TEACHERS’ AND STUDENTS’ BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF
GRAMMAR AND GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION IN THE
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

by

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Abstract

Teachers and students arrive to English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms with beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning. Teachers are not aware of what beliefs students bring to the classroom. Students are not aware of what beliefs teachers bring to the classroom. This reality affects the teaching and learning process of EFL. The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs of teachers and students about the role of grammar and grammar instruction in the EFL classroom. The study was guided by the primary research question, “Are students’ beliefs about grammar in EFL similar to or different from the beliefs of their teachers?” The study also had four subquestions: “What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the importance of grammar within foreign language teaching?” “What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar teaching?” “What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar learning?” and “What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction?” This study also reviewed current literature to analyze the viewpoints of others regarding perspectives about grammar and EFL. This quantitative study used a questionnaire to identify the participants’ perceptions. Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the participants tested. The results of this research study indicated there are significant differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the role of grammar, grammar methodology, and grammar learning. The results of the study will aid in the search for more effective ways to help teachers and students approach grammar teaching and learning successfully.
Dedication

My father set an example for all of his children. He became a certified public account in 1945. He was the first member of his family to go to college in Mexico. He was also one of the first certified public accounts to arrive to my hometown (Mexicali, Baja California) in 1949. My father was a man who loved to teach and help others. He volunteered to teach at a public university in Mexicali and started the first Association of Certified Public Accounts in the state of Baja California, Mexico. My mother never attended college. However, she was the driving force for all of her children to obtain graduate degrees. I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful parents: Sara and Victor (+).

I could never have reached my goal without my wonderful husband, Jim. I was hesitant to start my PhD because I was in my 50s. My husband insisted and convinced me that “you are never too old to learn.” My mother-in-law was always interested in my work. She was very proud of me and motivated me to continue moving forward and never give up. To my wonderful husband, Jim, and dear mother-in-law, Lila, I dedicate this dissertation.

I want to set an example for my children and grandchildren. I will be encouraging them to obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees. I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely children, Leobardo (“Bayo”) Annia, Alida; my stepsons, Craig and Colby; and my grandchildren, Andrea, Andres, Grace, and Miranda. My siblings have always believed in me. They knew I could do it. To Victor, Gustavo, Manuel, and Maggy. Sí se pudo, sí se pudo.
Last but not least, to Amelia, Lilly, and Carmen, my dear friends who are no longer with us. Remember what I promised all of you. I DID IT!!! To you, I dedicate this dissertation.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Teachers and students of English as a foreign language (EFL) bring to the language classroom personal beliefs about grammar and foreign language. Research has suggested these beliefs are based on the experiences teachers and students have had with different methods and approaches to grammar instruction (Thornbury, 2004). In the field of EFL teaching, beliefs are the views and attitudes language teachers and learners have acquired about the process of teaching and learning a foreign language (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Kuntz, 1997; Wenden, 2001). Thornbury (2004) asserted, “Differences in attitude to the role of grammar underpin differences between methods, between teachers, and between learners” (p. 14). He added that linguists, course writers, teacher trainers, and popular writers in language teaching have different attitudes toward the role of grammar and the methods of teaching grammar. The differences in attitudes and views guide the selection of materials, syllabus design, approaches, and methods to grammar teaching.

As previously stated, teachers and students hold beliefs about EFL and grammar methodology. However, some teachers are not aware of their students’ views about grammar instruction. Similarly, some students are not aware of the assumptions their teachers bring to the language classroom concerning the teaching of grammar. This
insufficient knowledge may result in misjudgment and negative attitudes toward the teaching and learning process. “Students bring their own interpretations to the process and these may not coincide with the teachers’, thus resulting in a conflict or mismatch” (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2006, p. 171). For example, students may view grammar as the most important part of language learning and believe their teachers will provide all grammatical rules and explanations. Teachers, on the other hand, may view grammar as only one of the many tools for language learning, so they may not give any explanations. The result could be that students do not trust the teachers or they believe the teachers do not have a command of the rules or structures of grammar.

Teachers and students possess beliefs about various aspects of EFL teaching. Some of these beliefs refer to the best practices for vocabulary, reading, writing, or speaking (Horwitz, 1988). However, this study focused on the similarities and differences in the beliefs teachers and students have about the role of grammar and the methods of grammar teaching in the EFL classroom. A mismatch between these beliefs can lead to “misunderstanding and mistrust on the part of both teachers and learners” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 35).

Allowing teachers to explore their personal beliefs as well as their students’ beliefs will help them to become more aware not only of their instructional practices but also why students select certain approaches to language learning. Furthermore, the exploration of beliefs will help to “see and understand what is going on between teachers and students and among students themselves” (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999, p. xiv). An exploration of these beliefs will help teachers and students to understand the role of
grammar and grammar teaching and learning in an effort to improve EFL teaching and learning.

**Background of the Study**

This study was carried out at a public university in Oman. The institution, established in 1982, is one of the most respected institutions of higher learning in the Arabian Gulf. As a part of its academic requirements, students must take EFL courses during their academic studies. The Language Center (LC) of the public university offers intensive English language courses for incoming high school students. When students do not meet the minimum language requirements, they are required to take a placement test for the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) and are then assigned to the corresponding level. The IELP consists of five levels that range from Level 2 to Level 6. Levels 2, 3, and 4 are foundation levels and are common for students in all colleges. These levels are organized around reading and vocabulary, writing and grammar, and listening and speaking. In Level 2, the emphasis is on listening, reading, and vocabulary. In Level 3, the emphasis is on language structure and communication. In Level 4, the emphasis is on reading and writing but with greater emphasis on academic materials as well as a more independent role on the part of the students.

In Levels 5 and 6, the students are grouped according to the colleges of their selection. For instance, students select among the following colleges they wish to attend: arts, business and economics, science, agriculture, medicine, engineering, and education. In Levels 5 and 6, students practice reading and vocabulary, writing and grammar, listening and speaking, and study and research skills. The emphasis, however, is on the
development of **reading and writing skills**. When students exit Level 6, they register in a credit program. The LC has various credit-bearing programs for the different majors of the university. However, for the purpose of this study, the focus was on the teachers and students of the IELP.

The teachers of the IELP are from Oman as well as 26 other Western and non-Western nations. The 217 LC teachers currently working at the university “are the greatest asset,” according to Dr. Rahma Al-Mahrouqi, LC administrator (personal communication, 2008). These teachers bring to the institution a variety of training, teaching experience, and teaching practices and beliefs. This wealth of resources makes a positive contribution to the teaching and learning process of EFL.

In an effort to inform the teachers of what has been accepted as best practices for English language teaching in the IELP, the IELP (2008) curriculum criteria have an appendix recommending certain teaching practices favorable to the program, including the following:

1. Grammar is acquired through appropriate practice, usually from more controlled to more free.
2. Teachers’ explanation of grammar can be used, but the emphasis should be on appropriate examples in a context and relevant practice.
3. Grammar practice should cover form, meaning and usage. (p. 61)

The IELP supports the inclusion of grammar teaching in the classroom and recommends certain approaches to be used in the five levels. However, little is known about the beliefs that Western and non-Western teachers and their Omani students have about the role of grammar and EFL, as well as the best methods to teach and learn grammar.

The students of the IELP attend a 3-year secondary school prior to registering in the university. In the first year of secondary school, students are introduced to basic
academic subjects. The last two years are dedicated to programs in the arts and sciences.

In a study conducted by the Omani Ministry of Education and Youth (1989) to evaluate the primary, preparatory, and secondary Omani curricula, secondary students in the arts and sciences responded to 28 items that assessed their opinions about EFL instruction. According to the responses to the survey

More than 40% of the high school art students . . . and more than 50% of high school science students indicated that the English Language curriculum was rarely or seldom successful in meeting the following objectives:

1. To what extent do you feel that the English Language curriculum has realized the following objectives?
   a. Provided you with basic English Language skills to enable you to express yourself in written and oral English with foreign nationals in and outside of Oman?
   b. Enabled you to use English effectively and creatively both casual and formal situations? (Omani Ministry of Education and Youth, 1989, pp. 223–228)

The students felt they were not able to communicate fluently in English. These outcomes may have reflected the students’ attitudes toward the teaching and learning process of EFL.

**Statement of the Problem**

It is not known what differences exist between the beliefs of teachers and students about the role of grammar and the best practices for grammar teaching and learning. Teachers and students require opportunities to identify their beliefs to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings in the language classroom (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2006). In addition, teachers may not be aware of the attitudes their students bring to the language classroom about grammar teaching and learning. By understanding what beliefs their students bring
to the classroom, teachers should be more able to meet their students’ expectations as well as guide them more effectively in the learning process (Thorp, 2006).

Students also require opportunities to not only identify their attitudes about grammar and EFL but also compare their beliefs with their teachers’ beliefs. Without this knowledge, students may encounter situations in which there may be differences in “what is useful to focus on in a language lesson” (p. 53) or other situations where students are “undervaluing an activity assigned by the teacher” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 54). For example, some teachers may decide to do group work to allow students to practice a grammatical structure. However, the students may not welcome doing grammar exercises in a group setting and may find this activity meaningless. Richards and Lockhart (1994) added that becoming aware of their personal beliefs as well as their teachers’ beliefs will help students to welcome the selection of materials and activities for grammar instruction.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers’ and students’ views about grammar and EFL. This information will help teachers and students have a better perception of teachers’ and students’ ideas. This study also obtained information that will facilitate the selection of materials and best practices that meet the expectations of teachers and students about grammar in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the purpose of the study was to answer the research questions about teachers’ and students’ views concerning grammar teaching and learning as well as contribute knowledge in the field of EFL. Two selected groups of teachers and students of the LC at a public university in
Oman had the opportunity to express their views about the role of grammar, their preferences about the methods and approaches to grammar teaching and learning, their views about the importance of grammar in EFL, and their opinions about the teacher’s roles in grammar instruction.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question asked, “Are students’ beliefs about grammar in EFL similar to or different from the beliefs of their teachers?” The study also had four subquestions:

1. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the importance of grammar within foreign language learning?
2. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar teaching?
3. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar learning?
4. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction?

Responding to these questions helped EFL teachers recognize their personal beliefs about the teaching and learning process of a foreign language. The teachers also became more informed about students’ views toward language teaching and learning. With this in mind, the teachers determined which approaches, methods, and techniques were the most appropriate for their students. The students had an opportunity to explore their personal
beliefs and identify the different ways in which they may approach language learning in their efforts to succeed in the acquisition of the target language.

**Significance of the Study**

This study aimed to raise awareness about the similarities and differences between the beliefs of teachers and students regarding the role of grammar, grammar teaching and learning and the teacher’s roles. It also intended to apprise teachers of their students’ beliefs about learning EFL and the best methods to teach and learn grammar. Furthermore, the results of the study will inform teachers of their students’ views and preferred methods of grammar teaching as well as inform students of their teachers’ preferences about grammar methodology. With this information, teachers will be in a better position to select the appropriate instructional techniques that are tailored to their students. Students will be in a better position to welcome the grammar methodology selected by their teachers. In addition, this study will help administrators design language courses that avoid mismatches between teachers’ and students’ beliefs.

**Definition of Terms**

**Approach.** “Describes how people acquire their knowledge of the language and makes statements about the conditions which will promote successful language learning” (Harmer, 2003, p. 78).

**English as a foreign language (EFL).** Refers to the use of English in a non-English-speaking environment. According to Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992), EFL refers to “the role of English in countries where it is used as a subject in schools but not used as
a medium of instruction in education nor as a language of communication (e.g.,
government, business, industry) within the country” (pp. 123–124).

**English as a second language (ESL).** Refers to “the role of English for immigrants and other minority groups in English speaking countries . . . who use English at school or at work” (Richards et al., 1992, p. 124). This term also refers to the study of English by speakers who have different native languages.

**Method.** Includes procedures, activities, techniques, teachers’ and students’ roles, materials, and syllabus design (Harmer, 2003).

**Second language acquisition (SLA).** Refers to

The process of learning another language after the basics of the first have been acquired, starting at about 5 years of age and thereafter. Second language acquisition includes learning a new language in a foreign language context (e.g., English in Mexico or German in the United States) as well as learning a new language in a host language environment (e.g., German in Germany). (Krashen, 1982, p. 10)

**Technique.** In the EFL classroom, techniques are the activities teachers use as part of their teaching practices to guide students in the learning process (Harmer, 2003).

### Assumptions

The first assumption is the teachers have experience using different methods to teach grammar. The second assumption is the teachers have ample knowledge of the grammar of the English language. The third assumption is the students participating in the study have learned the grammar rules of English. The fourth assumption is a questionnaire is a reliable instrument to collect information from the EFL teachers and their students.
Limitations

This quantitative study had some limitations. For example, a questionnaire was used to collect the participants’ views and beliefs about grammar and EFL. However, as Leedy and Ormrod (2005) acknowledged, the participants may express beliefs that were not necessarily true or were constructed just prior to answering the questions. This could be a limitation of the study and impact an accurate exploration of the participants’ beliefs. Another limitation is that not all participants will return the questionnaire, which may result in inaccurate or incomplete information. In addition, Kalaja and Barcelos (2006) argued that questionnaires do not offer a thorough perception of the beliefs of teachers and students because the beliefs are not manifested while performing certain activities that occur in the language classrooms.

This study included only teachers and students from Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP. Teachers and students from Levels 1–4 did not participate in this study. This could be a limitation to the study because only the voices of a small group of teachers and students were heard. Another limitation could be that not all students have the same command of the target language, and this may affect the results of the study. Only questionnaires were used, and this limited the results in the study. Interviews would have allowed participants to offer additional information about their views and expand the information given in the survey (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Only teachers of the LC participated in the study. Teachers from other institutions were not invited to participate. This limits the results of the study because the only responses obtained were those of the LC teachers.
Theoretical Framework

Dewey’s (1938) views of experience and beliefs contributed to the theoretical framework for this study. These ideas were taken from Dewey’s theory of education, which states that experience is a crucial part of teaching and learning. “Experience is not a mental state but the interaction, adaptation, and adjustment of individuals to the environment” (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2006, p. 174). In other words, experience results from the relationship between individuals and the environment.

In addition, Dewey’s (1938) theory refers to continuity and interaction as two elements that constitute experience. Continuity refers to the relation between past and present experiences and its influence on the individual’s future. For instance, the learning process is a representation of the continuity of past and present experiences and changes to improve the quality of future experiences.

Human beings live in a given environment in which they interact with other individuals (Gutek, 2004). “In interacting with others and with the environment, the individual both shapes and is shaped by the interaction” (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2006, p. 174). Beliefs result from individuals’ daily interactions with the environment and other individuals. Beliefs are the result of learning experiences. According to Dewey (1938), beliefs “form or judge, justify or condemn” (p. 83). They guide individuals’ selections of daily activities and decisions in life. James (1907/1991) mentioned that beliefs are not independent of one’s experiences. They dictate actions, and these actions transform beliefs. “Beliefs guide desires and shape actions by preparing individuals to act in case the situation arises” (Pierce, 1878/1958, p. 113). As an example, beliefs determine what
actions will be carried out regarding the selection of techniques, curriculum design, or testing.

Teachers and undergraduate students of the public university have had past experiences in the language classrooms. As Dewey (1938) asserted, these past experiences are the result of the interactions students have had with teachers and other students in previous language classrooms. The beliefs teachers and students have about EFL instruction are the result of their experiences in the language classroom. These beliefs, as Pierce (1878/1958) claimed, will guide teachers and students in their approach to teaching and learning grammar. However, teachers and students may have had different experiences concerning grammar teaching and learning, and the result is a mismatch between personal beliefs.

**Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

The major themes discussed in the literature review in chapter 2 are theories of second language acquisition (SLA), approaches and methods in SLA and foreign language acquisition, grammar methodology, definition of beliefs, and the beliefs of teachers and students. The subthemes are the beliefs of teachers and students about EFL, their beliefs about grammar methodology, comparison of their beliefs, and advantages of belief exploration. The research design, sample selection, and data collection instrument are discussed in chapter 3. The pilot study and the framework for data analysis are included. A description of the sample analysis results for each of the research questions and a summary of the research findings are examined in chapter 4. A summary of
findings and discussion, restatement of limitations, as well as conclusions and recommendations for further study are provided in chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review focuses on similarities and differences between the beliefs of teachers and students about the role of grammar, grammar instruction and the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction in EFL. To explain what these similarities and differences are, the researcher pays particular attention to the role of grammar in the different theories of language acquisition as well as in the methods and approaches to EFL teaching. To further explain the meaning of beliefs and the origin of teachers’ and students’ beliefs about foreign language and grammar, this chapter includes a definition of beliefs, a description of teachers’ and students’ belief systems, teachers’ beliefs about grammar and EFL, students’ beliefs about grammar and EFL, and an explication of mismatches between teachers’ and students’ belief systems.

Theories of Second Language Acquisition

This section contains some theories of SLA that have been the basis for the various procedures to teach EFL and grammar instruction. Behaviorism, cognitivism, and Krashen’s (1982) theory of acquisition and learning have influenced the selection of popular methods and approaches to grammar methodology and foreign language teaching for more than 50 years.
Behaviorism

Behaviorism was one of the first theories to influence foreign language methodology, the role of grammar and the teacher’s roles. This theory states all human behavior, including language acquisition, is conditioned and reinforced either positively or negatively (Harmer, 2003). Behaviorist principles have affirmed that language is acquired through stimulus–response–reinforcement, a pattern that also applies to other skills that children learn at an early age. This behaviorist pattern has influenced traditional language methods used with adult learners for several decades (Harmer, 2003).

Syllabus design in textbooks from the 1950s and 1960s followed traditional approaches influenced by behaviorism. Teachers used materials and activities that followed the approaches suggested by the textbooks. Teachers also turned their attention to the inclusion of grammar rules presented in progression and in separate units. The teacher’s role was to transmit the grammatical structures the learners required for the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). The learners were expected to learn the rules of grammar so they could master the foreign language successfully. Grammar, according to behaviorists, was considered a necessary tool, and teachers and learners accepted the belief that grammar was an important component of teaching and learning a foreign language.

Cognitivism

One theory that emerged as an opposing response to the theory of behaviorism was Chomsky’s (1959) theory of cognitivism. This theory did not support the belief that adult learners could easily acquire a language by simple repetition, as suggested by
behaviorists. He contended that language is not a set of habits but “an intricate rule-based system. . . . There are a finite number of grammatical rules in the system and with knowledge of these, an infinite number of sentences can be performed in the language” (as cited in Harmer, 1991, p. 33). Chomsky defended the belief that all human beings are born with a cognitive system that guides the development of a first or a second language. Consequently, language learners require opportunities to use the language in a meaningful manner, rather than in a series of mechanical drills and repetition as suggested by the theory of behaviorism.

To illustrate, the teacher asks learners in small groups to plan a trip to their favorite holiday location. They have a limited amount of money to spend for the trip. They must search for plane tickets, decide on places to visit, make hotel reservations, and choose popular restaurants. Once they have collected the information, they must present their findings to the whole class. In such an activity, the learners use various strategies to act in the real world and create new knowledge. The language is used in a meaningful manner, and grammar learning is not the focus of the lesson. Rather, the focus is on the mental process that allows learners to acquire grammar rules while communicating in the target language. The theory of cognitivism supports the inclusion of grammar in the lessons. Grammar is taught deductively in the classroom and the learners are allowed to make errors while learning the language in meaningful activities (Larsen-Freeman, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 1979).

**Krashen’s Acquisition and Learning Theory**

Krashen’s (1982) acquisition and learning theory also opposed the theory of behaviorism. Krashen did not favor the behaviorist mode that language is conditioned
and habit forming, nor did he favor learning a language based on grammar rules and practice. Krashen favored the theory of cognitivism regarding the acquisition of grammar rules while using the language in meaningful context. Krashen introduced his acquisition and learning theory, which asserts that adult learners acquire the target language by using an internal process similar to the one children use to construct language. Adult learners use language for the purpose of communication; however, they are unaware of the subconscious process that is involved while they acquire the target language. Krashen (1982) argued that some adults follow a conscious process to learn a language. In this procedure, students are aware whether they are learning grammatical structures or vocabulary while producing the language. To illustrate, teachers present and explain grammar rules, and students must learn these rules as part of language learning.

According to Krashen (1982), learners are able to acquire language on their own if they receive ample comprehensible input. This comprehensible input is language that is somewhat higher than the knowledge students possess. In other words, students can learn language even if it is more difficult than the language they know. Krashen (as cited in Thornbury, 2004) asserted that learners may acquire a second language by interacting with native speakers without having to learn the grammatical structures of the second language. Krashen did not support the inclusion of grammar instruction in the language classroom.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

The three theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, and Krashen’s (1982) acquisition and learning theory view the role of grammar from different perspectives. Behaviorists believe grammar should be learned inductively, that is, through the selection of
grammatical points and in mechanical drills. Cognitivists believe grammar is necessary for language learning. However, contrary to the beliefs of behaviorists, they support learning grammar deductively rather than in a series of mechanical drills. On the other hand, Krashen did not view grammar as a necessary tool for language learning. He believed learners do not require grammar instruction to learn a foreign language. The three theories have influenced methodologists in the decision to include or reject grammar instruction. Once the decision is made to include grammar instruction, these theories influence the selection of different instructional approaches.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language

For more than 50 years, the field of EFL has experienced diverse changes in the approaches and methods to language teaching and grammar instruction. The decision whether to teach grammar, which has been a polemic issue for several decades, has led methodologists to search for more effective ways to approach grammar instruction. The following subsection explains some approaches and methods to the teaching of EFL that have been widely used around the world, while focusing on the role of grammar, grammar teaching and learning, and the teacher’s roles.

Grammar-Translation Approach

One of the most popular approaches used to teach Latin and Greek more than 500 years ago was the grammar-translation approach. According to Celce-Murcia (2001), grammar is the focus of the lesson and sentence construction is based on grammar rules. The teachers explain the grammar in detail and the students have to learn lists of words based on grammatical structures rather than context. In the grammar-translation
approach, the teaching of grammar is considered essential and teachers have to be knowledgeable of the grammar of the target language. The role of the teacher is to transmit the grammar rules of the target language.

**Audiolingual Approach**

One well-known approach that followed the grammar-translation approach was audiolingualism, which is based on the theory of behaviorism (Celce-Murcia, 2001). As previously stated, behaviorists assert language is acquired by following the stimulus–response–reinforcement patterns of learning. One example of this approach is when the teacher gives extensive drills and the students are expected to learn the language by repeating the examples given by the teacher (Harmer, 2003). To illustrate, the teacher may give the following statements and the students are required to repeat after the teacher:

Teacher: “This is a pen. Repeat.”

Students: “This is a pen.”

Teacher: “Pencil.”

Students: “This is a pencil.”

Teacher: “Notebook.”

Students: “This is a notebook.”

In the audiolingual approach, grammar is taught inductively, that is, the teacher gives the students selected structures in mechanical drills. The grammatical structures are taught one at a time and in repetitive practice (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Contrary to the grammar-translation approach, in the audiolingual approach, the teacher does not give detailed explanations of grammar rules. The belief is that grammar is not a necessary tool
in language learning. Rather, language will be learned through continuous repetition, as recommended by the theory of behaviorism. The role of the teacher in this approach is to control the activities performed in class and monitor the students’ performance. The approach is teacher-centered because the students must follow the teacher’s orders (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

**Cognitive Approach**

Similar to the grammar-translation approach, the cognitive approach offers students a more comprehensive view of language. The emphasis is on meaningful communication rather than the meaningless repetition of the audiolingual approach (Celce-Murcia, 2001). The cognitive approach highlights the need to teach grammar deductively. In other words, the teacher explains the rules explicitly and the students must first deduce rules before they use the language for communicative purposes. The goal is to learn the language accurately. The cognitive approach is grammar-based. In other words, this approach follows a grammatical syllabus that indicates what structures the students have to learn, as well as in what order. In the cognitive approach, communication is not the main goal; instead, the main goal is to learn the language accurately. To illustrate, students must understand all components of a task they are asked to do in the target language. The teacher explains the grammar rules before the students apply them in oral or written form.

**Communicative Approach**

Contrary to the beliefs of cognitivists, supporters of the communicative approach believe language teaching should not follow a grammar-based syllabus because the focus is on communication rather than the learning of grammar rules. The goal for the learner is
to acquire communicative competence. For instance, this approach offers learners the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups while using the target language. In other instances, learners have the opportunity to discover how the language is used in a given context (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Proponents of the communicative approach believe language should be taught for communicative purposes. In other words, students should have the opportunity to use the language in communicative activities to obtain information or respond to a given situation. Furthermore, this approach supports learning the language in terms of the communicative functions, not in terms of the structures (Harmer, 2003; Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The function of language is more important than the structures and rules of grammar. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the focus is on the fluency of the language, not on the accuracy of the grammatical structures. The role of the teacher is to act as a facilitator and a guide in the learning process. The teacher also organizes activities in the language classroom that will allow students to communicate using the target language (Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

**Task-Based Learning**

Supporters of task-based learning believe language is learned by using tasks that promote effective communication (Ellis, 2004). For example, students are presented with a given task or problem. The focus is not on language structures but on the performance of certain activities to find solutions to problems. At the end of the activities, the teacher may explain the grammar rules if any language problems had occurred during the activity. Following is an example of the task-based learning approach:
Teacher: Today we are going to practice listening to obtain flight information that is given in airports through loudspeakers. Let’s pretend that you are in the airport waiting for information about your flight. You have only the flight number. You do not have the departure and arrival times. In pairs, you are going to listen to a recording about flights and schedules to different countries. Your task is to write down the flight number, and the departure and arrival times to Frankfurt, Germany. You will listen to the tape twice. Next, check with your partner to make sure that you have written down the same information. Finally, you will send an e-mail to your family to inform them of the flight number and the time of your arrival because they want to be in the airport long before you arrive. (Nunan, 2003, p. 178)

While the students are participating in this activity, the teacher may help any students who may be having problems with the structures they need to use. For instance, students may have problems selecting the appropriate verb tenses when writing the e-mail and may ask the teacher to explain the verb tenses they need to use. Although the focus of this lesson is on communication rather than grammatical structures, the teacher may help the students to select the appropriate structures.

Language Discovery

One approach that does not support grammar instruction in the language classroom is the language discovery approach. Supporters of the language discovery approach believe individuals learn optimally by discovering the language for themselves. Harmer (2003) agreed, arguing, “The things we discover for ourselves are absorbed more effectively than things we are taught” (p. 75). This approach suggests that teachers offer learners opportunities to discover how the language is used in the given examples. The language discovery approach does not favor explaining grammar rules to the learners. It prefers that they observe and analyze how the language functions in context rather than in grammatical pieces. For example, the teacher gives learners some examples with a specific structure (simple present tense, present perfect tense, simple past tense) and helps
them decipher the grammar rules. Rather than explain the rules, the teacher allows the learners to notice the language and discover the rules (Harmer, 2003). The teacher’s role is not traditional, as Harmer (2003) suggested; instead, the teacher becomes a facilitator and observer of the learning process.

Teachers and students have experienced different approaches and methods to grammar instruction. These experiences, as Dewey (1938) asserted, have resulted in the personal beliefs individuals acquire during the teaching and learning process of the target language. These beliefs may be similar or different, depending on the approaches to grammar instruction that teachers and students have encountered in the language classroom. The problem may be that teachers have found certain approaches to EFL and grammar teaching to be more effective than others and have incorporated them into their teaching practices. Teachers may have found certain roles they believe to be appropriate for grammar instruction. On the other hand, students have probably experienced approaches they believed were effective but may not have been in accordance with their teachers’ best practices in teaching grammar.

Role of Grammar and Grammar Instruction in the EFL Classroom

Grammar has been a polemic topic in the field of foreign language teaching for several decades. Proponents of the various teaching approaches used in the past 50 years have offered different and sometimes opposing views regarding grammar and foreign language teaching and learning. Some researchers have argued that grammar is not necessary for language acquisition, so teachers must not dedicate time to rules and explanations. Moreover, given the adequate context, “language can be learned holistically
... without explicit instruction in grammar” (ZhonggangGao, 2001, p. 1). As previously stated, Krashen (1982) believed learners only require sufficient exposure to the target language in context for acquisition to occur. He added that learning rules and practicing grammatical structures does not facilitate the learning process.

Contrary to the belief that grammar teaching is not necessary, other researchers have asserted that grammar is an important and necessary device for language teaching. Teachers must give grammar explanations in the classroom to ensure comprehension and accuracy of the target language. By providing grammar rules and practice, adult learners “can induce or deduce meaningful hints out of these rules” (ZhonggangGao, 2001, p. 1). This process will facilitate language comprehension and learning. Celce-Murcia (2001) argued that although some teachers agree with researchers who oppose grammar instruction, other teachers agree with those who favor the inclusion of grammar in the language classroom.

Despite the controversy about grammar instruction, many teachers are in favor of grammar instruction and prefer to use a deductive method to teach it. To illustrate, the teacher presents and explains the rules in the classroom. The teacher also gives examples of how the new structure is used (Woods, 1995). Many teachers believe explaining the rules overtly helps students to understand what they are practicing and also improves the accuracy of the language. To demonstrate, the teacher explains the use of the past perfect tense in the following example:

T: The past perfect is formed from the past of the auxiliary “have” plus the past participle.
T: For example, “everyone had left, the film had started.”
T: So, what’s the past perfect of “they go?”
ST: “They had gone.”
T: Good.
T: It is used when you are talking about the past, and you want to refer to an earlier point in the past.
T: For example, “We were late. When we got to the cinema, the film had already started.”
T: Did the film start after we arrived, at the same time as we arrived, or before we arrived?
ST: Before.
T: Right.
T: So, it’s like this. [Draws]
   ______________b___________________a___________________ (illustration)
T: We arrived at this point in time (a). But I need to refer to an earlier point, when the film started, here (b). (Thornbury, 2004, pp. 32–33)

Not all teachers favor a deductive method to teach grammar. Some teachers favor an inductive method, that is, the students find the rules and meanings in examples provided by the teacher. The teacher does not explain grammar rules but guides the students in a “process of discovering the language” (Woods, 1995, p. 77). Teachers who favor the inductive method believe allowing students to discover the rules of grammar on their own helps them to understand how the language functions. For example, the teacher presents students with the following scenarios:

   a. Chris has lived in Cape Town for 10 years.
      Andrew has been learning to drive for 6 months.
   b. Wendy has lived in Edinburgh since 1995.
      David has been out of work since January.

Next, students complete the following examples with for or since.

   a. Anna has been married __________ 7 years.
   b. Jeff has been studying French ____________1990.

By reading the examples carefully, the learners can infer the rule that applies in each statement. They can then apply the rule to complete the examples presented by the
teacher. The teacher gives any additional information about grammar points if the students are not able to discover the rules on their own.

Grammar instruction has been a controversial topic for decades. The decision to select certain approaches to grammar teaching and learning results from past experiences with approaches that have proven successful in the language classroom. Teachers’ and students’ beliefs, resulting from these experiences (Dewey, 1938), will guide decisions about grammar teaching and learning. The next section provides information about beliefs, the belief systems of teachers and students, and their beliefs about the role of grammar and grammar instruction in EFL.

**Definition of Beliefs**

Researchers use different terms to define beliefs. Kalaja and Barcelos (2006) commented,


Kalaja and Barcelos (2006) analyzed the terms (see Table 1) and concluded these definitions relate to language, language learning, and social and cultural interactions. They contended that “understanding students’ beliefs means understanding their world and their identify” (p. 8). Herein lies the importance of exploring the beliefs teachers and students bring to the language learning environment, in an effort to improve teaching practices and increase student achievement.
### Table 1. Beliefs About Second Language Acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folklinguistic theories of learning (Miller &amp; Ginsberg, 1995)</td>
<td>“Ideas that students have about language and language learning” (p. 294).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner representations (Holec, 1987)</td>
<td>“Learners’ entering assumptions about their roles and functions of teachers and teaching materials” (p. 152).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representations (Riley, 1994, 1997)</td>
<td>“Popular ideas about the nature of language and languages, language structure and language use, the relationship between thought and language, identity and language, language and intelligence, language and learning, and so on” (1994, p. 8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners’ philosophy of language learning (Abraham &amp; Vann, 1987)</td>
<td>“Beliefs about how language operates, and consequently, how it is learned” (p. 95).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1987)</td>
<td>“The stable, statable although sometimes incorrect knowledge that learners have acquired about language, learning and the language learning process; also referred to as knowledge or concepts about language learning or learner beliefs; there are three kinds: person, task and strategic knowledge” (p. 163).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs (Wenden, 1987)</td>
<td>“Opinions which are based on experience and the opinions of respected others, which influence the way they [students] act” (p. 5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural beliefs (Gardner, 1988)</td>
<td>“Expectations in the minds of teachers, parents and students concerning the entire second language acquisition task” (p. 110).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning culture (Riley, 1997)</td>
<td>“A set of representations, beliefs and values related to learning that directly influence [students’] learning behavior” (p. 122).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of learning languages (Barcelos, 1995)</td>
<td>“Learners’ intuitive implicit (or explicit) knowledge made of beliefs, myths, cultural assumptions and ideals about how to learn languages. This knowledge, according to learners’ age and social economic level, is based upon their previous educational experience, previous (and present) readings about language learning and contact with other people like family, friends, relatives, teachers and so forth” (p. 40).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of learning (Cortazzi &amp; Jin, 1996)</td>
<td>“The cultural aspects of teaching and learning; what people believe about ‘normal’ and ‘good’ learning activities and processes, where such beliefs have a cultural origin” (p. 230).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belief Systems of Teachers and Students

In the field of EFL, teachers’ belief systems are “founded on the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching, and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 30). Teachers possess preconceived views that may be the result of past experiences as language teachers or learners. These beliefs guide personal decisions about the selection of appropriate strategies and approaches to language teaching and learning (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Teachers’ belief systems also derive from the knowledge of different methods and approaches to EFL that teachers have gained through training, personal experience, or those that have been successful with language learners.

Graves (2000) described a personal experience while teaching Chinese students. The beliefs guided the teacher in adopting a facilitator role in the classroom. However, this role was not in accord with the learners’ view of the teacher as a “drill master” (Graves, 2000, p. 25) and successful learning as a process that required substantial drilling. To rephrase, the students believed the teacher’s role was that of an authority figure who should offer mechanical practice by modeling the target language, not by facilitating the language learning process.

Students also possess certain ways of approaching language learning. Richards and Lockhart (1994) commented, “Learners . . . bring to learning their own beliefs, goals, attitudes, and decisions, which in turn influence how they approach their learning” (p. 52). Students’ beliefs about language learning are influenced by their past and present experiences with the teaching and learning process. For example, some students believe grammar is the most important part of language learning and may favor grammar
instruction in the classroom, whereas other students may have different beliefs about
listening, speaking, reading, or writing.

The experience with different teachers also may influence students’ understanding
of the teacher’s role. For example, students may have the following expectations: “The
teacher’s responsibility is to provide information. Teachers should explain grammar
rules” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 54). Students come to class with certain attitudes
toward language learning. For instance, some students believe “it’s not useful to try and
remember grammar rules” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 55); others may believe “you
need to practice everyday to improve your English” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 55).
Students’ beliefs will translate into how they approach language learning and how they
expect their teachers to approach language teaching.

Beliefs About Grammar Methodology
in the EFL Classroom

Weaver (1996) suggested that teachers continue to teach grammar in traditional
ways. Teachers gave several reasons why they continue to teach formal grammar: (a)
teachers believe it will not hurt students to learn grammar rules, (b) teachers do not
believe new approaches will work, and (c) teachers believe the methods they have used
work successfully and there is no need for modern procedures. The results of Weaver’s
study indicated that teachers support the inclusion of grammar and prefer to teach
grammar using a deductive method.

According to research, many students believe learning grammar is an important
component of foreign language learning (Kern, 1995). However, EFL students in Japan
made the following statement regarding grammar: “The most difficult part of learning
English is learning grammar” (as cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 52). Researchers have investigated students’ beliefs about foreign language and oral instruction (Cohen & Fass, 2001), language aptitude, difficulty of language learning, appropriate language learning strategies and motivation (Horwitz, 1988), use of learning strategies (Wenden, 1987; Yang, 1992), and attitudes toward EFL (Llado-Torres, 1984). However, no study has specifically looked into the role of grammar and grammar methodology in EFL in Oman. This was the focus of this study.

Mismatches Between Teachers’ and Students’ Beliefs

Teachers and students have similar and different beliefs about the teaching and learning process. The different beliefs often reflect opposing views that impede language improvement. Horwitz (1988), Kuntz (1996), Tumposky (1991), and Yang (1992) identified similarities and differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs. According to their findings, teachers and students agree on the following beliefs:

1. Learning a foreign language requires time and practice.
2. It is easier for children to learn a foreign language.
3. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.
4. Some foreign languages are easier to learn than others. (Kalaja & Barcelo, 2006, p. 9)

The findings also suggested that teachers and students disagree on the following beliefs:

1. It is easier to read and write the language than to speak and understand it.
2. You shouldn’t say anything until you can say it correctly.
3. In order to listen to something in a foreign language, one must know all the words.
4. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on. (Kuntz, 1997, pp. 12–13)
Sanchetti (2007), LC program coordinator and EFL instructor, carried out a study that compared the perspectives of teachers and students about the best techniques for teaching and learning EFL. Three hundred students and 30 teachers from the LC participated in the study. Both teachers and students expressed their views about the best practices in teaching academic skills and grammar. The participants were asked to rank the 10 best practices on a Likert scale from 1 (*most important*) to 10 (*least important*). Some of the best practices referred to the writing process, giving feedback, using different activities in the classroom, and using activities to enhance critical thinking skills. Only one question referred to best practices for grammar teaching. According to the findings concerning teaching grammar through context, the students’ rank was 7, but the teachers’ rank was 5. The results reflected a difference between the teachers and the students in their perspectives about the importance of teaching grammar.

Although the study (Sanchetti, 2007) offered valuable information concerning language teaching and learning, the study did not include detailed information about grammar and EFL teaching and learning. A study was needed to offer detailed information about the role of grammar and EFL, the best practices for grammar teaching and learning, the importance of grammar for EFL teaching and learning, and the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction.

When students and teachers hold similar beliefs, the result is a positive environment for learning. Furthermore, having similar beliefs will allow the teachers to more readily meet the students’ goals and expectations of language learning. However, when students and teachers hold opposing beliefs, the results may be frustration and a lack of motivation. Institutions should offer teachers and students opportunities to explore
and align their beliefs that will result in the more effective selection of teaching materials, methods, and approaches to teach and learn EFL successfully.

Chapter Summary

This chapter delineated some theories of SLA and explained several approaches and methods to EFL, focusing specifically on the role of grammar, the best practices to teach and learn grammar, and the role of teachers in grammar instruction. This chapter included a discussion of teachers’ and students’ belief systems, mismatches between teachers’ and students’ beliefs, and the advantages and disadvantages of holding similar as well as opposing beliefs about EFL.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter begins with an explanation of the research design. Descriptions of the study sample, data collection instrument, and the pilot study follow. The goal was to identify similarities and differences in the beliefs of teachers and students about the role of grammar, grammar teaching and learning, and the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction in EFL. The main objectives were to (a) measure teachers’ and students’ beliefs about EFL and the role of grammar methodology, (b) examine the beliefs about grammar methodology in the EFL classroom, (c) examine teachers’ and students’ beliefs about grammar learning, and (d) examine the beliefs about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction. Grammar methodology, as mentioned in the previous chapters, refers to the different methods and approaches teachers use to teach grammar in the classroom. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the data collection process, the data analysis, and the efforts to protect the participants’ rights.

Research Design

A survey design was used to collect information concerning teachers’ and students’ belief systems. An adequate method to collect data about beliefs is the survey. It is a common method in the field of education. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explained that
“survey research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people—perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences” (p. 183). The survey design has several advantages. Using questionnaires is less expensive than other research designs and data can be collected more rapidly. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) and Simon and Francis (2001) recommended the use of questionnaires with closed-ended questions because they facilitate the data collection process and allow the participants to select the answer from a series of options. For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire asked about the personal beliefs of the teachers and the students who were involved.

Questionnaires also have some disadvantages. As previously mentioned, the participants do not always answer questionnaires truthfully. Other times, the participants do not understand the questions or how to respond. Another disadvantage is that not all participants return the questionnaire. To avoid misunderstandings, the teacher in each of the selected classrooms explained the questions to the students when necessary and allowed 15 minutes of class time for students to sign the consent form and answer the questionnaire. Teachers asked the students to answer the questionnaire truthfully. Teachers collected the questionnaires before students left the classrooms.

**Study Sample**

The participants were 30 EFL teachers and 300 students from Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP. Because the research questions sought responses that allowed the researcher to examine the beliefs of the teachers and students, it was essential to select teachers and students from the same level of the IELP. Selecting teachers and their students facilitated
a detailed comparison of personal beliefs. The teachers were randomly selected once the researcher obtained permission from their coordinators. Random selection ensures that “each individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population, ensuring that the sample will be representative of the population” (Keppel, as cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 164). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) agreed with Keppel when they explained that random selection will ensure the characteristics in the sample are similar to the characteristics of the target population. Simple random sampling was adequate because all of the participants are known to the researcher and the number is small. Once the teachers were selected, their corresponding students also participated in the study.

The teachers were selected from Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP. The total population of the teachers of Levels 5 and 6 is 60. The table of random numbers, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2005), selected 30 of 60 teachers of Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP. According to the staff recruitment department of the LC, the male and female teachers range in age from 25 to 65. These teachers are from Western countries, including the United States, Great Britain, and Canada; non-Western countries, including India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; and the Arab countries of Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, and Oman. However, the teachers’ countries of origin are not the focus of this study. Some of the teachers hold a doctorate in EFL or a related field. The majority of the teachers hold a master’s degree in EFL or a related field. A small percentage hold a bachelor’s degree and are TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) certified.

The student participants were from Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP. The students are Omani, male and female, and their first language is Arabic. Their ages range from 18 to 20. The majority of these students have been in the program for at least one year. The
selected teachers participated with their corresponding groups in the study. The teachers invited their students and asked them to sign a consent form if they were willing to participate in the study. Each group consisted of 10–20 students; therefore, a total of 300 students participated in the study.

**Instrumentation**

According to the LC, 3,000 students were registered in the IELP in the Fall 2010 semester. Data were collected at a specific time during that semester. A questionnaire identified the personal beliefs of all the participants.

The survey was the adaptation of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was used to seek opinions about language teaching and learning (Thornbury, 1999). Permission was granted by Oxford University Press to use the questionnaire. The second questionnaire concerned beliefs about grammar teaching and learning (Harmer, 1987). Permission was granted by Pearson Longman. The selected teachers and students from the IELP responded to the same questions in the questionnaire. The purpose was to examine the opinions given by the student and teacher participants. The questionnaire contained a Likert scale that gave the participants the opportunity “to express their agreement with various statements about an attitude object” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 628), ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

To ensure content validity, the researcher asked members of her dissertation committee to revise the instrument. Furthermore, a matrix (see Appendix A) shows the relationship between the research questions and the items on the questionnaire. To ensure
validity and reliability, a pilot study was conducted. A description of the pilot study follows.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study was administered among a group of teachers and students of the LC. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), “A brief pilot study is an excellent way to determine the feasibility of your study” (p. 110). Gall et al. (2003) recommended allowing the participants to give opinions and recommendations about the questions. The suggestions helped to improve the questionnaire so that it would have questions that were clear and comprehensible to all of the participants. The pilot test included 10 teachers and 23 students of the IELP. With permission from the director of the LC, and the cooperation of Level 5 and 6 coordinators, the pilot study was conducted in May of the Spring 2010 semester. The Level 5 and 6 participants answered a questionnaire and made suggestions on some words and/or questions that were not clear. The participants also suggested the questionnaire be translated to Arabic to avoid any misunderstandings among student participants because the questions referred to personal beliefs. The students answered the questionnaire in Arabic. The teachers answered the questionnaire in English. The suggested changes were made to the questionnaire (see Appendix B) so that it had questions that were clear and comprehensible to all of the participants.

**Data Collection**

As previously mentioned, the researcher collected the data in the LC during the Fall 2010 semester. Teachers and students, who were randomly selected, answered a survey based on two questionnaires, one developed by Thornbury (1999) and one by
Harmer (1987). The statements sought information on foreign language teaching and learning, with a focus on the role of grammar and grammar instruction. Some statements included preferences for best practices for grammar teaching in the EFL classroom. The statements also addressed the best methods to learn grammar. For example, a statement from the survey about the role of grammar is as follows: “Grammar is an important tool for language learning.”

After the random selection of the teachers and their corresponding students, data were collected at the end of Week 3 and beginning of Week 4 of the semester. Teacher participants were invited to participate in the research study. During the second week of class, teachers were informed of the date and time when the consent forms and questionnaires would be administered in their classrooms. This gave them time to organize their lesson plans to include time for the students to answer the questionnaire. The teachers distributed the consent forms and questionnaires to the class. The teachers asked the students to read the instructions carefully and allowed them to ask questions about the study. Students signed a consent form and answered a questionnaire that took approximately 15 minutes. In some cases, teachers selected the date and time when they were able to administer the questionnaires. Due to time constraints, the researcher was not present in all the participating classrooms during administration of the survey. When this was the case, the researcher gave the information to the teachers regarding the consent forms and questionnaires. The consent forms and questionnaires were collected once everyone had finished. The researcher was able to collect data from 30 teachers and 300 students on the dates assigned.
Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics helped to summarize the data collected from teachers and students of the LC. Simon and Francis (2001) recommended the use of independent $t$ tests when the two groups in the study are independent. Therefore, $t$ tests were used in this study to determine whether there were statistically significant similarities and differences between the teachers’ and students’ mean scores on the survey. According to Gall et al. (2003), “$t$ tests provide accurate estimates of statistical significance” (p. 304).

The researcher used inferential statistics to make inferences about a larger population from the data collected of the sample of teachers and students from the LC. The researcher also was able to make decisions about the data with the help of inferential statistics (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). According to Gall et al. (2003), inferential statistics will “contribute evidence to establish the population validity of a set of research results” (p. 165).

Participants’ Rights

As previously mentioned, 30 of 60 EFL teachers were selected for the study groups. Approximately 300 students from Levels 5 and 6 were selected to represent the student population. The privacy of both teachers and students was respected by the researcher. The participants were informed their personal information and any information they provided in their survey responses would remain confidential. The names of the teachers and the students did not appear on the questionnaires or any other documents related to the study. Each questionnaire had a number to facilitate the organization of data, as suggested by Gall et al. (2003).
Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research design for the study. The characteristics of the sample were described. The data collection instrument and the pilot study were explained. The chapter concluded with an explication of the data collection process, the data analysis, and the participants’ rights.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Introduction

The research questions compared and contrasted teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the role of grammar, the teacher’s role within grammar instruction, and grammar teaching and learning in the EFL classroom at a public university in Oman. The data collected and analysis of the results addressed the following research questions:

The primary research question asked, “Are students’ beliefs about grammar in EFL similar to or different from the beliefs of their teachers?” The study also had the following subquestions:

1. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the importance of grammar within foreign language learning?
2. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar teaching?
3. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best methods for grammar learning?
4. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction?

This chapter contains a description of the sample analysis results for each of the research questions and a summary of the research findings.
Data Analysis Procedure

Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the sample population tested. SPSS was used to code and tabulate scores collected from the survey and provide summarized values where applicable, including the median, mean, central tendency, variance, and standard deviation. In addition, demographic data were processed using frequency statistics. Finally, independent-samples $t$ tests were used to detect group differences in the variables of interest.

Prior to analyzing the research questions, data hygiene and data screening were undertaken to ensure the variables of interest met appropriate statistical assumptions. Thus, the following analyses followed an analytic strategy in that the variables were first evaluated for normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance. Subsequently, frequency statistics and independent-samples $t$ tests were run to determine if any relationships existed between variables of interest. To avoid repetition, data hygiene and data screening of variables were collectively reported where applicable, including normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance.

Analysis of Research Questions 1–4

Data related to Research Questions 1–4 were analyzed using independent-samples $t$ tests. Independent-samples $t$ tests were employed to determine if differences existed between students and teachers on the four defined constructs of grammar within foreign language, best practices for grammar teaching and learning, and the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction. The participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each of the 15 survey questions. Survey questions were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 =
strongly agree. The independent variable for Research Questions 1–4 was student and teacher groups. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables by group are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group type</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Grammar within foreign language</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best practices for grammar teaching</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.51</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best practices for grammar learning</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.59</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher’s roles within grammar instruction</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.60</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Grammar within foreign language</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher’s roles within grammar instruction</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Missing Data and Univariate Outliers**

Missing data were investigated by running frequency counts in SPSS 19.0. Based on the analysis, no cases with missing data were found. A test for univariate outliers was conducted. Univariate outliers were sought by converting observed scores to $z$ scores and then comparing case values to the critical value of $±3.29$, $p < .001$. Case $z$ scores that exceed this value are greater than three standard deviations from the normalized mean and should be removed from the analysis. No outliers were found to exist within the distributions.
Tests of Normality

Before Research Questions 1–4 were analyzed, basic parametric assumptions were assessed. That is, for the four dependent variables, assumptions of normality and linearity were evaluated. That said, standardized frequency histograms were created to enable the researcher to visually evaluate the aforementioned assumptions. Based on the evaluations, all assumptions were met.

Independent-Samples t Test Analysis

Research Question 1. Using the Analyze/Compare Means/Independent-Samples t Test feature of SPSS, a significant difference was found between students’ and teachers’ scores on grammar within foreign language: \( t(1,325) = -3.258, p = .001 \) (see Table 3 and Figure 1 for details). Table 3 provides descriptive statistics generated from the independent-samples t test analysis.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Generated From Independent-Samples t Test Indicating a Significant Difference Between Students and Teachers in Response to Grammar Within Foreign Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar within foreign language learning</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>SE difference</th>
<th>95% confidence interval of the difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-3.483</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.396</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>-0.619 - 0.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-3.258</td>
<td>34.165</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.396</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>-0.642 - 0.149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As depicted in Figure 1, mean scores for the importance of grammar and foreign language were significantly different between students ($M = 1.946, SD = 0.588$) and teachers ($M = 2.342, SD = 0.117$). Based on these results, there were significant differences between students’ and teachers’ responses to the importance of grammar within foreign language learning.

**Figure 1.** Means plot indicating a significant difference between students and teachers in response to grammar within foreign language.

**Research Question 2.** Using the Analyze/Compare Means/Independent-Samples $t$ Test feature of SPSS, a significant difference was found between students’ and teachers’ scores on best practices for grammar teaching: $t(1,325) = -7.912, p < .001$ (see Table 4 and Figure 2 for details). Table 4 provides descriptive statistics generated from the independent-samples $t$ test analysis.
As depicted in Figure 2, mean scores for best practices for grammar teaching were significantly different between students (\( M = 2.00, SD = .501 \)) and teachers (\( M = 2.77, SD = .517 \)). Based on these results, there were significant differences between students’ and teachers’ responses to best practices for grammar teaching.

**Research Question 3.** Using the Analyze/Compare Means/Independent-Samples \( t \) Test feature of SPSS, a significant difference was found between students’ and teachers’ scores on best practices for grammar learning: \( t(1,325) = -8.112, p < .001 \) (see Table 5 and Figure 3 for details). Table 5 provides descriptive statistics generated from the independent-samples \( t \) test analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best practices for grammar teaching</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>( SE ) difference</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>−7.912</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−0.762</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>−0.951</td>
<td>−0.572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>−7.707</td>
<td>34.726</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−0.762</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>−0.963</td>
<td>−0.561</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics Generated From Independent-Samples \( t \) Test Indicating a Significant Difference Between Students and Teachers in Response to Best Practices for Grammar Teaching
Figure 2. Means plot indicating a significant difference between students and teachers in response to best practices for grammar teaching.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics Generated From Independent-Samples $t$ Test Indicating a Significant Difference Between Students and Teachers in Response to Best Practices for Grammar Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best practices for grammar learning</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>SE difference</th>
<th>95% confidence interval of the difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>−8.112</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−0.908</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>−1.128 −0.688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>−7.511</td>
<td>34.035</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−0.908</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>−1.154 −0.662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As depicted in Figure 3, mean scores for grammar learning were significantly different between students \((M = 1.803, SD = .578)\) and teachers \((M = 2.71, SD = .636)\). Based on these results, there were significant differences between students’ and teachers’ responses to best practices for grammar learning.

![Means plot indicating a significant difference between students and teachers in response to best practices for grammar learning.](image)

**Research Question 4.** Using the Analyze/Compare Means/Independent-Samples \(t\) Test feature of SPSS, a significant difference was found between students’ and teachers’ scores on teacher’s roles within grammar instruction: \(t(1,325) = -5.414, p < .001\) (see Table 6 and Figure 4 for details). Table 6 provides descriptive statistics generated from the independent-samples \(t\) test analysis.
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics Generated From Independent-Samples \( t \) Test Indicating a Significant Difference Between Students and Teachers in Response to Teacher’s Roles Within Grammar Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s roles within grammar instruction</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>SE difference</th>
<th>95% confidence interval of the difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>−5.414</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−0.578</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>−0.788, −0.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>−5.519</td>
<td>35.427</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−0.578</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>−0.790, −0.365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted in Figure 4, mean scores for teacher’s roles within grammar instruction were significantly different between students (\( M = 1.600, SD = .558 \)) and teachers (\( M = 2.178, SD = .545 \)). Based on these results, there were significant differences between students’ and teachers’ responses to teacher’s roles within grammar instruction.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the results of this study. The answers to the survey questions used to collect data were analyzed and the results presented in tables and figures. The results of this research study indicated significant differences between teachers’ and students’ answers to nine of 15 survey questions on the views about grammar within foreign language. The differences that resulted from the study refer to the views about the role of grammar, grammar methodology, and grammar learning.
Teachers have strong beliefs about the role of grammar in the EFL classroom. They also have hearty opinions about the best ways to learn grammar and the best practices for grammar teaching. Students expressed stronger opinions on the importance of the different activities that can be done in class to learn a foreign language besides grammar learning. The results also showed there were no significant differences between teachers’ and students’ perceptions about the knowledge of grammar and grammar rules. The results demonstrated there were no significant differences between teachers and students regarding the relationship between practicing the language instead of learning the grammar. Finally, the results indicated there were no significant differences between teachers’ and students’ views about the context in which grammar should be studied.
Apparently, teachers have stronger beliefs regarding grammar and foreign language teaching and learning, and this may result in misunderstandings and conflict between teachers and students, as mentioned in chapter 1.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Teachers and students hold beliefs about the role of grammar and grammar teaching and learning, and the teacher’s roles in the EFL classroom. These beliefs have influenced the decisions both teachers and students make in the language classroom. Richards and Lockhart (1994) explored beliefs about language learning and found that teachers’ beliefs can lead to misunderstandings and negative views when they do not coincide with students’ beliefs. This results in different and sometimes contrasting views toward the teaching and learning of grammar.

Altan (2006) investigated teachers’ and students’ beliefs and found that teachers need to know what beliefs their students bring to the language classroom. This information will help teachers understand what students think about language learning and grammar and select appropriate approaches to increase language learning. The contrary would be what Richards and Lockhart (1994) found in their study. The lack of knowledge of beliefs may result in conflicts and failure in the language classroom.

A review of the literature indicated the role of grammar and grammar instruction in EFL has been controversial for years. For instance, some researchers, such as Krashen (1982), Harmer (2003), and Zhonggang Gao (2001), believe learners do not need grammar to master the target language. They asserted that learners need an appropriate
context and opportunities to discover the language without the help of grammar. However, other researchers believe grammar is necessary to help learners comprehend and learn the language accurately (Celce-Murcia, 2001). The review also showed that methodologists have searched for ways to improve grammar instruction. The review also highlighted the sometimes differing views toward foreign language between teachers and students. However, what researchers have overlooked to this point is an examination into the similarities and differences between teacher and student beliefs about the specific role of grammar and grammar teaching and learning in EFL as well as the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction.

Teachers and students possess beliefs about various aspects of EFL teaching. Some of these beliefs refer to the best practices for vocabulary, reading, writing, or speaking (Horwitz, 1988). A mismatch between these beliefs can lead to “misunderstanding and mistrust on the part of both teachers and learners” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 35); thus, it is important these underlying beliefs be understood by both parties and addressed by the teacher. Allowing teachers to explore their personal beliefs as well as their students’ beliefs will help them to become more aware of their instructional practices and the beliefs their students may bring with them into the classroom.

Teachers and students meet in the EFL classrooms, at times, on a daily basis. Both parties bring personal views about the teaching and learning of grammar. Finding out what beliefs students bring to the classroom will help teachers build students’ interest in learning grammar and strengthen their confidence as foreign language learners. Finding out what beliefs teachers bring to the classroom will help students understand the
role of the teacher, be more receptive to teaching practices, and be more agreeable to and engaged in classroom activities.

The purpose of this study was to obtain information that would facilitate the selection of materials and best practices that meet the expectations of teachers and students about grammar in the EFL classroom. Two selected groups of teachers and students of the LC at a public university in Oman had the opportunity to express their views about the role of grammar, their preferences about the methods and approaches to grammar teaching and learning, their views about the importance of grammar in EFL, and their opinions about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction.

This study was guided by a primary research question that asked, “Are students’ beliefs about grammar in EFL similar to or different from the beliefs of their teachers?” This guiding question was supported by four subquestions:

1. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the importance of grammar within foreign language learning?
2. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar teaching?
3. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar learning?
4. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction?

These questions were answered through a survey of 30 EFL teachers and 300 Level 5 and 6 students participating in the IELP at a selected university in Oman. Participants completed one questionnaire seeking opinions about language teaching and learning.
Results were analyzed for differences between teachers and students with regard to beliefs about the role of grammar, grammar instruction, grammar learning, and the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction. Chapter 4 contained a full account of the data and results of the survey. The following section is a review of the findings.

**Summary of Findings and Discussion**

**Beliefs About the Importance of Grammar Within Foreign Language Learning**

Research Question 1 was used to explore the importance of grammar within foreign language learning. Participants had the opportunity to express their beliefs about this matter. According to the results, there were significant differences between teachers’ and students’ responses about the importance of grammar.

In the areas of significant difference, teachers were found to express deep opinions about the importance of grammar and grammar as a tool for communication in EFL. Teachers did not agree that students need to learn grammar first in order to learn a foreign language. However, students viewed grammar as of primary importance for language learning. These mixed findings suggest there is a disparity in how teachers and students view the importance of grammar with respect to language learning.

**Beliefs About the Best Practices for Grammar Teaching**

Research Question 2 was used to investigated participants’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar instruction. When teachers and students were asked about their opinions concerning best practices for grammar teaching, the results were mixed.
In the areas of significant difference, teachers were found to support the idea that grammar is not necessary for language teaching. However, teachers may feel that grammar can be useful for some students, and therefore should be taught using certain approaches to grammar teaching that may not be in accordance with students’ views. According to Woods’s (1995) findings, some teachers prefer to help students discover the language instead of giving grammar rules. Nagyne (2006) found that teachers believe students do not need grammar to learn the target language. This supports the findings in Woods’s (1995) study. However, Nagyne (2006) also found that some teachers believe students need grammar for accuracy of the language.

Students supported the belief that teachers need to explain the grammar and give rules if the students are to learn EFL. Students’ opinions about grammar teaching supported Buyukyazi (2010), who found that students believe the teacher should give them grammar rules to learn for successful language learning. These mixed findings suggest there is a mismatch between teacher and student views regarding whether grammar is important for foreign language learning and the best methods to teach and learn grammar in the EFL classroom. These differences, as Kalaja and Barcelo (2006) asserted, create difficulties for the teacher, as students may not agree with the methods used for grammar instruction.

**Beliefs About the Best Practices for Grammar Learning**

Research Question 3, which referred to best practices for grammar learning, revealed a significant difference between students and teachers ($p < 0.001$). Mean scores for students ($M = 1.803$) were lower than those for teachers ($M = 2.71$). This difference
highlights the opposing views between teachers and students with respect to the best practices for grammar learning. Students supported the belief that the best way to learn grammar is by learning grammar rules and then applying them in exercises. According to the results, teachers did not believe that learning grammar rules and then applying them is the best way to learn grammar. Students’ opinions about the best practices for grammar learning supported Buyukyazi (2010), who found that students prefer to learn grammar rules for accuracy of the target language.

**Beliefs About Teacher’s Roles Within Grammar Instruction**

Research Question 4, the roles of the teacher within grammar instruction, showed statistically significant difference between teacher and student ratings ($p < 0.001$). As with the best practices for grammar learning explored in Research Question 3, student means ($M = 1.600$) were below those of the teachers ($M = 2.178$). Teachers viewed their role as the person who guides the students and facilitates the learning process, while students viewed the teacher as the one who provides knowledge by giving them grammar rules and explanation.

**Limitations**

A variety of limitations naturally constrain the conclusions drawn from this research. The potential limitations discussed in chapter 1 were affirmed during the study. In this quantitative study, a questionnaire was used to collect the participants’ views and beliefs about grammar and EFL. However, as Leedy and Ormrod (2005) acknowledged, participants may express beliefs that were not necessarily true or that were constructed
just prior to answering the questions. This could be a limitation of the study and impact an accurate exploration of the participants’ beliefs. In addition, Kalaja and Barcelos (2006) argued that questionnaires do not offer a thorough perception of the beliefs of teachers and students because the beliefs are not manifested while performing certain activities that occur in the language classrooms.

The study included only teachers and students from Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP. Teachers and students from Levels 1–4 did not participate in this study. This was another limitation to the study because only the voices of a specific group of teachers and students were heard. Further, students in Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP may not have the same command of the target language, and this could affect the different views they could have toward the importance of grammar and foreign language learning and result as a limitation to the study.

Only questionnaires were used, and this limited the results in the study. Interviews would have allowed participants to offer additional information about their views and expand the information given in the survey (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Teachers of the LC participated in the study. Teachers from other institutions were not invited to participate. This limited the results of the study because the only responses obtained were those of the LC teachers.

As a study that relied upon a small sample size in a single setting, these limitations must be noted but should not diminish the value of the research. With these limitations noted, the following section considers the conclusions and implications stemming from this study.
Conclusions

Beliefs About the Importance of Grammar Within Foreign Language Learning

The findings of mixed significance concerning the research question about the importance of grammar within foreign language learning suggests teachers and students have different views about the importance of grammar. This finding has implications for the teaching and learning process as well as the redesign of the current program concerning the role of grammar. Specifically, these results suggest teachers and students do not agree about the importance of grammar and, therefore, this disagreement may result in students’ low achievement in the classroom. This finding can also help inform the authorities in charge of the IELP at a public university in Oman to understand the impact of the perceptions held by teachers and students.

Prior researchers found similar results that suggest grammar should be taught in language classrooms (Celce-Murcia, 2001). However, the results of this study contradicted Krashen (1982), who stated adult learners do not need grammar to learn a language. Learners only need to be in the context in which the target language is used to acquire it. The findings of this study agreed with those of Kern’s (1995) study in which students stated grammar was an important component of foreign language learning. The findings of the present study seem to resonate with those of Pazaver and Wang’s (2009) study. They found that students have strong opinions in favor of grammar instruction. Pazaver and Wang (2009) also found that students believe grammar is necessary for language learning.
Beliefs About the Best Practices for Grammar Teaching

The significant findings about best practices for teaching grammar indicated there are differences in the opinions teachers and students expressed about the best ways to teach grammar. The findings affirm the work of Weaver (1996), who found that teachers preferred to give grammar rules in the language classroom. Some researchers, like Woods (1995), have found that some teachers favor giving grammar rules, while others oppose doing so. According to Woods’s (1995) findings, some teachers prefer to give rules and explanations in the classroom, while others prefer to help students discover the language instead of giving grammar rules. A study conducted by Barnard and Scampton (2008) investigated the beliefs of 48 language teachers. The results indicated the majority of the teachers believed grammar was the central and most important part for language accuracy.

The present study indicated that teachers and students do not agree about the best practices for grammar teaching. This disagreement may result in selecting practices that do not meet students’ expectations, and this could impact student learning and motivation. This is another area in which mismatch between student and teacher expectations may have an impact on student performance. Omani students have to study English starting in elementary school. Their views about foreign language learning as adults result from the experiences they had while studying English in elementary school, high school, and the levels of the IELP they studied. They acquire Arabic at home. It is their first language and they use it daily, at home, with family, friends, and peers,
whereas English is only used in school. They learn English in school in a classroom setting.

**Beliefs About the Best Practices for Grammar Learning**

The finding that teachers and students differ in some specific perceptions of best practices for grammar teaching suggests they also have different preferences for best practices for language learning. Differences highlighted in the data included the decisive beliefs teachers expressed about the best ways to learn grammar. This suggests teachers and students have their own and, at times, opposing views that may lead to “misunderstanding and mistrust on the part of both teachers and learners” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 35).

The findings support the study by Buyukyazi (2010), who found that students prefer to learn grammar rules for successful language learning. The fact that teachers and students had key results in common suggests that teachers and students have strong views concerning the learning of grammar. Such insight can be used to help the institution search for effective practices that are in accordance with students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar learning that help students succeed in the language classroom.

Forty-one teachers and 371 students participated in a study conducted by Liao and Wang (2009). Almost two thirds (65.9%) of teachers and 80.9% of students were in favor of learning rules in the foreign language classroom. The results of the present study are not in accordance with Liao and Wang’s study. The results indicated differences in teachers’ and students’ preferences for best practices for grammar learning.
Beliefs About Teacher’s Roles Within Grammar Instruction

Underlying beliefs about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction show that participants believe the teacher plays different roles in the language classroom. Teachers strongly disagreed that the teacher’s role is to provide knowledge about grammar, while students believed the teacher’s role is to give information about grammar. This aligns with the perspectives of the different approaches used to teach EFL. In the grammar-translation and cognitive approaches, the role of the teacher is a traditional one: to transmit the grammar rules of the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). However, in the communicative approach, the teacher is viewed as a facilitator, an organizer, and a guide (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). In the language discovery approach, the teacher’s role also is facilitator and observer (Harmer, 2003). This finding may assist both teachers and students to recognize the different views that exist concerning the roles of the teacher within grammar instruction.

Recommendations for Further Study

Several recommendations for future research in this area can be suggested. Specifically, four recommendations can be considered as a natural extension to this study, and hold the potential to further advance findings in this area.

1. Replicate the study with emphasis on the students’ roles during grammar instruction. One of the research questions of this study included the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction. However, this study did not include an exploration of students’ roles. There is a need for another study that focuses
on students’ roles in the language classroom to help teachers and students understand the roles students should hold in the classroom for high achievement in EFL. This knowledge will also help differentiate between roles, such as passive versus active, in an effort to select the most effective ones for successful learning.

2. Expand the study to include all levels of the IELP. This study included Levels 5 and 6 of the IELP. There is a need for a study to include all levels of the IELP to help improve teaching and learning practices in the whole program and to understand how one level informs the next. Teachers and students of the IELP need moments to discover personal views and share them with students and peers to select the best practices for grammar teaching and learning. The opportunities to explore teachers’ and students’ perspectives should continue throughout the program to better understand why teachers teach the way they do and students approach language learning the way they do.

3. Conduct the study at another university in one of the Gulf countries to look for similarities or differences about the perceived importance of grammar and grammar teaching and learning. This opportunity will help the IELP compare and contrast findings with another institution to have a wider perspective of teachers’ and their students’ views on EFL as well as search for approaches to best meet their needs.

4. Replicate the study in another university with a culture different from the Arabic one to search for similarities and differences about teachers’ and
students’ perceptions about the role of grammar, grammar methodology and learning, and the roles of the teacher in the EFL classroom. The results will offer the IELP another perspective of beliefs from a different culture and how those participants respond to the importance of grammar and best practices for grammar teaching and learning.

Beyond research, the application of this study also shows potential for improving practice in language instruction. The final section of the paper provides recommendations for improving practice based on the results of the research.

**Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

The findings of this study hold a number of implications for teaching practice. Those involved directly and indirectly in EFL have a responsibility to consistently incorporate knowledge from the literature that can advance practice and support student achievement. Teachers of EFL, EFL students, program coordinators, curriculum designers, and program administrators can all advance their work by incorporating the results of this study into their professional work.

**EFL Teachers**

Teachers need opportunities to uncover their beliefs about grammar and EFL in order to understand themselves, their students, as well as other teachers. Gebhard and Oprandy (1999) supported the premise that exploring beliefs will help “understand what is going on between teachers and students and among students themselves” (p. xiv). Professional development opportunities will help to explore personal beliefs teachers have about the importance of grammar, their roles within grammar instruction, and best
practices for language teaching and learning. Teachers will discuss their beliefs with other teachers and try to come to a consensus on common beliefs in an effort to help teachers improve their teaching practices. Teachers need sessions in which students have the opportunity to discover personal beliefs about grammar and share these beliefs with peers as well as with their teachers in an effort to understand students’ views. Teachers also need time to share their students’ beliefs with other teachers and discuss why they think students have these views and search for best practices for grammar teaching and learning that will meet their students’ perceptions.

**EFL Students**

The differences in perceptions between teachers and students highlighted in the results of this study suggest that students need to have a broader vision of the teacher’s role within grammar instruction, the importance of grammar, and the best practices for grammar teaching and learning. Both teachers and students also need time to share their beliefs and discuss them in order to meet each other’s demands in the classroom. By establishing such understanding, students are better positioned to engage in effective language learning. Further, teachers also are in a better position to meet students’ demands.

**Program Coordinators**

The program coordinators are close to the teachers and students who belong to the program they are coordinating. It is imperative the coordinators learn about the results of the study and support offering teachers and students opportunities to improve the teaching and learning of EFL.
Curriculum Designers

Course designers need to take into account the differences that teachers and students expressed regarding the importance of grammar, best practices for grammar teaching and learning and the roles of the teacher within grammar instruction. The results will guide the course designers to design materials that meet both teachers’ and students’ preferences for grammar teaching. They should also design materials that meet both teachers’ and students’ preferences concerning grammar learning.

Administrators

Administrators have to ensure that teachers and students meet in the classroom with a better understanding of the views each brings to the language classroom. Therefore, they need to authorize time for sessions in which teachers can meet and share their views as well as time for training courses regarding grammar and EFL, best practices for grammar teaching and learning, and the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction. Administrators must also authorize time for training sessions in which students can express their views as well as learn about best practices for grammar learning. Opportunities to share information will result in awareness of the perceptions teachers and students have about best practices for grammar teaching and learning.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs of teachers and students about the role of grammar within grammar instruction, the best practices for grammar instruction and learning, and the roles of the teacher within grammar instruction in the EFL classroom in a foreign setting. This study provided data that could facilitate the
selection of materials and best practices that meet the expectations of teachers and students in the EFL classroom. This study also reviewed current literature to analyze the opinions of others regarding grammar and EFL.

The results of this study indicated that teachers and students have certain significantly different views concerning the importance of grammar and practice. The results also indicated that teachers and students have different views concerning the best practices for teaching and learning of grammar and the roles of the teacher within grammar instruction in the EFL classroom. These include the strong beliefs teachers hold about best practices for grammar teaching and best ways to learn grammar. These also include students’ strong feelings about the best methods for grammar teaching and learning as well as how they view the roles of the teacher.

Researchers should continue to investigate teachers’ and students’ perceptions about EFL teaching and learning. In the future, more students will arrive to EFL classrooms, and teachers need to be ready to offer opportunities in the classroom that are conducive to successful language learning.
REFERENCES


Kuntz, P. (1997). *Beliefs about language learning held by students and their teacher (a pilot study).* Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED407853)


## APPENDIX A. RELATIONSHIP OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Questionnaire item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the importance of grammar within foreign language learning?</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar teaching?</td>
<td>4, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the best practices for grammar learning?</td>
<td>10, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the similarities or differences between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about the teacher’s roles within grammar instruction?</td>
<td>5, 14, 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read the following statements. Circle the number according to your preference.

1 = SA (strongly agree), 2 = A (agree), 3 = N (neutral), 4 = D (disagree), 5 = SD (strongly disagree)

1. Learning English as a foreign language is first a question of learning its grammar.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD

2. Grammar is a tool for English language learning.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD

3. It is helpful for adult learners to be aware of grammatical information about the English language.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD

4. Adult learners need to be given grammar rules if they are to learn English.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD

5. Teachers should always give rules and examples followed by oral and written exercises.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
6. Making adult learners aware of grammar rules is one of the things a teacher can do, but there are many other activities in the classroom which are just as important, like reading, listening, and speaking activities.

7. The teacher should not use grammatical terminology in the classroom.

8. If adult learners get enough chance to practice using a language, they don’t need to learn grammar.

9. Grammar should be studied with language as it is used in real context, rather than in isolation.

10. Grammar should be learned by doing a lot of exercises.

11. Grammar is best learned deductively, that is, adult learners study rules and then apply these rules to examples.
12. Grammar helps adult learners improve communicative competence.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD

13. The teacher should explain grammar rules.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD

14. The teacher should help adult learners discover the grammar in authentic materials instead of giving them rules.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD

15. The teacher should help adult learners discover the grammar in authentic materials and then give them the rules.
   1 – SA
   2 – A
   3 – N
   4 – D
   5 – SD