

Teaching English Grammar to Arabs: An Exploratory Study into the Context of University Undergraduate EFL Classrooms in the UAE

تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية للطلاب العرب: دراسة استطلاعية في نطاق
صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة دولة الإمارات العربية
المتحدة

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Abstract

This study examines university teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching in EFL undergraduate university classrooms in the UAE. It looks at the importance of grammar instruction in this context, the optimal method of teaching grammar, the challenges faced by teachers when dealing with this language area, the effect and method of grammatical error correction in addition to the impact of Arabic language interference on learning English grammar. A survey and interviews were used for this purpose. The survey consisted of seven demographic information questions, 28 closed-items questions of 5-point Likert scale (testing the extent of agreement or disagreement of respondents with the items) and three open-ended questions. The surveyed teachers were twelve males and ten females from different backgrounds working in various universities and higher education institutions in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, five of them were individually interviewed. Although the survey was originally paper-based, fifteen surveys were completed on paper, while the other seven were filled out online. The findings revealed that the majority of teachers appreciated the importance of grammar for mastering the language skills. Although they stressed the contextualized grammar, they believed that a combination of both explicit and implicit methods would be the best according to students' level, learning style, etc. The challenges they have faced when teaching grammar have been the use of authentic material, students' first language interference, students' low language level and lack of motivation, in addition to the difficulty of some structures.

Arabic language interference has been seen by the teachers as a stumbling block to grammar learning. Teachers do not focus on students' speaking error, but as the grammar method, they use the explicit and implicit techniques for correcting the written errors. They believe that correcting errors helps improve students' language level.

تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية للطلاب العرب: دراسة استطلاعية في نطاق صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

الخلاصة:

تبحث هذه الدراسة آراء المدرسين الجامعيين حول تدريس القواعد الإنجليزية في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. فهي تتناول أهمية تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية في هذا السياق ، و الطريقة المثلى في تدريسها ، والتحديات التي يواجهها المدرسون في هذا المجال ، وأثر تصحيح الأخطاء اللغوية وطريقتها ، بالإضافة إلى أثر تداخل اللغة العربية عند تعلم قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية.

ولإجل هذا الغرض تم استخدام استبيان للآراء كما أجريت مقابلات مع بعض المدرسين. ويتكون الاستبيان من سبعة أسئلة عن المعلومات الديموغرافية للمدرسين وثمانية وعشرون سؤالاً من نوعية "ليكرت" ذات الخمسة اختيارات المتدرجة (تقيس درجة اتفاق أو اختلاف المشاركين مع الأفكار المكتوبة) إلى جانب ثلاثة أسئلة غير مقيدة باختيارات تتطلب كتابة الآراء بإسهاب. وتتكون مجموعة المدرسين المشاركين في الاستبيان من اثني عشر مدرساً وعشر مدرسات من خلفيات متنوعة يعملون في مختلف الجامعات والمؤسسات التعليمية العليا في إمارتي أبو ظبي والشارقة، وقد تم إجراء مقابلات فردية مع خمسة منهم. وعلى الرغم من أن هذا الاستبيان أعد لكي يستكمل من قبل المشاركين بطريقة يدوية إلا أن خمس عشرة نسخة منه قد تم استكمالهم باليد بينما النسخ السبع الباقية تم تعبئتها باستخدام جهاز الكمبيوتر.

وقد أوضحت نتائج البحث أن غالبية المدرسين يقدرّون أهمية تدريس قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية من أجل تحقيق الكفاءة في المهارات اللغوية. وعلى الرغم من أنهم أكدوا على أهمية تناول القواعد اللغوية من خلال سياق معين إلا أنهم يعتقدون أن مزيجاً من الطرق الصريحة والضمنية لتدريسها هي الطريقة المثلى بحسب مستوى الطلاب وطريقة تعلمهم ... إلخ. ومن ضمن التحديات التي يواجهها المدرسون عند تدريس القواعد اللغوية هي استخدام النصوص غير المعدة للأغراض التعليمية ، وتداخل لغة الطلاب الأولى مع اللغة الأجنبية، وتدني المستوى اللغوي للطلاب مع قلة الدافعية لديهم للتعلم بالإضافة إلى صعوبة بعض التركيبات اللغوية. كما يرى المدرسون أن محاولة ربط الطلاب بين قواعد اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية تعتبر حجر عثرة في طريق تعلم قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية. ولا يركز المدرسون على أخطاء التحدث لدى الطلاب بل يتبعون الطرق الصريحة والضمنية (كالطريقة المتبعة لتدريس القواعد) لتصحيح الأخطاء اللغوية الكتابية. ومن المعتقد لدى المدرسين أن تصحيح الأخطاء يساعد على تحسين المستوى اللغوي للطلاب.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife and children who were very patient with me in times of pressure and who gave my study the priority over their social life. They strengthened my resolve to reach my goal. But for their encouragement and help, this work would not have been completed. I would like to express my love and gratitude to them for their contribution to my success after the long journey of study.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background information

Among the different instructional language areas, grammar teaching has been the most contentious in terms of its importance to language learning, the problems of handling it, the most workable method used, the technique of dealing with learners' errors, the interference of the native language, etc. Thornbury (1999: ix) states that "Teaching grammar has always been the most controversial and least understood aspect of language teaching." However, it is believed that grammar should be a fundamental part of language teaching especially in EFL (English as a foreign language) contexts where classroom is the only source of learning.

In discussing the importance of grammar instruction, Savage et al. (2010, pp. 2- 4) maintain that the majority of practitioners view grammar teaching as essential for ESL (English as a second language) adult learners. For some decades, grammar has been seen as rules to be studied and tested by discrete-point questions. However, Savage et al. (2010) lend support to the view of many teachers that grammar is a skill, rather than a set of rules, requiring enhancement and development. In this sense, grammar is considered to be a tool for conveying communicative meaning rather than a target in itself. Therefore, it should not be taught in isolation, but incorporated into other skills.

According to Ellis (2006a), grammar teaching may be handled in any way that raises students' consciousness and makes them notice the target form and use it in a way that secures its retention. With the appearance of the communicative language teaching approach (CLT), explicit grammar teaching has started to decline in importance. For this reason, teachers have to make a balance between focusing on form and focusing on meaning in communicative activities. Nassaji (1999) admits that focusing only on meaning in communicative tasks is not the right strategy for learning a language. In other words, teaching grammar in context can be the ideal way that may have been used with adults at universities. This contextualized grammar teaching must involve error correction, which is necessary for producing accurate communication. Among the different techniques of error correction is the teachers' repetition of learners' utterance in the correct way, which is believed to be the most effective method especially with advanced-level students. Yet,

there are some variables that determine the best strategy for correcting errors like the language feature (e.g. regular past tense, present participle), the students' nature, their linguistic level, etc. When talking about errors, the reasons for their occurrence must be hinted at. There is a huge body of SLA (second language acquisition) research asserting that many grammatical errors are due to first language interference (Cowan , 2008). This interference happens when there are no similarities between the grammars of both L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) like Arabic and English. Students' L1 interference is one of the challenges that face teachers when teaching grammar. Other challenges may be the poor linguistic level of students, the students' feeling of boredom in grammar lessons, and the constraints of curriculum, which prescribes a certain way of dealing with grammar.

1.2 Aim and significance of the study

Many researches have been done to investigate how teachers handle English grammar in their classrooms (e.g. Basturkmen et al. 2004; Borg 1998, 1999; Farrell 1999; Farrell & Lim 2005; Barnard & Scampton 2008; Thu 2009). Most of these researches were conducted at school level in non-Arab countries. The research tools used in such researches were classroom observations, field notes, interviews, and questionnaires. However, very few studies, if any, have explored university teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching in the UAE or the Arab region. Researchers may think that during school years, students are supposed to have acquired sufficient grammar knowledge; consequently, university teachers at foundation programs are expected to focus only on academic skills like writing assignments and giving presentations. Hence, grammar teaching at universities is thought to be peripheral, only done whenever the need arises.

The aim of this study is to research university undergraduate classroom teachers' beliefs about English grammar teaching to Arabic-speaking students in the UAE through a questionnaire with closed- and open-ended questions and interviews with some of the respondents. This research study complements previous studies conducted on schoolteachers' beliefs about grammar instruction. The difference is that the current study is concerned with EFL teachers of university Arab undergraduates. To the best of my knowledge, such teachers have been rarely undergone a similar exploratory study. It may be the first time in the UAE that university teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching have been investigated. On exploring teachers' beliefs the following issues have been researched:

- 1) The importance of grammar in teaching and learning English

- 2) The best method of teaching grammar in the context of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) university undergraduate classrooms
- 3) The impact and technique of dealing with students' grammatical errors
- 4) The effect of the native language (Arabic) on learning the target language (English)
- 5) The difficulties teachers might encounter when teaching grammar in EFL classrooms

The reason for choosing grammar teaching as the topic for this research is that it has been a controversial issue that attracted many researchers and educationalists to investigate its viability and mechanisms. While grammar is the basis for other language skills, it is sometimes disregarded by teachers especially university teachers whose prime concern is the academic areas. Those teachers have not paid attention to the fact that their students cannot proceed with their academic studies unless they have a solid background of grammar knowledge, which may have not been established at school.

1.3 Objectives of the study and research questions

The research findings are hoped to shed some light on university teachers' perceptions about the importance of grammar teaching and the techniques of handling grammar in their classrooms. It is expected that the study may engender teachers' rethinking of their views and instructional practices so as to better exploit grammar in their classrooms and help their students achieve grammatical competence which is a part of language proficiency. The study may also help curriculum developers and material designers to amend the existing course books and teaching material in order to meet the students' needs. In addition, this study may trigger more researches in the context of EFL university undergraduate classrooms in the UAE. In this context, the study aims to establish answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the importance of grammar teaching in EFL university undergraduate classrooms as seen by the teachers?
- 2) a. What is the optimal approach to teaching grammar to EFL university undergraduate students?
b. What are the challenges that EFL teachers of university undergraduates may encounter in teaching grammar?
- 3) a. What is the impact and method of dealing with students' grammatical errors in EFL classrooms?
b. How does first language interference affect EFL grammar learning?

1.4 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which contains three sections: background information about the research topic, aim and significance of the study, in addition to the objective of the study and research questions. The second chapter is the literature review that talks about the following points: the importance of grammar instruction, form-focused instruction, using grammatical terminology in the classroom, teachers' difficulties in teaching grammar, Error correction and negative feedback (feedback in writing and feedback in oral communication). The last section in chapter two is the negative impact of the first language on learning the second language, which is followed by a summary of the chapter. Chapter 3 handles the methodology in terms of the participants, the research tools (teachers' survey and interviews), the procedures, the data analysis and the research ethics followed. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research produced by the survey quantitative and qualitative tools and the interviews tool. The results are presented according to what answers the research questions. Tables and graphs are displayed for more illustration in this chapter. Finally, a summary of all results is provided in the last section. Chapter 5 is the discussion and conclusion that relates the main findings of the research to the previous researches conducted in the field and defines the limitations of the current study. The conclusion summarizes the results of the research and provides the recommendations and implications of the study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

As the topic of this research is teaching grammar to EFL university undergraduate Arab students in the UAE, the literature introduced here is focused on grammar instruction with its various aspects. For the sake of comparison, studies on grammar teaching at different stages of education not only in the Arab region, but also in foreign countries have been presented. This chapter starts with describing the importance of grammar instruction according to literature and exhibits the views of both supporters and opponents of grammar teaching. The second section touches upon one of the important approaches nowadays, which is form-focused instruction and explains its various classifications. Relevant to grammar teaching is grammar terminology, which is tackled in the third section of this chapter. The fourth section presents the difficult issues that teachers faced or may face on teaching grammar as mentioned in the literature. Since corrective feedback is an important example of focus on form, which is a current trend in teaching grammar, corrective feedback has been extensively treated in the fifth section. In this section, the importance of feedback has been discussed with reference to some studies carried out to investigate the impact of diverse techniques of feedback on both written output and oral communication of students. Finally, because this study is in the context of EFL Arabic-speaking undergraduate classrooms, it was necessary to include this last section of Arabic language interference in English grammar learning. The chapter ends with a short summary that recapitulates the prime points covered in the different sections.

2.1 The importance of grammar Instruction

Grammar instruction has gained much interest among educational writers (e.g. Borg 1998; Celce-Murcia 1991; Fotos 1998; Harmer 1987; Nunan 1998; Richards 2006; Schulz 2001; Scrivener, 2003, 2005), but before expatiating on this topic, the concept of grammar should be illustrated. As Cowan (2008, p. 3) defines it: “grammar is the set of rules that describes how words and groups of words can be arranged to form sentences in a particular language.” Yet, it should be evident that the importance of grammar does not lie in its rules, but in the way they are used in conveying right and accurate meanings. Expressing the importance of grammar, Nassaji and Fotos, (2011) say that grammar is a main pillar of language; if there is no grammar, there is no language. Supporting this claim, Chang (2011) depicts the fundamentality of grammar to

language as the architect's plan to a building. The building (language) bricks are words which despite being important, they cannot stand on their own. In my opinion, learning a language cannot happen without learning its grammar. Language cannot be used as a set of isolated words; it needs cement that ties the words together.

Stressing the importance of grammar in language learning, Savage et al. (2010) describe three roles grammar plays in adult ESL education: "grammar as an enabling skill", "grammar as a motivator" and "grammar as a means to self-sufficiency" (p.2). They mean by the first role that grammar is a basic skill that positively affects the development of other language skills. By the second role, they mean that students get motivated by believing in the necessity of learning grammar in order to learn a language for survival or for getting good jobs. The teachers in turn, finding their students motivated to study grammar, will get motivated to provide them with what they need. The third role of grammar, as indicated by Savage et al. (2010), means that when learners have the ability to internalize grammar rules, they can monitor their output and correct their own errors, the need that is specifically sought after by learners whose goals are professional or academic. By being able to correct themselves, Savage et al. (ibid) argue, learners can have self-sufficiency. This seems plausible because if students had the ability to judge the grammaticality of their language production and use self-correction, they would become independent learners. In short, grammar can be seen as an effective skill, motivating and leading to autonomous learning. This strong stance of grammar is advocated by Azar (2007, p. 2) who describes grammar as being "the weaving that creates the fabric". In the sense that it is the major component that makes a language comprehensible.

In spite of the fact that grammar is a significant part of learning a language, teaching grammar has been long disputed. For many years since the emergence of the grammar translation and audiolingual methods till the appearance of the communicative language approach, the pendulum has been swinging between teaching and non-teaching of grammar. This is clear from the history of language teaching described by many writers (e.g. Danesi 2003; Richards & Rodgers 2001; Thornbury 1999). Still one question has to be answered: Can students transfer their declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge through formal grammar studying? In other words, does teaching explicit grammar achieve communicative competence?

In fact, this may not be true with most students as teachers can have students who understand grammar very well and achieve very good results in grammar tests, but when it comes to

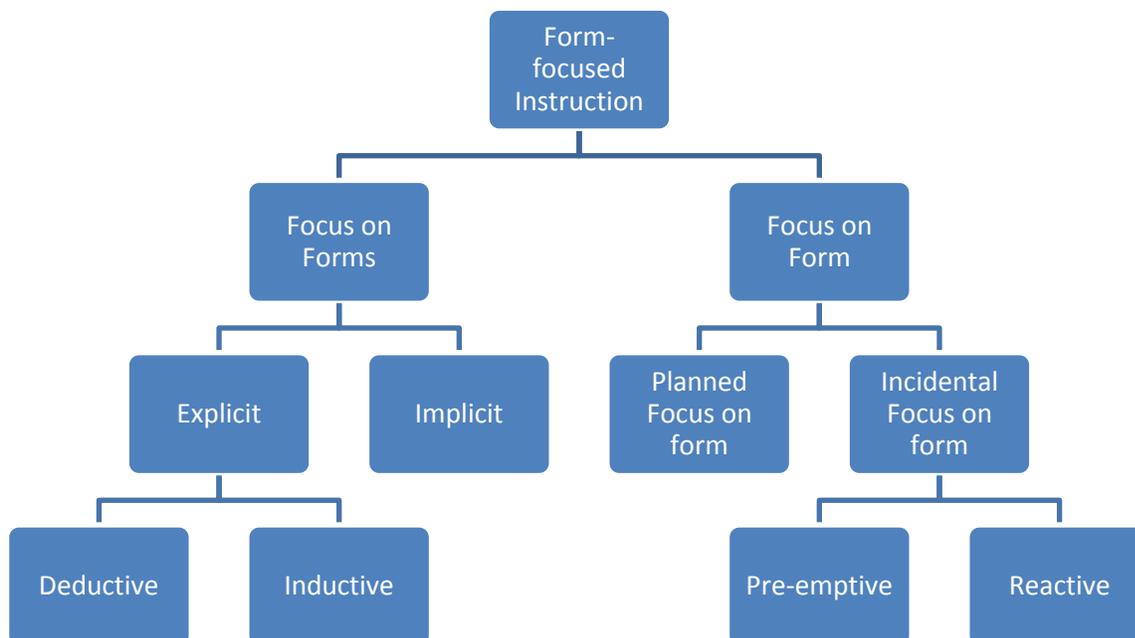
communication, they cannot use their grammatical competence in producing accurate meanings (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam 2011; Baleghizadeh & Farshchi, 2009). Conversely, Yim's (1998) study of the impact of grammar teaching on L2 learning proved that grammar teaching had a positive effect on all language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). This means grammar instruction can help students improve their communication skills. In this regard, it should be clear that when teaching grammar in a meaningful context rather than in isolation, learners will be able to connect meaning and form and as a result, they will improve their communicative competence.

Although many SLA researchers, as Cowan (2008) argues, assert that there is no much support nowadays to Krashen's theory of the possibility of adults learning a foreign language through exposure to comprehensible input, many teachers still hold the opinion that grammar teaching is useless. Supporting this disfavor of formal grammar teaching, Jaeger (2011), affected by her research study, claims that traditional grammar instruction has no effective role in producing good writing; therefore teaching traditional grammar is a waste of time. She confirms that much literature indicates that students in their writing commit errors of rules they have already shown to understand in separate grammar lessons. This may give a hint that university teachers, represented by the sample in the current study, are expected to be employing covert grammar teaching rather than traditional methods.

2.2 Form-focused instruction (FFI)

Form focused instruction is broadly defined by Ellis (2001, pp. 1-2) as "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form". It is a generic term for some other terms. These terms can be shown by the following diagram:

Figure 1: Classification of FFI constructs (adapted from Ellis, 2001)



According to Ellis (2001), Focus on forms (FonFs) is the way of making students aware that the main goal of the task they are doing is learning a particular predetermined form, which should be focused on intensively in order to be acquired. Meanwhile, focus on form (FonF) is defined as the technique of drawing students' attention to a certain language feature in a meaningful communicative activity. Comparing focus on forms with focus on form, it must be clarified that the former is a form-oriented approach, whereas the latter is meaning-oriented. In other words, the former's main concern is the target grammar rule while the latter's prime goal is the conveyed message. Either of the two forms or may be both of them can be the adopted technique used by university teachers in the present study.

Ellis classifies FonFs into two types, explicit and implicit. The implicit is the instruction that makes no direct reference to the target structure. It involves students into memorizing sentences, which embody a certain form, or processing a text for meaning without being conscious of the target form. The explicit FonFs, as Thornbury (1999) indicates, is either rule-driven (deductive) or rule-discovery (inductive). In the deductive method, the teacher starts with rule explanation followed by examples and practice, whereas in the inductive the teacher directly introduces examples to students in order for them to figure the rule out for themselves. According to Cowan (2008), the inductive approach might be more appropriate for intermediate and advanced levels of students. This belief can be justified by the ability of those students to use their analytic skills

in formulating the grammar rules through the examples provided. Cowan reaches a conclusion that it is widely agreed that whether to use the deductive or inductive approach is better than not to teach grammar at all. In my perspective, this is a valid conclusion because grammar teaching can lead students to achieve accurate communication.

Thinking about the aforementioned definitions of FonFs and implicit instruction that is a subdivision of FonFs, it must be realized that there is a contradiction in Ellis' (2001) classification and as a result, implicit instruction should not belong to FonFs. This idea was expressed by Ellis (2006 b, p. 25) as he says: "Earlier in Ellis (2002) [the same 2001 article in an edited book], I argued that both implicit and explicit instruction were sub-categories of focus-on-forms instruction. However, this is somewhat less clear to me now". He ended his argument saying, "whereas explicit instruction is clearly of the focus-on forms type, implicit instruction cannot be so viewed." From this sentence, it is clear that Ellis confirms the contradiction in his classification. This conclusion clarifies that implicit instruction is not expected to be a part of teachers' practices in the present study. This is because implicit instruction may belong to neither FonFs nor FonF, the two common approaches of grammar teaching. Implicit instruction can be compared to natural acquisition which does not happen in formal settings like schools or universities but it can occur during autonomous learning in everyday life.

Looking back at figure (1), readers find that FonF is classified into planned and incidental. The planned FonF is the technique of directing learners' attention to a preselected language feature that is expected to cause problems to learners in a meaning-oriented activity. On the other hand, the incidental focus on form is the driving of learners' attention to whatever problematic forms arise during a communicative activity whose main focus is on meaning.

The following table distinguishes between FonFs, planned FonF and incidental FonF in terms of the primary focus and the distribution in each type (whether the distribution is intensive, i.e. one language form is treated repeatedly over a period of time, or extensive, i.e. a number of forms hastily handled and mostly with no repetition).

Table 1: Types of Form-Focused Instruction (Ellis, 2001, p. 17)

Type of FFI	Primary Focus	Distribution
1. Focus on forms	Form	Intensive
2. Planned focus on form	Meaning	Intensive
3. Incidental focus on form	Meaning	Extensive

To discriminate between the pre-emptive and reactive incidental FonF illustrated in figure (1), it should be mentioned that the pre-emptive instruction is the technique of dedicating some time of the communicative tasks to explain language forms that are expected to cause learning problems (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011). The reactive focus on form on the other hand is the teacher's response to students' erroneous output, which is hypothesized to be the university teachers' approach to grammar teaching in this present study.

2.3 Using grammar terminology in the classrooms

Using grammar terminology in classrooms may have negative or positive effects on learning grammar. It is believed that using grammar terminology depends on the teaching method employed and the students' language level. If the grammar teaching method is overt, terminology is expected to be used (Baleghizadeh & Farshchi, 2009). With students of high language level, linguistic terms can be used since they can understand them. This perception is supported by Hedge (2008) who states that metalanguage (grammar terms) may have particular usefulness in discussing writing errors with advanced learners. However, the respondent teachers in Thu's (2009) study believe that employing grammar terminology in teaching is important with all levels of students. On the other hand, although students find grammar terminology useful to them, they might find difficulty in using it as indicated by the teachers in Baleghizadeh and Farshchi's (2009) research and Farahian's (2011) study.

Despite the advocacy of grammar terminology by many researchers and practitioners, some teachers believe that using grammar terms complicates the language learning process and engenders ineffective teaching. According to Mohammed (1996), employing complicated grammatical terminology renders grammar teaching "bad". Drawing on the findings of his study, Mohammed argues that non-metalinguistic grammar teaching (that is void of grammar terminology) has a better effect on learning than that provided in formal pedagogic grammar (that is based on metalanguage). He further contends that grammar terminology provides an extra burden to students learning. Therefore, based on his experience, he sees that only five simple and early-acquired terms are enough for teaching grammar in EFL secondary school and university classrooms. These are the verb, subject, object, noun and pronoun. It is logical that teachers should not overburden their students with a lot of terms especially when the grammar rule can be easily understood and internalized by practice, but sometimes other terms than the five

mentioned earlier have to be used like the adjective and the adverb which are essential and in most cases can be confusing for students.

2.4 Teachers' difficulties in teaching grammar

Looking at the difficulties that teachers may encounter sheds the light on the reasons why grammar teaching seems a heavy burden for some teachers who consequently keep away from it depending on their students' natural exposure to language. Nevertheless, there are not many studies that investigated teachers' difficulties in teaching grammar. One important study to mention is Mohammed's (2006), which was conducted on a huge population of teachers (197) in Maldivian schools (51 schools). This study reveals that more than two thirds of the surveyed teachers stated that they faced difficulties in teaching grammar during their professional life. The most shared difficulty was students' disinterestedness and their feeling of boredom in grammar lessons. Another difficulty was the lack of resources (e.g. textbooks, worksheets, etc), or the unsuitability of the existing ones. A third difficulty indicated by about 30% of the teachers was students' inability to understand or remember grammar rules. However, those teachers attributed students' lack of understanding grammar concepts to first language interference and the inadequacy of grammar teaching methods at lower levels. A fourth difficulty expressed by some other teachers in the study was the inappropriateness of grammar difficulty level to students' overall language level. Regarding this point, Andrews (2007) argued that it is not necessary for learning of grammar structures to be graded according to their difficulty nor is it important for them to be suitable for learners' linguistic level. This argument may be based on the natural order of acquisition, which does not necessitate acquiring simple forms before complex ones. Hence, it may be concluded that grammar rules, regardless of the degree of their complexity, can be taught in any sequence according to students' needs.

A fifth difficulty as a small number of teachers in Mohammad's (2006) study admitted was that they themselves did not have the ability to understand grammar or memorize rules. Moreover, the most difficult issue stated by teachers on teaching grammar was the many questions students raise, which may interrupt the lesson and to which teachers' sometimes find no answers. Added to the previous grammar teaching difficulties is the uneasiness of developing activities from authentic materials and the long time spent in using these materials as indicated by the respondent teachers in Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam's (2011) study. Moreover, there are other

difficulties that should be overcome in order for grammar teaching and learning to be enjoyable and beneficial for students.

2.5. Error Correction and negative feedback

Errors are a natural byproduct of learning. They are of significance to both the teacher and the learner. They show the teacher where the learner stands and push them to find suitable strategies for future teaching improvement. At the same time, by being corrected, the learner may reach language competence.

Talking about errors does not mean the same as mistakes. Corder (1967) differentiates between the two saying that errors are caused by poor knowledge, while mistakes occur as a result of occasional inability to use knowledge in producing the language. In Corder's view "mistakes are of no significance to the process of language learning" (p. 167).

In addition to a similar distinction made by Ellis (1997) and Hedge (2000), they distinguished between two types of errors that may determine the appropriateness of correction, global errors and local errors. Global errors are the ones that negatively affect the whole sentence structure and cause unintelligibility of communication, while local errors are the ones that affect only one part of the sentence and do not impede comprehension. This distinction raises the issue of the nature of error that has to be corrected. The communicative approach supporters believe that emphasis should be placed on correcting errors that interfere with comprehension (i.e. global errors) rather than all errors (Ur, 1999). In contrast, the teachers surveyed in Thu's (2009) study believed that correcting students' errors is necessary regardless of whether these errors negatively affect comprehensibility or not; but to be practical, neither time nor students' psychology allows correcting all errors.

Classifying feedback, it is either positive or negative according to Ellis (2009a). Positive feedback is the teacher's response to learners' right utterances in terms of the correctness of content or language. As Ellis argues, from the pedagogical point of view, positive feedback is important since it encourages learners and motivates them to learn. Nonetheless, positive feedback does not gain much attention in the second language acquisition compared to negative feedback. Negative feedback is defined by Ellis as a strategy signifying that an error has occurred in the learner's language output and this error needs to be corrected. Therefore, negative feedback is corrective feedback, which is believed to be a vital factor in second

language acquisition and an influential agent for grammatical accuracy. On talking about feedback hereafter, the researcher means the negative (corrective) feedback.

2.5.1 Feedback in writing

As an instructional strategy, Bitchener et al. (2005) characterized two types of feedback, direct feedback and indirect feedback. The direct feedback takes place when the teacher shows a learner's error and provides them with the correct form, whereas the indirect feedback occurs when the teacher draws the attention that an error has been made but leaves the identification and correction of error for the learner to come up with. The indirect feedback in turn is divided into coded feedback and uncoded feedback. The coded feedback refers to the teacher's use of a certain code for the identified error (e.g., when the teacher writes FS above a word/structure, that means: here is an error in the future simple tense.). This type of feedback presumes the teacher's prior explanation of the meanings of all codes to students. As for the uncoded feedback, the teacher locates the error by underlining or circling it, but does not give any clue to the type of error or its correction.

To test the efficacy of teachers' feedback on students' self-correction, a study was carried out by Alghazo et al. (2009) on a number of university students in Jordan. The study results showed that the coded feedback experimental group had better performance than both the uncoded feedback group and the control group that received no feedback. Comparing the two latter groups, the uncoded feedback group outperformed the control group. This result confirms the importance of feedback, whether coded or uncoded, for achieving grammar accuracy.

It can be contended that the optimum technique of error correction in writing is the indirect coded feedback as retention occurs when students exert mental effort in analyzing the language for the purpose of finding out the correct form of their errors; this of course should happen with the help of the teacher (through providing codes). In this respect, Ferris (2004) suggests that teachers should opt for indirect feedback that allows students to employ their analytical skills; yet this mechanism cannot be used with low-level students. Inconsistent with this is the statement of Guenette (2007, p. 51) which is shared by Ellis (2009b, p. 106) that there is no 'corrective feedback recipe' meaning there is no definite prescribed strategy that all teachers can follow. This is because there are many variables (like classroom environment, error type, students' language level, and the writing task involved) that may determine the effective error

correction technique. Added to these variables is the student's personality, whether students get discouraged by correction or feel neglected by being uncorrected (Thornbury, 1999).

Attacking error correction, Truscott (1996) alleged that grammar correction is not only unhelpful, but also harmful and 'has no place in writing classes and should be abandoned' (p. 361). He claimed that the effort and time spent in correction could be saved for more important activities like extra writing tasks. He further argued that by correcting students' errors, students would feel worried about making the same errors again and avoid using erroneous forms by resorting to a simple language rather than a sophisticated one. In reply to this, Soori et al. (2011, p. 495) state that "Although Truscott's argument is a powerful one, there is no conclusive evidence about the ineffectiveness of error correction is [sic] found". They added that what concerned the researchers was not whether to correct students' errors or not, but the type of errors and the way to correct them. This may imply that the usefulness of error correction is uncontroversial; the matter which was reported by Barnard and Scampton (2008) in their study. They investigated the grammar teaching beliefs of 32 EAP teachers from six universities in New Zealand. The majority of respondents agreed that error correction helped students improve their grammatical competence and more than half of the respondents did not agree that teachers should only correct students' errors that cause miscommunication.

There is one important point that should be clarified which is the use of comprehensive or selective error correction. It is logical that dealing with students' errors comprehensively may be time consuming and exhausting for teachers. For students, comprehensive error correction may be frustrating and de-motivating. This view is supported by Sheen (2007) who contends that written correction feedback is a complicated process and that the unfocused correction feedback (correction of various error types in one piece of writing) overburdens the students as they have 'limited processing capacity' (p. 278). Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should pick up the most frequent errors of form to focus on one at a time rather than handle them all in one occasion.

Moving to error correction provider, it is recommended that teachers have to urge students to self-correction especially if they are adult learners. Self-correction is believed to have a strong effect on internalizing the right language form. By frequent practice, identifying errors can go smoothly and students will be able to see the difference between their output and the target linguistic feature (Hedge, 2000). However, self-correction does not always work. As Ellis

(2009a) suggests, the reasons for the inapplicability of self correction are the students' willingness to be corrected by the teacher not by themselves, students' lack of linguistic knowledge, and the ambiguity of output prompting strategy (i.e. the difficulty in identifying the error type, whether linguistic or communicative). Yet, it is clear that if metalinguistic explanation for output prompting used, there should not be any ambiguity as it would be obvious that the error is linguistic. A substitute for self-correction can be peer-correction, which proved, by Grami's (2010) study, to be an effective element in improving students' writing accuracy. In this strategy, students may think that their peers are not a suitable source of correction as they do not have the linguistic competence of teachers. This negative perception transferred to positive in Grami's study after his Saudi ESL university students experienced collaborative writing feedback sessions. To come to a conclusion, it might be said that teachers can start with students self- correction, if it fails teachers should try inviting peer students to correct the error, otherwise the last recourse is teacher's provision of correction.

2.5.2 Feedback in oral communication

From Scrivener's (2005) perspective, which is supported by Thornbury (1999) and Xue-mei and Fang (2007), it is necessary for oral communication feedback to be immediate if the communication task aim is accuracy; if the aim is fluency, delayed correction is more appropriate. Therefore, on dealing with students' errors, teachers have to think of the aim of the oral activity in order to decide on the feedback timing. To compare the effect of both on improving accuracy, Dabaghi (2006) conducted a study that revealed that there was no difference in the positive impact of both immediate feedback and delayed feedback.

Regarding teachers' beliefs, it was found by Ganjabi's (2011) and Thu's (2009) studies that the surveyed teachers indicated the inappropriateness of correcting students' errors on the spot while they were engaged in a speaking activity. This seems sensible as teachers should not interrupt the flow of students' speech as long as the conveyed meaning is clear. In contrast with this, Thornbury (1999) states that it is widely believable that the most influential feedback is that which is given in "real operating conditions" (p. 119). Yet, the feedback timing depends on the teachers' proficiency. Competent teachers can correct students' errors while they are engaged in communication without causing discouragement or interruption to students (Baleghizadeh & Farshchi, 2009).

As for Feedback types, Ellis (2009a) classifies corrective feedback strategies into six types: recast (the teacher changes the incorrect utterance into a correct one without signaling that there is an error), repetition (The teacher repeats the whole learner’s utterance with changing intonation to highlight the wrong part), clarification request (the teacher shows that they did not get the message), explicit correction (the teacher locates the wrong utterance and corrects it), elicitation (the teacher repeats the learner’s utterance and stops before the wrong part for the learner to complete correctly), and paralinguistic signal (the teacher uses body language to indicate that an error has been made). To illustrate this classification of corrective feedback, Ellis combined feedback strategies from other studies (e.g. Carrol & Swain 1993; Lyster 2004) that define the explicit and implicit types. This classification is shown in the following table that adds metalinguistic explanation (involving an overt comment on the error nature) as an explicit strategy.

Table 2. Taxonomy of corrective feedback strategies (Ellis, 2009a, p. 8)

	<i>Implicit</i>	<i>Explicit</i>
Input-providing	Recast	Explicit correction
Output-prompting	Repetition	Metalinguistic explanation
	Clarification request	Elicitation
		Paralinguistic signal

To compare the effects of the implicit (recast) and explicit (metalinguistic explanation) feedback types on acquiring regular past tense, Ellis et al. (2006) conducted a study on low intermediate ESL learners which proved that the explicit feedback experimental group performed better than the implicit feedback group in the post test. The same result was gained by Dabaghi’s (2006) study that was carried out on a group of EFL students from a private school and a university in Iran. In spite of the consistent results of these two studies, explicit corrective feedback is believed to be unfavorable as it seems tactless compared to implicit feedback (Ellis, 2006b).

2.6 The negative impact of L1 on learning L2

Many language errors occur when a learner tries to use their L1 (first language) knowledge in producing L2 (second language). This is what Ellis (1997) calls L1 negative transfer, which is distinct from the positive L1 transfer that facilitates L2 learning. In relevance to this, Dweik and Abu Al Hommos (2007) state that from the Chomskian point of view, L1 is essential for the acquisition of a new language. On the other hand, they argue that the contrastive analysts

consider that the main reason for the difficulty of learning a second language is the interference of the learner's native language. This claim is supported by Lightbown and Spada (2006) who nevertheless admit that there are other reasons for learner's errors that are found out by error analysis specialists.

As the present study is about teaching English grammar to Arabs and is conducted in an Arab country, it is worthwhile to compare the grammatical features of both Arabic and English in order to illustrate how the negative transfer affects English grammar learning. With regard to the relation between English and Arabic, Smith (2001) maintains that unlike the Indo-European language family, Arabic is a Semitic language that has a lot of differences with English. These differences include all aspects of the language, i.e. morphology, phonology, and syntax. However, the main concern here is the syntax since the other language aspects are outside the limit of the current study. Only the grammatical differences that negatively affect Arab students' acquisition of English will be discussed.

To begin with, it must be clarified that while English is an SVO (Subject, Verb, Object) language, Arabic is a VSO (Verb, Subject, Object). Therefore, the sentence 'Ahmed drank the milk.' Would be in Arabic: *'Drank Ahmed the milk.' Nevertheless, this error is not very common with Arab learners. In the context of word order, it is worth mentioning that in Arabic the adjective does not precede the noun it qualifies as in English but follows it, so the noun phrase: 'good boy' would be said or written: *'boy good' by an Arab student. Again, this error is not so common and mostly ascribed to beginners.

In Arabic, there is no auxiliary verb equal to 'do' nor is there a linking verb like 'be'. As a result, errors may occur like: *'Where you go on the weekend?' or *'He playing football.' Unlike the previous errors, these two types of errors are very common among Arabic-speaking learners according to the experience of the present study researcher. Another problematic area is the relative pronouns. The relative pronouns in Arabic differentiate between genders (masculine or feminine) and numbers (singular or plural), but not between human and non-human beings like English; the matter that causes difficulty for Arab learners when using 'who' and 'which'. Relevant to this is the repetition of the object of the relative clause in Arabic which is not the case in English (e.g. *This is the man whom I met him yesterday.). This is indicated by analyzing writing errors of Sudanese secondary stage students in Mohammed's (1991) study. The study revealed that L1 negative transfer was the cause of 53 % of students' grammatical

errors, among which, the most frequent were pronoun-related (especially, the redundant use of pronouns after object relative clauses).

With respect to the indefinite articles, there are no equivalents to 'a' or 'an' in Arabic; hence, an error like: *'This is doctor.' may occur. For the definite article, it is not governed by rules in Arabic as in English, but it is frequently used with different numbers, genders and types of nouns. For this reason, the Arab learners may commit mistakes like: *'We will go to the Turkey next summer.' *'We take the breakfast at 7 o'clock.' *'The policeman should have the courage.' This misuse of definite and indefinite articles is confirmed by Zughoul's (2002) study that analyzed a part of the oral output of 25 Arabic-speaking English learners from seven countries. Zughoul states that 38% of errors in the noun phrase area were of articles. The errors of articles were represented by the omission of 'a' and 'an', or the confusion between them and the recurrent use of 'the' where it should not be used.

Another problem with Arabic speakers is the confusion on using 'much' and 'many', a type of errors which accounted for 4% of noun phrase errors as Zughoul's (2002) study reveals. Because In Arabic there is only one quantifier used with both countable and uncountable nouns, Arabic speakers may say: *'I saw much people in the college.' Reporting more errors in his study, Zughoul mentions the omission of objects with verbs like want, like, take and understand (13.4% of noun errors). This omission is common in Arabic, but is never accepted in English.

According to Smith (2001) an error that Arab learners make is the use of a singular noun after a cardinal number over ten, which is the rule in Arabic, e.g. *'There are six pencils and eleven pen'. One more common error, Smith (ibid) argues, is the use of the question tag 'isn't it' with negative statements or with various verbs. This mistake is due to the fact that Arabic has only one question tag (equivalent to 'isn't it') used with all statements. Other examples of errors which emerge as a direct translation of Arabic are: *'The math test for me is not a big deal. / *He has skills more than his neighbor. / *The next meeting he should conduct it. / *The child talked to the policeman without fearing. / *This language is difficult in learning.

To sum up, the negative transfer from Arabic to English may cause the following errors: wrong word order, absence or misuse of auxiliaries and some linking verbs, misuse of relative pronouns, redundant use of pronouns, lack or misuse of indefinite articles, frequent occurrence of the definite article, erroneous use of question tags and other errors resulting from literal translation of Arabic phrases and sentences. These errors might not take place if the syntax of

English and Arabic were similar. In other words, because of the dissimilarity between Arabic and English very little positive transfer, if any, can occur.

2.7 Summary

This chapter introduced the literature of grammar teaching in different contexts. It presented the importance of grammar instruction and the opinions of both supporters and opponents. It also discussed the classification of Ellis' (2001) form-focused instruction which distinguishes between focus on form whose main concern is meaning and focus on forms that is centered on form rather than meaning. As corrective feedback is considered a sort of focus on form instruction, the written feedback is reviewed with its different types, direct and indirect (coded and uncoded). In this regard, the literature illustrates that there is 'no one size fits all' in terms of error correction as some variables may determine the type of correction to be used by teachers. Studies on the impact of error correction on students' compositions have been discussed with the argument for and against corrective feedback. In addition, the efficacy of the correction provider (student, teacher, peer student) is mentioned according to literature. The oral feedback on students speaking activities, on the other hand, has been illustrated by Ellis' (2009a) taxonomy which divides the corrective feedback into explicit (explicit correction, metalinguistic explanation, elicitation and paralinguistic signal) and implicit (recast, repetition and clarification request). Moreover, the controversy over using grammar terminology and its usefulness is another issue that is presented in this literature review.

When teachers teach grammar, they might find some difficulties that hinder employing grammar explanation in their lessons. These difficulties, as described in the literature, are students' lack of interest in studying grammar, absence or inappropriateness of resources, students' difficulties in comprehending and remembering grammar rules, teachers' lack of grammar knowledge and the difficulties they face in using authentic materials. These difficulties may lead some teachers to avoid resorting to grammar instruction in their classrooms. In addition, the first language interference may be one of the main difficulties that cause learners' errors and impede their grammar learning. This point is expounded, in the last part of this chapter, according to the present study researcher's experience and the literature reviewed with relation to Arab learners of English. The errors caused by first language interference lie in the areas of pronouns, articles, auxiliaries and word order. These errors are made because of the dissimilarities in grammar between Arabic and English, the languages which belong to different families. Although first

language interference maybe one of the major reasons for committing errors, there are other reasons that should be investigated.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter deals with the methodology employed to conduct the exploratory study of teachers' perceptions on English grammar teaching to university undergraduates in the UAE. The chapter has four sections, the first section describes the profile of participants in terms of gender, qualifications, experience, etc; this information is provided in a table for more clarification. The second section handles the tools (survey and interviews) used to collect the data that was required to answer the research questions. In this section, a detailed table was drawn giving background information about each interviewee with unreal names. The third section explains the procedures taken to carry out the research. The last two sections discuss the methods employed for analyzing the gained data and the ethics followed while conducting the research.

3. 1 Participants

The participants in this study were twenty-two teachers who teach English language to first-year students in foundation bridge programs at universities and colleges in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah, the UAE. According to the information provided by the universities websites, some of the students studying in such programs fulfilled the higher education admission requirement by getting the required score in the IELTS or TOEFL tests; others have been allowed some time to achieve the score. Fourteen of the teachers in this research were from three universities and eight from two colleges. As table (3) shows, the teachers participated in the study were 12 males and 10 females. Half of the total number of teachers was Arabs, while the other half included seven native English speakers and four speakers of other languages. The majority of the teachers were MA holders, while over one fourth of the total had doctorates. However, a few had bachelor's degree. Five of the twenty-two teachers have been teaching English in higher education for 20 years or more. Most of the participant teachers did not take any training courses or attend any programs on grammar teaching.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of teachers' demographic information

Teacher's attribute	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	12	55%
	Female	10	45%
Highest qualification	BA	4	18%
	MA	12	55%
	PhD	6	27%
First language	English	7	32%
	Arabic	11	50%
	Other	4	18%
Total number of years of teaching English in higher education	1-5	3	14%
	6-10	8	36%
	11-19	6	27%
	20 or above	5	23%
Experience years of teaching English in higher education in the UAE	1-5	10	45%
	6-10	8	36%
	11-19	3	14%
	20 or above	1	5%
Teacher training on the topic	Yes	4	18%
	No	18	82%

3.2 Research tools

A mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative techniques was used in order to achieve triangulation and to have an in-depth idea about university teachers' perspectives on teaching grammar to Arab undergraduates in the UAE. "Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007, p. 141). The quantitative data were collected through closed-ended questions of teachers' survey, while the qualitative information was gathered through open-ended questions of the survey and the individual interviews with teachers.

The researcher of the current study expected that conducting interviews with university teachers would be difficult and might not take place since interviews consume some time and are not favored by many people. In the meantime, the researcher wanted to ensure that a qualitative method is used in addition to the quantitative in order to validate the collected data. For this purpose, he added the open-ended questions to the survey closed-ended items. In addition to this reason, open-ended questions are useful in providing detailed answers, which might not be anticipated as Wallace maintains (1998, p. 135):

Open questions are good for exploratory research where you have difficulty in anticipating the range of responses. They are also more likely to yield more unexpected (and therefore, perhaps, more interesting) data.

3.2.1 Teachers' survey

On designing the survey of this study, some ideas have been borrowed from those of Thu (2009) and Farahian (2011) which was based on Burgess and Etherington's (2002) survey. I was keen to write clear instructions, use simple language, and avoid ambiguous wording and jargons; even when some pedagogical terms were used, I gave the definitions between brackets for the reader to understand the meaning. Clarity and user-friendliness are important factors that attract the reader to complete the survey. For this reason, the main body of questions was put in a tabulated form followed by a complete lined page for comments and enough spaces for the open-ended questions to be answered. In doing so, the survey appeared neat in the layout and easy to follow. A five-page survey containing 31 grammar teaching relevant questions was administered to university teachers (Appendix A). It is divided into three parts. The first part consists of seven background information questions about the respondent teachers. The second part is composed of 28 Likert scale type questions. The response to each question of these has five options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. Each of these options has been given a value from 1 to 5 respectively for the ease of calculating the descriptive statistics. This type of questions is commonly used for exploratory studies as Brown (2001, p. 41) suggests, "Likert-scale questions are effective for gathering respondents' views, opinions, and attitudes about various language-related issues". The survey closed-ended items in this part were ordered in a way that addresses the research questions for facilitating the analytical process. To illustrate, the survey items were arranged to answer the research questions as shown in the following table:

Table 4: Distribution of survey items to the research questions

Research Question	Survey Items
1	1 : 4
2a	5 : 13
2b	14 : 19
3a	20 : 26
3b	28 & 29

As for the third part of the survey, it comprises three open-ended questions about three of the main researched issues, i.e. the importance of grammar instruction, grammar teaching methods and teachers' difficulties in grammar teaching. At the end of the questionnaire, an invitation for teachers' interviews was offered.

The reason for using the questionnaire as a research tool is that it produces much data while being cost-effective. It is widely used by researchers because it can be easily administered and the numerical data it produces can be simply analyzed. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the closed-ended questions facilitate statistical calculations and data analysis by providing response frequencies. In addition to this, the open-ended questions provide rich data that cannot be given by the closed-ended ones as respondents can elaborate and give extra ideas related to the asked questions.

3.2.2 Teachers' interviews

The interview questions were formulated to explore teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching at universities. The questions aimed to elicit information about how teachers see grammar teaching at the university level. The points covered were the approaches teachers employ in grammar instruction, the importance of using grammar terminology as well as error correction and how they are utilized, the effect of native language interference on students' English grammar learning and the challenges teachers face on teaching grammar. The responses to these questions supplemented and verified the data gathered from the survey. Bell (2005, p. 157) suggests that

“the interview can yield rich material and can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses”. The usefulness of employing interviews in any research is that any ambiguities of questions or answers can be easily sorted out. The interviewer can elicit more information and ask for exemplification in order to get clear ideas about the investigated topic. That was the main reason for using interviews in the current study.

In this research, semi-structured interviews were used to gather specific and comprehensive relevant grammar teaching data that is based on teachers’ beliefs and actual experiences in their university classrooms. To clarify, the semi-structured interview is the one that has a number of pre-set questions, which may give rise to other points pertinent to the answers provided by the interviewee. The order and wording of questions are not necessarily to be the same with every interviewee (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The semi-structured interview is the most common format of interviews as Wallace (1998) argues. In this exploratory study, a set of 16 predetermined questions, mostly consistent with those covered by the questionnaire, were used in the interviews to achieve reliability of data. (see Appendix B).

As the teachers’ background information was known to the researcher through their answers on the questionnaire paper, he tended to ask only a few questions in this area just to save time for the research topic. Hence, the questions of the interview were closely related to the research questions. Piloting the interview has not been performed because of the limited number of teachers who accepted to be interviewed (five out of twenty-two, almost one quarter). However, the interview questions were shown to two academics who approved them for the interview purpose with few amendments.

On presenting the interviewees’ background information in this report, the researcher has given them unreal names to keep their identities unrevealed. As table (5) shows, the teachers were two male English native speakers, one male and one female Arab teachers, in addition to one female Urdu-speaking teacher. One of the teachers has a doctorate, while the other four were master’s degree holders. The least number of experience years in the UAE higher education was four, whereas the most was eleven years. The teachers’ participation was completely out of their willingness as denoted by writing their contact details at the end of the survey last page.

Table 5: Profile of interviewed teachers

Participant	Gender	Native language	Highest degree	No. of years in H.E.	No. of years in H. E. in the UAE	Teacher training
Roberts	Male	English	PhD	20	6	√
Andrew	Male	English	MA	6	4	×
Anwar	Male	Arabic	MA	4	4	×
Salma	Female	Arabic	MA	14	9	√
Catherine	Female	Urdu	MA	12	11	×

3.3 Procedures

After designing the survey, in order to ensure its validity I piloted it on three experienced English teachers of my acquaintances who previously worked at universities. They gave me their feedback (in terms of the survey layout, question wording, time of completion, etc.) according to which I made some modifications. About piloting, Wallace (1998) maintains that however small the number of administered questionnaires is, it is worthwhile testing on a few people. He adds that the piloted sample should be proportional to the number of surveys to be distributed. In other words, the bigger the number of questionnaires intended to be distributed, the bigger the piloted sample should be.

Following the survey piloting and getting it ready for distribution, I browsed the Internet for universities and other higher education institutions to get an idea about the nature of the English language courses offered in the foundation bridge programs that prepare first-year students for the academic studies. I also looked for the number of the English faculty members and the contact details of the dean, the department head, or whoever might be in charge in order to address them and seek their help in circulating the survey.

In spite of the fact that the survey was designed to be used as a hard copy, it could be completed electronically by teachers' initialing the boxes of their answer choices for the closed-ended questions and typing in their answers to the open-ended ones. That was what I asked the concerned people whom I contacted by email to do. Due to time constraints, I visited some universities and emailed others. I contacted and visited 13 universities and colleges in the UAE both governmental and private (eight contacted by email and five visited). In some of the visited

universities, after explaining the research topic and submitting the research information sheets along with the survey I was asked to wait for some time to get the approval, which has not been granted. Most of the universities that have been emailed did not reply at all.

However, from the five universities I visited only one took immediate action by accepting the survey copies and giving a certain date for collecting the completed surveys. From this university most of the responses were received (9 out of 13 copies distributed to its faculty, with return rate of 69%). From other universities or colleges contacted by email I got few, one, or nothing. Finally, the total number of responses received was twenty-two. This process of collecting data took more than six weeks from 22/1/2012 to 4/3/2012. The reasons for getting a number of responses smaller than expected might be the complicated procedures of universities, the teachers' disinterestedness in the research topic or their lack of sufficient knowledge in the grammar area.

After reviewing the survey papers, I started to email the teachers willing for the interview to decide on the suitable date and time. The interviews were conducted individually in English at university teachers' offices in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. They were audio-recorded by the consent of the interviewed teachers after signing a special form (Appendix D). This consent form was adapted from the one generated by Oxford Brookes University. In each interview, because teachers had busy schedules, I was careful not to take more than 30 minutes as indicated in the information sheet. There were some reasons for preferring individual interviews to a collective one. Although group interviews are timesaving, the idea could not have been practical in this research as interviewees were from different higher education institutions and they do not know each other. In the meanwhile, individual interviews are usually more focused and productive of genuine opinions unaffected by others.

As soon as all the interview data was collected, the process of analysis commenced. Together with the survey data, conclusions were made by comparing the results gained from both tools. These conclusions were used to answer the research questions.

3.4 Data analysis

The data collection and analysis were linear, in the sense that all data were collected first then the process of analysis started. The quantitative results were calculated statistically by finding frequencies and percentages of responses (see Appendix F for calculated frequencies). For

verification of these results, the means and standard deviations of teachers' responses were calculated by using Microsoft Office Excel 2007 (Appendix E). On the other hand, the qualitative data emerged from the three open-ended questions (29, 30 & 31) in the teachers survey were descriptively analyzed. Analyzing this data consolidated the responses obtained from the closed-ended questions and gave elaborate explanation of the importance and methods of grammar teaching and the difficulties teachers face when teaching grammar in EFL university undergraduate classrooms.

For the interviews, they were transcribed, categorized and analyzed manually. The data obtained from them was much more than what was required; therefore, some of it was excluded as it was outside the scope of the research. Only answers within themes closely related to the research questions were selected for analysis and reporting.

3.5 Research ethics considerations

A brief introduction to the topic and purpose of the research was written to respondents at the top of the questionnaire first page (Appendix A). In this introduction, a pledge of keeping respondents' anonymity and data confidentiality was stressed. This appears in making the writing of the respondents' names optional. Furthermore, on contacting universities, people in charge were addressed rather than the teachers directly and they have been informed about the research outline on paper. Likewise, interviewees were provided with two information sheets that gave more details about the research and showed the participants' rights of unrevealing their identities and the unjustified withdrawal from research at any time in case they needed to. Based on this, a consent form was presented to them to sign before the interviews. Moreover, when referring in this study to the interview participants, neither real names nor workplaces have been exposed. The research participants' right of getting the results of this study was confirmed and they were promised to receive them by email. Before all these procedures took place, the researcher had sought advice from the supervisor of this research project to ensure the observance of human research ethics; accordingly, the guidelines given by the supervisor were followed.

Chapter Four

Results

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first part, the quantitative findings gained from the responses to survey closed-ended questions are presented according to what might answer the research questions. In addition to the description of the findings, tables or graphs have been drawn for illustration and provision of more information. The findings are shown in percentages (rounded to the nearest whole number for facilitating the data analysis) and in response frequencies. Although teachers' comments on the survey statements were a few, they have been taken into consideration on presenting the results. As the research ethics dictate, when referring to participants' opinions or beliefs expressed in written comments or interviews, pseudonyms were used to preserve participants' anonymity.

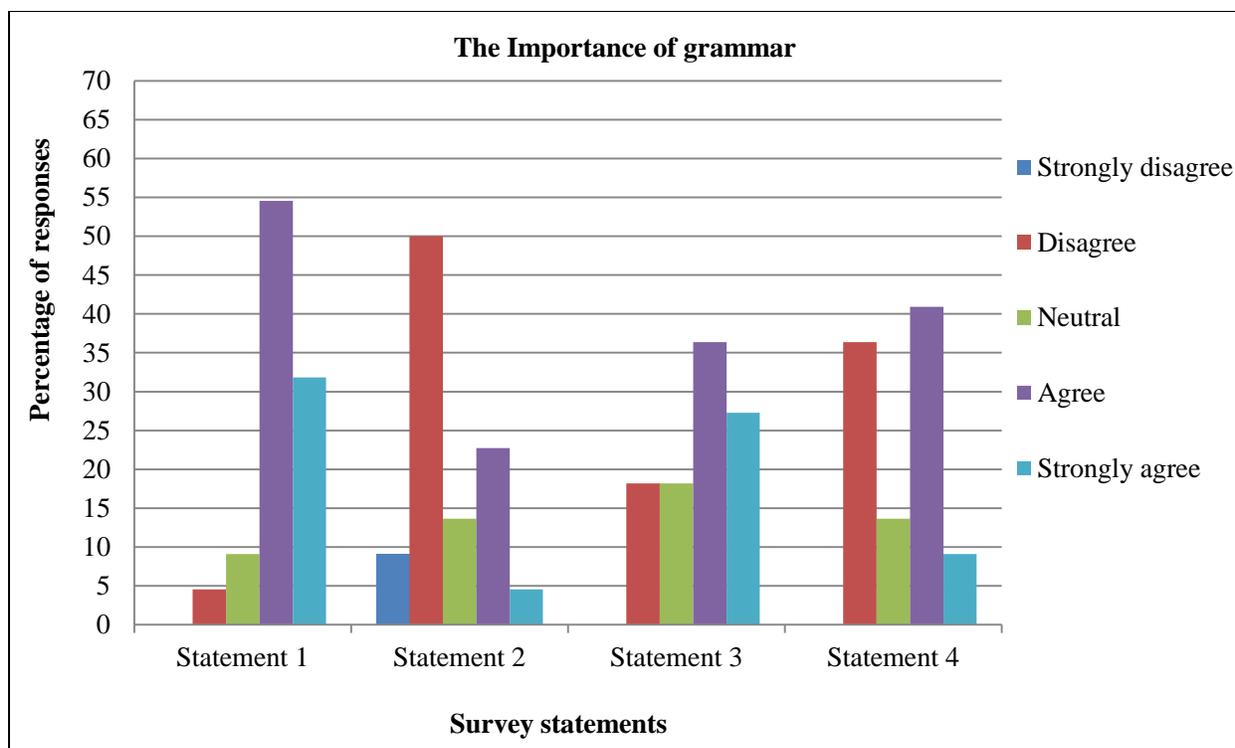
The second part of this chapter complements the first one; it handles the qualitative findings yielded by the responses to the survey open-ended questions. As for the third part, it presents the qualitative research findings of teachers' interviews with the exact words of interviewees in some occasions whenever necessary. The final part presents a summary of general results of the three research tools, the survey closed-ended statements and open-ended questions as well as the interviews.

4.1 Survey quantitative findings

Q1: What is the importance of grammar teaching in EFL university undergraduate classrooms as seen by teachers?

This research question has been answered by the responses to the first four questionnaire statements. The following figure demonstrates the findings in percentage points:

Figure 2: The importance of grammar



1. Studying grammar is essential for learners to master a foreign or a second language.
2. Natural exposure to foreign language is enough for acquiring grammatical competence.
3. Studying grammar helps students improve their communication skills.
4. Teaching grammar is more fruitful for adult learners than young learners.

According to this figure, it is clear that most respondents agreed or strongly agreed (55%, n= 12; 32%, n=7 respectively) that studying grammar is crucial for the mastery of a foreign or second language. This finding was confirmed by the responses to statement 2, which is the opposite of statement 1. More than half of the teachers (disagreed and strongly disagreed) rejected the idea that natural exposure alone can lead to grammatical competence. Although this statement generally had negative responses, Catherine added a comment on the questionnaire comments page saying that this situation depends on how much a learner is exposed to a foreign language. However, Roberts, who marked neutral 10 out of the 28 statements, commented that all his neutral responses were due to the idea that those statements could not be generalized as each case differs according to the context.

For statement 3, almost two thirds of the teachers (36% + 27%) supported the idea that grammar studying helps in improving the communication skills. The last statement in this group had positive opinions by 50% of teachers (agreed and strongly agreed) who think that grammar

teaching is more useful for adult learners than the young. The rest of teachers were divided between disagreement (36%, n=8) and neutrality (14%, n=3).

Q2a: What is the optimal approach to teaching grammar to EFL university undergraduate students?

This question has been addressed by the responses to the statements 5-13, which are relevant to the question in one way or another. The following table presents the responses given:

Table 6: The optimal approach to teaching grammar

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
5) Grammar should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills, reading, writing, listening or speaking).	45% (10)	41% (9)	14% (3)	—	—
6) The PPP (present-practice-produce) approach is the best for teaching grammar.	5% (1)	14% (3)	50% (11)	32% (7)	—
7) Using grammar terminology in teaching English is useful for adult learners.	9% (2)	23% (5)	36% (8)	27% (6)	5% (1)
8) Teaching grammar in context is of no avail with students at low language level.	14% (3)	55% (12)	14% (3)	18% (4)	—

9) Deductive grammar teaching explaining the grammar rule followed by practice) is more useful with difficult structures than with the easy ones.	9% (2)	23% (5)	36% (8)	27% (6)	5% (1)
10) Inductive grammar teaching (letting students extract the rule from example sentences) is more useful with difficult structures.	5% (1)	45% (10)	23% (5)	18% (4)	9% (2)
11) Teachers should pre-plan the grammar points that will be covered in their coming lessons.	5% (1)	9% (2)	9% (2)	27% (6)	50% (11)
12) Teachers should only teach grammar when a certain grammatical structure appears in the material under study.	18% (4)	41% (9)	14% (3)	23% (5)	5% (1)
13) Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the method of grammar teaching.	9% (2)	—	27% (6)	55% (12)	9% (2)

n =22 SD= Strongly disagree D= Disagree N= Neutral A= Agree SA= Strongly agree

This table clearly shows that the majority of teachers disagreed or even strongly disagreed (41%, 45%) that grammar should be taught in isolation. Interestingly, no one agreed or strongly agreed

with the statement. This means they encourage grammar being integrated into other skills. With relation to the best grammar teaching method, the teachers' responses were indecisive as 50% (11 respondents) of them were neutral while the others' responses were dispersed among the agreement (32%) and disagreement (14%, 5%) options. Grammar terminology, which can facilitate or complicate grammar teaching according to how it is employed, has gained undecided response, as the teachers' responses were almost evenly distributed among disagreement (n=7), neutral (n=8) and agreement (n=7) with the statement that using terminology is useful for adult learners.

As some university undergraduates can be of low language level, more than two thirds of their teachers in this sample (15 teachers) had a negative opinion that such students cannot benefit from teaching grammar in context. In other words, the teachers believed that contextualized grammar could help low achievers. Comparing deductive and inductive grammar teaching methods, which are touched upon in statement 9 and 10 respectively, the teachers seemed not sure whether the deductive method is better for difficult structures or not as the teachers tended to be neutral towards this method (disagreed 32%, neutral 36%, agreed 32%). Surprisingly, half the number of teachers opted for disagreement with statement 10, which is the opposite of statement 9. They did not believe that inductive grammar teaching is more useful with difficult structures. However, the other 50% were divided between neutral and agree options. With regard to statement 11, it was found that the idea expressed has got a strong agreement response of teachers (77%, 17 respondents out of 22). To them, prior planning of grammar points for coming lessons is essential. The last two statements in this set yielded negative and positive responses. The negative responses (59%) targeted statement 12 which indicate that teachers should not teach grammar unless they come across a particular structure in the study material. This finding proves the validity of the finding of statement 11. On the other hand, the positive responses were given to statement 13. Fourteen teachers of the group (64%) agreed that when choosing the grammar teaching method, students' preference should be taken into consideration.

Q2b: What are the challenges that EFL teachers of university undergraduates may encounter in teaching grammar?

The responses to statements 14-19 provided the answer to the research question 2b either directly or indirectly. The challenges indicated in these statements are pedagogical rather than contextual since the researcher supposes that in such a country of high economy as the United Arab

Emirates there are no contextual problems at universities, whether governmental or private, like the ones existing in other countries (e.g. big class sizes, lack of educational resources, etc). Hence, the questionnaire statements of teachers' challenges handled the difficulties in using authentic material and grammar terminology, students' negative feeling of grammar study, and the attempt to establish a link between meaning and form. The following table illustrates the responses to these statements:

Table 7: Teachers' challenges when teaching grammar

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
14) Using authentic texts when teaching grammar is time consuming for teachers.	5% (1)	23% (5)	27% (6)	41% (9)	5% (1)
15) Designing proper tasks from authentic material for practising grammar is demanding for teachers.	5% (1)	14 (3)	14% (3)	59% (1)	9% (2)
16) It is difficult for students to comprehend grammatical structures from authentic texts.	14% (3)	36% (8)	36% (8)	9% (2)	5% (1)
17) Students find difficulty in understanding and remembering grammar terminology.	—	23% (5)	32% (7)	41% (9)	5% (1)

18) Students find grammar something useless to study.	—	45% (10)	23% (5)	27% (6)	5% (1)
19) Trying to connect meaning and form in context confuses students.	14% (3)	55% (12)	14% (3)	18% (4)	—

n =22 SD= Strongly disagree D= Disagree N= Neutral A= Agree SA= Strongly agree

As the table shows, almost half of the teachers (46%) admitted that utilizing authentic material for grammar teaching consumes much of the class time. Yet, the disagreeing teachers were around one quarter of the total number (6 teachers). Even the design of practice tasks from such material is demanding as indicated by most teachers (68%). Moreover, half of the teachers found difficulty in students' understanding of grammar from authentic material. When using grammar terminology, a number of teachers (10) saw that students have problems in comprehending and remembering the terms, which might mean that those teachers do not use terminology in their teaching.

On the contrary, the same number of teachers did not see that students have a negative feeling towards grammar study. The respondent, Mary who strongly agreed on statement 18 wrote a comment that students see no connection between grammar and real life communication. Lastly, students' attempt to connect meaning and form in context does not confuse them as believed by most teachers (69%).

Q3a: What is the impact and method of dealing with students' grammatical errors in EFL classrooms?

The following table showing teachers responses to error correction statements provided the answer to the research question 3a. This table has seven statements about whether teachers should do comprehensive or selective error correction, what the impact of error correction on students might be, who may provide error corrections and how they can be done.

Table 8: The impact and method of grammar error correction

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
20) Students should only be corrected in speaking when their errors hinder getting the message across.	5% (1)	23% (5)	23% (5)	36% (8)	14% (3)
21) Students feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected.	—	32% (7)	—	45% (10)	23% (5)
22) Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately.	5% (1)	—	14% (3)	45% (10)	36% (8)
23) Immediate correction of students' oral mistakes can help prevent fossilization (stabilization) of erroneous patterns.	5% (1)	23% (5)	27% (6)	41% (9)	5% (1)
24) Peer correction in small groups is more preferable for students than teacher-student correction.	5% (1)	32% (7)	23% (5)	41% (9)	—
25) On correcting students' speaking errors, only explicit feedback (teacher corrects the error or gets it corrected with an indication that an error has been made) should be used.	5% (1)	27% (6)	50% (11)	18% (4)	—

26) On correcting students' speaking errors, both types of feedback (explicit and implicit) should be used.	5% (1)	5% (1)	23% (5)	59% (13)	9% (2)

n =22 SD= Strongly disagree D= Disagree N= Neutral A= Agree SA=

Strongly agree

It is clear from the table that half the number of teachers believed that only serious speaking errors, which negatively affect the communication of meaning, should be corrected. In addition, when all students' writing errors are corrected, students feel disappointed as believed by 15 teachers in the sample (68%). In general, if error correction is done properly, it can motivate students. This idea gained huge support from more than three fourths of the teachers. Unexpectedly, although the percentage of agreement with statement 23 (Immediate correction of students' oral mistakes can help prevent fossilization of erroneous patterns.) was the highest among the other options, it was only 46%. In this regard, Mary, who marked neutral the same statement, added a written comment saying:

This depends on the receptive nature of students. If the student genuinely wants corrective feedback, then immediate correction of their oral mistakes can help in preventing erroneous patterns. (Extract 4.1)

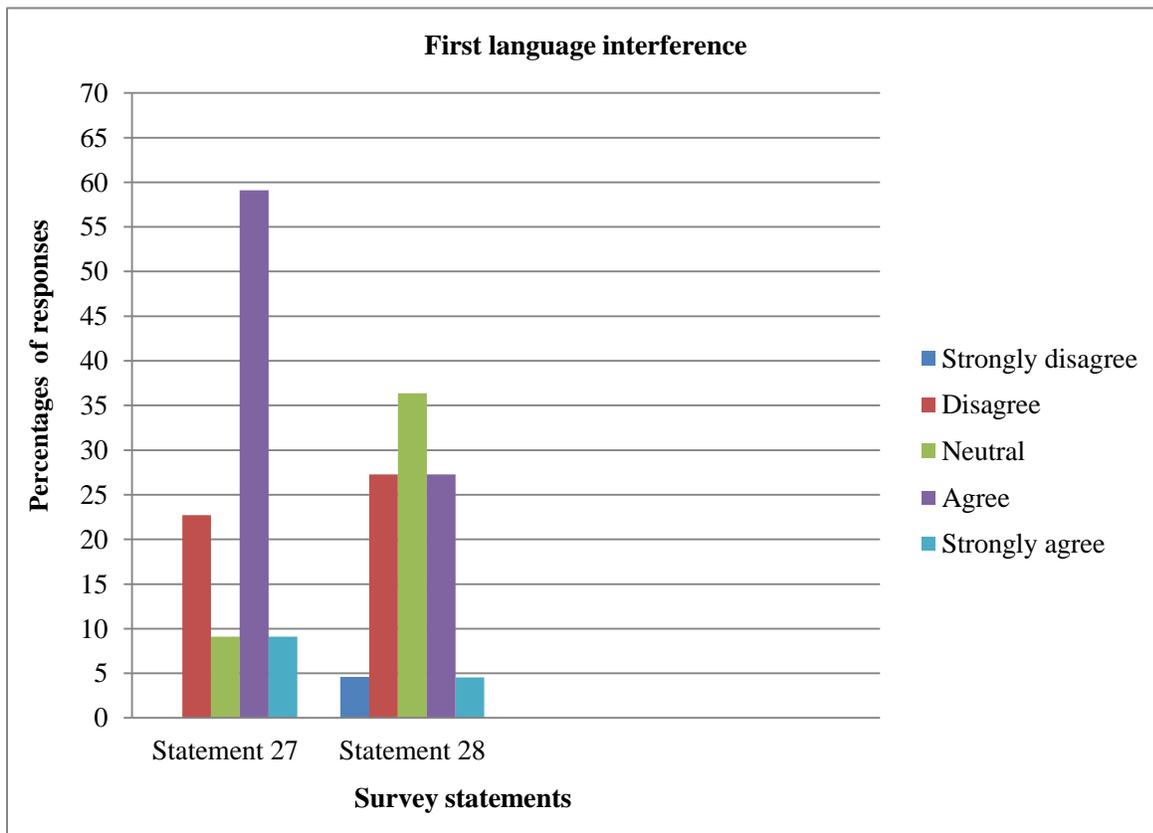
Concerning the correction provider, it is undecided whether peer correction in groups is more preferred by students than teacher-student correction. Only 41% of teachers had positive responses towards the students' preference for peer correction. About the explicit method of speaking error correction, it was also undecided whether it is the best or not since half of the teachers opted for the neutral response. However, the necessity of using both explicit and implicit correction methods was advocated by 15 respondents (68%).

Q3b: How does first language interference affect EFL grammar learning?

This research question was addressed by the teachers' responses to the last two closed-ended statements in the questionnaire: 27) Students' linking the first language (Arabic) with the foreign

language (English) causes difficulty in learning the grammar of the latter; and 28) Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' grammar errors. As Arabic differs to a great extent with English, the two statements indicate that difficulties in Arab students' learning of English grammar arise from the fact that Arabic and English are not alike. The responses to these statements are represented by the following figure:

Figure 3: First language interference



As shown from this figure, the highest percentage of responses (59%) inclined towards accepting the idea that linking the two languages, Arabic and English, in students' minds engenders difficulties in learning English grammar (statement 27). This is in addition to the 9% of teachers who strongly agreed with the same statement, which makes the percentage of agreement 68% in total. For the other statement, it is clear that albeit the highest percentage is of neutral responses (36%), the agreement and disagreement responses had identical percentages (27% for agree and disagree and 5% for strongly agree and strongly disagree). This means that the general response is undetermined. Teachers were not sure whether the dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a major factor for students making grammatical errors. On this same statement, Sameera, Mary

and Margaret wrote their comments. Sameera, who strongly disagreed with the statement, commented that dissimilarity between the two languages might be a reason but not a main reason as errors emerge from bad habits of learning. Similarly, Mary disagreeing with the statement commented that the main reason for errors was not the dissimilarity between Arabic and English, but students' devaluation of grammar that led them to disregard it. However, Margaret was neutral and commented that:

English grammar is complex, so it is difficult for any language learner not only with Arabic as a mother tongue. (Extract 4.2)

4.2 Survey qualitative findings

This section introduces the responses to the three open-ended survey questions (29, 30, and 31) which correspond to the research questions 1, 2a, and 2b respectively. The number of respondents who answered these questions was 14 (almost 64%) out of 22. One respondent of the 14 gave only one word as an answer to question 30 and left the other two questions unanswered. However, the responses to these questions are presented with the most important ideas of teachers, as written on the questionnaire paper, accompanied by clarifications. Comparisons were made between the different responses to the same question.

Question 29: Do you think that teaching English grammar is important for university undergraduate students ? Why/Why not?

In answering this question, 10 respondents (approximately 45% of the total number of the survey participant teachers) agreed that grammar teaching is important for students as it enables them to master the language skills, especially speaking and writing, which are required for the academic study. The following table displays the different responses to this question:

Table 9: Descriptive statistics of teachers' responses to question 29

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	10	45%

Disagree	2	9%
Neutral	1	5%
No response	9	41%
Total	22	100%

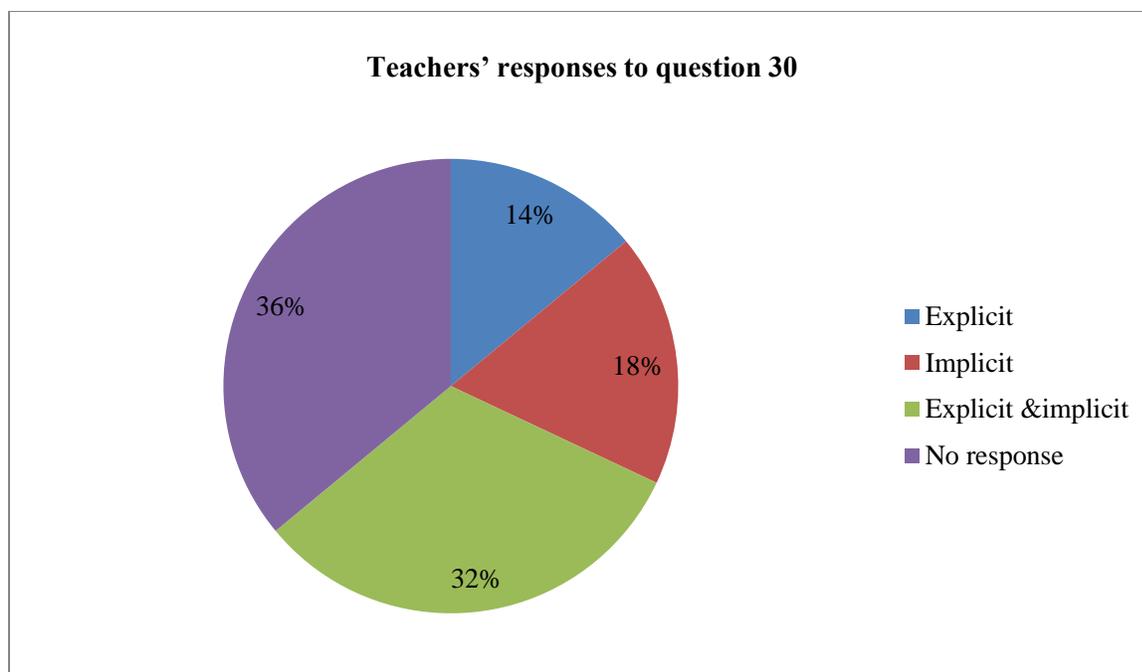
As can be seen from the table, two respondents (9%) disagreed and one was neutral while the others gave no response (41%). Alia who gave a negative answer justified her response by saying that teaching grammar has been done in high schools and when students join the university they are supposed to be ready for dealing with the academic subjects. Her answer may imply that it is not important for teachers to teach grammar to university students. Nadia, the other respondent who disagreed, said that grammar teaching is not important as the teachers' focus is on fluency rather than accuracy. Yet Roberts gave a neutral answer as he said:

It depends what is meant by grammar and how it is done. My belief is that using language in context is very important and that 'grammar' is a system of choices, which often depends on context. (Extract 4.3)

Question 30: Which is the best, teaching grammar implicitly (students understand grammar rules through language exposure), explicitly (rules are clearly indicated to students) or both? Why?

The percentile distribution of respondents' answers to this question can be represented by the following pie chart:

Figure 4: Teachers' responses to question 30



This chart illustrates that the highest percentage of respondents to this questions (32%, n= 7) revealed that a combination of the two grammar-teaching methods, explicit and implicit is the best to be used. Catherine's answer was written as follows:

Both methods can be used depending on the situation and teaching contexts. I believe in teaching grammar implicitly, but sometimes in some situations for some grammar items, I have to teach explicitly. (Extract 4.4)

Three of the teachers who favored the combination of the two methods expressed the idea that with difficult rules, the explicit teaching method should be used; otherwise, the implicit method can be employed.

For example, Ebrahim put it as:

There is no definite answer here; some rules especially the difficult ones should be taught explicitly, while the easy ones can be taught through exposure. (Extract 4.5)

Expectedly, the smallest percentage of teachers (14%, n= 3) believed that the explicit method must be used at universities. Anwar, for instance said:

Grammar should be taught explicitly at university level. At schools, however, the situation is different. (Extract 4.6)

Supporters of the implicit teaching method as seen in the chart are 18% (n= 4) of the respondents. Half of them believed that the implicit method is the easiest way of learning grammar as long as there is a constant exposure to the language. The other half saw that the implicit method helps students retain grammar rules as they will remember them in their contexts. Sameera, in this regard said:

I think that teaching grammar implicitly is better because the teacher contextualize the rules. He does not present isolated grammar rules that students will easily forget. The context will help students retain the material presented. (Extract 4.7)

Question 31: In your opinion, what are the problems that English language teachers may encounter when teaching grammar to Arabic speaking students in the UAE?

Most of the respondents (n= 6) who answered this open-ended question believed that L1 interference is a major problem. Salma stated that literal translation from Arabic into English leads to producing erroneous patterns, the matter that impedes students' progress. In addition, Margaret indicated that:

L1 interference is always there, no matter what the L1 is. Students here do not seem to be very good at Arabic grammar either, so lack of good grammar understanding in the mother tongue may inhibit grammar understanding in a second language as well, but not necessarily so. The problem we face with students entering university is that they have fossilized bad English grammar, pronunciation and spelling because of poor teaching in high schools. (Extract 4.8)

On the other hand, Catherine expressed the idea that non-Arabic speaking teachers cannot understand that the grammar errors of Arab students are due to their first language interference. She added that they face the difficulty of not being able to speak Arabic that may be used sometimes to explain a difficult rule. Other difficulties teachers reported were students' low language level and lack of motivation, their feeling of boredom when studying grammar, the difficulty level of some structures and the curriculum constraints.

4.3 Interview findings

4.3.1 The impact of grammar teaching on the communication skills

This part in the interview is somehow related to the first research question (What is the importance of grammar teaching in EFL university undergraduate classrooms as seen by teachers?). The question asked to the interviewees was: Can adult students improve their communication skills by studying grammar?

In answering this question, four of the interviewed teachers (80%) agreed and one disagreed. Roberts who confirmed his positive belief said:

Definitely, they can because they have to be precise and they cannot be so without using accurate grammar. Engineering Students for example have to be careful with quantifiers like few and a few. The difference between the two could be quite considerable. You can even imagine situations for engineers where it could be life threatening if they got it wrong. We should not underestimate grammar. It is the backbone of the language. (Extract 4.9)

By saying this, Roberts emphasized the importance of the formal study of grammar that helps in communicating clear and accurate meanings. His perspective was affirmed by Catherine as she answered the question saying:

Yes of course, because while communicating they are using grammar. How can they use it? They must know it. (Extract 4.10)

On the contrary, Salma answered negatively implying that studying grammar does not necessarily improve the communication skills when she said:

I do not think so. You can have a lot of students who can do very well in the grammar part [of the test], but they cannot use their grammar in producing good writing. (Extract 4.11)

4.3.2 The best grammar teaching method

Asked about the best grammar teaching method, three of the interviewees (Catherine, Salma and Andrew) said it differed according to many variables. For example, Andrew said:

Of course, there are many methods. It all depends on the environment, the level, number of students, students' motivation, etc. (Extract 4.12)

The other two teachers who were Roberts and Anwar supported the contextualized grammar and the explicit grammar respectively. Roberts teaching university project-based courses stated that:

When we teach language classes, because we teach communication classes now, we do not teach language first if you like, we do teach language through activities and

sometimes we do grammatical exercises as follow up, but we do not structure the course by the grammar.
(Extract 4.13)

According to the strategy followed in Roberts' university, teachers employ grammar in task-based activities and they might focus on separate grammar whenever required.

On the other hand, Anwar who does not advocate the implicit grammar teaching method, confirmed that:

If I want my students to get what the grammatical point is, I just introduce it explicitly.
(Extract 4.14)

When teaching grammar, all the five teachers stated that they only used simple grammar terminology whenever necessary as it helps in some situations, but normally it is dry and difficult for students to remember, as they described.

4.3.3 Teachers' challenges of grammar teaching

In this context, three teachers expressed the challenges they perceived as students' feeling of boredom and lack of interest, the perception that confirms the responses to question 31 in the questionnaire. The other two teachers mentioned the first language interference and the difficulty of some structures as the main challenges they faced. Catherine's view was:

Maybe, when we teach students grammar without context, it becomes boring for them and meaningless also. As a result, they will not take interest in that. If you follow a course book or a course outline, it becomes difficult for you and your students to change.
(Extract 4.15)

She hinted at the syllabus constraints that might lead the teacher to teach grammar in isolation which in turn results in students' feeling of boredom and losing of interest.

About the difficulty of some grammatical rules, Roberts mentioned the use of articles, prepositions and phrasal verbs saying that:

There are subtleties of articles use, which are very difficult to explain. There are also things like prepositional uses, which are very difficult to actually establish rules for, things like phrasal verbs as well. There are some rules so complicated that you do not want to teach them because the students would not be able to operate them. (Extract 4.16)

In addition to this, Roberts alluded to the teachers' need for professional development courses that provide them with solid grammar knowledge as he stated:

I think that Simon Borg in his research seems to show that whenever teachers give grammatical explanations in class, they tend to be wrong explanations, which do not actually help the students' language. Therefore, we should be very careful about how to explain language. We need quite sophisticated knowledge. (Extract 4.17)

4.3.4 Grammatical error correction

Regarding grammatical error correction, all the five teachers confirmed that students are always willing to have the correct forms when they make grammar errors, they might even ask for correction. There was also consensus that error correction improves students' language level. For oral correction, it is only done when there are serious errors that affect the meaning communicated as Andrew said, or in case the teachers prepare students for presentations as Salma mentioned. For Anwar and Roberts, error correction does not always happen in their classes since they believe that their students can convey the meaning easily. Yet, for Catherine the matter is different, she maintained that:

In oral communication, it depends; sometimes I clearly tell the students this should not be like this, it should be like this. Sometimes I repeat what the student said like when he says: *He do not know about that. I say: Ah... Ok, he does not know about that. This way, but if I feel he is not going to realize what I am repeating, I will use explicit correction. (Extract 4.20)

From her opinion, it is clear that she might use the implicit correction (recasting) or the explicit for students' oral language output. According to her, this depends on students' abilities. Unlike Roberts and Anwar who supported the teacher's explicit correction in response to written errors, Catherine preferred students' self-correction to teacher correction and student peer correction. This preference came in consistence with what Salma and Andrew believed to be the right way. Andrew for example demonstrated that:

For written work, I highlight the errors but I do not write the correct form. I get them to think about what the problem is here and let them do self-correction. (Extract 4.21)

4.3.5 First language interference

In this area, all the teachers involved in interviews agreed that although the degree may differ, Arabic language interference like any other native language causes problems for foreign language learners. When asked whether Arabic interference hinders the learning of English grammar, Catherine said:

Yes, I think so. For example, they [Arabic-speaking students] do not have this concept like adding s/es to the third person singular. They do not have this in their language; that's why they are unable to learn it. Eighty-nine percent of students make mistakes like this. (Extract 4.22)

It is the similarity between the grammars of native and foreign languages that facilitates the learning of the latter as Catherine believes. Even if the foreign language rule is very simple, but having no equivalent in the native language, it will be difficult for learners to acquire.

Roberts confirmed the idea and clarified that interference was only one reason for grammar mistakes, he explained saying:

When they mix the two, English and Arabic grammars, I would not say that because it's Arabic there is a problem, but obviously there's some first language interference. Arab colleagues tell us more about this. However, there are some other things that cause errors as well. For example, sometimes students put down words as they think they hear them rather than they should be written. (Extract 4.23)

Anwar admits the situation but with a lesser degree:

It happens with very few students; with low achievers, like placing the verb before the subject, or the adjective after the noun. (Extract 4.24)

4.4 Summary of the results

According to the results gained from the research quantitative and qualitative data, it was found that the majority of teachers appreciate the importance of grammar teaching in higher education. According to them, the study of grammar is fundamental for mastering the language. It helps students improve their oral and written communication skills. Most of the teachers believed in contextualized grammar and the combination of implicit and explicit grammar teaching. Students' first language interference was found to be a problem among others for most teachers. A big number of teachers responded that Arabic language interference as a native language causes difficulties in learning English grammar. Designing grammar practice tasks from authentic material is another difficulty for teachers. In addition, students feeling of boredom and

disinterestedness in learning grammar as well as the difficulty of certain structures as indicated by the qualitative data were among the problems teachers face when teaching grammar to university Arabic-speaking students. Although error correction helps improve students' language level, students feel frustrated when all their written errors are corrected. This idea was indicated by more than half of the respondent teachers. However, the majority believed that corrective feedback motivates students if it is employed properly. More than two thirds of the teachers agreed that when speaking errors are made, both implicit and explicit methods should be used.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This research study aimed at exploring the university teachers' beliefs about teaching English grammar to Arabic-speaking undergraduate students in the UAE. The general findings gained from the research tools showed that an overwhelming majority of the participant teachers appreciate the importance of grammar instruction in the university EFL context. Contrary to what some people might think, university teachers believed that teaching grammar is essential for their undergraduate students, especially those in their first year. This finding substantiates the data obtained from some studies, like the one conducted by Burgess and Etherington's (2002) that investigated the beliefs of 48 EAP (English for academic purposes) teachers in the UK universities. Another one was of Barnard and Scampton (2008) which indicated that 75% of the participants (32 EAP teachers in New Zealand) conceived grammar as the backbone of language competence and 63% believed that grammar is the framework for the other components of the language. This view implies that other language skills are based on grammar. In the present study, the participants dissented that grammar can be acquired through natural exposure only, meaning that grammar instruction is crucial, which is against Krashen's (1981) input hypothesis theory. This theory indicates that acquisition of language occurs by the exposure to comprehensible input without formal teaching.

According to the university teachers' view, students need to have good grammar knowledge in order to be able to cope with the academic study. By studying grammar, students can improve both their oral and written communication skills. A big number of the participant teachers confirmed this point, which consolidates Liu and Master's (2001) conviction of the necessity of grammar knowledge for achieving communicative competence.

Although the teachers were convinced that grammar should be contextualized in most cases to be remembered by students, they were not sure whether the traditional grammar teaching method of the PPP (presentation, practice and production) is the best as 50% of responses were neutral. Teachers reported in the interviews that the teaching method depends on different factors like the context, students' level and preference, etc. In the literature, Baleghizadeh and Farshchi's (2009) study indicated that the participant teachers did not espouse the PPP approach; rather they

supported the meaning-oriented approach. In other words, they advocated focus on form rather than focus on forms; the matter which was not decided by the current study sample of teachers in terms of this point (statement 6). In spite of this, the opinion of the sample was quite definite by approving of the focus on form approach when they disagreed that grammar should not be taught in isolation (statement 5). On the other hand, they also advocated the focus on forms method by disagreeing that teaching grammar should only be done when a grammatical point appears in the studied material (statement 12). This means they agree on both methods although they are more in favor of focus on form as the responses to interviews and statement 5 showed.

The qualitative results revealed that teachers believed in the superiority of the explicit and implicit combined method of grammar teaching. This finding partially refutes the results of the case study carried out by Suzar (2007). That study explored Turkish teachers' perceptions on grammar teaching in EFL classrooms in the tertiary education. It showed that the participants were against explicit grammar instruction and encouraged contextualized language and inductive learning. In this regard, Celce-Murcia (1991) believes that explicit teaching is more suitable for adults, while the implicit fits children better. This belief might be true since explicit teaching usually requires employing technical terms that are not easy for children to understand. For this reason, it was surprising to get an undecided result for statement 7 (using grammar terminology in teaching English is useful for adult learners). The responses were divided almost equally among disagreement, neutral, and agreement. Here, the interviewed teachers stated that sometimes they use terminology when they feel it is needed for students to understand a certain rule. One of the interviewees mentioned that terminology is a temporary tool used to help students understand, but students are always advised not to focus on terminology because it is not used in everyday life. Inconsistence with this, Jeffries (1985) argues that knowing grammar terminology can be considered a prerequisite for learning a foreign language in higher education. This view can be true because even if it is simple terminology it is required sometimes. How can students construct a sentence unless they know there is a subject, verb and object? Students need these terms that are used for explicit teaching. However, the use of terminology would be occasional as with this group of research participant teachers who focus more on implicit teaching as they indicated.

Talking about deductive and inductive grammar teaching approaches, it seemed that the participant teachers were not quite aware of the difference albeit the meanings were given on the

survey paper. Logically, it was expected that most responses would have targeted the advocacy of the use of deductive method with difficult structures (statement 9); consequently, statement (10) which is the opposite of (9) would have been rejected (see Appendix F). Surprisingly, the result was inconclusive for both, although the disagreement percentages for them were 32% and 50% respectively. These two statements are much related to classroom practice. Some teachers in their interviews or written answers mentioned that the difficulty of certain structures is one of the problems they face on teaching grammar. That means they have to decide on the suitable teaching method to help their students. Among the difficult structures they stated were the prepositional phrase and the noun phrase that was proved by Zughoul's (2002) study to be a source of confusion to Arab students.

The qualitative data of the present research, partially supporting the results of Mohammed's (2006) study, showed that the students' lack of motivation and low language level are among the challenges teachers face. Moreover, consistent with the result of Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam's (2011) study, the quantitative data of this research revealed that designing grammar practice tasks from authentic material is another challenge.

The quantitative results indicated that teachers were not confident whether correcting speaking grammatical errors is only done if the error leads to miscommunication or not. However, the qualitative results of interviews showed teachers' agreement with this strategy. In the literature, Barnard and Scampton's (2008) study showed that more than 50% of university New Zealand teachers did not favor the idea of correcting only the serious speaking errors, but all errors. In spite of this, it seemed that the UAE teachers at universities do not pay much attention to students' speaking errors since they give more attention to the writing skill. One of the interesting comments of a participant teacher during his interview was that his students always convey meanings without causing any miscommunication. Usually correcting speaking errors is done in the end after noting them down and eliciting the correct forms from students unless the error causes intelligibility of meaning. However, the respondents agreed that correcting students speaking errors should be both explicitly and implicitly. Likewise, Ellis (2006a) argues that a mixture of implicit and explicit types with input- and output-based feedback should be used in order for error correction to be implemented at its best.

Moving to written errors, although most of the teachers agreed that correcting all the written errors of students negatively affects their psychology, they almost all agreed that error correction

when done properly helps and motivates students. As teachers' responses to the statement "students should only be corrected in speaking when their errors hinder getting the message across" were inconclusive, it was expected that the same stance would be for the statement "immediate correction of students' oral mistakes can help prevent fossilization of erroneous patterns". Although the idea seems sound, teachers' could not support it, as the agreement rate was less than 50%. Maybe the teachers do not want to interrupt the flow of students' speech or do not want to cause them embarrassment. Their care for students appeared in their positive response to statement 13 (students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the method of grammar teaching). In reply to this, it can be said that teachers may provide correction tactfully by using recasting (repeating student's utterance in a correct way), which is an implicit method of correction. According to Cowan (2008), every teacher should use recasting when it is appropriate.

Inconsistent with the positive results revealed by Grami's (2010) study in terms of peer-correction, the participants of the current study were not sure whether it could be acceptable to students or not, but the teachers in the interviews illustrated that they use self-correction or teacher correction rather than students' peers. This is because they believe that their students are not up to that level, which is refutable by drawing their attention to the question: if students cannot correct their classmates, how can they correct themselves?

There is a consensus on the occurrence of first language interference, not because it is the Arabic language but because it is a language like any other native language causing problems when learning English. This was what some teachers, who taught both Arabs and non-Arabs, indicated in their written answers or interviews. One teacher said that with non-Arabs, English grammar is easier, another said the opposite. It is concluded that first language interference is one of the reasons among others that cause grammar errors. This proposition supports Lightbown and Spada's (2006) claim.

5.1.1 Limitations of the study

Like any other study, this research has some limitations. Although the group of participant teachers, whether the whole group or the interviewed teachers, was accidentally diverse in terms of gender, qualifications, experience and the language spoken (native Arabic, native English, another language), the sample was limited. This means the results obtained cannot be generalized to the population. The reason for this relatively small number of respondents (22 teachers) was

the complicated procedures of universities, which were supposed to help in administering the survey, or maybe the teachers' disinterestedness in the research topic or their lack of sufficient knowledge in the grammar area. Due to time constraints, visits have not been paid to all the intended universities; consequently, the survey should have been redesigned for online use in addition to the original paper-based design. By so doing, the electronic copy would have appeared easier and more attractive to respondents to complete. This could be another limitation of the study. A third limitation might be that interview questions have not been given to the interviewees in advance; the matter that if it had been done, it would have given the interviewees more relaxation and made them provide more focused answers. Wallace (1998) suggests that giving the interviewees prior knowledge of the questions to be asked reduces their stress to its minimum and makes the interviewees ready with more complete and useful answers.

5.2 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore university teachers' perspectives on grammar teaching in EFL undergraduate classrooms. A survey and interviews were used to find out teachers' beliefs with regard to the importance of grammar instruction, the best grammar method used in this context, the difficulties teachers face when teaching grammar, the effect and method of error correction and the Arabic language interference when learning English grammar. The research sample consisted of twenty-two teachers, from different universities and other higher education institutions, five of whom were interviewed. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended and closed-items questions. Although it was originally paper-based, the questionnaire was completed both manually and online. The findings of the research indicated that most teachers believed that grammar instruction is important for university students as it helps them improve their communication skills. Using both explicit and implicit grammar teaching methods is the best as indicated by the teachers' responses. Almost two thirds of the teachers agreed that using authentic material for designing grammar practice tasks is a challenge. Other challenges are the first language interference, students' low language level and their lack of motivation, in addition to the difficulty of some grammatical structures. Arabic language interference, as indicated by a big number of the participants, causes difficulty in learning English grammar. For error correction, 81% of teachers agreed that it motivates students and satisfies their needs if it is employed properly. A less percentage supported the combination of the implicit and explicit correction methods when dealing with students' grammatical speaking errors.

5.2.1 Recommendations

It was noted that most teachers did not use any technical terms relevant to the grammar topic neither in the written answers nor in the interviews. In addition, as their demographic information showed, very few of them have been trained for grammar teaching. In this respect, one of the interviewees who was very well qualified and had long experience in teaching argued that sometimes when teachers give students spontaneous answers to their questions, teachers realize afterwards that what they said was not quite right. He added that for this reason, teachers should have solid knowledge in order to help the students in their learning. Hence, it is important that teachers be encouraged to attend professional development programs and even do educational researches in order to be able to link theory to practice. For curriculum, it should have more focus on grammar as revealed by another participant.

It is recommended that universities should open doors for educational researchers and give support to them as long as the studies done will serve the learners and the community. Although some universities have a special department for research, they seem to serve only the researchers who belong to them. Therefore, it is suggested that all universities should have such a department that offers help to any researcher without any kind of procrastination and urges its teaching faculty to participate in researches by providing their opinions through surveys or interviews or even by allowing researchers to observe their classes whenever requested.

Although this research may be useful in drawing the attention of practitioners and educational researchers to the importance of grammar teaching in the EFL university undergraduate classrooms, further studies are required to investigate the same context in the UAE and in other Arab countries. A comparison can be made between teachers and students' beliefs on the same topic. Teachers' use of grammatical terminology is an issue that can be researched through empirical studies rather than exploratory researches.

5.2.2 Implications

This study maybe unique in its context, as most studies that explored teachers' beliefs about grammar have been done at school level in non-Arab countries. The topic itself at the university level might be considered marginal to some people since they believe that grammar teaching is the responsibility of secondary school teachers as indicated by an answer written to the first open-ended question in the survey. However, this is not true because it should not be supposed that secondary school graduates have mastered grammar during their school year study. In fact,

this is a shared responsibility between the secondary school and the university teachers. Students cannot proceed with their academic study unless they have good grammar knowledge that helps them in writing their assignments and oral presentations. As this research showed, grammar can be taught in context with explicit grammar in a few occasions whenever necessary, especially with low-level students. Using grammar terminology should be minimized as the sample in this study stated. As it was indicated, error correction should be done by the students themselves; otherwise, the teacher interferes. This helps them retain grammar rules since they exerted mental effort on analyzing their language output and finding out their errors. Finally, when teaching grammar, teachers have to be creative in their methods in order to motivate their students and prevent their feeling of boredom.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Teachers' Survey of Grammar Teaching

Dear colleague,

This survey is part of a research investigating the importance of English grammar teaching and how it is handled in EFL university undergraduate classrooms in the UAE. The investigation is conducted through exploring teachers' perspectives on grammar instruction.

I appreciate your candid responses to all questions according to your beliefs and actual classroom practices. Your valuable opinions are so important as they will help teachers and researchers reconsider methods of teaching grammar that may elevate students' proficiency level in the English language.

I confirm that the data obtained from this survey will be limited to the research with respondents' names and other personal information unrevealed.

Thank you in anticipation for your help

Part 1: Demographic Information

Kindly complete the following information about yourself

Name (Optional): _____

Gender: _____

Highest qualification: _____

What is your first language? _____

How long have you been teaching English in higher education? _____

How long have you been teaching English in higher education in the UAE? _____

Name grammar related teacher training programs or workshops attended and duration of each (if any):

Part 2: Grammar teaching statements

Please read the following statements carefully and tick the right box for each statement that best expresses the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. If you would like to elaborate on statements, you can add your comments on the lines provided on page 4.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1) Studying grammar is essential for learners					

to master a foreign or a second language.					
2) Natural exposure to foreign language is enough for acquiring grammatical competence.					
3) Studying grammar helps students improve their communication skills.					
4) Teaching grammar is more fruitful for adult learners than young learners.					
5) Grammar should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills, reading, writing, listening or speaking).					
6) The PPP (present-practice-produce) approach is the best for teaching grammar.					
7) Using grammar terminology in teaching English is useful for adult learners.					
8) Teaching grammar in context is of no avail with students at low language level.					
9) Deductive grammar teaching (explaining the grammar rule followed by practice) is more useful with difficult structures than with the easy ones.					
10) Inductive grammar teaching (letting students extract the rule from example sentences) is more useful with difficult structures.					
Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Response	1	2	3	4	5
11) Teachers should pre-plan the grammar points that will be covered in their coming lessons.					
12) Teachers should only teach grammar when a certain grammatical structure appears in the material under study.					

13) Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the method of grammar teaching.					
14) Using authentic texts when teaching grammar is time consuming for teachers.					
15) Designing proper tasks from authentic material for practising grammar is demanding for teachers.					
16) It is difficult for students to comprehend grammatical structures from authentic texts.					
17) Students find difficulty in understanding and remembering grammar terminology.					
18) Students find grammar something useless to study.					
19) Trying to connect meaning and form in context confuses students.					
20) Students should only be corrected in speaking when their errors hinder getting the message across.					
21) Students feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected.					
22) Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately.					
Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Response	1	2	3	4	5
23) Immediate correction of students' oral mistakes can help prevent fossilization (stabilization) of erroneous patterns.					
24) Peer correction in small groups is more preferable for students than teacher-student correction.					

31) In your opinion, what are the problems that English language teachers may encounter when teaching grammar to Arabic speaking students in the UAE?

*** To give more help, if you do not mind being invited for a twenty-minute interview, please write your contact details on the line below.**

Thank you for your time

Appendix B

Interview Questions (20 : 30 mins)

Introductory statement

Thank you for accepting to participate in my research. The aim of this interview is to have more insightful ideas about your beliefs of EFL grammar teaching and learning at the university. The information you provide will help me gather accurate data that contribute to the success of this research project. Therefore, I expect you to give full answers to my questions that are related to the grammar teaching and learning process. Our interview will be audio recorded and will take 20-30 minutes. As you have been informed, participants names and workplaces will not be revealed and all what you say will be restricted to my research.

1. Where are you from?
 2. Where did you teach before coming to the UAE? Which stage?
-

3. What is the most workable method of teaching grammar, in your opinion?
 4. What are the factors that determine your choice of grammar teaching method?
 5. How about teaching grammar in separate lessons?
 6. Do you think that your students have the ability to acquire grammar rules from context?
-

7. Can adult students improve their communication skills by studying grammar?
-

8. How do you usually correct your students' grammatical mistakes (oral and written)?
 9. When correcting your students' written work, do you use grammar codes like PRE for preposition, WO for word order, etc.? (If yes, do they usually understand them and correct their errors accordingly?)
 10. What is the impact of grammar error correction on students' language level?
 11. How do they feel about correcting their grammatical errors?
-

12. How do you find using grammar terminology with your students?
-

13. Do you think that Arabic language interference hinders English grammar learning?
 14. Is it important for the teacher to have an idea about the grammar of his/her students' first language? Why/ why not?
 15. Is there any difference between Arabs and non-Arabs in learning English grammar?
-

16. In your opinion, what are the problems facing you and your students on teaching and learning grammar?

Thank you

Appendix C

Research Project Information Sheets

This research project is a partial requirement for the degree of master of Education in TESOL, the British University in Dubai (BUiD). The research study has been approved by the BUiD Ethics Research Committee.

Title of Project: Teaching English grammar to Arabs: An exploratory study into the context of university undergraduate EFL classrooms in the UAE

Purpose and rationale of the study:

The purpose of this study is to investigate grammar teaching in EFL classrooms of Arabic-speaking university undergraduates in the UAE. In relevance to this topic the following issues will be researched: the importance of grammar in teaching and learning English, the best method of teaching grammar in this context, the impact and technique of dealing with students' grammatical errors, the effect of the native language (Arabic) on learning the target language (English) and the difficulties teachers face in teaching grammar in EFL classrooms. Examining teachers' beliefs through a questionnaire and an interview will be the means of collecting data.

The importance of this research is that to the best of the researcher's knowledge only a few, if any, studies have been carried out to investigate university teachers' opinions regarding grammar teaching in the UAE.

This research may engender teachers' rethinking of their views and instructional practices in order to come up with the best methods that help students achieve grammatical competence, which is a part of language proficiency. The study may also help curriculum developers and material designers to amend the existing textbooks and materials in order to meet the students' needs. In addition, this study may trigger more researches in the context of EFL university classrooms in the UAE.

Research questions:

In the context of EFL university undergraduate classrooms in the UAE, this study tries to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the importance of grammar teaching in EFL university undergraduate classrooms as seen by teachers?
- 2) a. What is the optimal approach to teaching grammar to EFL university undergraduate students?
 - b. What are the challenges that EFL teachers of university undergraduates may encounter in teaching grammar?

3) a. what is the impact and method of dealing with students' grammatical errors in EFL classrooms?

b. How does first language interference affect EFL grammar learning?

Research tools: a questionnaire with open and closed ended questions and a semi-structured interview to be held with EFL teachers (teaching university undergraduates) with the aim of exploring their perceptions about grammar teaching. As teachers' beliefs are a crucial element that affects and is affected by classroom behavior, it is important to explore them so as to have an in-depth idea about the teaching and learning process.

For this study survey, teachers are required to tick the appropriate boxes of the closed-ended statements according to their beliefs and experiences. As for the open-ended and the interview questions, teachers answer frankly and fully to give more insight into their beliefs about grammar instruction in their classrooms.

Participants: The targeted teachers are those who teach English in university colleges or foundation programs. A number between 30 – 40 EFL teachers (both males and females) of university undergraduates in the UAE will be surveyed. The survey is expected to take 15 minutes from respondents to complete. Those teachers who accept to be interviewed will answer questions about grammar teaching in an audio-recorded meeting of about thirty minutes with the researcher. Teachers' participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any time during the research. No one identity, whether names or workplace, will be revealed. However, when there is a need for the researcher to refer to any quote from the survey or the interview, a pseudonym will be given to the concerned participant.

Enquiries:

If any participant would like to get the results of the research later on or wants to ask any question, he/she may contact me through the details below.

Researcher's contact details:

Name:

Phone number:

Email address:

Appendix D

Consent Form

Research Project Title: Teaching English grammar to Arabs: An exploratory study into the context of university undergraduate EFL classrooms in the UAE

Contact details of researcher:

Name:	Position:
Email address:	Phone number:

Please tick box

7) Using grammar terminology in teaching English is useful for adult learners.	2.95	1.05
8) Teaching grammar in context is of no avail with students at low language level.	2.36	0.95
9) Deductive grammar teaching (explaining the grammar rule followed by practice) is more useful with difficult structures than with the easy ones.	2.95	1.05
10) Inductive grammar teaching (letting students extract the rule from example sentences) is more useful with difficult structures.	2.82	1.09
11) Teachers should pre-plan the grammar points that will be covered in their coming lessons.	4.09	1.19
12) Teachers should only teach grammar when a certain grammatical structure appears in the material under study.	2.55	1.18
13) Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the method of grammar teaching.	3.55	1.01
Statement	Mean scores	Standard Deviation
14) Using authentic texts when teaching grammar is time consuming for teachers.	3.18	1.01
15) Designing proper tasks from authentic material for practising grammar is demanding for teachers.	3.55	1.01
16) It is difficult for students to comprehend grammatical structures from authentic texts.	2.55	1.01
17) Students find difficulty in understanding and remembering grammar terminology.	3.27	0.88
18) Students find grammar something useless to study.	2.91	0.97
19) Trying to connect meaning and form in context confuses students.	3.36	0.95
20) Students should only be corrected in speaking when their errors hinder getting the message across.	3.32	1.13
21) Students feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected.	3.59	1.18

22) Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately.	4.09	0.97
23) Immediate correction of students' oral mistakes can help prevent fossilization (stabilization) of erroneous patterns.	3.18	1.01
24) Peer correction in small groups is more preferable for students than teacher-student correction.	3.00	0.98
25) On correcting students' speaking errors, only explicit feedback (teacher corrects the error or gets it corrected with an indication that an error has been made) should be used.	2.82	0.79
26) On correcting students' speaking errors, both types of feedback (explicit and implicit) should be used.	3.64	0.90
27) Students' linking the first language (Arabic) with the foreign language (English) causes difficulty in learning the grammar of the latter.	3.55	0.96
28) Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' grammar errors.	3.00	0.98

Appendix F

Statement	Response	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1) Studying grammar is essential for learners to master a foreign or a second language.		—	± (1)	++ (2)	++++ ++++ ++ (12)	++++ ++ (7)
2) Natural exposure to foreign language is enough for acquiring grammatical competence.		++ (2)	++++ ++++ ± (11)	+++ (3)	++++ (5)	± (1)
3) Studying grammar helps students improve their communication skills.		—	+++ (4)	+++ (4)	++++ +++ (8)	++++ ± (6)
4) Teaching grammar is more fruitful for adult learners than young learners.		—	++++ +++ (8)	+++ (3)	++++ +++ (9)	++ (2)
5) Grammar should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills reading, writing, listening or speaking).		++++ ++++ (10)	++++ ++++ (9)	+++ (3)	—	—
6) The PPP (present-practice-produce) approach is the best for teaching grammar.		± (1)	+++ (3)	++++ ++++ ± (11)	++++ ++ (7)	—
7) Using grammar terminology in teaching English is useful for adult learners.		++ (2)	++++ (5)	++++ +++ (8)	++++ ± (6)	± (1)
8) Teaching grammar in context is of no avail with students at low language level.		+++ (3)	++++ ++++ ++ (12)	+++ (3)	+++ (4)	—
9) Deductive grammar teaching (explaining the grammar rule followed by practice) is more useful with difficult structures than with the easy ones.		++ (2)	++++ (5)	++++ +++ (8)	++++ ± (6)	± (1)
10) Inductive grammar teaching (letting students extract the rule from example sentences) is more useful with difficult structures.		± (1)	++++ ++++ (10)	++++ (5)	+++ (4)	++ (2)
11) Teachers should pre-plan the grammar points that will be covered in their coming lessons.		± (1)	++ (2)	++ (2)	++++ ± (6)	++++ ++++ ± (11)
12) Teachers should only teach grammar when a certain grammatical structure appears in the material under study.		+++ (4)	++++ +++ (9)	+++ (3)	++++ (5)	± (1)
13) Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the method of grammar teaching.		++ (2)	—	++++ ± (6)	++++ ++++ ++ (12)	++ (2)
14) Using authentic texts when teaching grammar is time consuming for teachers.		± (1)	++++ (5)	++++ ± (6)	++++ +++ (9)	± (1)

Statement	Response	Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
15) Designing proper tasks from authentic material for practising grammar is demanding for teachers.		+	+++	+++	++++ ++++ ++	++
16) It is difficult for students to comprehend grammatical structures from authentic texts.		+++	++++ +++	++++ +++	++	+
17) Students find difficulty in understanding and remembering grammar terminology.		—	++++	++++ ++	++++ +++	+
18) Students find grammar something useless to study.		—	++++ ++++	++++	++++ +	+
19) Trying to connect meaning and form in context confuses students.		+++	++++ ++++ ++	+++	+++	—
20) Students should only be corrected in speaking when their errors hinder getting the message across.		+	++++	++++	++++ +++	+++
21) Students feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected.		—	++++ ++	—	++++ ++++	++++
22) Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately.		+	—	+++	++++ ++++	++++ +++
23) Immediate correction of students' oral mistakes can help prevent fossilization (stabilization) of erroneous patterns.		+	++++	++++ +	++++ +++	+
24) Peer correction in small groups is more preferable for students than teacher-student correction.		+	++++ ++	++++	++++ +++	—
25) On correcting students' speaking errors, only explicit feedback (teacher corrects the error or gets it corrected with an indication that an error has been made) should be used.		+	++++ +	++++ ++++ +	+++	—
26) On correcting students' speaking errors, both types of feedback (explicit and implicit) should be used.		+	+	++++	++++ ++++ +++	++
27) Students' linking the first language (Arabic) with the foreign language (English) causes difficulty in learning the grammar of the latter.		—	++++	++	++++ ++++ +++	++
28) Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' grammar errors.		+	++++ +	++++ +++	++++ +	+