

**Native and Nonnative English-speaking EFL Teachers'  
Beliefs about Teaching Grammar and their Classroom  
Practices in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi Government  
High Schools**

دراسة للتحقق من قناعات مدرسي اللغة الانجليزية الناطقين و الغير ناطقين  
بها حول تدريس القواعد النحوية للغة و مقارنه تلك القناعات بالممارسات  
التدريسية الحاصلة فعلاً في المدارس الثانوية الحكومية بإمارة أبو ظبي

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## **D - Dedication**

*This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely wife Lubna Abuzied, my pretty daughter Amal and to my two sons Mahmoud and Faris. Without their love, encouragement, support, patience and constant prayers, this study would never have been achieved.*

*I love you all, and thank you with all my heart.*

## **E - Abstract**

*The main purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the native English-speaking (NESTs) and the nonnative English-speaking (NNESTs) EFL teachers' self-reported beliefs towards grammar teaching and their classroom practices. The study aimed to examine the relationship between NESTs and NNESTs' beliefs and their actual instructional practices. Furthermore, it attempted to stand on the contextual factors that may hinder the transformation of their thoughts into real actions.*

*All the teachers participated in this study are in-service expatriates, teaching English language in six government high schools in the two cities of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. In the first stage of the study, 60 native and nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers (30 NESTs and 30 NNESTs) were invited to fill in a self-report questionnaire to elicit their beliefs and classroom practices regarding grammar teaching. In the second stage, a semi-structured interview was conducted with four (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) of those teachers to gain deeper understanding of their personal opinions, beliefs and perspectives. In the third stage, the same four participant NESTs and NNESTs' grammar instructional behaviour was observed, field-noted and then selectively transcribed and described.*

*The findings revealed that the participant NESTs and NNESTs undeniably have a set of multifaceted beliefs regarding the role of grammar in language learning, grammar teaching approaches, error treatment, and finally the use of grammatical terminology and students' first language. The quantitative data revealed that participants' self-reported beliefs are, to a large extent, reflected in their classroom practices. These findings thus add support to previous research findings that teachers' beliefs are powerful and can greatly shape and guide their professional practices. However, the qualitative data showed a different picture: the beliefs and practices were partially different. This inconsistency between beliefs and practices are related to various contextual factors, including class density, time constrains, incompatibility of the assigned text-books, huge work load, in addition to students' needs, expectations and proficiency levels.*

## F - Arabic Abstract

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة البحثية هو التحقق من قناعات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية من الناطقين والغير ناطقين بها حول تدريس القواعد النحوية للغة ومقارنة تلك القناعات مع ممارساتهم التدريسية الحاصلة فعلاً داخل الغرف الصفية وذلك للوقوف علي مدى التطابق بين أقولاهم وأفعالهم في هذا الصدد . كما هدفت هذه الدراسة إلي الوقوف علي العوامل المحتملة التي قد تؤدي إلي إعاقة ترجمة هذه القناعات إلي ممارسات تعليمية فعلية داخل الصفوف الدراسية .

جميع المدرسين الذين شاركوا في هذه الدراسة سواء كانوا من الناطقين أو غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية هم من المدرسين الوافدين الذين يعملون فعلياً في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية بستة من المدارس الثانوية الحكومية بمدينتي أبو ظبي والعين. تم إجراء هذه الدراسة علي ثلاث مراحل :

في المرحلة الأولى: تم توجيه الدعوة لعدد ستون مدرس لغة إنجليزية (ثلاثون من الناطقين وثلثون من غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية ) لتعبئة استبيان صرحوا فيه عن قناعاتهم حول تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية وكذلك عن ممارساتهم الصفية في هذا الصدد .

في المرحلة الثانية: تم اختيار عدد أربع مدرسين ( اثنين من الناطقين وأثنين من غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية ) وذلك لإجراء مقابلات شخصية معهم للحصول علي فهم أعمق حول آرائهم وقناعاتهم الشخصية تجاه تدريس القواعد النحوية للغة الإنجليزية .

في المرحلة الثالثة: تمت عمل دروس مشاهدة صفية لنفس الأربع مدرسين الذين تمت مقابلتهم شخصياً وذلك أثناء تدريس كل منهم لإحدى القواعد النحوية وذلك للوقوف علي ممارساتهم التدريسية الفعلية وتدوين الملاحظات أثناء تدريس هذه القواعد . بعد ذلك تم تحليل ومقارنة نتائج المراحل الثلاثة من الدراسة .

كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن المعلمين المشاركين (سواء كانوا من الناطقين أو غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية) يملكون بلا شك مجموعة متنوعة من القناعات حول أهمية ودور تدريس القواعد النحوية في تعليم اللغة وكذلك حول طرق التدريس المتبعة في ذلك وكيفية التعامل مع الأخطاء النحوية حين حدوثها وأخيراً حول أهمية استخدام المصطلحات النحوية ولغة الطالب الأم أثناء تدريس القواعد النحوية للغة الإنجليزية .

أظهرت النتائج الكمية توافقاً كبيراً بين قناعات المعلمين وممارساتهم التدريسية مما يعرض من نتائج الدراسات السابقة التي نوهت بالتأثير الكبير لقناعات المعلمين وأفكارهم الشخصية علي ممارساتهم التدريسية داخل الصفوف. ولكن النتائج النوعية للدراسة أثبتت أن هناك شبهة تناقض بين قناعات المعلمين المشاركين بالدراسة وبين ممارساتهم التدريسية الفعلية داخل الصفوف . هذا التناقض بين القناعات والممارسات التدريسية لهؤلاء المعلمين تم إرجاعه إلي مجموعة من العوامل المؤثرة والمصاحبة للعملية التعليمية منها كثافة الفصول الدراسية ، قصر الوقت ، عدم ملائمة المناهج الدراسية وكذلك الأعباء الإدارية المتزايدة علي المعلمين وأخيراً احتياجات وتوقعات الطلاب وكذلك مستوياتهم التعليمية واللغوية .

## G - Abbreviations

<b>ADEC</b>	<b>Abu Dhabi Educational Council</b>
<b>CEPA</b>	<b>Common Educational Proficiency Assessment</b>
<b>EFL</b>	<b>English as a Foreign Language</b>
<b>ESL</b>	<b>English as a Second Language</b>
<b>IAT</b>	<b>Institute of Applied Technology</b>
<b>NESTs</b>	<b>Native English-speaking EFL Teachers</b>
<b>NNESTs</b>	<b>Nonnative English-speaking EFL Teachers</b>
<b>RQ</b>	<b>Research Question</b>
<b>Student's L1</b>	<b>Student's First Language (mother tongue)</b>
<b>UAE</b>	<b>The United Arab Emirates</b>

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### I.1 Introduction

During the past few decades, researchers have significantly investigated the motives and the reasons behind teachers' classroom practices in the field of English language teaching (Calderhead 1996 & Carter 1990). Borg (2003) points out that teachers' beliefs recognizably influence, shape and guide their own teaching practices. In other words, teachers do not anymore mechanically implement a set of theories or in an "unthinking manner" teach curriculum designed by other experts, but "they deal with the subjects they teach as thinking decision makers who create their own teaching theories" (Borg 2003, p. 81). Therefore, Pajares (1992) states that since teachers' beliefs are the main motives behind their instructional strategies and practices, it is important to study them as the main sources of teachers' cognitive activities.

The crucial and undeniable role of grammar in language learning has led to endless arguments about the role of formal grammar instruction, the best way to approach grammar, and whether grammar instruction does or doesn't contribute to the improvement of students' skills in the field of EFL or ESL have led to different views, approaches and methodologies about grammar teaching for language teachers (Ellis 2006; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991 & Borg 1999).

However, counting on their beliefs and due to the scarcity of accredited study-based guidelines or unified approaches for grammar teaching, teachers can do nothing but resort to their own strategies and practices which they have already acquired through their own professional experience and grammatical knowledge to guide their grammar teaching. Borg (2003) claims that, relying on their own beliefs, teachers have created their own personal theories that led to different styles and modes in teaching grammar. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 42) report that the study of teachers' beliefs "forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work".

Many previous studies investigated language teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards grammar teaching in different parts of the world. However, Ellis (1998, p. 57) confirms that "very little research has explored how teachers arrive at decisions about what grammar to teach and when and how to teach it". Moreover, those previous studies were only limited and focused either on English native-speaking teachers teaching English to adult learners or on nonnative English-speaking teachers who work in different contexts. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted to compare and contrast or to gather data on what native and nonnative English speaking EFL teachers who work at Abu-Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) government high schools believe about grammar teaching. Therefore, this exploratory study attempts to address this gap in the present literature by investigating what grammar teaching beliefs native and nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers hold; what instructional strategies and practices that the same teachers prefer to employ when teaching grammar, and identify whether or not those beliefs influence their holders' instructional practices. The study also aims at identifying possible factors that may hinder both groups (native and nonnative) from transforming their beliefs into actual classroom practices.

## **I.2 Background of the Study**

The influence of work contexts on teachers' beliefs cannot be ignored and an understanding of the work contexts is mandatory to understand teachers' beliefs and practices (Borg (2003). Therefore, a brief description to the EFL context in the UAE educational system with particular reference to the teaching of English grammar in ADEC high schools will be furnished in the following paragraphs.

English is the key language for academic instruction at all higher education institutions in the UAE, while students start learning English at the age of six, even earlier in some cases, and up to the age of eighteen when they leave schools. The traditional approaches of teaching English with an emphasis on Arabic in a teacher-centered classroom, have led to a low level of language proficiency and limited communicative skills (Watson 2004). In recent years, and as a result of the high-school

students' inability to communicate confidently, the UAE has made an important move towards developing a more communicative pedagogy in the EFL classrooms. This has maximized the need for more communicative English language programmes and for EFL instructors who are able and qualified enough to achieve the goals of such programmes.

Bearing in mind the currently growing tendency on learning English language as an international mean of communication in the UAE, it is expected that the inclusion of native speakers of English in public schools maybe seen as an ultimate solution. Especially due to the belief that many educational policy makers have that nonnative speakers of English have not been able to develop students' communicative skills because, according to Watson's (2004, p. 58) claim, "they use Arabic to explain English concepts in the classroom".

Instead of learning English as a tool of daily life communications, students at all levels study English as an obligatory academic subject, which is part of the educational program. Teachers at all levels in the UAE are expected to cover a unified curriculum developed by the ministry of education or any other educational body. Based on this system-wide curriculum, almost all English textbooks used in public schools are designed to focus mainly on grammar, reading, and writing, with little emphasis on listening and speaking.

The majority of EFL teachers in government schools are Arabic native speakers recruited from different Arab countries, while EFL teaching in higher education is dominated by English native speakers. Additionally, there are also a few Arabic EFL instructors who graduated from English-speaking countries and work in higher education organizations. This mosaic of cultures, linguistic varieties and accents, shapes the EFL current situation, and has led to heated debates and uninvestigated assumptions about the effectiveness of English language teachers in the UAE government schools in best facilitating students' language abilities, on students' achievements and on students' attitudes towards learning English. A large number of researchers and educators believe that employing native speakers and enforcing "English only environment" and western pedagogy would improve students' achievements mainly in the productive skills.

Despite the negative view of the current situation in the English language teaching in the UAE schools, the efforts and endeavors that have been taken and implemented are indisputable, and should have led to a better achievement and performance in pre-university schools and at higher education organizations. Although the Ministry of Education and the different educational bodies in the UAE are keen and striving by all means to improve the quality of teaching English either by implementing innovative curricula and/or by hiring experts and highly qualified native and nonnative English language teachers, teaching English in the UAE still receives much criticism. Teachers of English who share the same mother tongue (Arabic) with the students receive the largest portion of criticism, mainly due to either their unsatisfactory language proficiency and/or their limited expertise in methods and techniques.

However, the educational policy makers in the UAE have set the acquisition of good oral and written communication skills as one of the ultimate goals of the English language programmes in government schools. The Institute of Applied Technology (IAT) High Schools, which were established in 2005, are one of the current new experiments in the UAE where the medium of instruction is English and have native and nonnative English-speaking teachers to teach English and other subjects as well.

The English Language curricula at IAT High Schools is meant to equip students with the essential language skills that enable them to use the language and communicatively, fluently and accurately in and outside the classroom. It also aims at valuing grammatical competency due to its importance in communication fluency. Thus, the role of English language teachers is to develop the students' knowledge and skills of grammar through utilizing the Communicative Approach. The same curricula is meant to help all grade 12 students to pass the CEPA (Common Educational Proficiency Assessment) English language Exam which is a prerequisite for all Emirati students who want to join the UAE University and secondly to score band 5.5 in IELTS if they want to join any university in the UAE with no need for the foundation year.

Through his experience as an English language teacher in the Air Force Secondary School and the IAT High Schools in the UAE for more than twenty years, the researcher has had the opportunity to work with and observe many native and nonnative

English speaking EFL teachers. Through such observations and discussions with both groups (native and nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers), the researcher has realized that teachers have their own different methods to approach grammar which they tend to adopt in their classrooms. Such variety of methods came due to teachers' different and variable personal beliefs, their different teaching and learning backgrounds, and to their own interpretations of the syllabus and the examination system they deal with.

According to his field observations, the researcher found that the majority of EFL teachers are split into two groups, the first group adopts the deductive grammar instruction and believes it should be taught directly to save time and to meet the students' needs. They believe that a teacher's main role is to help the students pass their grammar exams. Therefore, they tend to count on more traditional approaches in their instruction (e.g. Grammar Translation, Audio-lingual and Direct Methods). On the other side, the second group thinks that teaching grammar in isolation of the other language skills doesn't serve the students' communication needs. Therefore, all activities involved in their grammar lessons are communicative ones. Both groups of teachers do not deny the role and the importance of grammar in EFL classes, but they disagree with whether it should be presented explicitly or implicitly.

### **I.3 Significance and Rationale of the Study**

Richards, Gallo and Renandya (2001) confirm that it is necessary to recognize how English teachers approach their work in order to characterize the beliefs and principles they operate from. Therefore, this study came to provide some literature on how the native English-speaking EFL teachers (NESTs) and the nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers (NNESTs) working for Abu-Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) high schools deal with English grammar instructions. The study attempts to investigate the relationship between NESTs and NNESTs' self-stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices with regard to grammar teaching. It will also look at teachers' beliefs about how important grammar instruction is in language learning, grammar teaching approaches, the ways NESTs and NNESTs deal with grammatical errors and their

possible use of grammar terminology and students' L1 in grammar classes. Moreover, The study highlights the similarities and differences NESTs and NNESTs have in beliefs and classroom practices with regard to grammar teaching, and the possible contextual factors that may influence the transformation of their beliefs into actual practices.

The majority of EFL teachers in ADEC high schools are coming from different ethnicities with different learning and teaching backgrounds. Therefore, they bring different personal theories and perspectives to language teaching in general and to grammar instruction in particular. Thus, this study hopes to inspire the participant NESTs and NNESTs to reevaluate and reflect on their teaching practices with regard to grammar. It may also help other EFL teachers to reconsider their beliefs, which may eventually lead to drastic changes in their classroom practices. The study also aims to enrich the data of the curriculum developers, teacher trainers and the educational researchers regarding the different approaches that NESTs and NNESTs adopt in teaching grammar at ADEC high schools, which may help those developers and trainers to create suitable professional development courses and syllabi. In order to achieve the same learning objectives, the study also highlights the importance of setting one-approach policy for EFL teaching in general and for grammar instruction in particular.

The results of this research can serve as a resource for further studies on grammar teaching not only in this part of the Arab world and the Middle East, but also in all non-speaking English countries that have a same mixture of NESTs and NNESTs working together in the same EFL context.

## **I.4 Research Questions**

The researcher hopes that the following questions will assist and guide him to explore and investigate the case under study.

(R.Q.1) - What beliefs about grammar teaching do the native English-speaking EFL teachers (NESTs) and the nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers (NNESTs) working for ADEC high schools hold?

(R.Q.2) - What instructional strategies and practices do those teachers employ when teaching grammar?

(R.Q.3) - To what extent do NESTs and NNESTs' pedagogical beliefs match their grammar instructional practices?

(R.Q.4) - What are the influencing factors that may hinder those teachers to transmit their stated beliefs into actual classroom practices?

## **I.5 Structure of the Dissertation**

This study is organized into five chapters: Chapter one introduces an overview of the research background, purpose and rationale, and the research questions. Chapter two reviews literature in the fields of teachers' beliefs and grammar instruction. Chapter three describes the methodology followed in the study, and specifies the stages and the design of the research, instruments employed, participants' background, and data collection procedures. Chapter four furnishes all research findings. Chapter five discusses the findings with reference to the literature reviewed in the second chapter, and concludes the study with a brief summary that highlights implications and the study limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

This literature review will begin by defining the term of “Teachers’ Beliefs” and highlighting the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices. Then, some major areas about grammar teaching and learning will be highlighted such as the role of grammar instruction in language learning in general and in the EFL/ESL context in particular, and EFL/ESL teachers’ beliefs and the approaches they follow regarding grammar instruction. After that, the study will focus on other important aspects of grammar teaching and learning, such as: teachers’ attitudes towards grammatical errors treatment and feedback, in addition to the use of grammatical terminology and students’ L1 in grammar instruction.

#### II.1 The Term of “Teachers’ Beliefs”: Definition and Sources

Many educational researchers have stated that defining and evaluating teachers’ beliefs is not an easy task (Williams and Burden 1997 & Pajares 1992). Since it is hard for teachers themselves to justify the reasons and explain the motives behind adopting and implementing certain practices or behaviours, it is even harder for researchers to investigate teachers’ minds and explore the psychological theories or the mental processes behind their actual classroom instructions.

Pajares (1992) and Richardson (1996) view beliefs as teachers’ personal thoughts and claims that can help provide an understanding of their decisions and teaching practices. Arnold (1999, p. 256) adds “beliefs act as strong filters of reality”, whereas Eisenhart et al. (1988, p. 54) defines the term belief as “an attitude consistently applied to an activity”. Kagan (1992, p. 65 - 66) describes teachers’ beliefs as “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught”. She also adds that these beliefs that teachers develop over their career are generally constant and difficult to change. Moreover, beliefs reflect how teachers behave in classrooms (Williams Burden 1997 & Kagan 1992). In the same vein, Nespor (1987)

claims that beliefs which have been formed due to on going affective and evaluative loadings can neither be critically examined nor be subjected to external evaluation, moreover, such beliefs can include unreal conceptualizations of ideal conditions.

Grave (2000) asserts that teachers' beliefs have been built up from a variety of sources. They are generated from their prior learning experiences, teaching experiences, the context where they teach and in service professional development courses. Supporting the same point of view, Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) clarify that teachers' beliefs are shaped influenced by students' needs, prior experiences and syllabus expectations.

According to Pajares (1992), what makes studying teachers' beliefs a complex procedure is the confusion between beliefs and knowledge. In the same study, Pajares (1992, p. 309) suggested the concept of "belief system" which incorporates individuals' beliefs, attitudes and values. Borg (1999a, p. 19) refers to the term "teacher's cognition" as "all the beliefs, theories knowledge, assumptions and attitudes about all aspects of work that teachers hold". In his study of ESL teachers' beliefs and practices, Woods (1996) found that there is close inter-relationship of beliefs and knowledge. Therefore he asserted that "the terms knowledge, assumptions and beliefs do not refer to distinct concepts, but are points on a spectrum of meaning", and he further suggested an integrated network of Beliefs, Assumptions and Knowledge, which he referred as BAK.

In addition to BAK, proposed by Woods (1996), others have used the term teacher cognition, indicated by Kagan (1990, p. 421) as "pre- or in-service teachers' self reflections, beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students and content and awareness of problem-solving strategies endemic to classroom teaching", and defined by Borg (1999, p. 19) as "all the beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions and attitudes about all aspects of work that teachers hold".

In this study, the term "teachers' belief" expresses any personal opinions, views, theories, perceptions and attitudes the participant teachers hold about grammar teaching in EFL/ESL context.

## **II.2 The Relation Between Teachers' Beliefs and their Classroom Practices**

During the last few decades, researchers have become more aware to the fact that teachers' beliefs are influential and can greatly affect teachers' instructional behaviours and practices. Borg (2003, p. 81) states "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs". "It is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get" (Hargreaves and Fullan 1992, cited in Yero 2010).

Since teachers' beliefs are considered as one of the decisive factors that influence teachers and their teaching practices, it is necessary to deeply investigate them. According to Richards et al (2001, p. 42), the study of teachers' beliefs "forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work". In a similar claim, Hampton (1994) and Richards and Lockhart (1996) report that the best way to understand teachers' classroom practices is to explore their beliefs. Borg (2009) supports the previous views; he states that to understand language teachers' classroom practices and to improve their performance, we need to go into their thoughts and beliefs.

Many empirical studies (e.g. Andrews 2003 & Phipps and Borg 2008) aimed to reach a deeper understanding of teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Findings of these studies revealed that teachers' choice of a certain teaching approach is consistent with their self-stated theoretical beliefs. However, such consistency between beliefs and practices is not always the case. In their study, Karavas and Doukas's (1996) found that while most participants claimed commitment to the communicative teaching and learning, they showed more tendency to explicit and traditional teaching in their classrooms.

In a similar context to the UAE, Al-Siyabi (2009) conducted a case study about teachers' beliefs and practices regarding explicit grammar teaching in Omani lower secondary schools. The study findings revealed that teachers tended to adopt the

deductive approach and they employed activities and techniques that serve this approach in their classes such as oral explanations, providing examples and text-related questions. However, in the interviews all the participant teachers valued the role of eliciting the grammatical rules from the students.

In their case study of the grammar teaching beliefs and practices of three experienced EFL teachers of different nationalities in Turkey, Phipps and Borg (2009) found that the participants' beliefs were not always aligned with their practices in teaching grammar. Although all the three participants believed in the context based grammar teaching, they opted for a "Focus on Forms" approach, directly presented and practiced grammar and explicitly corrected grammatical errors.

An important issue, then, raises and cannot be ignored, why there are such contradictions between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Such inconstancy can be referred to various contextual constraints such as teachers' workload, classroom sizes, lack of teaching aids, prescribed curriculum and time limit, examination system, and policy makers and parents' expectations. Andrews's (2003) study found that the parental expectations, the examination system and the "micro-culture" significantly influenced the participant teachers' teaching decisions. In the same study, Andrews (2003) also found that, despite teachers' preference for other teaching approaches, the inclusion of grammar-focused instruction came as a result of students' needs to cope with the demands of certain examinations. These findings support Richard's (1996, p. 284) statement that teachers are influenced and driven by "...their understanding of the system in which they work and their roles within it".

In addition to contextual constraints, Andrews's (2003) study findings highlighted the relationship between teachers' cognition and practices in formal grammar instruction and their level of grammar knowledge. He found that teachers who adopted an inductive approach in their grammar teaching had a relatively high level of explicit knowledge of grammar. Moreover, teachers who had a relatively low level of explicit knowledge of grammar showed a strong tendency to teach grammar deductively.

Learners were also found as an influencing factor that urged teachers to reconsider and amend their teaching techniques. Classroom settings; students' needs, proficiency levels, learning styles and expectations may also influence teachers' teaching decisions and deny them applying their own beliefs and thoughts in the classroom (Andrews 2003 & Borg 2001). In a similar study, Peacock (1999) ended up to a similar conclusion that while the participant teachers highly valued "communicative" activities, their students opted for "traditional" ones.

### **II.3 Grammar Pedagogy in EFL/ESL Context**

A large number of studies have investigated teachers' beliefs in grammar teaching. Borg (2003 & 2006) reviewed 22 studies focused on grammar teaching and divided these studies into three types of researches: Firstly, teachers' declarative knowledge about grammar. Secondly, teachers and students' stated beliefs about grammar teaching. Thirdly and lastly, the relationship between teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and their classroom practices. The findings from the first type of research revealed that teachers' grammatical knowledge is generally deficient. In reviewing the second type of research, he found that influenced by their previous language learning experiences, teachers generally value and support grammar in their work. He also found a significant difference between teachers and students' views about different aspects of grammar instruction. Finally, the third type of research revealed that teachers' beliefs are not always implemented in their classroom practices for various reasons such as teachers' knowledge, contextual factors and students' needs and expectations.

This section aims to shed some light on grammar teaching research with a particular focus on the role and the place of grammar instruction in language learning, the core approaches of grammar instruction in EFL/ESL context, the use of grammatical terminology and students' L1, and finally, error treatment.

### **II.3.1 Grammar Teaching & Language Learning**

According to Brown (1994b, p. 347) grammar is defined as “a system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence”. Celce-Murcia (1988, p. 16), defines grammar as “a subset of rules which govern the configuration that the morphology and syntax of a language assume”. On the other hand, Caderonello et al (2003) uses two different terms to define grammar: “Technically” grammar refers to “the structure or system of a language, which sounds simple enough”, and “Socially” grammar can bring up “images of diagramming sentences or memorizing rules and definitions, as well as confusion and boredom”.

According to Ellis (2006, p. 84)

“Grammar teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it”

In other words, grammar teaching refers to all methods implemented and approaches employed by language teachers to present and then to practice isolated grammatical features.

Expressing a different point of view, Larsen-Freeman (2001) reports that in order to help learners to succeed in mastering the language, language teachers should consider using the following three dimensions together when dealing with grammar: (1) structure or form, (2) semantics or meaning, and (3) the pragmatic conditions covering usage. He (2001, p. 255) also states “grammar teaching is not so much knowledge transmission as it is skill development”. Therefore, instead of focusing on cramming their students’ heads with grammatical rules, language teachers should think of grammar as a skill the students need to master in order to convey an accurate and appropriate meaning. According to Larsen-Freeman (2001), if students knew the rules that had ever been written about English but were not able to apply them, language teachers wouldn’t be doing their jobs properly.

### **II.3.2 The Role of Grammar Instruction in EFL/ESL Context**

The role of grammar instruction in second or foreign language learning has always been a heated debate. The progress in all aspects of language teaching has led to shift the focus of grammar teaching objectives from the formal instruction towards communicative effectiveness. Moreover, the appearance of the Natural and Communicative Approaches in the seventies and eighties, has led to an endless and countless debate regarding the efficiency of explicit and implicit grammar teaching approaches in EFL/ESL classrooms and to a great deal of research that either maximize or minimize the importance of grammar instruction in EFL / ESL contexts.

Grammar has and still holds a vital position in language teaching (Ellis 2006). Nowadays, researchers are no longer focusing on the inevitability of grammar instruction. However, their current concern is to what extent teachers need to direct the learners attention towards understanding grammatical rules in meaningful contexts and natural situations.

Hinkel and Fotos (2002) report that recent research studies have found that grammar teaching is essential since it enables students to attain high level of proficiency in both accuracy and fluency. Krashen (1999) affirms that students' explicit knowledge of grammar will develop their communicative skills, enhance their language proficiency and enable them to edit or monitor their written and spoken work. Long and Richards (1987) indicate that grammar and vocabulary play key-roles in the four language skills to create and achieve communicative activities. Long (1991) suggests that in the formal education, teaching grammar is unavoidable for language teachers. Therefore, Ellis (2002) strongly advocates focusing on forms within communicative approaches in a second language curriculum.

On the other side, Krashen (1981), who strongly advocates the Natural Approach, claim that formal grammar instruction may lead to ineffective learning outcomes, moreover, students could naturally acquire the language if exposed to plentiful "comprehensible input". According to Krashen's (1981) claim, if people could learn their first language without formal instruction, they could learn a second language without

formal instruction as well. Krashen (1982, p. 21) clarifies that learners should use the comprehensible input which is “slightly beyond their present proficiency” to deduce rules. Krashen (1982, p. 21) also adds that acquisition takes place “when we understand language that contains structure that is a little beyond where we are now”. Ellis (1997, p. 48) explains that Krashen tends to adopt the so-called “zero-option” which ignores explicit grammar teaching at all and puts the emphasis on language acquisition through natural communicative activities or situations. Following Krashen’s claim, Nassaji and Fotos (2004) declare that not only grammar instruction was ineffective but also it could create learning difficulties and discourages learners from getting involved in successful communication. Therefore, they suggest that it should be abandoned.

Krashen’s claims have had a significant influence on language teaching and led to decreasing the attention towards the teaching of grammatical rules and to a greater tendency towards teaching language through natural and meaningful communicative activities. The increased focus on the learners’ use of the actual language in order to improve their communicative abilities has weakened the emphasis on grammar teaching. VanPatten (1990, p. 296) states “attention to form in the input competes with attention to meaning”. Therefore, teachers’ attitudes towards the importance of grammar teaching in foreign and second language have radically changed.

### **II.3.3 Approaches to Grammar Teaching in EFL/ESL Context**

The traditional approaches to grammar teaching which based on explicit instruction and direct practice (e.g. Deductive Approaches, Grammar Translation Method and the Focus on Forms Instructions) fell out of favor because of their inability to improve learners’ communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers 2001). Although there is almost a consistent rejection of traditional approach to grammar teaching among methodologists, this type of teaching is common and still alive in the majority of traditional educational institutions.

Four grammar-teaching approaches have dominated the contexts of second or foreign language learning: Inductive, Deductive, Focus-on-Form and Focus-on-Meaning

instructional approaches. The following sections attempt to shed some light on these approaches.

### **II.3.3.1 The Deductive Approach**

The deductive (rule-driven) grammar teaching approach is not only based on facts and statements but it is also based on prior logic. Since deductive reasoning works from the general to the specific, the grammatical rules, principles and concepts are presented first and then their applications come later. Stern (1992, p. 150) presents the schematic sequence of the deductive approach as follow: “General rule → Specific examples → Practice”. According to him, it is a process from theory to practice.

Based on presentation; explanation and then practice, the deductive approach deals with learning as a conscious process and grammar rules accordingly have to be presented explicitly by teachers or textbooks prior to the practice stage. Therefore, the teacher’s role, in the deductive approach, is to introduce the ready grammar rule to the students, explain how the new grammatical rule is formed, and the type of the context it can be used in. The teacher explicitly uses grammatical terminology to present the new rule in a form of direct instructions. After the presentation, the teacher provides his students with examples that clarify the new structure they study, and asks them to apply the rule to new more sentences afterwards. The deductive approach gets directly to the point and offers a comprehensive explanation of the new grammatical item, which makes the learning process easier, securing and timesaving. It also promotes learners’ accuracy by monitoring or editing what they say or write (Krashen 1999).

This form of teaching is “particularly appropriate for adult learners whose learning style and expectations inclined to a more analytical and reflective approach to language learning” (Thornbury1999, p. 30). Moreover, the teacher doesn’t have to deal with a lot of preparation, because it is a predictable learning experience in which the teacher selects the material and the sequence of presentation. Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) explored teachers’ views of direct grammar teaching in ESL classrooms. They found that most of the teachers agreed upon the importance of having explicit grammar

instruction combined with communicative practices. The participants also recommended the explicit instruction for adults and not for young learners.

Last but not least, the deductive approach has some quite significant disadvantages regarding grammar teaching that cannot be ignored. This approach treats grammar as a theoretically isolated area of study not as a means or a tool that enabling the students to use the language effectively which limits the demand for creativity and imagination. It also provides little room for students' participation during the lesson due to the teacher-fronted transmission-style adopted in the classroom and the scarce interaction between the teacher and learners.

### **II.3.3.2 The Inductive Approach**

The inductive (rule-discovery) grammar teaching approach comes from inductive reasoning which proceeds from particulars to generalities (Felder and Henriques 1995). Stern (1992, p. 150) presents the schematic sequence of the inductive approach as follow: "Specific examples → Practice → General rule". According to him, it is a process from theory to practice.

The inductive approach rejects the idea of presenting the grammatical rule directly to the learners. Researchers advocate this approach claim that learners obtain knowledge through exposure to real and natural language activities. Rather than explicitly presenting the rule to the learners, teachers provide them with carefully designed functional-language activities in which the targeted structure patterns are embedded. Teachers assist learners to recognize what the rule is and then make use of this rule but in examples of their own. Some strategies rely on the students themselves to deduce the rules, other strategies employ guided implicit techniques that target students' attention towards the structure through a series of "scaffolding" questions (Wood et al 1976). Then, teachers discuss the elicited rule with the learners and correct their deductions if necessary.

This type of teaching emphasizes the importance of making learners use their cognitive abilities to recognize the targeted structure. It encourages mental activities and

drives students to rely on their intelligence and abilities to analyze and make connections. Thornbury (1999, p. 54) claims that students' realization of being able to figure out what the rule is without teacher intervention will lead to more independent learning.

The inductive approach is a modern style of teaching where the student is centered and involved in all aspects of the teaching-learning process. Moreover, it offers more opportunities for the students to become deeply engaged in the classroom. It turns grammar into a "content" that the learners can communicate about, which will help learners to participate actively, practice the target language, and makes them feel active.

This approach assists teachers who have problems in maintaining their students' discipline, focus and involvement. The teachers' main role in this type of teaching is to design activities that suit the purpose of guiding their students' attention to the targeted outcomes, which is a challenging and stressful role. Therefore, the inductive approach can only be used by competent teachers with enough experiences and who are capable to adjust their methodologies to accommodate all their students' needs and individualities.

### **II.3.3.3 Focus-on-Form Teaching Approach**

Focus-on-Form type of instruction directs learners' attention to the grammatical rules in a communicative context. It refers to an approach to teaching grammar whenever errors take place but through meaning-focused activities. Long (1991, p. 45-46) clarifies it as

"Focus on Form...overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication".

Long and Robinson (1998, p. 23) added

"Focus on Form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features by the teacher and/or one or more students ... triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production".

In Focus-on-Form instruction, no L2 forms activities to be presented, but the focus is still communicative.

Two reasons were behind adopting this form of instruction. Firstly, there was a need for balancing the traditional non-communicative and communicative approaches (Long and Robinson 1998). Secondly, “comprehensible input” is inadequate to enable learners use the grammatical forms correctly, particularly the difficult ones (Swain 1995). However, Sheen (2003) insists that language teachers should be careful when counting on this type of teaching to improve the students’ oral accuracy and promote their understanding of the errors they made, because the grammar treatment is only provided when those errors hinder communication and in such a case the corrective feedback is usually quick and brief.

The term Focus-on-Form has been expanded beyond Long and Robinson’s clarification that quoted before. Doughty and Williams (1998, p. 5) point out that “there is considerable variation in how the term Focus on Form is understood and used”. Ellis (2001, p. 1) defines the Form-Focused instruction as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners”. Ellis (2006) highlights two types of Focus on Form instruction: planned Focus on Form, “where a focused task is required to elicit occasions for using a predetermined grammatical structure” (Ellis 2006, p. 100), and incidental Focus on Form, which includes incidental attention to the Form but in a communicative context.

In 2002, Burgess and Etherington conducted an exploratory study to investigate teachers’ attitudes towards grammar and grammar teaching. The results showed that the majority of participant teachers tended to use authentic materials and real life activities rather than the direct presentation of grammatical rules. The study concluded that teachers’ favor of the Focus on Form approach and their beliefs about the other grammar teaching approaches are based upon their students’ needs and expectations.

Due to their middle positions among the other approaches, the researcher personally believes that Focus on Form teaching and Inductive instruction are aimed at improving students’ accuracy and fluency, they balance the non-communicative and the communicative, the direct and the non-direct. Thus, applying these instructions in language classrooms may produce better learning outcomes.

### **II.3.3.4 Focus-on-Meaning Teaching Approach**

Focus on Meaning is an approach where classroom work is directed for communicating meaning, however, the form used to convey this meaning is not the target of the lesson. Hedge (2000) reports that Focus on Meaning came as a reaction to language teaching methods which emphasized the mastery of language forms. Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach claims that it is possible to acquire a second language within the classroom context if learners are exposed to plentiful "comprehensible input" and given the opportunity to communicate using the targeted language in a natural context.

However, the researcher believes that Focus on Meaning has lost its popularity and became less important in language teaching because the recent researches results have shown that drawing students' attention to the language forms ensure better performance in the target language. Moreover, the application of this method in the EFL context is quite hard and has some limitations among which is the examination system, the non English speaking environment surrounded the students, and the fact that many nonnative English-speaking teachers have a lack of communicative proficiency to teach grammar implicitly (Ellis 2001).

### **II.3.3.5 The Best Method to Approach Grammar: A Critical Eye**

Over the past several years, applied linguists, grammarians, education researchers and teachers have heavily investigated the different ways of approaching grammar. They have attempted to explore, examine and determine the best approaches in which grammar could be taught both interestingly and effectively in EFL/ESL classrooms. None of their studies has concluded to an unquestionable conclusive method to grammar teaching. As Ellis (1994, p. 646) states "it is probably premature to reach any firm conclusions regarding what type of formal instruction works best". The researcher personally believes that there is no certain or fixed grammar teaching model with which teachers can use to treat different students properly and there is no single approach that can assure successful results of language teaching as well. Hinkel and Fotos (2002) affirm that there is no single

best approach to grammar teaching that could work in all contexts and with all kinds of learners and teachers.

### **II.3.4 The importance of Grammatical Terminology**

Three main studies have discussed the importance of using grammatical terms in second or foreign language learning. Firstly, Mitchell and Redmond (1993) justify their disapproval of using grammar terminology that the fundamental target of foreign or second language learning is to promote communicative skills that help learners to communicate in the target language and not to talk explicitly about it. Secondly, in an opposing point of view, Carter (1990) supports employing terminology and claims that metalanguage provides “an economic and precise way of discussing particular functions and purposes” of language. The third study, Larsen-Freeman (1991), adopts the view of “it depends on the learners’ sophistication, maturity and knowledge”.

### **II.3.5 The Role of Students’ L1 in Grammar Classes**

Language teachers have adopted different points of views about using, or even referring to, their students’ L1 in grammar teaching. Borg (1998) investigated the grammatical instructional practices of a group of experienced teachers, and found that teachers’ regular reference to students’ L1 was driven by their beliefs that students’ better understanding of the target grammar and their awareness of the source of language errors were due to the L1 interference. In a different example, the participants in Cheng’s (1999) research expressed their doubts regarding the effectiveness of using students’ L1 in foreign or second language teaching especially with young learners.

### **II.3.6 Error Treatment**

Many error treatment supportive studies (DeKeyser 1993; Doughty 1991 & Ellis 1989) found that grammatical knowledge and corrective feedback can certainly promote foreign or second language learning. In addition to these positive research findings, learners themselves sometimes demand the need for grammar treatment. Borg (1998), affirming the same view, found that “the inclusion of error analysis during oral fluency work by the teacher was partly due to the fulfillment of students’ desire and expectations”.

However, other opposing studies (Hammond 1988 & Krashen 1982) argue that error treatment has “no value” in terms of speeding up foreign or second language learning and, on the contrary, it may cause negative responses among learners. A similar opposing study by Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that teachers’ overwhelming tendencies on the use of recasts and elicitation have led to more students’ reformulation of their own inaccurate utterances.

Schulz’s (1996) study compared students and teachers’ attitudes about the role of explicit grammar and error correction in EFL context. Overall, It was found that the majority of the students believe that their written and spoken errors should be corrected by their teachers, however, only 48% of the participant teachers believed so. The students’ responses reflected were more positive attitudes towards direct instruction of grammar rules than their teachers. The students supported the claim that grammar instructions and practices can lead to improving their communicative skills rapidly.

## **II.4 Shortcomings of Previous Research**

The existing published studies on teachers’ beliefs about grammar teaching have many limitations. Firstly, the available researches do not represent the large majority of language teaching settings around the world. It was not an easy task to find adequate literature to support and enrich this study due to the lack of studies in this particular domain. The absence of studies conducted to compare or contrast between native and

nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers working together in a similar context to the UAE has led the researcher to rely on studies carried out in different contexts. Secondly, most of the available studies have used native speaker teachers, working with adult learners, in university or private school settings, where classes are small. Apart from (Al-Siyabi 2009), none of the previous studies have been carried out in government high schools where teachers are confronted with many contextual factors and teaching large mixed ability classes. Due to this gap in literature, Borg (2003) recommends and encourages researchers to conduct more studies into teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching in less developed, non-western contexts, in which the teachers are non-native speakers of English, teaching prescribed curriculum to unmotivated students in government school settings. Finally, most of the studies found in literature utilized questionnaire and interviews as methods for data collection. These two methods are helpful in eliciting teachers stated beliefs and practices but they are not appropriate to judge their actual classroom practices.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodology utilized in the study. It is divided into six sections. The first and the second sections are a detailed description of the research design, the research context and subjects of the study. The third section describes in full detail the instruments used for data collection. The fourth section illustrates the procedure of applying the data collection instruments. The fifth and sixth sections explain how the data is processed, analyzed and presented.

#### **III.1 Research Design**

The main purpose of this case study is to investigate the native English-speaking EFL teachers (NESTs) and the nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers' (NNESTs) stated beliefs towards grammar teaching and their practices when teaching grammar. It aims to collect evidence of those teachers' instructional practices and examine the relationships between their thoughts and actions. Furthermore, the study attempts to investigate the probable contextual factors that influence the transformation of beliefs into practice. Thus, the present study aimed to provide answers to the following research questions: (1) What beliefs about grammar teaching do the native English-speaking EFL teachers (NESTs) and the nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers (NNESTs) working for ADEC high schools hold? (2) What instructional strategies and practices do those teachers employ when teaching grammar? (3) To what extent do NESTs and NNESTs' pedagogical beliefs match their grammar instructional practices? (4) What are the influencing factors that may hinder those teachers to transmit their stated beliefs into actual classroom practices?

### **III.2 Research Context and Subjects of the Study**

The context framing the current study is 20 Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) government high schools in the two cities of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. Due to the limited budget, resources and time, only 6 schools (4 for males and 2 for females) were selected as the research setting. The subjects of the study were 60 native and nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers (30 NESTs and 30 NNESTs) working at the Institute of Applied Technology (IAT). The IAT high schools were selected as targeted population of the study because the researcher is employed there and can have a better opportunity to conduct the study. To mark the exceptionality of the English language program IAT high schools provide to their students, a set of internationally accredited textbooks are employed, native English-speaking teachers along with nonnative English-speaking teachers are recruited not only to teach English but also other subjects, and the number of periods for English classes vary between 8 to 12 forty-five minute periods a week.

The total number of participants in the first part of this study (the questionnaire) was 60 native and nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers (30 NESTs and 30 NNESTs). Tables 1 and 2 show their demographic information. All of the participants were expatriate workers. The majority of the teachers (92.5%) stated that their highest educational qualification was a Bachelors degree, in addition to a postgraduate TESOL certificate (CELTA or TEFLA) in language teaching. Their age varied from 27 to 55, and their teaching experiences varied from 3 to more than 20 years.

The targeted population of the second and third parts of the study (the interviews and the classroom observations) consisted of 2 NESTs (one British and one Canadian) in comparison with 2 NNESTs who speak the same L1 (Arabic) of their students (an Egyptian and a Jordanian). Table 3 shows their background information. To ensure the variety of the cultural and educational background of the participants which will definitely reflect on their teaching beliefs and practices, the second and third parts of the study were to target 2 NESTs coming from 2 different western countries (The UK and Canada) located in 2 different continents and 2 NNESTs coming from 2 different Arab countries (Egypt and Jordan) located in 2 different continents.

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were employed. The selection of these instruments for data collection based on what exists in literature regarding teacher' beliefs about grammar teaching. The majority of studies in this field have employed questionnaires, classroom practices observations and interviews for data collection.

**Table 1: NESTs' Demographic Information**

Category	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Nationality	British	7	23.3%
	American	6	20%
	Canadian	15	50%
	Australian	2	6.7%
Gender	Male	20	66.7%
	Female	10	33.3%
Qualifications	Master's Degree	0	0%
	Post Graduate TESOL Certificate	30	100%
	Bachelor's Degree	30	100%
Age	20 – 30	7	23.3%
	31 – 40	13	43.3%
	41 – 50	6	20%
	51 – 60	4	13.4%
Native Language	English	30	100%
Years of teaching experience	1 – 5	13	43.3%
	6 – 10	15	50%
	11 – 15	0	0%
	16 – 20	2	6.7%
	More than 20 years	0	0%

**Table 2: NNESTs' Demographic Information**

Category	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Nationality	Egyptian	6	20%
	Jordanian	5	16.7%
	Lebanese	4	13.3%
	Iraqi	3	10%
	Tunisian	3	10%
	South African	2	6.7%
	British	1	3.3%
	American	1	3.3%
	Canadian	2	6.7%
	Indian	3	10%
Gender	Male	20	66.7%
	Female	10	33.3%
Qualifications	Master's Degree	6	20%

	Post Graduate TESOL Certificate	24	80%
	Bachelor's Degree	30	100%
Age	20 – 30	3	10%
	31 – 40	15	50%
	41 – 50	10	30.3%
	51 – 60	2	6.7%
Native Language	Arabic	25	85%
	Afrikaans	2	5%
	Hindi	3	10%
Years of teaching experience	1 – 5	0	0%
	6 – 10	4	13.3%
	11 – 15	12	40%
	16 – 20	10	33.3%
	More than 20 years	4	13.3%

**Table 3: Interviewees' Background Information**

Name	Nationality	Native Language	Age	Teaching Experience	Gender	Highest Qualification
Jonathan	British	English	40	15	Male	BA+TEFLA
Gus	Canadian	English	39	13	Male	BA+CELTA
Omar	Jordanian	Arabic	44	20	Male	Masters
Ali	Egyptian	Arabic	40	16	Male	BA+CELTA

### III.3 Research Instruments

The study comprised a questionnaire, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews for data collection. The researcher collected quantitative data through the teachers' questionnaires, and qualitative data through the classroom observations and the semi-structured interviews. A quantitative approach helps the researcher to capture the responses of a certain number of people to a specific set of questions speedily and thus, gives a broad, generalizable set of findings, while a qualitative method generates enough data from a smaller number of people, which increases understanding of the cases and the situations studied but are not generalizable. That is why adopting both is seen as complementary methods (Chi 2003).

#### III.3.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is the most widely used research instrument in the field of teachers beliefs and cognition, because it is economic, direct, easier to administer, efficient for collecting large amounts of data from a large number of respondents, and considered to

be the least threatening tool. However, questionnaires have a number of disadvantages, For example, participant teachers may interpret the questionnaire statements differently and provide inaccurate or superficial responses as Kagan (1990, p. 427) states “the standardized statements may mask or misrepresent a particular teacher’s highly personalized perceptions and definitions”.

This study utilized an anonymous self-report questionnaire to elicit teachers’ beliefs about grammar teaching and their stated classroom practices when teaching grammar. The questionnaire obtained both qualitative and quantitative data as it contained close-ended statements on a five point Likert scale, as well as an open-ended question that was optional to add comments on an issue in detail. The questionnaire statements were mainly adapted from a similar study (Lee Kit 2008, p. 81-82) on the basis of the research questions, the study population and context, and the key characteristics of grammar teaching approaches.

The four-page questionnaire consisted of three sections (see Appendix A) as follows: Section one, is designed to establish a general profile of the participants. In this section, participants responded to seven background information questions included their nationality, age, academic qualifications, first language, and years of teaching experience.

Section two, consists of 27 close-ended statements in which participants were asked to rate their beliefs towards grammar instruction on a five-point, Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The Likert-type scale is the most widely used method because it is simple, flexible, reliable and it doesn’t require judges (Karavas-Doukas 1996 & Dörnyei 2003). The statements covered three main themes regarding grammar teaching as follows; 1) beliefs about the role of grammar instruction, 2) beliefs about approaches to grammar pedagogy, and 3) beliefs about error correction and feedback. These three themes will be discussed in further details in Chapter 4. In Section three, the participant teachers are given the opportunity to freely report the contextual factors that may hinder translating their stated beliefs into actual practices.

The questionnaire limits in-depth exploration of teachers' beliefs and practices because they cannot capture teachers' behavior or actions, they can only record what teachers report about their own actions and behaviors (Borg 2006). Therefore, Pajares (1992, p. 327) stresses that questionnaires need to be supported by additional instruments such as open-ended interviews, and observation of behavior "... if richer and more accurate inferences are to be made". Thus, semi-structured interviews were employed to attain more in-depth information and to better understand teachers' perspectives and practices.

### **III.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews**

In spite of questionnaires effectiveness in collecting large amount of data, Borg (2006, p. 174) stresses that questionnaires are unable to examine the complex nature of teachers' mentality and beliefs. Such drawbacks of questionnaires provoked Pajares (1992, p. 327) to suggest "the inclusion of open-ended interviews, and observation of behaviour if richer and more valid inferences are to be made".

Semi-structured interviewing is commonly used for classroom research due to its effectiveness in understanding participants' personal opinions, beliefs and perspectives. The interactive nature of interviews gives the four voluntary participants (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) more opportunities to reflect upon their beliefs and allows the researcher to collect more in-depth data regarding the topic under study. The main aim of these 20-minute semi-structured interviews was to gather qualitative data to support and understand the data obtained from the questionnaire.

A list of interview questions (Appendix B) was used to help the researcher to follow the conversation and to ask for more clarifications or elaborations on certain points. The first part of each interview targeted the four participants' background information and the sources of their beliefs. The second part addressed their beliefs about grammar teaching covering the same four themes used in the questionnaire. The four interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

### **III.3.3 Classroom observations**

In addition to data collected via questionnaires and interviews, Borg (2006, p. 247) asserts that collecting data of actual classroom practices is highly important. In order to achieve this aim, unstructured classroom observations were conducted. Each of the four interviewed teachers was observed teaching one grammatical item. To minimize any “response effect”, the four teachers (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) were not made aware of which specific aspects of grammar teaching would be observed.

For the same five reasons provided by Creswell (1994), the researcher decided to use the tools of a questionnaire, interviews and observations in conducting his study. Firstly, because of triangulation by which the information obtained during observations confirms the data from the questionnaire and the interviews. Secondly, the interviews can supplement the questionnaire results by investigating issues in more depth. Thirdly, the interviewees can provide justifications for any unexpected or unusual answers to the questionnaire items. Fourthly, the data obtained from the interviews may bring an additional perspective to the study that was not addressed by the questionnaire items. Finally, a third research tool reinforces and adds more scope to the study.

### **III.4 Data Collection Procedure**

The present study was conducted during the second semester of 2010-2011 scholastic year. Data collection occurred over a period of four months. The collection procedure took place in the following three stages:

#### **III.4.1 Stage One**

Prior to the actual implementation of the questionnaire, several actions were taken to increase the reliability and validity of the questionnaire:

1. The questionnaire statements were placed according to the three themes of teachers’ beliefs in order to ease the process of data analysis.
2. Four experienced IAT EFL lead teachers reviewed the clarity and suitability of the first draft of the questionnaire.

3. Based on their recommendations, some modifications were made to introduction, instructions and statements.
4. A pilot study was conducted by 4 teachers (2 native and 2 non-native English speaking EFL teachers), who did not participate in the study, to check whether there was any confusion or ambiguity to the main sample in the research.
5. The pilot study revealed that the questionnaire was clear and ready to be administered. It also provided the estimated time needed to complete the questionnaire.
6. The ethical approval from the researcher's dissertation supervisor was obtained.
7. The researcher obtained all the necessary approvals to conduct the study on IAT premises and with IAT staff.
8. The researcher handed the questionnaire and a thank you letter to the participants.

### **III.4.2 Stage Two**

1. After the questionnaires had been completed, the researcher analyzed the data.
2. Out of 18 teachers, who agreed not only to participate in a follow-up interview but also to be observed teaching grammar in their classrooms, the researcher selected only four teachers (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) who teach the same level students (12<sup>th</sup> graders). The researcher contacted the four teachers to appoint the appropriate time for formal interviews.
3. The initial interview questions were piloted by the same four experienced teachers who piloted the questionnaire. Limited changes in wording were made as a result of this piloting, and the revised version was further trialed with two more EFL teachers (a native and a non-native English speakers).
4. In order to avoid the problem of "social desirability" (Cohen, 1998, p. 29) in which the participants might be hesitant to talk in the presence of others, all interviews were held individually.
5. All the interviewees were asked the same questions in the same order. Each interview lasted between 20 minutes and half an hour. In each interview, the researcher employed field notes and, after obtaining the participants' approval, the interviews were audio recorded.

### **III.4.3 Stage Three**

1. After the four audio-recorded interviews had been transcribed and analyzed, the researcher contacted the same four teachers who had been interviewed to appoint appropriate time for classroom observations.
2. Each observation session lasted for 45 minutes. The researcher took field-notes and collected samples of students' work.

## **III.5 Data Analysis**

### **III.5.1 Questionnaire Data Analysis**

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Teachers' responses in section one and two of the questionnaire were calculated using frequency count first and then converted into percentages (percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percentile). Qualitative responses to the open-ended question in section four of the questionnaire were analyzed and categorized according to meaning.

### **III.5.2 Interview Data Analysis**

Data obtained from the interviews transcriptions and field notes were read several times and then categorized according to the items of the questionnaire four main themes. The main features of the four (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) interviewees' beliefs about grammar teaching and learning were identified and comparatively employed to find out the extent of consistency between the interviewees' reported beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

### **III.5.3 Observational Data Analysis**

The four participant NESTs and NNESTs' grammar instructional behaviour was observed, field-noted and then selectively transcribed and described. The data analysis highlighted themes like grammar teaching and learning practice, use of grammatical terminology, error correction and use of students' L1 (for NNESTs). The data obtained formed the basis to find out the extent of consistency between the observed teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices.

## **III.6 Data Presentation**

### **III.6.1 Questionnaire Data**

The participant teachers' quantitative responses are presented in three main sections: teachers' stated beliefs about the role of grammar instruction, participants' approaches to grammar teaching, and error treatment. The participants' qualitative responses to the open-ended questions have been presented to reach a richer understanding of the teachers' thoughts about grammar teaching.

### **III.6.2 Interview and Observational Data**

The data obtained from the four interviews and the four observation sessions, are presented as two main cases. Each case manifests two individual teachers' (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) personal beliefs about grammar teaching. The data presented as a parallel comparison between the participants' self-reported beliefs and their actual classroom practices, which enables the researcher to examine the level of consistency between their self-reported beliefs and their actual classroom practices. The data are analyzed in terms of five main themes: the role and the approaches of grammar teaching, error treatment and feedback and use of grammatical terminology and students' L1.

## CHAPTER IV

### Research Findings

This chapter presents the results of the survey questionnaire, classroom observations and focused interviews. The data and the results obtained from the 27 close-ended statements of section 2 in the questionnaire will contribute towards answering (RQ1) and (RQ2). The qualitative results obtained from the open-ended question in section 3, classroom observations, and the four interviews will not only consolidate the data collected from the questionnaire answering the previous two questions but will also provide answers to (RQ3) and (RQ4).

The research findings are presented in three sections; (a) teachers’ stated beliefs about grammar teaching; (b) teachers’ reported classroom practices; and (c) the level of consistency between teachers’ beliefs and classrooms practices. A summary of the results of each component (pre-established five components that were used in designing the questionnaire) is first described, followed by a table showing the frequency counts and the percentage for each item included in this component.

#### IV.1 Teachers’ Stated Beliefs about Grammar Teaching

All 60 teachers (30 NESTs and 30 NNESTs) who participated in this study responded to all the close-ended statements in Section Two of the questionnaire that was intended to investigate their beliefs about the four components which represent different aspects and key issues of grammar teaching (see Appendix A).

##### IV.1.1 Beliefs about the Role of Grammar Instruction

**Table 4: Beliefs about the role of grammar instruction**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree		Not Sure		Disagree & Strongly Disagree	
		Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs
1.	Grammar is the most important component in language learning and English classes should allocate plenty of	0 0%	5 17%	0 0%	5 17%	30 100%	20 66%

	time to teach grammar rules.						
2.	Students can learn grammar through experiencing language in natural use.	20 66%	16 53%	2 7%	8 27%	8 27%	6 20%
3.	Formal instruction helps students to produce grammatically correct language.	20 66%	22 73%	3 10%	5 17%	7 24%	3 10%
4.	Direct instruction in the rules of grammar is crucial if students are to learn to communicate accurately.	18 60%	17 57%	0 0%	3 10%	12 40%	10 33%
5.	By mastering the rules of grammar, students can capably communicate in English.	6 20%	5 17%	3 10%	6 20%	24 80%	19 63%
6.	Mastering the grammar rules of a language does not guarantee the students' ability neither to produce nor to use the language appropriately.	20 66%	18 60%	5 17%	5 17%	5 17%	7 24%

Adapted from Lee Kit (2008, p. 81-82)

Ns=NESTs NNs=NNEST

Statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 in the first component were meant to investigate teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar instruction in language learning (see Table 4). Interestingly, all participant NESTs (100%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that grammar is the most important component in language learning, but what makes it more interesting is that 66% of the respondent NNESTs shared the same belief which is not that significant difference. 66% of respondent NESTs and 53% of NNESTs agreed that it is possible for students to learn grammar through experiencing language in natural situations. However, same percentage of participants (66% of NESTs and 53% of NNESTs) responded positively to the statement that grammar formal instruction does play a role in facilitating learners' production of grammatically correct language input.

Such strong appreciation both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) have showed to the "form-focused" grammar instruction is an obvious consequence of their belief that it can improve their students' linguistic performance. According to Burgess and Etherington (2002), "through direct and explicit grammar, learners especially those with lower abilities can easily notice the existence of a certain linguistic feature which is the essential starting point for language acquisition".

Although 60% of NESTs and 57% of NNESTs believe that the direct instruction of grammar rules helps improve students' oral accuracy, it seems that 80% NESTs and 63% NNESTs did not agree with the effectiveness of such approach in developing their

students' communicative skills. However, when they were asked about if their students could produce or use the language appropriately after mastering the target grammatical rules, only 17% of the NSETs and 24% of the NNESTs responded positively.

The above findings reveal that while the majority of both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) believe in the value of the “form-focused” grammar instruction. They also recognize that a teaching approach that focuses on form and accuracy is insufficient and does not guarantee successful and productive communications.

#### IV.1.2 Beliefs in Grammar Pedagogy

The second theme is grammar pedagogy, aimed to explore teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching approaches. To elicit NESTs and NNESTs' beliefs about the different teaching approaches existed in literature, this theme has targeted: Inductive, Deductive, Focus-on-Form and Focus-on-Meaning teaching approaches.

**Table 5: Beliefs about approaches to grammar teaching**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree		Not Sure		Disagree & Strongly Disagree	
		Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs
7.	My students expect me to teach grammar rules directly.	20 66%	18 60%	3 10%	6 20%	7 24%	6 20%
8.	Grammar is best taught explicitly (deductively), teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises.	18 60%	20 66%	5 17%	1 4%	7 24%	9 30%
9.	Grammar is best taught implicitly (inductively), students should examine many examples and find out the grammar rules (patterns) themselves.	9 30%	9 30%	3 10%	5 17%	18 60%	16 53%
10.	Direct explanation of grammar makes my students feel secured and ensure their straightforward grasp of grammar.	20 66%	20 66%	3 10%	5 17%	7 24%	5 17%
11.	If they know it, teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.	24 80%	6 20%	0 0%	6 20%	6 20%	18 60%
12.	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in	20 66%	17 57%	3 10%	5 17%	7 24%	8 27%

	better learning and understanding.						
<b>13.</b>	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.	20 66%	22 73%	3 10%	3 10%	7 24%	5 17%
<b>14.</b>	Grammar is best taught through work which mainly focuses on communication and shifts to grammatical form if necessary.	18 60%	16 53%	3 10%	6 20%	9 30%	8 27%
<b>15.</b>	Teachers should pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson.	5 17%	7 24%	3 10%	3 10%	22 73%	20 66%
<b>16.</b>	Teachers are advised to employ grammar terminology when teaching grammar.	0 0%	6 20%	15 50%	6 20%	15 50%	18 60%

Adapted from Lee Kit (2008, p. 81-82)

Ns=NESTs NNs=NNESTs

Responses to statement 13 (66% for NESTs and 73% for NNESTs) showed that both groups do not limit themselves to the use of Focus-on-Form or Focus-on-Meaning teaching approaches in their grammar instruction. In fact, they tend to adopt a sort of a balanced approach that addresses both the form and the meaning of the structures. This has also been confirmed in both groups' responses to statement 14, as 60% of NESTs and 53% of NNESTs agreed that they should focus on communication in their grammar instruction but they have to shift to teach grammatical forms when necessary. Both groups' (NESTs and NNESTs) preferences for a balanced approach correlate with Long and Robinson's (1998, p. 23) views that the topmost task for language teachers is "not to choose between form-based and meaning-based instruction but to find the best balance of these two orientations."

Although 66% of NNESTs opted for explicit (deductive) grammar, only 30% of the same group expressed their preference to teach grammar implicitly (inductively). Interestingly, 60% of the participant NESTs showed the same preference as NNESTs do to teach grammar explicitly, while 30% only of the same group (NESTs) expressed their preference of the inductive grammar teaching approach. In the same vein, more than half of the teachers (66 of NESTs and 57% of NNESTs) expressed their dissatisfaction towards students' self-discovery of grammatical rules as they consider it time consuming, but they have acknowledge its' effectiveness in grammar learning.

The responses to statement 11 related to the use of L1 in explaining complex grammatical rules showed striking differences between the two groups. While 80% of the

NESTs stated that they would use their students' L1 to explain grammar rules if they knew it, only 20% of the NNESTs, who share the same L1 as their students, agreed with the same statement.

Statements 7 and 10 investigated the participants' (NESTs and NNESTs) beliefs about their students' grammar learning expectations and preferences. More than 60% of both groups stated that their students expect them to present grammar rules directly. More over, the same respondents stated that those students would feel more secured and would show greater understanding of grammar rules if those rules were presented to them directly.

Participants' responses to statements 15 and 16 came, partially, as expected. 73% of NESTs and 66% of NNESTs stated that they prefer to plan for their grammar activities before bringing them to class. Using grammatical terminology is very controversial, only 60% of NNESTs agreed to employ grammar terminology in their grammar instruction and 50% of NESTs were not sure of the efficiency of employing grammar terminology in their grammar teaching.

### IV.1.3 Beliefs about Error Correction and Feedback Approaches

**Table 6: Beliefs about error treatment**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree		Not Sure		Disagree & Strongly Disagree	
		Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs
17.	Since making errors is a normal part of learning, a teacher's corrective feedback is a waste of time, as it does not help learners eliminate errors.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	30 100%	30 100%
18.	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.	22 73%	20 66%	3 10%	5 17%	5 17%	5 17%
19.	Students' spoken grammatical errors should be corrected immediately in order to avoid imperfect learning.	3 10%	5 17%	3 10%	3 10%	24 80%	22 73%

20.	Students' spoken grammatical errors should be corrected only when they cause difficulty in communicating the right meaning.	22 73%	20 66%	5 17%	5 17%	3 10%	5 17%
21.	Students' written grammatical errors should be corrected immediately in order to avoid imperfect learning.	15 50%	16 53%	12 40%	9 30%	3 10%	5 17%
22.	Students' written grammatical errors should be corrected only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	22 73%	20 66%	5 17%	5 17%	3 10%	5 17%
23.	My students dislike being corrected in class.	18 60%	15 50%	9 30%	9 30%	3 10%	6 20%
24.	Form-focused correction helps learners to enhance their grammatical performance.	22 73%	24 80%	3 10%	3 10%	5 17%	3 10%
25.	Teachers should only underline students' written grammatical errors.	6 20%	9 30%	7 17%	5 17%	17 57%	16 53%
26.	Teachers should only annotate students' written grammatical errors with marking codes.	6 20%	9 30%	9 30%	5 17%	15 50%	16 53%
27.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms by themselves.	22 73%	20 66%	3 10%	5 17%	5 17%	5 17%

Adapted from Lee Kit (2008, p. 81-82)

Ns=NESTs NNs=NNESTs

The fourth theme aimed to identify teachers' beliefs regarding feedback and correcting students' grammatical errors. The importance of grammatical accuracy in learners' language performance can be recognized from the positive responses of both groups to statement 18 in Table 6. 73% of NESTs and 66% of NNESTs tend to rely on form-focused correction in their grammar teaching. Moreover, 73% of NESTs and 80% of NNESTs agreed that students' grammatical performance could be improved through form-focused correction (statement 24). Participants' positive responses to error treatment correlate with Allwright and Bailey's (1991) beliefs that learners can adjust their expectations and revise their input through teachers' corrective feedback.

Although the majority of the participants (73% of NESTs and 66% of NNESTs) responded positively to error treatment, it doesn't necessarily mean that they always tend to correct their students' grammatical errors as soon as they happen. More than 50% of the participants (NESTs and NNESTs) have reported that their students dislike being corrected on the spot (statement 23). However, replies to statements 19 and 20 suggested that quite a large majority of respondents tend not to correct every spoken grammatical

error (73% replied positively) but to only correct those that interfere with the clarity of the message. Regarding the treatment of grammar written errors, more than 50% of both NESTs and NNESTs insisted on correcting their students' written mistakes as soon as they appear (statement 21).

Concerning the marking strategy teachers favor to employ when dealing with students written grammatical errors, both groups' responses to statements 25 and 26 suggests that they may favor to use mixed marking strategies rather than to limit themselves to an exclusive one. Furthermore, 73% of NESTs and 66% of NNESTs supported the idea that students should be given the opportunity to think about their own errors (statement 27).

## **IV.2 Teachers' Responses to the Open-ended Question**

**Are there any differences between your beliefs about grammar teaching and your actual practices in the classroom? If yes, what are the reasons that may lead to such differences?**

The 42 (23 NESTs and 19 NNESTs) teachers out of 60 who responded to this open-ended question gave similar responses. More than half of the respondents clearly stated that there are some inconsistency between their beliefs and their actual classroom practices. This is due to various reasons related mostly to the work setting where they teach such as the students' proficiency level which is far below the requested outcomes, the pressure of the current test-formats, the length and the type of the syllabus text books which is far beyond the students' level. Other reasons for such inconstancy are; the class density, workloads and busy schedules, lack of teaching aids, the students' previous learning experiences, time constraints and the policies and restrictions of the workplace. However, about 40% of the respondents from both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) insisted that they implement their beliefs in the classrooms.

### **IV.3 Beliefs and Classroom Practices of Four EFL Teachers**

As highlighted in section 3.3.2, Borg (2006, p. 174) stresses the questionnaires inability to stand on the complex nature of teachers' mentality and beliefs. The drawbacks of using questionnaires provoked Pajares (1992, p. 327) to suggest "the inclusion of open-ended interviews, and observation of behaviour if richer and more valid inferences are to be made".

This section is an attempt; firstly, to study the inner beliefs about grammar pedagogy of four EFL teachers (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) through in-depth interviews; and secondly, to compare their stated beliefs to their actual classroom practices through classroom observations. The main objective is to investigate the relationships between the two and to stand on any possible influencing factors in case if inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices were observed. In order to examine the extent to which the interviewees' actual classroom practices are influenced by their stated beliefs, the qualitative data for each pedagogical aspect, obtained through the four interviews, is followed by a summary table which presents a parallel comparison between the participants' self-reported beliefs and their actual classroom practices that were field-noted during the four observation sessions.

In the following presentation, each piece of qualitative data is followed by an indication of the source (a code number) as follow: (Ns1) followed by the extract number refers to extracts taken from the interview of the NEST number 1 (Jonathan from UK), while (Ns2) followed by the extract number refers to extracts taken from the NEST number 2 (Gus from Canada), (see table 8). On the other side, (NNs1) followed by the extract number refers to extracts taken from the interview of the NNEST number 1 (Omar from Jordon), while (NNs2) and followed by the extract number refers to extracts taken from the interview of the NNEST number 2 (Ali from Egypt), (see table 14).

### IV.3.1 Beliefs and Classroom Practices of Two Native English-speaking EFL Teachers (NESTs)

**Table 7: Summary of NESTs' classroom observations database**

Teacher	Students' Grade	Class Size	Students' Ability	Teaching Focus	Length of Observational Session
Jonathan	12	16	Average Mixed-abilities Class	Present Perfect Continuous	45 minutes
Gus	12	16	Average Mixed-abilities Class	Passive Voice	45 minutes

#### IV.3.1.1 NESTs' Beliefs about the Role and the Importance of Grammar in EFL Context

During their interviews, Jonathan and Gus appeared to have mixed feelings about how important grammar teaching is in English language learning. Both teachers stated that grammar does play a crucial role in the EFL situation, but it does not guarantee to enhance EFL students' communicative abilities. Gus commented (Extract Ns2.3)

Extract Ns2.3

...I think... grammar teaches them how...how to use the language accurately, of course in...in their writings, but sole grammar teaching will never lead to...fluency unless the students practice the target language in real life situations and...and get exposed to natural contexts.

Jonathan provided evidence that teachers sometimes give up their pedagogical beliefs due to certain contextual factors. Jonathan said (Extract Ns.1.3)

(Extract Ns.1.3)

umm...I think...I think grammar does need to be taught in the EFL situation...I do support the communicative approach and ...students got to learn the language through natural exposure, but... with the EFL learners...I think... grammar rules have to be highlighted and explained.

#### IV.3.1.2 NESTs' Approaches to Grammar Teaching

The second theme, which is grammar pedagogy, aimed to explore NESTs' beliefs about grammar teaching approaches. This theme is divided into two main categories to elicit teachers' beliefs about the different teaching approaches existed in literature including 1) Inductive Vs Deductive approach and 2) Focus-on-Form Vs Meaning-based approach.

### IV.3.1.2.1 NESTs beliefs about Inductive and Deductive Approaches

Jonathan expressed his strong support to the inductive approach and valued this approach effect on motivating students' long-term learning. Jonathan also added (Extract Ns1.4)

(Extract Ns1.4)

Well...If students can discover how the grammar rules function themselves, then...then...they... they are more likely not only to...to keep remembering them but also to develop a deeper understanding.

Interestingly, and seemed to be influenced by the level of his students and their learning preferences and expectations, Jonathan abandoned his favorable indirect discovery approach and resorted to the direct and explicit instruction. He added (Extract Ns1.4):

(Extract Ns1.4)

There is times when...direct grammar explanations are...are the most efficient way to present a new grammatical rule.

Seconding Jonathan's attitude, Gus did not limit himself to one specific approach. He said (Extract Ns2.4):

(Extract Ns2.4)

I think it depends on the level of the students...I think lower level students should engage in more direct grammar explanation until...till... they become more proficient in the language...then the teacher can...then...use more indirect grammar...grammar discovery work.

**Table 8: NESTs' beliefs about Inductive and Deductive approaches VS their actual teaching practices**

Teacher	Self-stated Beliefs	Classroom Practices	Factors for Inconstancy
Jonathan	Admires inductive teaching as it promotes long-term learning	He asked students only to change from present perfect into present perfect continuous.	- Less able students' needs
Gus	Favors to transmit form direct to indirect grammar teaching	He gave examples then asked students to produce similar ones. Then, he did his best to explain the structure, meaning and formation of passive voice.	None

### IV.3.1.2.2 NESTs' Beliefs about Focus-on-Form and Focus-on-Meaning Approaches

When asked about the importance of focus on forms or communicating meaning in grammar learning, Gus commented (Extract Ns2.5)

(Extract Ns2.5)

Okay...well...well...they're both important and...one leads to the other...You need the form to be able to communicate...so if you only talk about the form and...never give the chance for the students to use it in a communicative situation, then... well...they won't retain it and it certainly won't increase their communicative competency... and...If you...if you only focus on form you may help your students to pass a grammar test but...but not to build their competency in...in actual communicative use of the language.

Unlike Gus, and influenced by his students' language performance, Jonathan tends to attach much importance to form-focused instruction. He clarified (Extract Ns1.5)

(Extract Ns1.5)

Well...I'd rather to focus well...on form than on meaning...If my students don't know the form they won't be able to produce correct sentences.

**Table 9: NESTs' beliefs about Focus on Form and on Meaning approaches VS their actual teaching practices**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Self-stated Beliefs</b>	<b>Classroom Practices</b>	<b>Factors for Inconstancy</b>
Jonathan	Appreciates form-focused teaching since it leads to successful production of the targeted language.	He dedicated all his efforts to the teaching of present perfect continuous tense.	None
Gus	Values both, form and meaning focused instructions.	He dedicated the whole class time to teach passive voice forms.	- Limited instructional and planning time. - Less able students' needs.

### **IV.3.1.3 NESTs' Beliefs about the Use of Grammatical Terminology**

In discussing the role of terminology in his grammar teaching, Jonathan commented (Extract Ns1.6):

(Extract Ns1.6)

Ok...well...I believe teaching Arab students some basic grammatical terms like...like the parts of speech is helpful as they...they may facilitate my explanation of grammatical rules.

Thus, according to his point of view, employing grammatical terminologies is essential in his grammar teaching as they help students better understand and learn the targeted rules.

Gus has partially affirmed the value of providing his students with a sort of basic knowledge about grammatical terminology of the rules being taught. However, he also added (Extract Ns2.6):

(Extract Ns2.6)

It's helpful to teach my students some common terms...but not those complicated ones...they are far beyond the students' level.

It seems that Gus deeply believes that his use of grammatical terminology should not contradict with the main aim of EFL learning. Thus, during his grammar instruction, Gus always keeps in mind his students' language abilities. His refusal to use complex grammatical terminology seems to correlate with Larsen-Freeman's (1991, p. 292) claim that grammar instruction should be "formulated in a way which matches the maturity, knowledge and sophistication of the learners".

**Table 10: NESTs' beliefs about the use of grammatical terms and their actual classroom practices**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Self-stated Beliefs</b>	<b>Classroom Practices</b>	<b>Factors for Inconstancy</b>
Jonathan	Believes the use of grammatical terms is helpful as it facilitates his grammatical explanations.	He used "verb-to-be in present form + being" and "past participle" when he explained the form of present perfect continuous.	None
Gus	Tends to use uncomplicated terms, the ones that suit his students' cognitive abilities.	He made a significant use of grammatical terms in his explanation of passive structure and passive verb form.	Item difficulty is high and beyond many of his students' levels.

#### **IV.3.1.4 NESTs' Beliefs about Students' Errors Treatment and Feedback**

When asked about the way they deal with students' spoken errors, both teachers confirmed that they don't correct every spoken grammatical error. Jonathan said (Extract Ns1.7):

(Extract Ns1.7)

I only correct those errors that hinder the meaning...the right meanings...But I don't talk about the error or...or explain them...I just say or repeat what they should have said but in...in a right way.

Gus added (Extract Ns2. 7)

(Extract Ns2.7)

Spoken mistakes are very often in EFL classes and...errors are normal part of the learning process and...and you know...most of Arab learners dislike to be corrected on spot.

As for giving feedback on students' written work, samples collected from both teachers' classes showed that Jonathan and Gus do not utilize the same marking techniques with all students. Jonathan concluded that (Extract Ns1.8):

(Extract Ns1.8)

Well...the type of feedback depends on the students' level. I use marking codes, and...and self and peer correction only with the high level students...with the low level ones...I prefer to mark their writings explicitly.

The same situation applies to Gus. He tends to annotate his students' errors with marking codes. Gus explained (Extract Ns2.8)

(Extract Ns2.8)

The use of such marking codes gives a chance for the...I mean...my students to reflect on their own errors...I only give the exact correction if the right answer is far beyond them...their level.

**Table 11: NESTs' beliefs about students' error treatment VS their actual classroom practices**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Self-stated Beliefs</b>	<b>Classroom Practices</b>	<b>Factors for Inconstancy</b>
Jonathan	- Believes the use of marking codes depends on the students' language abilities. -Prefers to correct less able students' errors explicitly.	- He used marking codes with high-level students. - He used explicit correction with less able one.	None
Gus	- Prefers the use of marking codes as they encourage students to reflect on their own errors and correct them. - Uses explicit correction if the errors made are beyond students' level.	- He annotated all his students' grammatical errors to marking codes. - When students were unable to self-correct their own errors, he used explicit correction.	None

#### **IV.3.1.5 NESTs' Beliefs about the Use of Students' L1**

Jonathan and Gus showed support for the use of students' L1 to explain grammatical structures. Jonathan, for example thinks that (Extract Ns1.9):

(Extract Ns1.9)

Using L1 is very useful and demanded in certain contexts...As...as a native speaker of English...I sometimes feel...feel...handicapped by the fact that I don't share my students' L1...especially when I deal with complex grammar points.

Gus seconded Jonathan's point of view. He added (Extract Ns2.9)

(Extract Ns2.9)

Well...I have techniques and...and methods that I can use...elicit understanding of new grammatical points...but...but it would be more direct and efficient if I could use my students' L1.

**Table 12: NESTs' beliefs about the use of their students' L1 VS their actual classroom practices**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Self-stated Beliefs</b>	<b>Classroom Practices</b>	<b>Factors for Inconstancy</b>
Jonathan	Believes that using students' L1 is very useful and demanded.	- His high-level students used their L1 to help their less able classmates. - He didn't use his students' L1.	Unfamiliar with his students L1.
Gus	Believes that using students' L1 may facilitate his work.	- His high-level students used their L1 to help their less able classmates. - He didn't use his students' L1.	Unfamiliar with his students L1.

### **IV.3.2 Beliefs and Classroom Practices of Two Nonnative English-speaking EFL Teachers (NNESTs)**

**Table 13: Summary of NNESTs' classroom observations database**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Students' Grade</b>	<b>Class Size</b>	<b>Students' Ability</b>	<b>Teaching Focus</b>	<b>Length of Observational Session</b>
Omar	12	16	Average Mixed-abilities Class	Passive Voice	45 minutes
Ali	12	16	Average Mixed-abilities Class	Present Perfect Continuous	45 minutes

#### **IV.3.2.1 NNESTs' Beliefs about the Role and the Importance of Grammar in EFL Context**

When asked about the importance of grammar in foreign language learning, Omar appeared to believe that grammar partially plays an important role in any foreign language learning. Omar stated (Extract NNs1.2):

(Extract NNs1.2)

Grammar could...well...may help learners in two ways...improve their accuracy and correct their errors...but...but it will not...I mean...will never guarantee fluency.

On the other hand, Ali's reply reflected a very different, but interesting, point of view about the role of grammar in English learning. He said (Extract NNs2.2)

(Extract NNs2.2)

Grammar was given so much attention when I was a student...I used to face a lot of problems

understanding and...and memorizing...humm...rules like...like...passive voice. Now...well...I believe communication is...is more important than grammar rules. Correct grammar is not essential since it's not going to hinder communications...and...and communicating the right meaning...I think grammar should only be taught for academic purposes.

Ali's comments show that the difficulties he used to face as a student have shaped his attitude towards a reserved use of grammar in teaching.

### **IV.3.2.2 NNESTs' Approaches to Grammar Teaching**

The second theme, which is grammar pedagogy, aimed to explore NESTs' beliefs about grammar teaching approaches. This theme is divided into two main categories to elicit teachers' beliefs about the different teaching approaches existed in literature including 1) Inductive Vs Deductive approach and 2) Focus-on-Form Vs Meaning-based approach.

#### **IV.3.2.2.1 NNESTs beliefs about Inductive and Deductive Approaches**

Omar uses inductive and deductive approaches to teaching grammar, as he judges them to be relevant to his context (Extract NNs1.3):

(Extract NNs1.3)

Ok...well...both have places in my class. If the grammatical rule is totally new and still out of my students' reach, I tend to teach it directly...but...but if the grammatical rule that I'm about to present is related to other rules...which...which have already been taught...I provide my students with clues and examples...then I ask them to find out or...or come up with the rule themselves.

Omar's preference to employ, both, discovery and expository work was noticed in practice. He asked the students to discover all the structural differences between active voice and passive voice. He gave direct and explicit explanation for the rest of the structural features afterwards.

Unlike Omar, Ali seemed to believe that the explicit instruction is more suitable for his students. He stated (extract NNs2.3):

(Extract NNs2.3)

Although I find explicit grammar teaching boring...umm...well...I think it's...it's more suitable for my students' learning needs.

When asked why he finds explicit teaching boring, his answer reflected a tendency not to limit himself to the exclusive use of explicit teaching. He answered (Extract NNs2.4)

(Extract NNs2.4)

It's boring to...to keep lecturing students...but what shall I do? The majority of my grade 12 class are less...less able students, it is a big headache and...and aah...time consuming to ask them...to...to find out the grammatical rule by themselves. To keep the good ones interested and motivated, from time to time I add some discovery work.

It seems that Ali's students' language performance has influenced his tendency to adopt expository over discovery work.

**Table 14: NNESTs' beliefs about Inductive and Deductive approaches VS their actual teaching practices**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Self-stated Beliefs</b>	<b>Classroom Practices</b>	<b>Factors for Inconstancy</b>
Omar	Favors to transmit form direct to indirect grammar teaching	He gave examples then asked students to produce similar ones. Then, he did his best to explain the structure, meaning and formation of passive voice.	None
Ali	Finds explicit teaching boring and thinks inductive teaching motivates students	-He explicitly explained the structure and formation of the present perfect continuous. - He reminded students of verb to be and verb to have. - He asked students only to change from present perfect into present perfect continuous.	- Less able students' needs

#### **IV.3.2.2.2 NNESTs' Beliefs about Focus-on-Form and Focus-on-Meaning Approaches**

Omar stressed the importance of communicating meaning without overlooking the merits of teaching the form (Extract NNs1.4):

Extract NNs1.4

Let's make it clear...meaning is what matters in EFL classes. As for the form, yes...I give it consideration...but in the end to learn a language is to learn to communicate meaning.

Ali justified his preference to focus on meaning is that the communicative aspect of the language comes first. Ali also added (Extract NNs2.5)

(Extract NNs2.5)

Well...to focus on grammar at an early stage...this will delay or may block students' fluency. I'd rather focus more on...on the communicative aspect of the language then I start to polish my students' grammar as...as they proceed.

**Table 16: NNESTs' beliefs about Focus on Form and on Meaning approaches VS their actual teaching practices**

Teacher	Self-stated Beliefs	Classroom Practices	Factors for Inconstancy
Omar	Appreciates meaning-focused teaching since the ultimate goal of language learning is to exchange meaning	He dedicated all his efforts to the exclusive teaching of passive voice.	- Limited instructional and planning time. - Less able students' needs.
Ali	Prefers firstly to focus on meaning then gradually focuses on his students' grammars.	He dedicated the whole class teaching time to the structure and the form of the present perfect progressive.	- Limited instructional and planning time. - Students' needs.

### IV.3.2.3 NNESTs' Beliefs about the Use of Grammatical Terminology

In discussing the role of terminology in his grammar teaching, Omar commented (Extract NNs1.5):

(Extract NNs1.5)

Grammatical terms always help students...Arab students to...to understand the targeted rules. With beginners, I may use basic terms like Noun...Pronoun...Subject...Verb...Object...but I'll make a good use of grammatical terminology with advanced students.

Thus, in Omar's point of view, making use of grammatical terminology is essential in his grammar teaching as they help students better understand and learn the targeted rules.

Ali contradicted Omar's opinion. He stated that (Extract NNs2.6):

(Extract NNs2.6)

Familiarizing my students with grammatical terminology would...would add an extra burden on their shoulders. However...well...using basic terms like the parts of speech ones could...well...could be essential for examination purposes.

According to Ali, some basic knowledge of grammatical terminology is essential, but only for examination purposes. He justified his refusal to entirely depend on grammatical terms in his grammar teaching that he does not want to overburden his students.

**Table 16: NNESTs' beliefs about the use of grammatical terms and their actual classroom practices**

Teacher	Self-stated Beliefs	Classroom Practices	Factors for Inconstancy
Omar	Believes the use of grammatical terms is helpful as it facilitates his grammatical explanations.	He made a significant use of grammatical terms in his explanation of passive structure and passive verb form	None
Ali	Believes that basic knowledge of grammar terminology is only recommended for exam	He used "verb-to-be in present form + being" and "past participle" when he explained	Item difficulty is high and beyond many

	purposes	the form of present perfect continuous.	of his students' level.
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#### IV.3.2.4 NNESTs' Beliefs about Students' Errors Treatment and Feedback

When asked about the way they deal with students' spoken errors, both teachers confirmed that confirmed that, unless the right meaning isn't conveyed, they do not tend to correct every spoken grammatical error. Omar commented (Extract NNs1.7):

(Extract NNs1.7)

Since the meaning...I mean the...the right meaning is...has been conveyed, there is no need for so many steps to correct every single spoken error. Doing so will lead students to lose their self-confidence and...and become reluctant to use English in class.

Ali supported the same argument (Extract NNs2. 8)

(Extract NNs2.8)

I always encourage my students to communicate in English and to...do their best to send the right message. Once the right meaning got conveyed...even with many grammatical errors, why should I insist to...to hinder the flow of communication?

As for giving feedback on students' written work, samples collected from both teachers' classes showed that Omar and Ali heavily relied on using special marking codes, but in many cases both teachers underlined the errors and explicitly correct them.

When asked about the reason, Omar answered (Extract NNs2.8)

(Extract NNs2.8)

When I find the use of codes is useless and doesn't help my students to understand their errors, I provide them with the direct answers.

Ali gave a similar answer, he said (Extract NNs2.9)

(Extract NNs2.9)

Well...students with good language abilities can make use of my marking codes in self and in...pair correction, but the less able students need to understand why their answers are wrong. That's why I tend...well...I tend to correct their grammatical errors explicitly.

**Table 17: NNESTs' beliefs about students' error treatment VS their actual classroom practices**

Teacher	Self-stated Beliefs	Classroom Practices	Factors for Inconstancy
Omar	- Believes the use of marking codes depends on the students' language abilities. -Prefers to correct less able students' errors explicitly.	- He used marking codes with high-level students. - He used explicit correction with less able one.	None
Ali	- Believes the use of marking	- He annotated all his students'	None

	codes depends on the students' language abilities. - Uses explicit correction if the errors made are beyond students' level.	grammatical errors to marking codes. - When students were unable to self-correct their own errors, he used explicit correction.	
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#### IV.3.2.5 NNESTs' Beliefs about the Use of Students' L1

Since they share the same L1 with their students, it was expected that Omar and Ali would show a positive attitude towards using their L1 in their teaching in general and in their grammar instruction in particular. But when asked if they tend to use their L1 in teaching grammar, Omar interestingly replied (Extract NNs1.8):

(Extract NNs1.8)

Teaching grammar in students' L1 is something I would never do, because it's...it's not only related to understanding the...the concepts of English grammar in English, but it is still harder to link them to similar concepts of grammar in Arabic. Getting both grammars...English and...and Arabic together is like a contrastive analysis which may confuse students instead of helping them.

Omar's belief in the whole English approach did not accord perfectly with his classroom practices, he had to use Arabic to explain the difference between the active voice and the passive voice for the less able students. He also told them to match between the passive voice in English and a similar grammatical rule in Arabic.

According to Ali, he would revert to students L1 only if the students were not competent enough to grasp the targeted concepts or too much time has been spent on explaining the same grammatical rule. Ali commented (Extract NNs2.10)

(Extract NNs2.10)

It depends on the students' level, I...don't encourage using L1 with students who are competent in the target language, but...but if the students are...are low and not capable of understanding or...I mean...following grammar instruction in English...it would be better for less able ones to get this information in Arabic instead of...well...instead of wasting the whole class time.

**Table 18: NNESTs' beliefs about the use of their students' L1 VS their actual classroom practices**

Teacher	Self-stated Beliefs	Classroom Practices	Factors for Inconstancy
Omar	Beliefs in a whole English EFL class.	He didn't use any L1 until he failed to help the less able students to get across the passive voice meaning.	- Time constraints - Item difficulty is beyond less able students reach
Ali	Tends to use L1 to explain any difficult grammatical item for students with low English ability or if the instructional time is running short.	He occasionally used L1 as a supplement to his grammatical explanation	None

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, the major findings reported in the previous chapter, are presented and discussed in three sections. First, the participant teachers' stated beliefs about grammar instruction and their classroom practices are discussed together. Second, the relationship (consistency) between the participant teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Third, the factors that hinder those teachers from transforming their beliefs into practice. Furthermore, the major findings are summarized and followed by implications for the educational policy makers in the UAE in general and in the emirate of Abu Dhabi in particular. Finally, the limitations and suggestions for further research are presented.

#### **V.1 Teachers' pedagogical Beliefs and Classroom Practices (RQ1 and RQ2)**

The participant teachers in this study (whether NESTs or NNESTs) appeared to hold similar beliefs regarding the importance of grammar teaching. According to the questionnaire findings and the data obtained from the four interviews, although most of the teachers surveyed and interviewed emphasized the importance of grammar as it facilitates students' accuracy, almost all of the participants stressed that grammar is not the most important component in language learning. This result does not correlate with the outcomes of previous studies in terms of the overall role of grammar in the language learning (e.g. Burgess and Etherington 2002 & Schulz 2001). Participants' responses highlighted their strong belief that a focus on grammar alone helped improve students' oral accuracy but it was insufficient to develop their communicative abilities. This explains why more than half of the respondents stated that they do not invest too much time teaching grammar, which supports VanPatten's (1990, p. 296) claim that "attention to form in the input competes with attention to meaning".

It seems that a significant percentage of the participants in this study appeared to favour what is often referred to as “zero-option” on grammar teaching (Ellis 1997, p. 48) which does not focus on explicit grammar teaching at all, but stresses on language acquisition through communicative contexts. The lack of importance that teachers in the study showed to grammar teaching and the high regard for fluency correlate with the Natural Approach advocates’ claim that formal grammar instruction is ineffective and students can acquire language naturally if exposed to plentiful “Comprehensible Input” (Krashen 1981). According to Krashen’s (1981) claim, if people could learn their first language without formal instruction, they could learn a second language without formal instruction as well. Second language learners should acquire their language abilities through natural exposure, not through formal instruction.

As regards grammar teaching approaches, the data obtained from the four interviews and the questionnaire revealed that both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) do not prefer to limit themselves to an exclusive grammar teaching approach. Instead, they tend to adopt a sort of a balanced approach that focuses on the form and meaning of structures. Both groups’ participants agreed that they should focus on communication in their grammar instruction but they have to shift to teach grammatical forms when necessary. Both groups’ (NESTs and NNESTs) preferences for a balanced approach correlate with Long and Robinson’s (1998, p. 23) views that the ultimate task for language teachers is “not to choose between form-based and meaning-based instruction but to find the best balance of these two orientations”. Such use of a miscellaneous approach echoes the claim that there is no single best approach, as Ellis (1994, p. 646) reports “it is probably premature to reach any firm conclusions regarding what type of formal instruction works best”.

However, analysis of both NESTs and NNESTs’ responses to the questionnaire items revealed that both groups tend to adopt direct grammar instruction due to their beliefs of the effectiveness of direct grammar exposition in fulfilling their students’ (especially those with lower language abilities) learning preferences and expectations. In the same vein, Burgess and Etherington (2002) found that almost all of teachers took part in their study agreed that their students showed preference to explicit grammar

instruction. This preference for deductive approach correlates with the general research results reviewed by Ellis (2006) which have shown that deductive is considered more effective than inductive instruction.

The majority of the teachers (66% of NESTs and 73% of NNESTs) in this study are likely to believe that grammar teaching should focus on structures forms and meaning and their use in natural context. The previous result correlates significantly with the 60% of NESTs and the 53% of NNESTs who believe that grammar is best taught through work that emphasizes communication and shifts to grammatical forms when necessary.

A high percentage of respondents reported that they avoid correcting spoken mistakes unless the cause difficulties in comprehending the meaning. They also stated that students should be given the opportunities to think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves. However, this does not prevent them from immediate correction of students' written errors. Moreover, they do not think that grammatical errors (whether written or spoken) should be ignored or underestimated as more than two-thirds of the respondents agreed with statement 23 in the questionnaire that grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged. In sum, it seems that Error correction and giving feedback are further indications for the participants' tendency to adopt an eclectic approach in their grammar teaching.

Not only Stern (1992) but also Burgess and Etherington (2002) report that the use of grammatical terminology in the classroom may be understood as an unavoidable part of explicit grammar instruction. The data obtained from the four interviews correlates with findings of Burgess and Etherington's (2002) study that more than half of teachers believe that their students consider explaining and then using grammar terminology is useful. Two interviewees in the current study (a NEST and a NNEST) stated that some basic knowledge of grammatical terminology is essential as long as teachers keep in mind their students' language abilities. The other two teachers said that employing grammatical terminology should not contradict with the main aim of EFL learning which is to communicate in the target language, and not to talk explicitly about it (Mitchell and Redmond 1993, p. 19). However in their actual classroom practices, the majority of the

observed teachers appeared to use the grammatical terms frequently to save time and meet their students' needs which supports Carter's (1990, p. 109) claim that metalanguage provides "an economic and precise way of discussing particular functions and purposes".

Regarding the use of students' L1 and its role in English grammar instruction, surprisingly and interestingly, while 80% of the NESTs stated that they should use their students' L1 to explain grammar rules if they know it; only 20% of the NNESTs, who speak the same L1 of their students, agreed with the same statement.

Interestingly, in Section Two of the questionnaire, about 17% of the NNESTs' responses were "Not Sure", while the "Not Sure" statements represented only 13% of the NESTs' responses, which is not that very significant difference. This indication may reflect both groups' doubts about various aspects of teaching grammar. The trend may also indicate that the uncertainties both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) showed in expressing their beliefs are probably related to their rare participation in similar case studies which reflects the lack of studies in this field in this part of the world. Moreover, it may reflect their lack of knowledge in pedagogic grammar, which is due to their educational background and/or the lack of in-service professional development opportunities. Whatever the reasons are, more in-depth investigation is needed in order to stand on the rationale justifying their responses.

## **V.2 The Consistency between Teachers' stated Beliefs and their Actual Classroom Practices. (RQ3)**

This section attempts to answer the third research question, which discusses the level of consistency between NESTs and NNESTs' beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Based on the quantitative findings obtained from questionnaire, the respondents were found to hold a range of beliefs about the role and approaches of grammar teaching, the value of grammar practices, error correction, the use of grammatical terminology and students' L1. However, to a large extent most of the participants' instructional practices

reflected their own beliefs. The correlation between NESTs and NNETs' stated beliefs and their instructional practices accord with Johnson's (1994, p. 440) claim that "what teachers do in the classroom is governed by what they believe". According to the same claim, these beliefs often serve as "a filter through which second language teachers make instructional decisions, choose instructional materials and select certain instructional practices over others".

On the other side, the qualitative findings revealed a degree of inconstancy between the participants' beliefs and practices, which echoes Parajes's (1992) claim that self-stated beliefs are unreliable indicators of actual practices. The difficulties teachers face in their work settings might be the main reasons behind such inconsistency. For example, more than 60% of the participant teachers believed that students can learn grammar through continuous exposure to language in natural contexts. However, the participants reported that they teach grammar explicitly and with insufficient communicative activities due to time constraints and the low level of their students' language abilities. Moreover, about 70% of the participant teachers claimed that students' self-discovery of grammatical rules lead to better learning. Yet, little evidence of this was noticed during the four interviews and observation sessions. Moreover, most of the respondents to the open-ended question in section 3 of the questionnaire and the interviewees clearly stated that they are not able to translate their thoughts and beliefs into actual classroom practices.

The findings of the questionnaire, the interviews and the four observation sessions revealed that when deciding which grammar teaching approach to adopt, both groups (NESTs and NNETs) seem to be influenced by various contextual factors: their students' learning preferences and expectations, and their own perception and understanding of how effective instruction would be. Consequences of such influences appeared when most of the participant teachers in this study (particularly NESTs) tended to abandon their favourite teaching approach and resort to different ones. Borg (2003) claims that grammar teaching is a complex cognitive activity, rather than the unconscious application of a best method.

### **V.3 Factors that Hinder Teachers from Transmitting their Beliefs into Classroom Practices. (RQ4)**

The fourth research question aims to pinpoint the factors that may hinder teachers from acting according to their own thoughts and beliefs. It was found that the participant NESTs and NNESTs in this study adjust their teaching practices as a result of a range of contextual factors including the school policy, workload, the incompatibility of the assigned syllabus text-books, time constraints, the exam format and the students' needs. These findings support Richard's (1996, p. 284) claim that teachers are influenced by "...their understanding of the system in which they work and their roles within it".

Many teachers expressed their interest to teach more communicative lessons, but they were unable to put their beliefs into actual classroom practices due to the time constraints and the needs of their students. Moreover, the school policy, English supervisors' different views, preferences and expectations about grammar teaching were among the difficulties that teachers reported facing in teaching grammar. Each supervisor has a different point of view and wants the teachers under his supervision to modify their teaching practices accordingly. It was also found that teachers adjust their approaches to meet their students' language abilities, needs and expectations which confirm the findings of Borg's (1998, 1999a, 1999b) studies. For example, the examination pressures and format force teachers to train their students to focus on certain types of practices and activities and disregard the others. Moreover, students with low language abilities expect their teachers to use Arabic language in explaining the grammatical rules. Thus, NNESTs may respond positively to the weak students' needs, while NESTs may seek the high-level students' help for the same purpose. Eventually both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) have no choice but to modify their teaching styles and adopt approaches that may contradict with their beliefs.

## **V.4 Implications and Recommendations for the Educational Policy Makers in the UAE in General and in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in Particular**

Since they are responsible for developing learners' knowledge and skills in terms of grammar, English teachers are required to adopt appropriate and effective methodology and strategy in their grammar teaching. However, what is considered "appropriate" and "effective" remains questionable, as EFL teachers are not following a well-defined and a system-wide teaching approach in their grammar instruction. Therefore, the findings of this study invite the educational bodies in the UAE to assign a teaching methodology booklet that adopts a one-policy approach in teaching grammar and the other language skills which may lead to achieving the same learning outcomes. This booklet should provide teachers with adequate guidelines to cope with the different needs, learning preferences and expectations of their students. Moreover, this study encourages the UAE Ministry of Education and ADEC to provide their English language teachers with on-going professional development programs to develop their practices and sharpen their skills regarding the various aspects of grammar teaching in EFL context.

The study findings revealed some teachers inability to transform their pedagogical beliefs in actual practices due to restrictions and pressures from their work-settings and other contextual factors. Being committed to their schools policies and their supervisors' instructions, English language teachers may not make use of the best of their own beliefs. For example, many of the teachers who participated in this study complained about the extra administrative work they are involved in besides their huge teaching loads. Therefore, one of the suggestions for the educational bodies in the UAE is either to reduce teachers' load or to limit their work on academics only.

About 50% of the English language CEPA exam questions (which is a prerequisite for all Emirati students who want to join the UAE university) are dedicated for pure grammar multiple-choice questions. Training their students to deal with the CEPA exam puts huge pressures on grade 12 English language teachers and pushes them to adopt more traditional approaches rather than communicative ones in their grammar

teaching. To avoid the negative effects of such exam-dedicated teaching, the study invites the educational policy makers in the UAE to reconsider the current end of secondary stage English language CEPA exam.

## **V.5 Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Like any other studies in the field, this study has some limitations. Firstly, due to the limited budget and sources, the present exploratory study investigated what certain teachers (high school EFL teachers) in a certain context (6 government IAT high schools in the two cities of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain) believe about grammar teaching and the level of consistency between their beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Moreover, the population sample of this study is relatively small, only 60 respondents (30 NESTs and 30 NNESTs). Therefore, the findings from this study are not intended to be generalized to teachers teaching in other parts of the UAE. Therefore, further research on larger samples of EFL/ESL teachers from different geographical areas, working in a variety of teaching contexts is needed.

Secondly, the study conducted one pre-observation interview with four male teachers (2 NESTs and 2 NNESTs) from one school which indicates that the interview sample was relatively small including males only who did not represent all the schools covered in the survey. Therefore, further research should take these issues into consideration and extend the number of interviewees, include both genders and ensures true representative sample if more accurate and generalizable data is to be gained.

Thirdly, the limitation of time-constraints has to be considered. The data were collected over a four-month period, and thus revealed teachers' beliefs and practices at a particular moment in time in which the participants were all fully loaded with busy schedules and may not have been able to give as much thought as they would have liked to either to the questionnaire or to the interview questions. Thus, longitudinal studies are highly recommended in this field because they give better insights, gives participants more opportunities to reflect on their practices and may occur changes in their beliefs and practices.

Finally, this study has investigated in-service EFL teachers' beliefs and practices. Future research may also investigate the attitudes and beliefs of teacher trainers, curriculum developers and English supervisors.

## **V.6 Conclusion**

The main purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate 60 (30 NESTs and 30 NNESTs) in service EFL teachers' stated beliefs towards grammar teaching and their actual practices when teaching grammar in six government IAT high schools in the two cities of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. It aimed to study their instructional practices and examine the level of consistency between their thoughts and actions. Furthermore, it attempted to stand on the factors that influence the transformation of those teachers' beliefs into actual classroom practices.

The findings revealed that both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) do indeed have a set of beliefs about various aspects of grammar teaching, for example, the role and the importance of grammar in EFL learning, grammar approaches, error treatment, the use of grammatical terminology and the use of students' first language in grammar classes.

The quantitative data revealed that teachers' stated beliefs are, to a large extent, reflected in their classroom practices. However, the qualitative data showed a different picture: the beliefs and practices were partially different. For example, although many participants reported that they believed in inductive, implicit teaching through authentic texts, the findings revealed that formal instruction, the use of grammatical terminology, students' L1 and explicit grammar teaching are still valued among the teachers participated in the study. Moreover, more than half of the 42 teachers (23 NESTs and 19 NNESTs) who responded to the open-ended question clearly stated that there is a sort of inconsistency between their beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) related such inconsistency to various contextual factors such as the students' proficiency level which is far below the requested outcomes, the pressure of the current test-formats, the length and the type of the syllabus text books, the class density, teachers' workloads and busy schedules, the students' previous learning experiences and

expectations, and the policies and restrictions of the workplace. However, a little more than 40% of the respondents from both groups (NESTs and NNESTs) insisted that they implement their beliefs in the classrooms.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Questionnaire on investigating EFL teachers' beliefs towards grammar teaching

Dear colleague,

As I am currently conducting research on teachers' beliefs and practices, the purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what EFL teachers think about grammar teaching. Your valuable participation not only facilitates my study but also contributes significantly to deeper understanding of our grammar teaching practices.

All responses to this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used for research purposes only.

Many thanks in advance,

Shireen Hassanein

### PART I: Personal Profile

1. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age: 20-30            31-40            41-50            51-60 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you a native or a non-native speaker of English language? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been an EFL/ESL teacher? \_\_\_\_\_  
1-5            6-10            11-15            16-20            More than 20 years
4. What's the highest graduate or/and postgraduate degree have you got?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have any teaching qualifications? YES or NO.
6. If YES, please mention what they are? \_\_\_\_\_
7. If NO, have you received any professional training as an EFL/ESL teacher?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PART 2: EFL/ESL Teachers' Beliefs about grammar teaching

Please rate your belief in the following statements about the role and approaches of grammar instruction in your EFL class/classes. Please, tick (√) the appropriate box next to each statement that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with it.

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NS = Not Sure, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

### Questionnaire statements adapted from Lee Kit (2008, p. 81-82)

No.	Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1.	Grammar is the most important component in language learning and English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.					
2.	Students can learn grammar through experiencing language in natural use.					
3.	Formal instruction helps students to produce grammatically correct language.					
4.	Direct instruction in the rules of grammar is crucial if students are to learn to communicate accurately.					
5.	By mastering the rules of grammar, students can capably communicate in English.					
6.	Mastering the grammar rules of a language does not guarantee the students' ability neither to produce nor to use the language appropriately.					
7.	My students expect me to teach grammar rules directly.					
8.	Grammar is best taught explicitly (deductively), teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises.					
9.	Grammar is best taught implicitly (inductively), students should examine many examples and find out the grammar rules (patterns) themselves.					
10.	Direct explanation of grammar makes my students feel secured and ensure their straightforward grasp of grammar.					
11.	If they know it, teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.					
12.	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in better learning and understanding.					
13.	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.					
14.	Grammar is best taught through work which mainly focuses on communication and shifts to grammatical form if necessary.					

15.	Teachers should pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson.					
16.	Teachers are advised to employ grammar terminology when teaching grammar.					
17.	Since making errors is a normal part of learning, a teacher's corrective feedback is a waste of time, as it does not help learners eliminate errors.					
18.	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.					
19.	Students' spoken grammatical errors should be corrected immediately in order to avoid imperfect learning.					
20.	Students' spoken grammatical errors should be corrected only when they cause difficulty in communicating the right meaning.					
21.	Students' written grammatical errors should be corrected immediately in order to avoid imperfect learning.					
22.	Students' written grammatical errors should be corrected only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.					
23.	My students dislike being corrected in class.					
24.	Form-focused correction helps learners to enhance their grammatical performance.					
25.	Teachers should only underline students' written grammatical errors.					
26.	Teachers should only annotate students' written grammatical errors with marking codes.					
27.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms by themselves.					

Questionnaire statements adapted from Lee Kit (2008, p. 81-82)

**PART 3. Please answer the following question:**

**Are there any differences between your beliefs about grammar teaching and your actual practices in the classroom? If yes, what are the reasons that may lead to such differences?**

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## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

[Adapted from Lee Kit Man (2008)]

Opening statement:

- Thanks a lot, and I highly appreciate your participation and cooperation in this research.
- The purpose of this interview is to understand your views about grammar teaching and the role it plays in language learning.
- I'm interested in knowing: what you think about grammar teaching; how you teach grammar; and why you teach in such a way.
- The validity of this research depends on the extent to which your responses are open and frank, so please answer honestly and in as much detail as possible.
- As you know, I will audio-record your responses. All data collected will be used for research purposes only and will remain confidential.
- No real names will be mentioned in the study.

Before we proceed, is there anything you would like to ask me?

#### **A- Teachers Learning and Teaching Background**

- 1) - Can you tell me about your experience of learning grammar when you were a student? (Only for NNESTs)
- 2) - Do you think that your grammar learning experience affects how you teach grammar to your Students? (Only for NNESTs)
- 3) - Did you receive any new ideas on teaching grammar during your formal teacher training? What were they? Have these experiences affected how you teach grammar to your students?

#### **B- The Role and Importance of Grammar in Language Learning**

- 4) - Do you think EFL/ESL teachers should teach grammar?
- 5) - Do you agree that grammar instruction can help students develop their English accuracy and fluency? Why or why not?

#### **C- Grammar Pedagogy**

- 6) - Tell me about your preferred approach to teach grammar? Why?
- 7) - Do you use the same teaching strategies in all of the classes you teach or do you adjust your approach accordingly? Why or why not?
- 8) - How do you feel about direct grammar explanation and indirect grammar discovery

work?

**D- The Use of Grammar Terminology**

9) - Do you think the use of grammatical terms like subject, object help students learn grammar? Why?

**E- Error Correction and Feedback**

10) - What types of feedback do you give to your students? Do you think students' errors should be corrected? When do you correct errors and how?

**F- The Use of Students' L1**

11) - What are your views about the use of L1 in teaching grammar?

**G- The Value of Grammar Practices**

12) - Do you think grammar practice useful in the process of language learning? Why? What types of grammar practices do you usually provide in and after lessons?

**H- Consistency between Stated Beliefs and Actual Practices**

13) - Are there any differences between your beliefs about grammar teaching and your actual practices in the classroom?

[Interview questions adapted from Lee Kit Man (2008)]

## Appendix C

### Questionnaire Findings

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree		Not Sure		Disagree & Strongly Disagree	
		Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs	Ns	NNs
1.	Grammar is the most important component in language learning and English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.	0 0%	5 17%	0 0%	5 17%	30 100%	20 66%
2.	Students can learn grammar through experiencing language in natural use.	20 66%	16 53%	2 7%	8 27%	8 27%	6 20%
3.	Formal instruction helps students to produce grammatically correct language.	20 66%	22 73%	3 10%	5 17%	7 24%	3 10%
4.	Direct instruction in the rules of grammar is crucial if students are to learn to communicate accurately.	18 60%	17 57%	0 0%	3 10%	12 40%	10 33%
5.	By mastering the rules of grammar, students can capably communicate in English.	6 20%	5 17%	3 10%	6 20%	24 80%	19 63%
6.	Mastering the grammar rules of a language does not guarantee the students' ability neither to produce nor to use the language appropriately.	20 66%	18 60%	5 17%	5 17%	5 17%	7 24%
7.	My students expect me to teach grammar rules directly.	20 66%	18 60%	3 10%	6 20%	7 24%	6 20%
8.	Grammar is best taught explicitly (deductively), teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises.	18 60%	20 66%	5 17%	1 4%	7 24%	9 30%
9.	Grammar is best taught implicitly (inductively), students should examine many examples and find out the grammar rules (patterns) themselves.	9 30%	9 30%	3 10%	5 17%	18 60%	16 53%
10.	Direct explanation of grammar makes my students feel secured and ensure their straightforward grasp of grammar.	20 66%	20 66%	3 10%	5 17%	7 24%	5 17%
11.	If they know it, teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.	24 80%	6 20%	0 0%	6 20%	6 20%	18 60%
12.	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in better learning and understanding.	20 66%	17 57%	3 10%	5 17%	7 24%	8 27%

13.	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.	20 66%	22 73%	3 10%	3 10%	7 24%	5 17%
14.	Grammar is best taught through work which mainly focuses on communication and shifts to grammatical form if necessary.	18 60%	16 53%	3 10%	6 20%	9 30%	8 27%
15.	Teachers should pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson.	5 17%	7 24%	3 10%	3 10%	22 73%	20 66%
16.	Teachers are advised to employ grammar terminology when teaching grammar.	0 0%	6 20%	15 50%	6 20%	15 50%	18 60%
17.	Since making errors is a normal part of learning, a teacher's corrective feedback is a waste of time, as it does not help learners eliminate errors.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	30 100%	30 100%
18.	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.	22 73%	20 66%	3 10%	5 17%	5 17%	5 17%
19.	Students' spoken grammatical errors should be corrected immediately in order to avoid imperfect learning.	3 10%	5 17%	3 10%	3 10%	24 80%	22 73%
20.	Students' spoken grammatical errors should be corrected only when they cause difficulty in communicating the right meaning.	22 73%	20 66%	5 17%	5 17%	3 10%	5 17%
21.	Students' written grammatical errors should be corrected immediately in order to avoid imperfect learning.	15 50%	16 53%	12 40%	9 30%	3 10%	5 17%
22.	Students' written grammatical errors should be corrected only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	22 73%	20 66%	5 17%	5 17%	3 10%	5 17%
23.	My students dislike being corrected in class.	18 60%	15 50%	9 30%	9 30%	3 10%	6 20%
24.	Form-focused correction helps learners to enhance their grammatical performance.	22 73%	24 80%	3 10%	3 10%	5 17%	3 10%
25.	Teachers should only underline students' written grammatical errors.	6 20%	9 30%	7 17%	5 17%	17 57%	16 53%
26.	Teachers should only annotate students' written grammatical errors with marking codes.	6 20%	9 30%	9 30%	5 17%	15 50%	16 53%
27.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms by themselves.	22 73%	20 66%	3 10%	5 17%	5 17%	5 17%

## Appendix D

### Informed Consent

**Name:**..... **NEST or NNEST:**.....

As part of this research project, I have had your approval to take part in an interview relating to this study and to be observed teaching grammar in your classroom. The oral interview will be recorded and then transcribed, and your grammar class will be field-noted.

Please indicate below which uses of these records and field-notes you are prepared to consent to- they will only be used in these ways and your identity will remain anonymous at all times.

- The records and the field-notes can be studied and used in the research
- The records and the field-notes can be used in publications and conferences
- The written transcripts can be used by other researchers
- If you have any further comments, please voice them here:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Your contribution is extremely valuable.

**Shireen Mohammed Hassanein**

**M.Ed. Student - The British University in Dubai**