

## Thai University Non-English Majors' Attitudes towards Explicit Grammar

## Instruction in a Basic Writing Class

ทัศนคติของนิสิตไทยที่ไม่ใช่เอกภาษาอังกฤษที่มีต่อการสอนไวยากรณ์  
แบบตรงในวิชาการเขียนขั้นพื้นฐานNarat Kanprachar<sup>1\*</sup>, Khampee Noonkhan<sup>2</sup>, and Pornrawee Thunnithet<sup>3</sup>นรภัฏ กานต์ประชา<sup>4\*</sup>, คัมภีร์ นูนคาน<sup>5</sup> และพรวิรุทธิ์ ทันนิตเทศ<sup>6</sup>

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## Abstract

The present study aims to examine non-English major students' attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction in a basic writing class. It also compares and studies the students' attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction among high, mid-level, and low writing ability groups. The participants were 81 Thai university students from different language-major backgrounds. The research instruments included a questionnaire, focus-group semi-structured interview questions, and a reflective diary. The questionnaire data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, paired sample t-test, and ANOVA. The interview and diary data were analyzed thematically. The main findings revealed that the mean attitude scores of the students significantly decreased after the instruction in several items, but they were at the highly positive and positive levels. The qualitative results provided evidence for the students' positive and negative attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Explicit grammar instruction, Basic writing, Non-English majors, Thai EFL learners

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## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของผู้เรียนที่ไม่ใช่เอกภาษาอังกฤษที่มีต่อการสอนไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษแบบตรงในชั้นเรียนการเขียนขั้นพื้นฐาน เพื่อเปรียบเทียบและศึกษาทัศนคติที่มีต่อการสอนไวยากรณ์แบบตรงของผู้เรียนที่มีความสามารถในการเขียนเก่ง ปานกลางและอ่อน กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนิสิตไทยที่เรียนเอกภาษาอังกฤษจำนวน 81 คน เครื่องมือวิจัยประกอบด้วยแบบสอบถามทัศนคติ คำถามสำหรับการสนทนากลุ่มแบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง และบันทึกสะท้อนความคิด การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากแบบสอบถาม ใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา การทดสอบที่แบบจับคู่ตัวอย่าง (Paired-sample t-test) และการวิเคราะห์ความแปรปรวน (ANOVA) การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์และบันทึกสะท้อนความคิดใช้การวิเคราะห์แบบแก่นสาระ ผลการวิจัยที่สำคัญชี้ให้เห็นว่าค่าคะแนนเฉลี่ยของทัศนคติของนิสิตลดลงอย่างมีนัยสำคัญในหลายด้านภายหลังการสอนไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษแบบตรงแต่ยังคงอยู่ในด้านบวกระดับมากที่สุดและในระดับมาก ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพแสดงให้เห็นถึงทัศนคติในด้านบวกและด้านลบของนิสิตที่มีต่อการสอนไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษแบบตรง

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## Introduction

Grammar has long taken its place in language classrooms and raised several questions regarding whether or not to teach it; if so, why, what, when, and how (Hudson, 2017). While the debate among researchers over this issue continues, the teaching of grammar has been seen as nurturing the growth of learners' language (Azar, 2007; Folse, 2016; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Thornbury, 2001). For example, it contributes to the improvement of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Azar, 2007) and helps learners gain a better understanding of certain language structures that may remain their problems over time (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). In addition, teaching grammar offers learners an effective tool to create new sentences in the target language (Thornbury, 2001).

For writing, which is generally perceived among language learners as a complex and challenging skill, grammar instruction is needed to increase correct usage of the target language (Phuwarat & Boonchukusol, 2020) and specifically help learners "construct clear, interesting, and precise sentences and paragraphs" (Shen, 2012, p. 75). When grammar is introduced in later phases of the writing process, it helps learners see a clearer connection between grammar and their writing, enabling them to communicate their ideas more effectively in writing (Chin, 2015).

In Thailand, undergraduate students need to take English courses to fulfill their academic requirements. For example, those in language majors at the current institution are required to take Basic Writing. In this course, grammar topics that are believed to improve the students' writing skills have been prescribed (e.g. parts of speech, clauses, and sentence types). Since the students do not major in English, the question of how this type of grammar instruction affects the students attracts the attention of the current study researchers. While existing body of literature has largely explored students' views on the teaching of grammar in other courses (e.g. Ahmadi & Shafiee, 2015; Fedorova, 2022; Sari et al., 2017; Sopin, 2015) rather than writing courses (Aceron, 2015; Wang & Wang, 2014), it is thus worth studying further into this area. The results of the current study will contribute to the growth of research on grammar instruction in ESL/EFL writing classes and yield some benefits to the instructional planning and practices for non-English majors at the university level.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study is structured around the following research objectives:

1. To examine non-English major students' attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction.
2. To compare the attitudes of the students with high, mid-level, and low writing abilities towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction.
3. To study the opinions of the three groups of non-English majors towards explicit grammar instruction.

### **Literature Review**

This section presents a comprehensive review of related theories and research on grammar and grammar instruction, explicit grammar instruction and writing instruction, and attitudes in writing instruction.

#### **Grammar and Grammar Instruction**

The term 'grammar' has been viewed as comprising language rules and structures. It includes rules for words and rules for sentence constructions (Nunan, 2013, as cited in Nunan, 2015). Grammar is generally considered a significant component of every language; that is, "without grammar, language does not exist" (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 3). In language classrooms, grammar



has been recognized as a “fundamental” element, particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Şahinkaya, 2024, p. 14); therefore, the importance of grammar in language learning cannot be disregarded.

Language teaching methodologies have endorsed two types of grammar instruction, explicit and implicit, at different levels in relation to details of practice. For example, the Grammar-Translation Method strongly reinforces the significance of grammar through the direct presentation of language rules and structures using abundant examples and language practice opportunities, such as memorizing the rules and completing fill-in-the-blank exercises. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), on the other hand, completing marginalizes the role of grammar. As language instruction is firmly implicit or inductive, learners normally engage in meaning-oriented activities by, for example, playing games and performing role plays that promote fluency rather than accuracy, allowing them to discover language rules by themselves (Larsen-Freeman, 2002).

Other examples of grammar instruction that draw learners' attention to grammar in real communicative, practical contexts include task-based and content-based instructions. In task-based instruction, learners are involved in authentic environments with ample opportunities to communicate and negotiate to complete tasks. Feedback on language problems that emerge from communication is postponed to the end of the tasks. In content-based instruction, learners' knowledge of the target language is used to help them understand information in their own academic subjects. Language structures are dealt with later to facilitate their comprehension of the materials (Larsen-Freeman, 2002).

As can be seen, grammar has a role in language teaching methodologies; however, since a unified opinion regarding which approach to grammar instruction, explicit or implicit, is a better approach remains unresolved (Şahinkaya, 2024), the decision of how grammar should be introduced to learners seems to be a true challenge.

### **Explicit Grammar Instruction in Writing Instruction**

Explicit grammar instruction, an approach to introduce grammar deductively, is considered important and applicable in language pedagogy (Şahinkaya, 2024). It draws students' attention to language rules and structures (Larsen-Freeman, 2009; Pehlivan & Aydın, 2022). The classroom is in the teacher's control in choosing grammar rules and related exercises. There are practical



benefits to teaching grammar deductively. For example, it is easy to manage class time, and class activities seem to comply with some learners' expectations (Nunan, 2015).

In recent years, several attempts have been made to examine the effects of explicit grammar instruction on ESL/EFL students' writing abilities.

Nazari (2013) examined the effects of teaching grammar implicitly and explicitly to 60 elementary Iranian adult students. A grammar test and a writing test were administered to the students in two groups after the instruction. The results were that the group taught by explicit instruction did significantly better in both tests. Rahman and Asfah (2018) investigated the effects of syntactic priming, which refers to the target structure persistence following syntactic stimuli, and explicit grammar instruction on 18 graduate Indonesian students' writings. The results were positive, as the students attempted to use the ten instructed grammatical structures in their writings, making the essays varied with different sentence patterns. Chien (2018) examined which type of grammar instruction, explicit or implicit, benefited Korean junior high school students more in their narrative writing and which one increased the students' grammatical accuracy. The results revealed that students who received explicit grammar instruction performed better in writing than those in the implicit grammar instruction group. The results from semi-structured interviews with a student and a teacher from the study showed that the students preferred explicit grammar instruction, while the teacher preferred implicit grammar instruction.

#### **Attitudes in Writing Instruction**

Scholars define attitudes as emotional reactions, feelings, opinions, and beliefs established in one's mind about a particular subject matter (Lhorsumeth, 2017, pp. 5-6). They are framed by life experiences and personal backgrounds and have an influence on one's behaviors and decisions about something. In the language learning and teaching context, learners' attitudes are considered a crucial element that determines the success of language instruction. Specifically, positive attitudes are believed to stimulate the learning process, while negative attitudes can impede learning or lead to failure (Elyildirim & Ashton, 2006; Larasati & Simatupang, 2020).

Although much research has been carried out to investigate students' attitudes towards grammar instruction, to date, there seems to be limited research on students' attitudes, particularly towards explicit grammar instruction in ESL/EFL writing classrooms. Wang and Wang (2014) explored 15 Korean students' perceptions of a week-long sentence grammar instruction on their



writing and editing skills. At the end of the instruction, the students completed an online survey form asking their perceptions about the instruction regarding improvements of sentence structures, general accuracy, clarity of expression, and revising/editing abilities on a 4-point scale, ranging from no improvement to great improvement. The results revealed that the students felt their writing and editing abilities improved. Aceron (2015) investigated 270 Filipino freshmen's attitudes towards advanced grammar and composition instruction. The questionnaire on a 4-point Likert scale runs from *not true* to *most often true* was used. The results indicated that the students held attitudes that were classified as *sometimes true* across cognitive, affective, and conative categories, and exhibited a similar level of perceived behaviors in morphology, phonology, grammar and usage, and mechanics and composition writing. Also, no significant relationship was found between the students' attitudes and behavior in this class. These results were observed possibly because of several reasons such as the extensive number of lessons introduced to the students, their deprivation of skills needed to perform the assigned tasks, and their losing interest and motivation during the learning process.

## Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method, pretest-posttest design to enable an understanding of the students' attitudes in more depth. The one-group pretest-posttest design was selected due to some practical limitations in class management.

### Participants

Participants were 81 out of the expected 100 third-year undergraduates in the Faculty of Humanities at a mid-size university in lower northern Thailand. Most of them were females (72). They had different language-major backgrounds, with the majority majoring in Korean (31) and Chinese (21) and a smaller number majoring in French (12), Japanese (11), and Thai (6), respectively. Most of the participants perceived their grammatical knowledge at a good level (48), with a minority at poor (28), very poor (4), and very good levels (1). They perceived their English writing ability as good (37), followed by poor (36) and very poor levels (8). Most of them initially thought grammar should be taught explicitly in the writing course (76).

The participants were selected by the purposive sampling technique. They were chosen because their majors were not English; they enrolled in the Basic English writing course at the time

of data collection and voluntarily signed the informed consent form. They also completed all class activities and required documents for this research during the whole data collection period. The participants who did not meet these criteria were excluded from the study.

### Instruments

An attitude questionnaire, 6 semi-structured questions for focus group interviews, and a reflective diary were used to collect relevant data for this study.

Referring to Objectives 1 and 2, which examined the students' attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction, the questionnaire was developed to better address these objectives by crafting statements about writing with grammar instruction. It was guided by the questionnaire items of previous work (Sari et al., 2017; Wang & Wang, 2014).

The questionnaire consisted of three main parts. Part 1 gathered general information about the participants' background (gender, age, previous writing courses taken, overall perceptions of English grammar and writing abilities). Part 2 consisted of 4 main questions: (1) the grammar topics studied in this course, (2) the usefulness of the grammar topics based on the 4-points Likert scale (*not at all useful, rather useful, very useful, and extremely useful*), (3) usefulness of the grammar teaching at different stages of the writing process, and (4) 16 statements on the 4-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree*). They included statements regarding the role of the grammar studied, the psychological effects of the instruction, and general attitudes towards the instruction. Part 3 of the questionnaire was an open-ended question about additional comments. It is noted that the 4-point scale was used in the questionnaire to prevent the possible middle option bias, which makes it more difficult to interpret the true attitudes of those choosing this option since the interpretations tend to vary (e.g., "*undecided*", "*no opinion*", "*confused*", "*Don't care*" and "*Don't know*") (Chyung et al., 2017, pp. 3-4). In addition to the questionnaire, the other research instrument used in this study was 6 semi-structured interview questions for the focus group interviews. These questions aimed to explore the participants' views on explicit grammar instruction in more in-depth.

The questionnaire and interview questions were checked by three Thai university lecturers from the Department of English. They had at least five years of experience in teaching English courses, including writing courses. The IOC value of all the questionnaire items was between 0.67-1.00, which was considered an acceptable range (Sittisomboon, 2020, p. 139). The instruments were administered to a group of 30 undergraduate students, who had taken an English



writing course. The reliability was calculated using the Cronbach's alpha formula and yielded the value of 0.86, which was a satisfactory level for reliability (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 84). The reflective diary that records the researchers' thoughts and experiences for the focus group interviews was used as supporting data for the interview. It was organized in a table format guided by the semi-structured interview questions.

### **Procedure**

The students completed the questionnaire at the outset and studied grammar for 15 weeks, covering parts of speech, tenses, modals, phrases and clauses, and sentence types. They were taught the grammar rules first and later engaged in several grammar-focused exercises. The materials and class activities, as required by the institution, were aligned with the same course taught to English major students by other instructors at the same institution. After each topic, the students practiced writing sentences and short paragraphs of 50 words (before the midterm exam) and 100-150 words (after the midterm exam) relevant to the grammar topics studied. The students were made aware of the writing process, covering planning, writing, and revising/editing stages by teacher demonstration, and they were encouraged to practice it outside of class for the writing assignments due to class time constraints.

The students took the midterm exam for the course in Week 8, and the results obtained from the course instructor were used to divide the students into groups of high, mid-level, and low writing abilities using the percentile ranks of 33 and 66. The percentile rank was employed as it is a type of frequently used derived score in educational assessments to divide students based on their actual performance (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014). Later, in Week 16, the students completed the same attitude questionnaire, and 7-8 students from each group voluntarily participated in the recorded focus group interviews conducted in Thai, as the students were more comfortable expressing their ideas in Thai. The researchers also took notes in a reflective diary after the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

Data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The attitude level of mean ranges was interpreted as follows: 1.00-1.75 for highly negative, 1.76-2.50 for negative, 2.51-3.25 for positive, 3.26-4.00 for highly positive. This method of interpretation divided each mean range equally into 0.75 to avoid the possible scale-range bias on the 4-point Likert scale



(Todd, 2018, p. 74). Paired samples t-test and One-way ANOVA were used to compare the attitudes of the students before and after the instruction. The alpha level of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Data obtained from the interview were manually transcribed verbatim and checked with the original recording twice for accuracy using word-processing software. After that, the transcribed data were entered into a data analysis table. They were read through carefully a few times, divided into meaningful parts, and applied color coding for answers. The possible themes or categories were noted in a separate column next to the transcribed data for each question (e.g., Question 5: *Satisfied*, Question 6: *Negative Feeling*) and the reasons were briefly noted next to the themes (e.g., Question 5: *Satisfied – use when writing*, Question 6: *Negative feeling: worried when writing*). The synthesis of the main findings for each question was written in the next column of the same table. The intra-coder reliability was applied to ensure the reliability of qualitative data analysis (Bailey, 1998; Révész, 2012); that is, the qualitative data were coded by the same researcher twice at a two-week interval, with an extended re-coding session two weeks after the second session for any unclear themes or categories. The reflective diary, which was written after the interviews, and the open-ended section of the questionnaire, were reviewed to determine any similar or additional themes/ categories/ or reasons related to the interview data.

## Results

This section reports the questionnaire results that address three main research objectives: (1) to examine non-English major students' attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction and (2) to compare the attitudes of the students with high, mid-level, and low writing abilities towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction, and (3) to study the opinions of the three groups of non-English majors towards explicit grammar instruction.

Regarding Objective 1, to compare non-English major students' attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction, the results revealed the students' perceived usefulness of grammar topics taught to them (see Table 1) and of explicit grammar instruction at different writing stages (see Table 2). It also showed the students' levels of attitudes before and after the instruction (see Table 3 and Table 4).

**Table 1** Comparison of Students' Levels of Attitudes towards Usefulness of Grammar Topics

| No | Topic           | <i>M (SD)</i>                  |                                | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|----------|
|    |                 | Pre                            | Post                           |          |          |
| 1  | Parts of speech | 3.42 (.672)<br>highly positive | 3.23 (.639)<br>positive        | 2.243    | .028*    |
| 2  | Phrases         | 3.34 (.638)<br>highly positive | 3.22 (.592)<br>positive        | 1.395    | .167     |
| 3  | Clauses         | 3.41 (.630)<br>highly positive | 3.33 (.546)<br>highly positive | 1.068    | .289     |
| 4  | Sentences       | 3.60 (.563)<br>highly positive | 3.58 (.545)<br>highly positive | .293     | .770     |
| 5  | Tenses          | 3.60 (.587)<br>highly positive | 3.50 (.574)<br>highly positive | 1.303    | .196     |
| 6  | Modals          | 3.33 (.641)<br>highly positive | 3.17 (.661)<br>positive        | 1.651    | .103     |
| 7  | Other           | -                              | -                              | -        | -        |

$N = 81$ , \* $p < .05$

In Table 1, a significant difference in mean attitude scores was found in No.1 Parts of Speech ( $t=2.243$ ,  $p=.028$ ). The students' attitude scores towards parts of speech became lower but, interestingly, they were still at a positive level, suggesting that the non-English major students generally favored the grammar topic taught in class.

**Table 2** Comparison of Students' Levels of Attitudes towards Usefulness of Explicit Grammar Instruction at Different Writing Stages

| No | Statement                           | <i>M (SD)</i>                  |                         | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|----------|
|    |                                     | Pre                            | Post                    |          |          |
| 1  | When I think about what to write    | 3.36 (.658)<br>highly positive | 3.15 (.594)<br>positive | 2.403    | .019*    |
| 2  | When I think about how to write it  | 3.53 (.572)<br>highly positive | 3.20 (.579)<br>positive | 3.795    | .000***  |
| 3  | When I organize ideas in my writing | 3.42 (.610)<br>highly positive | 3.17 (.519)<br>positive | 2.838    | .006**   |

| No | Statement                                                    | M (SD)                         |                                | t     | p      |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|--------|
|    |                                                              | Pre                            | Post                           |       |        |
| 4  | When I reread my writing to check for clarity of ideas       | 3.33 (.592)<br>highly positive | 3.04 (.660)<br>positive        | 3.219 | .002** |
| 5  | When I reread my writing to check for logical order of ideas | 3.28 (.553)<br>highly positive | 3.04 (.641)<br>positive        | 2.631 | .010*  |
| 6  | When I edit my writing                                       | 3.55 (.571)<br>highly positive | 3.35 (.618)<br>highly positive | 2.188 | .032*  |

$N = 81$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

In Table 2, significant differences in mean attitude scores were found in all items (No.1:  $t=2.403$ ,  $p=.019$ ; No.2:  $t=3.795$ ,  $p=.000$ ; No.3:  $t=2.838$ ,  $p=.006$ ; No.4:  $t=3.219$ ,  $p=.002$ ; No.5:  $t=2.631$ ,  $p=0.10$ ; No 6:  $t=2.188$ ,  $p=.032$ ). Interestingly, although the mean scores became lower in the post-instruction, they still stayed at the highly positive (No. 6) and positive levels (No.1-5), suggesting that the non-English major students generally maintained positive attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction in all stages of writing: planning (No.1-2), organizing ideas (No.3), revising and editing (No.4-5).

**Table 3** Comparison between Pre- and Post-Instruction of Students' Levels of Attitudes

| No | Statement                                                                                                                      | M (SD)                         |                                | t     | p     |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
|    |                                                                                                                                | Pre                            | Post                           |       |       |
| 1  | The grammatical points that I have learned in this course are considered necessary composing tools.                            | 3.68 (.520)<br>highly positive | 3.59 (.587)<br>highly positive | 1.068 | .289  |
| 2  | The grammatical knowledge that I have learned from this course makes me reluctant to take risks when I write.                  | 2.52 (.776)<br>positive        | 2.36 (.826)<br>positive        | 1.340 | .184  |
| 3  | The grammatical points that I have learned in this course help me notice errors in my own writings or in my friends' writings. | 3.35 (.553)<br>highly positive | 3.11 (.656)<br>positive        | 2.657 | .010* |
| 4  | The grammatical points that I have learned in this course help me                                                              | 3.19 (.601)<br>positive        | 2.96 (.669)<br>positive        | 2.483 | .015* |



| No | Statement                                                                                                                       | <i>M (SD)</i>                     |                                   | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
|    |                                                                                                                                 | Pre                               | Post                              |          |          |
|    | analyze errors in my own writings or in my friends' writings.                                                                   |                                   |                                   |          |          |
| 5  | The grammatical points that I have learned in this course help me correct errors in my own writings or in my friends' writings. | 3.30 (.535)<br>highly<br>positive | 3.10 (.604)<br>positive           | 2.275    | .026*    |
| 6  | The grammatical points that I have learned in this course are necessary for me to develop my English writing skills.            | 3.57 (.611)<br>highly<br>positive | 3.49 (.635)<br>highly<br>positive | .948     | .346     |
| 7  | The grammatical knowledge that I learned from this course has made me become a better writer.                                   | 3.33 (.652)<br>highly<br>positive | 3.01 (.642)<br>positive           | 3.403    | .001**   |
| 8  | Teaching grammar in this course is a waste of time.                                                                             | 3.43 (.854)<br>highly<br>positive | 3.49 (.711)<br>highly<br>positive | -.540    | .591     |
| 9  | Teaching grammar is the core of teaching writing at the basic level.                                                            | 3.43 (.631)<br>highly<br>positive | 3.30 (.749)<br>highly<br>positive | 1.394    | .167     |
| 10 | Teaching grammar in this course helps motivate me to learn writing.                                                             | 2.75 (.662)<br>positive           | 2.53 (.792)<br>positive           | 2.309    | .024*    |
| 11 | Teaching grammar in this course makes me anxious to write.                                                                      | 2.77 (.852)<br>positive           | 2.60 (.843)<br>positive           | 1.386    | .170     |
| 12 | Teaching grammar in this course makes me lose my confidence in writing.                                                         | 2.95 (.835)<br>positive           | 2.77 (.810)<br>positive           | 1.664    | .100     |
| 13 | I cannot apply the grammatical knowledge in writing class assignments.                                                          | 3.08 (.671)<br>positive           | 3.06 (.832)<br>positive           | .125     | .901     |
| 14 | I'm interested in learning grammar in this class.                                                                               | 3.01 (.712)<br>positive           | 2.69 (.744)<br>positive           | 2.948    | .004**   |

| No | Statement                                                                                                    | M (SD)                  |                         | t     | p      |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------|--------|
|    |                                                                                                              | Pre                     | Post                    |       |        |
| 15 | I am not satisfied with my writing ability even though I studied a lot of grammatical points in this course. | 2.62 (.784)<br>positive | 2.54 (.988)<br>positive | .545  | .587   |
| 16 | I can apply grammatical knowledge in writing assignments to other courses.                                   | 3.16 (.665)<br>positive | 2.89 (.711)<br>positive | 2.923 | .005** |

$N = 81$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

*Note:* For some items, such as No.1-5, which contained the phrase “The grammatical points that I have learned...,” when data were collected before the instruction, the students were asked about their levels of agreement towards these items by considering the grammatical points to be taught to them as shown in Table 1.

In Table 3, significant differences in mean attitude scores were observed in 7 items: No.3 “help notice errors” ( $t=2.657$ ,  $p=.010$ ), No. 4 “help analyze errors” ( $t=2.483$ ,  $p=.015$ ), No. 5 “help correct errors” ( $t=2.275$ ,  $p=.026$ ), No.7 “help become a better writer” ( $t=3.403$ ,  $p=.001$ ), No.10 “help motivate me to learn writing” ( $t=2.309$ ,  $p=.024$ ), No.14 “interested in learning grammar” ( $t=2.948$ ,  $p=.004$ ), and No.16 “help apply knowledge to other courses” ( $t=2.923$ ,  $p=.005$ ). Noticeably, the mean scores were lower in these items in the post-instruction but maintained a positive level, suggesting that the non-English major students favored explicit grammar instruction throughout the course.

The results related to Objective 2 are presented in Tables 4 and 5, which compare the attitudes of the students with high, mid-level, and low writing abilities towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction.

**Table 4** Comparison of Levels of Attitudes of High, Mid-level, and Low Writing Ability Groups

| S. | Ins. | High (n=27)                          |       |      | Mid- (n=32)                          |       |      | Low (n=22)                           |      |      |
|----|------|--------------------------------------|-------|------|--------------------------------------|-------|------|--------------------------------------|------|------|
|    |      | M                                    | t     | p    | M                                    | t     | p    | M                                    | t    | p    |
| 1  | Pre  | 3.59<br>(.572)<br>highly<br>positive | -.273 | .787 | 3.75<br>(.440)<br>highly<br>positive | 1.487 | .147 | 3.68<br>(.568)<br>highly<br>positive | .370 | .715 |



| S. | Ins. | High (n=27)                          |       |       | Mid- (n=32)                          |       |      | Low (n=22)                           |       |       |
|----|------|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------------|-------|------|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|
|    |      | M                                    | t     | p     | M                                    | t     | p    | M                                    | t     | p     |
|    | Post | 3.63<br>(.492)<br>highly<br>positive |       |       | 3.53<br>(.718)<br>highly<br>positive |       |      | 3.64<br>(.492)<br>highly<br>positive |       |       |
| 2  | Pre  | 2.70<br>(.775)<br>positive           | 1.126 | .270  | 2.38<br>(.793)<br>negative           | .338  | .737 | 2.50<br>(.740)<br>negative           | .847  | .406  |
|    | Post | 2.44<br>(.974)<br>Negative           |       |       | 2.31<br>(.780)<br>negative           |       |      | 2.32<br>(.716)<br>negative           |       |       |
| 3  | Pre  | 3.27<br>(.533)<br>highly<br>positive | .768  | .449  | 3.38<br>(.609)<br>highly<br>positive | 1.722 | .095 | 3.41<br>(.503)<br>highly<br>positive | 2.309 | .031* |
|    | Post | 3.11<br>(.652)<br>positive           |       |       | 3.15<br>(.662)<br>positive           |       |      | 3.09<br>(.684)<br>Positive           |       |       |
| 4  | Pre  | 3.19<br>(.491)<br>positive           | 1.413 | .170  | 3.25<br>(.622)<br>positive           | 1.545 | .133 | 3.14<br>(.710)<br>positive           | 1.312 | .204  |
|    | Post | 3.00<br>(.679)<br>positive           |       |       | 2.97<br>(.752)<br>positive           |       |      | 2.91<br>(.526)<br>positive           |       |       |
| 5  | Pre  | 3.22<br>(.506)<br>positive           | .328  | .746  | 3.41<br>(.615)<br>highly<br>positive | 1.899 | .067 | 3.23<br>(.429)<br>positive           | 1.418 | .171  |
|    | Post | 3.19<br>(.483)<br>positive           |       |       | 3.09<br>(.689)<br>positive           |       |      | 3.00<br>(.617)<br>positive           |       |       |
| 6  | Pre  | 3.52<br>(.643)                       | .000  | 1.000 | 3.56<br>(.619)                       | .619  | .540 | 3.64<br>(.581)                       | 1.000 | .329  |



| S. | Ins. | High (n=27)                       |       |      | Mid- (n=32)                       |       |      | Low (n=22)                        |       |       |
|----|------|-----------------------------------|-------|------|-----------------------------------|-------|------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|
|    |      | M                                 | t     | p    | M                                 | t     | p    | M                                 | t     | p     |
|    |      | highly positive                   |       |      | highly positive                   |       |      | highly positive                   |       |       |
|    | Post | 3.52<br>(.509)<br>highly positive |       |      | 3.47<br>(.761)<br>highly positive |       |      | 3.50<br>(.598)<br>highly positive |       |       |
| 7  | Pre  | 3.37<br>(.565)<br>highly positive | 1.657 | .110 | 3.25<br>(.718)<br>positive        | 1.832 | .077 | 3.41<br>(.666)<br>highly positive | 2.614 | .016* |
|    | Post | 3.11<br>(.506)<br>positive        |       |      | 2.94<br>(.759)<br>positive        |       |      | 3.00<br>(.617)<br>positive        |       |       |
| 8  | Pre  | 3.30<br>(.823)<br>highly positive | -.750 | .460 | 3.48<br>(.890)<br>highly positive | -.166 | .869 | 3.50<br>(.859)<br>highly positive | .000  | 1.000 |
|    | Post | 3.44<br>(.641)<br>highly positive |       |      | 3.53<br>(.761)<br>highly positive |       |      | 3.50<br>(.740)<br>highly positive |       |       |
| 9  | Pre  | 3.41<br>(.694)<br>highly positive | 1.803 | .083 | 3.50<br>(.568)<br>highly positive | .205  | .839 | 3.36<br>(.658)<br>highly positive | .271  | .789  |
|    | Post | 3.07<br>(.917)<br>positive        |       |      | 3.47<br>(.718)<br>highly positive |       |      | 3.32<br>(.477)<br>highly positive |       |       |
| 10 | Pre  | 2.59<br>(.636)<br>positive        | .225  | .823 | 2.75<br>(.568)<br>positive        | 1.679 | .103 | 2.95<br>(.785)<br>positive        | 2.113 | .047* |



| S. | Ins. | High (n=27)                          |       |        | Mid- (n=32)                |       |      | Low (n=22)                 |       |      |
|----|------|--------------------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------------|-------|------|----------------------------|-------|------|
|    |      | M                                    | t     | p      | M                          | t     | p    | M                          | t     | p    |
|    | Post | 2.56<br>(.847)<br>positive           |       |        | 2.50<br>(.762)<br>negative |       |      | 2.55<br>(.800)<br>positive |       |      |
| 11 | Pre  | 2.96<br>(.759)<br>positive           | 1.237 | .227   | 2.70<br>(.952)<br>positive | .611  | .546 | 2.59<br>(.796)<br>positive | .616  | .545 |
|    | Post | 2.74<br>(.813)<br>positive           |       |        | 2.56<br>(.878)<br>Positive |       |      | 2.48<br>(.814)<br>positive |       |      |
| 12 | Pre  | 3.00<br>(.832)<br>positive           | 1.154 | .259   | 3.00<br>(.880)<br>positive | .818  | .420 | 2.82<br>(.795)<br>positive | .961  | .348 |
|    | Post | 2.81<br>(.786)<br>positive           |       |        | 2.84<br>(.847)<br>positive |       |      | 2.59<br>(.796)<br>positive |       |      |
| 13 | Pre  | 3.15<br>(.662)<br>positive           | -.618 | .542   | 3.06<br>(.669)<br>positive | .619  | .540 | 2.95<br>(.722)<br>positive | .237  | .815 |
|    | Post | 3.31<br>(.736)<br>highly<br>positive |       |        | 2.97<br>(.782)<br>positive |       |      | 2.91<br>(.971)<br>positive |       |      |
| 14 | Pre  | 3.01<br>(.698)<br>positive           | 2.874 | .008** | 3.00<br>(.480)<br>positive | 1.329 | .194 | 3.05<br>(.722)<br>positive | 1.789 | .088 |
|    | Post | 2.68<br>(.690)<br>positive           |       |        | 2.71<br>(.824)<br>positive |       |      | 2.68<br>(.716)<br>positive |       |      |
| 15 | Pre  | 2.52<br>(.700)<br>positive           | .841  | .408   | 2.53<br>(.915)<br>positive | -.399 | .693 | 2.86<br>(.640)<br>positive | .722  | .478 |

| S. | Ins. | High (n=27)                |       |      | Mid- (n=32)                 |      |      | Low (n=22)                           |       |        |
|----|------|----------------------------|-------|------|-----------------------------|------|------|--------------------------------------|-------|--------|
|    |      | M                          | t     | p    | M                           | t    | p    | M                                    | t     | p      |
|    | Post | 2.33<br>(.877)<br>negative |       |      | 2.63<br>(1.070)<br>positive |      |      | 2.68<br>(.995)<br>positive           |       |        |
| 16 | Pre  | 3.19<br>(.681)<br>positive | 1.886 | .071 | 3.03<br>(.740)<br>positive  | .466 | .645 | 3.32<br>(.477)<br>highly<br>positive | 2.925 | .008** |
|    | Post | 2.85<br>(.732)<br>Positive |       |      | 2.97<br>(.647)<br>Positive  |      |      | 2.82<br>(.795)<br>Positive           |       |        |

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

Note: S. = Attitude statements, which are the same items as in Table 3; Ins. = Instruction

In Table 4, significant differences in mean attitude scores were found between pre- and post-instruction in the high and low writing ability groups, but not the mid-level writing ability group, in several items. For the high writing ability group, mean attitude scores were significantly lower in the post-instruction in No. 14 “interested in learning grammar” ( $t=2.874$ ,  $p=.008$ ). For the low writing ability group, mean attitude scores were lower in 4 items: No. 3 “help notice errors” ( $t=2.309$ ,  $p=.031$ ), No. 7 “help become a better writer” ( $t=2.614$ ,  $p=.016$ ), No.10 “help motivate me to learn writing” ( $t=2.113$ ,  $p=.047$ ), and No.16 “help apply knowledge to other courses” ( $t=2.925$ ,  $p=.008$ ). The mean scores were noticeably lower in these items in the post-instruction but still maintained a positive level, suggesting that the high and low writing ability groups were optimistic about explicit grammar instruction throughout the course.

Table 5 shows the results from ANOVA analyses to compare the attitudes of high, mid-level, and low writing ability students towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction.



**Table 5** Comparison of High, Mid-level, and Low Writing Ability Students' Level of Attitudes towards Explicit Grammar Instruction

| Statements | Instruction | High ( <i>n</i> =27) |           | Mid-level ( <i>n</i> =32) |           | Low ( <i>n</i> =22) |           | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|-------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
|            |             | <i>M</i>             | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>                  | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>            | <i>SD</i> |          |          |
| 1          | Pre         | 3.59                 | .572      | 3.75                      | .440      | 3.68                | .568      | .665     | .517     |
|            | Post        | 3.63                 | .492      | 3.53                      | .718      | 3.64                | .492      | .285     | .753     |
| 2          | Pre         | 2.70                 | .775      | 2.38                      | .793      | 2.50                | .740      | 1.332    | .270     |
|            | Post        | 2.44                 | .974      | 2.31                      | .780      | 2.32                | .716      | .217     | .805     |
| 3          | Pre         | 3.27                 | .533      | 3.38                      | .609      | 3.41                | .503      | .429     | .653     |
|            | Post        | 3.11                 | .652      | 3.15                      | .662      | 3.09                | .684      | .064     | .938     |
| 4          | Pre         | 3.19                 | .491      | 3.25                      | .622      | 3.14                | .710      | .229     | .796     |
|            | Post        | 3.00                 | .679      | 2.97                      | .752      | 2.91                | .526      | .112     | .894     |
| 5          | Pre         | 3.22                 | .506      | 3.41                      | .615      | 3.23                | .429      | 1.122    | .331     |
|            | Post        | 3.19                 | .483      | 3.09                      | .689      | 3.00                | .617      | .565     | .571     |
| 6          | Pre         | 3.52                 | .643      | 3.56                      | .619      | 3.64                | .581      | .223     | .801     |
|            | Post        | 3.52                 | .509      | 3.47                      | .761      | 3.50                | .598      | .045     | .956     |
| 7          | Pre         | 3.37                 | .565      | 3.25                      | .718      | 3.41                | .666      | .447     | .641     |
|            | Post        | 3.11                 | .506      | 2.94                      | .759      | 3.00                | .617      | .534     | .588     |
| 8          | Pre         | 3.30                 | .823      | 3.48                      | .890      | 3.50                | .859      | .459     | .633     |
|            | Post        | 3.44                 | .641      | 3.53                      | .761      | 3.50                | .740      | .108     | .897     |
| 9          | Pre         | 3.41                 | .694      | 3.50                      | .568      | 3.36                | .658      | .330     | .720     |
|            | Post        | 3.07                 | .917      | 3.47                      | .718      | 3.32                | .477      | 2.102    | .129     |
| 10         | Pre         | 2.59                 | .636      | 2.75                      | .568      | 2.95                | .785      | 1.851    | .164     |
|            | Post        | 2.56                 | .847      | 2.50                      | .762      | 2.55                | .800      | .040     | .961     |
| 11         | Pre         | 2.96                 | .759      | 2.70                      | .952      | 2.59                | .796      | 1.287    | .282     |
|            | Post        | 2.74                 | .813      | 2.56                      | .878      | 2.48                | .814      | .639     | .530     |
| 12         | Pre         | 3.00                 | .832      | 3.00                      | .880      | 2.82                | .795      | .374     | .689     |
|            | Post        | 2.81                 | .786      | 2.84                      | .847      | 2.59                | .796      | .704     | .498     |
| 13         | Pre         | 3.15                 | .662      | 3.06                      | .669      | 2.95                | .722      | .489     | .615     |
|            | Post        | 3.31                 | .736      | 2.97                      | .782      | 2.91                | .971      | 1.738    | .183     |
| 14         | Pre         | 3.01                 | .698      | 3.00                      | .480      | 3.05                | .722      | .033     | .967     |
|            | Post        | 2.68                 | .690      | 2.71                      | .824      | 2.68                | .716      | .014     | .986     |
| 15         | Pre         | 2.52                 | .700      | 2.53                      | .915      | 2.86                | .640      | 1.513    | .277     |



| Statements | Instruction | High (n=27) |      | Mid-level (n=32) |       | Low (n=22) |      | F     | p    |
|------------|-------------|-------------|------|------------------|-------|------------|------|-------|------|
|            |             | M           | SD   | M                | SD    | M          | SD   |       |      |
| 16         | Post        | 2.33        | .877 | 2.63             | 1.070 | 2.68       | .995 | .934  | .397 |
|            | Pre         | 3.19        | .681 | 3.03             | .740  | 3.32       | .477 | 1.266 | .288 |
|            | Post        | 2.85        | .732 | 2.97             | .647  | 2.82       | .795 | .351  | .705 |

\* $p < .05$

Note: Statement = attitude statements, which are the same items as in Table 3.

In Table 5, no statistically significant differences were found in all attitude items ( $p > .05$ ), suggesting that the high, mid-level, and low writing ability groups were not different in their attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction before and after the instruction.

### Results from Students' Opinions

The results in this section are related to Objective 3, which aims to study the opinions of the three groups of non-English majors towards explicit grammar instruction. They revealed interesting commonalities and differences in the students' views towards explicit grammar instruction that can be summarized below.

Regarding the results from the open-ended question of the questionnaire, 11 students out of 81 answered this question. Among those who gave responses, the majority wrote positive comments, mentioning explicit grammar instruction in the basic writing course was perceived as beneficial, as it helped them build the courage to write in English and allowed further application of knowledge to other courses. Some wrote: *"It is useful. I have more courage to write even though I know it's not perfect"* (Student 1, High ability); *"This course is very good. I gained a lot of knowledge that can be used in other courses"* (Student 30, High ability). Two students had negative comments, addressing the content of the instruction was inundated, making them confused. They wrote: *"A lot of information was presented in one semester. I could not remember everything I studied. It's difficult to deal with the overloaded content in one semester"* (Student 20, High ability); *"The teaching was good, but there was too much information about grammar, which made me rather confused"* (Student 12, mid-level ability).

The results from the focus-group interviews revealed the students' positive and negative attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction which can be summarized according to the interview questions as follows.



Q1: "Are you for or against grammar teaching in any writing classes? Why or why not?"

Most students in the three groups similarly explained that grammar should be taught in writing classes as it provided fundamental knowledge that would assist students in writing later. However, the grammatical topics taught in class should cover what students had studied in other courses but had partially forgotten, and they should not be cognitively overloaded. A student noted: *"Yes. But not too much of what to teach. Students can feel frustrated when there is a lot of information"* (High ability, male).

Q2: "Do you think grammar is necessary when you write in English? How?"

All students in the three groups agreed that grammar knowledge was very necessary for writing. It was fundamental knowledge, enabling them to communicate their ideas to readers more clearly. One student explained:

*"For writing, it's like we need to have grammatical knowledge. We need to understand grammar. It's not necessary for speaking...we see the speakers' faces. We can communicate. But in writing, we cannot know what writers want to communicate if grammar in the writing is not correct. Or if there are grammatical mistakes, we cannot communicate our ideas"* (High ability, female).

Q3: "Should your teacher teach grammar explicitly in the basic writing course? Why or why not?"

The high, mid-level, and low writing ability groups mostly felt that grammar should be taught in the basic writing class; it was perceived as remedial instruction to aid weak students. However, some students favored implicit grammar instruction: *"I want an instruction like in conversation...like there are sentences for students to use, just like when I learn Chinese. I learn from the sentences I use, and then I learn grammar. Then I realized there is grammar in the sentences I use. It makes me familiar with the language. I don't know how to explain it, but it's like there's a situation for us to use this tense. I think I can understand it better"* (Mid-level ability, female).

Q4: "In what ways does explicit grammar teaching affect your writing?"

Most students in the three groups generally felt that the teaching of grammar made them cautious about what to write, knew how to correct some mistakes by themselves, and raised their

awareness of how to write down ideas to make their writings readable. A student also noted: *"We know more techniques. Earlier, whatever we wrote, we used simple sentences. But when the teacher said using only this made writing boring to read, it made us think more when constructing sentences"* (High ability, female). However, some students felt reluctant to write and self-consciously worried about grammar options when writing: *"I think it makes us reluctant to write...as there are many options. We don't know which one should be used"* (Mid-level ability, male); *"Yes. Very worried...It's difficult and complex. Some are similar... Sometimes I think and think about what should be used"* (Low ability, male).

Q5: "Are you satisfied with the selected grammatical points that you have learned in this course? Why or why not?"

Students in all groups were mostly satisfied with the grammatical points learned in class. They explained that they used the knowledge learned in their writings. The topics also helped remedy their knowledge deficiencies as some students might have different background knowledge about grammar even though they had studied all grammatical points in their previous education. However, some students still did not feel good about the overloaded contents of the course, which made them have a rough time studying the contents. A student added: *"The topics are very much okay to learn, but some topics are complex and have too much information. English is not my major, so I think the contents are difficult...and when I studied them in depth...and things are complex...Gosh, I wished the class would end soon!"* (Low ability, male).

Q6: "What is your overall attitude towards explicit grammar instruction in the basic writing course?"

Students in all groups had both positive and negative attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction. Most of them fundamentally liked studying grammar even though they could not write in English well. However, grammar was sometimes boring when dealing with difficult topics: *"But sometimes I don't like it...it's boring...it's difficult"* (Low ability, female).

In summary, the results based on the interview data reported the students' positive and negative views regarding explicit grammar instruction in this course. The positive views were mostly related to the role of grammar and general opinions about explicit grammar instruction. The



psychological effects were also found to be positive and negative among these groups. The students' views can be summarized in Table 6 below.

**Table 6** Students' Attitudes from the Open-ended Questionnaire and Interview Data

| Role of Grammar in Writing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Psychological Effects of Grammar Instruction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | General Opinion about Grammar Instruction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Positive points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provide fundamental knowledge (A)</li> <li>- use knowledge when writing (A)</li> <li>- address knowledge deficiencies (A)</li> <li>- help communicate clearer ideas to readers (H)</li> <li>- raise awareness about what to write (A)</li> <li>- enable self-correction (A)</li> </ul> <p><b>Negative points:</b> None</p> | <p><b>Positive point:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- build students' courage to write in English (A)</li> <li>- feel cautious about what to write (A)</li> </ul> <p><b>Negative points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feel reluctant to write: many grammar options (M)</li> <li>- feel self-consciously worried: what structure to use (M)</li> <li>- feel bored: difficult topics (L)</li> <li>- confused (M)</li> <li>- frustrated: content overloaded and complex (H, L)</li> </ul> | <p><b>Positive points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- allow applications of knowledge to other courses (A)</li> <li>- like grammar and like teaching grammar (A)</li> </ul> <p><b>Negative points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- contain overloaded content (A)</li> <li>- favor inductive teaching (M)</li> </ul> |

*Note:* A = students in all groups, H = High-ability student(s), M = Mid-level ability student(s), L = low-ability student(s)

### Discussion

This research aimed to examine non-English major students' attitudes before and after explicit grammar instruction. It also compared the attitudes and studied the opinions of high, mid-, and low writing ability students before and after the instruction. As the findings have shown, grammar, whether some students like to study it explicitly or not, has confirmed its place in the basic writing classroom for non-English major students in the Thai EFL context. Overall, the findings revealed that the students were positive about explicit grammar instruction in the basic writing course. These findings have extended the past study by Acheron (2015), which used a different research instrument from the current study to examine students' attitudes towards advanced



grammar instruction in the advanced composition class, and corroborate the interview results by Chien (2018), who noted the students' preference towards explicit instruction rather than implicit instruction.

Interestingly, the quantitative findings of the current study highlighted the students' interest and motivation in learning grammar and their perceived sense of usefulness, particularly from the planning to editing stages. The instruction also helped them in many aspects: noticing and correcting errors, applying knowledge to other courses, and becoming better writers. These findings possibly stem from the fact that all of the students had language-major backgrounds (Korean, Chinese, French, Japanese, and Thai languages). They may feel basically optimistic about learning grammar, which they may also experience when taking courses in their own majors. Another possible reason may be that many non-English majors are characterized as having "weak writing ability," which makes it hard for them to avoid making mistakes when writing in English (Shen, 2012, p. 74). Therefore, they seem to need assistance from grammar instruction to pick up deficient knowledge of the rules. For some learners, it seems rather difficult to discover how language works by themselves. They need guidance from teachers to tell them how. In accordance with this view, Folse (2016) further noted that teaching grammar seems to enable ESL/EFL students to craft the words that they already know in English and to organize "linguistic chaos" in their heads (pp. 64-65).

The qualitative findings of the current study largely lend support to the quantitative findings, but add more interesting perspectives. Grammar presentations, though favored by most students in an explicit manner, contained many required topics and seemed to overwhelm them. These also made them overloaded, anxious, and possibly discouraged when digesting the information, regardless of their writing ability levels. This may explain why the mean attitude scores became largely lower at the post-instruction even though the positive level of the students' attitudes was maintained throughout the course. Another possible explanation may be that some students prefer implicit instruction, which seems to enhance better understanding of the rules (e.g., mid-level ability female from the interview). Also, a further likely cause would be the short period of time given to the students before they were asked to produce a piece of writing; some students with limited English backgrounds possibly may need more time to maximize their learning for each grammar topic. This point has similarly been mentioned by some research participants in Wang and Wang's study (2014, p. 70).



### Limitations of the Current Study

This research aimed to examine non-English major students' attitudes before and after explicit grammar instruction. It also compared the attitudes and studied the opinions of the students in different writing ability groups. While this study provides valuable insights into how non-English majors view explicit grammar instruction, limitations should be addressed to caution the generalization of the findings. These limitations mainly include the one-group design which aimed to obtain data from language-major backgrounds in the deductive environment. However, a comprehensive understanding of the students' attitudes would be more complete and strengthened if a balanced view from the implicit instruction and other groups of students, such as from science and social science majors, is added to replicate the current study. Also, the limitation should be noted for how the students were divided into high-, mid-, and low-ability groups. Since the midterm exam results were obtained from the course instructor, who acted as a single grader of the exam, the scores used to calculate percentile ranks may be affected by a single-rater bias.

### Recommendations for Future Research and Implications for Classroom Practice

Further research is possibly needed for other non-English major groups to see whether similar results can be observed. It may incorporate an investigation into the implicit classrooms or explore university teachers' attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction to contribute further to the field. In addition, it is possible to investigate this area in the context of writing in the AI environment, which has also become widely popular in recent years.

As we all know, writing is not easy to master because, in addition to grammar, students need to craft content and take into account several rhetorical considerations when writing. Therefore, based on the results of the interview data regarding the overwhelming amount of course content, writing instructors who plan to introduce grammar explicitly to non-English major students are advised to limit grammar topics and increase class time to provide more writing practices and explanations. They also need to prioritize the language areas the students struggle with the most in their writing. If possible, they may integrate implicit instruction into the class to accommodate some students' learning styles based on the observed evidence from the current study.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study on students' attitudes helps enhance a greater understanding of non-English major students toward explicit grammar instruction, which may still be widely practiced in many ESL/EFL classrooms. It may also reinforce existing knowledge of ESL/EFL students' writing abilities and behaviors. When teachers know students' attitudes towards instructional practices they bring to the classrooms, they can provide more effective assistance to help their students get closer to their language learning success.

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