2015

The Effectiveness of Explicit Instruction Versus Implicit Instruction Method on Chinese Grammar Acquisition

Fuyang Peng

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION VERSUS IMPLICIT INSTRUCTION METHOD ON CHINESE GRAMMAR ACQUISITION

A Thesis Presented

by

FUYANG PENG

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2015

Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Asian Languages and Literatures (Chinese)
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION VERSUS IMPLICIT INSTRUCTION METHOD ON CHINESE GRAMMAR ACQUISITION

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To my supportive mother Xiaobai Hu
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my thesis advisor, Professor Zhijun Wang, and the committee members: Professor Zhongwei Shen and Professor David K. Schneider, not only for their wise guidance and kind support, but also for their generous help and warm encouragement throughout my master’s years. They have always trusted me, provided me with advice and help. What I have learned from them will affect the rest of my life and the development of my career.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the director, teachers, staff and students in the Chinese program and the department of Asian Languages and Literatures. It is truly fortunate for me to be here as a member of this large family. The life in the Chinese program at Umass Amherst will never fade away in my memory.

In the end, I must thank my supportive parents and friends for their constant encouragement and love.
ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION VERSUS IMPLICIT INSTRUCTION METHOD ON CHINESE GRAMMAR ACQUISITION

MAY 2015

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In the past century, grammar instruction has aroused debate among scholars and instructors in the field of second language teaching and acquisition without absolute consensus. However, for the acquisition of Chinese grammar by adult L2 learners, there is wider acceptance that grammar should be taught due to the unique Chinese grammatical features. The issue in question is merely on how to teach Chinese grammar effectively. Hence, inspired by many other comparative studies on explicit and implicit instruction methods for teaching Western languages such as English, French, Spanish and so forth, the researcher conducted an empirical study to investigate the effectiveness of the two instruction methods on Chinese grammar acquisition.

The current study consisted of two experiments, involving two target forms: Affirmative-Negative Questions (A-Not-A Questions) and the perfective aspect particle LE (了). The participants were beginning level Chinese language learners who studied Chinese as a second language in two class sections of the Elementary Non-intensive Chinese Class at a large public university. They formed two comparative groups naturally.
During the two experiments, the explicit group was provided with explicit knowledge of grammar patterns, examples carrying the patterns and opportunities to practice with the teacher’s explicit corrective feedback, while implicit group received input without any grammatical knowledge or explanation. The teacher would give recast feedback (implicit) if students made mistakes in their practice. Importantly, the explicit and implicit teaching groups were reversed in the second experiment, in order to enable each group to be exposed to both the explicit and the implicit teaching conditions.

Analysis of the results obtained from immediate-tests and delayed post-tests yielded three main findings: first, learners who had received explicit grammar instruction treatment overall gained greater improvement in their knowledge of, and their ability to use the target forms in the short term; second, when it comes to longer-term effects, both groups in the two experiments showed loss, in varying degrees, in the knowledge of and the ability to use the target forms; third, explicit instruction was of more advantage for L2 Chinese learners when they are learning more complex rules.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Does formal instruction make any difference in second language acquisition? Might not mere exposure to target language input be equally effective?

In Krashen’s influential Natural Acquisition Hypothesis (1981), he argued that second language acquisition emerges when learners are exposed to sufficient and comprehensible input with low affective filter. It is the input rather than the formal instruction that plays the critical role in second language acquisition. Nonetheless, after reviewing many researches, Long (1983) believed that formal instruction does aid second language acquisition. In addition, Terrell (1991) in his study mentioned a few informal individual examples on adults’ second language learning, stressing that adults did not automatically use input to develop competence in the way Krashen had suggested. He further pointed out that even if L2 learners were in the country of target language, the input might not be comprehensible for them to take in. In fact, for most L2 Learners, formal instruction in a classroom setting is the only source of input. Learners who had no formal instruction tended, according to Pica (1983), to use production strategies of omission, which will eventually impeded the development of L2 learners’ acquisition.

As a matter of fact, when scholars and instructors in the field of second language acquisition are discussing about the issue of teaching, the controversy is usually focused on the role of grammar teaching.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, several aspects related to the present study are reviewed in the following sections. It begins with the discussion of the role of grammar instruction, followed by the issue of Chinese grammar instruction. Then, different grammar instruction methods and related empirical studies are presented and compared. This chapter concludes with the purpose and significance of the present study.

2.1 Grammar Instruction in Second Language Acquisition

2.1.1 The Role of Grammar Instruction

Grammar instruction, according to Ellis’s definition (2006, 84),

…involves the instructional technique that helps learners either to understand the target grammar metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it.

In the recent decades, there has been a continuous controversy on the role of grammar instruction among instructors and scholars in the field of second language teaching and learning. The word grammar, if tracing back to Ancient Greek, is grammatikos, which pertains to letters or learning (Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988). In the Middle Ages, grammar played a crucial part in language learning, of which the purpose was to develop rhetorical skill, to read and write. Thus grammar studying was related to scholarship achievement at that time. In a more modern view, as Swan put it (2005), grammar is a limited set of devices for expressing necessary meaning that cannot be conveyed by vocabulary alone. Before nineteenth century, grammar was still regarded
not only necessary but also sufficient (Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988).

Nonetheless, debate came to arise in the later century on whether learning a second language could be facilitated through the study of grammar.

Since 1980s, the focus of second language instruction has switched from grammar knowledge to the ability of using language skills in communication in natural contexts. The disfavor of grammar teaching is probably partially due to that scholars are easily associating the term “grammar teaching” with the Grammar-Translation Method or its counterpart methods, which are regarded notorious by most scholars. From their perspective, this method failed to make any contribution to the communicative goal. Meanwhile, in Krashen’s profound hypothesis (1985), he proposed that second language acquisition occurs when learners process comprehensible input in a low anxiety context. It is input rather than grammar instruction that plays a pivotal role in the process of second language acquisition. Additionally, according to his Monitor Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), teaching grammar was only for Monitor use, which was explained as follows:

In the Monitor model, a monitor is used to ‘correct’ the errors, or rather what the performer perceives to be errors, in the output of the acquired system.

From his point of view, teaching grammar does not directly facilitate the acquisition, but merely help to raise grammatical accuracy in the production of the acquired system.

However, proponents of the “cognitive approach” emphasized that students should understand the rules of target language forms and structures before they attempted to use them for communication (Terrell, 1991). To learn the grammar of a language is to acquire the ability to produce grammatically acceptable utterances in the language (Corder, 1988). Although grammatical knowledge, asserted by Krashen, bears no
relationship with fluency, it has been proved by ample evidence that grammar instruction could contribute to L2 learners’ accuracy in communication (Alanen, 1995; de Graaf, 1997; Hernandez; 2008). In reality, grammatical competence has been actually viewed as one of the four components in Canale and Swain’s (1980) model of communicative competence:

1. Sociolinguistic competence (i.e. appropriacy); 2. Discourse competence; 3. Linguistic competence (i.e. accuracy): The forms, inflections, and sequences used to express the message are grammatically correct; 4. Strategic competence.

For second language learners, learning grammar rules help them express their meaning in a more deliberate and accurate way, rather than speaking sporadic and ambiguous phrases.

In fact, it is not hard to find that in numerous schools and language programs, grammar instruction has been still integrated into various curricula and syllabi. Therefore, instructors and learners, as suggested by Corder (1988), shall not be confused by the ambiguous expression “teaching grammar” if they keep firmly in mind that grammar teaching is not the object but the aid to learning.

2.1.2 Chinese Grammar Instruction

In the field of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language, scholars and instructors come to agree almost unanimously that grammar teaching is necessary and essential for L2 Chinese learning, especially for learning those grammars of much complexity (Zhao, 1994, 2002; Guo, 2002; He, 2003; Sun, 2006, etc.). It is noted that Chinese language is different from Western languages. For instance, if a L2 English learner mixed up the singular and plural in an English sentence, it will not affect the meaning of the sentence.
However, if a L2 Chinese learner did not receive the instruction of a specific Chinese grammar structure (e.g. BA and BEI structure), he probably would be totally confused or misunderstanding the sentences containing this structure, even though he might know the exact meaning of each word. Meanwhile, he might produce meaningless and scattered words and phrases instead of complete accurate sentences, which will definitely discourage his efforts and future learning.

Proponents of Krashen’s Input Hypothesis might argue that the L2 Chinese learner should be provided with sufficient comprehensible input of the target structure to let the acquisition take place. Nevertheless, it is truly hard for the L2 Chinese learners to acquire the correct pattern rules as well as the proper function of the target grammar. Assumed that the learner had a chance to receive enough input containing the structure, it might be still extremely difficult for him to figure out the function of the target form and to produce the accurate and meaningful sentences bearing this structure. Therefore, merely relying on input exposure may carry a risk that students cannot figure out or understand the function of the grammar easily. It will take more efforts and longer time for learners themselves to figure out the rules, which is not economical and efficient for their second language learning.

In reality, the persistent controversy among Chinese instructors is not on whether grammar should be taught or not, but on what to teach, when to teach and how to teach. In this thesis paper, the focus will be mainly on how to teach grammar effectively.
2.2 Grammar Instruction Methods

Pondering on the very question concerning effective grammar instruction, second language instructors have been striving all the time to find a most beneficial way to teach grammar.

2.2.1 Focus-on-FormS, Focus-on-Form and Focus-on-Meaning

Traditionally, grammar was taught by means of Focus-on-FormS, which is characterized by Long (1991) as

“…earlier, synthetic approaches to language teaching that have as their primary organizing principle for course design the accumulation of individual language elements (e.g., forms such as verb endings or agreement features)”

In other words, the content and the very end of Focus-on-FormS are to learn the knowledge about specific linguistic elements. This kind of traditional approaches always isolates linguistic features from context or from communicative activity (Long, 1991). The outdated teaching methodology “grammar-translation” can be seen as a representative of Focus-on-FormS approaches. Contrarily, distinguished from Focus-on-FormS, Focus-on-Form was regarded as more advantageous, in that the learners’ attention is drawn precisely to a linguistic feature as driven by the communicative demand (Long, 1991). The Focus-on-Form instruction is considered as planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners’ attention to the target linguistic form (Ellis, 2001). According to this view, a task-based communicative approach is an exemplar of Focus-on-Form approaches. In addition, it has been proven that Form-focused instruction is more effective in many face-to-face classroom settings (R. Ellis, 2001, 2002; Lyster, 2004a, 2004b). Additionally, according
to Nassaji and Fotos (2004, p130), if learners are exposed to grammar points that have been introduced in a communicative setting, they will retain a longer-term effects and their accuracy will improve consequently.

Celce-Murcia (1991. PP. 474-475) also proposed that Grammar instruction should be integrated into a communicative curriculum:

For the general-purpose language learner, the beginning-level course can develop a base by dealing first with grammar-meaning correspondences and then with grammar-function correspondences. As soon as a basic threshold level has been established, the course must also begin to deal with discourse-level grammar.

In fact, this is what most regular language programs adopted and applied into practice. Likewise, in this thesis paper, the two contrastive grammar instruction approaches (explicit and implicit) were also implemented in the communicative curriculum setting.

2.2.2 Explicit and Implicit Grammar Instruction

The explicit method of teaching grammar is, as defined by Chastain (1976), offering a clear presentation of grammar structure and a direct explanation of the rule, while the implicit method is characterized as presenting the examples containing the rule in context so that students can hear the structure and grasp its function and meaning without any formal analysis, under which condition, the rules are not being discussed, and the learners are not attended to rules. In general, the explicit method includes analysis, explanations, and practice of the target form; in contrast, the implicit method consisted of drills but no analysis or explanation of the grammatical structure in question (Scott, 1989).

Implicit teaching might cause some confusion in that the principle seems similar to that of focus-on-meaning approach, which, as Burgess and Etherington (2002) pointed
out, gives no attention to form and the focus of classroom activity is merely on communication and negotiation of meaning. However, it is important to point out that implicit instruction method is still a planned method of grammar teaching rather than non-grammar-instruction. Both of the two methods (explicit and implicit) are favoring the point of view on grammar instruction, with the contrast that explicit instruction involves presentation and clear explanation of the grammar rules, while under the condition of implicit grammar instruction the learner makes his own mental representation of the generalization rather than the teacher stating the grammar rules overtly (Krashen and Seliger, 1975).

Meanwhile, it might be also easy to mix up the term implicit with the term inductive. Nevertheless, implicit teaching is in effect different from inductive teaching since inductive approach belongs to the explicit approach. With inductive teaching method, learners are first exposed to examples of the grammatical structure and then are asked to discover and generalize a metalinguistic rule with the assistance of the instructor (DeKeyser, 2003). The inductive teaching method essentially helps learners develop metalinguistic awareness of the rule. Whereas, students who are under implicit teaching condition are neither encouraged to make any analysis on the target forms, nor receiving any information or feedback on the grammatical knowledge. Generally speaking, under implicit instruction condition learners are only provided with exemplars of the rule while they are not attempting to learn it (DeKeyser, 2003).
2.2.3 The Empirical Studies on Explicit and Implicit Grammar Instruction Method

To date, a number of studies have been conducted on explicit and implicit grammar instruction (Andrews, 2007; Carroll & Swain, 1993; Ellis, 1994, 2001; DeKeyser, 1995, 2003; De Graaff, 1997; Krashen, 1982; Rosa and O’Neill, 1999; Scott, 1989, etc.), while disagreement still exists regarding the effectiveness of the two methods. Advocators of implicit teaching method claim that learners should not be attempted to learn a specific rule so that they could achieve acquisition in a more natural way, but the opposing views in favor of explicit instruction provide ample evidence proving that learners who receive explicit instruction outperformed those who were under the implicit teaching condition. For example, in DeKeyser’s (2003) review of researches, 14 studies comparing explicit and implicit treatments in both laboratory and classroom studies were included and a conclusion was made that explicit instruction was much more effective than implicit instruction.

An empirical study conducted by Scott (1989) measured the effectiveness of explicit and implicit teaching approach on French grammar teaching. The experiment was divided into two parts, involving two target forms: the relative pronoun structure and the subjunctive one. During instruction of a second structure (the subjunctive), the explicit and implicit teaching groups were reversed, in order to enable students to receive both the explicit and the implicit instruction to counterbalance the research design. After giving tests in written form and oral form respectively and completing the data analysis, the result showed that there is a significant difference with the explicit group performing better than the implicit group on the two target forms. In her study, Scott discussed several factors which might have influenced the results: students’ familiarity with explicit
instruction from prior coursework, relatively short time available for the implicit teaching condition, greater test anxiety in the oral mode, etc. However, she admitted that the participating students had all been taught the experimental items before this training, which inevitably made the results less convincing.

In a more recent empirical study, Andrews (2007) also investigated the effects of implicit and explicit instruction of simple and complex grammar structures for English language learners. The results showed that explicit instruction is significantly better than implicit for the acquisition of complex rule, and that both methods are equally effective for the simple rule, which was against Krashen’s (1982) assert that explicit instruction could only be beneficial in the case of simple and portable rules. Nevertheless, the author did not provide detailed comparison and corresponding discussion on the short-term and long-term effects of the two instruction methods.

Overall, most of the previous researches related to the grammar instruction are all focusing on the Western languages as a second language such as English, French, Spanish and so forth (Andrews, 2007; Carroll & Swain, 1993; Ellis, 1994, 2001; De Graaf, 1997; DeKeyser, 1995, 2003; Erlam, 2003; Hernandez, 2008, etc. Scott, 1989, etc.), while little attention is given to the issue of Chinese grammar instruction. In addition, there is particularly lack of empirical evidence on Chinese grammar instruction methods, since most researches are conducted in the scope of Chinese theoretical grammar. Therefore, further researches are needed.

2.3 The Purpose and Significance of the Present Study

Since there has been little empirical research exploring the effectiveness of explicit instruction and implicit instruction on Chinese grammar acquisition, an empirical
study is conducted with an attempt to fill this gap. This present study will compare the two instruction methods in detailed treatments on two Chinese grammars, with different degree of complexity.

For Chinese language instructors, it will be of great help to find out what kind of method will better aid L2 learners’ grammar acquisition. The study will also try to shed light upon the implementation of these two methods in class teaching. The researcher of this thesis hope that the present study could draw more Chinese instructors’ attention and interests to explore more effective methods in assisting students’ grammar acquisition.
CHAPTER III

THE PRESENT STUDY

This chapter describes several facets of this present study. It begins with the statement of the research questions, which directed the researcher to conduct this study. Then, an overview of the research design is presented. Next, the general information of participants is provided, followed by the introduction and description of two target forms and the instruction treatments. The assessments and the scoring procedure are then described. This chapter ends with the explanation of analysis method.

3.1 The Research Questions and Hypotheses

The main purpose of the present empirical study was to investigate the effectiveness of explicit instruction and implicit instruction methods on the L2 acquisition of Chinese grammar.

The following research questions were intended to answer in the present study:

1. Which method is more effective on L2 Chinese grammar learning in the short term, explicit instruction or implicit instruction?

2. Is the explicit instruction method still more beneficial for L2 Chinese grammar learning in the longer term?

3. Does the explicit instruction method facilitate the acquisition of simple rules or more complex rules in Chinese grammar?

Correspondingly, there were three hypotheses posited by the researcher, which were attempted to be tested in this current study.
1. While both instruction methods might benefit the learners’ acquisition, the explicit teaching approach would be more effective for L2 Chinese grammar learning in the short term.

2. The explicit group would show less loss in their knowledge of, and the ability to use, the target grammar forms in the long term.

3. When learning the target forms of much complexity, it is more advantageous for L2 Chinese learners to receive explicit instruction.

3.2 Research Design

The current study consisted of two experiments, involving two target forms: Affirmative-Negative Questions (A-Not-A Questions) and the perfective aspect particle LE (了).

In the first experiment of A-not A Questions, class section 1 received explicit grammar instruction, while section 2 received implicit treatment. Whereas, during the treatment period of the second structure LE (了), the explicit and implicit teaching groups were reversed, that is to say, the explicit group in the first experiment (A-not-A Questions) turned into implicit group in the second experiment (Perfective aspect particle LE). In this way, each group was intentionally exposed to both the explicit and the implicit teaching conditions to counterbalance the research design.

For each experiment, the length of treatments on each group was the same, lasting for 30 minutes in the regular class meeting. To ensure that students acquired no previous knowledge prior to this study, pre-tests were employed two days before each instruction treatment. The immediate post-tests were administered right after the instruction
treatment, and delayed post-tests were designed to carry out two weeks later for the purpose of evaluating learners’ acquisition on these two target forms in short term and longer term.

The overview of the experiment schedule is provided as below (Table 3.1). It might be confusing that the delayed post-tests in the first experiment were employed two weeks later than the instruction treatments, but the one in the second experiment were conducted only one week after the treatments. This is because the week 15 was the final week of class teaching, so the researcher had to collect the data before the semester ended.

Table 3.1: Overview of the Experiment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>Class Section 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>Pre-test (A-not-A)</td>
<td>Pre-test (A-not-A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Treatment (<em>Explicit</em>)</td>
<td>Treatment (<em>Implicit</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td>Immediate post-test</td>
<td>Immediate post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Delayed post-test</td>
<td>Delayed post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Pre-test (LE)</td>
<td>Pre-test (LE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Treatment (<em>Implicit</em>)</td>
<td>Treatment (<em>Explicit</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td>Immediate post-test</td>
<td>Immediate post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Delayed post-test &amp; Research Survey</td>
<td>Delayed post-test &amp; Research Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Along with the delayed post-tests, students were also asked to fill out a research survey, which included two parts: background information and grammar learning experience (See Appendix G).

3.3 Participants

The participants were learners of beginning level in the first semester of a non-intensive Chinese course at a large public university in New England Area. Placement and background survey were conducted before they enrolled in this course with the purpose of ensuring that they were suited to the current syllabus. There were three class sections for this course, and students chose to attend voluntarily depending on the class time. Three instructors were assigned for the three class sections, however, one of them took responsibility for two sections and the other two instructors co-taught the other one section. As a result, in order to reduce the influence of instruction factors, the present study chose the two sections that shared the same instructor as the experimental groups.

There were 51 students in total in these two sections. However, some of them did not take part in the whole research due to their absence from classes. Meanwhile, several students who demonstrated previous knowledge about the target forms in the pre-tests were also eliminated from this study. In other words, the participants in the study were chosen based on their attendance and the results yielded from the pretests, thus each time the subjects of the groups might be slightly different, as shown in Table 3.2. The participants in these two experiments were mostly in their freshman, sophomore and junior years of undergraduate study, and their ages ranged from 18 to 21. According to the background survey, the participants had not learned Chinese before taking this course.
Table 3.2: Number of Participants and the Respective Treatments in Each Group and in Each Experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Lecture Section</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Treatments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The First Experiment (A-Not-A Question)</td>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Explicit Grammar Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Implicit Grammar Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Second Experiment (LE “了”)</td>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Implicit Grammar Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Explicit Grammar Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all, both of the two experimental groups met three times a week, sharing the same regular instructor (and the researcher as the experimental instructor), and using the same textbook materials and syllabus, of which the goal was to help students obtain communicative skills in Chinese.

3.4 The Target Forms

As indicated above, two grammars were chosen as the target structures in the present study: Affirmative-Negative Questions (A-Not A Questions) and the perfective aspect particle “了” (LE). The rationale for choosing these two grammars was that the two grammar structures are of different complexity, and one of the research questions is to probe into the relationship between grammar of different complexity and
explicit/implicit teaching: A-NOT-A Questions is comparatively simpler and perfective aspect particle LE is more complex.

Affirmative-Negative Questions, which is known as A-Not-A Questions (Liu, 2009), is composed of the affirmative and the negative form of a verb or an adjective, e.g. 好不好 / 喜欢不喜欢. It is another common way of forming a question in Chinese besides adding the question particle 吗 to a declarative sentence.

With regard to the particle LE, many linguists have characterized this post-verbal LE as a marker of perfectivity (Wang 1965, Chao 1968, Li and Thompson 1981, Sharwood Smith 1997). Also, there is widely acceptance that LE is one of the most difficult grammars for L2 Chinese learners to acquire.

3.5 The Instructional Treatments

Both of the two class sections met three times a week regularly, each time for 50 minutes. Normally, the same lecturer prepared the same teaching material for the two class sections. For the purpose of this study, as indicated in the Table 3.1, in the eighth week and the fourteenth week, the researcher replaced the regular teacher to implement the instruction treatments.

During the treatments, students from the two groups received same amount of instruction time but with different focuses. The explicit group was provided with explicit knowledge of grammar patterns, examples carrying the patterns and opportunities to practice with the teacher’s explicit corrective feedback. Conversely, implicit group focused more on the meaning/message over the form. The students received input without any grammatical knowledge or explanation. The teacher would give recast
feedback (implicit) if students made mistakes in their practice. The contrast is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: The Comparison on Instruction Procedure in Explicit and Implicit Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Grammatical Knowledge</th>
<th>Grammar Pattern Rules</th>
<th>Examples and Practice</th>
<th>Types of Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Provided</td>
<td>Presented</td>
<td>Provided</td>
<td>Metalinguistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>Not Provided</td>
<td>Not Presented</td>
<td>Provided</td>
<td>Recast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Target Form 1: Affirmative-Negative Questions

The first experiment of Affirmative-Negative Questions took place on Wednesday in the eighth week. In Monday’s class the students had already been introduced the new vocabulary of Lesson 3, and Wednesday’s class was the second day of Lesson 3, the goal of which was reviewing the vocabulary and practicing the new grammar.

As discussed before, the Affirmative-Negative Questions (A-Not-A Questions) is another common way to form questions, by putting the affirmative form and the negative form of a verb or an adjective together (e.g. 你喜欢不喜欢中国菜？). However, in learning A-NOT-A Questions, students might still add “吗” into the A-NOT-A Question form affected by a developed habit. Also, they might encounter problems when there is more than one verb in the A-NOT-A questions (e.g. 你喜欢不喜欢看电影？).

In the explicit group, the instructor (the researcher) first introduced the target form with explicit explanation and a few simple examples, coloring the affirmative and negative form of the verbs and adjectives differently to make them salient (e.g. 忙不忙：
好\不好\)，and let students transcribe the questions with 吗 into A-not-A Questions. Then, the researcher utilized pictures to ask questions in the target form to check students if they can understand the form. When it came to the more complicated A-NOT-A questions with two verbs in the sentences, the rule was presented to students with a colored example, namely, if there is more than one verb in A-NOT-A Questions, the question form applies to the first verb (e.g. 你喜欢+不喜欢吃中国菜？). In the class, the students were always asked to interact with the researcher as well as their classmates, asking each other A-NOT-A questions based on the pictures shown on the PowerPoint (see Figure 3.1). After practice, they were involved in a pair work and an activity to apply this target form in the context. Through the explicit treatment, if students made mistakes or asked metalinguistic questions about this target form, the researcher would give explicit explanation. For example, in the explicit class one student said, “你有没有中文名字吗？“ The researcher pointed out the mistake directly, “是 ‘你有没有中文名字？’，不说 ‘吗’。” In addition, the researcher gave a further grammatical explanation: the question particle 吗 cannot go with the A-NOT-A questions since the form already bears the function of questioning.

With regard to the implicit group, students were provided examples and practices bearing the target form but without any grammatical knowledge or explanation, nor explicit pattern rules were presented for the students. They were more focused on the meaning rather than the form. However, to ensure that the total amount of treatment time was the same, the researcher designed one more task for students in implicit group (See Figure 3.2). When students in the implicit group made mistakes, contrast with the way of giving feedback in explicit group, the researcher would correct them in a more implicit
way (e.g. recast), which means no grammatical information or metalinguistic explanation was accompanying the correction. The task in Figure 3.2 was a comprehension task, during which the researcher asked students A-NOT-A questions to check if students could understand the target form and gave the right answer.

Figure 3.1: Sample Practice on Affirmative-Negative Questions for Explicit Group

Figure 3.2: Sample Task on Affirmative-Negative Questions for Implicit Group
(2) Target Form 2: The Perfective Aspect Particle “了”

The second experiment of the Perfective aspect particle LE was conducted on
Wednesday in the fourteenth week. Similarly, in Monday’s class the students had already
been introduced the new vocabulary of Lesson 5, and Wednesday’s class was the second
day of Lesson 5, the goal of which was mainly practicing the grammar for that LE was
considered one of the most difficult grammars for L2 Chinese learners to acquire.

Since there is still no exact consensus among Chinese linguists on the functions
and features of LE, after consulting with other instructors, the researcher mainly referred
to the pedagogical grammar explanation in the textbook to prepare for the instruction
treatment.

Hence, during teaching in the explicit group, several facets of LE from Lesson 5
were introduced and explained to students. For the sake of instruction, the rules were
generated comparatively simply as follows: 1. LE signifies the completion of an action or
an event (e.g. 我昨天和朋友聊天了。); 2. the negative form of “VP 了” is “没有+VP”
(e.g. 我昨天 没有 和朋友聊天。); 3. if there is a numeral modifier for the object, it
should be inserted between the verb and the object (e.g. 我今天 喝了两杯 咖啡。); 4. LE
is not a past tense marker, since it can refer to the future events to show the sequence of
two actions (e.g. 我 明天 看了电影 去 打球。); 5. LE cannot be used with the psych verb
such as 喜欢 (e.g. 我 喜欢 喝咖啡。). In addition to presenting the pattern rules and
offering a number of related examples, the researcher also designed exercises, pair works
and a story-telling activity (see Figure 3.3) to engage students in the learning of the target
form – the Perfective aspect particle LE. Similar to the explicit instruction treatment in
the first experiment, the researcher would directly correct students’ mistakes with explicit
explanation. Also, the researcher would clarify it if students had confusion on the grammar point.

In contrast, students in the implicit group received no generated pattern rules or any explicit grammatical information. However, to ensure the same amount of instruction treatment time and to cover the facets of LE in the Lesson 5, students were provided with more input and practice opportunities in addition to those in the explicit group (see Figure 3.4 & 3.5). With regard to the mistakes made in the class, the researcher would only recast them without any metalinguistic explanation.

It can be noticed that there is slight difference between the task in Figure 3.3 and that in Figure 3.4. Yet the pattern rule was provided in the task for explicit group, while in the task for the implicit group, only the example sentence was given. One would question that students in the implicit group might also have generated the rule with the colored example. However, the researcher did not draw students’ attention intentionally, nor did she ask students to make an inductive conclusion on the rule.

Figure 3.3: Sample Task on Perspective Aspect Particle LE for the Explicit Group

![Activity: Make a story together! Tomorrow Little Wang will be very busy...]

- 起床 qi chuáng get up
- 吃早饭 chī zǎofàn
- 打球 dǎ qiú
- 喝咖啡 hè kāfēi
- 画画 huà huà
- 看电视 kàn diànshì
- 跳舞 tiào wǔ
- 唱歌 chàng gē
- 看外国电影 kàn wàiqué yǐngdiàn
- 听音乐 tīng yīnyuè
- 逛街 guàng jiē
- 睡觉 shuìjiào
- 下棋 xià qí
- 看中文书 kàn zhōngwén shū
- 和朋友聊天 hé péngyǒu liàntiān
3.6 Assessment Tests and Scoring Procedure

Three tests were employed respectively in each experiment during the present study (see Appendices A to F), which were all administered during the students’ regular class time. The students were required not to discuss with their peers or refer to the textbooks.
The pre-tests were conducted two days before the instruction treatment, of which the purpose was eliminating those who had previous knowledge prior to the treatments. The immediate post-tests were administered right after the treatment without advanced notice, and the delayed post-test were two weeks (or one week, as explained in section 3.2) later than the treatment. In fact, only immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests were considered for assessment.

Inspired by Han and Ellis (1998)’s suggestion, the researcher combined the explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge in the tests. In this way, students’ acquisition was measured by means of the immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests. For each experiment, the immediate post-tests and the delayed post-tests were designed as Pen-and Paper tests in the similar format, including three sections:

- Translation Tasks
- Grammaticality Judgment Tasks (Error Detection and Correction Tasks)
- A Dialogue-Completion Task

During the immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests of the first experiment, students were required to translate two English sentences into Chinese in the translation tasks. In the case of grammaticality judgment tasks, there were two sentences containing one error for each, and students were asked to detect the error, correct it and to offer explanation. As for the third task, students were asked to complete a dialogue in the given context. In the second experiment, the number of translation tasks and grammaticality judgment tasks was slightly different from that in the first experiment, but the format was similar.
According to Green and Hecht (1992), metalinguistic knowledge (explicit knowledge) is operationalized as learners’ ability to correct, describe, and explain error. Hence, the second section was aimed at eliciting students’ explicit knowledge, while the first and the third task was designed to tap the implicit knowledge. It is believed that the explicit knowledge would be easily elicited if there were less time constraint (Han & Ellis, 1998). Nonetheless, if there exists time constraint, it is more possible for the learners to tap implicit knowledge. During the tests in each experiment, although the researcher asked students to take their time, some of the students still rushed finishing it since they had other classes after this class session. In this sense, the tasks, especially the first and the third parts can be regarded as to tap students’ implicit knowledge in that they did not have sufficient time to reach to the explicit knowledge and make use of it. Since there is wide agreement that the learners’ acquisition could be seen as implicit knowledge, the tests employed in the present study, in this light, lent support to measure L2 Chinese learners’ acquisition of the two target grammars.

With regard to the scoring procedure, the total score is 100 points for each test. Since the numbers of the questions were slightly different between the two experiments, the score distributions for the two experiments were accordingly different. In the first experiment, the score percentages for the three parts were respectively 50%, 40% and 10%. In the second experiment, the score percentages were 51%, 42% and 7% for the three sections. Generally speaking, a score of 0 point was given if the target form was attempted but used incorrectly or the target form was avoided in the case of translation tasks and the dialogue-completion tasks. Errors in structures other than the target form, however, were not taken into consideration. Additionally, Pinyin was allowed to use
when completing the tasks, in order to avoid the case that students knew the correct answer but could not write the characters. As for the grammaticality judgment tasks, students received part of points if they just corrected the wrong sentences but failed to provide any explanation.

3.7 Data Collection and Method of Analyses

Since the pre-tests was aiming at excluding students who had previous knowledge prior to the treatments, only the results of immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests in each experiment were analyzed. In this sense, participants engaged in the whole study were not exposed to the target forms before the instruction treatments and their previous knowledge was calculated as zero. Also, given that the participants took the placement test before they enrolled in this non-intensive elementary class, it could be assumed that their average abilities were randomly equivalent.

With regard to result analysis, descriptive statistics from each set of tests from the two different groups in the two separate experiments were calculated. Microsoft EXCEL was utilized to draw the graphs in showing whether the differences within each group changed over time between the immediate and the delayed post-tests. Furthermore, to determine whether there is a significant difference between explicit and implicit group, a Paired Two-Tailed T-Test (the significance level was set 0.05 for all analyses) was applied. Therefore, the analyses involved both within-group (immediate post-test and delayed post-test) and between-group (explicit and implicit instruction methods) comparisons.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS AND ANALYSES

This chapter describes and evaluates the results yielded from the quantitative analysis. The Paired two-tailed T-Test was employed to investigate whether there is significant difference between explicit group and implicit group in each experiment. The descriptive statistics were arranged according to the order of the two experiments: the first experiment of Affirmative-Negative Questions (A-NOT-A Questions) and the second of Perfective Aspect Particle LE.

4.1 Results and Analyses on Affirmative-Negative Questions (A-NOT-A Questions)

As it showed in Table 4.1, in terms of the experiment of A-NOT-A Questions, students from explicit group overall outperformed those from the implicit group on the immediate post-test. However, in the delayed post-test, the performance of explicit group and implicit group was nearly the same. The mean score of implicit group, as Table 4.2 reported, was even slightly higher than that of explicit group, which could be explained in the light of long-term effects and it will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for the Immediate Post-test on A-NOT-A Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68.00</td>
<td>36.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>35.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for the Delayed Post-test on A-NOT-A Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>30.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>55.36</td>
<td>32.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the significant difference between explicit and implicit groups, the result of a Paired two-tailed t-test for the immediate post-test showed that the $p$-value equaled 0.13994 (> 0.05), demonstrating that the difference was considered to be not statistically significant. And the $p$-value was even larger ($p=0.97808$) for the delayed post-test. The less complexity of the target form A-NOT-A Questions might account for this result. Moreover, the small sample size might also affect the attaining of a more precise result.

To gain a direct overview of the two treatments in this experiment, a trend of the performance of both groups on A-NOT-A Questions was drawn in Figure 4.1, showing that both explicit instruction and implicit instruction methods made a difference in students’ performance since there was a remarkable increase from zero previous knowledge to the performance on immediate post-test. As introduced in the chapter 3, participants from both groups were not exposed to the target forms prior to the instruction treatments. Although there existed no significant difference on the performance between explicit group and implicit group as calculated by Paired t-test, one could still conclude that explicit instruction was more effective for L2 Chinese students to learn A-NOT-A Questions than the implicit instruction method in the short term. Nevertheless, when it came to a relatively long term, the effects of the two treatments were almost the same.
More interestingly, the mean score of the implicit group on delayed post-test was comparatively higher than the immediate post-test, while explicit group’s mean score declines sharply between the two tests. Although the outcome did not fully support the hypotheses, it still could be viewed as positive in some way. The reasons will also be discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.1: Trend Graph for Mean Scores of Treatment Groups on A-NOT-A Questions

Meanwhile, in order to obtain more details of the two post-tests on A-NOT-A Questions, the mean scores of the three parts in each post-test were separately calculated and reported in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. Comparisons between explicit group and implicit group on the three parts were also drawn as Figure 4.2 and 4.3.

According to Figure 4.2 and 4.3, it could be generalized that the explicit group performed much better than the implicit group on all the three tasks in the immediate post-test, while in terms of the delayed post-test, the implicit group did slightly surpass the explicit group on the first two tasks but was still inferior to the explicit group on the dialogue-completion task. The reasons will also be discussed in Chapter 5.
Table 4.3: The Mean Scores of the Three Parts in the Immediate Post-test on A-NOT-A Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Error Detection</th>
<th>Dialogue-completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit</strong></td>
<td>39.09</td>
<td>24.55</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicit</strong></td>
<td>27.86</td>
<td>15.71</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: The Mean Scores of the Three Parts in the Delayed Post-test on A-NOT-A Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Error Detection</th>
<th>Dialogue-completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit</strong></td>
<td>30.45</td>
<td>20.45</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicit</strong></td>
<td>31.07</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: Comparison of the Mean Scores of the Three Parts in the Immediate Post-test between Explicit and Implicit Group in the Experiment of A-NOT-A Questions
4.2 Results and Analyses on Perfective Aspect Particle LE

In the second experiment, the two groups were exchanged in order to ensure that each class section had chance to be exposed to both explicit and implicit instruction treatments. To put it simply, the explicit group in this experiment of Perfective aspect particle LE, in effect, was the implicit group in the experiment of A-NOT-A Questions. However, it is important to note that, regardless of the changing condition, the explicit group continuously outperformed the implicit group as reported in Table 4.5 and 4.6, demonstrating that the explicit instruction method was more beneficial than implicit instruction method.
Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics for the Immediate Post-test on Perfective Particle LE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62.53</td>
<td>24.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41.87</td>
<td>28.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics for the Delayed Post-test on Perfective Particle LE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.77</td>
<td>33.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.00</td>
<td>23.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the result of a Paired two-tailed T-test, the $p$-value for immediate post-test was 0.0427 ($<0.05$), demonstrating that there is statistically significant difference between explicit group and implicit group in terms of immediate post-test. Although there is no significant difference between the two groups on the delayed post-test ($p=0.07445$), the results, to a great extent, lent support to the researcher’s hypotheses concerning the short-term effects and the instruction method on more complex grammar.

The below Figure 4.4 depicted a trend of the two treatment groups’ performance on the two post-tests of the Perfective aspect particle LE, showing that both explicit instruction and implicit instruction contributed to students’ development of LE. Moreover, it should be noted that differing from the results of the first experiment, the explicit group in this case outperformed the implicit group in both immediate and delayed post-tests, suggesting that with regard to the grammar LE, explicit instruction approach was more advantageous for students than the implicit instruction approach. Yet the slight decrease
of the mean score between the immediate post-test and the delayed post-test in both groups implied that explicit instruction facilitated students’ learning more in the short term than in the long term.

Figure 4.4: Trend Graph for Mean Scores of Treatment Groups on the Experiment of LE

![Graph showing mean scores over time for explicit and implicit groups.]

Similarly, to gain a more detailed view as to the two post-tests on the experiment of LE, the mean scores of the three parts in each post-test were respectively calculated and reported in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8. The comparison graphs were also drawn as Figure 4.5 and 4.6, which demonstrated that, the explicit group performed much better than the implicit group on the first two tasks in both post-tests, while in terms of the dialogue-completion task, the outcome of these two groups was similar to each other. The reasons will also be discussed in Chapter 5.
Table 4.7: Mean Scores of the Three Parts in the Immediate Post-test on the Experiment of LE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Error Detection</th>
<th>Dialogue-completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit</strong></td>
<td>35.47</td>
<td>25.07</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicit</strong></td>
<td>26.97</td>
<td>12.87</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Mean Scores of the Three Parts in the Delayed Post-test on the Experiment of LE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Error Detection</th>
<th>Dialogue-completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit</strong></td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>24.40</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicit</strong></td>
<td>16.53</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5: Comparison of the Mean Scores of the Three Parts in the Immediate Post-test between Explicit and Implicit Group on the Experiment of LE
4.3 The Average Performance of Explicit and Implicit Group on the Two Experiments

As has been pointed out in the above section, the two groups were reversed in the two experiments, to enable students from the two class sessions to be provided with both explicit and implicit instruction treatments. Therefore, all participants had received two contrastive instruction approaches. The overall comparison of participants’ performance on the immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests in the two experiments was shown in Figure 4.7 and 4.8. In the case of immediate post-test, two conclusions could be made based on the Figure 4.7: a. explicit instruction was more effective than implicit instruction approach for the learning of A-NOT-A Questions as well as for the Perfective LE; b. regardless of the instruction treatment method (explicit or implicit), participants’ performance on the grammar A-NOT-A Questions was slightly superior to the
performance on the grammar LE. Meanwhile, according to Figure 4.8, it could be observed that the average performance of explicit group in the delayed post-test on the two grammars was nearly the same, while there was much difference in the performance of implicit group between the two experiments. The detailed discussion and possible explanation will be provided in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.7: Comparison of the Mean Scores on Immediate Post-tests between Explicit and Implicit Group in the Two Experiments

Figure 4.8: Comparison of the Mean Scores of Delayed Post-tests between Explicit and Implicit Group in the Two Experiments
Finally, in order to compare the overall effects of explicit instruction and implicit instruction approach, the average performance of the two experiments were combined to be evaluated by the Paired two-tailed t-test, in terms of immediate post-tests and delayed post-tests respectively. The $p$-value for the average performance on the immediate post-tests of the two experiments was 0.02001 ($<0.05$), which means that there was significant difference between explicit group and implicit group on immediate post-tests in general. As for the delayed post-tests in the two experiments, no significant difference was found between the two groups since the $p$-value is 0.23729 ($>0.05$).
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the current empirical study will be discussed within the scope of the three research questions and corresponding hypotheses.

5.1 Research Question 1: Short-term Effects of Explicit and Implicit Instruction

It was hypothesized that both instruction methods would have positive effects on learners’ performance in the short term, and that explicit instruction would be more beneficial for L2 Chinese grammar learning. Namely, learners who had received explicit grammar instruction treatment would gain greater improvement in their knowledge of, and their ability to use the target forms in the short term.

In general, the results obtained from this present study showed that compared to their previous knowledge, both groups did make a great progress in the immediate post-tests right after the treatments (see Figure 4.1 and 4.4). Meanwhile, as revealed in Figure 4.7, the performance of the explicit group on the immediate post-tests in the two experiments were much better than the implicit group. In terms of the three respective tasks in the post-tests, the explicit group surpassed the implicit group on most of the three tasks in the immediate post-tests as reported in Figure 4.2 and 4.5. Moreover, as pointed out in the last section of Chapter 4, there did exist a significant difference, in general, between the two kinds of groups on the two immediate post-tests (p-value=0.02001).

However, to discuss separately, in terms of the immediate post-tests, significant difference between the explicit group and implicit group was only found in the second
experiment of LE ($p$-value=0.0427), while in the first experiment the difference was not significant ($p$-value=0.13994). Therefore, the results seemed did not always support the hypothesis.

An analysis of these mixed results could suggest several potential reasons. With regard to the general superior performance of the explicit group over the implicit group in the two experiments, one possible reason might be similar to that suggested by Nazari (2012) and Scott (1989), that the participants might have already been accustomed to the explicit teaching condition, in which the learners were exposed to the target grammar patterns and rules as well as meaningful exemplars of the rules. As a matter of fact, the regular classes (other than the experiment treatments) were also taught in a relatively explicit way. Thus, the implicit groups in the two experiments might be in a condition of unfamiliarity and uneasiness, since it was different from the mode of their regular classes. The positive outcome of the explicit group on the first two tasks (translation and error detection) in the immediate post-tests might put another possible reason in the spotlight, that the effects of the treatments were measured by the kinds of tests (translation and grammaticality judgment tests) that were more likely to favor explicit teaching. The third reason might be that the treatments were of short duration and insufficient input, which is in effect against the operationalization of implicit learning (Krashen, 1982). In addition, according to Fotos (2002), the success of implicit instruction relies on adequate communicative opportunities in class and sufficient exposure outside of class. However, according to the research survey, most students were lack of opportunities to be exposed to the target language outside the class.
When evaluating the results in the separate experiment, participants’ individual learning ability might account for this situation. The results indicated that there existed no significant difference between explicit group and implicit group on the immediate test in the first experiment of A-NOT-A Questions while there was a significant difference in the second experiment of LE. As illustrated in Table 3.2 in Chapter 3, the two groups were reversed in the two experiments with the purpose of counterbalancing the experiment design. That is to say, the explicit group in the first experiment (class section 1) turned into the implicit group in the second experiment, while the implicit group in the first experiment (class section 2) received explicit instruction in the second experiment. Thus, it could be inferred that the overall language ability of the participants from class section 2 might be slightly better than class section 1.

In summary, although the results did not always support the hypothesis regarding the first research question, explicit instruction method did, generally speaking, bring short-term effects for the learning of the two grammars.

5.2 Research Question 2: Longer-term Effects of Explicit and Implicit Instruction

The second research question concerns whether the explicit instruction method will still have more positive effects in the long run on L2 Chinese grammar learning. It was postulated that the explicit group would show less loss in their knowledge of, and the ability to use, the target grammar forms.

However, mixed results also emerged at this point. As was shown in Figure 4.1 and 4.4, the mean scores of the two groups on the delayed post-tests in these two experiments were in general decreasing sharply compared to the immediate post-tests,
with the exception that the mean score of the implicit group on the delayed post-test in the first experiment of A-NOT-A Questions was nearly 10 points higher than the immediate post-test (see Figure 4.1). Meanwhile, the results of the sampled two-tailed t-test failed to show that there was significant difference between groups on the delayed post-tests in the two experiments ($p=0.97808$ in the first experiment; $p=0.07445$ in the second experiment). Additionally, as stated in the last section of Chapter 4, no significant difference was found between the combined average scores of the two groups on the delayed post-tests as a whole ($p=0.23729$).

It seems rather complicated to provide any absolute explanation in this case. Yet an analysis of the results could tentatively offer a couple of possible reasons in which external and internal factors might jointly played a role. First, the period of instruction treatments was too short to place an impact on the long-term effects. Both explicit and implicit treatments only lasted for 30 minutes or so, in which the learners were completely lack of sufficient input. Additionally, according to the research survey, most students failed to have the chance to receive the exposure of the target language. Consequently, it is not surprising that both groups cannot retain the longer-term effects on the whole.

Second, the fact that there was a salient increase on the mean score of implicit group on the delayed post-test (compared to the immediate post-test) in the first experiment and that the score was even slightly higher that the explicit group, as discussed in section 5.1, might be attributable to the individual differences among students from two groups. As Krashen (1985) proposed, what makes one person anxious and thereby blocks language acquisition, may be just the right thing to lower the affective
filter\(^1\) in someone else, which is to say, grammar study could raise filters for some people, but also could lower it for others. To simply put it, the participating students from the implicit group in the first experiment might be the “Monitor-users” (Krashen, 1982) who necessarily needed grammar instruction. Thus, the mean score of their immediate results right after the implicit treatments were lower but it increased comparatively on the delayed post-test. Besides, it is not impossible that students who were under the implicit instruction condition in the first experiment of A-NOT-A Questions had a chance to gain explicit grammar knowledge from the regular instructor or from the explanations of the target grammar in the textbook between the treatment day and the delayed post-test day. According to the research survey, most students from the implicit group in the first experiment of A-NOT-A Questions (the second class section) claimed that they did often read grammar explanations in the textbook if they were “still confused or needed more review on the target grammar”. It is interesting to notice that the students mentioned “confusion” in this way, which may imply that students in the implicit group in effect demanded, to some degree, the grammatical knowledge and/or over instruction.

Finally, the distinct complexity of the two target forms might also attributable to the mixed results, which will be discussed in detail in next section.

5.3 Research Question 3: Complexity and Effectiveness

The hypothesis was posited that when learning the target forms of much complexity, it is more advantageous for L2 Chinese learners to receive explicit instruction. Contrary to the claim made by Krashen (1982) that explicit instruction only

\(^1\) According to Krashen (1985), the ‘affective filter’ is a mental block that prevents
benefit the acquisition of simple and portable rules, the attained results, consented with Andrews’s (2007) study, attest to the third hypothesis of this present study in a large degree.

As it is widely known, Chinese linguistics and language instructors have agreed almost unanimously that the grammar LE is one of the most complex and difficult Chinese grammars, while Affirmative-Negative Questions (A-NOT-A Questions) is considered comparatively more simple and portable. By comparing the results of the two experiments, as demonstrated by Figure 4.7, one can find that the mean scores of the two groups on the immediate post-tests in the experiment of LE were all lower than those in the experiment of A-NOT-A Questions. In terms of the delayed post-tests, it is also easy to draw the same conclusion. According to Figure 4.8, contrasted with the positive performance of implicit group in the experiment of A-NOT-A Questions, the implicit group in the experiment of LE, nevertheless, encountered considerable more loss within only one week after the treatment. In addition, both groups in the experiment of LE performed relatively poorly in the dialogue-completion task in the two post-tests compared to the performance in the experiment of A-NOT-A Questions (see Figure 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6), which indicated that it was actually more difficult for L2 learners to produce the target form of more complexity.

As reported in Chapter 4, there emerged a significant difference between explicit and implicit groups on the immediate post-test in the experiment of LE ($p=0.0427$). Although there is no significant difference ($p=0.07445$) between the two groups on delayed post-test in the experiment of LE, the mean score of the explicit group was about 20 points higher than that of the implicit group (see Table 4.6).
The different degree of complexity of these two target grammars might explain the results. As discussed above, there was no significant difference between groups on both post-tests in the experiment of A-NOT-A Questions; meanwhile, the results showed that there was even a salient increase on the mean score of implicit group on the delayed post-test. It could be suggested that even though students did not receive explicit grammar instruction in class, they still could acquire it outside the class with the possible assistance of the instructor or the textbooks, since the target grammar A-NOT-A Questions is relatively simple and portable. However, as for the experiment of LE, the existence of significant difference on the immediate post-test as well as the large gap on the delayed post-test between the two groups implied that explicit instruction was more effective for L2 Chinese learners to acquire more complex grammar structures. As mentioned before, the success of implicit instruction relies on adequate communicative opportunities in class and sufficient exposure outside of class (Fotos, 2002). However, the duration of the implicit instruction treatments was too short to make a difference, and at the same time, most students lacked the chance to be exposed to the target language. Thus, it is comparatively hard for students to acquire the grammar under implicit instruction, especially for the grammar of more complexity.

In short, when concerning the question whether the explicit instruction will be beneficial to the simple rules or the grammar of more complexity, it could be concluded that it is more advantageous for L2 Chinese learners to receive explicit instruction when learning more complex rules.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, the conclusions based on the results of the present empirical study are summarized first, and then the implications for the learners and instructors are provided; in the end, the limitations of this study and the directions for future researches are stated.

6.1 Summary of the Conclusion

The present study echoed previous researches conducted on the effectiveness of explicit instruction and implicit instruction with a different intention of attempting to fill in the gap in the empirical database concerning Chinese grammar teaching methodology.

To sum up, in this present study, the explicit group in general outperformed the implicit group in both two experiments. The significant difference between the two groups on the immediate post-test in the experiment of LE and in the combined two experiments as a whole, indicated that explicit instruction was more effective on the Chinese grammar acquisition in the short term. Nonetheless, when it comes to longer-term effects, both groups in the two experiments showed loss, in varying degrees, in the knowledge of and the ability to use the target forms. It is important to note that the implicit group in the experiment of LE encountered a dramatically huge loss, while the implicit group in the experiment of A-NOT-A Questions had, on the contrary, gained the knowledge and the ability as revealed by the increasing score in the delayed post-test. As for explicit groups, their loss was fairly less. The mixed results were probably affected by
the combined external and internal factors: first, the participating students might be accustomed to the explicit grammar instruction method; second, the treatments was too short and students barely had the opportunities to be exposed to the target language or to use the language outside the class; third, the learning styles and language abilities varied greatly among participating students in the two class sections; fourth, the degree of complexity of the two target forms was different. The present study suggested that the explicit instruction would be in particular of more advantage for L2 Chinese learners especially when they are learning more complex rules, which was also consented with the opinions of many other Chinese language instructors.

6.2 Implications of the Present Study

6.2.1 Implications for Adult Learners

In the present study, the researcher found that students from the explicit groups were overall more confident and relaxed since they knew that the instructor would clarify the points that they did not understand, while students under the implicit teaching conditions were always confused, especially when they were learning the target grammar of more complexity. In this light, it could suggest that, unlike children, adult learners in effect demanded grammatical knowledge to some extent. Additionally, adult learners would eagerly like to know whether they made a mistake or not, if so where the mistake was and why it was a mistake. As Sharwood Smith (1988) put it,

Adult learners require explicit information about the target language since their intellectual maturity as well as their previous learning experience makes them cry out for explanations.
Schmidt (1990) also pointed out that paying attention to language form is not only facilitative, but also necessary for adult second language learning. Explicit grammar instruction could help adult learners notice the gap between his own utterances and the target language, test and conform his hypotheses, which ultimately contributes to acquisition.

6.2.2 Implications for Chinese Instructors

As discussed in Chapter 2, some specific Chinese grammars have no counterparts in western languages. Teaching Chinese grammar is actually bound up with teaching the meaning and function. L2 Chinese learners might fail in communicating accurately and appropriately if they were unable to pick the right grammar. For example, the researcher found that the implicit group in the second experiment of LE tended to overgeneralize and use LE wrongly as a past tense marker.

According to the research survey, most students were more in favor of explicit grammar teaching than discovering the rules all by themselves without any overt explanation. Nevertheless, it is also important for instructors to note that students’ learning styles would vary from individual to individual, since there were also some students suggesting that the explicit and implicit instruction methods should be combined together to better aid their learning. As Norris and Ortega proposed (2000), for some learners, a sufficient number of good and clear examples will be enough, but for others they might find it more beneficial to know quite explicitly. Thus, instructors should know well about their students to make the best decision.
Moreover, since the students lacked the opportunities to use Chinese outside the classroom, classroom teaching became the only source of input for their Chinese learning. Thus it is difficult to deny that, the instructor - facilitator, would play a critical role in the classroom. Instructors themselves should obtain correct knowledge and perfect command of the target grammars, so that they can explain grammars better and more clearly. Also, the instructor should make full use of each class, providing students with abundant input and communicative activities. More importantly, to retain the longer-term effects, instructors must attach importance to the reviewing of grammar points, incorporating the repetition and recycling of the old grammars into the lesson plans.

Nonetheless, although explicit grammar instruction can provide a shortcut for the language acquisition (Gass, 1991), instructors should keep firmly in mind that grammar teaching is not the end, but the tool to help students use the target language accurately and appropriately (Corder, 1988). As revealed by the less positive outcome of the dialogue-completion tasks compared to the other two tasks in the two post-tests, it could be suggested that knowing how to detect and correct the error did not mean that one could use it in communication. Thus, instructors should balance the proportion of explicit explanation and the meaningful practice. After all, grammar should be taught within communicative approach, along with adequate input, meaningful practice and activities.

6.3 Limitations of the Present Study

Needless to say, there are limitations in the present study, which were stated as follows: Firstly, given the small number of participants, decreased reliability was not unexpected. Since the participating students of small size were chosen from two non-
intensive classes at one university, the findings of this present study could not be representative of the L2 Chinese learners in other situations. Also, as suggested by the large standard deviations, there was great individual variance in each group, which also made the results of the present study less convincing.

A second shortcoming concerns the duration of treatments. As discussed before, period was too short to provide sufficient comprehensible input and meaningful practice for learners. Normally, the experiment treatments in other empirical studies would last for at least several weeks. However, because of the external circumstances, the researcher did not have the opportunity to conduct the study within a longer period. Thus, it might affect the results to some extent.

Third, due to the administrative constraints, the pre-tests were given two days before the experiment treatments, which however, might affect the exact results of the treatments, since the students in the implicit group might have already gained the knowledge of the target grammars before the implicit treatments. Thus, the pre-tests should be given on the same day as the treatment.

Fourth, only two grammars were targeted in this study, which might have led to less precise results and unconvincing conclusion.

Finally, since the post-tests in the present study only included three parts (translation, error detection and correction and conversation-completion task), they were not comprehensive in order to measure four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). Spontaneous oral interview would be needed to test students’ fluency as well as accuracy.
Admitted these limitations, future researches are urgently in demand for further substantiation of the hypotheses and conclusions made in this present study. For example, a larger-scale study which includes L2 Chinese learners of a large size and of different levels could be conducted to yield more valid results. Meanwhile, future researchers could also conduct follow-up studies to find if the more instructed learners perform the better in their further studies. With regard to the treatments, the duration period is suggested to be longer enough to provide sufficient and meaningful input, and the material for implicit instruction should be developed differently from that of explicit instruction. Additionally, more grammar structures of different complexity could be also included in future studies, and the measurement should be designed more comprehensive in order to test the learners’ four skills in terms of accuracy and fluency.
APPENDIX A

PRE-TEST ON AFFIRMATIVE-NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

Name: \hspace{2cm} Lecture Section#: \\

*Please answer these questions without looking at your textbook.*

一. Please translate the following Chinese sentences to English.

1. 你是不是中国人

2. 你有没有姐姐

3. 你喜欢不喜欢吃美国菜

二. Please complete the dialogue based on the given context. Please use affirmative-negative (A-not-A) pattern to form the sentence.

王朋：李友，__________？
李友：我明天晚上不忙。
王朋：明天是我的生日，我请你吃饭。
李友：太好了，谢谢！
APPENDIX B
IMMEDIATE POST-TEST ON AFFIRMATIVE-NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

Name:                                 Lecture Section#: 

Please answer these questions without looking at your textbook.

一. Please translate the following English sentences to Chinese. (If you do not know how to write the character, you can use Pinyin instead.)

1. Are you Chinese or not?

2. Do you like to eat Chinese food or not?

二. Each of the following sentences contains one error. Please correct it and explain in English why the sentences are wrong.

1. 你有没有中文名字吗？

2. 你喜欢吃不吃中国菜？

三. Please complete the dialogue based on the given context. (If you do not know how to write the Chinese character, you can use Pinyin instead.)

Today is Wang Peng's birthday, so Wang Peng is asking Li You out for dinner……

王朋: 李友，_________________？

李友: 今天晚上我不忙。

王朋: 今天是我的生日，我请你吃晚饭。你喜欢吃什么菜？

李友: 谢谢！我喜欢吃美国菜，_________________？

王朋: 我也喜欢吃美国菜。
APPENDIX C

DELAYED POST-TEST ON AFFIRMATIVE-NEGATIVE QUESTIONS

Name:                                  Lecture Section#:  

Please answer these questions without looking at your textbook.

一. Please translate the following English sentences to Chinese. (If you do not know how to write the character, you can use Pinyin instead.)

1. Is your father teacher (or not)?

2. Do you like to eat American food (or not)?

二. Each of the following sentences contains one error. Please correct it and explain in English why the sentences are wrong.

1. 你有没有中国朋友吗？

2. 你喜欢吃不吃日本菜(Japanese food)?

三. Please complete the dialogue based on the given context. (If you do not know how to write the Chinese character, you can use Pinyin instead.)

Li You is asking Wang Peng if today is his birthday and plan for a dinner tomorrow...

李友: 王朋，今天是不是我的生日？

王朋: 今天不是我的生日。明天是我的生日。

李友: 明天你忙吗。

王朋: 明天我不忙。

李友: 我明天请你吃饭，怎么样？

王朋: 太好了！谢谢。
APPENDIX D

PRE-TEST ON PERFECTIVE ASPECT PARTICLE “了”

Name: ______________________ Lecture Section#: ______________________

Please answer these questions without looking at your textbook.

一. Please translate the following English sentences to Chinese. (If you do not know how to write the character you can write Pinyin instead.)

1. I have had three glasses of tea today.

2. I did not sleep yesterday.

3. Tomorrow I will go to see a movie after I have eaten dinner.

二. Do you know the Chinese character “了”? What does it mean?
APPENDIX E
IMMEDIATE POST-TEST ON PERFECTIVE ASPECT PARTICLE “了”

Name: 
Lecture Section#: 

*Please answer these questions without looking at your textbook.*

一. Please translate the following English sentences to Chinese. (If you do not know how to write the character you can use Pinyin instead.)

1. I have had three cups of coffee today.
2. I did not eat dinner today.
3. Tomorrow I will go to the library after I have seen the movie.

二. Each of the following sentences contains one error. Please correct it and explain in English why the sentences are wrong.

1. 昨天我没有睡觉了。（zuótiān wǒ méiyǒu shuìjiào le。）
2. 我喜欢了唱歌。（wǒ xǐhuān le chànggē。）
3. 我昨天看一个中国电影。（wǒ zuótiān kàn yīgè zhōngguó diànyǐng。）

三. Please complete the dialogue based on the given context. (If you do not know how to write the character you can use Pinyin instead.)

*Wang Peng is asking Li You why she did not eat dinner with him yesterday, while Li You is telling Wang Peng that she was very busy yesterday and has done many things…*

王朋: 昨天我请你去吃晚饭，你为什么不去？
李友: 我昨天很忙， ____________________________

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APPENDIX F
DELAYED POST-TEST ON PERFECTIVE ASPECT PARTICLE “了”

Name: 
Lecture Section#: 

Please do not look at the textbook, thank you!

一. Please translate the following English sentences to Chinese. (If you do not know how to write the character you can use Pinyin instead.)

1. I have watched two movies today.
2. I did not eat dinner yesterday.
3. Tomorrow I will go shopping after I have finished the homework. (go shopping: guàngjìè)

二. Each of the following sentences contains one error. Please correct it and explain in English why the sentences are wrong.

1. 昨天我没有做功课了。（zuótiān wǒ méiyǒu zuò gōngkè le。）
2. 我喜欢了跳舞。（wǒ xǐhuān le tiàowǔ。）
3. 我今天喝两杯咖啡。（wǒ jīntiān hē liàngbēi kāfēi。）

三. Please complete the dialogue based on the given context. (If you do not know how to write the character you can use Pinyin instead.)

Wang Peng is asking Li You to drink coffee tomorrow, but Li You cannot go because she will do many things tomorrow...

王朋：明天我请你喝咖啡，好不好？
李友：对不起，明天我很忙，__________________________
APPENDIX G
RESEARCH SURVEY

Name:                                             Lecture Section#:  

Part 1: Background information
1. Gender: Male   Female
2. Age: _________
3. What year are you in school? _________
4. How many years have you been studied Chinese?
   ______________________________
5. Do you have or have you had an opportunity to speak Chinese language outside of class?
   Yes _____ No _____  If yes, where? ________________________________
6. On average, how often did you communicate with native or fluent speakers of Chinese in Mandarin during the year?
   (0) never (1) a few times a year (2) monthly (3) weekly (4) daily
7. Is the Chinese language you are studying now spoken at home or in your family?
   Yes _____ No _____ Please explain _______________________________________
8. In what language do your mother ____________________, father ________,
   grandparents ______________________ speak to you?
9. In what language do you speak to your mother _______________, father ________,
   grandparents __________________________?
10. What are your motivations for taking this Chinese language course? Please explain.

   ________________________________
11. How much do you know about the Chinese language and culture prior to taking this course?
12. Have you ever been to a Chinese-speaking region for the purpose of studying Chinese?
   Circle one: Yes  No
   12a. If yes, when?
   12b. Where?
   12c. For how long?
Part 2: Grammar learning

13. What do you think is the **MOST IMPORTANT** thing in Chinese language learning? (And Why?)
   (1) Character  (2) Vocabulary  (3) Grammar  (4) Pronunciation & tones
   Please provide the reason:

14. What do you think is the **MOST DIFFICULT** thing in Chinese language learning? (And Why?)
   (1) Character  (2) Vocabulary  (3) Grammar  (4) Pronunciation & tones
   Please provide the reason:

15. How do you learn Chinese grammar so far? (Please elaborate your learning experience and learning strategies in details.)

16. Do you pay much attention to grammar rules when speaking or writing in Chinese? Why do or why do not?

17. What do you think of grammar teaching? Do you like it or not? Is it useful and helpful to your grammar learning? (Please elaborate with some examples.)

18. What do you expect from the instructors to help you with Chinese grammar learning? Do you prefer the **INSTRUCTORS** to explaining the grammar rules **OVERTLY** or helping you **DISCOVERING** the grammar rules **BY YOURSELF** with the examples provided?

19. Do you often read the grammar explanations in the textbooks?
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