstract ways. Therefore, implicit instruction presents itself as a good choice. As for the effectiveness of the implicit approach, this is a controversial issue among language scholars. Norris and Ortega's (2000) meta-analysis of 49 studies indicated that explicit instruction is generally more effective than implicit types of instruction. However, there was an interesting finding by Hammerley (1975), who argued that some grammatical structures are best taught by explicit instruction while other structures are best taught by implicit instruction. For example, structures that do not become clear through examples or do not exist in the native language usually require explanations. Therefore, the two approaches can be complementary in the teaching process. As Burgess and Etherington (2002) point out, "there is a danger in seeing explicit and implicit teaching as opposing methods, rather than points on a continuum of options" (p. 440). To conclude, the use of implicit grammar instruction to teach adult students may not be suitable for the Omani context since most students preferred some explicit instruction. However, as students indicated, it might be worth considering as a suitable approach for younger learners. Future research might also provide further evidence for a more informed choice.
Conclusion

This chapter presented the study main findings and then discussed them in relation the literature. The findings indicate that Omani students believe there is a connection between language proficiency and explicit language instruction. Participants do not generally agree with the absence of grammar instruction in CLT. Nonetheless, they do not see that EGI is enough for language acquisition. Moreover, the study explored students' beliefs about their experience regarding EGI. Although they believe that EGI is effective, their experience was not very beneficial because of the lack of practice, the inability to apply the rules, and other factors. The study also investigated students' perceptions regarding the heavy focus on grammar at Omani schools. The findings revealed that the focus on EGI alone is the result of several factors such as teachers' lack of experience in CLT and their previous training in traditional grammar approaches. In addition, the study investigated students' perceptions of how grammar can be taught in a CLT based curriculum. The findings suggest that most students advocate the integration of EGI into CLT. They expressed diverse opinions about how this integration can be successful. They emphasized the importance of context and situations and the need for teaching relevant grammar rules that can be applied in daily communication. The findings also suggest that EGI is thought to be more suitable for adults and advanced students. Students also had favorable attitudes towards FonF instruction but expressed some worries regarding its applicability in the Omani context. Overall, the Omani students do not prefer a grammarless approach and simultaneously do not agree with the heavy focus on grammar by Omani teachers. They prefer a method that pays attention to both form and meaning. They want to develop their communicative abilities and achieve good levels of accuracy.
Chapter (5) Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

This chapter begins by answering the main research questions. The chapter then presents recommendations for the Omani ELT system which are built upon the findings of this study and related to the use of explicit grammar instruction in a CLT-based curriculum. The recommendations are intended particularly for English language teachers and curriculum developers. They address the current challenges in the Omani ELT system with regard to grammar teaching and provide suggestions for more effective implementation. The chapter ends with recommendations for future research and a brief conclusion.

5.1. Addressing the main research questions

Question (1) Students' perceptions of the connection between EGI and language proficiency

The study findings have revealed that Omani students have diverse perceptions of EGI. First, most participants conceive of EGI as an effective method for teaching grammar. It is essential for achieving high levels of accuracy, preventing errors fossilization, and facilitating the acquisition of the language. In addition, most participants believe that any teaching method that excludes EGI will be inadequate and learners will not be able to attain grammatical accuracy, except for children who can acquire the language naturally. Nonetheless, participants do not believe that language proficiency can be obtained through this method alone. The heavy focus on EGI is not endorsed by students who believe that competence in a language involves more than mastery of language structures.

Question (2) Students' perceptions of EGI in relation to their experience at Omani schools

Almost half of the participants did not gain any significant benefits from learning English through EGI, despite holding a positive view of this method. The findings have shown that grammar was taught without a meaningful context and was irrelevant to students' language...
needs. In addition, language structures were taught through Arabic and students did not have enough opportunities to practise them in meaningful situations. Therefore, students could not apply what they have learned in daily communication. Finally, the way grammar was taught did not arouse students' interest and caused them to be bored.

**Question (3) Students' perceptions of the use of EGI in CLT**

The answer to this question is divided into two parts: first, students' perceptions of why Omani teachers focus exclusively on EGI, secondly, their perceptions of the productiveness of integrating EGI into CLT. As to the first part, students believe that teachers focus on EGI alone because of their unfamiliarity with CLT, their previous training in traditional grammar methods which influenced their beliefs about language teaching, lack of time and resources, and the type of assessment that encourages memorization at the expense of language performance. Therefore, students perceive these factors as hindering the implementation of CLT and do not consider the use of EGI as an obstacle to successful and effective implementation. However, they mentioned that the overuse and heavy emphasis on form-focused instruction can be a hindrance and advocated moderation.

As for the use of EGI in CLT, the findings have shown that participants support its inclusion into CLT, but they have various beliefs of how to make it successful. First, grammar needs to be presented in meaningful contexts and situations, accompanied by enough opportunities for communicative practice. Second, grammar rules should be linked to students' own lives and can be applied in daily communication. Third, students prefer an active role in grammar learning instead of being passive receivers. They showed advocacy for the inductive method in which learners are involved in discovering and inferring rules from examples. Fourth, students indicated the need for a balance between focus on form and focus on meaning. Finally, they believe that the integration works better for adults, whereas children are more capable of acquiring the language in a natural way.
5.2. Recommendations

5.2.1. Pedagogical Recommendations for Omani English teachers

This study asserts the need for a balanced approach where neither form nor meaning is used at the expense of the other. The participants in this study and in other studies (e.g. Al Mahrooqi, 2012a) indicate that the current methods adopted by Omani teachers pay little attention to meaning and communicative skills. Students do not support the exclusion of grammar instruction, but assert the need for a moderate use of it. Research has shown that a combination of both form and meaning is much better than the exclusive focus on either one (Spada, 1997). Successful CLT implementation is not inhibited by a balanced integration of EGI. In fact, CLT that excludes grammar instruction is not appropriate for the Omani context, not supported by research and against Omani students' wishes and expectations.

Furthermore, there is a need for improving the quality of grammar teaching in Oman. The decontextualized sentence-level grammar teaching is not efficient. Students asserted the need for learning grammar in context. The presentation of language structures in real-life situations, the use of authentic materials and giving learners feedback when correcting their writing assignments are just a few examples of procedures that help students to learn grammar in context. In addition, due to the importance of learner autonomy, teachers need to minimize learner passivity and avoid absolute teacher-centeredness by diversifying their methods of teaching grammar. Instead of explaining grammar directly to students, teachers need to involve them in the learning process by using other methods such as the inductive method where students are engaged in discovering the rules from examples. This method is advocated by many participants in this study, which indicates their disapproval of passive learning and their desire to be engaged and active.
Furthermore, there is a necessity to increase opportunities for communicative practice. Students need to be given enough support and encouragement to use language structures for real communicative purposes. Students also need more opportunities to apply what they learn and give examples from their own life using the target structures. Learning grammar without an opportunity to practise is not useful. Students' complaint about the inability to apply grammar is a result of learning grammar only as facts. Moreover, due to the importance of language personalization, teachers need to allow and encourage students to link grammar to their lives. Personalization would lead to higher motivation and positive attitudes. In addition, grammar teaching need to be made more interesting by using games, visual aids, educational technology, discovery exercises, just to name a few procedures. Students stated that grammar teaching did not arouse their interest and they felt unenthusiastic. Such techniques can make grammar teaching more interesting and enjoyable.

Furthermore, there is a need to minimize the use of L1. Although it sometimes can be useful, it reduces students' exposure to the L2 and can encourage passive learning. Finally, the focus on grammar teaching should be less with children. The study findings indicate that explicit grammar instruction is more suitable for adults, whereas children can find it less interesting motivating. They can learn in a more natural way, or they can be exposed to grammar through implicit instruction, an alternative that is worth considering.

5.2.2. Recommendation for curriculum developers

Due to the importance of functional syllabus for the development of communicative skills, there is a need for implementing it. This type of syllabus is based on communicative purposes for which language is used (Thornbury, 1999). Students' complaints about the inability to use language structures when communicating can be solved through choosing this syllabus. In addition, there is a need to choose grammar that is relevant to students and related to their daily communication. The involvement of Omani linguists in designing the curriculum is necessary for a better choice of grammar that suits the Omani context and is germane to their culture, ideas, and worldviews. Finally, this study as well as other studies (e.g. Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011) indicates the need for appropriate assessment that does not give knowledge
more importance than performance. Examination-based assessment encourages students to view language as a subject, not as an important lingua franca.

5.2.3. Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

This study in addition to other studies (Al Mahrooqi, 2012a; Al-Rasbiah, 2006) indicates that Omani teachers need more training in other teaching approaches such as CLT. The use of traditional grammar teaching ‘alone’ is not helping students acquire the English language. Students emphasized that grammar teaching is effective, but its exclusive use does not lead to language proficiency. Fluency activities are crucially needed as well. Moreover, The Ministry of Education needs to consider conducting workshops regularly in order to provide more training for schoolteachers on the latest developments in the field of language teaching methodology and the use of educational technology. Furthermore, there should be more time allocated for the English class. Teachers focus only on grammar instead of CLT because of the lack of sufficient time. There is a dire need for a balance between what teachers should accomplish and the time that they are granted for doing it. Moreover, this study as well as (Al-Jardani, 2012) indicates the lack of resources at Omani schools, which are vital for conducting communicative lessons. Finally, due to the importance of educational research and the lack of it in the Omani context, the Ministry of Education should support and fund more research projects at Omani schools in order to compare the effectiveness of different language teaching methods and improve current pedagogy.

5.3. Limitations and recommendations for further research

Using only one data collection method can be seen as a limitation for this study. Future research is recommended to measure the effectiveness of different methods to grammar teaching by combining various data collection methods and expanding the sample to include school students from different grades. Based on the findings of this study, there is also a need to investigate the effectiveness of implicit grammar teaching for children. The majority of students do not believe that explicit instruction is appropriate for younger students. Future research also
can focus on the implementation of incidental focus on form. In this type of instruction, teachers treat language points based on their observation of difficulties students have with the language instead of teaching pre-selected language points in the textbook. Finally, research can focus on how to integrate teaching methods that encourage greater learner autonomy and allow students to be more active in the learning process.

**Conclusion**

In the field of language teaching methodology, there is a plethora of instructional options which can help students acquire the target language. The findings of this study suggest that the exclusive use of a single method is not as effective as a combination of several ones, especially methods that pay attention to both form and meaning. As this study attempted to investigate how compatible the use of explicit grammar instruction (EGI) in CLT, it can be confidently stated that a moderate use of EGI is effective and does not hinder CLT Implementation. It can address the limitations of meaning-focused instruction and help learners develop linguistic competence.
List of references


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Glossary

Basic Education System (BES): is a comprehensive language teaching programme introduced as a result of educational reform. It involved major changes in textbooks, assessment, and school regulations (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011).

English For Me (FEM): a new textbook series introduced as part of BES and organized around topics and themes and based on a communicative and skills-based methodology (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011).
Appendix (1)

Theories and concepts have been formed in order to understand the interface. This area provides the theoretical framework for this research. The strong interface hypothesis explains that explicit knowledge converts to implicit knowledge and thus grammar instruction is effective, while the non-interface negates the conversion (Ellis, 2009). Krashen (1981) explains that explicit knowledge only acts as a monitor. Understanding the nature of the interface has guided the direction of the study.
From the above diagram, we can see that communicative competence consists of four main competences. The first is grammatical competence that refers to the knowledge of formal properties of the language such as syntax and morphology. Secondly, strategic competence includes “verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). The third one is sociolinguistic and it refers to “knowledge of the relationship between language and its nonlinguistic context, knowing how to use and respond appropriately” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 90). Finally, discourse competence, which includes knowledge of how to begin and end conversations (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 91).
Appendix (2)

A summary of approaches to grammar teaching

| Types of grammar | Prescriptive (or normative): based on grammarians' statements about what is correct and how language should be used (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). It has been criticized because it is not based on actual usage of the language. |
| Approaches to teaching grammar | Descriptive: based on observation of how language is used in everyday life by most people (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Suitable for teaching language for communication. |
| Focus on formS: the traditional teaching of grammar points. The teacher and students are aware that the main focus of the lesson is to learn a pre-selected language structure (Ellis, 2001). | Planned focus on form: Although the primary focus of the lesson is on meaning, the teacher draws students' attention to the form through different ways such as input enhancement. However, students initially are not aware of the focus on a pre-selected form (Ellis, 2001). |
| Incidental focus on form: the primary focus is meaning, but the teacher focuses on form if students ask or if he or she sees a persistent error. It is extensive in that many structures can be covered in a single lesson (Ellis, 2006). | |
| How to present grammar in focus on forms instruction? | Deductive: begins with a presentation of a grammar rule, and then followed by examples and opportunities for practice (Thornbury, 1999). |
| | Inductive: begins with examples, and then students infer the rule from these examples (Thornbury, 1999). |
| How to bring students' attention in planned FonF? | Input-enhancement: This is performed by altering the input in order to make certain language features very noticeable (Smith, 1991). Coloring the target features is one way of attracting students to notice them. |
| How to give feedback in incidental FonF? | Implicit corrective feedback: a popular method is the use of a recast which is "a teacher's correct restatement of a learner's incorrectly formed utterance" (Nicholas et al, 2001, p.720) |
| | Explicit corrective feedback: "occurs when a teacher clearly indicates that the learner has said something wrong and provides the correct form" (Ellis 2001, p. 25). |
Appendix (3):

Summary of theme (1): Predominance of positive attitudes towards grammar in general

| Most students had a strong conviction that grammar is essential | They believe that grammatical knowledge helps them use the language accurately and avoid making mistakes | Students believe that learning grammar can lead to more confidence about one’s linguistic abilities |

Summary of theme (2) findings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The effectiveness of EGI</td>
<td>- EGI leads to gains in language acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- EGI leads to accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The absence of EGI in the strong version of CLT</td>
<td>- Focus on form is necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Neglecting grammar may lead to fossilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The acquisition of language proficiency through EGI alone</td>
<td>- EGI alone cannot lead to language acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of grammar is one part of language competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of theme (3) Findings

Explicit grammar instruction as in students' language learning experience

| Grammar rules were not applicable in everyday language | Grammar knowledge did not help students while communicating | Grammar learning created boredom | Grammar was taught through L1 (Arabic) without further practice. |

Summary of theme (4) findings

Students' beliefs about why Omani teachers' focus on EGI in a CLT-based curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers avoid CLT because it is demanding</th>
<th>Teachers' lack of experience in CLT</th>
<th>Teachers were trained in traditional grammar methods</th>
<th>The type of assessment</th>
<th>Students' language level is so low and they need grammar first</th>
<th>Lack of time</th>
<th>Grammar teaching can save time</th>
<th>Lack of resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Summary of findings for the first subtheme of theme (5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrating explicit grammar instruction (EGI) into CLT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EGI integration</strong> is effective and does not hinder CLT implementation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating <strong>EGI</strong> by using the inductive method</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGI integration works better with adults, but not children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGI integration into CLT works better with upper-level students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context and the use of situations are important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students need to be given sufficient practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization of the language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix (4) Questionnaire

1- Do you believe that there is a connection between direct grammar teaching and language proficiency? Why?

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2- How do you perceive communicative lessons without any direct grammar teaching?

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3- To what extent do you think direct grammar instruction should be incorporated into Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)?

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4- Do you think that there is any link between difficulties in implementing CLT in Oman and the use of direct grammar teaching?

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5- Why do you think some teachers focus on grammar teaching when they have to teach a communicative lesson?

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6- Do you believe that “focus on form” instruction, i.e. teaching grammar points as they arise incidentally in a communicative lesson, can replace direct grammar teaching? Why?

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7- Do you think that direct grammar teaching is more suitable for adult learners than young children? Why?

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8- How useful was direct grammar teaching in your experience of learning English?

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9- What is your perception of the most effective way to teach grammar in CLT?

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