
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Pedagogical Model for Developing Syntactic Awareness in EFL Contexts through Explicit Instruction

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| ABSTRACT

This paper aims to propose a theory-driven pedagogical model for enhancing syntactic awareness among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners through explicit instruction. Although grammar is a core component of EFL curricula, learners often fail to transfer grammatical knowledge to accurate written production. The study seeks to address this gap by synthesizing relevant theories and empirical research into a coherent instructional framework. A conceptual and analytical approach was adopted to develop the Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM). The model integrates principles from the Noticing Hypothesis, Skill Acquisition Theory, and Metalinguistic Awareness Theory. Current literature on grammar pedagogy, explicit instruction, and syntactic development was systematically reviewed to formulate a three-phase instructional sequence: noticing, guided analysis, and reflective application. The synthesis of theoretical and pedagogical evidence indicates that explicit syntactic instruction—supported by consciousness-raising tasks, structured manipulation activities and reflective writing practices—can substantially enhance learners' syntactic awareness and promote more accurate language production. The ESADM model provides a comprehensive framework showing how metalinguistic reflection and procedural practice can be effectively combined to support syntactic development in contexts with limited authentic input. The proposed model offers practical guidance for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and language programs seeking to improve grammar instruction and writing proficiency. It supports the integration of explicit, reflective, and application-oriented approaches in grammar pedagogy. The paper recommends future empirical research to validate the model across diverse EFL contexts and to examine its impact on learners' writing, reading, and oral performance.

| KEYWORDS

Syntactic awareness, explicit instruction, grammar pedagogy, EFL teaching, metalinguistic awareness, instructional model

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Syntactic awareness has emerged as a central component of second language proficiency, particularly in instructional contexts where learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. It reflects learners' ability to recognize, analyze, and manipulate grammatical structures and to understand how these structures shape meaning in communication (Roehr-Brackin, 2018). As language tasks become more complex—especially in academic reading and writing—learners who lack syntactic control often struggle with coherence, accuracy, and comprehension. These challenges are well documented in EFL settings, where restricted naturalistic input heightens the need for explicit instructional support (Al-Hamzi, 2021; Alzahrani & Alshehri, 2022).

Over the past three decades, research in second language acquisition (SLA) has consistently emphasized the importance of drawing learners' attention to linguistic form. According to Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, learners must consciously register grammatical features in input before these forms can be integrated into their developing interlanguage system. More recent studies reaffirm that attention to form plays a decisive role in successful grammar learning, particularly when noticing is supported through instructional techniques such as input enhancement, consciousness-raising activities, and guided practice (Sato & Loewen, 2022; Rassaei, 2022; Takimoto, 2021).

At the same time, insights from Skill Acquisition Theory help explain how learners move from initial, declarative understanding of rules toward proceduralized, automatic language use. Through repeated, scaffolded practice, learners internalize grammatical structures and become capable of using them fluently and accurately in communication (DeKeyser, 2015; Michaud & Ammar, 2023). Complementing this perspective, research on metalinguistic awareness highlights the value of reflective engagement with language forms, showing that learners who can articulate and evaluate their syntactic choices develop stronger control in both comprehension and production (Myhill, 2018; Fotovatnia, 2020).

Despite the growing body of research supporting explicit grammar instruction, many EFL learners continue to experience persistent syntactic difficulties, especially in writing. Studies have frequently reported recurring problems with complex sentence structures, clause relations, and structural accuracy (Zhang & Koda, 2018; Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024). These issues underscore the need for instructional models that not only introduce grammatical forms but also integrate analysis, practice, and reflective application in a structured and coherent manner.

In response to these needs, this paper proposes the Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM)—a three-phase instructional framework designed to strengthen syntactic awareness through explicit noticing, guided analytical practice, and reflective application in writing. Unlike traditional grammar approaches that emphasize rule memorization or isolated exercises, ESADM draws on contemporary SLA theory to provide a developmentally sequenced pathway for supporting syntactic growth. The model integrates well-established pedagogical strategies such as input enhancement, sentence combining, metalinguistic feedback, and reflective writing, offering a theoretically grounded and classroom-ready approach to enhancing syntactic competence.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it offers an integrated framework for understanding how syntactic awareness develops through staged cognitive engagement. Practically, it provides EFL instructors with a structured model that operationalizes grammar instruction through input enhancement, sentence manipulation, metalinguistic feedback, and reflective writing.

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are:

- (1) to develop a theoretically grounded instructional model (ESADM) based on SLA principles;
- (2) to integrate explicit noticing, guided analysis, and reflective application into a coherent pedagogical sequence;
- (3) to propose instructional strategies that enhance learners' syntactic awareness and writing accuracy; and
- (4) to bridge the gap between SLA theory and classroom-based grammar instruction.

In line with these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- (1) How can an instructional model for syntactic awareness be theoretically constructed based on SLA principles?
- (2) How can noticing, guided practice, and reflective application be systematically integrated within the ESADM framework?
- (3) In what ways can the proposed model enhance EFL learners' syntactic awareness and writing performance?
- (4) How does the ESADM model align with established SLA theories such as the Noticing Hypothesis and Skill Acquisition Theory?

2. Literature Review

Syntactic awareness has received increasing scholarly attention as a core component of second language proficiency. It refers to the learner's capacity to consciously recognize grammatical structures, evaluate how they function, and manipulate them in meaningful contexts (Roehr-Brackin, 2018). In EFL settings—where natural exposure to English is often restricted—learners rely heavily on instruction to develop these skills, making syntactic awareness and critical instructional target (Alderson et al., 2015; Al-Hamzi, 2021). The following review synthesizes key theoretical foundations and pedagogical insights that inform the development of the Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM).

2.1 Conceptualizing Syntactic Awareness

Syntactic awareness is commonly viewed as a metalinguistic skill that allows learners to analyze sentence structures and understand how these structures shape meaning (Gombert, 1992). It contributes to learners' ability to interpret complex input and produce coherent, grammatically accurate language. Previous research has shown strong links between syntactic awareness and broader linguistic outcomes, including reading comprehension and writing proficiency (Zhang & Koda, 2018; Zhang et al., 2023). As academic demands increase, the need for learners to process structurally dense texts becomes more pronounced, reinforcing the importance of explicit syntactic instruction.

2.2 Syntactic Awareness in EFL Contexts

Learners in EFL environments typically encounter limited opportunities for authentic interaction, which restricts their exposure to varied syntactic patterns (Al-Shurfa, 2022). As a result, many learners depend on teacher-led input to acquire and practice grammatical structures. Studies from Middle Eastern and Asian contexts consistently report recurrent problems with sentence structure, clause relations, and grammatical accuracy, even after years of English study (Alzahrani & Alshehri, 2022; Fotovatnia, 2020). These findings highlight the need for structured instructional approaches that compensate for limited exposure by building syntactic knowledge through explicit and carefully sequenced activities.

2.3 Noticing and Attention to Form

A considerable body of SLA research emphasizes the role of attention in grammatical development. Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis posits that conscious awareness of linguistic forms is a prerequisite for learning. Instructional techniques that direct learners' attention—such as input enhancement, underlining, bolding, or color-coding—have been shown to increase learners' sensitivity to grammatical features (Rassaei, 2022). Studies by Sato and Loewen (2022) and Takimoto (2021) also demonstrate that tasks designed to raise awareness of form lead to improved accuracy, confirming the value of planned noticing activities in syntactic development.

2.4 Skill Acquisition and the Role of Practice

While noticing is essential for the initial stages of learning, learners must engage in repeated, scaffolded practice to develop fluent and accurate grammatical performance. Skill Acquisition Theory explains this developmental trajectory as a transition from declarative knowledge—knowing rules—to procedural knowledge—using rules automatically in communication (DeKeyser, 2015). Research supports the effectiveness of structured practice tasks, including sentence manipulation, transformation exercises, and controlled drills (Michaud & Ammar, 2023; Mahmood & Aziz, 2023). These tasks help learners internalize grammatical structures, especially when feedback and gradual complexity are incorporated.

2.5 Metalinguistic Awareness and Reflective Learning

Another important dimension of syntactic development is learners' ability to reflect on their language use. Metalinguistic awareness enables learners to articulate, evaluate, and justify their syntactic decisions. Studies indicate that when learners engage in reflection—through self-editing, peer review, or guided metalinguistic commentary—they deepen their understanding of grammatical relationships and improve their writing performance (Myhill, 2018; Fotovatnia, 2020). This reflective capacity is particularly important in academic writing, where syntactic choices influence coherence, organization, and clarity.

2.6 Writing Development and Syntactic Competence

Syntactic awareness has been repeatedly identified as a predictor of writing quality. Learners who understand how sentences connect and how clauses function tend to produce more cohesive and structurally varied texts (Zhang et al., 2023). Research shows that targeted instruction focusing on complex structures—such as subordination, coordination, and relative clauses—leads to measurable improvements in writing accuracy and complexity (Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024). Additional work by Pereira Loor and Guevara Peñaranda (2025) demonstrates that syntactic awareness contributes significantly to academic writing performance, supporting the integration of syntax instruction into writing courses.

2.7 Instructional Approaches to Developing Syntactic Awareness

Several instructional techniques have been shown to enhance syntactic awareness. Consciousness-raising tasks encourage learners to analyze grammar inductively, while sentence-combining activities require learners to manipulate clauses and restructure ideas, promoting deeper syntactic processing (Jaya et al., 2025). Form-focused instruction, especially when combined with meaningful communication, has been found to yield long-term gains in grammatical accuracy (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010). Recent meta-analytic research further confirms the strong effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction for promoting structural accuracy and complex sentence production (Li, 2024; Kim & Ro, 2023).

2.8 Previous Studies

2.8.1 Syntactic Awareness and EFL Learning

Several studies have highlighted the crucial role of syntactic awareness in second and foreign language acquisition. Syntactic awareness refers to learners' ability to recognize and manipulate the grammatical structures of a language, which supports reading comprehension, writing accuracy, and overall linguistic proficiency. For instance, Grabe (2003) found that syntactic competence significantly predicted reading comprehension among L2 learners, indicating that awareness of sentence structure facilitates integration of textual information. Similarly, Zhang & Koda (2011) demonstrated that explicit instruction in syntax yields measurable gains in learners' ability to parse complex sentences and improve comprehension accuracy.

In the context of EFL, Huang (2014) reported that students receiving structured syntax instruction outperformed control groups in tasks requiring sentence transformation, suggesting that syntactic awareness can be systematically developed through targeted teaching. In addition, Ellis (2006) emphasized the importance of form-focused instruction in grammar learning, arguing that raising learners' consciousness of linguistic form enhances acquisition without detracting from communicative goals.

2.8.2 Explicit Instruction of Grammar and Syntax

A significant body of research supports explicit instruction as an effective approach for teaching grammar and syntactic knowledge in EFL classrooms. Fotos & Ellis (1991) reported that explicit instruction combined with corrective feedback facilitated greater gains in grammar use compared to purely inductive approaches. Their study on English tense and aspect showed that learners who were provided with rule explanations and practice opportunities produced more accurate and fluent output.

Similarly, Norris & Ortega (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of grammar instruction studies and found that explicit grammar teaching produced larger effect sizes compared to implicit instruction, especially when instruction included metalinguistic explanations and structured practice. This reinforces the premise that overt syntactic instruction can accelerate learners' awareness and application of grammatical rules.

More recently, Farrokhi & Sattarpour (2012) investigated the impact of explicit grammar instruction on Iranian EFL learners' writing accuracy. The results revealed that students who received explicit syntactic explanation improved significantly in reducing grammatical errors in their written texts compared to peers in a control group.

2.8.3 Pedagogical Models for Developing Syntactic Awareness

Efforts to design pedagogical models that integrate syntactic awareness into EFL instruction have also been documented. Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1996) proposed a model integrating form-focused tasks within communicative activities, where learners

examine and reconstruct sentence structures as part of meaning-focused tasks. Their approach revealed that learners became more attentive to syntax when embedded within meaningful language use.

In another study, Sheen (2007) implemented a task-based framework that incorporated sequence drills and form-focused episodes tailored to syntactic target structures. Results indicated positive effects on both controlled and free production tasks, suggesting that careful sequencing and integration of explicit instruction can enhance syntactic development.

Additionally, Li (2010) developed a systematic pedagogical sequence for increasing syntactic awareness in Chinese EFL learners, involving explicit rule explanation, guided practice, and reflective self-analysis. This model demonstrated statistically significant improvements in learner performance on syntactic judgment tests and writing accuracy.

2.8.4 Longitudinal and Intervention Research

Longitudinal investigations also contribute to understanding how syntactic awareness develops over time with instruction. For example, Braine (2010) tracked intermediate EFL learners over an academic year, finding that those exposed to regular explicit syntactic instruction showed more consistent gains in sentence combining and error correction tasks than those with traditional grammar instruction.

Intervention studies such as Carlson, S., & Vaughan, K. (2017) examined the effects of explicit syntactic intervention on lower-proficiency learners. The study reported enhanced performance in parsing tasks and reduced reliance on rote memorization, indicating that explicit instructional sequences can support deeper processing of grammatical structures.

2.8.5 Gaps and Contextual Limitations

While the existing literature underscores the benefits of explicit syntax instruction, several gaps remain. Most researches have been conducted in university settings with adult learners, leaving limited evidence for younger EFL learners in secondary contexts. Moreover, fewer studies systematically integrate metalinguistic tasks within communicative models that balance both form and meaning, particularly in non-Western EFL contexts such as the Middle East.

Finally, while qualitative insights (e.g., learner perceptions of explicit instruction) are available, there is a need for mixed-methods or classroom-based research that investigates not only performance outcomes but also learner engagement and cognitive motivation when exposed to explicit syntactic teaching.

2.8.6 Summary of Key Findings from Previous Studies

	Theme	Main Findings
1	Importance of syntactic awareness	Strong predictor of comprehension and writing accuracy.
2	Explicit instruction effectiveness	Produces larger gains compared to implicit approaches.
3	Pedagogical models	Hybrid models integrating syntax tasks within communicative activities show promise.
4	Longitudinal effects	Sustained explicit instruction yields cumulative benefits.
5	Research gaps	Need for diverse contexts, younger learners, and balanced pedagogical frameworks.

2.9 Summary of the Literature Review

Overall, previous research demonstrates that syntactic awareness is essential for L2 reading, writing, and overall proficiency. Instructional strategies that promote noticing, structured practice, and metalinguistic reflection have proven effective in facilitating syntactic development. However, few studies offer a comprehensive, theory-driven instructional model that integrates these elements into a coherent developmental sequence. This gap provides the rationale for proposing the Explicit Syntactic

Awareness Development Model (ESADM), which synthesizes insights from SLA theory and empirical research to support syntactic growth in EFL learners.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a conceptual research design, an approach commonly used to develop new theoretical and pedagogical models by synthesizing existing scholarship rather than collecting empirical data. Conceptual research is particularly valuable when the aim is to integrate diverse theoretical perspectives and pedagogical insights into a coherent framework that can guide practice and future inquiry (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2016). Since the primary goal of this paper is to construct a theoretically informed model for enhancing syntactic awareness in EFL contexts, a conceptual design offers an appropriate lens for organizing, analyzing, and refining relevant literature.

3.2 Literature Identification and Selection

The study relied on a systematic review of scholarly literature related to syntactic awareness, explicit grammar instruction, noticing, metalinguistic reflection, and writing development. Searches covered the period 2000–2025, drawing on Scopus-indexed journals and reputable publishers such as Wiley, Routledge, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Elsevier.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies were selected if they:

- addressed syntactic awareness, metalinguistic skills, or grammar acquisition;
- examined instructional methods relevant to EFL learners;
- contributed theoretical insights into SLA, including noticing, skill acquisition, or reflection;
- were peer-reviewed and published in recognized academic outlets.

Exclusion Criteria

The review excluded studies that:

- focused exclusively on first language acquisition;
- lacked instructional relevance;
- were non-scholarly, unreviewed, or conceptually weak.

A total of **145 sources** were located initially. After applying inclusion criteria and reviewing abstracts, 96 sources were retained for analytic synthesis.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The development of the Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM) followed a multi-stage analytical process designed to extract key themes from the literature and organize them into a structured pedagogical model.

3.3.1 Theoretical Analysis

Relevant SLA theories—such as the Noticing Hypothesis, Skill Acquisition Theory, and Metalinguistic Awareness Theory—were examined to identify mechanisms that contribute to syntactic development. This step involved comparing theoretical assumptions, clarifying conceptual overlaps, and determining their pedagogical relevance. Recent studies highlight that noticing plays a crucial role in transforming input into intake, particularly when learners are guided to attend to form (Leow, 2020). Similarly, Skill Acquisition Theory has been widely applied to explain the progression from controlled to automatic syntactic processing (DeKeyser R M& Suzuki, 2025; Li, 2023). In addition, metalinguistic awareness has been shown to facilitate deeper processing of grammatical structures, especially in instructed EFL

3.3.2 Pedagogical Mapping

Instructional studies were analyzed to extract effective classroom strategies, including input enhancement, sentence manipulation, consciousness-raising tasks, feedback techniques, and reflective writing practices. These techniques were grouped into thematic clusters based on pedagogical purpose and cognitive demands. The objective was to identify which instructional elements best supported syntactic awareness in EFL environments. Recent empirical research confirms that input enhancement and structured input activities significantly improve learners' attention to form (Shintani, N. 2015). Moreover, corrective feedback—particularly metalinguistic and focused feedback—has been found to enhance syntactic accuracy over time (Vuono, A., & Li, S. 2021; Yousefi, M., & Nassaji, H. 2024). Reflective and output-based practices, such as guided writing and reformulation tasks, also contribute to the development of syntactic awareness by encouraging deeper engagement with language form (Teng, L. S. 2022; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

3.3.3 Model Construction

Insights from theoretical analysis and pedagogical mapping were integrated to construct the ESADM. The development proceeded through:

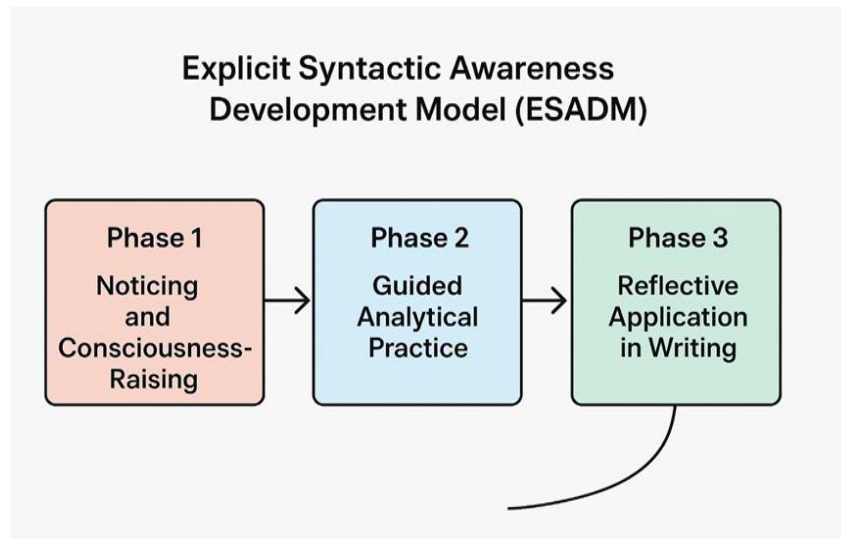
1. outlining a preliminary sequence linking noticing, analysis, and reflective use;
2. refining the phases to align with SLA processes;
3. ensuring coherence, developmental logic, and classroom applicability;
4. revising the model to enhance clarity and instructional flow.

The final ESADM consists of a three-phase cycle—Noticing, Guided Analytical Practice, and Reflective Application—each corresponding to specific learning processes supported by SLA theory.

3.4 Rationale for a Conceptual Approach

A conceptual methodology was chosen for several reasons. First, syntactic awareness is inherently a cognitive and theoretical construct that benefits from analytical synthesis rather than empirical observation alone. Second, in many EFL contexts, research on systematic models for syntactic awareness remains limited, making conceptualization a necessary step before empirical testing. Third, SLA researchers consistently recommend the development of theory-based instructional frameworks to bridge the gap between research findings and classroom realities (Ellis, 2021; Loewen, 2018). Thus, conceptual model building provides a sound foundation for future empirical validation of the ESADM.

Figure 1: Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM)



3.5 Quantitative Descriptive Analysis of the Reviewed Literature

Although the present study adopts a conceptual design, a quantitative descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a clearer overview of the literature base underpinning the ESADM model.

3.5.1 Study Selection Overview

A total of 145 sources were initially identified. After screening and applying inclusion/exclusion criteria, 96 studies were retained for synthesis.

Table 1 Study Selection Process

Stage	Number of Studies	Percentage
Initial identification	145	100%
Excluded after screening	49	33.8%
Final included studies	96	66.2%

Figure 2: Study Selection Process

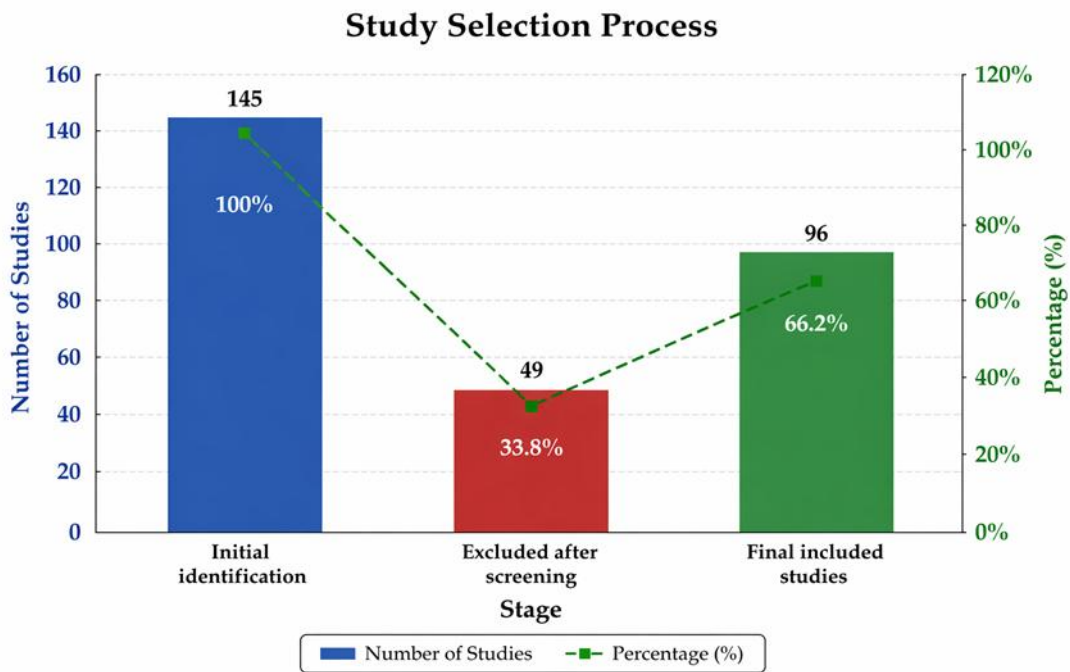


Table 1 and figure 2 show that out of 145 initially identified studies, 49 (33.8%) were excluded after applying the screening criteria. A total of 96 studies (66.2%) were retained for final analysis. This indicates a systematic and selective review process, ensuring that only relevant and methodologically appropriate sources informed the development of the ESADM model.

3.5.2 Distribution by Publication Period

To examine temporal research trends and determine how scholarly interest in syntactic awareness and explicit grammar instruction has evolved over time, the included studies were categorized according to their publication period (2000–2025). This distribution provides insight into the growth and contemporary relevance of research informing the ESADM framework.

Table 2 Distribution of Studies by Publication Period (2000–2025)

Period	Frequency	Percentage
2000–2009	18	18.8%
2010–2019	37	38.5%
2020–2025	41	42.7%
Total	96	100%

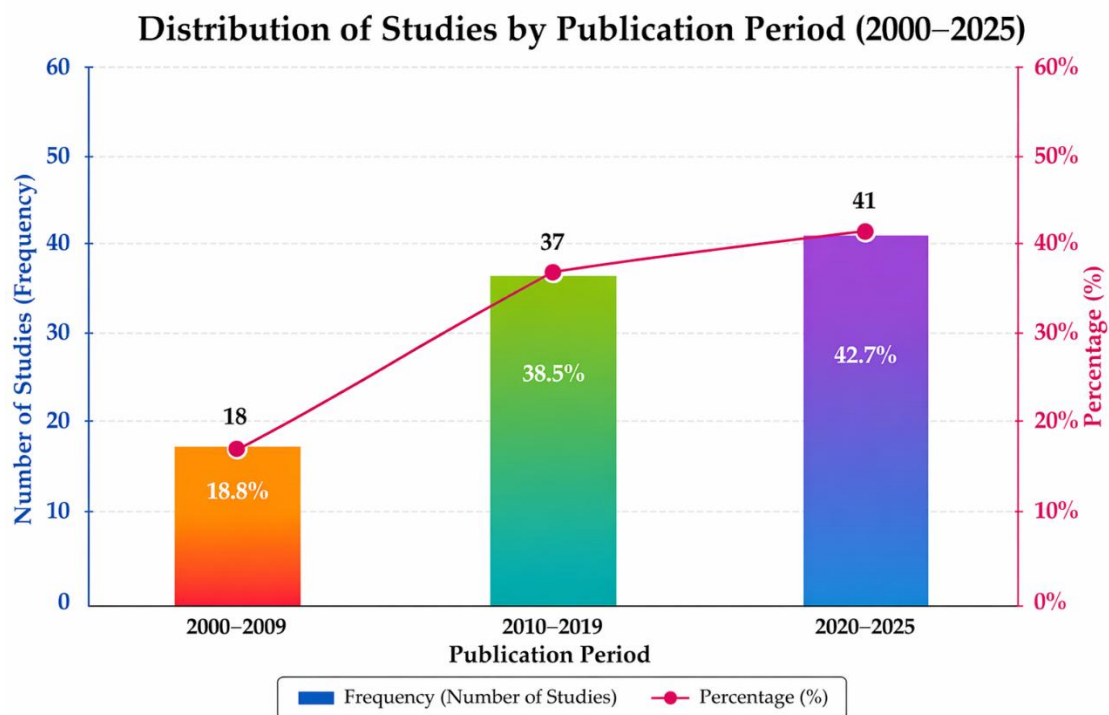
Figure 3: Distribution of Studies by Publication Period (2000–2025)

Table 2 and figure 3 indicate a clear increase in research on syntactic awareness and explicit instruction over time. While 18 studies (18.8%) were published between 2000–2009, the number nearly doubled to 37 (38.5%) in 2010–2019 and further increased to 41 (42.7%) in 2020–2025. This upward trend reflects growing scholarly interest and highlights the contemporary relevance of research informing the ESADM model.

3.5.3 Distribution by Research Focus

Conducting an analysis of Distribution by Research Focus is essential because it reveals how research efforts are allocated across different topics or themes. This helps identify dominant areas, highlight underexplored fields, and guide future research priorities. It also aids in understanding trends and gaps in the scholarly landscape.

Table 3 Primary Focus of Reviewed Studies

Focus Area	Frequency	Percentage
Explicit grammar instruction	28	29.2%
Syntactic awareness	17	17.7%
Metalinguistic awareness	14	14.6%
Writing development	16	16.7%
Skill acquisition & practice	11	11.5%
Noticing & attention	10	10.3%
Total	96	100%

Figure 4: Primary Focus of Reviewed Studies

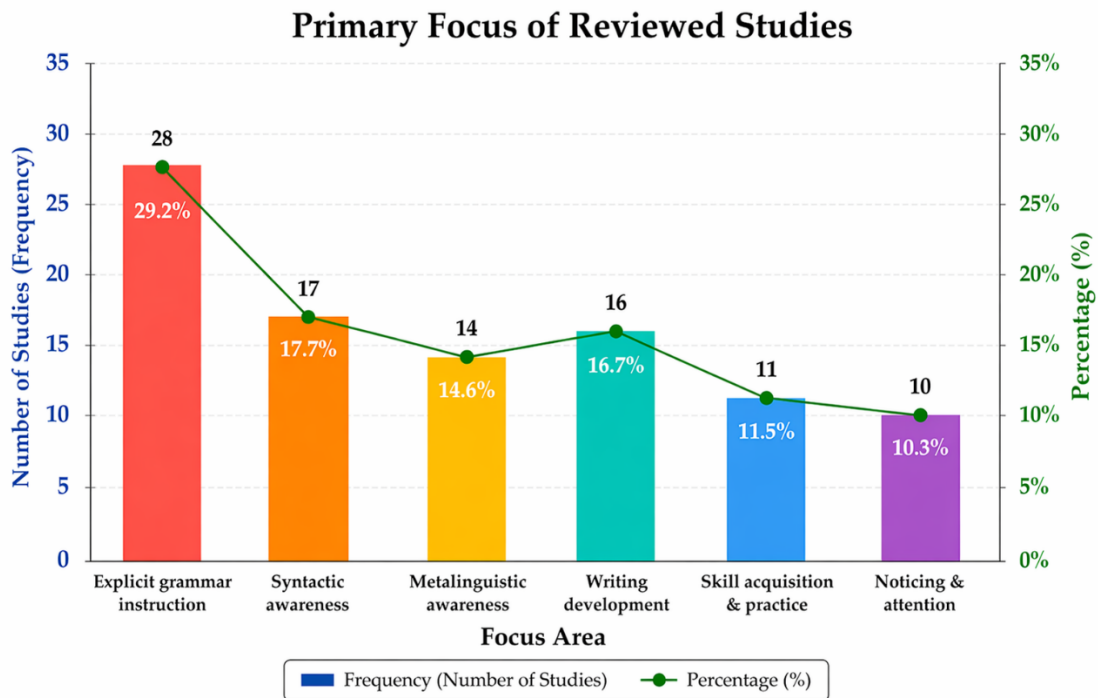


Table 3 shows that the largest proportion of studies (29.2%) focused on explicit grammar instruction, indicating strong empirical attention to structured teaching approaches. Research on syntactic awareness (17.7%) and writing development (16.7%) also represents substantial areas of investigation. Studies addressing metalinguistic awareness (14.6%), skill acquisition and practice (11.5%), and noticing and attention (10.3%) further demonstrate balanced theoretical support across key components of the ESADM model. Overall, the distribution reflects comprehensive coverage of both theoretical and pedagogical dimensions relevant to syntactic development.

3.5.4 Geographic Distribution of Empirical Studies

Examining the geographic distribution of empirical studies is important because it demonstrates the cross-cultural relevance and applicability of the research base. A diverse regional representation enhances the generalizability of the findings, ensures that conclusions are not limited to a single educational context, and strengthens the credibility of the proposed ESADM model across different EFL settings worldwide.

Table 4 Regional Distribution of the Reviewed Studies

Region	Frequency	Percentage
Middle East	26	27.1%
East Asia	24	25.0%
Europe	18	18.8%
North America	15	15.6%
Other regions	13	13.5%
Total	96	100%

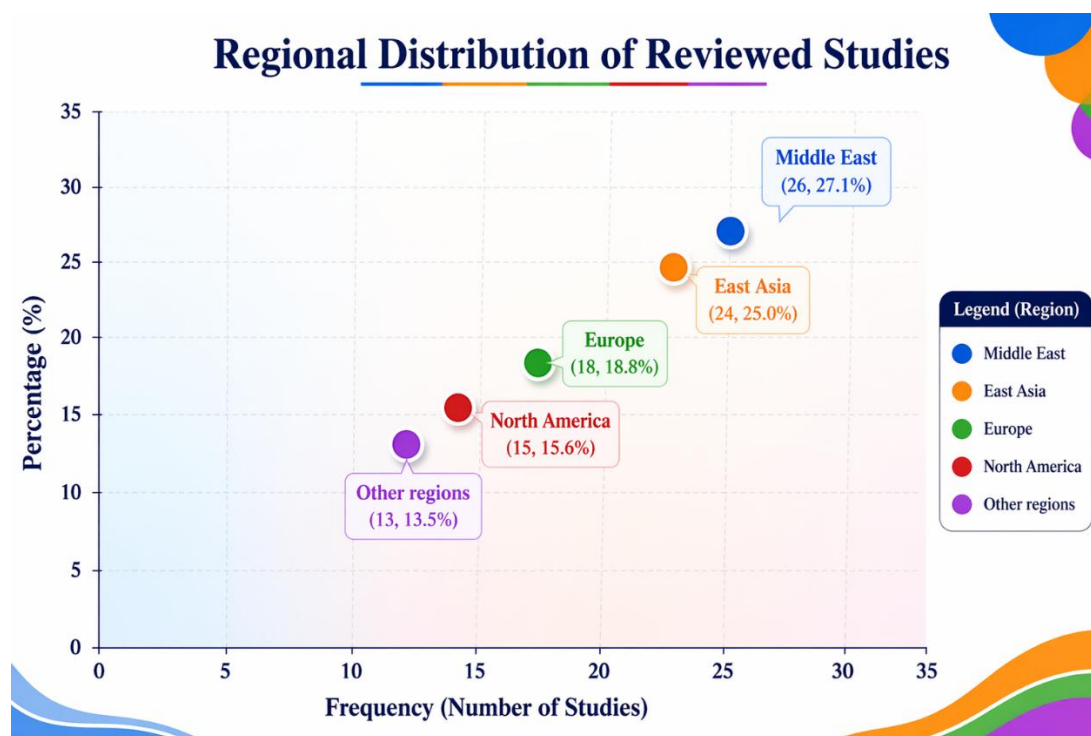
Figure 5 Regional Distribution of the Reviewed Studies

Table 4 and figure 5 display the regional distribution of participants (or cases) across different parts of the world. The highest representation comes from the Middle East with 27.1%, closely followed by East Asia at 25%. Europe accounts for 18.8%, while North America contributes 15.6%. Other regions make up the smallest share at 13.5%. Overall, the data indicates a relatively balanced distribution, with the Middle East and East Asia together representing over half of the total sample.

3.6 Summary

This methodology outlines a structured approach to constructing the ESADM model by drawing on established SLA theories and pedagogical evidence. Through systematic literature selection, theoretical analysis, and iterative model refinement, the study produces a comprehensive framework aimed at enhancing syntactic awareness in EFL learning contexts. This conceptual foundation sets the stage for future empirical implementation and testing.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to propose the Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM), a theoretically informed instructional framework designed to strengthen EFL learners' syntactic awareness through an integrated sequence of noticing, guided analysis, and reflective application. This section discusses how the model aligns with major SLA theories, its contributions to grammar pedagogy, and its potential impact on EFL contexts.

4.1 Alignment of the ESADM with Key of SLA Theories

4.1.1 Noticing as the Starting Point of Structural Learning

The initial phase of ESADM highlights the indispensable role of attention in grammatical development. Drawing on Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, the model assumes that learners cannot internalize grammatical structures unless these forms are consciously observed in input. Recent evidence showing the benefits of input enhancement and attention-oriented tasks supports this approach (Sato & Loewen, 2022; Rassaei, 2022). By foregrounding noticing as an explicit instructional objective, the ESADM provides learners with the necessary cognitive focus to identify structural features that often go unnoticed in meaning-focused instruction.

4.1.2 The Importance of Structured Practice in Skill Development

The second phase of the model incorporates insights from Skill Acquisition Theory, which distinguishes between initial rule-based learning and automatized use of language structures (DeKeyser, 2015). Activities such as sentence manipulation, transformation drills, and scaffolded practice prompt learners to process grammar repeatedly in varied contexts. Such guided practice enables learners to convert declarative knowledge into procedural ability, a process documented in studies examining the role of structured syntactic activities (Michaud & Ammar, 2023; Mahmood & Aziz, 2023). This alignment strengthens the model's theoretical grounding and practical relevance.

4.1.3 Reflection as a Link between Knowledge and Application

The final phase of the ESADM draws from research on metalinguistic awareness, which highlights the importance of deliberate reflection on language choices (Roehr-Brackin, 2018). Through self-editing, commentary, and reflective writing, learners evaluate their syntactic decisions and connect grammatical forms with communicative needs. These processes help solidify structural understanding and enhance the transfer of syntactic knowledge to extended writing tasks (Myhill, 2018). Thus, reflection serves as a bridge between controlled learning and meaningful language production.

4.2 Contributions to EFL Grammar Pedagogy

4.2.1 Addressing Persistent Structural Challenges

Many EFL learners continue to struggle with complex sentence structures, clause relationships, and grammatical accuracy despite prolonged exposure to English instruction (Al-Hamzi, 2021; Alzahrani & Alshehri, 2022). The ESADM addresses these issues by offering a systematic instructional pathway that emphasizes conscious attention, structured analysis, and reflective practice—elements often missing from traditional grammar teaching.

4.2.2 Integrating Form and Meaning

A key contribution of the ESADM is its integration of form-focused instruction with purposeful language use. While explicit teaching is known to enhance structural accuracy, it is sometimes criticized for limiting communicative engagement. The ESADM resolves this tension by ensuring that reflective writing tasks require learners to apply syntactic knowledge in authentic communicative contexts. This approach aligns with recent calls for hybrid instruction that balances explicit teaching with meaningful use (Lightbown & Spada, 2021).

4.2.3 Supporting Writing Development

Syntactic awareness has been consistently linked with writing quality, complexity, and cohesion (Zhang et al., 2023; Pereira Loor & Guevara Peñaranda, 2025). By encouraging learners to analyze and reflect on their syntactic choices, the ESADM promotes greater structural variety and accuracy in writing. This makes the model particularly relevant for academic writing courses, where syntactic control plays a crucial role in producing coherent and well-organized texts.

4.3 Advancement beyond Existing Techniques

While several instructional strategies—such as consciousness-raising, input enhancement, and sentence combining—have been widely studied, they are often applied in isolation. The ESADM's originality lies in bringing these strategies together within a coherent, theoretically grounded sequence. By organizing these pedagogical tools into interconnected phases, the model provides teachers with a structured roadmap for planning lessons and supporting learner development.

4.4 Implications for Understanding SLA Processes

The ESADM contributes to ongoing debates in SLA about how explicit knowledge interacts with implicit learning processes. The model's phased design reflects a weak-interface perspective, suggesting that explicit knowledge can facilitate the development of implicit competence when learners engage in meaningful practice and reflection (Ellis, 2017; Li, 2024). Moreover, the model demonstrates how form-focused techniques can be meaningfully integrated into communicative pedagogy, providing empirical researchers with a coherent framework for investigating syntactic development.

4.5 Applicability across Diverse EFL Settings

Because EFL learners often operate in environments with limited naturalistic input, instructional models must compensate by providing repeated exposure, structured practice, and opportunities for meaningful production. The ESADM is adaptable to a range of instructional contexts—including secondary schools, universities, online courses, and intensive language programs—making it a versatile tool for teachers. Its design enables gradual implementation, allowing instructors to integrate one phase at a time or use the entire sequence as a curriculum framework.

4.6 Summary of the Discussion

Overall, the ESADM integrates theoretical insights and instructional strategies into a unified model that supports syntactic awareness development. By emphasizing noticing, analysis, and reflection, the model responds to well-documented challenges in EFL grammar learning and offers a clear, theory-driven pathway for improving learners' syntactic control. This foundation sets the stage for future empirical studies to examine its effectiveness in classroom settings and refine its components further.

5. Pedagogical Implications

The Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM) offers several meaningful implications for classroom practice, curriculum planning, teacher development, and assessment in EFL contexts. By combining explicit noticing, structured analytical work, and reflective language use, the model provides a practical framework for addressing persistent syntactic challenges that many EFL learners encounter. This section outlines the pedagogical value of the model and explains how it can guide teachers and institutions in enhancing grammar instruction.

5.1 Strengthening Grammar Instruction through Guided Noticing

One key implication of the ESADM is the central role it assigns to intentional noticing. Many EFL learners struggle to identify syntactic patterns simply through exposure, especially when instruction is meaning-focused. Teachers implementing ESADM can incorporate techniques such as input enhancement, contrastive analysis, and consciousness-raising tasks to direct learners' attention to structural features. These activities help learners observe differences in clause structures, verb patterns, or syntactic markers that may otherwise remain unnoticed. Encouraging learners to attend to form at the beginning of instruction lays the groundwork for more effective syntactic learning.

5.2 Enhancing Syntactic Development Through Structured Practice

The ESADM also emphasizes the value of guided analytical practice. Teachers can help learners move beyond passive recognition of structures by designing activities that require manipulation, reconstruction, and controlled production. Tasks such as sentence combining, clause transformation, and syntactic reordering provide opportunities for learners to manipulate structure meaningfully while gradually reducing reliance on teacher support. This progression fosters proceduralization, enabling learners

to use grammatical forms more confidently during communication. Integrating these activities into lessons can help teachers systematically build their students' syntactic accuracy and flexibility.

5.3 Supporting Writing Development through Reflective Application

Another pedagogical contribution of ESADM is its emphasis on reflective language use, especially in writing. In many EFL settings, writing instruction often focuses on producing a final text rather than developing syntactic awareness. The ESADM shifts this practice by incorporating reflective tasks such as guided self-editing, syntactic journals, and revision cycles that target specific structures. These reflective activities encourage learners to evaluate their syntactic choices, make corrections, and consider alternative constructions, strengthening both accuracy and stylistic awareness. When applied consistently, this approach helps learners transfer syntactic knowledge from controlled exercises to authentic writing tasks.

5.4 Implications for Curriculum and Course Design

The ESADM offers a clear framework that curriculum designers can use to sequence grammar instruction more effectively. Each phase—Noticing, Guided Analysis, and Reflective Application—can be embedded into weekly units, writing modules, or thematic lessons. The model's cyclical nature allows for continuous revisiting of structures, which supports long-term retention. Curriculum designers can align textbook activities, writing assignments, and formative assessments with each ESADM phase to ensure coherence across the course. In contexts where grammar has traditionally been taught as isolated rules, the ESADM provides a blueprint for integrating grammar meaningfully within communicative and academic tasks.

5.5 Assessment and Feedback Practices

The model also carries implications for assessment. Teachers can incorporate formative assessments that capture both structural knowledge and syntactic awareness. Rubrics for writing tasks may include criteria related to clause complexity, accuracy, variety, and metalinguistic explanation. Additionally, feedback can focus on raising awareness of syntactic patterns rather than simply correcting errors. Metalinguistic feedback—such as prompts, questions, or coded symbols—encourages learners to reflect on their errors and make informed revisions. Such feedback aligns with the reflective dimension of the ESADM, supporting deeper, more lasting syntactic learning.

5.6 Implications for Teacher Professional Development

To implement ESADM effectively, teachers may require training in strategies that promote noticing, analysis, and reflection. Professional development programs can introduce teachers to practical techniques such as input enhancement, consciousness-raising tasks, guided syntactic exercises, and reflective writing tools. Training can also focus on helping teachers shift from rule-based explanation to interactive, form-meaning integrated instruction. Given the complexity of syntactic instruction, teacher professional growth is an essential component of the model's successful adoption.

5.7 Flexibility and Adaptability across EFL Contexts

One of the strengths of the ESADM is its adaptability. Teachers can integrate the model in full or apply individual phases depending on instructional needs, class time, and learner proficiency. The model is suitable for secondary, tertiary, and adult learning contexts and works well in both face-to-face and online teaching environments. Its flexibility makes it particularly valuable in input-limited settings, where structured instruction compensates for insufficient natural exposure.

5.8 Summary

The ESADM provides a structured and theory-driven approach to developing syntactic awareness among EFL learners. By aligning instructional practice with key SLA principles and research-based strategies, the model offers teachers a practical pathway for addressing learners' syntactic difficulties. Its emphasis on noticing, guided analysis, and reflective practice positions it as a useful framework for enhancing grammar instruction, supporting writing development, and improving overall language proficiency.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper introduced the Explicit Syntactic Awareness Development Model (ESADM), a conceptually grounded framework designed to support the development of syntactic awareness in EFL contexts. The model brings together insights from major SLA theories—particularly the Noticing Hypothesis, Skill Acquisition Theory, and research on metalinguistic awareness—to outline a structured pathway for helping learners recognize, analyze, and apply grammatical structures with increasing independence. By organizing instruction into the three interconnected phases of Noticing, Guided Analytical Practice, and Reflective Application, the ESADM responds to well-documented challenges faced by learners who have limited exposure to English and who struggle with complex syntactic forms.

The model contributes to the field in several important ways. First, it synthesizes diverse research findings into a coherent instructional sequence, offering teachers a clear blueprint for supporting syntactic development. Second, it positions grammar not as an isolated component of language study but as an essential resource for meaning-making, particularly in academic writing. Third, it highlights the role of reflection in transforming explicit knowledge into purposeful and accurate language use—an element often overlooked in traditional grammar instruction. Together, these contributions align the model with contemporary approaches that emphasize the integration of form and meaning in communicative pedagogy.

While this study is conceptual, it lays the groundwork for empirical investigations that could evaluate the ESADM in real instructional settings. Future research could examine how different learner groups respond to each phase of the model, the extent to which the model improves writing complexity and accuracy, and how teachers adapt the framework to diverse instructional environments. Longitudinal and experimental studies would be particularly valuable for testing the model's effectiveness and refining its components.

In summary, the ESADM provides a theoretically informed and practically applicable framework for enhancing syntactic awareness in EFL classrooms. By systematically combining noticing, structured practice, and reflective engagement, the model offers a meaningful approach to improving learners' grammatical control and academic language proficiency. Its adaptability and theoretical robustness make it a promising tool for teachers, curriculum developers, and researchers interested in advancing grammar pedagogy and supporting learner success in a variety of educational contexts.

Declaration

Ethical Approval

This study did not involve human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

Informed Consent

No human subjects participated in this study; accordingly, informed consent was not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, or the publication of this article.

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Author Contribution

The author solely conceived the study, conducted the literature review, developed the conceptual model, drafted the manuscript, and approved the final version.

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