


RESEARCH ARTICLE

The impact of an explicit grammar knowledge course on the development of grammatical awareness in UK native speakers' pre-service TESOL education

Rhian Webb

University of South Wales, United Kingdom / Contact: rhian.webb@southwales.ac.uk 

Abstract

This paper contributes to conversations which examine the effectiveness of grammar knowledge courses in native speaker (NS) UK pre-service TESOL education. A three-year longitudinal study was undertaken at a UK university. It explored 10 UK NS participants' ability to demonstrate grammatical awareness during their TESOL practicum after studying a 48-contact hour explicit grammar knowledge course before procedural TESOL education began. Quantitative and qualitative, deductive, and inductive thematic coding were undertaken using the participants' reflective teaching summaries and interview transcripts to identify examples of established grammar awareness themes. Findings indicated that the participants considered the process of gaining grammar knowledge challenging but essential for TESOL. Grammatical awareness was demonstrated through metalinguistic knowledge, metalanguage, noticing and language teaching beliefs during the practicum.

Keywords

Explicit grammar knowledge; grammatical awareness; implicit grammar knowledge; TESOL; Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Introduction

The lack of explicit grammar knowledge held by native speakers (NS) in the Anglophone world has been identified as problematic for over 35 years. In 1986, Bloor stated that NS undergraduates demonstrated “fairly widespread ignorance” (Bloor, 1986, p.159), in their ability to identify and label parts of speech. Since that time, many commentators have supported the findings through research that has explored NS' explicit grammar knowledge (Alderson, Clapham, & Steel, 1997; Alderson & Hudson, 2013; S. Andrews, 1994, 1999; Author, 2016; Chandler, Robinson, & Noyes, 1988; Harper & Rennie, 2009; Myhill, Jones, & Watson, 2013; Williamson & Hardman, 1995; Wray, 1993). The reason for the situation is because NS do not study explicit grammar knowledge in secondary school (Crystal, 2018), which is unlike most

European countries who consider it "... an important part of their school curriculum" (Hudson, 2016, p.289). The lack of knowledge impacts on NS entering pre-service (P-S) TESOL education because explicit grammar is an essential part of a teacher's acumen. In TESOL, grammar learning has not altered over time (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Traditional grammar, which focuses on accuracy of form, learning rules and completing exercises (Jean & Simard, 2011: cited in Larsen Freeman, 2015) is taught in classrooms globally. To address NS' knowledge gap, explicit grammar courses have been designed and delivered on an ad hoc basis by some TESOL educators. However, research into how the courses' impact on pedagogy is inconclusive (Bell, 2016; Bigelow & Ranney, 2005; Borg, 2006; Hislam & Cajkler, 2005). This paper contributes to those conversations through one research question, which is:

RQ1: What individual grammatical awareness do UK NS, who have studied a 48-contact hour explicit grammar knowledge course, demonstrate during their pre-service TESOL practicum?

Literature Review

Grammar consists of two knowledge bases (Adamson, 1907; Sweet, 1892), which are either explicit or implicit. Explicit grammar knowledge is attained through scientific study. Knowledge is conscious and verbalizable because the rules of language are understood (Ellis, 2004; Malderez, 2007). Alternatively, implicit knowledge is the attainment of language use, where the knowledge is unconscious and cannot be verbalized or intentionally retrieved (Isbell & Rogers, 2020). Importantly, both knowledge bases can be used proficiently as independent units.

NS from the UK and Anglophone countries have strong implicit grammar knowledge, which is acquired naturally and demonstrated through proficient usage (Chomsky, 1957). The rules of language are below a level of consciousness, and an ability to be creative with language is understood (Stern, 1983). NS can use English without having to give any scientific thought to what is being said, just like we can breathe without needing knowledge of the chemical constituents of air (O.U.,2014). Alternatively, explicit grammar knowledge needs study to verbalise (Svalberg, 2015). Study leads to an understanding about the form and use of parts of speech, word inflection, inflection of verb forms for tense, mood, aspect and voice, and the rules of

syntax. It goes beyond an understanding of what is correct or incorrect and leads towards a linguistic knowledge base which is “immense” (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005, p.616).

Grammatical awareness is an expansion of grammar knowledge, which develops from a deep and wide-ranging understanding of both the implicit and explicit knowledge bases (Duff, 1988). Teachers with grammatical awareness are better equipped to deal with classroom circumstances, which enable them to: earn learner confidence by having grammatical terminology to present new language effectively, anticipate language problems, deal with errors and identify areas where additional knowledge can be given (Cook, 2008). Andrews (1994) produced a list of grammatical areas (presented in figure 1), which impact on teaching behaviour and are required to demonstrate awareness for grammar teaching.

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|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Knowledge of grammatical terminology 2. Understanding of the concepts associated with the terms 3. Awareness of meaning/language in communication 4. Ability to reflect on language and analyze language forms 5. Ability to select and grade language and break down grammar points for teaching 6. purposes 7. Ability to analyze grammar from learners’ perspective 8. Ability to anticipate learners’ grammatical difficulties 9. Ability to deal confidently with spontaneous grammar questions 10. Ability to explain grammar to students without complex meta language 11. Awareness of ‘correctness’ and ability to justify an opinion about what is acceptable usage and what is not 12. Sensitivity to language/awareness of how language works”(Andrews, 1994, p.75, cited in: Andrews, 2007, p.35) |
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Figure 1. List of grammatical areas that impact on teaching

Andrews’ (1994) list provides a useful inventory as it clarifies grammar knowledge needed to develop grammatical awareness. However, it also highlights the challenges NS have when they have not gained explicit grammar knowledge prior to TESOL education. Only three points, which are 3,10 and 11, are related to implicit grammar knowledge. The other eight points require explicit grammar knowledge to applied to reflection for action (whilst lesson planning), in action (whilst teaching) and on action (whilst reflecting on lessons).

Between the 1960s and 2000, grammar education was largely absent from UK schools and the majority of the English-speaking world (Hudson & Walmsey, 2005). The prescriptive construction of grammar, which enabled individuals to gain a clear understanding of correct and incorrect usage, disappeared (Crystal, 2007) leaving NS school leavers with an unsystematic and vague appreciation of sentence structure and, “little understanding of grammatical terminology” (Crystal, 2007, p.230). The 1999 version of the UK’s National Curriculum (DfEE, 1999) identified the need for explicit grammar to be taught but also identified a grammar skills’ deficit in teachers, so explicit grammar’s inclusion in syllabi was abandoned. The current policy for teaching English in UK secondary schools is the 2014 version of The National Curriculum (DfEE, 2014), where grammar forms part of the English syllabus. However, the grammar element focuses on grammatical enquiry, where the effect meaning has on communication is taught to enable an understanding about the consequence of a linguistic choice (Crystal, 2018). As a result, potential UK NS TESOL teachers do not leave school with an understanding of explicit grammar.

In addition, the suitability of contemporary P-S TESOL education for UK P-S NESTs has been questioned because of its lack of explicit grammar content (Borg, 2003; Brandt, 2006; Ferguson & Donno, 2003; Hobbs, 2013; Kanowski, 2004) and from the expectation that explicit grammar is known (Ferguson & Donno, 2003; Hobbs, 2013; Tsui, 2003). However, when explicit grammar courses have been undertaken, research undertaken to examine their effectiveness present inconclusive results. Borg (2006) tells us that the anticipated transfer of gaining explicit grammar in a pre-course to its use in practice does not always occur because teaching involves a lot more than just grammar. Hislam and Cajkler (2005) found that P-S teachers struggled to develop their learners’ explicit grammar knowledge but acknowledged that the course was too short. Bigelow and Ranney (2005) questioned the dichotomy of learning and using explicit grammar within a real teaching context, where real language examples add a level of complexity from those that are neatly presented in a study environment. More recently, Bell’s (2016) investigations tell us that primary teachers’ understanding and use of grammatical metalanguage improved following a course.

Despite inconclusive results about explicit grammar courses, experts consider teacher language awareness (TLA) to be one of the most important areas for pre-service

and in-service teachers to develop (Andrews, 2003, 2012 ; Bartels, 2002; Wright, 2002). TLA develops teacher cognition, which is an understanding of what teachers know, think and believe (Borg, 2006). In terms of knowing, understanding explicit grammar and being able to dissect it is considered central to effective L2 English teaching (Bolitho & Tomlinson, 1995; Thornbury, 1997; Wright & Bolitho, 1993). In addition, grammar knowledge and awareness is needed to develop beliefs, where teachers make sense of their work through using grammar implicitly or explicitly in lessons (Borg, 2006). A noteworthy fact is that TESOL's grammar syllabus has 'persisted' (Thornbury, 2018, p.1) through decades of research on methods, approaches and syllabi for effective second language acquisition. Grammar's persistence within global second language English classrooms makes knowledge associated with it essential and highlights the fact that at some point, NS need to engage in focused explicit grammar study.

Methodological Context

The study builds on research (Bell, 2016; Bigelow & Ranney, 2005; Borg, 2006; Hislam & Cajkler, 2005), which examines the impact an explicit grammar course has on the development of grammatical awareness for grammar teaching.

Participants

A sample of 10, UK NS participants (10 females, mean age = 20.42, SD=1.74) contributed to the study's findings, where they are referred to as P1, P2, as so on until P10. The participants were members of a larger undergraduate cohort, but their data were used because they volunteered and were available to undertake the final interview at a pre-arranged time. No other selection criteria were used. All NS participants had English as their first and only language, which whilst extensively described by Copland, Mann and Garton (2020), in this study refers to a person who has inherited English, has a social affiliation with it and a level of expertise (Rampton, 1990). The participants attend a UK university, where one third of their three-year, BA English degree study is dedicated to TESOL each year. Therefore, the NS participants had completed secondary school education and fulfilled the university's entry criteria by achieving school leavers' exam grades B, B, C, where A is the highest and grades A-E are

considered pass grades. In this study, the NS participants are third and final year university undergraduates. They arrived onto TESOL education in year one with a low level of explicit grammar knowledge, where they were unable to identify, define, produce or label parts of speech with metalanguage despite perceiving their grammar knowledge to be good (Webb, 2016). However, they all successfully completed the 48-contact hour explicit grammar course during their first year, studied procedural aspects of TESOL in their second year and completed their third-year studies, where six hours of live teaching, from which they gain a CELTA equivalent teaching certificate, was undertaken.

Ethics

The research followed guidance on ethical codes and principles that appear in Second Language Teacher Education (Bryman, 2012; Dornyei, 2007), which are provided by The British Educational Research Association (B.E.R.A, 2011). Gaining participant involvement was non-problematic because I had taught the NS participants for three years and trust had been established. The interview power divide was reduced because from the first day of teaching, I explained and reiterated my personal lack of explicit grammar knowledge during my TESOL education and initial employment.

Materials: The grammar course

The NS studied the explicit grammar course for 2 hours per week for 24 weeks = 48 hours, which aimed to ensure that a foundation in and exposure about explicit grammar knowledge was established. Traditional grammar of Standard English was taught as stipulated by global TESOL provider CELTA (2013). It is defined as, “the variety of the English language ... normally spoken by 'educated' speakers,” (Trudgill & Hannah, 2002, p.110). Using Standard English is seen as a pragmatic need as it is neutral and provides learners with a guideline to orient themselves (Gnutzmann, 1999) and to compare alternative forms of the language with (Train, 2003).

A cognitive constructivist approach was used for learning, teaching, and delivery, where knowledge was transmitted from teacher to the NS and developed through social interaction. The learning focused on the individual's ability to interpret and construct knowledge (Powell & Kalina, 2009). The teaching valued NS questions so that individual concepts and understanding of the grammar could be achieved. The

delivery positioned me, the teacher in an authoritative role, where I choose the content and delivered the lessons. The course was based around A1 - B2 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level (CEFR, 2001) and covered explicit grammar that is commonly used in EFL textbooks (Soars & Soars, 2006) and study books (Sowton, 2012) (as outlined in appendix 1).

The course was designed so that metalanguage could be elicited more frequently as time progressed following exposure to the grammar area, for example: nouns, noun phrases and pronouns were taught before introducing the subject and object of a sentence. To explicitly describe the content of each lesson is out of reach within this paper but it was delivered using worksheets, which followed similar formats. The grammar point was introduced using metalanguage and forms and usage discovered through questioning and tasks. The consolidation exercises highlight a main aim of the course, where learner errors can be corrected and explained using metalanguage because a large amount of knowledge is required to do this. Samples of consolidation tasks from lessons are presented below.

Table 1. Samples of lesson consolidation tasks with answers

LESSON 1:

INCORRECT: Please send me some informations about the school.

CORRECT: Please send me some **information** about the school.

REASON: **Information is an uncountable noun and does not take a plural form.**

LESSON 7:

INCORRECT: I am understanding you.

CORRECT: I **understand** you.

REASON: **'to understand' has been used as a dynamic verb. 'To understand' is a stative verb and does not have a present participle (or -ing) form.**

LESSON 17:

INCORRECT: The journey was very tired.

CORRECT: The journey was very **tiring**.

REASON: **The incorrect form of adjective has been used. Adjectives ending in -ed (past participle used as an adjective) describe facts. The sentence needs an adjective ending in -ing (present participle used as an adjective), which describes a personal perspective.**

Progress was demonstrated through four in-class tests, which included questions that asked for grammatical areas to be, identified, defined, produced, and

labelled with metalanguage and for the form and use of grammatical structures to be explained. In addition, a 1000-word project, which used authentic L2 learners' writing samples graded at an IELTS level 5.0, was undertaken where errors needed to be explained using metalanguage (as practiced in weekly consolidation tasks). The project addressed Bigelow and Ranney's (2005) concerns about working with neatly presented errors in course materials.

Data collection materials

Qualitative data were drawn from the NS' reflective teaching summaries, which were produced during their third-year live teaching practice and from a semi-structured interview, which took place at the end of their TESOL studies. The NS were guided through the process of writing a reflective summary through the provision of questions to consider. The questions that related to grammar were:

- Was your lesson at an appropriate level to stretch and challenge the learners?
- What meaningful language did your lesson provide?
- Were there opportunities for learners to provide their own input/ideas into the lesson?
- What evidence did you encounter to demonstrate the learners' interest or lack of interest in your lesson?

The semi-structured interview explored how the NS felt about their explicit grammar study, level, knowledge, and awareness at the end of their P-S TESOL education. Leading questions were avoided, and the NS' responses were interjected by asking 'why?' to encourage elaboration. The questions were:

- How do you feel about studying explicit grammar before P-S TESOL education?
- How do you feel about your explicit grammar knowledge and awareness at the end of P-S TESOL education?
- How often did you need grammar knowledge in your lessons?
- How did you use grammar within different methodologies?
- How do you think the learners feel about studying grammar?

Analysis

Occurrences in NS' reflective summaries (rs) and interview transcripts (i) that referred to the four sub-themes relating to the development of individual grammatical awareness in Andrews (1994) criteria were identified and counted using content analysis. The deductive sub-themes included: "Knowledge of grammatical terminology, understanding of the concepts associated with the terms, awareness of meaning/language in communication and sensitivity to language/awareness of how language works" (Andrews, 1994, p.75, cited in: Andrews, 2007, p.35). In addition, one inductive sub-theme emerged, which was self-reported awareness.

Qualitative analysis was undertaken using NVivo, which is renowned for its usefulness to reduce large volumes of data (Bryman, 2012; Wiltshier, 2011). A TESOL colleague and I worked simultaneously for 16 hours undertake the deductive and inductive coding, which ensured inter-rater reliability; 95% agreement was reached, and discussion undertaken when required. Quantitative analysis was undertaken simultaneously using the statistical package of social science-version 24 (SpSSv24), which reported the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of occurrences. In addition, the minimum (min) and maximum (max) number of occurrences were included to inform the data.

Findings

Sub-theme 1, developing individual knowledge about grammatical terminology, was the strongest theme (M= 14.40, SD=2.01). The min (=12.00) and max (=17.00) numbers of occurrences showed how it was mentioned by all the NS. References were articulated through comments about the development of metalinguistic knowledge, metalanguage, and challenges.

The development of metalinguistic knowledge is gained in part from being able to break down language from explicit knowledge (Bialystok, 1988) and language dissection is a recognised skill for effective L2 teaching (Bolitho & Tomlinson, 1995; Thornbury, 1997; Wright & Bolitho, 1993). P2 commented on the difference between TESOL students, who had studied explicit grammar, and NS in general and

demonstrated an understanding of knowledge required for TESOL, '*... native speakers can use grammar quite well ... but we cannot break it down and talk about it.*' (P2i). P8 spoke about metalinguistic knowledge in relation to her teaching, where she demonstrated a cognitive change, '*We had to look at words individually ... words taken for granted like marker pen (adjective/noun). The learners may know what pen is, but marker?'* (P8i).

The development of grammatical metalanguage featured strongly in the NS' responses, which should be expected. P9 focused on how inappropriate self-study would be, which is the position that many NS find themselves in, '*Even if I had googled something like conjunction, I would not know what it meant. It doesn't show how it is used or why*' (P9i). Whilst it is understood that NS do not gain explicit grammar from secondary education, P10 articulated the importance of the course, '*Before the grammar course, I had never heard of an auxiliary verb, just verbs and just three ... I did not know conditionals or that there was an order to adjectives. I did not know anything ... Now I do.*' (P10i)

The challenge in NS gaining the explicit grammar was mentioned frequently, '*There is just so much of it ... I can't remember it all*' (P5i) and '*It proved a lot to take in*' (P3i). NS, who embark on TESOL education, are confronted with an immense knowledge base, which needs to be studied, learned, remembered and applied in a short space of time. P1 articulates the point well, '*I think the process of TESOL would be a lot easier if we had the basis of grammar from school, but we don't.*' (P1i).

Sub-theme 2, developing knowledge about concepts associated with terms, had the second highest level of reference (M=10.8, SD=1.03) with a similar range of UK NS' responses (min=10.00, max=13.00). Reflective summaries presented insights into how the NS portrayed grammar to the learners and demonstrated that understanding explicit grammar prevented inward-looking behaviour, which is a common trait for new teachers because the impact their actions had on the learners was considered (Senior, 2006).

P8 drew learners' attention to irregular verb forms and considered learners having to deal with the intricacies of regular and irregular verbs, '*I gave them an irregular verbs list ... it drew attention to different formations ... I heightened their*

understanding' (P8rs). P6 reflected how she could have addressed her present continuous lesson differently. '*... I could have helped more by introducing the use of the present continuous with stative and dynamic verbs.*' (P6rs)

Sub-theme 3, developing knowledge about the meaning of language in communication, had a much lower number of mentioned occurrences (M= 3.90, SD=5.60) and a wider range of response difference where min (=0.00) and max (=18.00). The grammar course did not focus on how to explain meaning because it is implicit, innate knowledge. However, maybe it needs to be included because to describe something succinctly requires skill (Johnson & Golombek, 2016)

P2 reflected on an unsuccessful encounter in her lesson about 'giving opinions' with intermediate learners, where her innate knowledge was used. '*... opinions could have been developed to look at formality. One learner suggested, 'I believe it's so', which would be correct but old-fashioned*' (P2rs). The speed of exchanges within L2 classrooms does not allow time for the NS to consider or act on their thoughts without experience, time is needed to develop the skill.

P3 used metalinguistic knowledge to successfully teach subtle differences in meaning. '*I focussed on looks, looks + like and looks as if/ as though, to describe paintings ... I taught subtle differences in meaning and form by giving examples and eliciting.*' (P3rs). P3 broke down the form of the language, explained its use and gave examples from which the learners could identify patterns to mirror independently. She used a technique labelled noticing, where stimuli are consciously delivered to learners (Myles & Mitchell, 2014).

Sub-theme 4, developing knowledge about how language works, received the lowest level of references (M=1.30, SD=1.76), which was not mentioned by all the NS (min=0.00, max=5.00). However, from some, the development of beliefs emerged, which, "may be the clearest measure of a teacher's professional growth" (Kagan, 1992 p.85) because they are considered propositions that individuals believe to be true and provide the basis for action (Borg, 2011). Graus and Coppen (2016) tell us that how grammar is used, either implicitly or explicitly in lessons, is a good indication of a grammar teaching belief. P2 demonstrated belief development in her reflective

summary where she questioned the need to use metalanguage to teach a grammar when teaching defining and non-defining relative clauses.

The learners said they recognised the structures but did not know the name in English. They started to look up the term on their phones and I waited ... I could have just told them the answer as I was able to elicit the use of the relative clauses anyway. In future, I could think about whether the learners need to know the terminology. In some cases, they may need to know, but not all the time. In this situation, it was necessary to be able to make a distinction between defining and non-defining relative clauses, but the correct terminology was arguably unnecessary. (P2rs)

P2 elaborated on the lesson during the interview, where she considered further the need for learners to know metalanguage. ‘... there is only so much grammar you can live with ... if you have grammar sections of lessons, you also need to know how to communicate it properly ...’ (P2i).

P1 showed development of how language works by questioning the use of teaching grammar rules, ‘people can communicate without grammar rules’ (P1i). In addition, she demonstrated a development of beliefs, ‘... if we bring grammar into communicative activities, I think that is more important than doing grammar in isolation to learn the rules’ (P1i). The comments demonstrate that by studying explicit grammar in a pre-course, it does not lead to NS feeling that the explicit grammar needs to be taught.

Sub-theme 5, self-reported awareness, emerged as a new theme from inductive coding (M=11.10, SD=1.37, min=8.00 and max=12.00). All the NS indicated that their level of explicit grammar growth was visible to themselves and that they considered learning about it essential for TESOL. ‘I do not think we could do TESOL without it to be honest’ (P1i). ‘...it makes you seem more professional to be able to speak the lingo of linguistics’ (P6i). ‘In the first year, the verb tenses really frightened me, but I know them quite well now.’ (P9i).

NS commented on how crucial they considered their grammar education to be for TESOL, ‘I think if you want to teach English, you need to know English grammar.’

(P9i), ‘...even if you are not doing a grammar lesson anything could crop up... It is helpful having a knowledge base to use.’ (P5i). P7 spoke about a situation many NS find themselves in, where explicit grammar knowledge needs to be gained from self-study because of the small amount of time dedicated towards developing it in courses (Hobbs,2013). P7 understands that implicit knowledge enables people to say what is correct and incorrect but explicit knowledge is needed to build a lesson around a language point.

I would not like to think what it is like for a teacher to go into a lesson without the grammar knowledge that we have had. That must be horrendous. Their poor learners must get so confused. You cannot learn it from a textbook, you just can't ... We need to give a lesson a purpose ... if we don't ... It can become just a chat between friends.
(P7i)

Finally, despite all the NS successfully completing the grammar course, they understood that there was more explicit grammar to learn. ‘*I guess my knowledge now, despite the course, pales in comparison to actually how much there is to know, mmm*’ (P7i). ‘*I realise I have more to learn ... I am not at the bottom; I am somewhere in the middle*’ (P5i). P6 adds another dimension where from a strong foundation she is able to gain more knowledge, ‘*I think that my grammar knowledge is increasing ... I pick things up now*’ (P6i).

Discussion

According to Ellis (2005), declarative knowledge is explicit and encyclopedic in nature. It draws on knowledge of rules, which focuses primarily on linguistic form and is suited to later life learning, without time pressure. He explains that explicit knowledge is unlike implicit knowledge, which focuses on intuition, does not need metalinguistic knowledge, and is suited to early life learning. Alternatively, Gregg (1989) states, “acquisition of knowledge has nothing whatsoever to do with explicit knowledge.” (Gregg, 1989, p.38)

NS entering pre-service TESOL education without an understanding of explicit grammar has been researched over decades (Alderson et al., 1997; Alderson & Hudson, 2013; S. Andrews, 1994, 1999; Author, 2016; Chandler et al., 1988; Harper & Rennie, 2009; Myhill et al., 2013; Williamson & Hardman, 1995; Wray, 1993). The situation is due to absent learning opportunities about explicit grammar in UK secondary school education (Crystal, 2007, 2018; DfEE, 2014; Hudson & Walmsley, 2005). Despite the research and facts, the value of teaching NS explicit grammar courses has been questioned (Borg, 2006). However, grammar teaching in TESOL has “persisted” (Thornbury, 2018, p.1) and is taught in classrooms globally today.

Borg and Burns' (2008) research provides a global perspective of teachers' cognition about teaching grammar. Teachers commented on the importance of integrating grammar in lessons, ‘... to allow students to apply the rules, forms, structures in context’ because, ‘teaching grammar rules alone will defeat the purpose’ (Borg & Burns, 2008, p.469). Some additional teacher comments include how grammar needed to be presented within a meaningful focus, with or without an explicit grammar focus, to allow learners to deduce grammar rules and react appropriately to grammar errors and queries, which increase learners' interest and satisfaction. Without doubt, for this form of instruction to be undertaken successfully, explicit grammar knowledge is essential.

Findings from this study demonstrate that individual awareness for grammar teaching has developed from explicit grammar knowledge study and that the NS participants, despite the challenges, not only appreciated the study opportunity but considered it essential for TESOL. The sub-themes explored did not present uniform numbers of mentions by the NS, which demonstrates that development of awareness is both individual and circumstantial. Some NS questioned using grammatical metalanguage in lessons from learner interactions, whilst all understood the need to breakdown language down to aid understanding. The findings do not present a quick fix solution and cannot be expected to as the explicit grammar knowledge is new. The NS have a lot of work to do gain familiarity, to use and to apply their new knowledge to circumstance. They also understand the need to develop and expand their knowledge, which is an understanding that has developed from the exposure. However, the NS leave pre-service TESOL education with a strong explicit grammar foundation, for

example: in the grammar course, the NS learned that if a word ends in -ing that it could be a gerund, an -ing adjective or the present participle of a past, present or future verb tense form. It would take a long time for NS to understand this from self-study. Can NS from Anglophone countries be considered appropriately qualified to teach or deal with grammar in lessons after successfully completing globally recognised pre-service TESOL education? No, they are woefully underprepared as typically only 4 out of 120 hours are dedicated to explicit grammar knowledge education (Hobbs, 2013). Is this fair? No, it leads to NS fearing grammar. The question, “Why do I feel nervous when students ask me grammar?” was the question asked by a NS teacher with five years’ experience, when undertaking exploratory research practice (Hanks, 2017) as she had had no formal education about it. Whilst there is more to teaching than understanding grammar, a high level of explicit grammar knowledge is needed, “whether or not that teacher believes in the value of learners’ developing such knowledge”(Andrews, 2012 p.16) or as P4 stated, *‘Any questions can come up, if you have grammar knowledge, you can jump on it and explain it at that point, you cannot always prepare for it, so it is very important to have a good knowledge base’*. (P4i)

Therefore, is it time for NS entry onto pre-service TESOL education to be changed? Globally recognised TESOL educators ask for NS applicants to demonstrate “... awareness of language and a competence in both written and spoken English” (Johnson & Poulter, 2015, p.184) as an entry requirement to a course, which is easily demonstrable from natural acquisition and implicit grammar knowledge. No explicit understanding of language is asked for, which is unlike NNS, who need a minimum CEFR- C1 (expert) level that includes learning explicit grammar knowledge. The difference is vast and places NS in a vulnerable position, where their lack of knowledge leads to being unprepared and feeling nervous years after qualifying. Should a pre-course in explicit grammar knowledge course be a feature of NS TESOL education? More conversation is needed to address NS’ well known knowledge gap and to create appropriate TESOL education, where a grammar knowledge and awareness springboard into initial employment is created.

Conclusion

To conclude, the purpose of the study was to contribute further to inconclusive findings, which question the impact an explicit grammar course has on pedagogy in UK pre-service TESOL education. This was done by exploring the individual language awareness that UK NS could demonstrate after studying a 48-hour explicit grammar knowledge course prior to their procedural TESOL education. In the study, quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated growth in NS individual grammatical awareness for grammar teaching, which addressed items from Andrews' (1994) list that included: the development of knowledge about terminology, concepts associated with terms, awareness of meaning and how language works, together with a new inductive sub-theme which was self-reported awareness.

However, research shortcoming may include the lack of opportunity for study replication because currently, dedicating 48-hours to teaching an explicit grammar course is not normal practice. In addition, only 10 NS' results were analysed, which could be increased.

Further research could be undertaken through a comparative study, which explores language awareness for grammar teaching between NS who have, and NS who have not, undertaken an explicit grammar knowledge course. In addition, a comparative study between NS and NNS, who have not studied an explicit grammar course within their pre-service TESOL education could be undertaken, which would provide an understanding about the starting position of NS and NNS candidates' explicit grammar knowledge and awareness when embarking upon globally recognised pre-service TESOL education.

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Notes on the contributors

Rhian Webb is a senior lecturer in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and has been teaching and undertaking research at the University of South Wales, UK since 2006. This paper is taken from her PhD research, which was completed in 2018.

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