



A Survey of Iranian School EFL Teachers' Perceptions on Grammar Intervention

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Abstract: *Considering the various problems faced by Iranian teachers in teaching English grammar to their students, this study aimed to investigate Iranian school EFL teachers' perceptions of grammar intervention. So, the research method was based on a descriptive, quantitative and qualitative design and data collection was done via questionnaires, and interviews. Forty EFL teachers were randomly chosen for this study. All of the teachers for the study were selected from Ardabil secondary schools as the participants. In order to take into account gender differences in dealing with teaching, both genders were used in this study. A questionnaire about teachers' perceptions of grammar intervention was designed based on Schulz (2001). After that, the semi-structured interview was used in this study in order to elicit the contextual factors that hinder teachers from implementing their beliefs in the classrooms. Finally, the data gained from the questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS software. Findings revealed that Iranian EFL school teachers have statistically significant perceptions of grammar intervention. This study can be used by language teachers and syllabus designers of English grammar who work in Iran's Ministry of Education.*

Keywords: *Perception, Teacher, Grammar Intervention, Iranian schools.*

INTRODUCTION

In teaching and learning the English language, it is believed that grammar has always been an essential component, since it provides the speaker with the needed structures to organize words and ideas in a comprehensible form. It is through the use of correct grammar people tend to communicate efficiently and avoid misunderstandings. However, teaching grammar has always been an area of controversy (Corzo, 2013). Due to the emergence of these new methods and approaches in the field of English language teaching, teachers tend to develop different opinions on grammar teaching. Teachers' decisions regarding how and when they teach grammar is based upon their cognition (Borg, 2003).

After the Communicative Approach in the 1970s, a grammar-oriented syllabus has changed and grammar has lost its popularity shifting from rules to talks. Teachers often believe language learning cannot occur without grammar and learners build their knowledge upon it (Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam, 2011). In this regard, Jafarigohar and Kheiri (2015) believed that a teacher should not only have good command of what he or she is supposed to teach in the class but also have knowledge about the act of teaching and strategies a language instructor is expected to know. Gabonton (2000) believed that teacher's pedagogical knowledge is based on the assumption that what teachers do in the classroom has its origins in thoughts or mental acts, which have

been shaped by attitudes, values, knowledge, and beliefs gathered through years of being a student and a teacher.

The role of grammar and how to integrate it into foreign language classroom are at the core of EFL learning and teaching context (Ellis, 2001). Rinvoluceri and Davis (2008) asserted that teaching the grammar of English is not simply a question of handing out clear, linguistic information to the learners (Lawrence and Lawrence, 2013).

According to Lannin, Chval, Arbough, Taylor, and Bruton (2013), teachers' behaviors and practices in the class can be shaped due to their education as a student and what they have learned during this period of time may be mirrored in their teaching practices to an extent which can instruct them how to make on-the-spot decisions based on pedagogical and content knowledge they have developed during their education. According to Burgess and Ethernigton (2002), grammar has three main stages: focus on forms adopts a structuralist approach to language and the focus is on the forms rather than meaning. Focus on form, in contrast, includes drawing the students' attention to grammatical forms in a communicative context. Focus on meaning gives no attention to the forms and the focus of classroom activity is on communication of meaning only.

Some researchers have stated that teachers' beliefs are considered to be one of the most crucial factors that impact their instructional decisions, particularly in teaching grammar (Çapan, 2014). Barnard and Scampton (2008) provided insight into teachers' decision-making process regarding materials, activities and instructional practices. Their contribution to investigating language teachers' planning processes is their notion of BAK (Beliefs, Assumptions, & Knowledge) factors that affect the decision making process.

Furthermore, one of the key issues in language teaching, which English teachers learn through their education and is likely to shape their practice, is the strategies applied in error correction to enhance their learners' grammatical knowledge. There have been a range of approaches to grammatical error correction in the form of flexible practices in language teaching and learning, from among, four strategies are focused: (a) recast, (b) repetition, (c) metalinguistic feedback and, (d) explicit correction (Ellis, 2012).

Review of the Literature

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines grammar "the rules in a language for changing the form of words and joining them into sentences" (2006, p. 559). In fact, grammar is "multi-dimensional" and has multi-meaning. In general, it is a series of rules for selection words and putting them together to make sentences. Every language has grammar. If a person knows a million English words, but he does not know how to put them together, then he cannot speak English (Brumfit and Johnson, 2000).

Gotsch and Stathis (2008) identified ESL/ELD teachers' attitudes toward and perceptions of grammar instruction for English learners. The survey revealed that most respondents believe that English learners should receive direct instruction in the rules of grammar and writing conventions. In their paper, Nagaratnam & Al-Mekhlafi (2013) attempted to investigate pre-service student teachers attitudes towards the mode of grammar instruction (i.e., explicit or implicit) in the context of teaching English as a foreign language. The main findings of the study showed a positive attitude of the pre-service student teachers towards grammar instruction in general and a more favourable attitude towards the implicit approach than the explicit.

In addition, Mai and Iwashita (2012) compared Vietnamese learners and teachers' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in terms of four factors: grammar instruction, error correction, group and pair work, and teachers' role. As in Turkey, most of the English language examinations are not skill-based but focus on linguistic competence at almost all primary and secondary level, and university entrance and graduation examinations. It is, therefore, considered that a good knowledge of grammar is a must to succeed in that kind of traditional testing methods.

Grammar teaching is one of the main aspects in the multifaceted process of language teaching. Also, teaching grammar has been a controversial issue in the field of language teaching. Ellis (2002) explained that grammar teaching is important in language acquisition though grammar teaching may not have an immediate impact on students' language skills and performance. Grammar teaching is generally defined as a teaching activity that involves presenting and practicing the targeted grammatical structures which the language teacher tries to explain to his students (Ellis, 2006). In the same context, Hedge (2001) agreed that grammar teaching consists of two main elements: presentation and practice, where teachers start their lessons with a presentation of the grammatical structure they intend to teach and then engage their students with activities to practice the material they have already presented to make sure that the students understood it, and they are able to use it properly.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that teachers possess assumptions about language and language learning, and that these provide the basis for a particular approach to language instruction. Hence, it is argued that if theoretical orientation is a major determinant of how teachers act during language instruction, then teacher educators can affect classroom practice by ensuring that teachers develop a theoretical orientation that is "reflective of current and pertinent research in the field" (Cummins et al., 2004, p. 183).

The study of teachers' beliefs has in the last 15 years emerged as a major area of enquiry in the field of language teaching. Different scholars investigated different dimensions of teachers' beliefs. Some investigate the relationship and the effect of teachers' belief and conception as a pivotal factor in forming and arranging classroom practices, activities and techniques, (Aguirre and Speer, 2000; Cheng et al., 2009; Isikoglu et al., 2009) and in teachers' decision making concerning the instructional activities being used in the classroom, (Aguirre and Speer, 2000; Cheng et al., 2009), the relation between teachers' belief and teaching ability (Fives and Buehl, 2008), the role of teachers belief in implementing new instructional method such as computer technology in the classroom, (Hermans et al., 2008) and also its role in other disciplines such as mathematics, (Ozgun-Koca and IlhanSen, 2006).

The concept of grammar

Different attempts have been made to define grammar. According to Widdowson (1990), "Grammar is not a constraining imposition but a liberating force: it frees us from a dependency on context and purely lexical categorization of reality" (p. 86). Sadighi (2008), stated that "Grammar, as a means of communication, refers to the overall unconscious knowledge of a native speaker of a particular language" (p. 1). Further, Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) viewed grammar "As a set of restrictions on what is allowed and disallowed in language use" (p. 71).

According to Debata (2013) "Grammar is the study of words and the ways words work together; an invisible force that guides us as we put words together into sentences. Any person who communicates using a particular language, consciously or unconsciously becomes aware of the grammar of that language" (p. 483). Yule (2010) defined grammar as "The process of describing the structure of phrases and sentences in such a way that we account for all the grammatical sequences in a language and rule out all the ungrammatical sequences" (p. 81). According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009) grammar is "The rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences, or the study or use of these rules" (p. 762).

Grammatical difficulty

Most recent research studies of international students identify their problems in coping with English in general, and grammar aspects in particular. First of all, Second Language acquisition literature reveals various approaches to defining "grammatical difficulty". They claimed that some grammar structures are easy to comprehend, but difficult to produce, whereas others are easy to produce, but difficult to comprehend (Spada and Tomita, 2010).

Larsen-Freeman (2003) discussed grammatical difficulty in terms of linguistic form, semantic meaning, and pragmatics. According to Larsen-Freeman, a grammar feature can be easy with respect to one aspect, but difficult with respect to another. For instance, the form of the English passive is easy to learn, but its use is more difficult for EFL/ESL learners. Moreover, DeKeyser (2003) distinguished objective difficulty from subjective difficulty. Objective difficulty focuses on the linguistic factors which contribute to the learning difficulty of the structures in questions. Subjective difficulty concerns the individual learners' differences. Furthermore, grammatical difficulty can also be related to the form, function, and meaning of a grammar feature (or a combination thereof). Hulstijn and De Graaff (1994), referring to linguistic form, defined difficulty as contingent on "the number (and/or type) of criteria to be applied in order to arrive at the correct form" (p. 103). Spada and Tomita (2010), in a meta-analysis of 41 studies found that there is no clear evidence of interaction between types of instruction and the degree of difficulty of a linguistic feature. However, they readily admitted that results might have been different had they used a different set of criteria to differ between simple and complex structures.

The Necessity of Grammar

Grammar is a key concept in learning a language. This means that grammar functions as an aid to learning instead of being an object of knowledge per se, and the importance of grammar cannot be ignored or neglected (Debata, 2013; Kachru, 2010). Broadly speaking, grammar is important because it is the language that makes it possible to talk about the language, yet for many language teachers and learners, the importance of grammar is associated with the accurate use of language for effective communication (Ahangari and Barghi, 2012).

Moreover, according to Nan (2015), knowing grammar is not enough for real communication, but an inadequate knowledge of grammar would severely constrain one's ability for effective communication. Thus, grammar is a lexicogrammatical resource for making meaning. In the process of making meaning, grammar changes in both form and meaning to ensure appropriate use in different situations. Additionally, Ellis (2002) claimed that, while there have been significant changes in the methods of language teaching in recent years, the status of grammar instruction is an issue that language teachers still have to sort out.

Widodo (2006) claimed that knowledge of grammar and structure enables language learners to put their ideas into words and allows them to communicate with others. Furthermore, Widodo demonstrated that grammar plays a role in learning vocabulary: "...grammar provides a pathway to learners how some lexical items should be combined into a good sentence so that meaningful and communicative statements or expressions can be formed" (p. 122). Ahangari and Barghi (2012) argued that grammar knowledge is the most elaborate component of linguistic competence, and Ellis (2006) claimed that language examiners cannot (and indeed should not) ignore linguistic competence.

Overview of research in teachers' perceptions of grammar instruction in L2

In a study conducted in a language school in California (Thu, 2009), 11 ESL teachers agreed that when language learning is limited to the classroom formal study of grammar is essential to the eventual mastery of a foreign or second language. The same teachers also believed that practicing the target language in real life situations is more important than analyzing and practicing grammar patterns.

The same study was adopted and conducted with Iranian state and private high school teachers of English (Farshchi, 2009). The majority of participant teachers agreed that knowledge of grammar for students and teachers was necessary. The main concern was the way grammar should be presented and, despite the importance given to natural exposure, there was a great agreement that formal instruction helps students to use grammatical structures correctly.

Shiu (2011) examined EFL learners' perception of grammatical difficulty and investigated 20 selected features of grammar through a questionnaire. Shiu found that some features were more difficult than others for the participants to learn. He concluded that some of the 20 features, including embedded question clauses,

prepositions, real conditional, participle constructions, and unreal conditionals were considered by the participants as the most difficult.

In another study, Scheffler (2011) explored the grammatical difficulty from English language teachers' perspectives. 20 Polish teachers of English were asked to rank twelve structures on a one-to-five scale measuring grammatical difficulty. According to the teachers' responses, and based on their mean scores, the 12 grammatical features were ranked from least to most difficult as follows: adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, articles, passive voice, reported speech, conditional sentences, modal verbs, -ing forms, infinitives, prepositions, and tenses.

Azad and Kalam' (2013) findings revealed that the teachers believe grammar is an inseparable and essential component in language teaching. The teachers also preferred explicit grammar instruction and contextualized use of grammar within communicative activities, rather than the decontextualized use of grammar as was used in the Grammar Translation Method. These teachers also favored integrated approaches to grammar teaching that focus on both form and meaning. Furthermore, a study conducted by Uysal & Bardakci (2014) findings of the study delete revealed that most teachers preferred explicit grammar teaching, mechanical drills, use of L1 and repetition - all of which are considered traditional approaches to grammar teaching.

The Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present study was to determine the paramount role of utilizing grammar by Iranian school EFL teachers and examined the teachers' perception of grammar intervention with what they practice in the classroom. Generally, the goal of giving students good language skills, particularly, in grammar knowledge is to ensure that evidence-based practices are being applied in classroom. In this regard, EFL teachers' grammar knowledge can directly influence language teaching and thus influence students' English learning outcomes. The linguistic and knowledge of teachers acts a paramount role in supporting students at language learning developmental stages. The other aims of this study were:

- To determine English teachers' perception of grammar intervention and relevant practice in the classroom.
- To illustrate the degree of the relationship between English teachers' perception of grammar intervention and the nature of instructional practices.

Actually, in Iranian EFL, grammar instruction plays a crucial role in language teaching at all level. Though, teachers' good knowledge of grammar expedites student's language learning, there is a need to apply effective methods and techniques to develop students' language knowledge outputs. In present situation, most Iranian students in public schools do not have adequate English language competence and performance to express themselves in different situations or contexts fluently and accurately. It is important to highlight the role of grammar instruction as a necessary response for the development of English literacy of Iranian students through practices by teachers in their classrooms.

In this way, Iranian school EFL teachers who are involved in practical teaching are responsible for finding a way out of the current situation. Taking into account the kernel role of grammar in second language beliefs and practices about grammar cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is essential to find out teachers' beliefs as they can be reflected in the classroom. This study will investigate Iranian school teachers' cognition and practice mismatches of applying grammar intervention. Accordingly, one of the most significant current discussions will be to emphasize the difficult and complex responsibility of English teachers, and the development of their minds and skills in the route of students' English literacy.

Likewise, one of the most predominant issues in EFL learning is the position of learners' grammar knowledge of rules as well as teachers' formal grammar instruction in the language teaching process. Unfortunately, Iranian English teachers rely on the textbook which has been developed by curriculum system. While, the significance of mastering grammatical rules of the target language arises when Iranian EFL students realize

the impact which it would have on the success of their overall language learning skills such as writing, speaking, reading, and so on. Students realize that they need to practice the target language regularly in the classroom in order to overcome not only their grammatical problems but also their problems in vocabulary, phonology, morphology and so on.

The innovative aspect of the current study lies in the fact that it can be considered a mild contribution in the latest theories and models of teaching grammar to Iranian EFL learners. This includes the investigation of the teachers' perceptions of grammar intervention which is supposed to lead to a better and easier way of teaching grammar and help students to use grammar roles more frequently. Thus, this study attempted to determine English teachers' perception of grammar intervention and relevant practice in the classroom. For this purpose, the following research question proposed:

RQ1: What are Iranian EFL school teachers' perceptions of grammar intervention?

Method

Design of the study

This study applied survey research in that the data were obtained by administering a questionnaire to the participants. However, since the data collected from the questionnaire are both qualitative and quantitative data, this research study can be seen as a mixed research design. Particularly, although most items on the questionnaire are quantifiable, one final question is open-ended and it allows the participants to describe what they do. Therefore, the final item on the questionnaire is most related to qualitative data in nature.

Hence, to examine the perceptions of English teachers, a qualitative research design was used because the data were collected through administering a questionnaire from thirty English teachers. Hence, due to a few number of participants, it was found crucial to analyze the data qualitatively. If the research interest is in studying values, beliefs, understandings, perceptions, meanings, etc., qualitative study designs are more appropriate as they provide immense flexibility. The main reason for choosing this research design is that it is suitable to study data gathered through qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Four secondary schools in Ardabil were selected for the study. In addition, the schools were intentionally selected as the geographical location of the researcher was close to the aforementioned schools. So, this made the situation suitable and relevant for frequent observation and interviews.

Participants

The target participants of the study were thirty English language teachers of the total four schools who were randomly selected as the participants for the study. The students at these schools were taught all language skills and grammar was included in the curriculum as a component. Thus, all of the thirty English language teachers of the specified grade were selected as the target sample for the study. In this study, all the target population was taken as the sample and primary sources of the study. In other words, available data sampling method used as a sampling technique.

Materials

This study utilized a self-report questionnaire (Appendix A) to elicit teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and their stated classroom practices when teaching grammar. The questionnaire obtained quantitative data as it contained close-ended sections that required teachers to respond to statements on a five point Likert scale. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher on the basis of the research questions, similar questionnaires in similar studies and the key characteristics of grammar teaching and approaches (Borg and Burns, 2008; Burgess and Etherington 2002).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections, one collecting biographical data and another collecting the main data to answer the research questions. The section for demographic data asks the participants to provide their gender, age, and length of teaching experience. The main questionnaire section is made up of 30

statements that require the participants to respond with their level of agreement. The items are on a five-point Likert-scale (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NS = Not Sure, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree).

The 30 statements covered eight main themes regarding grammar teaching as follows: 1) belief in the role of grammar teaching, 2) belief in grammar pedagogy, 3) belief in practicing grammar, 4) belief in feedback and error correction, 5) belief in using grammatical terminology in teaching, 6) belief in the role of first language in assisting grammar instruction, 7) belief in the role of English language teachers in grammar classes, and 8) belief in comparison between teaching grammar to children and adults.

A semi-structured interview (Appendix B) aimed to elicit the contextual factors that hinder teachers from implementing their beliefs in the classrooms was run in this study which involved two parts. The first part which included 5 open-ended questions, was interested in the participants' background information and the sources of their beliefs. The second part included 13 open-ended questions, addressed their beliefs about grammar teaching covering the same eight themes used in the questionnaire.

Semi-structured interview is commonly used for classroom research due to its effectiveness in understanding people's personal opinions, beliefs and perspectives. The interactive nature of interviews gives participant more opportunities to reflect upon their beliefs and allows the researcher to collect more in-depth data regarding the topic under study. The main aim of these interviews was to gather qualitative data to support and understand the data obtained from the questionnaire.

Data collection and analysis

The researcher utilized the following steps in collecting data for the study. First, the relevant literature review was used to get adequate information on the topic. Secondly, data gathering tools were developed. Of the data gathering tools, the questionnaire about teachers' perceptions of grammar intervention was designed by the researcher based on the one used by Schulz (2001). The questionnaire was conducted for all the thirty English teachers after the classroom observations were carried out. This step helped the practitioner to attain raw facts and relevant information as well. After that, the semi-structured interview was done in order to elicit the contextual factors that hinder teachers from implementing their beliefs in the classrooms.

The attained data from the thirty English language teachers through questionnaires was analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis to examine their perceptions of grammar teaching. Since qualitative form of analysis builds theories on the basis of generalizations obtained from the data directly obtained and requires a certain level of creativity, because it is one's responsibility to arrange the data into logical, meaningful categories, establish some general patterns or trends in the data, and interpret the data in a way that is understandable to others.

First, responses from the questionnaires were grouped according to the item groups that attempt to answer the research questions. If the mean scores of an item were over 2.50, it is inferred that the participants generally agree with the item. On the other hand, if the mean scores were below 2.50, it is concluded that the teachers generally disagree with the item. Teachers' quantitative responses were presented in three sections: teachers' stated beliefs about grammar teaching, their reported classroom practices and consistency between their beliefs and classroom practices. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were drawn accordingly.

Result

The data of the current study were mainly quantitative and qualitative in nature and were subject to a range of statistical analyses performed with the aid of the SPSS software program. Descriptive statistics designed to seek demographic information about the respondents in order to establish a general profile of the participants. The results of descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers' Demographic Information

Category	Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	10	33.3
	Female	20	66.7
Age	31- 40	14	46.7
	41-50	16	53.3
Years of teaching experience	7-12	8	26.7
	13-18	6	20
	19-24	6	20
	25 and above	10	33.3
Total		30	100.0

The results of Table 1 showed that most of the teachers in the study are in female gender. The findings of age and years of teaching experience also demonstrated that the participants in the study were experienced teachers.

Before conducting the study and distributing the questionnaires, it was necessary to validate the surveys' content. Therefore, the study's questionnaire was given to five EFL teachers to review and evaluate them in order to ensure their content validity. So, the Cronbach's Alpha value was measured for each of them to ensure their internal stability. The results showed that the Cronbach's alpha value for teachers' perceptions about grammar teaching questionnaire exceeded 0.7 (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.747), and this value indicated that the study instrument was stable. Then, in order to answer the question of the study, all teachers (N = 30) who participated in this study responded to all the close-ended statements (30) of the questionnaire that was intended to investigate their beliefs about the below eight components which represent different aspects and key issues of grammar teaching. The results of the teachers' responses illustrated in Table 2. After the questionnaire had been completed, the researcher contacted teachers to appoint the appropriate time for interviews. By comparing the answers of the teachers to the both questionnaire and interview, the results of the data analyzed in details.

Table 2. Statistics for Component: The Role of Grammar Teaching

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
Beliefs in the role of grammar teaching				
1.	Grammar is the most important component in language learning.	14 (46.7%)	2 (6.7%)	14 (46.7%)
2.	English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.	10 (33.3%)	4 (13.3%)	16 (53.3%)
3.	By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable in communication.	8 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)	14 (46.7%)
4.	A learner can learn a second or foreign language without grammar instruction (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).	20 (66.7%)	2 (6.7%)	8 (26.7%)
Beliefs in grammar pedagogy (deductive approach)				
5.	Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual rules and structures.	6 (20%)	14 (46.7%)	10 (33.3%)
6.	Teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises when teaching grammar.	18 (60%)	2 (6.7%)	10 (33.7%)

7.	Direct explanation of grammar is more secure and straight-forward to ensure students' understanding.	12 (40%)	6 (20%)	12 (40%)
8.	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.	14 (46.7%)	6 (20%)	10 (33.3%)
9.	My students expect me to present grammar points directly and explicitly.	20 (66.7%)	6 (20%)	4 (13.3%)
Beliefs in grammar pedagogy (inductive approach)				
10.	Grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves.	22 (73.3%)	6 (20%)	2 (6.7%)
11.	Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by giving examples.	30 (100%)	0	0
12.	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in better learning and understanding.	18 (60%)	8 (26.7%)	4 (13.3%)
No.	Statements	Strongly Agree & Agree	Not sure	Strongly Disagree & Disagree
Beliefs in grammar pedagogy (focus on form approach)				
13.	Teachers should not plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand; they should wait until students have difficulties with Certain features.	4 (13.3%)	12 (40%)	14 (46.7%)
Beliefs in grammar pedagogy (meaning-based approach)				
14.	Learners learn grammar best through exposure to language in natural contexts.	28 (93.3%)	0	2 (6.7%)
15.	You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well.	20 (66.7%)	0	10 (33.3%)
16.	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.	26 (86.7%)	4 (13.3%)	0
Beliefs in the value of practicing grammar				
17.	Practice of structures must always be within a full, communicative context.	26 (86.7%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
18.	Drilling and memorization are essential to the successful learning of new language forms.	16 (53.3%)	6 (20%)	8 (26.7%)
Beliefs in feedback and error correction				
19.	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.	16 (53.3%)	8 (26.7%)	6 (20%)
20.	Since errors are a normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time.	10 (33.3%)	6 (20%)	14 (46.7%)
21.	Learners' mistakes should always be corrected immediately to prevent the formation of bad habits.	12 (40%)	6 (20%)	12 (40%)
22.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.	24 (80%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)
23.	A teacher should correct students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.	18 (60%)	6 (20%)	6 (20%)
Beliefs about using grammatical terminology				

24.	Learners do not need the grammatical terms to succeed in learning the language.	10 (33.3%)	2 (6.7%)	18 (60%)
Beliefs in the role of first language				
25.	Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.	12 (40%)	14 (46.7%)	4 (13.3%)
26.	You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language.	14 (46.7%)	6 (20%)	10 (33.3%)
Beliefs in the role of English teacher				
27.	In teaching grammar, a teacher's main role is to explain the rules.	20 (66.7%)	4 (13.3%)	6 (20%)
28.	The teachers' role is to help learners figure out the grammar rules for themselves.	24 (80%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (13.3%)
Beliefs about teaching young and adults learners				
29.	Teaching the rules of English grammar directly is more appropriate for older learners.	12 (40%)	10 (33.3%)	8 (26.7%)
30.	Indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate for younger learners.	24 (80%)	0	6 (20%)

As it showed in Table 2, statements 1 to 4 were meant to investigate teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar teaching in language learning. The results showed that half of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that grammar is the most important component in language learning, but the other half had different perspectives. 16 out of 30 respondents stated that they did not spend a lot of time on teaching grammar rules. More than half of the teachers reported that students can learn a foreign language without grammar instruction and this justifies why 47% of them strongly disagreed or disagreed with statement 3 "By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable in communication". During interviews, when asked about the role of grammar in English learning, the majority of the teachers appeared to believe that grammar plays an important role and could help learners to improve their accuracy and correct their errors and also enhance learners' self-confidence to produce more language and correct their errors; but they all confessed that sole grammar teaching will never lead to fluency unless the students practice the target language in real life situations and get exposed to natural contexts.

The second theme is grammar pedagogy, aimed to explore teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching approaches. This theme is divided into four main categories to elicit teachers beliefs about the different teaching approaches existed in literature including deductive, inductive, focus on form, and meaning-based approach. In terms of deductive approach, the findings revealed that the teachers broadly favor teaching grammar explicitly by pointing out the rules to the students. Only 33% of participants did not focus on individual rules and structures when teaching grammar. Moreover, 60% of them believed that teachers should analyze structures and tell students the rules; whereas only 34% disagreed with this opinion. The justifications for their choices were clearly stated in their responses to statements 7, 8 and 9. In their replies to statement 7, respondents' scores were equally spread over the categories of agreement and disagreement; 6 (40%) out of 15 respondents believed that direct explanation of grammar is more secure and ensure students' understanding, whereas 40% (6) do not believe so. 47% of the participant teachers claimed that grammar instruction aid learners in correcting their mistakes. Furthermore, more than half of the teachers 67% (10) stated that their students expect them to present grammar directly and explicitly.

The findings about the inductive approach depicted a strong preference of discovery techniques at the level of teachers' beliefs. It is also clear that in this statement they were not divided at all. The majority of them believe in the usefulness of an inductive approach. Almost all the teachers (100%) expressed their agreement

towards the statement that teaching a grammar point should begin by giving examples. Although more than half of the teachers (60%) expressed a negative attitude towards students' self-discovery of grammatical rules because it is time consuming, 73.3% of the respondents confirmed its effectiveness in grammar learning for themselves. In sum, respondents showed a high preference for using discovery techniques which shows a tendency to believe in an inductive approach.

In terms of focus on form, it appears that the respondents disagreed with statement 13 "Teachers should not plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand; they should wait until students have difficulties with certain features". Also, it is interesting that there is a relatively great number of teachers (40%) being indecisive in relation to this statement. Thus, more in-depth investigation is needed in order to explore the rationales underlying their responses. Although, the results of meaning-based approach revealed that 93% of the teachers generally believed that the best way to teach grammar is through exposure to language in natural contexts. Moreover, most of the teachers (87%) agreed that they should focus on form, meaning and use when teaching grammar. Nearly two thirds of the teachers (67%) agreed with statement 15 "You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well". In sum, this sample of 15 respondents showed a high preference for using natural approach techniques, which shows a tendency to believe in a meaning-based approach. Teachers' responses to open-ended question gave different perspectives which reflected their various methods of approaching grammar. Only few teachers were able to name the methods they employ when teaching grammar. Half of the interviewees reported favoring the Inductive approach in which the students work out the rules for themselves, whereas the rest were between the Deductive and Focus on Meaning approaches.

The third theme focused on the value of practicing grammar. The results of this theme showed that the majority of the respondents found it is a must to expose students to communicative grammar practice. However, their preference for communicative grammar practice does not seem to prevent their use of grammar drilling and memorization. Written and oral grammar practicing were highly valued by the interviewees. Almost all of them professed that they use various kinds of activities to practice grammar and to check that the grammar point which has been discussed during the lesson is understood.

The fourth theme aimed to identify teachers' beliefs regarding feedback and correcting learners' grammatical errors. The importance of grammatical accuracy in learners' language performance can be inferred from the affirmative responses, 53% replies were of agreement to statement 19. However, replies to statement 23 suggested that quite a large majority of respondents tend not to correct every spoken grammatical error (60% replied positively) but only to correct those that hinder their understanding of meaning. Furthermore, 80% of respondents supported the idea that students should be given the opportunity to think about their own errors. The data collected during interviews revealed that the students are in need for teachers who continuously correct their errors. However, the type of feedback depends on the students' proficiency level, age, and personal reactions. Therefore, the interviewees appeared to utilize different types of feedback and error correction techniques, the most popular ones are recasting students, explicit error correction, self-correction and peer-correction. In addition to employing the body language which gives the students a hint that he/she has made a mistake and make him/her rethink about his/her sentences.

The fifth theme was the belief in the importance of using grammatical terminology or metalanguage in teaching, aimed to gather data on whether teachers employ grammatical terms in their classes or not. As depicted in Table 2, more than half of the respondents (60%) disagreed with the idea of using terminology in grammar teaching. This means, they do not believe that learners should know or even understand terminology. 33% were strongly agreed and agreed. The majority of the interviewees expressed their doubts regarding the importance of using grammatical terms in classroom. They agreed that familiarizing the students with grammatical terminology would add an extra burden on their shoulders. However, the parts of speech (e.g. verb, noun, adjective, adverb, and preposition) are essential for examination purposes.

The sixth theme was the belief in the role of first language in assisting grammar instruction, aimed to explore the participants' beliefs concerning the reference to students' L1 (Persian Language) in teaching grammar. The findings revealed that only 40% of respondents supported the idea of using Persian language to explain English grammar rules while 47% not sure with this opinion. Moreover, their replies to statement 26 "You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language" were spread over the categories of agreement and disagreement (47% agreement vs. 33% disagreement). All the interviewees declared that they use the students' native language in the classroom on daily basis, particularly when teaching abstract vocabulary items and grammar. However, their use of Persian language cannot be described as a Grammar Translation Method. To them, the use of the native language is a shortcut, time saving and meets the students' previous learning.

The seventh theme was the belief in the role of the English teacher in grammar classes, aimed to elicit information about the role teachers play in classrooms. As shown in Table 2, majority of the teachers (80%) asserted that the teacher's main role is to help learners find out the grammar rules for themselves. The eighth theme aimed to examine participants' views towards the differences in teaching grammar for adult and young learners. The results showed that the majority of the teachers responded positively to statement 30; 80% strongly agreed or agreed that indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate for younger learners, whereas 40% agreed that direct grammar teaching is suitable for older learners.

Conclusion and Implications

From the questionnaire findings, more than half the teachers surveyed asserted that grammar is the most important component in language learning. The participants also recognized the fact that a focus on grammar alone is insufficient to develop students' ability in communication and this explains why nearly half of the respondents do not spend too much time on grammar teaching. Moreover, the dominant belief of the majority of teachers who participated in this study was that student can learn a second or foreign language without grammar instruction, similar to how children learn their mother tongue. This result further confirms those of previous studies in terms of the overall role of grammar in the language learning (Burgess and Etherington, 2002).

In this sample, teachers did not focus on explicit grammar teaching, but put the emphasis on language acquisition through natural communication. The Natural approach proponents claim that formal grammar instruction is useless and students can acquire language naturally if exposed to plentiful "comprehensible input". So, Second language learners should acquire their language abilities through natural exposure, not through formal instruction.

The findings revealed that the teachers are in favor of direct grammar explanation due to their beliefs of the effectiveness of grammar instruction in enabling the students correcting their errors and their awareness of their students' needs and expectations. Similarly, Burgess and Etherington (2002) found that over 90% of the teachers in their study agree that their students expect them to present grammar points explicitly. Although, the limited time they have to cover the text book is another factor that forces them to approach grammar directly.

They also highly appreciated the importance of giving the learners the opportunities to work out the rules for themselves. This preference for inductive approach contradicts with the general research results reviewed by Ellis (2006) which has shown that deductive instruction seems more effective than inductive instruction. It also disagrees with Uysal and Bardakci's (2014) findings, who found a much more balanced spread of preferences for inductive and deductive grammar approaches.

The results of the study can provide implications for the choice of the most effective instructional approaches in teaching grammar in different contexts and in particular in the Iranian secondary school EFL context. Because of problems in traditional structure-based grammar teaching which involves presenting discrete

grammatical forms in an isolated manner, the teachers attempt to draw the student's attention to grammatical forms in the context of communication.

Course book writers should include relative contents into the books, and the content of the books should be appropriate to the level of learners understanding. And they should use the related information for the learners. This works the same for syllabus and curriculum designers, too. Choosing inappropriate materials and method for the EFL learners can cause undeniable mismatches between what teachers believe and what they try to teach. So to prevent the possible mismatches all these groups should work together and pay attention to the learner's needs and objectives, as well as their educational objectives.

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Appendix A

Teachers' perceptions about grammar teaching questionnaire

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

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

Section One: Teachers' background

1. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age: 20-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐
3. Years of teaching experience:
- Less than 1 ☐ 2-6 ☐ 7-12 ☐ 13-18 ☐ 19-24 ☐
- 25 and above ☐

Section Two: Teachers' perceptions about Grammar Teaching

We would like you to indicate your opinion by ticking (✓) the appropriate box next to each statement that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with it.

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

No.	Statements	SA	A	NS	D
1.	Grammar is the most important component in language learning.				
2.	English classes should allocate plenty of time to teach grammar rules.				
3.	By mastering the rules of grammar, students become fully capable in communication.				
4.	A learner can learn a second or foreign language without grammar instruction (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).				
5.	Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual rules and structures.				
6.	Teachers should analyze structures, tell students the rules and then let them do related exercises when teaching grammar.				
7.	Direct explanation of grammar is more secure and straight-forward to ensure students' understanding.				
8.	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.				
9.	My students expect me to present grammar points directly and explicitly.				
No.	Statements	SA	A	NS	D
10.	Grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves.				
11.	Teachers should begin teaching a new grammar point by giving examples.				
12.	Students' self-discovery of grammatical rules is time-consuming but results in better				

	learning and understanding.				
13.	Teachers should not plan what grammatical features to cover beforehand; they should wait until students have difficulties with certain features.				
14.	Learners learn grammar best through exposure to language in natural contexts.				
15.	You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well.				
16.	Grammar teaching should focus on the form and meaning of structures and their use in context.				
17.	Practice of structures must always be within a full, communicative context.				
18.	Drilling and memorization are essential to the successful learning of new language forms.				
19.	Grammatical correctness is one of the important criteria by which language performance should be judged.				
20.	Since errors are a normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time.				
21.	Learners' mistakes should always be corrected immediately to prevent the formation of bad habits				
22.	Students themselves should think about the errors they make and find the correct forms for themselves.				
23.	A teacher should correct students' spoken grammatical errors only when they cause difficulty in understanding the meaning.				
24.	Learners do not need the grammatical terms to succeed in learning the language.				
25.	Teachers should use the learners' L1 to explain grammar rules.				
26.	You must learn the grammar of your native language very well before you learn a foreign language.				
27.	In teaching grammar, a teacher's main role is to explain the rules.				
28.	The teachers' role is to help learners figure out the grammar rules for themselves				
29.	Teaching the rules of English grammar directly is more appropriate for older learners.				
30.	Indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate for younger learners.				

Appendix B

Interview questions

Thank you very much for taking part in this research, and I highly value your participation and cooperation. The purpose of this interview is to understand your views about grammar teaching and the role it plays in language learning. I'm interested in what you think about grammar teaching, how you teach grammar and why you teach it the way you do. Please remember that there is no right or wrong answers. The validity of this investigation depends on the extent to which your responses are open and frank, so please answer honestly and in as much detail as possible. All data collected will be used for research purposes only and will remain confidential. No real names will be mentioned in reporting.

Teachers Learning and Teaching Background

- Can you tell me about your experience of learning grammar when you were a student? (e.g. where and

how did you learn; was it a positive or negative experience; did you have exposure to the target language community; etc.)

- Do you think that your grammar learning experience affects how you teach grammar to your Students?
- Can you tell me about a good language teacher that you know, perhaps one that you have worked with, or a teacher who taught you?
- Over the years, has your approach to grammar changed in any way during your career as a teacher?
- If your teaching approach has changed in any way, which of the following sources have been most responsible for that change? (e.g. Feedback from supervisor, Student feedback, Trial and error, Collaboration with colleagues, Self-discovery, Use of new textbooks, Professional teaching journals, Published research, experimenting with new ideas, Language teaching theories, personal experiences, needs of the learners, the way you were taught)

The role and importance of grammar

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

Grammar teaching

- Tell me about your preferred approach to teach grammar? Why do you prefer to teach in this way? What kind of techniques do you use frequently?
- Do you use the same teaching strategies in all of the classes you teach or do you adjust your approach accordingly? Why or why not?
- How do you feel about direct grammar explanation and indirect grammar discovery work?

The use of grammatical terminology

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

Feedback and error correction

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

The use of L1

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

Professional Development

- Did you receive any new ideas on teaching grammar during your formal teacher training? What were they? Have these experiences affected how you teach grammar to your students?

The value of practicing grammar

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