

Original Research Article

## Exploring How the ESA Teaching Strategy Affects Eleventh Graders' Grammar Skills and their Feelings about Learning English

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### Article History

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to analyze how the ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) method of instruction affected the attitudes and knowledge of eleventh graders regarding English grammar. This goal was accomplished by means of an experimental approach. An attitude survey and a grammar accomplishment test were the two main instruments we used to gauge students' progress in English language acquisition. The researcher teaches English at Al-Yarubia Preparatory School for Girls, and the students there were selected as subjects. The sample consisted of sixty-four female students. Two of the researcher's three classes were selected to participate in the study. There was an experimental group consisting of 34 students and a control group consisting of 30 pupils. Excluding the third class, which consisted of 28 pupils, allowed the data to remain focused and believable.

**Keywords:** ESA Method, English Grammar, Eleventh Grade, Experimental Research, Student Attitudes, Grammar Achievement.

### 1. SECTION ONE

#### INTRODUCTION

The current study aims at an identification the influence of ESA strategy on students' achievement in English grammar. It also aims at an investigation which strategy, the ESA or traditional method has the most effect on students' performance in grammar lesson. To achieve these aims, null hypothesis is formulated. The research sample consists of two groups: the experimental group taught using ESA and control group taught using conventional method. The limitation of the study is eleventh-grade students from Al-Yarubia school for girls, during the first semester 2025-2026, and textbook English for Iraq 11 especially grammar. The results indicate that ESA strategy encourages students to be more active, interact with their peers in the EFL classroom

#### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Eleventh-grade students demonstrated minimal improvements in classroom engagement, motivation, and grammatical accuracy during grammar instruction, according to the researcher. In light of this experience, the researcher has reconsidered the most effective methods for teaching and learning grammar.

Students' deficiencies in English, particularly in grammar, were evidently influenced by a variety of contributing factors. The research determined that the predominant factors contributing to students' subpar performance were their unfavorable perceptions of English and the pedagogical methods used in its instruction.

Consequently, the primary goal of this investigation is to assess the effectiveness of the ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) strategy as a superior approach to grammar instruction. The research aims to determine the impact of this on the attitudes of students toward English as a discipline and their competence in grammar acquisition.

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## 1.2 Aims of Study

- To examine the effect of the ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) strategy on eleventh graders' achievement in English grammar.
- To investigate how the ESA strategy influences students' attitudes toward learning English.
- To compare the performance of students taught using ESA with those taught through traditional methods.
- To identify whether the ESA strategy can enhance motivation and classroom participation in grammar lessons.

## 1.3 Hypotheses of Study

- **H1:** eleventh graders taught using the ESA strategy will achieve significantly higher scores in English grammar compared to those taught with traditional methods.
- **H2:** The ESA strategy will lead to more positive attitudes toward learning English among eleventh graders compared to traditional teaching methods.
- **H3:** There will be a statistically significant difference in classroom participation and motivation between students in the ESA group and those in the control group.
- **H0 (Null Hypothesis):** The ESA strategy has no significant impact on eleventh graders' grammar achievement or their attitudes toward English compared to traditional methods.

## 1.4 Limits of Study

The present study was conducted under the following constraints:

- **Sample Restriction:** The participants were eleventh-grade students from Al-Yarubia school for girls.
- **Time Frame:** The research was implemented during the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year.
- **Content Scope:** The study focused exclusively on topics that are found in the textbook English for Iraq 11 especially grammar.

## 1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms

### 1.5.1 ESA stands for Engage, Study, and Activate

- **Engage:** This stage is all about getting students interested in the class and making them feel like they are a part of it. Teachers utilize activities that make students curious and excited about learning a new language. This helps them become emotionally and intellectually engaged to it.
- **Study:** At this point, students carefully examine how language works. They pay attention to grammar rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, or how the language is put together and used. This level puts a lot of stress on understanding and precision.
- **Activate:** Finally, pupils use the language in real-life situations. They use what they've learnt as freely and naturally as possible through role plays, conversations, or creative work. The objective is fluency and assurance in self-expression (Harmer, 2010).

### 1.5.2 Grammar

For a long time, grammar has been an important part of teaching language in schools. However, its long-standing presence has also led to inconsistencies in how the term grammar is used. For example, some introductory grammar books for Learners of foreign languages are referred to as Grammar in Use or English Grammar (Robins, 2000).

### 1.5.3 Attitude

A predisposition or tendency to respond favorably or unfavorably to a specific concept, thing, person, or circumstance is known as an attitude. It plays a key role in shaping an individual's choices, actions, and responses to different challenges, incentives, and rewards—collectively referred to as stimuli.

Scholars often identify four major components of attitude:

- **Affective:** The emotional or feeling-based aspect.
- **Cognitive:** The beliefs or opinions that are consciously held.
- **Conative:** The natural urge or predisposition to do something.
- **Evaluative:** The overall good or bad appraisal of a stimuli. (<http://www.businessdictionary.com>).

## 2. SECTION TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Concept of ESA Strategy

Jeremy Harmer came up with the ESA Strategy (Engage–Study–Activate), which breaks language classes down into three parts: getting students interested, learning the language, and using it in real life. A lot of English teachers employ the ESA technique because it blends motivation, instruction, and practice. It was made to go beyond strict lesson plans and provide teachers more freedom while keeping students engaged (Harmer, 2001).

### Engage Phase

- **Goal:** To get pupils interested in the subject and get their attention.
- **Things to do:** games, conversations, images, stories, role-playing, or anything else that makes you curious.
- **Why it's important:** It gives students the drive to study and gets them ready psychologically and emotionally.

### Study Phase

- **Goal:** To pay attention to the language itself, including its patterns, forms, and rules.
- **Activities** include grammar lessons, vocabulary drills, pronunciation drills, and controlled practice.
- **Importance:** It gives students the knowledge and understanding they need to understand how the language functions.

### Activate Phase

- **Goal:** To get students to use the language freely and to talk to each other.
- **Activities:** group projects, role-plays, creative writing, debates, or problem-solving exercises.
- **Importance:** It helps students use what they've learned in real-life situations that matter.

## 2.2 Flexibility of ESA

ESA lets teachers change the order of the stages, which is different from prior techniques like PPP (Presentation–Practice–Production).

- **Straight Arrow ESA:** Get involved, study, and then activate (easy and straightforward). - Boomerang ESA: Get involved, then practice, then study, and finally activate.
- **Patchwork ESA:** A combination of various levels of engagement, study, and activation (creative and adaptable).

## 2.3 Why ESA Works for Grammar

- **Combines meaning, form, and usage:** Students don't merely learn rules; they use them.
- **Balances learning that is clear and not clear:** You learn the rules, but you also learn how to use them.
- **Makes people want to do it:** Starting with fun activities makes grammar less scary.
- **Helps with communication competence:** Students learn to use grammar to get their thoughts across, not merely to pass tests.

## 2.4 Concept of Grammar

Scholars have provided many meanings of the term grammar over time, and these distinctions are substantial. Some definitions emphasize the pragmatic viewpoint, characterizing grammar as the skill of articulating and composing accurately. Barnard (2002) observed that numerous writers characterized grammar in this manner, although others regarded it as a framework for comprehending language through its lexicon and modes of expression.

Theoretically, grammar is regarded as the study of language. Sweet (2005) said that grammar's job is to look at language facts and events, sort them, and show them in a systematic way, much like any other science.

Williams (2005) said that teachers and administrators commonly use the word "grammar" when they are angry about students' writing mistakes. In these situations, they usually stress going back to the "basics," which most people think of as grammar. Williams also said that grammar might be thought of as a more general way to describe how people really talk.

## 2.5 Importance of Teaching Grammar

The study of how words fit together to make sentences and how they work together. It works like an unseen force that helps people who talk and write make sense of what they say. People who speak a language, even if they don't mean to, learn a little about its grammar.

Kohli (1984) provided a pertinent analogy to demonstrate the significance of grammatical knowledge. Picture two drivers of cars. The first one knows how to drive but doesn't know how the engine works. This motorist feels helpless when there are problems with the car. But the second driver not only knows how to drive, they also know how the engine works. In the same way, someone who knows grammar can use it if they aren't sure if their language is correct.

So, learning grammar is important for better and clearer communication. For ordinary language use, it may be enough to have an intuitive comprehension of grammar. However, people who want to communicate clearly, artistically, and with well-defined structures must learn more about grammar and master it (Debata, 2013).

The researcher believes that grammar is the most important part of any language. Knowledge is unstable and unpredictable without it, like a liquid without a solid! Grammatical structure helps us organize and communicate our ideas.

It moves messages like a train. To communicate, you need to know how to employ grammar and patterns like a railroad needs tracks.

## 2.6 Principles of Teaching Grammar

Hedge (2000) says that grammar lessons should actively help students learn in several ways. It can show how to use structures by putting them in spoken and written contexts that make sense, give learners input that helps them recognize and use correct forms of English, and give information either directly through direct instruction on stylistic variations or indirectly through examples.

Jendeya (2015) took these ideas and turned them into six guiding rules for teaching grammar: - Rule of Context: Grammar should be taught in ways that make sense, not just on its own.

- **Rule of Use:** Teaching grammar should help students understand and use genuine, communicative language.
- **Rule of Economy:** Teachers should spend as little time as possible on presentations so that students have more chances to practice.
- **Rule of Relevance:** Lessons should only cover the grammar areas that students have trouble with.
- **Rule of Nurture:** Just because you teach grammar doesn't mean your students will learn it; they need to practice and reinforce it.
- **Rule of Appropriacy:** All rules must be understood in light of the learners' requirements, wants, abilities, learning styles, and expectations.

## 2.7 Methods in Teaching Grammar

When teaching grammar, English teachers stress the use of both deductive and inductive methods. These strategies are good because they assist pupils learn how to think critically.

- **Deductive Method:** This method starts by teaching students clear grammatical rules. Then, when they use the language, they follow these norms, which helps them remember how to use it correctly and in a structured way (Larsen-Freeman, 2001).- **Inductive Method:** In this case, students don't get rules right away. Instead, they learn grammatical patterns by seeing examples, practicing, and being led in their observations.

The researcher observes that the integration of inductive and deductive methodologies may foster a helpful and collaborative learning environment, particularly for deaf pupils. These students can better understand and remember grammar principles by employing both methods, and then they can use them in real conversations and discussions (Abu Shagga, 2012).

## 2.8 Attitudes

Language attitudes and language acquisition are tightly associated (Starks & Paltridge 1996). Scholars in the domains of psychology and education, particularly in the area of language acquisition, take into account a number of definitions of attitude that discuss various interpretations from various settings and viewpoints (Alhmali). According to Crystal (1997) "language attitudes" are defined as "The attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each others" languages or to their own language". Baker, (1992) states that attitude is a convenient and efficient way of explaining consistent patterns in behavior. It often manages to summarize, explain and predict behavior. Similarly, Dittmar (1976) identifies three major components of attitude:

- Cognitive: The belief structures an individual holds.
- Affective: The emotional reactions associated with the attitude.
- Conative: The tendency or inclination to act in a particular way toward the attitude.

## 2.9 Language Attitude

In addition to the intellectual viewpoint, language learning contains psychological and social components and is largely dependent on the learners' desire and attitude toward acquiring the language (Padwick, 2010). Gardner and Lambert (1972) came to the conclusion that students' attitudes and impressions about the target language have an impact on their capacity to learn a second language, in addition to their mental competence or linguistic skills. Additionally, they argued that the attitude idea may improve language learning by altering students' attitudes and behaviors toward the other language, its culture, and its community, which will reveal their propensity to pick it up.

## 2.10 Importance of Studying Attitudes

There are several reasons why studying attitudes is essential in the context of language learning. Jupriaman(2021) emphasizes that "attitudes are important to us because they cannot be neatly separated from study." Visser (as referenced in Jupriaman 2021) also says that attitude is a very important thing that affects how well someone speaks a language.

Here's a short summary of how important attitudes are:- Individual Differences: Students have different requirements, wants, opinions, ways of learning, and educational backgrounds. Making adjustments without taking these differences into account could lead to bad emotions and people not wanting to learn.

- Understanding the Learning Process: Looking at how students feel about learning gives language teachers, education planners, syllabus designers, and researchers useful information. These kinds of insights assist them understand how students see the learning and teaching process, which can help them make changes to how they teach and develop the curriculum.
- Learner Perspectives: Learners have their own thoughts on how they learn a language, and they can often explain these thoughts. Acknowledging and contemplating different perspectives enables educators to better connect pedagogical methods with learners' expectations and experiences.

### 3. SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 The Research Design

The researcher employed an experimental methodology to evaluate the influence of the ESA Strategy (Engage-Study-Activate) on grammar acquisition in eleventh-grade pupils. To achieve this objective, two groups were selected: experimental and control groups. The first one taught using the ESA strategy, whereas the second one taught using the old or conventional manner.

The research investigated three primary variables:- Implementation of the ESA Strategy (independent variable).

- The results of studying grammar (the dependent variable).
- Learners' feelings about English (dependent variable).

The experiment lasted for eight weeks, which was long enough to see how the teaching methods affected both grammatical learning and how the students felt about it.

#### 3.2 The Study Sample

The researcher utilized a purposive sampling method from Al-Yarubia School. There were 64 female students in the whole sample. The researcher chose two of their own classes to teach:

- The experimental group, which had 34 female students, learned using the ESA Strategy. The control group, which had 30 female students, learned grammar in the usual way.

The researcher personally conducted the experiment to guarantee uniformity in instruction and execution. Table (3.1) shows how the sample is spread out.

**Table (3.1): The distribution of the study sample according to the groups**

Group	No	Percent
Control	30	46.875
Experimental	34	53.125
<b>All</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 3.3 Instrumentation

The researcher created and used a set of research tools to collect the information needed to meet the goals of this study.

#### 3.4 Preparing of Grammar Achievement Test

The grammar test was given to see how well students understood grammar. The official English language of the textbook is used to set the rules for the test, together with information from other studies on how to teach grammar. This made sure that the exam items were both related to what was being taught and followed the rules of good research. (See Appendix 2)

#### 3.5 Description of the Grammar Achievement Test

The grammar accomplishment test was given to pupils before and after the test to see how well they did in grammar. Most of the test questions were from the students' textbooks, which made them familiar and relevant, thus most students could answer them well.

Before the test, students had enough time to look over the questions and think about what their replies might be. The researcher did a pilot test to figure out how long the test should last. The results of this exploratory study were utilized to determine the optimal time allocation for the real administration.

The grammar accomplishment test had questions that were all meant to measure how well children did in grammar. The questions were based on material from textbooks that the students were already familiar with, so they were at the right level and interesting to them. The researcher computed both difficulty and discrimination coefficients to guarantee validity and reliability. The test consisted of 41 items, organized into four major questions as follows:

- Question 1: Multiple Choice (21 items – 21 marks)
- Focus: Present (perfect and simple and also in passive), past (simple and continuous as well as in passive)
- Purpose: Assess students' ability to select the correct grammatical form.
- Question 2: Sentence rewriting (5 items – 5 marks)
- Focus: Conditional sentences, reported speech, and the use of by.
- Purpose: Measure students' ability to transform sentences while maintaining grammatical accuracy.
- Question 3: Error Correction (5 items – 5 marks)
- Focus: Identifying and correcting underlined grammatical mistakes.
- Purpose: Evaluate students' skill in recognizing and correcting errors.
- Question 4: True/False Statements (10 items – 10 marks)
- Focus: Detecting grammatical mistakes in given statements.
- Purpose: Assess students' ability to judge correctness of grammatical structures.

### 3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot research with a random sample of forty female students from Al-Yarubia School for Girls was conducted to validate the reliability of the grammar accomplishment test. The kids' answers were carefully written down and then analyzed using statistics. We changed and improved a number of test questions based on the findings of this study to make them clearer, more suitable, and more useful overall.

### 3.7 Reliability of the Test

"Reliability refers to the consistency or stability of test scores; a test is reliable when it yields consistent results over repeated administrations" (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012). Two statistical methods were used to make sure the grammar accomplishment test was reliable: the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (K-R20) and the Split-Half method. These metrics were used to check how consistent the test items were with each other and to make sure that the instrument stayed stable across multiple uses.

### 3.8 Reliability of the Scale

"A scale is deemed reliable when it yields consistent results under identical administration conditions" (Al Agha & Al Ostaz, 2004). The researcher executed a pilot study to evaluate the reliability of the scale utilized in this investigation. Then, two statistical methods, Cronbach's Alpha and the Split-Half method, were used to find out how reliable the data was. These steps made sure that the scale was stable and consistent on the inside, which showed that it was a valid way to measure students' attitudes.

## 4. Section Four

### 4.1 Analysis of collected Data and Results

The independent samples t-test analysis of the first hypothesis shows that the ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) method clearly helps eleventh graders understand English grammar better. The experimental group, taught using the ESA framework, did better than the control group, which was taught in a more traditional way, when looking at the average scores. The post-test measuring grammar proficiency showed that students who had ESA did much better.

The results were statistically validated, which gave them more weight. The t-value found was higher than the critical threshold at the 0.05 significance level, which means that the difference was not random. The null hypothesis, which said that there was no big difference between the two ways of teaching, was thrown out because of this.

This result shows how well ESA helps people learn grammar. The method seems to have helped students learn grammar better and use it in real life by having them follow the steps of engagement, focused study, and active use. ESA makes the classroom more interesting and supportive than traditional methods, which helps students feel more confident and improve their grammar skills.

The second hypothesis was evaluated by examining the attitudes of eleventh graders towards learning English and determining whether the ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) technique exerted a more significant influence compared to

traditional instructional methods. An independent samples t-test was used to look at this using the results of the post-attitude scale.

Students instructed through ESA exhibited significantly more favorable perceptions of English compared to those educated via conventional methods, indicating a marked distinction between the two groups. At the 0.05 level of significance, the calculated t-value exceeded zero, confirming that the disparity in mean scores was statistically significant. The null hypothesis, which said that students' feelings would stay the same no matter what method was used, was not accepted.

These data show that ESA has a positive effect on students' emotional involvement and thoughts about learning English. The method creates a positive environment that boosts motivation, lowers stress, and makes school more fun overall by using group projects, lively class discussions, and other student-centered learning activities. This shows how ESA's creative teaching methods can motivate students to learn a new language with hope and a sense of purpose.

Our third hypothesis examined whether the ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) method significantly diverges from conventional instructional approaches regarding student engagement and motivation within the classroom. Observational data and participation markers showed that students in the experimental group were much more engaged, proactive, and willing to join in on class discussions than students in the control group.

Statistical analysis corroborated these results: the ESA group demonstrated markedly elevated levels of engagement and motivation in comparison to the control group. The null hypothesis, which said that the two ways of teaching were statistically the same, was not accepted because the test value was higher than the critical level at the specified significance level.

These results show that ESA can create a fun and interactive learning space. Following the steps of Engage, Study, and Activate makes people more interested, helps them understand better, and encourages them to use language actively. ESA promotes both the cognitive and emotional aspects of language learning. These aspects help students become more engaged in their learning, which leads to better academic performance.

The null hypothesis posited that the ESA strategy did not influence the grammatical proficiency and attitudes towards English among eleventh graders, differing from conventional methodologies. But when we looked at the data on both academic performance and attitudes, it was clear that the experimental group was very different.

The experimental group not only exhibited greater attitude and enthusiasm but also surpassed the control group in grammatical assessments. The estimated values were all higher than the critical levels, which means that the null hypothesis was not true.

This shows that the ESA method makes learning English much better for both your emotions and your brain. The findings offer compelling evidence that ESA is an efficacious method for teaching English as a second language (ESL), enhancing students' engagement, enthusiasm, and motivation to learn.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

The results of this empirical study led to the following conclusions:

The ESA model significantly surpassed the conventional approach to teaching English grammar to eleventh graders, evidenced by the substantially higher scores attained by students taught through ESA on grammatical proficiency assessments.

The ESA method improved students' grammar skills by having them go through the planned steps of Engage, Study, and Activate. This helped them understand, use, and remember grammar rules.

The ESA method had a big effect on how students thought about learning English. The students in the experimental group were more excited, confident, and willing to participate in English classes than the students who were taught in a more traditional way.

The proposed ESA technique was very important for getting students more involved and motivated because it encouraged them to be active, interact with their peers, and learn on their own in the EFL classroom.

This new way of teaching had a big effect on language learning outcomes by helping students grow cognitively (grammar skills) and emotionally (positive attitudes and motivation).

The ESA strategy gave students a good place to learn and grow. It gave them chances to use language in new ways, work together, and learn new things through real-world practice. This made cooperative learning better and made the whole classroom work better.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on what this study found, the following suggestions are made:

- **Curriculum Development:** To ensure that teachers have access to structured, student-centered methods, curriculum designers and policymakers should include the ESA model in English language teaching guides, especially for grammar instruction. Teacher Training: Educational supervisors and training centers should hold professional development seminars to give teachers the tools they need to use ESA in the classroom and teach them about it.
- **Teaching Materials:** To get students more involved and less dependent on rote learning, schools should add interactive activities that fit with the ESA phases to their teaching materials.
- **Classroom Practice:** English teachers should use ESA in their lessons so that grammar lessons are balanced with chances for creativity, teamwork, and communication.
- **Learner Support:** Teachers can use ESA to help students with their grammar and also to boost their motivation, confidence, and positive attitudes toward English. In this way, they may help students grow mentally and emotionally.

## 5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

To augment the findings of this research, subsequent studies may investigate the following pathways:

- **Different Language Skills:** Find out how well ESA teaches other language skills, like reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- **Different Levels of Education:** Look at students in different grades, like middle school or college, to see if ESA has a different effect on people of different ages.
- **Gender and Mixed Samples:** Conduct studies employing mixed-gender samples to examine potential disparities in responses to ESA between male and female learners.
- **Longitudinal Research:** Carry out prolonged studies to assess the lasting impacts of ESA on grammar retention, motivation, and attitudes over time.
- **Comparative Approaches:** Compare ESA to other modern teaching methods (like PPP, TBLT, or CLT) to find out which one works best in EFL settings.
- **Technology Integration:** Find out how ESA can be used with digital tools, online platforms, or mixed learning environments to make learning more fun and useful.
- **Cultural Contexts:** Carry out the study in diverse cultural or regional settings to assess the generalizability of ESA's effectiveness across multiple educational environments.
- **Teacher Perspectives:** Look into how teachers feel about ESA, including the problems and chances it presents in the classroom.

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