Perceptions of Iranian EFL Learners on Teaching Effectiveness of Explicit and Implicit Grammar Instruction Methods

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Abstract
Although there is controversy surrounding the place of grammar in foreign language teaching, it remains of great importance for learners. This explanatory mixed methods study aimed to investigate Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of three computer-assisted grammar teaching methods, which mainly differ in the degree of explicitness. The participants in the quantitative phase of the study were 70 Iranian EFL learners chosen from Payam Noor University of Tabriz. Besides, 15 participants were randomly selected for the qualitative phase of the study. The participants were divided into three groups of grammar teaching, including Traditional Explicit Instruction (TEI), Implicit Input Enhancement (IIE), and Guided Discovery Method (GDM). The data was collected through the Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The results of descriptive statistics showed that the participants in all three instructional groups generally had positive perceptions of computerized grammar teaching approaches. Despite opposing views, the qualitative data analysis also confirmed the effectiveness of the methods. This study concludes with some important implications for EFL teachers, learners, and educational administrators to improve the quality of education.
Keywords: Explicit instruction; Guided discovery approach; Implicit instruction; SEEQ; Teaching effectiveness

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1. Introduction

The importance of teaching grammar cannot be neglected. It is an inseparable part of successful language learning, according to many researchers (Yufrizal, 2017). Takala (2016) defines learning a language as knowing its grammar. EFL learners who do not receive adequate instruction on grammatical principles are incapable of producing complete sentences in English or speaking the language proficiently (Zhang, 2009). Greenbaum and Nelson (2002) assume that grammar plays a pivotal role in the process of language acquisition and should be approached with careful consideration. Different methods or approaches to language education assign varying degrees of importance to teaching grammar within their curricula or classroom activities (Tran-Hoang, 2009). Grammar instruction has long been practiced in second or foreign-language classes; however, choosing the most appropriate teaching method is challenging for any English teacher (Sik, 2014). EFL practitioners discuss different ways of teaching grammar to students according to the learners' needs and resources (Schurz & Coumel, 2020).

Different assumptions about the nature of language representation and its promotion have led to different teaching methods (Kelly, 1969). According to Ellis (2006), grammar teaching should incorporate implicit and explicit approaches. The idea that perception and awareness of L2 rules essentially come before their use inspired explicit methods (Ellis, 2008). However, the emergence of humanistic methodologies in the 1970s, such as communicative language instruction, represented a shift back to more implicit grammatical styles. These approaches highlight authenticity and meaningful interaction in educational exercises and hold that communication should be the goal of instruction (Rodriguez, 2009), not an object of study.

As remarked by Hulstijn (2003), for implicit learning to take place in L2, a substantial amount of exposure to L2 content is required. It is a mainly subconscious and inadvertent data processing directed towards knowledge presented as "networks with layers of hidden units" (p. 193). On the contrary, explicit learning is assumed to be a consciously regulated procedure and thus more open to instruction compared with the process of implicit learning (Graaff & Housen, 2009). Perhaps a harmony between explicit exercises and those that permit exploring grammar use will be the most successful grammatical instructional approach (Moeller & Ketsman, 2010).

Accordingly, some educators opt for a balanced combination of implicit and explicit techniques. Those who believe implicit and explicit

instruction lie on a spectrum may benefit from the Guided Discovery Method (GDM). The GDM is a teaching method that combines implicit and explicit techniques to improve learning outcomes. Language exposure comes first on the GDM, then inference and explicit grammar rule practice. It is an effective and often overlooked option in grammar teaching discussions (Sulistiani & Agustini, 2022).

In spite of the importance of English grammar, Iranian EFL learners face several problems while learning it. The first problem is not knowing how to learn English; the second is not having enough chances to use it daily. Thus, learners must rely heavily on the classroom interactional opportunities offered by the teacher and their peers (Yaghobian et al., 2018). Lack of motivated teachers, whether language teachers or content teachers, is another problem while learning English grammar (Akbari, 2016). Therefore, an effective teacher is warranted in language teaching, specifically the grammatical instructional area. Effective teaching is no easy task; rather, it is an art that requires skill, creativity, and dedication (Dash & Barman, 2016). Teachers are essential for developing students' futures, and teaching effectiveness is the capability of teachers to teach in such a manner that they succeed in bringing out the desirable changes in students' behaviors (Florence et al., 2022). As Toor (2014) puts it, a teacher's effectiveness lies not only in the presentation of subject matter in an effective way but also in making the whole classroom environment conducive to learning to ensure the complete development of a child.

When it comes to achieving proficiency in a target language, having positive perceptions toward language learning is just as important as intellectual capacity (Seven, 2020). The primary objective of grammar instruction is to help students communicate effectively (Kumayas & Lengkoan, 2023). For this purpose, it is vital to provide students with meaningful contexts that offer appropriate support and engage them in different learning experiences (Stathis & Gotsch, 2013). The studies have shown that the old methods of grammar teaching that relied solely on explicit or implicit instructional strategies appeared insufficient (Pawlak, 2021). Therefore, an updated instructional approach that incorporates the positive aspects of past methods into modern technology-based learning environments is necessary. Hence, student feedback on teaching performance is an important factor that allows teachers to adjust their course content, improve their progress, and self-reflect (Erdemir & Yesilçınar, 2021). The effectiveness of any teaching method would be questioned if the students' attitudes were not considered (Khezrlou, 2019). Learners' attitudes towards the course, the instructor, and the material serve as mediating factors in relation to

learners' cognitive learning and performance. Therefore, considering the specific demands and challenges in the Iranian EFL setting, the current study analyzed the students' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of three computer-based grammatical instructional strategies. These methods, which mainly differ in degree of explicitness, were Traditional Explicit Instruction (TEI), Implicit Input Enhancement (IIE), and Guided Discovery Method (GDM). In other words, the study aimed to gain insight into the students' classroom experiences throughout the semester.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Attitude and perception

A favorable or negative evaluative response to an item, class, person, language, or event inferred from the individual's views or opinions is known as attitude (Gardner, 1985). A learner can develop various attitudes and perspectives about the learning environment, as noted by Atchade (2002). These attitudes and views may either facilitate or hinder when it comes to learning a new language (Getie, 2020).

In order to help students, avoid setting unreasonable goals and a subsequent feeling of failure, Brown (2009) suggests that educators should spend time exploring pupils' views of teaching and learning and describing the variations in their expectations. This does not imply that pedagogical practices should receive students' approval, but the teacher-student perception gap should be bridged (Wang et al., 2020). When students feel safe and supported in the classroom, they are likelier to develop a positive attitude toward the learning process and participate willingly (Yan et al., 2023). Furthermore, attitudes are crucial in guiding teachers' teaching practices, accepting new teaching techniques, and implementing diverse activities (Donaghue, 2003).

2.2. The students' evaluation of teaching effectiveness (SETE)

Emery et al. (2003) state that student ratings are highly influential in promotion and tenure decisions for institutions prioritizing teaching effectiveness. Students' evaluations of teaching (SET) are global metrics used in almost all academic systems (Zabaleta, 2007). The SETE embodies the principles of Marsh's (1987) Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ), which serves as the benchmark for evaluating educational quality (Marsh & Dunkin, 1992). The SEEQ project began by asking, what constitutes effective teaching? Marsh (2007) identified a set of independent elements that make up effective teaching. He first classified key factors of successful instruction and formulated specific inquiries regarding these attributes. The SEEQ

exhibits superiority over other SET instruments due to consistently high validation and reliability scores obtained from psychometric analyses (Coffey & Gibbs, 2001; Marsh & Roche, 1993; Marsh & Hocevar, 1991). Hence, the tool is trusted globally and renowned for its highly dependable evaluation of teaching effectiveness (Grammatikopoulos et al., 2015). SEEQ is appropriate for all academic disciplines due to its consideration of various facets of instruction and learning (Daumiller, 2023). It is an instrument founded on the notion that teaching effectiveness is a multifaceted issue and that SET scores must reflect this (Wang & Hsu, 2023). In addition, Marsh (1987) argued that SETE helps students develop the ability to analyze teaching effectively, turning them into astute observers of the teaching process.

For SETE purposes, questionnaires have gained a positive reputation as the best way of collecting students' feedback (Richardson, 2005). However, various other effective means of collecting students' opinions exist, like structured and semi-structured interviews, observing students in class, reviewing their work, conducting surveys, and analyzing student dropout rates (Slade & McConville, 2006). Marsh and Dunkin (1992) reviewed the content of SEEQ based on teaching and learning principles in post-secondary education, outlined by Feldman (1976) and Fincher (1985). They declared that SEEQ factors properly incorporated the principles discussed in the prior studies. Like other questionnaires in the SET, SEEQ assesses teaching across various dimensions. It encompasses ten dimensions, including the general assessment of the instructor's performance and the subject matter being taught (Matosas-Lopez & Cuevas-Molano, 2022). They are learning value- 4 items, teacher enthusiasm- 4 items, organization- 4 items, group interaction- 4 items, individual rapport- 4 items, breadth of coverage- 4 items, examination or grading- 3 items, assignments- 2 items, workload or difficulty- 4 items, and overall rating- 2 items (Al-Muslim & Arifin, 2015). Marsh (1987) believes that this rating is helpful for educators, instructors, and learners regarding potential benefits. Indeed, SEEQ has efficiently presented accurate and dependable SET scores within diverse environments, including various higher education institutions worldwide (Balam & Shannon, 2010; Coffey & Gibbs, 2001; Marsh et al., 1997; Watkins & Thomas, 1991).

2.3. Contributing factors to effective teaching

Postlethwaite (2007) identifies various factors that impact students' academic performance, including teacher-related, environment or family-related, and school-related variables. Teaching effectiveness is a

crucial teacher-related variable that greatly improves academic achievement (Munna & Kalam, 2021). According to Stringer and Irwing (1998), effective teaching is measured by the extent to which students' performance improves after instruction, in line with the objectives and pre-set goals. This improvement is reflected in their knowledge, motivation, adaptability, and stress management changes. Simon and Boyer (2010) categorized variables affecting teaching effectiveness and student achievement into four dimensions:

1. Teacher variables include educational qualifications, years of teaching experience, motivation, and dedication to teaching.
2. Student variables encompass desire for learning, previous knowledge, behavior upon entering a class, genetic predispositions, and abilities.
3. Environment or family variables are comprised of the sociocultural background of students, educational levels of parents or guardians or siblings, and interpersonal relationships within the family.
4. School variables consist of quality and quantity of teaching staff, teacher salaries and benefits, working conditions for teachers, and availability of resources such as instructional materials, well-equipped libraries, and laboratories.

Overall, it is widely acknowledged that the attitudes of learners and teachers significantly influence how they approach learning and teaching processes, which in turn affects their academic performance (Ramzan et al., 2023). Many researchers in the field of educational evaluation have expressed a similar view. For example, Hajdin and Pazur (2012) have argued that the main goal of evaluation, irrespective of the topic, is to identify the current value of the subject following the established standards or principles to improve its quality in the future. Teaching performance in higher education institutions worldwide is often measured using SETE instruments (Abdallah & Balla, 2020; Alizadeh, 2018; AlKuwaiti, 2015; Chan et al., 2014; Zabaleta, 2007; Zamanian & Saeidi, 2017; Zarei et al., 2020). In the Iranian EFL context, some studies have used teaching effectiveness questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of instructors' teaching and course delivery. However, these studies have mainly focused on exploring learners' perspectives about the prevalent challenges encountered in academic writing or speaking (Ahmadpour et al., 2022; Derakhshan & Shirejini, 2020; Grammatikopoulos, 2015; Omara, 2022; Safdari, 2019). To the best of the author's knowledge, there has been a lack of research investigating the use of the SEEQ to assess students' attitudes toward grammar teaching techniques in Iran.

Moreover, regarding the rapid advancement of technology and the emphasis on the importance of providing various resources for students' academic development, Iranian EFL students seem to be at a disadvantage. Unfortunately, they have limited access to these resources. In addition, the language laboratories that are accessible in the Iranian academic system are not often used for teaching grammar. The deficiency of facilities and resources appears to worsen when students' opinions towards instructional techniques are disregarded. To put it simply, the lack of materials and inadequate use of existing resources, such as language labs, at Iranian universities, together with the disregard for students' voices, were the main drawbacks that prompted us to conduct this research. To fill the gaps mentioned above, the current study aimed to gauge learners' views on the instructional efficiency of the grammar teaching approaches they went through. In order to accomplish the goal of this study, the following main research question was formulated:

What are the Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of different computer-based grammatical instructional methods (i.e., TEI, IIE, and GDM)?

3. Method
3.1. Design

The present study was an explanatory mixed-methods research, employing quantitative and qualitative investigations of learners' perceptions of the teaching effectiveness of three instructional techniques, namely TEI, IIE, and GDM.

3.2. Participants

The original number of participants in the quantitative phase of the study was 100 male and female university students majoring in English Language Translation and English Language Literature at Payam Nour University in Tabriz who were chosen based on the convenience sampling method. These students were homogenized through the proficiency test of the Preliminary English Test (PET), and 70 intermediate EFL learners whose scores fell between one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected, and the outliers were excluded from further analyses. The design of the study allowed for the participation of three groups, including IIE (N = 25; 11 males and 14 females; mean age = 27 years old), GDM (N = 22; 4 males and 18 females; mean age = 24 years old), and TEI (N = 23; 7 males and 16 females; mean age = 28 years old). They spoke either Persian or Azeri as

their native language. For the qualitative phase of the study, 15 participants (5 participants from each group) were randomly chosen to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The number of participants for the qualitative phase was determined based on the data saturation principle, which suggests that no new significant information or themes are likely to arise beyond a certain number of interviews.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Questionnaire of teaching effectiveness

Teaching effectiveness is commonly measured by well-designed questionnaires to evaluate teaching styles and improve course content, structure, and format (Simpson, 1995; Wright & O'Neil, 1992). The researchers of this study also examined teaching effectiveness through a questionnaire that elicits valuable information on teaching effectiveness and students' learning. The questionnaire was prepared based on the teacher's plans and goals for selecting the three teaching techniques. The experts' approval of the SEEQ questionnaire and the comprehensive nature of its measuring criteria also prompted researchers in this study to utilize it in Iran. Another crucial factor in selecting SEEQ as the research instrument for this study was its foundation on a sound theoretical framework (Jimaa, 2013). Although the questionnaire was adapted from Marsh's (1987) SEEQ, the researchers examined its items in terms of their appropriateness to the study context with an eye toward the computerized nature of the study. Thus, certain adjustments were made to the original SEEQ items in order to ensure that each item adhered to computer-based grammar teaching.

The initial version of the questionnaire comprised 35 items; however, after the items passed through preliminary pilot testing and subsequent revisions and by carrying out the reliability and validity estimations in the final version, 25 remained. The questionnaire did not include any reverse scoring, and the items were categorized into three sections: organization or institution-related (Statements 1-7), teacher-related (Statements 8-18), and learner-related factors (Statements 19-25). The researchers selected the relevant dimensions and made minor wording changes to the questionnaire to suit the study. Thus, the analysis did not include the 9th and 10th categories of SEEQ that were out of the context of this study.

Learners were instructed to indicate their level of agreement using a five-point Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Meanwhile, the questionnaire has been rigorously tested and confirmed to be valid by three highly experienced EFL teachers with a reliability

level of α = 0.93 as determined by Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire is presented in the appendix.

3.3.2. Semi-structured interview

We conducted a qualitative interview-based study to gain a deeper understanding of the various perspectives, consolidate the findings, and make the data collection more systematic (Lynch, 1996). This method was chosen because it allowed us to explore the diversity and heterogeneity within the topic of teaching effectiveness, which was not fully covered by the questionnaire. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that qualitative interviews are particularly useful for gaining insight into the meaning that respondents attribute to their experiences.

3.4. Procedure

The study treatments were implemented using a computerized grammar training program that was cooperatively developed by researchers and software programmers to instruct passive voice. The program's material has been rigorously examined and approved by a team of specialists in TEFL and curriculum design. Since the theoretical backgrounds of the three study groups differed, the program varied for the TEI, IIE, and GDM groups. It is worth mentioning that the TEI, in this study, incorporates the principles of the presentation, practice, and production (PPP) approach. The three-stage PPP model was devised throughout the period of the shift between communicative language teaching (CLT) and situational language teaching (SLT) in England (Harmer, 2007). It is a widely used language teaching methodology in harmony with CLT's 'weak version' (Rixon & Smith, 2012). It emphasizes practical language skills and meaningful communication (Anderson, 2016). The IIE method accords with the input enhancement approach to language teaching. According to Shimanskaya (2018), language input is crucial for developing language proficiency. As Smith (1993) notes, input enhancement techniques like typographical manipulations improve understanding of input by drawing attention to specific features. Correspondingly, the GDM aligns with guided discovery learning, an educational methodology combining constructivist and cognitive pedagogy concepts with a discovery learning approach (Sulistiani & Agustini, 2022). This approach is based on the belief that students must construct their own knowledge and understanding (De Jong, 2021).

The process of collecting data for this study involved introducing the methods and procedures required for performing the activities in the

computerized system. The instructor collected data during 12 treatment sessions for passive voice training across three tense levels as part of the weekly teaching syllabus. Each instruction session was held in the computer lab, equipped with multiple computers, and each group underwent separate treatment sessions.

Firstly, the PPP model of teaching grammar was used to implement TEI. The process consisted of a three-step computerized program. The first step focused on the presentation of all the rules of a specific passive voice in detail. Following that, learners practiced various drills and exercises such as gap fill, substitution, sentence transformations, reordering sentences, and matching sentences to pictures. In the production stage, learners could communicate their ideas while discussing a topic.

Secondly, grammar was taught implicitly in the IIE group using input enhancement methods. Exercises in this technique were particularly created to emphasize target grammatical aspects by boldfacing, underlining, and using a slightly larger font. The instructor did not explain the grammatical rules explicitly.

Finally, GDM's innovative approach to instruction, which sets it apart from traditional methods, was applied using the procedures outlined below. Rather than starting with rule explanations, the unique approach engaged learners in interactive ways. Students were first presented with examples as separate sentences or within a text. They were then guided to actively explore the application of the rules and forms through a series of steps. These included tasks, language awareness activities, visual aids, and key questions from the teacher (Bjornsdottir, 2016).

Upon completing the treatment, participants in each group received the teaching effectiveness questionnaire and were instructed on how to complete it. The questionnaire was designed to examine their perceptions of the efficacy of the teaching methods they underwent. They were asked only to choose the open option if they could not decide between the other options. The questionnaire completion lasted 15 minutes, and learners were not interrupted during its administration.

In the next phase, 15 of the consented participants were randomly selected to join the semi-structured interviews aimed at eliciting their ideas about the teaching methods. The main researcher gathered qualitative data by conducting a semi-structured interview in a quiet classroom setting. This interview involved specific open-ended and follow-up questions that demanded participants to express their views on the effectiveness of the teaching methods they underwent. Learners' responses to interview questions were recorded using a digital voice

recorder with their permission. This was done to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data collected. The inter-rater reliability of the interviews conducted by the researcher and a second trained rater was calculated using Cohen's kappa coefficient, which was applied to 20% of the available data. The obtained value (κ = .89) verified a nearly perfect agreement among the raters as it was between 0.81-0.99 (Viera & Garrett, 2005). We utilized Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) recommended content analysis method to analyze the interview results. As noted by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), content analysis is the most commonly used qualitative data analysis method. They have outlined six steps an analyst must go through to establish meaningful patterns. After analyzing the data, initial codes were developed and grouped into themes. These themes were then reviewed, defined, labeled, and reported. The six procedures mentioned above were used to report on the main findings of the interviews.

The interview was conducted to triangulate the data to obtain a deeper understanding of their teaching method preferences. The participants were notified that the interview would be done only for study purposes and assured that their responses would remain confidential. The interview questions were derived from the questionnaire's three categories and the relevant items, with follow-up questions included flexibly based on responses. Participants were asked to expand on their responses if they answered briefly. Consequently, the questions were designed to prompt the participants to provide explanations by asking how or why. This approach allowed them to elaborate on their thoughts and provided opportunities to include any additional information they deemed relevant to the questions. The questionnaire and interview went hand in hand to gauge the participants' perceptions toward the innovative grammar teaching methods implemented during treatment sessions. Interviews lasted 10-15 minutes, were recorded digitally, transcribed precisely, and reviewed for accuracy by each contributor.

3.5. Data analysis

To answer the research question, descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected. As the data in the present study were categorical, frequencies and mean scores were used as descriptive statistics. Initially, the frequencies of the participants' replies to each item on the questionnaire were calculated, along with the corresponding mean scores. Subsequently, the overall mean score for the whole questionnaire was assessed. Finally, a one-sample t-test was performed to determine whether participants' perceptions reached statistical

significance. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 26. For the qualitative analysis of the study, the responses provided by the participants during the interviews were coded using interpretive content analysis. Two coders meticulously analyzed transcribed interviews and came to a consensus on the recurrent themes through a comparison of their analyses. They conducted a comprehensive analysis of the interviewees' responses to each question to discern the underlying themes and patterns that emerged repeatedly. Based on whether they conveyed positivity, negativity, or mixed feelings, attitudes were coded, and a few are presented below.

4. Results and discussion
4.1. The participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the three teaching techniques

The study results are based on participants' perceptions gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews regarding the teaching effectiveness of the three instructional techniques. Indeed, the interviews and questionnaires both yielded similar results. The participants of each group in this study evaluated the effectiveness of the teaching technique they were involved in.

Table 1. *Descriptive Results of the Questionnaire in TEI Group*

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Ambivalent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	10	8	2	2	1	4.04
2	8	9	3	2	1	3.78
3	11	6	3	1	2	4.00
4	9	8	3	2	1	3.96
5	14	7	1	1	0	4.48
6	8	9	3	2	1	3.91
7	7	10	2	1	3	3.74
8	8	8	4	2	1	3.87
9	7	10	1	2	3	3.70
10	8	8	5	1	1	3.91
11	6	10	3	2	2	3.70
12	7	8	3	3	2	3.65
13	10	5	5	3	0	3.96
14	9	10	0	2	2	3.96
15	11	10	1	1	0	4.35
16	6	12	2	1	2	3.83
17	8	10	1	1	3	3.83
18	7	6	7	2	1	3.70
19	8	9	4	0	2	3.91
20	11	8	2	2	0	4.22

21	8	9	4	1	1	3.96
21	8	9	4	1	1	3.96
22	10	10	1	1	1	4.17
23	8	9	5	0	1	4.00
24	7	6	7	2	1	3.70
25	9	6	5	2	1	3.87

The results were consistent across the three instructional groups, corroborating all surveyed students' positive attitudes toward the teaching methods they separately experienced. The tables below display the frequencies of responses by study participants in TEI, IIE, and GDM, respectively.

It can be inferred from Table 1 that the highest mean scores in the TEI group belong to items 5 (M=4.48), 15 (M=4.35), 20 (M=4.22), 22 (M=4.17), and 1 (M=4.04). This means that the learners in this group particularly agreed that working with computers was more exciting than with books, feedback was timely and valuable, joining the class discussions was motivating, a positive relationship between the instructor and students was formed, and the grammar teaching software was useful.

Table 2. *Descriptive Results of the Questionnaire in IIE Group*

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Ambivalent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	8	8	5	2	2	3.72
2	15	6	4	0	0	4.44
3	11	6	3	1	2	3.68
4	8	9	3	3	2	3.72
5	9	8	2	5	1	3.76
6	8	9	4	3	1	3.80
7	8	11	2	1	3	3.80
8	8	9	5	2	1	3.84
9	14	7	2	1	1	4.28
10	7	9	5	2	1	3.64
11	6	10	3	2	4	3.48
12	7	8	3	5	2	3.52
13	10	6	5	4	0	3.88
14	14	6	3	1	1	4.24
15	8	10	4	1	2	3.84
16	7	13	2	1	2	3.88
17	8	11	2	1	3	3.80
18	8	7	7	2	1	3.76
19	8	9	5	1	2	3.80
20	7	8	4	3	3	3.52
21	7	9	4	4	1	3.68
22	7	9	4	2	3	3.60

23	13	6	4	1	1	4.16
24	12	6	3	2	2	3.96
25	10	6	5	2	2	3.80

Similarly, the result of the data analysis in Table 2 indicates that the participants of the IIE group were principally in favor of items 2 (M=4.44), 9 (M=4.28), 14 (M=4.24), 23(M=4.16), and 24 (M=3.96) which respectively state that studying grammar and computers occurred simultaneously, the instructor was well-prepared and was able to solve the issues, the teacher helped students and checked on their progress, students have developed new beliefs and changed their negative attitudes towards grammar learning, and the objectives of the course was successfully achieved.

Finally, according to Table 3, items 1 (M=4.45), 2 (M=4.36), 24 (M=4.32), 19 (M=4.23), and 9 (M= 4.14) received the maximum support from the students in the GDM group. This indicates that the learners in this specific group had given their strong approval that the grammar teaching software was useful, studying grammar and computers occurred simultaneously, the learning goals were achieved, students were encouraged to work in groups, and the instructor was well-prepared and was able to solve the issues.

Table 3. *Descriptive Results of the Questionnaire in GDM Group*

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Ambivalent	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	14	5	2	1	0	4.45
2	13	5	3	1	0	4.36
3	10	6	3	1	2	3.95
4	9	7	3	2	1	3.95
5	8	7	4	1	2	3.82
6	8	9	3	1	1	4.00
7	7	10	2	1	2	3.86
8	8	8	4	2	0	4.00
9	11	7	1	2	1	4.14
10	8	8	4	1	1	3.95
11	6	9	3	2	2	3.68
12	6	8	3	3	2	3.59
13	9	5	5	3	0	3.91
14	9	9	0	2	2	3.95
15	8	10	2	2	0	4.09
16	6	12	2	0	2	3.91
17	8	10	1	1	2	3.95
18	7	6	7	2	0	3.82
19	11	6	4	1	0	4.23
20	7	9	3	2	1	3.86

21	7	9	4	1	1	3.91
22	8	10	1	1	2	3.95
23	8	8	5	0	1	4.00
24	12	6	3	1	0	4.32
25	9	6	5	1	1	3.95

The results of the questionnaire analysis in Table 4 indicate that both the mean scores of each questionnaire item and the overall mean score of the whole questionnaire in all study groups were greater than the average value of the choices (that is, 3.92 > 3.00, 3.82 > 3.00, 3.98 > 3.00).

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics for the TEI, IIE, and GDM Groups' Perceptions*

	N	Mean	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
TEI	25	3.9270	1.032	.464	1.081	.902
IIE	25	3.8240	1.068	.464	1.021	.902
GDM	25	3.9855	.653	.464	.915	.902
Valid N (listwise)	25					

This demonstrates that, on the whole, the participants in each group agreed with all the questionnaire items and had a positive attitude toward the teaching approach they received.

To see whether their positive attitudes reached statistical significance or not, one- sample t-test was used. According to Table 4, the skewness and kurtosis coefficient values for all three study groups fall within the range of -2 and 2. This indicates that the required assumption of normal data distribution was already established before performing the one-sample t-test.

Table 5. *One-Sample t-Test Results for Students' Perceptions of Teaching Effectiveness*

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	(2-Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
TEI	22.402	24	.000	.92696	.8416	1.0124
IIE	17.307	24	.000	.82400	.7257	.9223
GDM	25.105	24	.000	.98545	.9044	1.0665

As Table 5 demonstrates, the p-value for all three study groups is less than .05, that is, (.00 < 0.05). This indicates that the learners held significantly positive attitudes toward the treatment they received.

4.2. Qualitative results

This section presents the interview analysis findings, which further substantiate the generally favorable perspectives about the efficacy of the instructional approaches. Based on the content analysis of the interviews, four main recurrent themes emerged in the participants' responses. These themes along with their percentages are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Four Recurrent Themes Emerging from Students' Responses*

Themes	Percentages
Positive attitudes toward institutional factors	90%
Desirable environmental factors	85%
Reasonable extent of trust in the teacher	95%
More cooperation with classmates	80%

As the outcome of the questionnaire data and the interviews for the three groups of participants supported each other, the following discussions based on recurring themes in their answers can be made:

Theme 1. Positive attitudes toward institutional factors

It was predicted that Iranian EFL students, who were used to the traditional chalk-and-board teaching technique, would not get significant benefits from computerized activities. Contrary to this belief, the findings of the present research did not provide support, and the majority of learners preferred the different computerized approaches. According to Table 6, 90% of the participants from all study groups (13 out of 15 total participants) stated in their interviews that the educational outcome of the course had been achieved. To clarify, the results of the interview indicated that the majority of students had a favorable opinion of computer-based grammar instruction. For example, one respondent expressed,

Excerpt 1: "*Without a doubt, the course's learning objectives have been accomplished. The course content was well-structured and meticulously designed to equip the learners with the necessary knowledge and skills*".

Another student asserted that,

Excerpt 2: "*I just had the most amazing experience learning grammar in the computer lab. It was really fascinating and gave me so many learning opportunities*".

Based on the responses, it can be inferred that most of the students (from all three groups) were satisfied with the organizational elements provided to assist them in learning the language. This accords with previous research (Ayaz & Sekerci, 2015; Schroeder et al., 2007; Sugano & Nabua, 2020; Umer & Siddiqui, 2013) that has supported the significant contribution of effective teaching strategies to academic success. Only 10% of respondents had a negative attitude toward using computers in grammar classes. For example, one explained,

Excerpt 3: "*Unfortunately, I lack computer knowledge, which has made using computer programs challenging for me. I always struggle with computer-related tasks due to my lack of expertise in this area*".

It seems that these participants' limited knowledge of working with computer software caused them difficulty understanding different stages of the teaching program. This might be the main reason behind their negative view toward using computers for teaching grammar. The claim is consistent with the research conducted by Lee (2000), Dashtestani (2014), and Habbash (2020).

Theme 2. Desirable environmental factors

As Table 6 represents, this theme was raised by most participants and was found in 85% of their responses. Put another way, the students also highlighted the essential role of the new context in assisting them to master grammar in the computer-based classroom environment, more specifically in presenting the material, demonstrating the strategies, and giving necessary feedback and support. For instance, one of the participants in the GDM group emphasized,

Excerpt 4: "*The computer program was very fruitful and exciting since, these days, most works are conducted in the digital world, having the experience of grammar learning through computer programs was interesting for me*".

Another respondent from the TEI group stressed,
Excerpt 5: "*I just had the most amazing experience learning grammar in the computer lab. It was really fascinating and gave me so*

many learning opportunities".

Also, another student from the IIE group stated,
Excerpt 6: "*In my opinion, working with computers is more thrilling and engaging than working with books. I found the technological advancements and the vast possibilities of working on a computer much more exciting than the traditional medium of books*".

As is evident in the interview results, many participants found the grammar teaching software appealing and preferred it over practicing grammar through books. This finding supports the conclusion that has already been reached in earlier studies (Davidson et al., 2003; Jha et al., 2007). It is assumed that the participants in the three groups found environmental factors very effective in grammar learning using various computerized treatments. This finding aligns with (Tang et al., 2007; Shoja, 2011). However, it contrasts with prior research that has identified foreign language anxiety as an impeding factor that technology use brings about in educational settings (Selami, 2018; Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2010). It appeared that the implementation of a curriculum tailored to the participants' interests led to their satisfaction and pleasure in the course. This, in turn, might create a meaningful and favorable environment inside the classroom. Learners' attitudes towards instructors, instructional materials, classroom settings, and teaching techniques have a mediating role in their learning and performance (Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016).

Theme 3: Reasonable extent of trust in the teacher
Another outstanding theme in the available data is that the teacher's role was considered as critical as it was supposed to be. Almost all students (95%) believed that feedback from the teacher was necessary in many aspects of grammar instruction, especially when they encountered challenges. The following examples show how participants have addressed this theme. For example, one student said,

Excerpt 7: "*The lecturer was quite knowledgeable, and the simple language that she used made it easier for me to understand the material*".

Also, according to the findings, the teacher-student interaction was appealing to the learners. For example, one stated,
Excerpt 8: "*The instructor's friendly approach towards each student*

fostered a positive and engaging learning environment, where students felt comfortable to ask questions and participate in class".

Most individuals also highlighted the importance of receiving timely feedback when encountering issues. As one student said,

Excerpt 9: "*The teacher's warm welcome resonated with students seeking guidance or support. She checked their progress whenever appropriate and ensured they received the necessary attention and guidance to excel in their studies*".

It appears that teacher-student interaction has a substantial effect on student learning. According to Archer and Hughes (2011), the absence of feedback might pose difficulties for students throughout the learning process. More precisely, in computer-based classrooms such as the one in this study environment, feedback must be provided immediately. Moreover, in response to the students' requests for feedback and clarification during lectures, the teacher might effectively assist them using educational visual aids, such as a concise video presentation. Regarding this aspect, the responsibility of instructors in computer-based training is seen as extraordinary in terms of delivering information and providing essential assistance and feedback. As Noland (2005) also believes, intellectual stimulation and customized attention have a substantial impact on learning. This verifies the importance of a teacher's influence in technologically driven settings (Park & Son, 2022). According to Rahimi and Pourshahbaz (2019), EFL teachers' expertise in successful computer-assisted language learning (CALL) cannot be underestimated. As Soori et al. (2011) argued, teacher help during treatment sessions can yield better results even in CALL-based environments. The finding approves the role of teachers in aiding their students to participate in language learning activities through individualized attention effectively, and the previous research supports it (Noland & Richards, 2014; Pounder, 2003; Safari, 2017; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Soozandehfar & Sahragard, 2017; Zarbafian, 2014; Zou et al., 2020).

Theme 4: More cooperation with classmates
The TEI, IIE, and GDM group participants also expressed positive feelings toward the learner dimension of the teaching techniques. About 80% of them desired to share their knowledge and opinions with others, and they were encouraged to engage in class discussions. For instance, one in the TEI group said,

Excerpt 10: "*I was excited to be a part of the class discussions as it provided me with an opportunity to learn from my peers and share my perspectives*".

Likewise, another student from GDM added,
Excerpt 11: "*Our group work was a success. I learned from others' mistakes and received objective feedback from the teacher and peers, which helped me identify and resolve issues*".

Additionally, most participants had positive attitudes toward the communicative dimension of the teaching program. For instance, a student in the IIE group stated,
Excerpt 12: "*I have had ample opportunities to share my ideas with people from diverse backgrounds. It has been a great experience to collaborate with individuals who bring fresh perspectives to the table*".

Alternatively, one in GDM believed that
Excerpt 13: "*Through active engagement, I hoped to contribute to the class discussions and gain valuable insights that helped me improve my academic pursuits*".

These responses show that participants were interested in working in groups, which was one of the main objectives of the three computerized techniques. This finding accords with Gruba's (2004) view that interactive computer programs offer a range of activities designed to enhance language skills and facilitate communicative interaction for learners. According to Sadeghi et al (2017), friendly interaction between students may avoid anxiety in implementing a new teaching approach. Indeed, interpersonal interactions can provide students with a range of strategies, applications, and benefits (Zimmerman, 1990). These can increase self-efficacy, motivation, and autonomy toward achieving task objectives. Hence, it can be asserted that class discussions can help teachers expand students' strategy knowledge and application (Duke & Pearson, 2008).

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to discover Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of the three computer-assisted grammar teaching methods (TEI, IIE, GDM). The outcomes of the questionnaire data and the interviews supported each other and revealed that a substantial

proportion of participants believed in the essential role of computerized programs in enhancing their grammatical learning. The overall results of the study indicated that the learners generally expressed positive opinions about teaching methods and were willing to learn grammar through computerized programs. As mentioned before, learners are more inclined to acquire information when they are motivated and actively engage in classroom activities. This suggests that customizing instruction according to the learners' interests can lead to increased satisfaction and improved grammar learning. Hence, it may be advised that the conventional approach to grammar instruction (teacher-centered) used in Iranian institutions could be substituted with innovative methodologies.

The findings of the current study promise several implications. Firstly, combining technology and new educational methods should be further emphasized in teaching grammar. Moreover, due to the importance of perceptions of students, teachers are advised to be concerned with the affective aspects of learning, cater to the learners' needs, and give them a voice in the class. This would help them observe growth in learners' learning, which ultimately leads to better knowledge retention. It also allows us to address the importance of learners' voices in terms of their needs, expectations, and rights. Concerns made in this respect may be addressed within the context of their needs analysis. Based on their perceptions, it would be possible to infer which teaching methods or aspects of the learning environment are more welcomed by the students to be taken into account for future planning. The results may also assist educators in enhancing the curriculum and teaching methods to optimize the efficacy of teaching grammar. These indicate that in order to facilitate successful instruction and learning, it is essential for all parties involved, including the administration, students, and instructors, to actively and consistently participate in an open and continuous discussion to create optimal teaching and learning environments.

Although this study has limitations, such as relying on self-reported questionnaires, the small sample size, individual differences, and the students' proficiency levels, it may pave the way for new lines of inquiry and more investigation. Additional research tools, such as narrative inquiry, and focus group interviews, with other groups such as EFL teachers, can be employed to validate the results.

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APPENDIX:
Student Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) Questionnaire

Direction: Please carefully read each question. Make sure you understand what the question is asking. Use this scale and check the option that best matches your opinion: 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither disagree nor agree 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Factors	Items	1	2	3	4	5
Organization/ Institution related	The grammar teaching software was useful.					
	I studied both grammar and computer simultaneously.					
	There were plenty of learning opportunities, and the facilities provided were sufficient.					
	The laboratory work/assignments helped me achieve the course's educational outcomes.					
	Working with computers was more exciting than working with books.					
	The curriculum was well structured.					
	The course content was challenging and stimulating.					
Teacher related	At the onset, course objectives were clearly stated and pursued.					
	The instructor was well-prepared and was able to solve my issues.					
	The information was efficiently delivered.					
	The teacher spoke audibly and used simple language.					
	The instructor began and finished the lessons on schedule.					
	The teacher motivated the students to think critically and be autonomous.					
	The teacher welcomed students seeking help or advice and whenever appropriate, she checked the points with them.					
	Feedback was timely and valuable.					

	The teacher took an interest in the students' classroom success.					
	The instructor was friendly towards the individual students.					
	The teacher presented assignments, quizzes, and homework engagingly, fostering comprehension and enjoyment of the subject matter.					
Learner related	Students were encouraged to work in groups.					
	I have been motivated to join the class discussions.					
	I had enough opportunity to share my ideas with others.					
	I had a positive relationship with both my instructor and classmates.					
	I have developed new beliefs and changed my negative attitudes towards grammar learning.					
	I assume that the course's learning goals have been achieved.					
	I was inspired to think autonomously, critically and analytically.					