A Study on the Nature of Iranian English Teachers' Grammar Beliefs

Esmaeil Jadidi[1], Khalegh Setoodeh[2], Ehsan Rassaei[3]

Esmaeil Jadidi
Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.
Khalegh Setoodeh
Ph.D. Candidate Department of Foreign Languages, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.
Ehsan Rassaei
Associate Professor, Department of English, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran
Corresponded Author
esmaeil.jadidi@yahoo.com

Abstract

   L2 research, during the last two decades, has almost abandoned studying appropriacy of methodologies and techniques to focus more on the underlying derives for teachers' pedagogical decision makings inside the class. Borg's (2003) ideas of the role of teachers' cognition in their adaptation and adoptation of teaching techniques and activities have noticeably influenced L2 professional research community. This study, in line with the recent trend, is designed and conducted to elicit EFL teachers' grammar teaching cognition to have more comprehensive accounts of teachers' behaviors in the class. In so doing, a Likert scale 25-item questionnaire developed by Naashia (2006) was administered to 177 Iranian EFL teachers. The results indicated that EFL teachers are currently more inclined toward communicative focus on grammar in which grammar instruction is marginalized to have learners naturally act out linguistics rules while performing communicative tasks.

Key Words: Teachers' Grammar Cognition, Pedagogical Decision Makings, Teaching Approach, Feedback and Error Correction

---

[1] - Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.

[2] - Ph.D. Candidate Department of Foreign Languages, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.

[3] - Associate Professor, Department of English, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran.

*- Corresponding Author: esmaeil.jadidi@yahoo.com

Introduction

Grammar is a fundamental component of foreign language instruction. Thompson (2010) declared that learning grammar is very important. She emphasized that grammar plays the most important role in speech because people are judged by the way of the production of the language. Foppoli (2006) also assumed that the most significant part of every language is its grammar. He declared that the needed structure is made available through grammar; in fact, grammar holds different parts of language together in a meaningful way. Foppoli believed that grammar is a channel through which one's ideas, messages and opinions are conveyed. Sorkhabi (2007) stated that Iranian language learners are unable to apply what they learn after spending many years in language classes learning words and basic structures. It can be assumed that this inability has been rooted in the lack of grammar knowledge, methods of teaching grammar, and teaching experience on the part of language teachers. Accordingly, knowledge of grammar and its application are considered as highly important components of language learning. Teaching grammar has always been a hot discussion in foreign language instruction (Ellis, 2002a, 22002b, 2002c; Ur, 1996). Various theories and notions have been put forward about grammar teaching which have led to different methods through time. Some researchers suppose that teaching the grammar rules is an essential subject in the process of teaching a language. They are in favor of the belief that grammar rules must be taught in every single classroom. Yet other researchers think teaching grammar is a waste of time. They believe that students can learn grammar inductively and that teachers must eschew explicit teaching of grammar rules. Thus, teaching explicit grammar rules is ignored in this view. The aforementioned two views are the two ends of an extreme because of their opposite view on teaching grammar. Widdowson (1979) declared that various teaching and learning approaches can contribute to the learners' incompetence to use different aspects of a language. Krashen (1992) thought that the main parts of a second language such as grammatical rules can be acquired through an unconscious process; that is, through using the language. Moreover, he believed conscious learning is not that beneficial. But, they can offer a situation in the classroom in which activities must be arranged in such a way to provide opportunities for learners to use language which can lead to learners' language acquisition.

One of the influential aspects of teachers' cognition in language teaching is teachers' beliefs about grammar and its different aspects (Borg,2003). Grammar teaching has always created challenges and raised complex and fascinating pedagogical, linguistic and curricular issues. The advent of new methods or theories have always led to either the demise or enhance attention to grammar.

Such variation affects the way language teachers develop different perspectives on grammar in the processes of becoming a teacher. During the last two decades, two strands of inquiry, one concentrating on the traditional practice of focus on forms and the other focusing on the issue of focus on form which has led to replacement of grammatical syllabus with more communicatively oriented ones.

Literature review

Teaching is a multifaceted activity which encompasses social, pedagogical, linguistic, personal, and cognitive dimensions. For the last ten years or more there has been a continual growth in the study of teachers' cognition. Researchers have concentrated on the study of teachers' belief on teaching, learning, learners, and the influence it has on teaching practices, activities, and learning consequences (Tillman, 2000; Shavelson, and Stern, 1981; Burns, 1992; Eisenhart et. al., 1998; Fang, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Reynold, 1992). Research into teachers' cognition has not been limited to one or few certain fields or content areas. The influence of teachers' beliefs on their teaching is being studied within some disciplines and educational settings such as general education, mathematics (Ernest 1989; Shuck 1997; Karaagac and Threlfall; Raymond, 1997), second/ foreign language learning and teaching (Farrell, and Patricia, 2005). The effect of teachers' beliefs has also been studied in pre-service and in-service contexts, different educational levels: kindergarten, elementary schools, high schools and adult education.

In short, the value of teaching grammar is still in doubt. Some studies have been against teaching grammar and think of it as just a waste of time; researchers in this view have the interpretation that most of the language learners cannot apply the grammatical rules after years of spending time in grammar classes (Cawley 1957; Hudson, 1987, 1998, 2001; Macauley, 1947). On the other hand, some other studies have found that when grammar is well taught through any methods, can be beneficial and learned by most learners (Bateman & Zidonis, 1966; Elley, 1994; Elley et al., 1975; Ghabanchi, 2010; Herriman 1994; Kennedy & Larson, 1969; Mellon, 1969; Naeeimi, 2009; Tomlinson, 1994; Yousefi, 2010).

Theories of second language learning have currently proposed that an explicit grammatical knowledge is important in in some ways. This kind of knowledge permits learners to monitor; that is, pay attention to linguistic features, their own output and trigger the essential process of noticing new structures in the input. Moreover, some studies have shown the advantage of explicit grammar instruction for the past twenty years or more (e.g. Long 1983; Ellis 1990; Long 1991; Ellis 1994; Ellis 2001; Ellis 2002). Likewise, Norris & Ortega (2000) reported sturdy evidence to mention that learners' direct attention to

linguistic form is significantly more effective than implicit instruction.

Krashen (1982) also explicated that advocates of implicit way of teaching grammar consider that learners acquire grammatical knowledge independently through exposure to the linguistic and syntactic structures; that is, this can occur through receptive activities that concentrate on both reading and listening without paying conscious attention to linguistic structures. Brown (2007a) approved that implicit learning is "learning without conscious attention or awareness" and that it takes place "without intention to learn and without awareness of what has been learned" (p. 292). However, Norris and Ortega (2000) discussed that explicit teaching is more effective than implicit teaching. They further argued that implicit grammar teaching is not adequate to promote accurate use of the target language. Language acquisition can occur if learners notice the L2 forms. So, implicit instruction still needs to be combined with explicit grammar teaching (R. Ellis, 2001; Fotos, 1994; Spada & Lightbown, 1993). R. Ellis (1984) confirmed that explicit learning facilitates implicit learning which can lead to learners' knowledge of language since it assists them to notice the gap between theL2 form and that of their own interlanguage (Schmidt, 1990). Reber (1993) mentioned that learners can learn more complex rules through implicit instruction; whereas Krashen (1994) stated that less-complex rules should be taught by explicit instruction.

Teachers in teaching English grammar have always faced a challenge in which their learners should examine the language analytically to learn the grammar or use the language to master the grammar. Grammar may be approached by English teachers in two different ways: deductively, where students are first given a rule and then they start practicing the pattern; or inductively, in which they discover the rules through using and practicing the given examples for themselves (Littlejohn & Hicks, 2009). It has been argued for many years on whether grammar should be taught deductively or inductively. However, a key point is that both approaches are related to language learning rather language acquisition (Wilson, 2000). The important question here is whether language teachers should use just one or the other one or both of them? (Cuff, 1956).

Brown (2000) stated that "both inductively and deductively oriented teaching methods can be effective, depending on the goals and contexts of a particular language teaching situation" (p. 97). Inductive and deductive approaches interrelated. Azar (2007) declared that there are some occasions in which language learners make use of both of them; that is, they are given the rules and explicit information about grammar and at the same time urged to form grammar patterns for themselves to extract the general rule.

Newmark (1979) mentioned that in an inductive way of learning grammar, "the language learners' craving for explicit formulization of generalization can be usually met better individually and independently than by discussion in class" (p. 165). Sasson (2007) also believed that there is a strong relationship between communicative competence and inductive way of teaching grammar. Teaching grammar inductively can be useful for communicative competence. Seliger (1975) also found that learners retained their knowledge of grammar longer by deductive approach. Likewise, Robinson (1996) showed that learners performed grammatical tasks better and reacted faster in deductive rather than inductive teaching. Erlam (2003) confirmed that deductive teaching is easier for learners to learn direct object pronouns in French as a second language, and it is highly probable that English learners performed similarly in such a task. In contrast, R. Ellis (2002b) thought that the inductive teaching has its benefits in the class. Hawkins (1984) also was in agreement with the point that inductive approach can encourage L2 learners to discover rules naturally which can help to perform a language task better. Herron and Tomasello (1992) declared that inductive approach is a more effective way of teaching an L2 in the context of French. Rosa and O'Neill (1999) went further and contended that there is not any significant differences between inductive and deductive approaches. As such, both approaches have been practical in promoting language acquisition progress. Therefore, the most effective way of teaching could be a combination of the two approaches in the process of teaching a language point.

Concerning whether grammar should be taught in isolation or with other language skills, 80% of teachers did not agree with teaching grammar separately from other skills (Borg and Burns, 2008). Moreover, the research has indicated that the way teachers handle grammar will be formed by the interaction of their language learning beliefs, their perspectives on their learners' needs and wants (e.g., Farrell & Lim, 2005). As a result of such interactions, what teachers do in the classroom may not necessarily be the reflection of their beliefs about the way grammar should be taught (see, e.g., Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Sato & Oyanedel, 2019). It is therefore significant in studies of teacher beliefs to investigate not only teachers' theoretical beliefs (e.g., Jean & Simard, 2011; Schulz, 1996) but how these are put into practice in various contexts in which teachers work (Pahissa & Tragant, 2009 and Wang, & Du, 2016).

A number of studies have examined teachers' implementation of communicative principles (e.g., Gorsuch, 2000, 2001; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Nishino, 2008, 2011; Sakui, 2004, 2007; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Taguchi, 2005). Some of these studies such as Gorsuch (2000 and

2001) provide evidence that English teachers in Japan insist on valuing explicit grammar teaching in spite of the fact that institutional policies and teacher training initiatives were aimed at increasing the frequency of communicative-based activities in the classroom. Likewise, Gorsuch (2001) conducted a survey of 876 Japanese teachers of English and declared that while they slightly approved of communicative activities, teachers encountered some obstacles in using such activities in their classrooms. Similarly, Underwood (2012) put emphasis on the importance of such a phenomenon, although he brought the accuracy of the extent to which teachers' perceptions of some of these obstacles into question, as well. Moreover, this study suggested that the teachers held positive beliefs about the integration of teaching grammar together with communicative-based language teaching activities.

There have been a number of studies on teachers' grammatical beliefs and grammar teaching. Ng & Farrell (2003) and Yim (1993) examined the extent to which teachers' theoretical beliefs affected their classroom grammatical practices and found evidence to suggest that what teachers say and perform in the classroom are controlled by their beliefs. Similarly, Richards, Gallo, and Renandya (2001) investigated the grammatical beliefs of in-service teachers. The results of their study showed that many teachers had an inclination to favor a communicative approach to

teaching, while some of them mentioned that they definitely believed in the importance of direct and explicit grammar teaching.

Research has recently shown the effect of formal grammar teaching on some particular parts of grammar teaching; including inductive versus deductive approach to the teaching of grammar (Shaffer, 1989; Dekeyser, 1995), correcting errors and feedback (Chaudron, 1977; Dekeyser, 1993), use of grammar terminology in teaching grammatical points (Berman, 1979; Garrett, 1986), and the impact of grammar practice on L2 learning (Ellis, 1991; Johnson, 1994). Borg (2003) provides a comprehensive review of research into teachers' beliefs about grammar in the following areas; including, research into teachers' grammatical knowledge, teachers and learners' perspectives about formal instruction, and the implementation of the actual grammar teaching activities in their classes.

To explore viewpoints about conscious grammar instruction, they used questionnaires with 60 ESL university teachers in New York and Puerto Rico together with informal interviews (with eight of these teachers). They found that most of the teachers tend to think of teaching grammar at least sometimes. Moreover, the teachers in Puerto Rico had a strong tendency toward conscious grammar instruction than the New York group because of the advocacy of the more traditional approach to language teaching in

Puerto Rico. The study also declared that teachers generally had personally well-defined approaches to teaching grammar in which they were confident. In expressing their coherent rationales, teachers referred to different factors such as student wants and syllabus expectations and more specifically it was their experience as teachers and learners that strongly influence on their perspective about grammar teaching, 'not research studies or any particular methodology' (p. 255).

Schulz (1996; 2001) examined both teachers and students' perspectives towards the role of grammar and error correction. Schulz (1996) compared grammar teaching beliefs and corrective feedback of 92 FL teachers and 824 language learners at an American university. The findings of this study were in line with Cathcart & Olsen (1976) and McCargar (1993) which revealed significant mismatches between teachers and students' viewpoints about error correction; almost all of the students (94%) were not in agreement with the statement 'teachers should not correct students when they make errors in class', while only less than half of the teachers did. Schulz (2001) replicated his former study (Schulz, 1996) with 122 FL teachers in Colombia, together with 607 of their students and found the results on this study were consistent with what was achieved in the previous study.

Brumfit, Mitchell, and Hooper (1996) described knowledge about language (KAL) practices in secondary English and Modern FL classrooms in the context of UK .They declared marked differences between English and FL teachers; FL teachers viewed KAL mainly at the sentence level. In contrast, English teachers adopted a text-based functional approach in teaching grammar. Moreover, they rarely used explicit grammar work and they indicated that using explicit grammar teaching is of little importance to the development of students' overall language proficiency (Mitchell et al. 1994b; Mitchell & Hooper 1992).

Overall, the findings which were mentioned above together with Mitchell et al. 1994a indicate that theories of second-language acquisition, which play down the role of explicit instruction in foreign language learning situations, have influenced FL teachers relatively little.

The findings of such main studies as (Borg1998b; 1998c; 1999a; 1999c; 1999d; 2001; Johnston & Goettsch 2000; Abu Rass, 2014) show that the decision in conducting explicit formal instruction does not necessarily suggest a belief on the part of the teacher that such instruction promotes language learning. Besides, teachers do not necessarily stick firmly to a specific approach (deductive and inductive) in teaching grammar; for instance, one of the teachers in Borg (1999c) made use of both deductive and inductive approaches in teaching grammar, defending her own way of doing

this with reference to interacting and sometimes conflicting viewpoints based on her own teaching and learning experience.

The rationale underlying this study is that, teaching and learning grammar has always played a significant role in Iranian EFL context. Even with the advent of more communicative approaches to language teaching, grammar has been a pivot in class activities for both teachers and learners. The study can help arrive at a better understanding of the factors that may contribute to the development of the belief system or influence teachers' beliefs by examining perspectives of teachers about grammar. So, it aims to answer the following research question:

What beliefs do Iranian English teachers in English language institutes hold about L2, its acquisition, and methods of instruction?

Research Design

Classroom based educational research employs qualitative and quantitative designs, or a combination of both. The difference between the two, as Best & Kahn (1998) describe, is in numbers. Qualitative research consists of observing and asking with the purpose of describing actions and individuals carefully to gain a profound and full understanding of the phenomenon under investigation without analyzing them. In contrast, quantitative research is concerned with measuring numerical data which are of paramount importance. The main

and the most outstanding feature of quantitative research is that it is capable of quantifying variables which can be generalizable. Besides, it can measure factors in terms of quantity, degree or frequency. Moreover, due to some limitations and the teachers' willingness to fill out a questionnaire- based study, the present study employs a quantitative research design; that is, it aims to describe systematically, factually and accurately teachers' grammar beliefs and attitudes in English language classrooms through a belief questionnaire.

Method Participants

A total of 177 Iranian EFL English teachers, who participated in this study, were randomly selected. They teach English at language institutes in Fars province, Iran. They were both male and females. They ranged from 23 to 40 years of age. As to their teaching experiences, all participants had at least a minimum of 3 and maximum of 14 years of teaching experience. All teachers had BA or MA degree in teaching English.

Instruments

A questionnaire is a self-report instrument useful for economically and speedily obtaining data from a large number of respondents (Brown, 2001). In the study of teachers' beliefs and practices, questionnaires have made regular appearances (e.g. Mac Donald, Badger, & White, 2001). A 24-item questionnaire, developed by

Naashia Mohamed (2006), required teachers to respond to statements on a five-point Likert scale in the present study. The beliefs questionnaire used for this study was designed to fulfil two main objectives. Firstly, it tries to pinpoint the beliefs teachers had concerning grammar and its role in language learning and teaching. Secondly, the questionnaire aimed to obtain information about teachers' reported classroom practices regarding the teaching of grammar. In general, teachers' beliefs questionnaire was divided into five main components: teaching approach, importance of grammar, role of the learner in learning grammar, arguments against teaching grammar, and feedback and error correction. The validity of the questionnaire was established through a review by a group of university teachers together with some PhD candidates.

Data collection procedure

The questionnaire was distributed among language teachers at institutes where they taught. Teachers took the questionnaire either before or after their class time. They were required to choose the option that best explains their beliefs. The researcher sent some of the questionnaires (30%) through an email because they taught at different institute across Fars province. Still some teachers were allowed to take questionnaire home to complete. All the teachers had to select strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (Ne), agree(A), and strongly agree (SA) for each of the items in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Seven experts including experienced university teachers and experienced observers were asked to review each item of the questionnaire closely to support the content validity of the questionnaires. Five EFL experienced teachers responded to the questionnaire; then the teachers were asked to comment on the items by signifying the questions which were in some way vague. As a result, the necessary revisions were made for each of the ambiguous item. Besides, concerning both teachers' grammar beliefs questionnaire reliability coefficient which is the scale used to measure reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach alpha. Teachers' beliefs as stated in the questionnaire were then scored and summarized on the basis of the five main components of beliefs questionnaire. The answer to each item of the beliefs questionnaire was transformed into SPSS 22. A descriptive analysis including frequencies and percentages was done concerning the provided answers for each item of the five component of the questionnaire to interpret the data; the answers to items within each component were compared to one another and then the five components were compered and contrasted; the results are provided in the results section.

Results and Discussion

Larsen-Freeman (2007) declared that teachers teach subjects based on their understanding. What teachers try to do in their actual classroom teaching comes from many factors including their experiences, their teaching philosophy, and contextual factors. This issue is important because language teachers' beliefs influence their choice of teaching methods. Teachers' beliefs are the words they use to explain what they think they actually do in the classroom. Argyris (1980) highlighted that the best result can be achieved in case of compatibility between beliefs and behaviors.

Much research has been done on figuring out the perspectives and attitudes on second or foreign language teachers and learners (Arikan, 2011; Navarro & Thornton, 2011; Peng, 2011), but the number of studies concerning teachers' beliefs is not enough (Peacock, 2001), particularly EFL teachers' grammar beliefs. Borg (2009) stated that few studies have been done on teachers' beliefs in English Language Teaching (ELT). Besides, because the number of NNSs who teach English is more than NS teachers (Lin 1999), and that the number of EFL learners is more than their ESL counterparts (Graddol 1997), the current research needs to be done in relatively many more language teaching contexts across the world.

Because of such gaps in the literature, Borg (2003) indicated that there is a very important need to do research on NN L2 teachers' beliefs in the environments other than developed countries. While significant attempts have been made to understand the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in the L1 context, the studies examining teachers' beliefs in the EFL contexts have been limited (Borg, 2006). As Borg (2003) rightly declared that teachers' beliefs may be shaped by their cognitive characteristics, learning and teaching experiences, and their professional behaviors.

Research Question

What beliefs do Iranian English teachers in English language institutes hold about L2 grammar, its acquisition and methods of instruction?

As the data were collected by a questionnaire on a Likert scale, it could allow calculation of the descriptive statistics for each single item of the questionnaire and the five main components of teachers' beliefs about grammar. Component 1 deals with different aspects of teaching grammar and hence is the strongest of five components. Table 1. shows the frequency counts and percentage for each item in this component.

Table 1- Descriptive Statistics for Component 1, Teaching Approach (T A).

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	SA	A
11	It is essential that students are familiar with the correct grammatical terminology	177 100%	8 4.53%	57 32.2%	34 19.2%	50 28.2%	28 15.8%
21	Students will learn grammar better if they understand grammatical terminology.	177 100%	11 6.2%	44 24.9%	22 12.4%	66 37.3%	34 19.2%
23	The main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point.	177 100%	14 7.9%	63 35.6%	25 14.1%	57 32.2%	18 10.2%
7	Grammar should be the main component of any teaching syllabus.	177 100%	20 11.3%	66 37.3%	8 4.5%	48 27.1%	35 19.8%
4	Grammar can be successfully taught without extensive grammatical terminology.	177 100%	19 10.7%	20 11.3%	13 7.3%	78 44.1%	46 26%
9	It is best to teach grammar intensively rather than extensively.	177 100%	21 11.9%	68 38.4%	13 7.3%	45 25.4%	30 16.9%
14	It is important to focus on grammar in all lessons.	177 100%	21 11.9%	59 33.3	20 11.3%	54 30.5%	23 13%
22	Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how the structure works.	177 100%	14 7.9%	52 29.4%	22 12.4%	67 37.9%	22 12.4%
16	It is more important to teach grammar to beginners than to advanced learners.	177 100%	6 3.4%	50 28.2%	17 9.6%	68 38.4%	36 20.3%

Note. No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. % refers to the percentages.

It can be seen from the table 1. that teachers generally agree /strongly agree with items number 11 (44%) and 21 (56.5%) which are about knowledge of grammatical terminology. This is in line with what Andrews (2007) found the key importance of knowledge of grammatical terminology in a number of studies in an EFL context of Hongkong. Teachers disagree/ strongly disagree with item No.9 (50.3%) it is better to teach grammar

intensively rather than extensively which is in contrast with item No.4 Grammar can be successfully taught without extensive grammatical terminology in which teachers strongly agree/ agree with (71.1%). Regarding statement 7, close to half of the teachers 48.6% believed that grammar should not be the main component of any teaching syllabus this may due to the fact that they believe in a communicative based language

teaching or due to institutional policies in some language schools. Likewise, 45.2% of the teachers disagree with item No. 14 It was important to focus on grammar in all lessons. 58.7% of teachers agreed with statement 16, the importance of teaching grammar to beginners than advanced learners, because beginner learners are not advanced enough to deal with grammar on their own.

Table 2- Descriptive Statistics for Component 2, Arguments Against Grammar Teaching (AAGT)

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	SA	A
1	A learner can acquire a second or foreign language without grammar instruction.	177 100%	18 10.2%	40 22.5%	7 4%	74 41.8%	38 21.5%
5	Grammar is best acquired unconsciously through meaningful communication.	177 100%	11 6.2%	42 23.7%	7 4%	81 45.7%	36 20.3%
6	Grammar is best learned naturally through trying to communicate	177 100%	8 4.5%	35 19.7%	9 5.1%	48 27.1%	77 43.5%

Note. No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. % refers to the percentages.

It can be seen from table 2 that teachers had strong responses to these statements. The most important point about this component is that a small number of teachers chose the neutral position for all three statements. About half of the teachers strongly agree/ agree with item No.1 in which they did not believe in grammar instruction. Teachers were in agreement about the grammar acquisition through natural and meaningful

communication in statements 5 and 6 which supports Krashen (1988) and what Richards, Gallo, and Renandya (2001) among others found that many teachers tend to follow a communicative approach to teaching.

The three statements in component 3, shown in table 3. below, deal with feedback and error correction. The most noticeable fact about this component is that the vast majority of teachers 87% either agreed/

strongly agreed with item No. 12, It is important for students to be given the right answers after an exercise/test. Concerning statement 13, more than 55% of the teachers disagreed/strongly disagreed with correcting all grammatical errors in oral activities. This may due to the fact that teaching grammar hinders fluency. On the other hand, 67% of them strongly agreed/ agreed with identifying all grammatical errors in students' written work. This is in line with what Teachers in (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001; Schulz, 1996) claimed that accuracy was far more important than fluency which was associated almost exclusively with speaking skills and therefore was not considered a priority in EFL contexts such as Maldivian schools and examinations. Moreover, errors in writing could be identified and commented on more easily.

Table 3- Descriptive Statistics for Component 3, Feedback and Error Correction (FEC)

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	SA	A
12	It is important for students to be given the right answers after an exercise/test.	177 100%	5 2.8%	7 4%	11 6.2%	86 48.6%	68 38.4%
13	It is important to correct all grammatical errors in students' oral work.	177 100%	11 6.2%	87 49.2%	5 2.8%	49 27.7%	25 14.1%
15	It is important to identify all grammatical errors in students' written work	177 100%	11 6.2%	25 14.1%	19 10.7%	75 42.4%	47 26.6%

Note. No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. % refers to the percentages.

Teachers strongly agreed/agreed with all five statements included in component 4 importance of grammar. As it can be seen from table 4., more than 74% of the teachers responded positively to item No. 8 If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct errors. This tallies Swain noticing hypothesis in which if learners receive instruction, they notice the correct form and hence reformulate their errors. About 79% of the teachers strongly agree or agree with statement 2 Attention to grammar ensures that students become aware of how the language works. This matches up what Clark & Peterson (1986) declared to be a "resilient or core belief" that attention to explicit grammar instruction should be the main focus of any teaching syllabus and that it was significant to concentrate on grammar in all

lessons. Teachers responded positively 77.6 % to statement 3 Explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language. This lends support to other studies of teachers' beliefs (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001; Schulz, 1996) which showed that teachers had a general tendency towards explicit grammar instruction.

Table 4- Descriptive Statistics for Component 4, Importance of Grammar (IG).

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	SA	A
8	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct errors.	177 100%	14 7.9%	16 9%	15 8.5%	73 41.2%	59 33.3%
17	Regular practice ensures that grammar is quickly and successfully acquired.	177 100%	10 5.6%	13 7.3%	8 4.5%	91 51.4%	55 31.1%
2	Attention to grammar ensures that students become aware of how the language works	177 100%	12 6.8%	13 7.3%	12 6.8%	75 42.4%	65 36.7%
3	Explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language.	177 100%	21 11.9%	20 11.3%	00 00	51 28.8%	85 48%
24	Teaching grammar enables students to produce more complex sentences	177 100%	15 8.5%	18 10.2%	17 9.6%	81 45.8%	46 26%

Note. No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. % refers to the percentages.

As it is shown in table 5. below, component 5 deals with role of the learner in learning grammar. The most outstanding feature of this component is that more than 87% of the teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with item No. 20 in which students should be given the opportunity to work out rules from examples. This is in line with (Shaffer, 1989 and Dekeyser, 1995) among others who declared that students can benefit more from an inductive approach to teaching grammar. However, Borg (1998c) and Johnston & Goettsch (2000) declared that teachers do not necessarily follow a specific approach (deductive and inductive) in teaching grammar.

Table 5- Descriptive Statistics for Component 5, Role of the Learner in Learning Grammar (RLLG).

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	SA	A
10	It is better for students to figure out for themselves why their answer was wrong.	177 100%	8 4.5%	8 4.5%	22 12.4%	77 35.2%	62 35%
18	Students generally do not learn the grammatical structures they are taught.	177 100%	54 30.5%	67 37.9%	15 8.5%	24 13.6%	17 9.6%
19	Students rarely become error-free because English grammar is very complex.	177 100%	16 9%	17 9.6%	19 10.7%	74 41.8%	51 28.8%
20	Students should be given the opportunity to work out rules from examples.	177 100%	8 4.5%	5 2.8%	7 4%	90 50.8%	67 37.9%

Note. No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. % refers to the percentages.

The analysis of the five components of the grammar beliefs questionnaire generally reveals that teachers have the inclination to teach grammar in all lessons though not be the main component of any teaching syllabuses; in so doing, they put emphasis on understanding the grammar terminology and the importance of concentrating on grammar in all lessons. The findings also show that teachers believe in teaching grammar through communication; this may mean that teachers believe in communicative-based activities in an EFL context.

Moreover, concerning the feedback and error correction, teachers have a general tendency to provide feedback and the corrected form though with different degrees; for example, in speaking and writing skills. Besides, the results above show that teachers believe in the importance of teaching and the practicing of the grammar lesson to help learners to be competent to produce more complex sentences. Furthermore, teachers believed in allowing the learners themselves to come across the correct answer and in providing the opportunities for learners to elicit rules from the samples; these are in line with learner-centered way of learning a language.

Conclusion

A bulk of L2 research has been done for the last few decades on teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning grammar which is important because according to Fazio and Zanna (1981), beliefs have a direct impact on behavior. On the other hand, by considering the Action Theory (Argyris & Schön, 1984), the congruity between teaching beliefs and

practices is very important; if there is no compatibility between beliefs and practices, there won't be good achievements. Furthermore, what underlies teachers' decision makings in accepting and applying various teaching techniques and activities have markedly affected L2 professional research community (Borg, 2003 and Yuan & Lee, 2014). Therefore, the present study is done to manipulate Iranian EFL teachers' grammar cognition in order to have a thorough understanding of teachers' behaviors and practices in the classroom. In so doing, a 24-item questionnaire on a Likert scale developed by Naashia (2006) was administered to 177 Iranian EFL teachers. The results revealed that EFL teachers have predispositions in concentrating on a communicative way of teaching grammar. Besides, in order to assist learners to be naturally competent in using linguistics while performing communicative activities.

References

- Abu Rass, R. (2014). Developing reflective skills among EFL student teachers. *International Journal of English Language Teaching, 2*(3), 1-14.

- Andrews, S. (1997). Metalinguistic awareness and teacher explanation. *Language Awareness, 6*(2&3), 147-161.

- Andrews, S. (2007). *Teacher language awareness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Argyis, C., & Schon, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.

- Basturkmen, H., Loewen, S., & Ellis, R. (2004). Teachers' stated beliefs about incidental focus on form and their classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics, 25*(2), 243-272

- Bellalem, F. (2015). The study of foreign language teachers' beliefs: implications for research in the Arab world. *English Lingua Journal, 1*(1), 91-106.

- Borg, M. (2001). Teachers' beliefs. *ELT Journal, 55(2)*, 186-187.

- Borg, S. (2018). Teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. In P. Garrett & J. Cots (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language awareness* (pp. 75-91). London: Routledge.

- Borg, S. (2018). *Teacher evaluation: Global perspectives and their implications for English language teaching. A literature review*. Delhi: British Council.

- Borg, S. (2015). *The study of teacher cognition*. Shanghai: SFLEP.

- Borg, S. (2015). Researching teacher beliefs. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Research methods in applied linguistics: A practical resource* (pp. 487-504). London: Bloomsbury.

- Borg, S. (2012). Interview "Teacher cognition & language teacher education: beliefs & practice". A conversation with Simon Borg. *Berratella Journal of Language Teaching & Learning Language & Literature, 5* (2), 88-94.

- Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, *39*, 370-380.

- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition & language education*. London: Continuum.

- Borg, S. (2005). Experience, knowledge about language & classroom practice in teaching grammar. In N. Bartels (Ed.), *Applied linguistics & language teacher education* (pp. 325-340). New York: Springer.

- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, & do. *Language Teaching*, *36*(2), 81-109.

- Borg, S. (2001). Self-perception & practice in teaching grammar. *ELT Journal*, *55*(1), 21−9.

- Borg, S. (1997). *Unifying concepts in the study of teachers' cognitive structures*. Unpublished manuscript.

- Borg, S. (1998a). Talking about grammar in the foreign language classroom. *Language Awareness, 7(4)*, 159-175.

- Borg, S. (1998b). Teachers' pedagogical systems and grammar teaching: a qualitative study. *TESOL Quarterly, 32(1)*, 9-38.

- Borg, S. (1999a). Studying teacher cognition in second language grammar teaching. *System, 27(1)*, 19-31.

- Borg, S. (1999b). Teachers' theories in grammar teaching. *ELT Journal, 53(3)*, 157-167.

- Borg, S. (1999c). The use of grammatical terminology in the second language classroom: a qualitative study of teachers' practices and cognitions. *Applied Linguistics, 20(1)*, 95-126.

- Borg, S. (2001). Self-perception and practice in teaching grammar. *ELT Journal, 55(1)*, 21-29.

- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: a review of research on what language teachers think, believe, know and do. *Language Teaching, 36*, 81-39.

- Borg, S. (2006). The distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers. *Language Teaching Research, 10(1)*, 3-31.

- Borg, S., & Sanchez, H. S. (2020). Cognition and good language teachers. In C. Griffiths & Z. Tajeddin (Eds.), *Lessons from good language teachers* (pp. 16-27). Cambridge University Press

- Breen, M. P., Hird, B., Milton, M., Thwaite, A., & Oliver, R. (2001). Making sense of language teaching: teachers' principles and classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics, 22(4),* 470-501.

- Brumfit, C., Mitchell, R., & Hooper, J. (1996). Grammar, language and classroom practice. In M. Hughes (Ed.), *Teaching and learning in changing times*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Burgess, J., & Etherington, S. (2002). Focus on grammatical form: explicit or implicit? *System, 30,* 433-458.

- Burns, A. (1990). Focus on language in the communicative classroom. In G. Brindley (Ed.), *The second language curriculum in action*. Sydney*:* National Centre for English Language Teaching and Learning.

- Çapan, S. A. (2014). Pre-service English as a Foreign language teachers' belief development about grammar instruction. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(12), 131-152.

- Clark, C. M., & Peterson, P. L. (1986). Teachers' thought processes. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

- Johnston, B., & Goettsch, K. (2000). In search of the knowledge base of language teaching: Explanations by experienced teachers. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, *56*, 437- 468.

- Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 10(4)*, 439-452.

- Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist, 27*(1), 65-90.

- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition* (1ˢᵗ ed.). Oxford; New York: Pergamon).

- Mohamed, N. (2006). An exploratory study of the interplay between teachers' beliefs, instructional practices & professional development (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Auckland, Auckland.

- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs & educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, *62*, 307-332.

- Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (2nd Edition ed., pp. 102-119). New York: Macmillan.

- Richards, J. C., Gallo, P. B., & Renandya, W. A. (2001). Exploring teachers' beliefs and the processes of change. *The PAC Journal, 1*(1), 41-62.

- Sato, M., & Oyanedel, J. C. (2019). "I think that is a better way to teach but ...": EFL teachers' conflicting beliefs about grammar teaching. *System*, *84*, 110-122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.06.005

- Schulz, R. A. (1996). Focus on form in the foreign language classroom: students' and teachers' views on error correction and the role of grammar. *Foreign Language Annals, 29*(3), 343-364.

- Schulz, R. A. (2001). Cultural differences in student and teacher perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback: USA Colombia. *The Modern Language Journal, 85*(2), 244-258.

- Woods, D (1996). *Teacher cognition & language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press

- Wang, L., & Du, X. (2016). Chinese language teachers' beliefs about their roles in the Danish context. *System*, *61*, 1-11. https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2016.06.009

- Yuan, E. R., & Lee, I. (2014). Pre-service teachers' changing beliefs in the teaching practicum: Three cases in an EFL context. *System, 44*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.02.002