

**Grammar Teaching in Sharjah  
Preparatory (Cycle 2) Schools  
Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices**

دراسة حول تدريس قواعد اللغة الانجليزية في مدارس  
المرحلة الاعدادية (الحلقة الثانية) في الشارقة  
قناعات المعلمين وممارساتهم الصفية

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
M.A in English Language Teaching

Faculty of Education

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## DISSERTATION RELEASE FORM

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***Grammar Teaching in Sharjah Preparatory(Cycle 2) Schools  
Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices.***

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## الخلاصة

كان الغرض الرئيس من هذه الدراسة هو التحقق من قناعات المعلمين حول تدريس قواعد اللغة الانجليزية وذلك من خلال جمع بيانات حول ممارستهم الصفية ومقارنتها مع قناعاتهم الشخصية لمعرفة مدى التطابق بينهما. كما هدفت الدراسة إلى الوقوف على العوامل المحتملة التي تعيق ترجمة القناعات إلى ممارسات فعلية داخل الصفوف.

جميع المعلمين المشاركين في هذه الدراسة هم من العرب وعددهم 46 مدرساً ومدرسة ويقومون بتدريس اللغة الانجليزية في ثماني مدارس حكومية في الشارقة. وقد تم جمع البيانات اللازمة على مرحلتين. في المرحلة الأولى: قام المعلمون المشاركون بالدراسة في تعبئة استبانة صرحوا فيها عن قناعاتهم حول تدريس القواعد وممارساتهم الفعلية داخل الصفوف. وفي المرحلة الثانية: تم إجراء مقابلات شخصية مع ثمانية منهم للحصول على فهم أعمق حول آرائهم الشخصية وقناعاتهم.

كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن المعلمين المشاركين لديهم بلا شك مجموعة متعددة من القناعات حول المجالات الثمانية التي أعدت للدراسة وتشمل: دور القواعد في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية، طرائق تدريس القواعد ، التدريب على القواعد ، تقديم التغذية الراجعة والتعامل مع أخطاء الطلاب ، استخدام لغة الطالب الأولى و المصطلحات القواعدية ، وقد كشفت النتائج الكمية أن قناعات المدرسين إلى حد كبير مماثلة لممارساتهم داخل الصفوف وهذا النتيجة تؤيد ما جاءت به الدراسات السابقة بأن معتقدات المعلمين قوية وهي التي توجه وتشكل ممارساتهم المهنية وتؤثر على تعلم الطلاب. ولكن النتائج النوعية كشفت صورة مغايرة حيث وجد بعض الاختلاف في بعض الجوانب بين قناعات المعلمين وممارساتهم الصفية. فعلى سبيل المثال بالرغم من أن العديد من المعلمين صرحوا بأنهم يؤمنون بالطرق الاستنباطية في التدريس من خلال التعليم غير المباشر والقائم على حل المشكلات مع ضرورة استخدام نصوص حقيقية مستوحاة من مواقف حياتية إلا أنه وجد أن الطرائق التقليدية أو القياسية القائمة على التعليم المباشر للقواعد وعزلها عن اللغة واستخدام المصطلحات القواعدية ولغة الطالب الأولى ما زالت تشغل حيزاً كبيراً في صفوفهم. وهذا التضارب بين القناعات والممارسات الفعلية يعود لمجموعة من العوامل التي تمنع المعلمين من تطبيق قناعاتهم داخل الصفوف. وهذه العوامل تعود إلى تردي البيئة المدرسية من حيث الصفوف المكتظة ، قصر الوقت وطول المنهج الدراسي المقرر، قلة الوسائل التعليمية و الضغط الناتج عن نماذج الامتحانات، بالإضافة الى مستويات الطلاب وتوقعاتهم واحتياجاتهم .

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** - *The main purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate teachers' stated beliefs towards grammar teaching and their practices when teaching grammar in EFL classrooms. It aimed to collect evidence of their instructional practices and examine the relationships between their thoughts and actions. Furthermore, it attempted to stand on the probable contextual factors that influence the transformation of beliefs into practice.*

**Methodology** - *All the teachers involved in this study were Arabs, teaching English language in eight government preparatory schools in Sharjah. In the first stage of the study, 46 in-service teachers were invited to fill in a self-report questionnaire to elicit their beliefs and classroom practice regarding grammar teaching. In the second stage, two semi structured interviews were conducted with eight of these teachers to gain deeper understanding of their personal opinions, beliefs and perspectives.*

**Findings** - *The findings revealed that teachers undeniably have a set of multifaceted beliefs regarding the eight beliefs dimensions under study including the grammar role in learning, grammar approaches, grammar practising, error treatment, the use of grammatical terminology and students' first language. The quantitative data revealed that teachers' stated beliefs are to a large extent consistent with 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 and influence the way that students learn. However, the qualitative data showed a different picture; the beliefs and practices were different in some domains, though. For example, although many participants reported that they believed in inductive, implicit, problem solving activities, and presentation through authentic texts, the findings revealed that formal instruction, the use of grammatical terminology, students' first language and explicit grammar teaching are still valued among teachers participated in the study. This inconsistency between beliefs and practices are related to various contextual factors, including class density, time constrains, length of text books, lack of teaching resources and examination format. In addition to students' needs, expectations and proficiency levels.*

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## DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful parents, Younes Shatat and Soud Shatat for their love, encouragement, and constant prayers. It is also dedicated to my lovely wife, Riham Alshraideh who has filled my life with endless happiness and inspired me to be a better person. Without her support, patience and encouragement, this dissertation would never have been written. I love you and thank you with all my heart.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 Introduction

During the last three decades teacher cognition has gained great importance in the field of English language teaching. Researchers have increasingly focused on the cognition that is behind teachers' classroom practice, rather than their behaviors (Calderhead 1996, Carter 1990). This shift of focus from observing the behavior to understanding the reasons behind implementing it led to a considerable body of valuable studies on the psychological cornerstones of teachers' work in second language teaching. It is widely accepted now that teaching is a cognitive activity and that teachers' beliefs influence, shape and guide their teaching practices (Borg 2003). In other words, teachers are no longer viewed as 'robots' or 'mechanical implementers' who master a set of general principles and theories developed by experts and implement, in an "unthinking manner", curricula designed by others but as active, thinking decision-makers who construct their own personal theories in teaching (Borg 2003, 2006, Richards 1998). Thus, it is important to investigate teachers' beliefs as a basis of these cognitive activities since these beliefs are the foundation for the teachers' teaching strategies (Pajares 1992).

As a result of the on-going debate about the best way to teach grammar and the role of formal grammar instruction and its contribution to the improvement of students' language skills in the field of second language acquisition, different views, approaches and methodologies about grammar teaching have come out for language teachers (Krashen 1982, Ellis 1986, 1990, 2006, Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, Truscott 1999, Doughty and Williams 1998, Borg, 1999a). However, teachers are already implementing their practices based on their beliefs due to the absence of clear guidelines or one-pattern approach for grammar teaching. Teachers have relied on their beliefs and created their own personal theories which led to different styles and modes in teaching grammar (Borg, 2003). Nepsor (1987: 324) claims that teachers will depend on their beliefs when they are faced with "ill-defined and deeply entangled situations". Therefore, the study of teachers' beliefs as Richards et al (2001: 42) have stated, "forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work".

Although previous studies have investigated what language teachers know, think, believe and apply while teaching grammar in their learning contexts in different parts of the world (Schultz 2001, Ellis 2006, Borg 1998a, b, 1999a, b, 2001). “very little research has explored how teachers arrive at decisions about what grammar to teach and when and how to teach it ...” (Ellis 1998: 57). To the best of our knowledge no research has been conducted to gather data on how teachers working in Sharjah preparatory schools context view grammar instruction. Thus, this study attempts to address this gap in the present literature by investigating what grammar teaching beliefs English teachers hold and compare their beliefs with their instructional practices. It also aims at identifying possible factors that may constrain teachers from translating their beliefs into practices.

## **1.2 Contextual Background**

An understanding of the context is seen to be an essential prerequisite to comprehending teachers’ beliefs and practices as Borg (2003) claims that the impact of contexts on teachers' beliefs system is hard to be ignored. The current study was based on the teaching of English grammar in the UAE preparatory schools. Thus, what follows is a brief description to the UAE education system with particular reference the teaching of English grammar in the preparatory schools and English teachers, outlining their backgrounds and work load.

The Ministry of Education in the UAE, particularly in the northern Emirates (Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Alkhaimah and Um al Quwain) is responsible for all educational affairs at primary, preparatory and secondary levels. The ministry’s responsibilities include policy, school infrastructure, curriculum, textbooks designing for all levels, teacher recruitment, in-service professional development, school and teacher supervision, public examinations,... etc.

The UAE government provides free education for both boys and girls from the primary to the secondary level through public schools. In general, all the government schools are single-sex schools and most of its students are Emiratis in addition to some other Arab students (e.g. Yemeni, Palestinian, Jordanian, Sudanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Tunisian and Iraqi). Although the medium of instruction is Arabic, there is a strong emphasis on teaching English at all levels, particularly at the preparatory and secondary levels in order to equip students with the necessary skills and prepare them

for higher education. One of the main reasons Emirati students study English is to pass university entry exams (IELTS, TOEFL, and CEPA). Another is to acquire the essential skills to communicate with people from different countries. In the UAE, the primary stage, which is known as the first cycle, includes grades 1 to 5; and the preparatory stage, which is called the second cycle, includes grades 6 to 9. The third stage which is the secondary stage includes three grades 10, 11, and 12. In government schools, students learn English as a compulsory subject from grade one. That is, by the time they finish their high school, they will have studied English for 12 years.

English teachers at preparatory level have a typical teaching load of three classes; with 5 hours (6 periods) of English lessons per week per class, each teacher would thus have a total of about 15 hours (18 periods) of teaching time spent in class every week. They teach the same English textbooks assigned by the Ministry of Education. The UAE English Skills series by Phillips and Phillips is the main syllabus in these schools. It is a skill based syllabus for grades 7, 8 and 9, organized into six themes, each with thematic focus. Each theme consists of six sections. Each section deals with a discrete skill focus: listening, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. The course is comprised of Student's book, Work book, Teacher's book, and audio component and a test booklet.

The UAE English Skills series values the role of grammar in language learning and emphasizes formal grammar instruction. It has a separate section for grammar in each theme. Each section consists of a 20 close –ended items in the form of multiple choice and substitution tables to practice the grammatical rules learnt in this section, supported by grammar check boxes in which the rule is clearly stated. It also employs grammatical terminology particularly parts of speech. However, users (teachers) are encouraged to implicitly teach the grammatical rules and avoid teaching them in isolation. The text book values the importance of pattern repetition and the role it plays in enabling the students to acquire the functional competence of grammar as Phillips (2007) states: "the only way students acquire a functional competence of grammar is by meeting the same grammatical patterns in context again and again...this is very similar to the way native speakers learn the grammar of their own language". He also mentions that the purpose behind bringing back these patterns again and again is to avoid spending a lot of time on teaching grammar.

At the preparatory level, grammar is an obligatory element in monthly tests as well as end-semester exams throughout the scholastic year. Students in each grade are tested on different grammatical patterns. The exam paper format includes a section devoted for grammar. The same questions format for all grades is used in these tests. The grammar test has two parts, in the first part, the students are expected to respond to a 15 multiple choice items which cover the grammatical rules they have already learnt whereas the second part expects the students to reorder the words of a 5 scrambled sentences. The grammar section is worth 20 marks out of 70 which represent 29% of the total exam grade.

English language teaching in the UAE is based on the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. The English Language curricula for the primary, preparatory and secondary levels are meant to equip students with the essential language skills that enable them to use the language and communicate effectively in and outside the schools. It also aimed 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.

Through my experience as an English language teacher in Sharjah government preparatory schools for more than ten years, I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe other teachers in the classroom. Through such observations and discussions with teachers I have realized that teachers approach grammar differently in their classrooms relying on their assumptions, personal beliefs and their own interpretations of the syllabus and that is due to their different teaching and learning backgrounds, different views about grammar teaching, the absence of well-defined approach, different approaches to teaching grammar and the current examination system. English teachers are split into two groups. The proponents of the first group support the explicit grammar instruction to language teaching and believe it should be taught directly to save time and meet the students' needs. They think that teachers' main role is to help the students pass their tests and score high marks in the grammar section to satisfy both the students and their parents. Therefore, they incline to use traditional approaches (e.g. Grammar Translation and Direct Methods) and emphasize the role of the memorization and drilling in their classrooms. In contrast, the other group thinks that teaching grammar in isolation doesn't serve the students'

communication needs. In their classrooms, they design activities based on the Communicative Language Teaching approach that enable the students to notice and work out the rules for themselves.

Although both groups approach grammar differently, they do not reject that students need to learn grammar, but the disagreement lies in how to teach grammar. The different views regarding grammar teaching have put teachers in a doubtful situation about how to approach grammar in language classrooms. Moreover, the learning context (Sharjah) is considered to be EFL setting not ESL one. Therefore, teachers insist to teach grammar explicitly because the amount of English exposure that the students might get is quite limited due to the non- English speaking environment.

### **1.3 Significance and Rationale of the Study**

Despite the increased interest in the last 25 years in studying the process of teaching grammar from the teacher cognition perspective, the studies on teachers' beliefs particularly regarding grammar teaching are limited (Borg 1998). To the best of our knowledge no research has been carried out on how English teachers working in Sharjah preparatory schools deal with English grammar instructions. Thus, this study attempts to provide some literature about the teachers' beliefs and practices in this area. The results of this research can serve as a resource for studies on grammar teaching in this part of the world.

The majority of English language teachers in Sharjah preparatory Schools are expatriate teachers, coming from different Arab countries with different learning and teaching backgrounds. Therefore, the researcher assumes that they adopt different approaches to teach grammar and have different personal theories and perspectives on grammar teaching. Thus, this study hopes to familiarize the participants with their own instructional practices with regard to grammar teaching and inspires them to reflect on and reexamine their teaching practices. Self exploration and reflection are crucial to teachers as they help them become more aware of their own professional development needs. It also hopes to make changes in their beliefs which may lead to changes in their classroom practices.

This study also aims to provide the policy makers, the syllabus designers, teacher trainers and the educational inspectors with actual data about the different

approaches teachers adopt in teaching grammar in Sharjah preparatory schools which may help in determining the future professional development courses and syllabus. It also hopes to attract their attention to the importance of setting one –approach policy for teaching grammar in which all the teacher follow the same approach and consequently produce the same learning outcomes and reach the same standards.

#### **1.4 The Purpose of the Study**

This study explores teachers' beliefs and their self reported practices with regard to grammar teaching. It will look at teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar in language learning, the optimal way to teach grammar, the way to deal with grammar mistakes, the influence of students' first language, the use of metalanguage, the role of practice, and comparison between teaching children and adults. It also explores the contextual factors that influence the translation of these beliefs into practice. The study hopes to explain how teachers approach and deal with grammar because it is assumed that in order to understand how English teachers approach their work, it is necessary to understand the beliefs and principles they operate from (Richards et al 2001).

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

Research questions not only assist the researcher to focus on the issues to be investigated but they also help to frame the aspects or domains that the researcher is interested to explore. Four questions are addressed. These questions comprise the full scope of research on the teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in the present study. The author of this study hopes that the following questions will guide him to explore and investigate the case under study.

(RQ1) - What beliefs do English language teachers in Sharjah Cycle 2 Schools hold about the process of teaching grammar?

(RQ2) - What classroom practices do they favour when teaching grammar?

(RQ3) - Are there any commonalities or differences between English language teachers' beliefs and practices?

(RQ4) - What contextual factors constrain teachers from transmitting their beliefs into practices?

## **1.6 Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which provides an overview of the research contextual background, its purpose, rationale and the specific research questions. Next, chapter two reviews literature in the fields of teachers' beliefs with regard to grammar instruction. This includes the importance of grammar teaching, grammar instruction methodology and teachers' beliefs. Chapter three describes the methodological issues considered for the study, and specifies the design, instruments, participants' background, contexts and data collection procedures. The results of the study are presented in Chapter four which focuses on the results obtained from the data collection instruments. Chapter five discusses the findings with reference to the literature reviewed in the second chapter, concludes the study with a brief summary of the research findings, highlights implications and identifies the study limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

This literature review will begin by defining teachers' cognition as a general frame work for the present study and discussing the power of teachers' beliefs and the underlying principles behind studying them. Then, some major areas about grammar teaching will be highlighted such as the role and approaches of grammar instruction. After that some studies investigating teacher beliefs about grammar teaching will be pointed out and its limitations will be highlighted.

#### **2.1 Teachers' Cognition**

Teacher cognition, defined by Borg (2006: 41) as teachers " beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions, perspectives about teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject matter, curricula, materials, instructional activities, (and) self". In other words, it refers to the study of what teachers know, think, and believe and how these relate to what teachers do. Thus, in this study the term "teachers' cognition" will be used interchangeably with the term "teachers' beliefs".

The study of teachers' belief is quite important for two main reasons. On the one hand, teachers' classroom practices are influenced by their beliefs; on the other hand, beliefs play a major role in the teachers' professional development. Therefore, investigating such issues provide clearer understanding of why teachers do what they do in the classroom and how teachers' beliefs about teaching change over time. The findings of these studies might give recommendations for language teaching and professional training contents as Johnson (1994:439) declares that understanding teachers' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and teacher education programs.

#### **2.2 Teachers' Beliefs – Definition and Sources**

In order to understand what beliefs teachers hold in their instructional practices, it is essential first to define what we mean by 'beliefs'. Various educational researchers have suggested that defining, studying and evaluating teachers' beliefs is

not an easy task (Pajares 1992, Johnson 1994, Williams and Burden 1997). It is extremely hard to dig up teachers' minds and explore the psychological constructs or the mental processes behind teachers' actual instructions in the classrooms since it is also hard for some teachers themselves to justify or verbalize the reasons behind implementing certain practices or behaviors.

The term 'teacher's belief' in this study refers to any personal opinions, views, theories, perceptions and attitudes the participant teachers hold about grammar teaching in the context of second language learning and teaching and how these relate to what they do. Many educators have attempted to define the term "teachers' beliefs" the most popular ones that serve the purpose of this study most are as follows:

Pajares (1992) and Richardson (1996) view beliefs as personal constructs of teachers that can help and provide an understanding of their decisions and teaching practices. Arnold (1999: 256) adds "beliefs act as strong filters of reality". Whereas Eisenhart et al. (1988:54) defines a belief as "an attitude consistently applied to an activity". Kagan (1992: 65 - 66) describes teachers' beliefs as "tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught". He (1992: 65 - 66) also adds that these beliefs which teachers develop over their career are generally stable and do not change. Moreover, beliefs mirror how teachers behave in classrooms (Williams Burden 1997, Kagen 1992).

Teachers' beliefs have been accumulated from a variety of sources. They are derived from their prior learning experiences, teaching experiences, the context where they teach and in service professional development courses (Graves 2000). Richard and Lockhart (1996:30-31) claim that there are six different sources teachers' belief systems are derived from: 1. their own experience as language learners; 2. their experience of what works best; 3. established practice; 4. personality factors; 5. educational based or research-based principles, and 6. principles derived from an approach or method. Moreover, Eisentein-Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) see teachers' beliefs shaped by students' needs, prior experiences and syllabus expectations.

### **2.3 Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices**

Teachers' beliefs are powerful and they can greatly influence their behaviors. "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). It is necessary to have better insights into teachers' beliefs because they have clearly been seen as one of the crucial factors that affect teachers and their teaching practices. The study of teachers' beliefs as Richards et al (2001: 42) have stated, "forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work". Understanding teachers' beliefs is a better approach to realizing how they usually teach (Hampton 1994, Richards and Lockhart 1996). Understanding what language teachers think, know and believe is a prerequisite for understanding their classroom practices and enhancing their educational development (Borg 2009, Johnson 1994).

During the last three decades, researchers have become more alert of the fact that teaching is a thoughtful behavior and teachers' beliefs determine their instructional choices. Borg (2003: 81) points out that "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". Many empirical studies aimed to explore to what extent do teachers' stated beliefs match with what they do in the classroom and there is evidence from various empirical studies that the two do not always go together (e.g. Andrews 2003, Phipps and Borg 2008).

A key issue, then, is why there are such inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices. The mismatch can be related to various contextual factors such as school requirements, teachers' workload, classroom sizes, lack of teaching aids, prescribed curriculum, time constraints, and examination system. Andrews's (2003) study found that the observed teachers were influenced by parental expectations, the examination system and by the "micro-culture" of their particular institution. These findings support Richard's (1996:284) claim that teachers are influenced by "...their understanding of the system in which they work and their roles within it". Besides contextual constraints, research evidence also suggests that learners' factors often force teachers to modify their instruction. Unmotivated students, classroom disciplinary, students' needs, proficiency levels, expectations, learning styles and preferences may influence teachers' beliefs and prevent them from doing what they think they should do in the classroom (Andrews 2003, Borg 1999, 2001).

## 2.4 Grammar and Grammar Teaching

According to Celce-Murcia (1988:16), grammar is defined as "a subset of rules which govern the configuration that the morphology and syntax of a language assume". Brown (1994b:347) defines grammar as "a system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence. Caderonello et al (2003:1), on the other hand, use two different terms to define grammar: "Technically" where grammar refers to "the structure or system of a language, which sounds simple enough", and "Socially" where grammar can bring up "images of diagramming sentences or memorizing rules and definitions, as well as confusion and boredom". These narrow definitions covering only morphology and syntax represent the structuralist point of view of grammar which views it as an isolated system from meaning and context.

Larsen-Freeman (2001) argues that when dealing with complexity of grammar, teachers should take into consideration three dimensions: structure or form, semantics or meaning, and the pragmatic conditions covering usage. By using all of them together accurately, students will succeed in mastering the language. He also believes that although it is important to develop our understanding of the grammatical facts of the language we are teaching, it is not these facts that we wish our students to learn. That is, teachers should not be interested in filling their students' heads with grammatical rules. If they knew all the rules that had ever been written about English but were not able to apply them, teachers would not be doing their jobs properly. Larsen-Freeman (2001:255) also argues that "grammar teaching is not so much knowledge transmission as it is skill development". Therefore, by thinking of grammar as a skill to be mastered, rather than a set of rules to be memorized, we will be helping EFL students go a long way toward the goal of being able to accurately convey meaning in the manner they think appropriate.

"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" ( Ellis, 2006: 84). In other words, teaching grammar refers to the methods or approaches language teachers adopt to introduce and practice the discrete grammatical rules.

## 2.5 The Role of Grammar Teaching

The place of grammar instruction in second language learning is a controversial issue. Due to the development of the history of language teaching, the focus of grammar teaching aims had shifted from the formal correctness towards communicative effectiveness. The appearance of the Natural and Communicative Approaches in the seventies and eighties, has led to a countless debate concerning the effectiveness of explicit and implicit grammar teaching in language classrooms and to a presentation of a great deal of research that supports and undermines the importance of grammar instruction in ESL / EFL contexts.

Regardless of how important grammar is considered in language learning, it remains one of the essential components to master a language, it has held and continues to hold a central position in language teaching (Ellis 2006, Hinkel and Fotos 2002). Nowadays, the necessity of grammar instruction is no longer the focus of researchers. However, their current concern is revolving around the degree or to what extent teachers need to direct the learners' attention to understanding grammatical rules in meaningful context and natural interaction. When to teach grammar (the timing) in language classes and how (pedagogy)?

Recent research studies have shown that grammar teaching is both necessary and essential because it enables students to attain high level of proficiency, both in accuracy and fluency (Hinkel and Fotos 2002). Strong proponents suggest that students' explicit knowledge of grammar will increase their communicative competence, improve their proficiency in English and gives them adequate opportunities to edit or monitor their written and spoken discourse (Krashen 1999). Long and Richards (1987) indicate that grammar plays a central role in the four language skills and vocabulary to establish communicative tasks. So, in the formal education, it is inevitable for language teachers to teach grammar (Long 1991). Therefore, recent suggestions strongly advocate focusing on forms within communicative approaches in a second language curriculum (Ellis, 2002a).

However, the Natural approach proponents claim that formal grammar instruction is useless and students can acquire language naturally if exposed to plentiful "comprehensible input" (Krashen 1981). According to Krashen's (1981) hypothesis, if people could learn their first language without formal instruction, they could learn a second language without formal instruction as well. Krashen (1982: 21)

explains that learners should use the comprehensible input which is "slightly beyond their [learner's] present proficiency" to deduce rules. Acquisition takes place "when we understand language that contains structure that is "a little beyond where we are now" (1982: 21). Krashen favors the so-called 'zero-option' (Ellis 1997: 48) which ignores explicit grammar teaching at all and puts the emphasis on language acquisition through natural communication. Following Krashen's hypothesis, Nassaji and Fotos (2004) claim that not only grammar instruction was useless, but it could create learning difficulties and discourage learners from getting involved in successful communication. Thus, they suggest it should be 'abandoned altogether'

Krashen's views have had a considerable influence on language teaching and caused de-emphasis on the teaching of grammatical rules and a greater emphasis on teaching language through natural communication and meaningful interaction. The increased concern for the learners' communicative ability to use the actual language has declined the emphasis on grammar teaching as VanPatten (1990: 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 dramatically shifted.

Over the past several years, applied linguist, grammarians, education researchers and teachers alike have heavily investigated the different ways of approaching grammar. They have attempted hard to explore, examine and determine the best approaches in which grammar could be taught both interestingly and effectively in English as second or foreign language classrooms. None of their studies have concluded to unquestionable conclusive method to grammar teaching. As Ellis (1994:646) states "it is probably premature to reach any firm conclusions regarding what type of formal instruction works best". There is no certain or fixed grammar teaching model with which teachers can use to treat different students properly. No single approach can assure successful results of language teaching just like the old saying which says "There are approaches for teaching, but no definite ones". There seems to be no single best approach to grammar teaching that could apply in all contexts to all kinds of learners and teachers (Hinkel and Fotos, 2002)

## **2.6 Core Approaches to Grammar Teaching**

Broadly speaking, in teaching grammar, there are four approaches that can be applied in EFL / ESL classrooms: Inductive, Deductive, Focus on Form and Focus on Meaning instructional approaches which have dominated the field of second language acquisition. The following papers introduce these approaches in details particularly, Deductive and Inductive. However, the present study does not intend to investigate the effectiveness of these approaches as it does not serve the purpose of this study.

### **2.6.1 The Deductive Approach**

Deductive (rule-driven, top-down) grammar teaching approach is not only based on facts and statements but it is also based on prior logic. It is derived from the notion that deductive reasoning works from the general to the specific. In this case, rules, principles, concepts, or theories are presented first and then their applications are treated. Stern (1992:150) represents its sequences schematically in the following way: General rule → Specific examples → Practice. It is a process from theory to practice.

This is based on presentation, explanation and practice. Learning is seen as a conscious process and grammar rules are explicitly presented by teacher or textbooks prior to the practice stage. In such a method the teacher's role is to dictate students the ready grammar rule, describing in details how the new structure is formed, what its components are, and in what type of context it can be used. All the information is given in the form of a mini-lecture, during which the teachers usually employ grammatical terminology. After the explanation, the learners are provided with examples illustrating the new structure, which they analyze, and are subsequently asked to apply the rule to new sentences. The most common types of exercises are gapped sentences, pattern drills and sentences for transformation.

This form of teaching gets straight to the point, offers a clear clarification of the new language items, which makes the learning task easier, less threatening and time-saving. Eisenstein (1987) suggests that learners will be in control during practice and have less fear of drawing an incorrect conclusion related to how the target language is functioning.. It also helps learners to be more grammatically accurate by monitoring or editing what they say or write (Krashen 1999).

The deductive approach is “particularly appropriate for adult learners whose learning style and expectations inclined to a more analytical and reflective approach to language learning”, it confirms many students’ expectations about classroom learning (Thornbury1999:30). Moreover, deductive method does not require much preparation on the part of the teacher because it is a predictable learning experience in which the teacher selects the material and the sequence of presentation.

Nevertheless, the older prescriptive grammar approach has some quite significant disadvantages that cannot be ignored. It is used to have students theoretically analyze sentences for correctness as if they are training to become linguists. It 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 rare interaction between the teacher and learners.

## **2.6.2 The Inductive Approach**

The inductive (rule-discovery, bottom-up) grammar teaching approach comes from inductive reasoning, stating that a reasoning progression proceeds from particulars to generalities (Felder and Henriques 1995). In short, when we use induction, we observe a number of specific instances and from them we deduce a general principle or concept. Stern (1992:150) represents its sequences schematically in the following way: Specific examples → Practice → General rule. It is a process from practice to theory.

It rejects the idea of giving the learners a ready rule and assumes that learners obtain knowledge through exposure to real language contexts in foreign language. Instead of explicitly telling the learners what the rule is, teachers may provide them with carefully designed contextualized tasks that embedded the required structure items in the form of a text illustrating the use of these grammatical items. Teachers are facilitating learners to notice and find out what the rule is and to arrive at some generalization of the rule governing the material presented through several strategies; some rely on the students themselves to induce the rules. Other strategies use guided inductive techniques that focus students' attention on the structure through a series of

leading questions "scaffolding" (Wood et al: 1976). Then, teachers discuss the elicited rule with the learners and correct their hypotheses if necessary.

The inductive approach is based on a Socratic method which emphasizes the importance of making learners exploit their cognitive abilities, to notice the structure. It encourages mental efforts and forces students to rely on their intelligence and abilities to analyze and make connections between particular samples of speech. The students' realization of being able to figure out what the rule is without teacher intervention (Mohamed 2004) will lead to more independent learning which may make a world of difference in their future study of the language (Thornbury 1999:54).

The inductive approach represents a more modern style of teaching where the student is centered and it guarantees the involvement of the learners and bans the boredom during the language class. This form of teaching 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. In other words, learners can use the target language as the medium for discovering grammar which will help learners to participate actively, practise the target language and makes them feel more important and less passive.

Students need to notice a structure by themselves in order to hold it in their short- or long-term memory. What the students discover themselves are more likely to remember (Paradowski, 2007 citing Brudnik *et al.* 2000). Benjamin Franklin (1706:90) summarizes this in his wise words: "tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn".

This approach provides a great service for teachers who have problems in classroom management in terms of maintaining their students disciplined, focused and involved. However, the teachers' role in designing materials that suit this purpose and guide students to the desired conclusions is a demanding and risky task. Thus, it can be used solely by an experienced and competent teacher who knows his students well enough to be able to adjust the instruction to their needs and capacities.

### **2.6.3 Focus on Form Instruction (FonF)**

Focus on Form, which was originally coined by Long in 1991 is an instruction that direct learners' attention to the grammatical rules in the context of meaningful communication. It refers to an approach to teaching grammar whenever errors occur

during a meaning focused activity. Long (1991:45-46) defines 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". To clarify the point, Long and Robinson (1998:23) point out that "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, the syllabus remains communicative, with no preplanned L2 forms to be learned in any specific lesson or in any special order. However, when a form is comprehended to be problematic, constrains learners from understanding, Long and Robinson (1998) argue that the responsibility of helping learners to understand problematic grammatical forms falls not only on their teachers, but also on their peers. The teacher and/or other learners may deal with it explicitly in different ways, such as through direct error correction, rule explanation, modeling, and drilling. Two reasons were behind adopting this form of instruction. Firstly, there was a need for balancing the traditional approaches (non-communicative) with the communicative approaches (Long and Robinson 1998:23). Secondly, 'comprehensible input' (Krashen, 1985) is inadequate to enable learners use the grammatical forms correctly, particularly the difficult ones (Swain 1995). However, Sheen (2003: 225) suspects its effectiveness on improving learners' oral accuracy and their understanding of the committed errors because the grammar treatment is only provided when there is a breakdown in communication and the treatment usually takes the form of quick and brief corrective feedback.

The term focus on form has been stretched beyond Long's original definition quoted above. As Doughty and Williams (1998: 5) observe "there is considerable variation in how the term focus on form is understood and used." Ellis's (2001:1) definition of form-focused instruction is "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners". Ellis (2006) distinguishes 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: 100), and incidental focus on form, which involves unplanned attention to form in the context of communicative work.

#### **2.6.4 Focus on Meaning Instruction**

Focus on Meaning is an approach where classroom work is wholly concerned with communication of meaning but with no attention given to the forms used to convey this. This term was born in reaction to language teaching methods which emphasized the mastery of language forms (Hedge 2000). The Natural Approach of Krashen and Terrell, 1983, is an example of this position which claims that it is possible to acquire a second language within the classroom context only if teachers provide learners with plentiful 'comprehensible input' and give them an opportunity to naturally communicate with each other. However, Focus on Meaning does not now feature as strongly in discussion concerning grammar teaching as it once did: cumulated evidence from research in grammar learning and SLA suggests that some conscious attention to form is necessary for language learning to take place (Ellis, 2001).

### **2.7 Critical Eye on Grammar Teaching Approaches**

The traditional approaches to grammar teaching which based on explicit explanations and drill-like practice (e.g. Deductive Approaches, Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio- Lingual 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 uniform 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.

Focus on Meaning has lost its popularity and become less attractive in language teaching because the cumulative evidence from recent research shows 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 non-native English speaking teachers have a lack of communicative proficiency to teach grammar implicitly.

I personally believe that Focus on Form (planned or incidental) and Inductive instructions are aimed at providing the learners with both accuracy and fluency

competences due to their middle positions among the other approaches; they are balancing the non communicative and communicative, the direct and non direct. Thus, applying these instructions in language classrooms may produce better learning outcomes.

## **2.8 Research on Teachers' Beliefs about Grammar Teaching**

A large number of studies have been carried out to explore teachers' beliefs in grammar teaching. Borg (2003) provides a comprehensive review of research into teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching. He reviewed 22 studies focused on grammar teaching and divided these studies into three groups: (1) teachers' declarative knowledge about grammar (2) teachers' and students stated beliefs about grammar teaching; and (3) the relationships between teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and their classroom practices. Borg (2006) provided a detailed description for each type of research. The findings from the first type of research suggest that teachers' grammar knowledge is generally inadequate. In reviewing the second type of research, he found that teachers generally value and support grammar in their work as a result of their previous language learning experiences. He also found a wide difference in aspects of grammar teaching between teachers' and students' views. Finally, the third type of research revealed that teachers' beliefs are not always implemented in their classroom practices for various complicated reasons such as teachers' knowledge, contextual factors and students' needs and expectations.

The following paragraphs provide a brief review of similar studies conducted in this area to enrich the present study. The review is based on (Al-Siyabi 2009, Borg and Burns 2008, Phipps and Borg 2008, Andrews 2003, Burgess and Etherington 2002, Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers 1997, Schulz 1996)

Andrew's (2003) study examined the relationship between teachers' cognition and practices in formal grammar instruction and their level of grammar knowledge. He found that teachers who were most in favor of teaching grammar inductively had a relatively high level of explicit knowledge of grammar, whereas those who had a relatively low level of explicit knowledge of grammar were the strongest supporters of a deductive approach to grammar teaching.

In 2002, Burgess and Etherington conducted an exploratory study to identify teachers' attitudes towards grammar and grammar teaching. The results showed that

the majority of participant teachers highly valued grammar and grammatical knowledge for their students and considered grammar as a fundamental and indispensable component in language learning. They also found that teachers tended to use authentic materials and real life tasks rather than isolated presentation of grammatical rules. 90% of the teachers felt that their students expect the explicit presentation of grammatical items. The study concluded that teachers were more in favour of a Focus on Form approach and their views about suitable approaches to grammar are based upon their students' needs and expectations.

Schulz's (1996) study compared students' and teachers' attitudes about the role of explicit grammar and error correction in foreign language learning. Overall, It was found that the majority of the students believe that their written and spoken errors should be corrected by their teachers where as only 48% of the participant teachers believe so. The students were found to have more favorable attitudes toward formal study of grammar than the teachers. More students than teachers agreed that students can improve their communicative ability more quickly if they study and practice grammar.

Borg and Burns (2008) examined English teachers' beliefs about the integration of grammar and skills teaching. The study found that teachers show strong beliefs in the need to avoid teaching grammar in isolation. The participants also reported high levels of integrating grammar in their practices.

Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) explored teachers' views of conscious 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 suggested the appropriateness of explicit instruction for adults and not young learners.

In a similar context to the UAE, Al-Siyabi (2009) conducted an exploratory study to identify teachers' beliefs about explicit grammar teaching and their classroom practices in Omani lower secondary schools (Cycle 2). The classroom observation results revealed that teachers were in favour of deductive approach and they employed several strategies that serve this approach in their classes such as oral explanations, providing examples, comprehension questions and writing explanations. During the interviews all the participants valued the role of eliciting the grammatical rules from the students and the importance of peer correction.

Phipps and Borg (2008) examined tensions in the grammar teaching beliefs and practices of three experienced EFL teachers of different nationalities in Turkey. The analysis indicated that, teachers' beliefs were not always aligned with their practices in teaching grammar. Although all the three believed in the context based grammar approach, they tended to adopt a 'focus-on-forms' approach, present and practice grammar, correct grammatical errors and use grammatical terminology.

## **2.9 Limitations of Previous Research**

The existing published studies on teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching have many limitations. Firstly, the existing research does not represent the large majority of language teaching settings across the world. It was not an easy task to find adequate literature to support and enrich the study due to the lack of studies in this particular domain. The absence of studies conducted 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 primary or preparatory state 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 state 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 Three**

### **Methodology**

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

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The main purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate teachers' stated beliefs towards grammar teaching and their practices when teaching grammar in EFL classrooms. It aimed to collect evidence of their instructional practices and examine the relationships between their thoughts and actions. Furthermore, it attempted to stand on 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 do English Language teachers in Sharjah cycle 2 schools hold about the process of teaching grammar? (2) What classroom practices do they favor when teaching grammar? (3) Are there any commonalities or differences between EFL teachers' beliefs and classroom practices? (4) What contextual factors constrain teachers from translating their beliefs into practices?

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. It was noticed that most of the conducted studies in this field have employed questionnaires and interviews for data collection.

#### **3.2 Research Context and Participants**

The context framing the current study is 34 government preparatory (cycle 2) schools in Sharjah. Due to the limited budget, resources and time, only 8 schools were selected as the research setting. These schools were selected because they were the

biggest in terms of students number, their geographical locations were convenient and the English teachers were accessibility. The eight schools have the same features in terms of their curricula, instructional systems, admissions, and teachers recruiting systems (the research context has been discussed earlier in 1.2). Thus, investigating such a context which shares the same circumstances and its teachers have the same duties would provide more valuable data about their beliefs and classroom practices.

The total number of participants in this study was 46 in – service English teachers (25 males and 21 females). Table 1 shows their demographic information. All of the participants were Arabs. Moreover, all the male teachers were expatriate workers. The majority of the teachers (87%) stated that their highest educational qualification was Bachelors, the most common subject that teachers had majored in at university was English language and literature and did not appear to have obtained any further qualification in language teaching. Their age varied from 20 to 60, their teaching experience ranged from 1 to more than 25 years.

### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

The study comprised questionnaire and semi structured interview for data collection. The researcher collected quantitative data through teachers' questionnaires and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. A quantitative approach helps the researcher to capture the responses of a great many people to a specific set of questions speedily and thus, gives a broad, generalizable set of findings where as a qualitative method generates a wealthy detailed information from a smaller number of people and cases, which increases understanding of the cases and the situations studied but reduces generalizability. That is why adopting both is seen as complementary methods (Chi 2003).

#### **3.3.1 Questionnaire**

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 sections that required teachers to respond to statements on a five point Likert scale, as well as open-ended questions that invited teachers to comment on an issue in detail. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher on

the basis of the research questions, similar questionnaires in similar studies (e.g. Burgess and Etherington 2002, Karavas-Doukas's 1996, Borg and Burns, 2008) and the key characteristics of grammar teaching and approaches. The five page questionnaire consisted of four sections (see Appendix A) as follows:

**Table1: Teachers' Demographic Information**

Category	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Nationality	Palestinian	3	7%
	Jordanian	5	11%
	Syrian	7	15%
	Egyptian	10	22%
	Emirati	17	37%
	Tunisian	4	9%
Gender	Male	25	54%
	Female	21	46%
Highest qualification	Master's Degree	3	7%
	Post Graduate Certificate	1	2%
	Bachelor's Degree	40	87%
	Diploma	2	4%
Age	20 – 30	13	28%
	31- 40	10	22%
	41 – 50	13	28%
	50 – 60	10	22%
Native language	Arabic	46	100%
Years of teaching experience	1-6	12	26%
	7-12	5	11%
	13-18	10	22%
	19-24	6	13%
	25 and above	13	28%
Number of classes	2	9	20%
	3	32	70%
	4	5	11%
Class size	15-19	5	11%
	20-24	24	52%
	25-29	15	33%
	30-34	2	4%
Teaching periods per week	12	9	20%
	18	32	70%
	24	5	11%
Professional Development	Yes	27	60%
	No	19	40%

Section one, designed to seek demographic information about the respondents in order to establish a general profile of the participants. In section 1, participants responded to two sets of background information, the first set included their nationality, age, gender, academic qualification, first language, years of teaching experience and the classes they teach and the second set represented the context where they teach included the number of classes they teach, the number of teaching periods per week and the professional development activities.

Section two, consisted of a 30 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 no judges are required (Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Dörnyei, 2003). The statements covered eight main themes regarding grammar teaching as follows; 1) belief in the role of grammar teaching, 2) belief in grammar pedagogy, 3) belief in practicing grammar, 4) belief in feedback and error correction, 5) belief in using grammatical terminology in teaching, 6) belief in the role of first language in assisting grammar instruction, 7) belief in the role of English language teachers in grammar classes, and 8) belief in comparison between teaching grammar to children and adults. These eight themes will be discussed in further details in Chapter 4

Section three, consisted of a 16 close – ended statements in which participants were asked to indicate how often they personally used certain activities when teaching grammar in a five-point, Likert-type scale ranging from ‘never to ‘always. This section aimed to obtain information about teachers’ reported classroom practices regarding grammar teaching. The same eight themes in section two were used with different wording for the statements.

In Section four, two open- ended questions were included to give the respondents the opportunity to freely express their own professed beliefs that the statements might be unable to cover because they are brief, abstract and decontextualized as criticizes by Borg (2006: 185 - 176). The first question invited the teachers to state their personal views about the ideal way to teach grammar in EFL contexts, where as the second question asked them to write the differences between their beliefs and actual classrooms practices. To ensure enough participants were

willing to take part in further interviews, their initial agreement was obtained in the last question of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire is the most widely used research instrument in the field of teachers cognition, it shows and appears regularly in all the studies the researcher read 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 (1990:427) states “the standardized statements may mask or misrepresent a particular teacher’s highly personalised perceptions and definitions”. The questionnaire limits the 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: 327) suggests that belief inventories and 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 interview was employed to attain more in-depth information and to better understand teachers’ perspectives and practices.

### **3.3.2 Semi Structured Interview**

As noted earlier, semi-structured interview is commonly used for classroom research due to its effectiveness in understanding people’s personal opinions, beliefs and perspectives. The interactive nature of interviews gives participant 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 60-minute semi-structured interviews was to gather qualitative data to support and understand the data obtained from the questionnaire.

The semi-structured interview (Appendix B) in this study involved two parts. The first part included 5 open – ended questions, was interested in the participants' background information and the sources of their beliefs. The second part included 11 open – ended questions, addressed their beliefs about grammar teaching covering the

same eight themes used in the questionnaire. It also aimed to elicit the contextual factors that hinder teachers from implementing their beliefs in the classrooms.

### **3.4 Data Collection Procedure**

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

#### **3.4.1 Stage One**

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

- 1- The questionnaire statements were placed according to the eight themes of teacher's beliefs in order to ease the process of data analysis.
- 2- The questionnaire statements were simplified and the difficult terminology was avoided to meet all the participants' levels.
- 3- Eight experienced EFL teachers reviewed the clarity and suitability of the first draft of the questionnaire.
- 4- Based on their recommendations, some modifications were made to introduction, instructions and statements.
- 5- A pilot study was conducted by five teachers to check whether there was any confusion or ambiguity to the main sample in the research.
- 6- 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.

#### **3.4.2 Stage Two**

- 1- The ethical approval from the researcher's dissertation supervisor was obtained, and the research sites official permission was circulated to the targeted schools by the Sharjah Educational Zone on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- 2- The researcher in person visited the targeted schools and handed the questionnaire to the heads of English Departments in the boys' schools who volunteered to distribute them among other English teachers.

3- Since it was difficult to contact the female teachers, the researcher handed the questionnaires to two English supervisors who regularly visit these schools and they took the responsibility of distribution.

4- A thank - you letter was attached with the questionnaire and as a payback for their valuable contribution; the participants were informed that they would get soft copies of the complete dissertation via e-mail.

5- 53 questionnaires were distributed but only 46 of them were returned on March 17, with a response rate of 88.6%. The sample size exceeds the number (30) which Cohen and Manion (1994:89) describe as the minimum for useful statistical analysis.

### **3.4.3 Stage Three**

1- After the questionnaires had been completed, the researcher analyzed the data and contacted 8 teachers to appoint the appropriate time for formal interviews.

2- The initial interview questions were piloted by two experienced teachers not involved in the study. Limited changes in wording were made as a result of this piloting, and the revised version was further trialed with a third teacher.

3- Two small focused group interviews were conducted at the researcher's house on March 26<sup>th</sup> and March 28<sup>th</sup>. Each group consisted of four male teachers. The interviewees' identifications were pseudonymous when presented in the final paper to protect their privacy. Table 2 shows their demographics. None of the female participant showed positive response to participate in the study.

4- In order to avoid the problem of 'social desirability' (Cohen, 1998:29) in which the participants might be hesitant to talk in the presence of others, the researcher selected teachers with whom he had good rapport and friendly relationships. However, the presence of the head of English department in the school might influence their responses.

5- All the interviewees were asked the same questions in the same order. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. In each interview the researcher employed field notes and with the participants' permission the interviews were audio recorded using windows software called (jet audio 7).

**Table2: Interviewees' Background Information**

Name	Nationality	Age	Teaching experience	Gender	Highest Qualification
Ali	Syrian	30 - 35	9	Male	BA
Khaled	Palestinian	35 - 45	18	Male	BA
Sami	Egyptian	20 - 30	7	Male	BA
Tareq	Palestinian	30 - 40	16	Male	BA
Omar	Jordanian	25 - 35	9	Male	BA
Tamer	Syrian	20 - 30	6	Male	BA
Mousa	Jordanian	30 - 35	12	Male	BA
Najeeb	Tunisian	30 - 40	15	Male	BA

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Teachers' responses in section one, two and three of the questionnaire, were calculated using frequency count first and then converted into percentages (percentages rounded to the nearest tenth of a percentile). Moreover, the mean score for each statement was also calculated to ease the process of comparing teachers' beliefs and practices (Appendix C). Qualitative responses to the open-ended questions in section four of the questionnaire were analyzed and categorized according to meaning. Data obtained from the interview transcriptions and field notes was listened to and read several times and was categorized according to the questionnaire item themes and then some extracts were transcribed and coded for analysis purposes.

### **3.6 Data Presentation**

Teachers' quantitative responses were presented in three sections: teachers' stated beliefs about grammar teaching, their reported classroom practices and consistency between their beliefs and classrooms practices. Each section presents the findings on the basis of the pre-established eight components that were used in designing the questionnaire. Their qualitative responses to the open-ended items and the interviews questions were presented where appropriate in order to reach a richer interpretation of what most teachers thought about grammar teaching.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Results**

This chapter presents the results of both the survey questionnaire and the two small focused interviews. The data obtained from the 30 closed statements of section 2 in the questionnaire will contribute towards answering (RQ1). Whereas the data gathered from section 3 (16-closed statements) will help in answering (RQ2). Comparing the results in these two sections will enable the researcher to answer (RQ3). The qualitative results obtained from the two open-ended questions in section four and the interviews will not only back up the data collected from the questionnaire and provide more consolidation data towards answering the previous three questions but it will also provide an answer for (RQ4).

This chapter presents the findings in three sections: first, teachers' stated beliefs about grammar teaching. Second, teachers' reported classroom practices. Finally, the level of consistency between their beliefs and classrooms practices. A summary of the result of each component (pre-established eight 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. In addition to calculation of mean scores for each single item of the questionnaire (Appendix C)

#### **4.1 Teacher's Stated Beliefs about Grammar Teaching**

All teachers (46) who participated in this study responded to all the close-ended statements (30) in Section Two of the questionnaire that was intended to investigate their beliefs about the below eight components which represent different aspects and key issues of grammar teaching (see Appendix A).

##### **4.1.1 Beliefs in the Role of Grammar Teaching**

Statements 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the first component were meant to investigate teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar teaching in language learning (see Table 3). Although (60%) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that grammar is the most important component in language learning, only 18(39%) out of 46 respondents stated that they spend a lot of time on teaching grammar rules. Two thirds of the teachers

(69%) reported that students can learn a second language without grammar instruction and this justifies why 46% (21) of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with statement 3 " By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable in communication".

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Component 1. The Role of Grammar Teaching**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
1.	Grammar is the most important component in language learning.	28 (60%)	3 (7%)	15 (33%)
2.	English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.	18 (39%)	7 (15%)	21 (46%)
3.	By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable in communication.	14 (30%)	11 (24%)	21 (46%)
4.	A learner can learn a second or foreign language without grammar instruction (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).	32 (69%)	6 (13%)	8 (18%)

(n=46)

During both interviews, when asked about the role of grammar in English learning, the majority of the teachers appeared to believe that grammar plays a crucial role and could help learners in two ways; first, improve their accuracy and correct their errors. Second, enhance learners' self confidence to produce more language and correct their errors but they all confessed that sole grammar teaching will never lead to fluency unless the students practice the target language in real life situations and get exposed to natural contexts. One of the interviewees (Ali) commented (Extract 4.1)

(Extract 4.1)

Yeah, I think it is possible. I think grammar is very helpful, like I said, helping students correct errors and understand errors but fluency needs practice.

Tareq added (Extract 4.2)

(Extract 4.2)

I think students are usually very shy when speaking a second language, and grammar helps them make sentences and helps them to feel more confident in language. If students learn grammar well, it improves their confidence.

Khaled was the strongest proponent of the importance of grammar in language learning. He highly valued the role of grammar and considered it as a key to language learning. He stated (Extract4.3)

(Extract4.3)

If students can learn grammar without the help of teachers, so why do they come to school and pay money, [I mean] in the UAE, in Sharjah, our students have very limited opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom, so we should make it up for them inside the classroom.

However, Mousa thought that grammar should neither be taught in class nor the focus of teaching.

## **4.1.2 Beliefs in Grammar Pedagogy**

The second theme is grammar pedagogy, aimed to explore teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching approaches. This theme is divided into four main categories to elicit teachers beliefs about the different teaching approaches existed in literature including 1) Deductive 2) Inductive 3) Incidental focus on form and 4) Meaning-based approach.

### **4.1.2.1 Beliefs in Deductive Approach**

The results show that the teachers broadly favor teaching grammar explicitly by clearly stating and pointing out the rules to the students (see Table 4). Nearly half of the teachers 22 (48%) focused on individual rules and structures when teaching grammar. Moreover, 52% of respondents believed that teachers should analyze structures and tell students the rules; whereas, only 39% (18) disagreed with this opinion. The justifications for their choices were clearly stated in their responses to statement 7, 8 and 9. In their reply to statement 7, respondents' scores were equally spread over the categories of agreement and disagreement; 17 (37%) out of 46 respondents believed that direct explanation of grammar is more secure and ensure

students' understanding, whereas, 37% (17) do not believe so. 59% of the participant teachers claimed that grammar instruction aid learners in correcting their mistakes. Moreover, more than half of the teachers 52% (25) reported that their students expect them to present grammar directly and explicitly.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Component 2. Grammar Pedagogy – Deductive**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
5.	Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual rules and structures.	22 (48%)	11 (24%)	13 (28%)
6.	Teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises when teaching grammar.	24 (52%)	4 (9%)	18 (39%)
7.	Direct explanation of grammar is more secure and straight-forward to ensure students' understanding.	17 (37%)	12 (26%)	17 (37%)
8.	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.	27 (59%)	9 (20%)	10 (21%)
9.	My students expect me to present grammar points directly and explicitly.	25 (54%)	12 (26%)	9 (20%)

(n=46)

#### 4.1.2.2 Beliefs in Inductive Approach

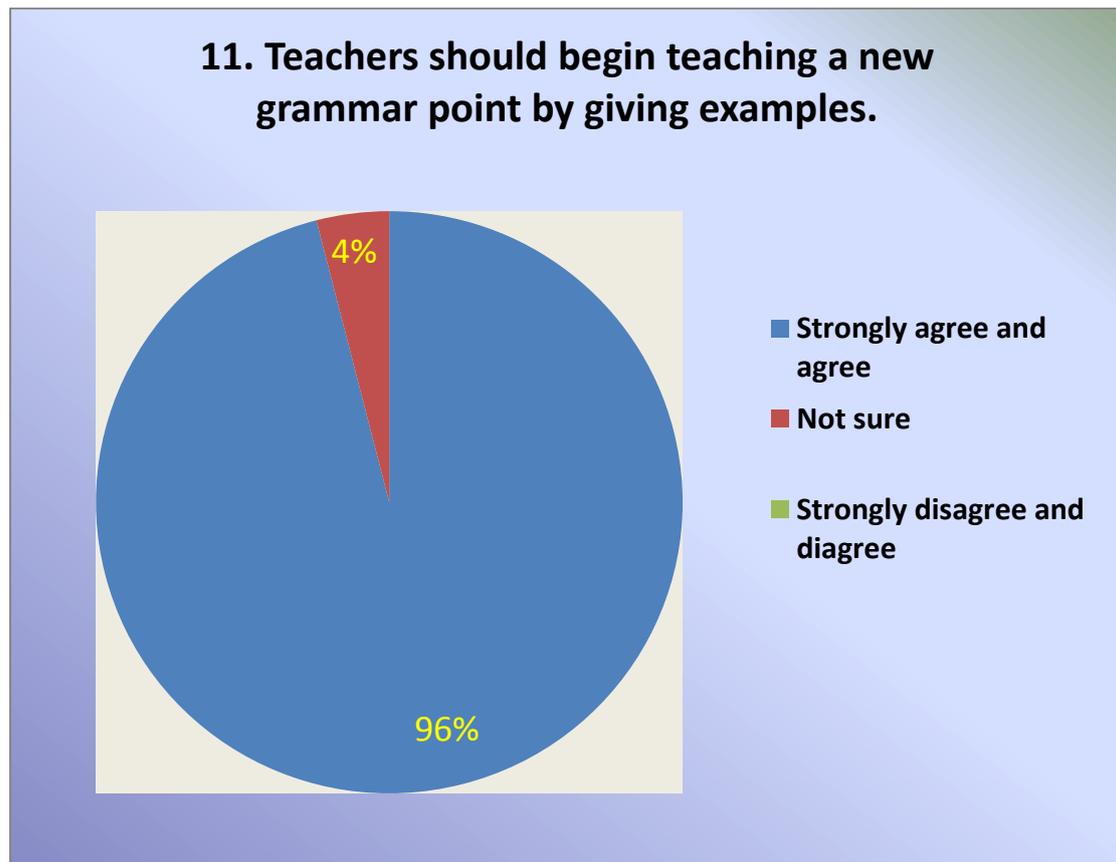
Table 5 shows a strong preference of discovery techniques at the level of teachers' beliefs. It is also clear, that in this statement they were not divided at all. The majority of them believe in the usefulness of an inductive approach. Almost all the teachers 96% (44) expressed their agreement towards the statement that teaching a grammar point should begin by giving examples (see figure 1). Although more than half of the teachers 27 (59%) expressed a negative attitude towards students' self-discovery of grammatical rules because it is time consuming, 78% (34) of the respondents confirmed its effectiveness in grammar learning. In sum, this sample of 46 respondents showed a high preference for using discovery techniques, which shows a tendency to believe in an inductive approach.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Component 2. Grammar Pedagogy – Inductive**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
10.	Grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves.	34 (74%)	8 (18%)	4 (8%)
11.	Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by giving examples.	44 (96%)	2 (4%)	
12.	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in better learning and understanding.	27 (59%)	12 (26%)	7 (15%)

(n=46)

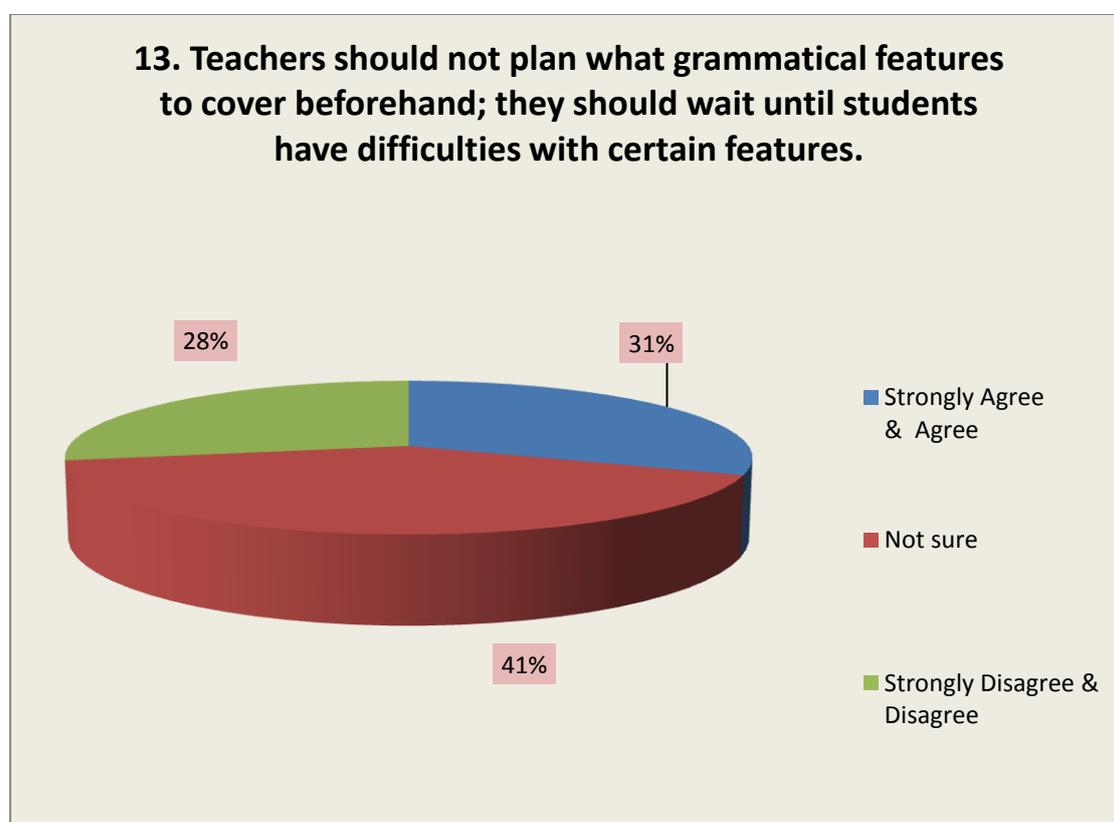
**Figure 1: Teachers' responses to statement 11**



### 4.1.2.3 Belief in Incidental Focus on Form Approach

It appears that the respondents have quite a mixed feeling as their replies to statement 13 (Figure 2) "Teachers should not plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand; they should wait until students have difficulties with certain features" were divided over the categories of agreement, disagreement (31% agreed vs. 28% disagreed). However, it is interesting that there are a relatively great number of teachers (41%) being indecisive in relation to this statement. Thus, more in-depth investigation is needed in order to explore the rationales underlying their responses.

**Figure 2: Teachers' responses to statement 13**



### 4.1.2.4 Beliefs in Meaning-Based Approach

Table 6 below shows that 83% (38) of the participant teachers generally believed that the best way to teach grammar is through exposure to language in natural contexts (see figure 3). Moreover, most of the teachers (78%) agreed that teachers should focus on form, meaning and use when teaching grammar. Nearly two thirds of the teachers (62%) agreed with statement 15 "You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well". In sum, this sample of 46 respondents

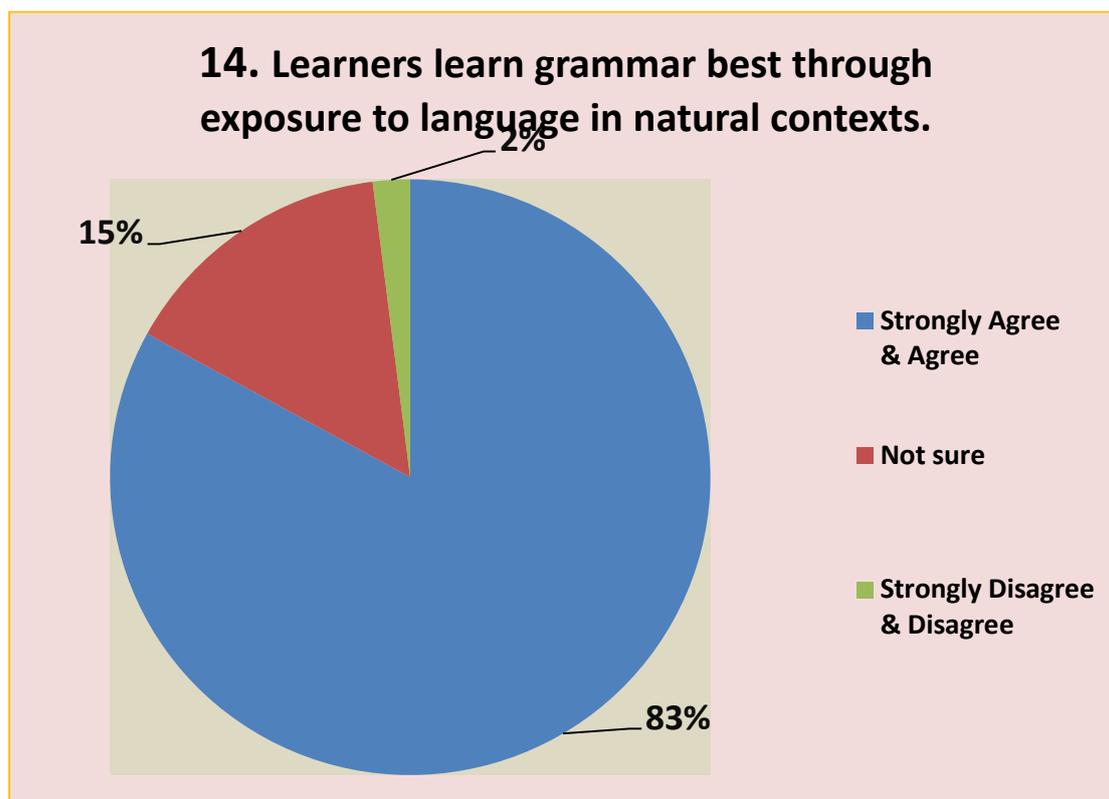
showed a high preference for using Natural Approach techniques, which shows a tendency to believe in a Meaning Focused Approach.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Component 2. Grammar Pedagogy – Meaning**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
14.	Learners learn grammar best through exposure to language in natural contexts.	38 (83%)	7 (15%)	1 (2%)
15.	You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well.	29 (62%)	9 (20%)	8 (18%)
16.	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.	36 (78%)	7 (15%)	3 (7%)

(n=46)

**Figure 3: Teachers' responses to statement 14**



Teachers' responses to the open-ended question number 1 in section 4 (What do you think the ideal way to teach grammar?) generated 765 words, averaging about

21 words per respondent. The 36 teachers out of 46 (78%) who responded to this question, gave different responses which reflected their various methods of approaching grammar. Out of these responses several related to grammar teaching activities. Only few teachers were able to name the methods they employ when teaching grammar. Table 7 below shows a summary of the most repeated responses provided by these teachers.

**Table 7: Teachers' Responses to Open Ended Question 1**

Deductive Approach	Practicing the grammatical rules through doing related exercises. Correcting students' mistakes immediately to avoid errors for next time. Analyzing structures – introducing the rules. Drilling
Inductive Approach	Through examples. Using contexts not in separates way or separate rules. Peer correction and group correction. Asking students to find out the rules for themselves. Preplanning the grammatical rules – using contexts – rule discovery. Communicative way - introducing situation - elicitation of rules. Teaching through games and puzzle to practice the grammar and stick it in their minds. It is more useful to teach grammar indirectly. Avoiding the use of grammar terminology. Employing dialogues and role plays. Avoiding the use of the first language. Contextualization - focus on meaning first and then focus on form
Focus on Meaning Approach	Students learn grammar best through exposure to language in natural context. Grammar teaching is not important.

During the semi structured interviews, the teachers were requested to describe the methods they favor for teaching grammar. Half of the interviewees reported favoring the Inductive approach in which the students work out the rules for themselves whereas the rest were between the Deductive and Focus on Meaning approaches. Proponents of the inductive approach believed that rule discovery is challenging but long lasting. They also added that this method keeps the students

involved and encourages students to use thinking skills. Najeeb commented on this idea by saying (Extract 4.4)

(Extract4.4)

If students find out the grammatical rule themselves, it will stick in their memories for ever, similar to the way the students do experiment in the science lab.

Tamer added (Extract4.5)

(Extract4.5)

Although much preparation is required for inductive approach [I mean] worksheets, or any other teaching aids, I think it helps me in keeping the students busy trying to find the problem and its solution.

On the contrary those who were in favor of deductive approach claimed that it is time saving, help students to pass their grammar tests and does not require too many teaching aids which might not be available in the context where they teach. Sami declared (Extract 4.6)

(Extract4.6)

Down to earth guys, we have no time to do all of this, think about the textbook that we have to cover, [do not tell me teachers can manage] think about the exams the students have to sit for at the end of each semester, what would you say to the supervisor and the school principal if you have not finished the prescribed material in the right time? I am sorry I need my job for a while.

Focus on Meaning proponents clearly stated that grammar is old fashioned and should not be taught at all, they prioritized meaning over grammar and believed that teacher's main role is to help the students convey messages and communicate using the target language outside the classroom. Mousa said (Extract4.7)

(Extract4.7)

In the UAE, where English is widely spoken, the most important thing is to teach the students how to order food, fill an application form, open a bank account and all these situations do not require perfect grammar.

### 4.1.3 Beliefs in the Value of Practising Grammar

Regarding teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar learning practices, there seems to be a clear agreement among the respondents that grammar practices do play an important role in the language learning process, positive responses to statements 17 and 18 in (Table 8) totaled more than 80% and 65% of replies respectively. The majority of the respondents found it is a must to expose students to communicative grammar practice. However, their preference for communicative grammar practice does not seem to prevent their use of grammar drilling and memorization.

Written and oral grammar practicing was highly valued by the interviewees. Almost all of them professed that they use various kinds of activities to practice grammar and to check that the grammar point which has been discussed during the lesson is understood. They employ gaps filling, sentence correction, word scrambling, drilling and pattern repetition and when asked about the activities they like most to practice grammar, khalid maintained (Extract4.8)

(Extract 4.8)

I have no choice but to train my students on the exam format, so most of the exercises I use are typical to those the students will sit for in the exam. I mean word correction (e.g. correct the word between brackets) or multiple choice questions.

**Table 8: Descriptive Statistics for Component 3. Practicing Grammar**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
17.	Practice of structures must always be within a full, communicative context.	37 (80%)	6 (13%)	3 (7%)
18.	Drilling and memorization are essential to the successful learning of new language forms.	30 (65%)	9 (20%)	7 (15%)

(n=46)

#### 4.1.4 Beliefs in Feedback and Error Correction

The fourth theme aimed to identify teachers' beliefs regarding feedback and correcting learners' grammatical errors. The importance of grammatical accuracy in learners' language performance can be inferred from the affirmative responses, (27 replies (59%) were of agreement to statement 19 in Table 9. However, replies to statement 23 suggested that quite a large majority of respondents tend not to correct every spoken grammatical error (70% replied positively) but only to correct those that hinder their understanding of meaning. Furthermore, 67% of respondents supported the idea that students should be given the opportunity to think about their own errors. On the other hand, less than half of the respondents (21 out of 46) viewed errors as a normal part of learning, whereas 37% (17) disagreed with them. It was also found that half of respondents were in favor of correcting students' grammatical mistakes immediately

The data collected during both interviews revealed that the students are in need for teachers who continuously correct their errors. However, the type of feedback depends on the students' proficiency level, age, and personal reactions. Therefore, the interviewees appeared to utilize different types of feedback and error correction techniques, the most popular ones are recasting students, explicit error correction, self correction and peer correction. In addition to employing the body language which gives the students a hint that he has made a mistake and make him rethink about his sentences. Omar stated (Extract4.9)

(Extract4.9)

I don't talk about the mistake. What I do is I say what they should have said. But I don't tell them that it's wrong. I just want them to hear what is right. So sometimes I say what students said, and I make a change. They usually notice, I think they hear the difference.

As for giving students feedback on their written work, they also appeared to employ other techniques such as underlining the incorrect words using red ink and providing the correct ones, correcting on impression without referring to the grammatical mistakes and using the code "G" as a grammatical mistake indicator. Ali said (Extract 4.10)

(Extract 4.10)

I think my students hate to see their paper bleeding full of red ink like blood, I avoid correcting every grammatical mistake the students make. I always select the most important ones.

**Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for Component 4. Feedback and Error Correction**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
19.	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.	27 (59%)	10 (21%)	9 (20%)
20.	Since errors are a normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time.	21 (45%)	8 (18%)	17 (37%)
21.	Learners' mistakes should always be corrected immediately to prevent the formation of bad habits	23 (50%)	7 (15%)	16 (35%)
22.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.	31 (67%)	9 (20%)	6 (13%)
23.	A teacher should correct students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	32 (70%)	7 (15%)	7 (15%)

(n=46)

#### 4.1.5 Beliefs about Using Grammatical Terminology

The fifth theme is the belief in the importance of using grammatical terminology or metalanguage in teaching, aimed to gather data on whether teachers employ grammatical terms in their classes or not. As clear from table 10, more than half of the respondents (54%) disagreed with the idea of using terminology in grammar teaching. This means, they do not believe that learners should know or even understand terminology. However, 24% were not sure.

**Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Component 5. Using Grammatical Terminology**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
24.	Learners do not need the grammatical terms to succeed in learning the language.	25 (54%)	11 (24%)	10 (21%)

(n=46)

The majority of the interviewees expressed their doubts regarding the importance of using grammatical terms in their classroom. Surprisingly, they all agreed that familiarizing the students with grammatical terminology would add an extra burden on their shoulders. However the parts of speech (e.g. verb, noun, adjective, adverb, and preposition) are essential for examination purposes. Mousa declared (Extract 4.11)

(Extract 4.11)

What is the benefit of telling the students the grammatical terms, I don't want my student to become a language expert, I want him to be a user who is able to communicate properly.

#### 4.1.6 Beliefs in the Role of First Language

The sixth theme is the belief in the role of first language in assisting grammar instruction, aimed to explore the participants' beliefs concerning the reference to students' L1 (Arabic Language) in teaching grammar. As shown in table 11, only 28% of respondents supported the idea of using Arabic language to explain English grammar rules while 46% disagreed with this opinion. Moreover, their replies to statement 26 " You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language" were spread over the categories of agreement and disagreement (41% agreement vs. 46% disagreement).

All the interviewees declared that they use the students' native language (Arabic language) inside the classroom on daily basis, particularly when teaching abstract vocabulary items and grammar. However their employment of Arabic cannot be described as a Grammar Translation Method. To them, the use of the native language is a shortcut, time saving and meets the students' previous learning experiences. Moreover, they claimed that they dislike comparing the alike concepts

between English and Arabic when they teach grammar (e.g. past tense and passive voice). Sami affirmed (Extract 4.12)

(Extract 4.12)

I enjoy the privilege of being a bilingual teacher, I translate, and compare between the two languages but in teaching grammar. For example I may tell the students that English has capital letter and Arabic does not.

Omar added (Extract 4.13)

(Extract 4.13)

I myself when I was a student, used to write the vocabulary meanings in Arabic and when I become a teacher I always ask my students to do the same. For example the word "culture" how you think students can learn it without a direct translation

Ali continued by explaining that (Extract 4.14)

(Extract 4.14)

Comparison is useless; we don't want our students to think in Arabic before saying or writing an English sentence.

**Table 11: Descriptive Statistics for Component 6. The role of First Language**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
25.	Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.	13 (28%)	12 (26%)	21 (46%)
26.	You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language.	19 (41%)	6 (13%)	21 (46%)

(n=46)

#### 4.1.7 Beliefs in the Role of English Teacher

The seventh theme is the belief in the role of the English teacher in grammar classes, aimed to elicit information about the role teachers play in classrooms. The

majority of the teachers (78%) asserted that the teacher's main role is to help learners find out the grammar rules for themselves (Table 12).

**Table 12: Descriptive Statistics for Component 7. The Role of the English Teacher**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
27.	In teaching grammar, a teacher's main role is to explain the rules.	12 (26%)	7 (15%)	27 (59%)
28.	The teachers' role is to help learners figure out the grammar rules for themselves	36 (78%)	7 (15%)	3 (7%)

(n=46)

#### 4.1.8 Beliefs about Teaching Young and Adults Learners.

The eighth theme aimed to examine participants' views towards the differences in teaching grammar for adult and young learners. Table 13 shows that the majority of the teachers responded positively to statement 30; 78% strongly agreed or agreed that indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate for younger learners whereas 57% agreed that direct grammar teaching is suitable for older learners.

**Table 13: Descriptive Statistics for Component 8, Teaching Children and Adults**

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
29.	Teaching the rules of English grammar directly is more appropriate for older learners.	26 (57%)	7 (15%)	13 (28%)
30.	Indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate for younger learners.	36 (78%)	7 (15%)	3 (7%)

(n= 46)

#### 4.2 Teachers' Reported Classroom Practices

All teachers (46) who participated in this study responded to all the close-ended statements (16) in Section Three of the questionnaire that was aimed to obtain information about teachers' classroom practices regarding the teaching of grammar (see

Appendix A). Teachers were kindly requested to indicate how often they use each of the given activities in their own teaching on a scale from Never to Always.

Regarding the importance of grammar teaching, as shown in Table 14 below, 57% (26 out of the 46) of the preparatory teachers who responded to statement 31 “I spend a lot of time on teaching grammar.” pointed out that they “Sometimes” spend a lot of time on grammar teaching whereas only 7 respondents out of 46 claimed that they “Always” do so.

**Table 14: Teachers’ Classroom Practices. The Role of Grammar Teaching**

No.	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
31.	I spend a lot of time on teaching grammar.	1 (2%)	12 (26%)	26 (57%)	7 (15%)	

(n=46)

As for the result of the interviews, all of the interviewees expressed their strong disagreement towards spending too much time on grammar teaching per a 50 – minute period. They thought it might either confuse or bore the students. The amount of time they usually spend on teaching grammar ranges from 10 to 20 minutes per period.

Statements 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37 were grouped together and were meant to elicit teachers’ responses about their practices when teaching grammar in their classrooms (see Table 15). Statement 35 “ I pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson” appears to be the most frequently used activity with 34 (74%) teachers out of 46 claiming that they “Usually or Always” practice it, followed closely by the findings of statement 33 “ I use examples instead of rules” with 32 (69%) teachers out of 46 claiming that they “Usually or Always” adopt this technique. Statement 34 comes next in which 61% (29) of respondents indicated that they “Usually or Always” encouraged learners to discover rules for themselves. In their responses to statements 36 and 37, more than half of the participant teachers (55%) in this study rated “Usually / Always” while statement 32 “ I state, describe and explain the grammatical rules then provide more examples” and 38 “ I ask my students to memorize the grammatical rules” were rated as the most “Never / Rarely” used activity, with only (13 and 12 respectively) teachers claiming to use it frequently.

**Table 15: Teachers' Classroom Practices – Grammar Pedagogy**

No.	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
32.	I state, describe and explain the grammatical rules then provide more examples.	11 (24%)	12 (26%)	10 (22%)	10 (21%)	3 (7%)
33.	I use examples instead of rules.	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	10 (22%)	25 (54%)	7 (15%)
34.	I encourage learners to discover grammar rules for themselves.	2 (4%)	5 (11%)	10 (22%)	17 (37%)	12 (26%)
35.	I pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson.	1 (2%)	5 (11%)	6 (13%)	17 (37%)	17 (37%)
36.	I use games, objects, pictures, texts, role plays and dialogues in teaching grammar.		5 (11%)	16 (35%)	16 (35%)	9 (20%)
37.	When teaching new grammar, I teach the form and the meaning together.	2 (4%)	3 (7%)	16 (35%)	21 (46%)	4 (9%)
38.	I ask my students to memorize the grammatical rules.	8 (17%)	11 (24%)	15 (33%)	8 (17%)	4 (9%)

(n=46)

Regarding the value of practicing grammar, statements 39 and 40 were meant to collect information about how teachers make their students practice grammar in English classrooms. Table 16 below shows that a high percentage of survey respondents declared that they use different written exercise in teaching grammar; 68% scored Usually or Always and 30% scored sometimes. In their responses to statement 40, 61% of respondents stated that they "Usually or Always" provide their students with more repetitive pattern practices whereas 20% scored "Never /Rarely" and "Sometimes" respectively.

Regarding feedback and error correction, table 17 below shows that 61% of the respondents appeared to give their students the opportunity to think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves. In their responses to statements 41 and 43, nearly half of teachers 44% (20) out of the 46 participating in this study, pointed out that they "Always" or "Usually" correct all students grammatical errors immediately while 48% (22) of them "Always" or "Usually"

correct their students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.

**Table 16: Teachers' Classroom Practices – Practising Grammar**

No.	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
39.	I use different written exercise such as gapped sentences and sentence correction in teaching grammar.		1 (2%)	14 (30%)	21 (46%)	10 (22%)
40.	I provide my students with more repetitive pattern practices (drilling) when teaching grammar.	3 (7%)	6 (13%)	9 (20%)	21 (46%)	7 (15%)

(n=46)

**Table 17: Teachers' Classroom Practices – Feedback and Error Correction**

No.	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
41.	I immediately correct all grammatical errors in students' oral and written work and provide feedback.	1 (2%)	11 (24%)	14 (30%)	15 (33%)	5 (11%)
42.	I give my students the opportunity to think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.	2 (4%)	4 (9%)	12 (26%)	17 (37%)	11 (24%)
43.	I correct my students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	4 (9%)	5 (11%)	15 (33%)	10 (22%)	12 (26%)

(n=46)

Statement 44 (see Table 18) was meant to elicit teachers' views regarding the use of grammatical terminology. Findings showed that half of the respondents 50% claimed that they "Sometimes" use grammar terms when they teach, where as 11 respondents out of 46 "Usually or Always" do so.

**Table 18: Teachers' Classroom Practices – The Use of Grammatical Terminology**

No.	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
44.	I employ grammar terminology when I teach grammar.	4 (9%)	8 (17%)	23 (50%)	7 (15%)	4 (9%)

(n=46)

In statements 45 and 46, teachers were asked about the role of the first language in teaching or learning a second one (see Table 19). Most of their answers were divided over "Never / Rarely" categories; 59% (27) of respondents indicated that they "Never or Rarely" compare how the past tense is used in English and Arabic grammar. Moreover, 63% (29) of respondents asserted that they "Never or Rarely" use Arabic language to teach English grammar.

**Table 19: Teachers' Classroom Practices – The Use of the First Language**

No.	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always
45.	I compare how the Past Tense is used in English and Arabic grammars	15 (33%)	12 (26%)	9 (20%)	7 (15%)	3 (7%)
46.	I use Arabic Language to teach English grammar.	10 (22%)	19 (41%)	12 (26%)	4 (9%)	1 (2%)

(n=46)

### 4.3 Consistency between Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices

In the final stage of the analysis, calculation of mean scores for each single item of the questionnaire was used to reveal relationships between teachers' stated beliefs about grammar teaching and their reported classroom practices by comparing two similar statements from Section 2 and Section 3 of the questionnaire (See Appendix D). From the slight difference of mean scores, some inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices can be observed. Here is the comparison of the fourteen pairs of statements.

Comparing the statements 2 and 31 regarding the importance of grammar in English learning revealed that teachers believe in spending a lot of time on grammar teaching and this is what they do in practice (Appendix D).

In the area of grammar teaching, statements 6 and 32 are about the explanation and isolation of grammar rules, revealed that teachers believe in focusing on the form first, then practicing it and this is what they do in their classrooms (Appendix D). Statements 10 and 34 indicated that the majority of the participant teachers strongly

agree that learners should work out rules for themselves and in reality they encourage their learners to discover rules for themselves (Appendix D). Statements 11 and 33 showed that a large majority of respondents strongly agree that teachers should begin by giving examples instead of rules and this is what they do while teaching grammar in classrooms. In statements 13 and 35, teachers showed evident agreement with the idea of pre planning what grammatical points to cover in the lesson and they put it more often in their teaching. Statements 16 and 37 signaled that teachers strongly agree with the idea of teaching the form and meaning together and this is what they frequently do in their classes. Statements 14 and 36 suggested that teachers strongly agree that students should be exposed to authentic language and they indeed do so in classes.

Statements 18 and 40 are regarding practicing grammar (Appendix D). Since they like focusing on grammatical forms and teaching them explicitly the comparison of the statements about the usefulness of drilling and memorization is not surprising. Drilling is a favourable technique and used often by practicing teachers.

In feedback and error correction, teachers showed evident agreement with the idea of correcting learners' mistakes immediately, and thus they often put it into practice (statements 21 and 41, Appendix D). In statements 22 and 42, the majority of the teachers believed that students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms themselves and this beliefs is translated into practice in their classes. Statements 23 and 43 showed clear consistency between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices; most of the respondents agreed that teachers should correct students' spoken errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning and this is what they frequently do in their teachings.

However, in the area of grammatical terminology, it was found that teachers stated beliefs are somehow inconsistent with their actual classroom practice. They regarded terminology as not important, but they found using terminology in grammar explanation (items 24 and 44, Appendix D).

Regarding the use of the first language, statements 25 and 46 showed that teachers disagree with the idea of using the first language while teaching a foreign one and in practice they avoid using Arabic in their classes. Moreover, statement 26 and 46 signaled that teachers don't think that learning the grammar of the first language is

a prerequisite for learning a foreign one and in their classes they don't attempt to compare the similar concepts between the two languages.

Although the findings obtained from the questionnaire (section 2 and 3) revealed that teachers' beliefs are consistent with their reported classroom practices, the data collected from the open ended questions and the interviews showed a different picture. Teachers' responses to the open-ended question number 2 in section 4 (Are there any differences between your beliefs about grammar teaching and your actual practices in the classroom?) generated 576 words, averaging about 16 words per respondent. The 35 teachers out of 46 (76%) who responded to this question, gave different responses which reflected their agreement or disagreement. 19 participants (54%) clearly stated that there are some inconsistency between their beliefs and their actual classroom practices due to various reasons related mostly to the work setting where they teach such as the students' proficiency level, the pressure of the current exam format, the length of the text books, the class density, workload and busy schedules, lack of teaching aids and the students 'previous learning experience. As one teacher commented "Yes, that's all depend on the level of the students and their ages". Another respondent wrote, "Yes, because it depends on the class size, the nature of students, the ability of students and some time the nature of the school working duties. Whereas the rest of the respondents (15) 46% strongly acknowledged that they implement their beliefs in the classrooms. During both interviews, the majority of the interviewees clearly admitted that they can't implement their thoughts in the classes due to many constrains that hinder the translation of beliefs into practice. They mentioned the same external factors listed by the respondents to question 2 in section 4 of the questionnaire.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter, the major findings of this study, reported in the previous chapter, are presented and discussed in three sections. First, teachers' stated beliefs and classroom practices in grammar instruction are discussed together. Second, the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. Third, the factors that constrain teachers from translating their beliefs into practice. The discussion is based on the existing literature and the findings of this study. Moreover, in this chapter, the major findings are summarized, followed by implications for the UAE Ministry of Education. Finally, the limitations and suggestions for further research are highlighted.

#### **5.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices. (RQ1 and RQ2)**

Interestingly, in Section Two of the questionnaire, 12 out of the 30 statements scored over 20 per cent of 'Not sure' responses each. This inclination may reflect teachers' doubts about various aspects of teaching grammar (e.g. 41 % of the respondents were unsure about whether teachers should plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand or they should wait until students have difficulties with certain features). The trend may also indicate that the difficulties some teachers faced in expressing their beliefs are related to their rare participation in similar studies which signals the lack of studies in this field in this part of the world. Moreover, it may mirror their lack of knowledge in pedagogic grammar which is may be due to the teachers' education background and the lack of in service training courses. Whatever the reasons are, more in-depth investigation is needed in order to explore the rationales underlying their responses.

The teachers in this study appeared to hold similar beliefs regarding the importance of grammar teaching. From the questionnaire findings, more than half the teachers surveyed asserted that grammar is the most important component in language learning; this result further confirms those of previous studies in terms of the overall role of grammar in the language learning (e.g. Burgess and Etherington 2002; Schulz 1996, 2001). The respondents also recognized the fact that a focus on grammar alone

is insufficient to develop students' ability in communication and this explains why nearly half of the respondents do not spend too much time on grammar teaching and this echoes VanPatten' (1990 : 296) claim "attention to form in the input competes with attention to meaning". Moreover, the dominant belief of the majority of teachers who participated in this study was that student can learn a second or foreign language without grammar instruction, similar to how children learn their mother tongue. The lack of importance teachers give to grammar teaching and the high regard for fluency is a further indication of the influence of the Natural Approach and Krashen's (1981) hypothesis. It seems that the teachers in this sample appear to favour what is often referred to as 'zero-option' on grammar teaching (Ellis 1997: 48) which does not focus on explicit grammar teaching at all, but puts the emphasis on language acquisition through natural communication. The Natural approach proponents claim that formal grammar instruction is useless and students can acquire language naturally if exposed to plentiful "Comprehensible Input" (Krashen, 1981). According to Krashen's (1981) hypothesis, 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.

Regarding grammar teaching approaches, the analysis revealed that the teachers do not seem to be extremely loyal to one single approach but they seem to combine inductive, deductive and meaning based approaches in their classes. Their use of an eclectic approach supports the claim that there is no single best approach to grammar teaching as Ellis (1994:646) states "it is probably premature to reach any firm conclusions regarding what type of formal instruction works best". It also indicates that the teachers tend to be flexible in their choice of grammar approaches as they may see each type of practices has its own merits. It is very likely that the teachers in this study do not hesitate to use these types of practices as long as they suit the learning context and the needs of their learners. The findings revealed that the teachers are in favor of direct grammar explanation due to their beliefs of the effectiveness of grammar instruction in enabling the students correcting their errors and their awareness of their students' needs and expectations. Similarly, Burgess and Etherington (2002) found that over 90% of the teachers in their study agree that their students expect them to present grammar points explicitly. Moreover, the limited time

they have to cover the text book is another factor that forces them to approach grammar directly.

However, this does not imply a preference among our sample for direct instruction though, as the number of teachers supporting discovery and meaning based learning was almost two times greater than the number who favoured explaining rules which shows a tendency to believe in an inductive approach within the communicate frame. Almost, 96% of the respondents believed that teaching a grammar point should begin by giving examples instead of rules. They also highly appreciated the importance of giving the learners the opportunities to work out the rules for themselves. This preference for inductive approach contradicts with the general research results reviewed by Ellis (2006) which has shown that deductive instruction seems more effective than inductive instruction, it also disagrees with Andrew's (2003) findings, who found a much more balanced spread of preferences for inductive and deductive grammar approaches. The majority of the teachers in this sample are likely to believe that grammar is best taught through exposure to language in natural contexts. Their preference also signals their inclination towards the contemporary methods which indicates their awareness of the new trends in pedagogic grammar. However, in the area of incidental focus on form, the respondents expressed their unfamiliarity with this approach as a relatively great number of teachers (41%) were indecisive in relation to this statement.

In the area of practicing grammar, Schulz (2001) found that more than 80% of the teachers believe that it is more important to practice a second language in situations simulating real-life than to analyze and practice grammar patterns. Similarly this study, 80% of respondents agreed that practice of structures must always be within a full, communicative context. However, their preference of pattern practice (drilling) and memorization as effective teaching techniques appears to be a significant influence of behaviorism, which was justified by the interviewees as essential activities for mid and final –year examinations. It seems that teachers' previous learning experience has also influenced the way they currently teach; the majority of the interviewees reported having learned English through a grammar based syllabus which heavily emphasized rule memorization and drilling.

Error correction and giving feedback is a further indication for their tendency towards adopting an eclectic approach while teaching grammar, as a high parentage of

respondents claimed 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 instant correction of errors, fearing of formation of bad habits. Moreover, they do not think that grammatical mistakes should be ignored or underestimated as more than half of the respondents agreed with the statement that grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged. In sum, it seems that the teachers are likely to value fluency and content in their students' talks, but they also do not ignore grammar mistakes.

The use of grammar terminology in the classroom may be understood as a necessary part of an explicit approach to grammar teaching (Stern, 1992; Burgess and Etherington 2002). In their study, Burgess and Etherington found that more than half of teachers believe that their students consider grammar terminology as useful. In the contrary, at the level of belief, the sample of this study regarded grammar as unnecessary part of grammar teaching as one of the interviewees asserted that he wants his students to become an English user but an expert, which goes in line with the ultimate goal of L2 learning that is to interact in the target language, not to talk explicitly about it (Mitchell and Redmond 1993: 19). However in practice the majority of teachers appeared to use the grammatical terms frequently to save time and meet their students' needs which supports Carter's (1990: 109) claim that metalanguage provides "an economic and precise way of discussing particular functions and purposes".

Concerning the use of Arabic language and its role in teaching English grammar. Surprisingly, the respondents showed a negative inclination towards the use of Arabic in their classroom as most of the teachers disagreed with statement 26 that teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules. This is also shows that the teachers in this sample strongly believe in the inductive approach.

## **5.2 The Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and Practices.**

### **(RQ3)**

This section attempts to answer the third research question which concerns to what extent teachers' classroom practices are shaped by their beliefs. As seen from

Appendix D, based on the quantitative findings obtained from questionnaire, although the respondents hold various beliefs about the role and approaches of grammar teaching, grammar practices, error correction, use of grammatical terminology and students' first language, to a large extent most of their beliefs are reflected in their instructional practices. The similarity between teachers' stated beliefs and their instructional practices seems to accord with Johnson's (1994:440) claim that what teachers do in the classroom is governed by what they believe and 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".

However, the qualitative findings revealed a mismatch between the belief and the practice, confirming Parajes' (1992) view that stated beliefs are an unreliable indicator of actual practice. The researcher presumed that the difficulties teachers face may be the main reasons behind causing the inconsistency. For example, 83% of the teachers surveyed believed that grammar is best learnt through exposure to language in natural contexts. Yet, teachers stated teaching grammar explicitly, with a lack of communicative tasks due to time constraints and the length of the text books. Also, almost 74% of the teachers surveyed claimed that grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves. Yet, little evidence of this was reported during both interviews. Moreover, most of the interviewees and the respondents to the open ended question number 2 in Section 4 of the questionnaire clearly stated that they are not able to translate their beliefs into practices. Thus, this mismatch suggests that in some cases and under certain circumstances teachers are not able to apply their beliefs into full practice.

### **5.3 Factors that Constrain Teachers from Transmitting their Beliefs. (RQ4)**

The fourth research question aims to explore the possible factors that prevent teachers from acting in accordance with their cognition. It was found that the participant teachers in this study modify and adjust their teaching practices as a result of various contextual factors including the school policy, lack of teaching resources, overcrowded classrooms, workload, length of assigned text books, time constraints and the exam format. These findings support Richard's (1996:284) claim that teachers

are influenced by "...their understanding of the system in which they work and their roles within it". Many teachers expressed the desire to conduct more communicative lessons but due to the time constraints they were not able to put their beliefs into practice. Moreover, the school policy which heavily emphasizes the importance of quietness in classes and regards it as a sign of good classroom management hinders the teachers as reported in the interviews from conducting noisy activities such as mingle, hands on or group work activities. The lack of resources is another factor that prevents teachers from applying their beliefs. For example one of the interviewee mentioned that due to the lack of photocopiers in his school, he photocopies the worksheet on his own expense. English supervisors' different views about grammar teaching were also found as one of the difficulties that teachers reported facing in teaching grammar. Each supervisor has a different view point and he wants the teachers under his supervision to modify their teachings according to his viewpoint. Thus, teachers find themselves obliged to follow him as an authoritative figure. It was also found that teachers adjust their approaches as a result of their understandings of their students' language abilities, needs and expectations which confirms the findings of Borg's (1998, 1999a, 1999b) studies. For example, the examination pressure and format force teachers to train their students how to deal with the multiple choice items. Moreover, the students expect their teachers to use Arabic language in explaining the grammatical rules. Thus, teachers have no choice but to modify their teaching styles and adopt approaches that may contradict with their beliefs.

#### **5.4 Implications for the UAE Ministry of Education**

English language teachers are responsible for developing learners' knowledge and skills of grammar. These teachers are required to adopt 'appropriate' and effective methods and strategies to teach grammar in English language classrooms. However, what is considered appropriate and 'effective' remains vague as teachers are not given well-defined guidelines on how to approach grammar teaching, whether it should be done explicitly or implicitly. Therefore, the findings of this study invite the ministry of education to assign a booklet containing well defined guidelines for teachers to follow and adopt when teaching grammar in their classroom. General outlines are inadequate; teachers need to be informed about their precise duties when teaching grammar and the other language skills. Furthermore, I strongly suggest

adopting a one policy approach in teaching grammar and the other language skills which may guarantee producing similar learning outcomes.

In the light of the findings, the Ministry of Education and the other educational bodies (e.g. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research) are encouraged to provide teachers with continuous opportunities for professional development and training programs to improve their teachers' practices regarding the various aspects of grammar teaching either by in-service programs or more professional education in colleges and universities. Such programs would result in serving not only pre-service but also in-service teachers acquire and implement the contemporary procedures for grammar teaching.

The results also indicate that teachers' beliefs may not be fully translated in teachers' classroom practices due to restrictions and pressure from work setting and many other several contextual constrains. Teachers being limited by the policies of the schools where they are working may not make use of all their best beliefs. Therefore, schools are responsible for providing the means for implementing what teachers know about their profession. For example, the majority of the teachers who participated in this study complained about the length of the curriculum, the lack of teaching aids, the extra administrative tasks teachers are involved in. Therefore, one of the suggestions for the UAE Ministry of Education is to reduce the teaching load for teachers and provide the schools with necessary teaching aids and resources that enhance the learning environment, especially at the preparatory schools.

The finding of this study also invites the Ministry of Education to start thinking of changing the current exam format assigned for Cycle 2 students particularly, the grammar part which is heavily based on the multiple choice items which are generally inauthentic to real language use and may not represent the students' true knowledge of grammar. Students are trained in guessing rather than in learning the language.

## **5.5 Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

The findings of this study were of great help in demonstrating teachers' beliefs and practices regarding grammar teaching in the government preparatory (cycle2) schools in one educational zone in Sharjah City. Nonetheless, like any other studies in the field, this study is far from perfect and has some limitations. Firstly, due to the

limited budget and sources, the present exploratory study investigated what certain teachers (cycle 2 EFL teachers) in a certain context (8 government cycle 2 schools in Sharjah) believe about grammar teaching and the relationship of their beliefs with classroom practices. Therefore, the findings from this study are not intended for generalization that is, making generalization from 'sample to population'. This is because each study is unique and differs from setting to setting. Moreover the population sample of this study is relatively small, only 46 respondents which cannot be qualified 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 instructional contexts is needed before more meaningful generalizations can be made. In addition, conducting a replication study in two other emirates to contrast the findings could help gain more insightful awareness about grammar teaching in the UAE.

Secondly, the researcher does realize that using questionnaires and semi structured interviews as sole sources of information will only reveal the teachers' stated beliefs and their reported classroom practices. Participants may tend to share the ideal ways to deal with grammar not the ones that reflect their actual practices. Therefore, stated beliefs and practices need to be triangulated with classroom observations to explore the consistency and inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and actual practices.

Thirdly, the present researcher conducted two group focused interviews with eight male teachers from three different schools 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.

Fourthly, the limitation of time-constraints has to be considered. The data were collected over a two-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 is highly recommended in this field because it gives better

insights, gives participants more opportunities to reflect on their practices and may occur changes in their beliefs and practices.

Fifthly, the data collection took more time than what was expected. Although participating teachers who took part in the pilot study confirmed that it did not take them more than 15 to 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaires, the participating teachers in the actual study were not willing to answer the questionnaires within one week and asked for more time. This was due to the length of the questionnaires. Teachers complained of being over-burdened with teaching duties and taking part in administrative work. Thus, future research should design the questionnaires carefully and give the participants as much time as possible to ensure true data.

Finally, this study has specifically looked at in-service EFL teachers. Future research may also examine pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs. It may also be interesting to investigate the perceptions of English supervisors, teacher trainers and directors of teacher training programs.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The main purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate 46 in service English teachers' stated beliefs towards grammar teaching and their reported practices when teaching grammar in 8 government preparatory schools in Sharjah. It aimed to collect evidence of their instructional practices and examine the relationships between their thoughts and actions. Furthermore, it attempted to stand on the probable contextual factors that influence the transformation of beliefs into practice. The findings revealed that teachers do indeed have a set of multifaceted beliefs about various aspects of grammar teaching in terms of the grammar role in learning, grammar approaches, grammar practising, error treatment, the use of grammatical terminology and students' first language. The quantitative data revealed that teachers' stated beliefs are to a large extent reflected in their classroom practices. However, the qualitative showed a different picture; the beliefs and practices were different in some domains, though. For example, although many participants reported that they believed in inductive, implicit, problem solving activities, and presentation through authentic texts, the findings revealed that formal instruction, the use of grammatical terminology, students' first language and explicit grammar teaching are still valued among teachers participated in the study. This inconsistency between beliefs and

practices are related to various contextual factors, including class density, time constraints, length of text books, lack of teaching resources and examination format. In addition to students' needs, expectations and proficiency levels.

## **5.7 Final Recommendation**

I think it is widely accepted now that teachers are the most important element in the classroom and in any educational system. It is the teacher who affects students learning and accomplishes what is called quality teaching.

Once the classroom door closes, once the lesson begins, once the student steps toward the teacher asking for help, it is all up to the teacher, not the school. Good schools help; great schools help more; but great teachers are the far more precious commodity. (Temes)

Therefore, the authority to change education for better or worse is and always has been in the hands of teachers. Educational reform is unlikely to occur until teachers take part in this reform. Thus, teachers should be the first priority in any intended educational reform (Yero 2010)

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Teachers' Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore teachers' beliefs towards grammar teaching and their classroom practices in UAE government preparatory (Cycle 2) schools. The following questions seek to find out your beliefs, views and ideas about grammar teaching. Your valuable participation not only facilitates my study but also contributes significantly to deeper understanding of our current grammar teaching.

The time needed to complete this questionnaire is estimated to be 15 minutes. All responses to this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used for research purposes only. **I highly appreciate your time in filling out this survey.**

#### **Section One: Teachers' background**

1. Nationality: -----
2. Gender:  Male  Female
3. Age:  20 - 30  31- 40  41 - 50  51 and above
4. Academic Qualifications
  - Certificate in -----
  - Diploma in -----
  - Bachelor in -----
  - Post Graduate Certificate in -----
  - Master's in -----
  - Doctorate in -----
5. Your native language is -----
6. Years of teaching experience:  Less than one year  1-6  7-12  13-18  19-24  
 25 and above
7. The number of classes you are teaching:  1  2  3  4  5 and above
8. Grades you currently teach:  6  7  8  9
9. Class size:  1-14  15-19  20-24  25-29  30-34  35 and above
10. Teaching periods per week:  6  12  18  24  25 and above
11. Do the in-service professional development courses satisfy you and meet your needs as a teacher?  
 Yes  N

## **Section Two: Teachers' Beliefs about Grammar Teaching**

We would like you to indicate your opinion by ticking (√) 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**

No.	Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1.	Grammar is the most important component in language learning.					
2.	English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.					
3.	By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable in communication.					
4.	A learner can learn a second or foreign language without grammar instruction (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).					
5.	Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual rules and structures.					
6.	Teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises when teaching grammar.					
7.	Direct explanation of grammar is more secure and straightforward to ensure students' understanding.					
8.	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.					
9.	My students expect me to present grammar points directly and explicitly.					
10.	Grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves.					
11.	Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by giving examples.					
12.	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in better learning and understanding.					
13.	Teachers should not plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand; they should wait until students have difficulties with certain features.					
14.	Learners learn grammar best through exposure to language in natural contexts.					
15.	You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well.					
16.	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.					

No.	Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
17.	Practice of structures must always be within a full, communicative context.					
18.	Drilling and memorization are essential to the successful learning of new language forms.					
19.	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.					
20.	Since errors are a normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time.					
21.	Learners' mistakes should always be corrected immediately to prevent the formation of bad habits					
22.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.					
23.	A teacher should correct students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.					
24.	Learners do not need the grammatical terms to succeed in learning the language.					
25.	Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.					
26.	You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language.					
27.	In teaching grammar, a teacher's main role is to explain the rules.					
28.	The teachers' role is to help learners figure out the grammar rules for themselves					
29.	Teaching the rules of English grammar directly is more appropriate for older learners.					
30.	Indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate for younger learners.					

### **Section Three: Teachers' Practices in EFL Classrooms.**

In this section you are kindly asked to indicate the frequency of doing different activities in your classes in connection with grammar teaching on a scale from **Never** to **Always**.

**N** = never      **R** = rarely      **S** = sometimes      **U** = usually      **A** = always

No.	Statements	N	R	S	U	A
31.	I spend a lot of time on teaching grammar.					
32.	I state, describe and explain the grammatical rules then provide more examples.					
33.	I use examples instead of rules.					
34.	I encourage learners to discover grammar rules for themselves.					
35.	I pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson.					
36.	I use games, objects, pictures, texts, role plays and dialogues in teaching grammar.					
37.	When teaching new grammar, I teach the form and the meaning together.					
38.	I ask my students to memorize the grammatical rules.					
39.	I use different written exercise such as gapped sentences and sentence correction in teaching grammar.					
40.	I provide my students with more repetitive pattern practices (drilling) when teaching grammar.					
41.	I immediately correct all grammatical errors in students' oral and written work and provide feedback.					
42.	I give my students the opportunity to think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.					
43.	I correct my students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.					
44.	I employ grammar terminology when I teach grammar.					
45.	I compare how the Past Tense is used in English and Arabic grammars					
46.	I use Arabic Language to teach English grammar.					

**Section Four:**

**Please answer the following questions:-**

**1- What do you think the ideal way to teach grammar?**

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

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**If you are willing to participate in the follow up interview, please write your name, phone number and E-mail address in the following blanks:-**

**Name: -----**

**Phone No.: -----**

**Email: -----**

**Thank you very much for your kind help**

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Questions**

Opening statement:

Thank you very much for taking part in this research, I highly value your participation and cooperation. The interview will last about one hour. 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 what you think about grammar teaching, how you teach grammar and why you teach it the way you do. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers. The validity of this investigation 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 reporting.

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

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

- 1) - Can you tell me about your experience of learning grammar when you were a student? (e.g. where and how did you learn; was it a positive or negative experience; did you have exposure to the target language community; etc.):
- 2) - Do you think that your grammar learning experience affects how you teach grammar to your Students?
- 3) - Can you tell me about a good language teacher that you know, perhaps one that you have worked with, or a teacher who taught you?
- 4) - Over the years, has your approach to grammar changed in any way during your career as a teacher?
- 5) - If your teaching approach has changed in any way, which of the following sources have been most responsible for that change? (e.g. Feedback from supervisor, Student feedback, Trial and error, Collaboration with colleagues, Self discovery, In service programmes, Use of new textbooks, Professional teaching journals, Published research, experimenting with new ideas, Language teaching theories, personal experiences, needs of the learners, the way you were taught)

#### **2- The role and importance of grammar**

- 6) - Do you think teachers should teach grammar?
- 7) - Do you teach all chapters and all grammar rules in the textbook?
- 8) - Do you agree grammar instruction can help students develop their English accuracy and fluency? Why or why not?

### **3- Grammar teaching**

- 9) - Tell me about your preferred approach to teach grammar? Why do you prefer to teach in this way? What kind of techniques do you use frequently?
- 10) - 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?
- 11) - How do you feel about direct grammar explanation and indirect grammar discovery work?

### **4- The use of grammatical terminology**

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

### **5- Feedback and error correction**

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

### **6- The use of L1**

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

### **7- Professional Development**

- 15) - 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?

### **8- The value of practicing grammar**

- 16) - Why do you think grammar practice useful in the process of language learning? What types of grammar practices do you usually provide in and after lessons?
- 17) - Are there any differences between your beliefs about grammar teaching and your actual practices in the classroom?
- 18) - Do you have anything else to say about your grammar teaching?

**Thank you very much**

## Appendix C

### Teachers' beliefs and practices mean scores and standard deviation

No.	Statements	Sum	Mean	STDEV
1	Grammar is the most important component in language learning.	156	3.39	1.24
2	English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.	138	3	1.15
3	By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable in communication.	125	2.72	1.05
4	A learner can learn a second or foreign language without grammar instruction (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).	167	3.63	1.1
5	Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual rules and structures.	141	3.07	1.2
6	Teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises when teaching grammar.	147	3.2	1.17
7	Direct explanation of grammar is more secure and straight-forward to ensure students' understanding.	138	3	1.01
8	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.	158	3.43	0.98
9	My students expect me to present grammar points directly and explicitly.	164	3.57	1.05
10	Grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves.	186	4.04	0.97
11	Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by giving examples.	204	4.43	0.72
12	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in better learning and understanding.	168	3.65	1.06
13	Teachers should not plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand; they should wait until students have difficulties with certain features.	136	2.96	1.09
14	Learners learn grammar best through exposure to language in natural contexts.	191	4.15	0.76
15	You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well.	167	3.63	1.22
16	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in	182	3.96	0.82

	context.			
17	Practice of structures must always be within a full, communicative context.	192	4.17	0.9
18	Drilling and memorization are essential to the successful learning of new language forms.	173	3.76	1.02
19	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.	159	3.46	1.09
20	Since errors are a normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time.	143	3.11	1.2
21	Learners' mistakes should always be corrected immediately to prevent the formation of bad habits	148	3.22	1.07
22	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.	172	3.74	0.93
23	A teacher should correct students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	173	3.76	1.04
24	Learners do not need the grammatical terms to succeed in learning the language.	162	3.52	1.05
25	Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.	123	2.67	1.17
26	You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language.	137	2.98	1.37
27	In teaching grammar, a teacher's main role is to explain the rules.	120	2.61	1.02
28	The teachers' role is to help learners figure out the grammar rules for themselves	183	3.98	1.04
29	Teaching the rules of English grammar directly is more appropriate for older learners.	153	3.33	1.14
30	Indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate for younger learners.	192	4.16	0.93
		<b>4798</b>		
<b>FINAL</b>		<b>SUM</b>		
Strongly Agree		1335		
Agree		2120		
Not Sure		750		
Disagree		520		
Strongly Disagree		73		

	FINAL SUM	4798		
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No	Statements	Sum	Mean	SD
31	I spend a lot of time on teaching grammar	131	2.85	0.7
32	I state, describe and explain the grammatical rules then provide more examples.	120	2.61	1.26
33	I use examples instead of rules.	172	3.74	0.88
34	I encourage learners to discover grammar rules for themselves.	170	3.7	1.11
35	I pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson.	182	3.96	1.07
36	I use games, objects, pictures, texts, role plays and dialogues in teaching grammar	167	3.63	0.93
37	When teaching new grammar, I teach the form and the meaning together.	170	3.7	0.89
38	I ask my students to memorize the grammatical rules.	127	2.76	1.2
39	I use different written exercise such as gapped sentences and sentence correction in teaching grammar	178	3.87	0.78
40	I provide my students with more repetitive pattern practices (drilling) when teaching grammar	161	3.5	1.11
41	I immediately correct all grammatical errors in students' oral and written work and provide feedback.	150	3.26	1.02
42	I give my students the opportunity to think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.	169	3.67	1.08
43	I correct my students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	159	3.46	1.24
44	I employ grammar terminology when I teach grammar.	137	2.98	1.02
45	I compare how the Past Tense is used in English and Arabic grammars	109	2.37	1.27
46	I use Arabic Language to teach English grammar.	105	2.28	0.98
		2407		
	Final	SUM		
	Always	545		
	Usually	932		
	Sometimes	621		
	Rarely	244		
	Never	65		
	FINAL SUM	2407		

## Appendix D

### Mean Difference between Beliefs and Practices

No.	Statements	Mean	Mean Difference
2.	English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.	3	
31.	I spend a lot of time on teaching grammar.	2.85	0.15
6.	Teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises when teaching grammar.	3.2	
32.	I state, describe and explain the grammatical rules then provide more examples.	2.61	0.59
10.	Grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves.	4.04	
34.	I encourage learners to discover grammar rules for themselves.	3.7	0.34
11.	Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by giving examples.	4.43	
33.	I use examples instead of rules.	3.74	0.69
13.	Teachers should not plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand; they should wait until students have difficulties with certain features.	2.96	
35.	I pre-plan what grammatical feature to cover in the lesson.	3.96	1
16.	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.	3.96	
37.	When teaching new grammar, I teach the form and the meaning together.	3.7	0.26
14.	Learners learn grammar best through exposure to language in natural contexts.	4.15	
36.	I use games, objects, pictures, texts, role plays and dialogues in teaching	3.63	0.52

	grammar.		
18.	Drilling and memorization are essential to the successful learning of new language forms.	3.76	
40.	I provide my students with more repetitive pattern practices (drilling) when teaching grammar.	3.5	0.26
21.	Learners' mistakes should always be corrected immediately to prevent the formation of bad habits	3.22	
41.	I immediately correct all grammatical errors in students' oral and written work and provide feedback.	3.26	0.04
22.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.	3.74	
42.	I give my students the opportunity to think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.	3.67	0.07
23.	A teacher should correct students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	3.76	
43.	I correct my students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	3.46	0.3
24.	Learners do not need the grammatical terms to succeed in learning the language.	3.52	
44.	I employ grammar terminology when I teach grammar.	2.98	0.54
25.	Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.	2.67	
46.	I use Arabic Language to teach English grammar.	2.28	0.39
26.	You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language.	2.98	
45.	I compare how the Past Tense is used in English and Arabic grammars	2.37	0.61

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