GRAMMAR IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING: TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT: *Considerable evidence indicates that, in language learning classrooms that adopt a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, explicit grammar instruction helps learners master specific syntactic features of the target language. The degree to which teachers themselves conceptualize explicit grammar instruction as an integral part of the CLT approach is less clear. The current study investigates the relationship between stated beliefs and reported practices among English as an Additional Language teachers regarding the integration of explicit grammar instruction into learner-centered CLT classrooms. Questionnaire data from 28 participants reveal unanimous adoption of both the CLT approach and moments of explicit grammar instruction, thus aligning in reported practice with a "weak" version of Howatt's (1984) model of CLT. However, participants held differing and sometimes conflicting views on whether or not explicit grammar instruction constitutes a violation of CLT methods, indicating a need for greater clarity in promoting the "weak" version of CLT.*

KEYWORDS: integrated approach, English as an additional language, communicative language teaching, explicit grammar, language teacher beliefs

INTRODUCTION

As a theoretical approach instead of a method, communicative language teaching (CLT) is realized pedagogically in a broad range of ways, and there continues to be limited consensus regarding best practices. Woods and Çakir (2011) describe CLT as "…a gesture towards an unspecified range of possible constructs and relationships that individuals dynamically construct and instantiate through experience" (p. 382). This definition identifies the teaching approach as a fluid concept that does not *a priori* exclude or require specific classroom practices. In the early years of the implementation of CLT, Richards and Rodgers (1986) observed that practitioners disagreed about whether the incorporation of explicit grammar instruction facilitated mastery of communicative competence and fit into a CLT model. They noted that for some teachers, CLT "means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching", while at the other extreme, explicit (form-focused) grammar teaching is avoided entirely (p. 86). This paper investigates the degree to which this pedagogical conflict endures more than thirty years later through studying how contemporary EAL teachers view the role of grammar instruction in a CLT approach.

Drawing on questionnaire data, the current study investigates the beliefs of 28 experienced EAL teachers from a broad range of backgrounds and teaching experiences about incorporating explicit (form-focused) grammar instruction into classrooms that use a communicative (meaning-focused) approach to English learning. All 28 teacher respondents report incorporating elements of explicit grammar teaching into their practice, whether they view it as inherent to the CLT approach or not. Even so, their responses also point to a persistent ambiguity around how to define CLT, reflecting divergent beliefs about how grammar should be taught in a CLT classroom. The paper concludes with several observations about the implications of this ongoing ambiguity for language teacher practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar in Communicative Language Teaching

CLT as a strategy for teaching EAL began in the 1960s as a reaction to pedagogical methods such as Situational Language Teaching (which included pre-packaged conversational exercises) and the Audiolingual method (which used memorization and drill-based techniques) (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). There has been an ongoing debate since the introduction of CLT about "how to best support the development of grammatical accuracy" (Valeo & Spada, 2016, p. 314) when using this approach. While fluency is the primary goal and accuracy is secondary (Chung, 2005, p. 34), Savignon (1991) also observed that "for the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the *integration* of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience. Grammar is important…" (p. 269). Such integration can be realized in various ways, however.

Howatt (1984) described beliefs about teaching grammar in CLT in terms of "strong" and "weak" versions. According to the strong version, learners are expected to acquire grammar inductively; that is, as students learn, they develop an intuitive feeling for what is correct (Mammadova, 2016, p. 50). This interpretation of CLT was influenced by the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1977) and the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996). As explained by Han (2002), in an extreme version of CLT such as this, "Form-focused instruction is deemed detrimental. Corrective feedback consequently is accorded low status in classroom processes" (p.2). A considerable body of research has indicated, however, that this approach can result in EAL learners' deficiency in the production of grammar patterns (i.e., in speaking and writing). For example, two studies that focused on Malaysia, Azerbaijan, and Taiwan observed that students who were trained solely under CLT methods developed fluency but lacked accuracy (Abdullah & Shah, 2015, p. 194; Subramanian & Khan, 2013, p. 43). In addition, there is a risk that fossilization may set in without direct correction, as noted by Subramanian & Khan (2013, p. 45). In such cases, grammatical accuracy may never be achieved. The study they carried out concluded that "CLT furnished with explicit instruction on form and meaning gives exposure to the learners not only to achieve fluency, but also accuracy in language use" (p. 43). The Noticing

Hypothesis (Schmidt 1995) provides context for these results. This hypothesis states that what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning (Schmidt, 1995, p. 9); therefore, noticing is crucial for language acquisition because if the input is not recognized it is not internalized. "The noticing hypothesis," as Schmidt (1995) explained, "claims that learning requires awareness at the time of learning" (p. 26). Schmidt's hypothesis illustrates that implicit grammar teaching may not be the most effective way to teach form to EAL students, since they might not notice particular forms; consequently, they might not learn them.

In Howatt's (1984) "weak" version of CLT, often conceptualized as a synthesis of pedagogical approaches and commonly referred to as the Integrated Approach, a focus on meaning and form work together to promote holistic learning. The theories of communicative competence (Hymes, 1974) and functional linguistics (e.g., Halliday, 1970), as well as a belief in the efficacy of contextualized form-focused pedagogical practices, informed this interpretation of CLT. Functional linguistics, which emerged as a response to Chomsky's structural observations (e.g., 1957, 1975) and was developed as a complement to structural theory, highlights the symbiotic relationship between form and function in language use. As the functional linguist Van Valin (2003) pointed out:

> [I]n functional linguistic analysis, forms are analyzed with respect to the communicative functions they serve and functions are investigated with respect to the formal devices that are used to accomplish them. Both form and function in language are analyzed, not just function (p. 324).

This fundamental concept of form and function as essential components of the language system which cannot operate independently of one another underpins Howatt's "weak" version of CLT. In discussing CLT as an emergent pedagogical approach rooted in this linguistic theory, Canale and Swain (1980) wrote "…if a communicative approach to second language teaching is adopted, then principles of syllabus design must integrate aspects of both grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence" (p. 6). According to this interpretation of CLT, some degree of explicit form-focused instruction is not antithetical to a CLT approach, especially since it serves to facilitate the stated primary goal for the learner of achieving grammatical competence.

There is also widespread support in subsequent literature for the incorporation of contextualized form-focused exercises into a meaning-focused CLT classroom (Abdullah & Shah, 2015; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Chung, 2005; El-Dakhs, 2014, 2015; Gutowska, 2017; Mammadova, 2016; Schmidt, 1995; Subramaniam & Khan, 2013; Terrell, 1991). For example, Liamkina and Ryshina-Pankova (2012) concluded that a focus on categories of meaning can help learners achieve specific communicative purposes. The experimental group in their study, who learned through explicit grammar lessons, including functional and situationally-based instruction, demonstrated increased ability to recognize and understand linguistic concepts that did not exist in their first

language(s). They also performed better in speech production, in both immediate posttests and delayed posttests administered two months later (p. 284).

Overall, studies show that teaching form as a complement to the focus on meaning is more effective than instruction which focuses only on meaning or only on form (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Spada 2011). For example, Mammadova (2016) reports on a study in which EAL learners were separated into two groups—one instructed through implicit grammar methods (focus on meaning) and the other instructed through explicit grammar methods (focus on form). As the research progressed, nearly 70% of the group taught through implicit grammar methods started to fail in all activities, and she decided to add some elements of explicit grammar in order to help inform the students about the language forms that they were exposed to, with the goal of increasing the rate of successful acquisition. Consequently, she ended up with a group of students learning through solely explicit grammar methods, and another group learning through a mix of explicit grammar and CLT methods. Posttest data showed that the group with the mixed approach performed over 20% better than the group taught only through explicit grammar. In the same way, Subramanian & Khan (2013) studied two groups of EAL learners. The first group received semantic-based explicit grammar instruction, and the second group did not receive any type of explicit grammar methods of instruction. Subramanian and Khan (2013) concluded that form-focused instruction, using explicit grammar along with meaning-based activities, was beneficial for the students to develop both fluency and accuracy in the second language. In summary, evidence abounds in support of the Integrated Approach, first formalized as Howatt's (1984) "weak" version of CLT, according to which explicit grammar instruction is used in the classroom as a complement to meaning-focused lessons. However, the persistent theoretical debate over best practices in CLT has resulted in a wide range of variation in teacher beliefs.

Teacher Beliefs
Research indicates that language teacher beliefs greatly impact instructional decisions in the classroom (e.g., Bell, 2005; Borg, 2003; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Richards, Gallo & Renandya, 2001; Wong & Barrea-Marlys, 2012), so understanding these beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and educational programs (Farrell and Lim, 2005). Numerous studies on CLT have examined teacher beliefs, focusing on correlations between teacher beliefs and topics such as teaching experience (e.g., Sato & Oyanedel 2019), language learner beliefs (e.g., Valeo & Spada 2016), background or training (e.g., Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999), and classroom practice (e.g., Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis 2004; Basturkmen 2012).

Several studies on the correlation between teacher beliefs and classroom practice found that more experienced teachers show a higher rate of convergence between stated beliefs and classroom practices (e.g., Feryok, 2004; Mitchell, 2005). Regardless of experience, however, situational constraints such as prescribed curricula and institutional regulations can place restrictions on teacher agency, preventing teachers who would like to implement explicit grammar exercises in an EAL classroom from doing so (e.g., Farrell & Lim, 2005; Wong &

Barrea-Marlys, 2012). Previous research has also found that teachers' understanding of pedagogical approach, including what CLT means, varies widely and largely reflects their own second language learning experiences and training (e.g., Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999). Woods and Çakir (2011), based on discussions with six newly graduated second language teachers in Turkey who supported CLT, found that these relatively inexperienced teachers became less rigid in their ideological rejection of explicit grammar exercises after observing such exercises being implemented by experienced teachers in a communicative way. The authors explain this finding as a mismatch between theoretical and practical knowledge. The current study contributes to this area of inquiry by further investigating the relationship between stated beliefs and reported practices in regards to the role of grammar instruction in CLT.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose and Participants

The purpose of this study is to learn about EAL teachers' beliefs about the need for explicit grammar instruction within a CLT framework and their reported inclusion of explicit grammar teaching in their classrooms in order to examine how contemporary teachers understand and implement the CLT approach. In particular, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are EAL teachers' beliefs about incorporating direct grammar instruction into a CLT classroom?

2. Do EAL teachers report incorporating direct grammar instruction into the classroom, as a complement to CLT methodologies?

3. Do teachers' reported practices and stated beliefs correspond?

Our findings come from questionnaire data collected from 28 EAL teachers (4 men, 24 women), ranging in age from late 20s to 60s. The second author recruited participants via face-to-face discussion and word-of-mouth, as well as by email, resulting in 17 non-local participants and 11 local participants. At the time of their participation in the current study, the 11 local participants were the second author's co-workers at an English language teaching institute affiliated with a university in the southeastern United States, and four of the non-local participants had previously worked at the same English language teaching institute. All but two participants were still teaching. Appendix A provides additional demographic information for each participant. In sum, most participants are women who speak English as a first language, hold a master's degree, and have taught EAL for more than 10 years. Participant teaching experience includes over 12 countries across Europe, Central and South America, and Asia, comprising an extensive list of first languages among learners. University-based English language programs are the most common setting, but

teaching venues also include prisons, refugee programs, non-profit community ESL, adult education as well as other government-sponsored programs. As such, the study participants (individually referred to hereafter by number—from participant #1 (P1) to participant #28 (P28)) represent a broad range of EAL teaching experiences and backgrounds.

Materials

Data was elicited via a questionnaire (Appendix B) that was created by the second author based on anecdotal observations as an EAL teacher as well as discussion with fellow EAL teachers. As such, the questions adopt the type of language used by teachers themselves in discussing EAL teaching approaches. It consists of three parts, as follows: 1) demographic questions; 2) open-ended questions about pedagogical practice (Q1-Q4); and 3) a series of 15 Likert scale statements (S1-S15), also pertaining to teaching practices, preferences, and methodology. Data elicitation involved the second author meeting face-to-face with the 11 local participants to discuss the questionnaire in an interview-type setting and the 17 non-local participants returning their completed questionnaires via email. The second author, who has over 20 years of EAL teaching experience herself, having taught English in both her home country of Brazil and in the United States, followed up through email with 11 of the remote participants to clarify answers. We focus here on the responses to a subset of these questions—namely Q1-Q4, S1 and S8—that illustrate the inconsistent and sometimes paradoxical views that emerged regarding the use of form-focused instruction within a CLT context. We also discuss items S11-S15, which asked teachers to identify the most important grammatical features to teach students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following sections discuss results from the second and third parts of the questionnaire, which focused on teacher beliefs and their self-reported pedagogical practice.

Experience as a contributing factor to perspective

In response to the first part of Q1 ("Did you teach ESL prior to the Communicative Approach?"), 14 respondents replied that they had used methods outside of CLT in their teaching practice and 14 replied that they had not. Interestingly, previous use of non-CLT methods did not correlate with a consistent pattern of responses to Q2 ("In your opinion, is the Communicative Approach effective in grammar teaching?"), apart from the expected finding that teachers with experience in more than one methodology often had a more nuanced understanding of the benefits of CLT in contrast to other methods. With respect to interpretations of what it means to teach within a CLT approach, results showed considerable in-group variation. Some respondents in both groups indicated that CLT is not effective without an explicit grammar component, revealing an interpretation of CLT that does not inherently include explicit grammar instruction. Alternatively, some respondents indicated that CLT is effective in facilitating grammar learning due to the affordance of targeted

grammar lessons within the context of real language use, revealing an interpretation of CLT that does include use of direct grammar instruction where appropriate. The lack of correlation between non-CLT teaching experience and beliefs about what a CLT approach entails indicates that one's understanding of CLT is shaped by factors other than experience with other teaching methods, at least for these participants. The finding may also be partly explained by the fact that all participants had a minimum of seven years of experience as EAL teachers and had therefore had time to develop a sophisticated understanding of what works in the classroom. We examine specific approaches to grammar instruction in the next section.

Value of direct grammar instruction

In responding to Q4 ("Do you catch yourself using traditional grammar teaching methods in your classroom from time to time? If yes, why do you think that happens?"), 26 of the 28 participants (93%) answered "yes", reporting that they reinforce the implicit grammar approach by using additional explicit strategies to teach grammar. The most common explanations were as follows: the belief that students need explicit explanations, the need to respond to a student request, and their observations that such practice has proven to be effective. In agreement with findings from previous research (e.g., Farrell & Lim, 2005; Wong & Barrea-Marlys 2012), however, institutional expectations were cited by a few as a constraint on teacher agency in regards to practicing direct grammar instruction. For example, when teacher P5 was teaching in an institution that required instructors to use solely CLT approaches, she remembered closing the door in order to discuss grammar with students directly. This example indicates a belief on the part of the teacher that explicit discussion of grammar with students did not qualify as a CLT approach, or at least not at her institution.

Two teachers, P8 and P19 answered "no" to Q4, initially reporting that they do not rely on explicit grammar teaching. Consistent with this response, both also stated their belief that CLT is effective in teaching grammar (Q2). Taken together, these responses reflect a belief in Howatt's "strong" version of CLT, implying that the implicit grammar process is sufficient in order for adult additional language learners to master grammar. On further discussion, however, both respondents acknowledged including targeted grammar instruction in their lessons. Teacher P19 reported that he does bring grammar structures to the attention of his students, in the interest of effective communication. At the same time, he reported that "we use language to do something" in his classes, thereby aligning himself with a "weak" CLT perspective, reflecting ideas relating to communicative competence (Hymes, 1974) and functional linguistics (Halliday, 1970) frameworks. When asked to give an example, teacher P19 stated that after defining the communicative situation and the task, he gives students steps to accomplish the task. To do so, he "isolates the grammatical features to work with, not overwhelming students with too many", and then relates these specific features to the task they are trying to accomplish. In the same way, after being requested via email to give an example of drawing attention to form, teacher P8 replied as follows:

> So, what I mean by 'direct instruction' is that, yes, students do need explicit (direct) instruction of grammar point(s), but those points are drawn from their own writing productions. Once I identify the point(s) from a particular writing, the writing itself is the 'pre-assessment' for the grammar structure and then becomes a graded item in a post assessment.

She went on to provide the following additional example, from a recent class with Chinese EAL learners:

> …[I] noticed they were having difficulty with dangling modifiers. For example: *Installing superconductive materials, AI (artificial intelligence) has advanced significantly* [italics in original]. So, the problem here is that AI cannot "install superconductive materials." I noticed this kind of error in multiple students' writings, so it became a good direct instruction point as how to avoid this kind of error.

Valeo and Spada (2016), describe two types of form-focused activities, isolated and integrated. Isolated form-focused instruction occurs when "learners' attention is drawn to form separately from communicative activities, that is, before, in preparation, or after a communicative activity" (p. 314). According to this definition, Teacher P8's explanation and example illustrate isolated form-focused instruction. Nonetheless, she also relies on material that emerges from the learners themselves to teach grammatical elements of language, reflecting a learner-centered model that this teacher may conceptualize as contrasting with "explicit" grammar teaching. In this way, both P8 and P19 demonstrate that while their reported beliefs support a "strong" version of CLT which involves avoiding traditional grammar instruction, their actual practice incorporates contextualized and situationally determined grammar instruction.

Table 1 shows responses to the Likert scale question S1 ("I do not show my students explicit grammar structures."). Similar to findings from Q4 ("Do you catch yourself using traditional grammar teaching methods in your classroom from time to time? If yes, why do you think that happens?"), the majority of participants self-report using explicit grammar methods, with 23 participants (82%) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 1. Participant response to S1 "I do not show my students explicit grammar structures." (N = 28)

Scale	# of teachers	%
strongly disagree	13	46%
disagree	10	36%
neutral	2	7%
agree	2	7%
strongly agree	1	4%

In providing further explanation for her response to this question, P11, a teacher who has been teaching for 30 years at university-based English language institutes, stated that good language learners will pick up some grammar while mediocre and poor learners do not. She then added that even when a good student picks it up, they may doubt themselves, providing additional evidence that instructors are often the main source of accurate language content and that providing direct grammar instruction can aid students' language learning. In other words, explicit grammar instruction can facilitate learning not only when a form goes unnoticed by a student during learner-centered communicative exercises but also when a form that has previously been noticed by the student, in a way that is compatible with Schmidt's (1995) Noticing Hypothesis, is subsequently confirmed in the classroom through a form-focused exercise.

Another notable finding displayed in Table 1 is that three respondents agreed or strongly agreed with S1 ("I do not show my students explicit grammar structures") and two were neutral. Interestingly, there is no overlap between these five respondents and the two who said 'no' to Q4 ("Do you catch yourself using traditional grammar teaching methods in your classroom from time to time?"). One of the two teachers who said 'no' to Q4 disagrees with S1 and the other teacher strongly disagrees. This seeming contradiction indicates that these two teachers have different definitions of "traditional grammar teaching methods" and "explicit grammar structures". One of these two respondents, teacher P8, commented as follows:

> I have always understood traditional grammar teaching as relying on grammar texts to lead the way in what is being taught and in a certain sequence. It would involve showing form, doing exercises, then applying the form in some authentic way. When I was inexperienced as a teacher, the traditional approach felt safe to me because it seemed that publishers put a lot of brainpower into their texts and I should trust that. By *explicit instruction*

[italics in original], I understand it as direct instruction of some point, but also structured and contextualized…drawn from their own writing productions.

Participant responses to Likert scale question S8 ("If I never show my students grammar, they still learn it because they read and hear it spoken"), presented in Table 2, are somewhat more ambiguous than results for Q4 or S1.

Table 2. Participant responses to S8: "If I never show my students grammar, they still learn it because they read and hear it spoken" (N = 28)

Scale	# of teachers	%
strongly disagree	5	18%
disagree	11	39%
neutral	5	18%
agree	5	18%
strongly agree	2	7%

Table 2 shows that 16 of the 28 respondents (57%) disagree or strongly disagree that students will learn grammar without being explicitly taught by the EAL teacher. It is important to note here, however, that even those seven respondents who supported the statement did indicate elsewhere in the questionnaire that direct grammar instruction in the classroom is necessary at times. These inconsistent responses suggest ambiguity in the minds of at least some of the participants regarding their beliefs about using explicit grammar instruction.

Finally, in further accord with the general agreement that drawing student awareness to specific grammar structures is an essential part of the learning process, participants provided similar motivations for why they use traditional grammar teaching methods in their responses to the second part of Q4 ("Do you catch yourself using traditional grammar teaching methods in your classroom from time to time? If yes, why do you think that happens?"). Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Participant explanation for using traditional grammar teaching methods (N = 28)

Explanation	# of teachers	%
best practice, in general	17	61%
when students ask/are not otherwise catching on	5	18%
best practice for lower levels	2	7%
I learned that way	2	7%
no explanation	2	7%

The most common response by far is the belief that including some direct grammar instruction is a best practice. A representative explanation for why explicit grammar instruction is so broadly used comes from teacher P6, who remarked that "students may repeat the same structural mistakes, the error persists, therefore it needs to be shown to them explicitly." Similarly, teacher P28 stated, "[in] addressing a common error, I feel like I am interrupting the process of fossilization."

Diverse approaches to direct grammar instruction

The responses examined thus far indicate support for the inclusion of form-focused instruction, although the degree to which participants rely on direct grammar techniques varies considerably. The 24 participants who specified use of direct grammar instruction in their response to Q3 ("How do you teach grammar?") reported methodologies such as presentation of English-specific formulas and use of contrastive grammar, in which English grammatical structures are compared to the learner's mother tongue. The remaining four participants provided more vague responses to this question, such as "group/partner work for reading/writing" and "meaningful topic in real context", suggesting a belief in implicit methods. However, all four of these same teachers replied 'yes' to Q4 ("Do you catch yourself using traditional grammar teaching methods…?"), indicating that they do rely on direct grammar instruction methods in the classroom. Three of these four did, however, qualify their response by commenting that they only do this when students ask, or when students are having trouble making the connection to form. As such, it appears that they too align with the "weak" version of CLT, broadly defined. When given opportunity to explain their responses, these teachers' reported practices for teaching grammar (in response to Q3) do not provide strong evidence of following traditional grammar teaching methods (in response to Q4) even though they indicated that they do teach traditional grammar methods "from time to time". Ambiguous responses such as these suggest that teachers hold differing perspectives on what constitutes grammar instruction in a CLT classroom.

With respect to which grammatical forms are most important to target, questions S11 through S15 from the Likert scale section of the questionnaire asked teachers to select the grammatical category that they thought was the most significant to teach. The five categories were selected based on elements of English grammar with which learners frequently struggle. Although participants often selected more than one category as "most important", results still indicate fairly robust agreement here too, such that verb tense and word order take priority, as displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Participant opinion on target grammatical categories for learners (N = 28)

Scale	Verb Tense	Word Order	Pronouns	Prep & Conj.	Articles
strongly disagree	3	2	5	4	9
disagree	0	2	6	12	10
neutral	7	10	11	9	7
agree	**13**	**10**	6	3	2
strongly agree	**5**	**4**	0	0	0

Table 4 shows that 18 participants (64%) agree or strongly agree that verb tense is the most important grammatical feature to teach students, while 14 participants (50%) strongly agree or agree with the importance of teaching word order. Pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and articles rank much lower. As an explanation, teacher P13 wrote,

> …as an L2 learner I certainly only learned prepositions by listening and using them, but I still depend heavily on "rules" for things like verb tense. Plus, the meaning of a sentence is not usually too altered by the wrong preposition, and I am all about meaning and conveying meaning.

Similarly, teacher P20 wrote, "Verb tenses, word order, and pronouns students need to be understood. [As for] articles, prepositions, and conjunctions, students can make themselves understood without these."

In further considering how teachers responded when asked to comment on specific grammatical features that they believe are important (or not important) to teach, we found that they expressed awareness that particular language features (verb tense and word order) require more than mere exposure in order for students to learn them while other language features (articles and prepositions/conjunctions) were generally not deemed to require direct instruction. Interpreted through the lens of the Noticing Hypothesis proposed by Schmidt (1995) that "learning requires awareness at the time of learning" (p. 26), these findings

suggest that function words such as pronouns, prepositions, and articles may be more readily noticed (and thus learned) implicitly than verb structures or syntactic configurations such as word order, although further observations in this regard are outside the scope of the current research. Such distinctions point to language teachers' nuanced understandings and practices regarding the role of grammar instruction in CLT, which we discuss further below.

Conflicting teacher beliefs: Theory vs Practice

Although all participants indicated strong support for CLT, in general, responses to Q2 ("In your opinion, is the Communicative Approach effective in grammar teaching?") suggest disagreement as to whether CLT inherently includes a grammar component or not. Results for this question are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Participant responses to Q2: "In your opinion, is the Communicative Approach effective in grammar teaching?" (N = 28)

Response	Q2	%
Yes	11	39%
Yes and No	13	47%
No	4	14%

Table 5 shows that 17 respondents (61%) were not fully convinced of the efficacy of CLT in teaching grammar, while 11 respondents (39%) do believe it is an effective approach. This is a stronger difference of opinion than seen for any other question. Furthermore, although Q2 was framed as a "yes" or "no" question, participants independently created a third "yes and no" category, underscoring the persistent confusion or diverse understandings that exist with respect to the relationship between grammar and CLT. The thirteen teachers who answered with both "yes and no" (47%) expressed dissatisfaction with student grammar outcomes in CLT. Teacher P5, for example, said "I think only using the communicative approach doesn't work," while teacher P17 stated that "you can't only use the communicative approach, it is a problem, they have to learn the rules." An additional seven participants mentioned that CLT is an effective approach but "not by itself." For example, teacher P28 suggests it "should be used in combination", proposing 85% communication and 15% explicit grammar, while teacher P17 suggested a 90% to 10% distribution, respectively. In contrast, 39% of participants (n = 11) indicate agreement that the communicative approach is effective in teaching grammar. Since responses to other parts of the questionnaire indicate that participants largely agree about the necessity for some explicit grammar teaching, as previously discussed, it is likely that this mismatch reflects the fact that CLT means different things to different people, with some subscribing to Howatt's "strong" version, which excludes direct grammar instruction, and others adopting the

"weak" definition, which includes direct grammar instruction. Given the shared beliefs reported among participants that a reliance on implicit grammar teaching alone can hinder students, results for Q2 ("In your opinion, is the Communicative Approach effective in grammar teaching?") reveal a lack of consistency in how language teachers conceptualize CLT.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study found that 100% of the 28 respondents reported complementing meaning-focused instruction with form-focused instruction at some point in the questionnaire. These teachers are thus modeling a "weak" version of CLT in their classrooms, a pedagogical model supported by current research (e.g., Mammadova 2016). Even so, a number of these respondents provided inconsistent responses in relation to their stance on grammar instruction and some of them overtly commented on feeling conflicted about what to do when teaching. For example, teacher P18 indicated, "I sometimes get torn" between the two approaches, and P25 similarly admitted that she has difficulty in balancing methodologies when CLT is what she is required to use, but that she sees value in teaching language forms. She said, "It is still a challenge to me" when talking about trying to refrain from teaching grammar explicitly.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of doing research on teacher beliefs through the use of a questionnaire. In addition to the follow-ups that were done with some respondents, detailed individual interviews with all participants would have enabled greater depth and perspective in our interpretation of teacher responses. Similarly, the use of Likert scale statements provides a challenge in that, although they enable direct comparison across participants, the researcher cannot tailor a statement to better fit each individual participant. For example, some participants had used pedagogical approaches other than CLT, while others had not, but all were asked to evaluate statements such as "Since I started teaching using the Communicative Approach, I noticed that students learn grammar faster and are able to use grammar structures accurately." A further limitation is the study's focus on a relatively small sample size of 28 participants. Despite these limitations, these language teachers' sometimes self-contradictory responses to the questionnaire in this study also point to the complexity and messiness of trying to trace a direct relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices (Farrell & Guz, 2019). More important, in the case of determining how language teachers view the role of explicit grammar instruction in CLT, their sometimes inconsistent responses suggest that the integration of meaning-based and form-focused instruction continues to be regarded as potentially problematic, or as an uneasy alliance between opposing theories of language instruction. As such, the findings in our study compare to what Choi (2000) found when surveying English language teachers in Korea on their beliefs about CLT nearly two decades ago and are not so different from what Richards and Rodgers (1986) found to be true of English language teachers more than three decades ago.

Given that "teachers' theories and beliefs serve as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made" (Farrell & Guz, 2019, p. 2), we believe that it is important for teachers to learn how to provide explicit grammar instruction that aligns with CLT's emphasis on meaning-based instructional practices (see El-Dakhs, 2015).

Perhaps more important, we contend that teachers should be explicitly disabused of their beliefs that grammar instruction necessarily undermines the mission of CLT, efforts which could free them of feeling insecure or "torn" about their teaching practices and decisions. It was due, at least in part, to a similar strain on EAL teachers to follow a strictly circumscribed mandated approach that Cook (2001) argued against the prevailing belief that use of students' L1 in the language classroom was detrimental to students' ability to learn the L2. Just as teachers' necessary and often unavoidable concessions to L1 use in their classroom should not lead to feelings of guilt or shame, as Cook suggests, so we contend that teachers should feel confident in embracing form-focused instruction as a complementary component of CLT. Given the longevity of the CLT approach in language teaching, we find that contemporary teachers' ambiguous beliefs about and occasional indicators of their self-consciousness about using explicit grammar instruction point to the need for greater clarity in promoting the "weak" version of CLT, through continued development of resources such as teacher training programs and language learning textbooks. Not only can strong support for situationally relevant grammar instruction as a complement to meaning-focused instruction reinforce best practices for teachers of English as an additional language, it can also serve to strengthen teachers' professional identities by validating the practical wisdom that they have gained from their classroom experience.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research goals include examining the degree to which form-focused instruction in CLT is clearly and consistently articulated across teacher training programs, among administrators of language teaching institutions, and among textbook publishers. Further investigation is also needed into the correlation between teaching experience and perceptions of CLT, in order to better understand whether teachers with more experience using pedagogical approaches other than CLT tend to conceptualize the relationship between grammar instruction and CLT differently than teachers who have only taught within a CLT framework.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1. Participant demographics. Expert speakers were classified as those who began speaking English before primary school.

Partic. #	Gender	Teaching Exp. (yrs)	Highest Degree	Yrs speaking English
P1	F	7	MA Engl. Lit.	entire life
P2	F	10	MA Engl. & Bilingual Ed.	entire life
P3	F	12	MA ESP	25 yrs
P4	F	25	MA TESOL	entire life
P5	F	15+	MA TESOL	entire life
P6	F	20	MA TESOL	entire life
P7	F	6.5	MA TESOL	entire life
P8	F	28	M Ed. Literacy & CELTA	entire life
P9	F	13	MA TESOL	entire life
P10	F	15	M Ed. w/spec. TESOL	entire life
P11	F	30	MA Ling.	entire life
P12	F	7	BS Finance & unfinished BA Lg. Arts – Engl.	27 yrs
P13	F	9	MA Engl. Lit. & TEFL cert.	entire life
P14	F	8	MA TESOL	entire life
P15	F	9	M Ed TEFL	entire life
P16	M	29	MA TESOL	30 yrs
P17	F	10	MA Engl. Lit. & MFA	entire life
P18	M	10	PhD student in Ed. Sci. & MA Engl. Lit.	14 yrs
P19	M	9	MA TESOL	entire life
P20	F	12	M Ed. Elem. Ed. & Cert. in TESOL	entire life
P21	F	10	MA TESOL	entire life
P22	F	10	BA Engl. Grammar & Lit.	15 yrs
P23	F	12	MA Engl. & Span. - focus Ling.	entire life
P24	F	8	M Ed. TESL	entire life
P25	F	11	Lic. in Lgs. & unfinished MA Ling.	13 yrs

P26	F	10	Lic. in Engl. Lg. - Liberal Arts	14 yrs
P27	M	13	Lic. Liberal Arts – Engl.	entire life
P28	F	11	MA Adult Ed. - TESOL	entire life

APPENDIX B

Participant Questionnaire

PART I- Identification
1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been teaching ESL?
3. Please explain where you have taught ESL and the size/level, and L1 language diversity of the groups you have taught.
4. Are you a native speaker of English? If not, how long have you been speaking English?
5. What is your bachelor's/master's degree in?

PART II- Open-ended questions
1. Did you teach ESL prior to the Communicative Approach? What are the benefits that the Communicative Approach brings to L2 learners?
2. In your opinion, is the Communicative Approach effective in grammar teaching?
3. How did you used to teach grammar before the Communicative Approach, and how do you teach grammar now?
4. Do you catch yourself using traditional grammar teaching methods in your classroom from time to time? If yes, why do you think that happens?

PART III- Likert scale questions
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements, on a scale from 1 to 5, as follows: 1- strongly disagree and 5- strongly agree:

1. I do not show my students explicit grammar structures.

Additional Comments for question 1:

2. I like the fact that I do not need to show my students grammar structures.
3. I do not think it is necessary to teach students to notice grammar because they will eventually pick it up.
4. The Communicative Approach is a highly effective method in terms of teaching grammar structures.
5. Since I started teaching using the Communicative Approach, I noticed that students learn grammar faster and are able to use grammar structures accurately.
6. My students show evidence of understanding grammar structures without me having to point that out.

Additional comments for questions 2-6:

7. My students use grammar accurately because of the Communicative Approach.
8. If I never show my students grammar, they still learn it because they read and hear it spoken.
9. The Communicative Approach is comprehensive in terms of grammar teaching.
10. I would like to teach grammar explicitly because I think my students would learn it better.
11. Determiners, specifically articles, are the most important grammatical features to teach students.
12. Verb Tenses are the most important grammatical features to teach students.
13. Prepositions and conjunctions are the most important grammatical features to teach students.
14. Word order is the most important grammatical feature to teach students.
15. Pronouns are the most important grammatical features to teach students.

Additional comments for questions #7-15: