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**An Exploration of Teachers' Beliefs about the Role of Grammar
in Iranian High Schools and Private Language Institutes***

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to explore the beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers about the role of grammar in English language teaching in both state schools and private language institutes. Data were collected through a questionnaire developed by Burgess and Etherington (2002), which consisted of 11 main subscales and was divided into two sections. The first section dealt with approaches to grammar teaching and the second with student and teacher difficulties with grammar. An independent sample *t*-test was used on all the eleven subscales to check the differences among teachers' beliefs in both state and private language schools. Responses from 117 English language teachers from both settings indicated that they appreciate the value of grammar and its role in language teaching. However, their beliefs were significantly different in three areas: explicit teaching of grammar, the role of instruction versus exposure, and presentation of grammar through authentic texts.

Keywords: declarative knowledge, explicit teaching, implicit teaching, procedural knowledge, teachers' beliefs

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1. Introduction

In recent years, grammar teaching has regained its rightful place in the language curriculum. Language teaching professionals (e.g., Batstone and Ellis, 2009; Ellis, 2006; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004) are now of the belief that grammar is too important to be ignored, and that without a good knowledge of grammar, learners' language development will be severely constrained. In order to achieve a better fit between grammar and communication, it is not helpful to think of grammar as a discrete set of meaningless, decontextualized, static structures, nor is it helpful to think of grammar solely as a set of prescriptive rules about linguistic forms. Grammatical structures not only have (morphosyntactic) forms, but they are also used to express meaning (semantics) in appropriate use contexts (pragmatics). There is now a general consensus that the issue is not whether or not one should teach grammar. The issue now centers on questions such as which grammar items learners need most or how teachers can most effectively teach grammar (Thornbury, 1999).

2. Grammar teaching and teacher beliefs

Teachers wishing to explore their personal theories in grammar teaching through classroom practice must start by obtaining descriptive data about their work. The options available to teachers for doing so are well documented (e.g., Richards and Lockhart, 1994). However, familiarity with their own practices and the proceduralized nature of much professional behavior may impair teachers' ability to discern anything noteworthy in the description of their work. In such cases, teachers' reflective efforts can be enhanced by an awareness of the kinds of questions they might apply to their data. Teachers must distinguish between their actual practices and what they believe they do. There are several studies which have investigated the extent to which teachers' theoretical beliefs influence their classroom practice, all of which have found evidence to suggest that what teachers say and do in the classroom is shaped by their beliefs (Andrews, 2007; Borg, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2007; Pajares, 1992, Schultz, 2001; Tsui, 2003). The evaluation of their perceptions calls on teachers to (a)

honestly examine whether this perceived impact is as inevitable as it appears to be, and (b) to consider instructional adjustments, no matter how slight, which will allow them in a manner more in line with their pedagogical ideals (Borg, 2003, 2006).

3. The present study

Since teachers are active decision makers in classrooms and they are mainly responsible for what goes on there, it seems necessary to explore certain issues regarding their beliefs. Based on the perceptions that teachers possess, which have been accumulated through the years of their previous learning and teaching experience, they make decisions which might lead to the use of different procedures and techniques. The beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold about all aspects of their work affect their instructional decisions (Burns, 1996; Johnson, 1994; Smith, 1996; Woods, 1996). Besides, one of the most important issues addressed in this study is grammar and grammar teaching, which is one of the most controversial debates in language teaching. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, little attention has been paid to L2 teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar teaching in their work and to the manner in which instructional decisions regarding grammar teaching are informed by teachers' personal pedagogical systems. Given the central position grammar occupies in studies of L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1997) and in discussions of L2 teaching methodology (e.g., Batstone, 1994; Bygate, Tonkyn, & Williams, 1994), lack of attention to the cognitive bases of teachers' work in grammar teaching represents a gap in research agenda of L2 scholars. Given this and a dearth of research conducted in Iranian contexts about the relationship between teachers' perception and their practice, this study was made to bridge the gap in the present literature. Since grammar has been a long problematic area for both learners and teachers in classrooms, this study focused on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and different approaches to grammar teaching.

4. Research questions

The questions which this study sought to answer are as follows:

- a) What is the teachers' perception of the role of grammar in language teaching and learning in state high schools?
- b) What is the teachers' perception of the role of grammar in language teaching and learning in private language institutes?
- c) What is the difference between teachers' perceptions toward grammar teaching in state high schools and private language institutes?

5. Method

The research was mainly quantitative in design, using a questionnaire to explore beliefs across groups of teachers. The questionnaire took the form of a five point, Likert-type attitude scale, which was completed by 117 male and female teachers. As the participants were studied cross-sectionally, the design of the study was considered a simple survey through which the beliefs of a sample of teachers were investigated.

5.1 Participants

117 English language teachers volunteered to help the researchers from a number of state high schools and private language institutes in Tehran. Fifty-seven of them (22 males and 35 females) were from state high schools and the other sixty (35 males and 25 females) were from private language institutes. Their age varied from 25 to 60. Sampling was not random because of the problems of availability of participants, time framing and facilities. As a result, convenience sampling was practiced in which the participants showed up depending on their willingness to participate as well as the match between the research timetables and their own schedules.

5.2 The research instrument

In order to conduct this study, a questionnaire was used. Since the aim of this study was to check teachers' perception of grammar teaching, a questionnaire relevant to this construct was adopted from a

study made by Burgess and Etherington (2002), so the categories had already been identified.

This closed-item questionnaire was used in the form of a Likert scale with 5 categories including strongly agree (5), agree (4), no idea (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) (see Appendix A).

These closed-item questions involved greater uniformity of measurement and therefore greater reliability. Furthermore, answers could be easily quantified and analyzed. The Likert scale is relatively easy to construct and administer and tends to yield more reliable results compared to other techniques (Dornyei, 2003). The first section of the questionnaire dealt with approaches to grammar teaching and the second section was about students and teachers' difficulties with grammar. Some areas regarding teachers' attitudes in this questionnaire include the role of grammar in language teaching, explicit grammar teaching including the importance of instruction, the role of declarative knowledge, consciousness in the learning of grammar, comparison and contrast of structures, the use of grammatical terminology, problem-solving activities, correction, presentation of grammar through authentic texts, and the role of practice (see Appendix B).

6. Results

The related data are summarized and tabulated below. Each subscale consists of several statements which help to identify teachers' beliefs for similar items. In order to answer the first two questions, i.e. teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar in state high schools and private language institutes, the descriptive statistics of each subscale were calculated; namely, first the frequency of teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching in state high schools and private language institutes in each of the eleven subscales was calculated and then to check the difference between the two types of schools an independent sample *t*-test was operated. Table 1 displays the mean scores and standard deviations of the teachers' beliefs on all the subscales with respective *p* values for each independent sample *t*-test.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and the results of *t*-tests for both groups of teachers

School Teachers' beliefs	state N=57		private N=60		Independent sample <i>t</i> - test
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
The role of grammar in language teaching	10.40	2.74	10.11	2.4	<i>t</i> = 0.191 <i>p</i> = 0.849
Explicit grammar teaching	9.25	1.58	8.47	2.05	<i>t</i> = 2.225 * <i>p</i> =0.028
Instruction vs. exposure	21.18	3.12	20.33	2.86	<i>t</i> = 2.090 * <i>p</i> = 0.039
Declarative and procedural	3.82	.908	3.28	1.16	<i>t</i> = 2.791 <i>p</i> = 0.06
The importance of conscious	7.66	1.72	7.62	1.60	<i>t</i> = 0.405 <i>p</i> = 0.686
Comparison and contrast of structure	3.12	1.25	3.18	1.06	<i>t</i> = 1.517 <i>p</i> = 0.132
The use of grammatical terminology	5.29	1.10	4.95	1.08	<i>t</i> = 1.076 <i>p</i> = 0.084
Problem solving	7.67	1.36	7.13	1.45	<i>t</i> = 2.431 <i>p</i> = 0.17
Correction of errors	16.11	3.45	15.70	3.07	<i>t</i> =0.908 <i>p</i> = 0.336
Presentation of grammar through authentic texts	24.44	4.66	21.56	4.69	<i>t</i> = 3.599 * <i>p</i> = 0.00
The role of practice	16.93	2.58	17.35	2.49	<i>t</i> = 0.311 <i>p</i> = 0.756

6.1 The frequency of teachers' beliefs in each subscale

6.1.1 The role of grammar in language teaching

Four of the statements in the survey were designed to discover teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar in language teaching. These statements view grammar as a framework for the rest of the language system, as the building blocks of language, as something which is added later to language proficiency, and as an equal pillar supporting language proficiency. 57.9% of the state high school teachers agreed with the view of grammar *as an equal pillar*

supporting language proficiency, 17.5% of them disagreed, and 24.6% had no idea. It seems that this group of teachers views grammar as equally important as other language components and they prefer to teach it while other language components are being covered rather than an optional add-on after basic communication has been achieved. They might be more likely to favor an integrated approach to grammar teaching.

The majority of respondents in private language institutes agreed with statement 1.1d (*an equal pillar in supporting language proficiency*). 43.4% of them agreed, 28.3% had no idea, and 21.6% disagreed with it. Therefore, it seems that this group of teachers prefers grammar to be taught simultaneously with other components and not be delayed until later stages. So they favor an integrated approach to grammar teaching, not a total communicative one in which grammar is mostly taken for granted. Comparing the mean scores of teachers in both groups (10.40 vs. 10.11) shows that there is no significant difference between them on this subscale (see Table 1).

6.1.2 Explicit grammar teaching

The dichotomies of unconscious/conscious learning and deductive/inductive teaching methods are both sometimes equated with explicit/implicit grammar teaching. The strongest indication of agreement in the survey came on question 2.3, (*My students expect teachers to present grammar points explicitly*). 86% of state high school teachers agreed with this idea, while 1.8% disagreed and 12.3% had no idea. This is not surprising since student expectations of traditional, explicit grammar teaching are familiar to many teachers (Borg, 1999a,b), which also confirms the popularity of grammar self-study books for students.

Responses to question 2.13 (*A lack of explicit grammar teaching leaves my students feeling insecure*) also support the view that students prefer explicit grammar teaching. Here 61.4% of the teachers agreed, 21.1% had no idea and 17.5% disagreed.

73.3% of the participants among private language institute teachers agreed, 8.3% disagreed and 18.3% had no idea regarding statement 2.3. So it could be inferred that although private language institute teachers cover different books and use more communicative tasks, they still believe in the role of explicit discussion of rules since

students still expect them to do regardless of the types of books and activities. About 56.6% of the teachers agreed, 23.3% disagreed and 20% had no idea about statement 2.13 (*A lack of explicit grammar teaching leaves my students feeling insecure*). This result could be a confirmation of the previous one, which emphasizes the role of explicit grammar teaching and its positive effect on learners. Comparing the mean scores obtained from both groups (9.25 vs. 8.47), one can easily realize that there was a significant difference between their beliefs on explicit teaching of grammar (see Table 1).

6.1.3 Instruction vs. Exposure

The question of instruction vs. exposure is an important one in the implicit-explicit discussion of grammar teaching. Teachers' beliefs on this issue (*is formal instruction necessary or is exposure to input sufficient?*) provide a good indication of their orientation.

71.9% of the respondents agreed with statement 1.13 (*Grammar is best taught through work which focuses on message*), while 19.3% had no idea and 8.8% disagreed. This result is evidence of teachers' preferences for message-based approach rather than code-based approach.

66.7 % of the respondents agreed with the statement 1.2, (*students learn grammar through exposure to langue in natural use*), 24.6% had no idea and 8.8% disagreed. Findings indicate that most of the respondents believe in the effect of exposure to natural language use in order to help the learning process.

The results of the statements 1.3, 1.8, 1.10, 1.19 and 2.10 represent support for explicit grammar teaching and focus-on-forms which might stem from students' expectations and teachers' interpretation of their preferences, especially at advanced levels which could also be further supported by statement 2.10 (*My students cannot find form-function matches in authentic texts without explicit direction from teachers*). 54.4% agreed, 29.8% had no idea and 15.8% disagreed with it.

It should be noted, however, that these results do not refer to instruction versus exposure as two opposing poles, rather according to the results obtained it can be inferred that while many teachers believe in the possibility of grammar learning through input alone, they feel that learning can be assisted by formal instruction and responding to students' expectations through that.

Similar to state high school teachers, private language institute teachers also believe in exposure to natural language use and its positive effect for students to learn grammar. 80% of the respondents agreed with statement 1.13 (*Grammar is best taught through work which focuses on message*) while 11.7% had no idea and 8.3% disagreed. This result strongly suggests that private institute teachers value teaching grammar through message-oriented approaches. Thus, they are opposed to decontextualized grammar teaching which only focuses on analytical isolated grammar points. Both groups of teachers feel strongly about this item. 70% of the respondents agreed with statement 1.2 (*Students can learn grammar through exposure to language in natural use*), while 15% had no idea and 15% disagreed.

It sounds pretty clear that the separation of grammar is useless and both groups of teachers, particularly private language institute teachers do not favor this analytical P-P-P approach. This result could be another support for previous statement, since half of the group does not favor grammar teaching through individual structures. This belief is stronger among private institute teachers than state high school ones. It is possible to infer that they value more natural exposure than formal instruction. It could be because of the textbooks they use, their own experiences, schooling and students' expectations and preferences. The result of the *t*-test (see Table 1) also confirms this as there is a significant difference between the mean scores of both groups (21.18 vs. 20.33).

6.1.4 Declarative and procedural knowledge

Statement 2.1 (*My students find it difficult to transfer their grammatical knowledge into communicative language use*) is a piece of evidence for the difficulty of the transference of knowledge about grammar (declarative knowledge) into actual use of that knowledge in communication (procedural knowledge).

59.6% of the state high school teachers agreed, 33.3% had no idea and 7% disagreed with this statement. As it is clear most of the respondents agreed that this transference poses a problem for students, and teachers recognize this as a gap that needs to be dealt with. Many teachers relate many examples that their students can recite grammatical rules perfectly but unable to use them in communication.

So they might favor a more integrated approach to combine these two types of knowledge.

50% of the respondents in private institutes agreed, 23.3% had no idea and 26.6% disagreed with statement 2.1 (*My students find it difficult to transfer their grammatical knowledge into communicative language use*).

In many cases students might have the knowledge about grammar and know the rules but they might be able to actually use them in communication. This static knowledge can even hinder communication among learners and leave them communicatively incompetent. Both groups of teachers perceive this transference as one of the language difficulties for students. Table 1 indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of both groups.

6.1.5 The importance of conscious knowledge

Responses to statement 1.6 (*Students need a conscious knowledge of grammar in order to improve their language*) among state high school teachers were 59.7% agreement, 19.3% no idea and 21.1% disagreement. More than half of them believed in importance of being consciously aware of a structure's form and function and half of them did not. Form-function relation and the conscious awareness of students of the forms could be regarded as an important issue which needs to be investigated more in detail.

Private language institutes teachers' responses to statement 1.6 are respectively: 60% agreement, 23.3% no idea and 16.7% disagreement. Apparently, most of the respondents still believe in the importance of conscious knowledge especially for language use. Table 1 shows that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of both groups.

6.1.6 Comparison and contrast of structures

Comparison and contrast of structures is mostly associated with focus-on-forms approaches to grammar teaching. 59.6% of the respondents agreed, 28.1% had no idea, 12.3% disagreed with statement 1.17, (*Comparison and contrast of individual structures is helpful for students learning grammar*).

Thus, the majority of respondents in state high schools believe it is necessary for students to compare and contrast grammatical structures.

However, the statement does not specify at what stage of learning this comparison and contrast is used. A preference for this approach is an indication of a focus-on-forms approach no matter where it occurs in a lesson.

Among private language institute teachers 48.3% agreed, 33.3% had no idea and 18.3% disagreed with this statement. This item is more in line with explicit grammar teaching, formal instruction and the use of grammatical terminology categories. So this result makes sense inasmuch as private institute teachers believe more strongly in natural exposure to language. Comparing the mean scores of both groups, however, reveals that there is no statistically significant difference between their beliefs in this respect.

6.1.7 The use of grammatical terminology

The use of grammatical terminology in the classroom is understood as a necessary part of an explicit approach to grammar teaching, i.e. when teachers and students talk about grammar they need the related terminology. Surprisingly in both groups the same number of teachers agreed with statement 2.14 (*My students find grammatical terminology useful*) and statement 2.19 (*My students find it difficult to use grammatical terminology*).

So most of the respondents believe that it might pose difficulties for students to use grammatical terminology, although, they find it helpful. So these two statements are two more pieces of evidences for explicit grammar teaching and focus-on-forms approaches. According to Table 1, there is not a significant difference between the mean scores of both groups of teacher when it comes to this category.

6.1.8 Problem solving

Responses to statement 2.2 (*My students are motivated by problem-solving techniques for learning grammar*) among state high school teachers were 59.6% agreement, 33.3% no idea, and 7% disagreement. Most of the respondents find this motivating for students to use problem-solving techniques for grammar. The use of problem-solving activities in consciousness-raising tasks is seen as one of the characteristics of explicit grammar teaching (Ellis, 1997; Stern, 1992).

66.7% agreement, 17.5% no idea and 18.3% disagreement were the responses to statement 2.5 (*My students prefer to find matches*

between meaning and structure for themselves) among state high school teachers. Most of the respondents, then favor problem-solving activities and they find it more interesting for students to follow them, since according to this statement students also prefer this type of activity. So there is a correspondence between teachers and learners' preferences.

Among private language institute teachers about 56.7% of them agreed, 31.7% had no idea and 11.6% disagreed with statement 2.2 (*My students are motivated by problem-solving techniques for learning grammar*). Most of the respondents, then favor problem-solving activities and they find it more interesting for students to follow them, since according to this statement students also prefer this type of activity. So there is a correspondence between teachers and learners' preferences. Table 1 also confirms that there is no significant difference between the beliefs of teachers in both groups.

6.1.9 Correction of errors

Statements 1.16, 1.18, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17 and 2.18 belong to this category. About 52.7% of state high school teachers agreed with statement 1.16 (*Teachers should only correct errors of form which interfere with communication*). The majority of the respondents believe that it really causes problems for students to improve a totally communicative written activity. The reason might be because of the nature of the activity which is a total communicative one. Students might not be so familiar with the format and/or aims of a real-life communicative activity so it poses difficulty for them. The communicativeness of the activity could be the major problem and it can get more serious during a spoken activity.

Statements 1.18 (*Form-focused correction helps students to improve their grammatical performance*) and 2.17 (*My students find it difficult to improve the accuracy of their grammatical language within a totally communicative writing activity*) were agreed by 56.6% of the private institute teachers. Most of the teachers do not seem to have difficulty correcting students' errors of grammar within a communicative context. This could be because of the type of the task that they are performing, students' interest and teachers' strategies for dealing with them. They might only interrupt when the message gets blurred. The majority of the respondents believe that it really causes

problems for students to improve a totally communicative written activity. The reason might be because of the nature of the activity which is a total communicative one. Students might not feel at home with the format and/or aims of a real-life communicative activity so they cannot perform to the best of their ability. Competent teachers are able to correct students' errors during a communicative speaking activity without discouraging and interrupting them, while incompetent ones might discourage them by only dealing with form-focused errors. Comparing the mean scores of teachers in both groups (16.11 vs. 15.70) shows that there is no significant difference between them on error correction (see Table 1).

6.1.10 Presentation of grammar in authentic texts

Authentic texts are understood a texts which are not produced for the sake of language teaching, but arise for some other purposes in the real world. Most of the state high school teachers prefer to feel that authentic texts are a successful way of presenting grammar. From the results gained for other statements like 2.6 (*My students find it difficult to handle grammar presented within authentic texts*), 2.7 (*My students find authentic texts difficult because of the wide variety of structures which appear*) and 2.8 (*My students find authentic texts difficult because they are too culture bound*), it could be inferred that the variety of structures and presentation of grammar through authentic texts are problematic for students. The reason might be due to the new way of the structure presentation, their difference from the usual practice and lack of explicitness. These practices could be far from students' expectations so they might gain neither satisfaction nor any sense of improvement.

Statement 2.4 (*My students prefer to learn grammar from one sentence example*) was responded as 66.7% agreement, 15.8% no idea and 17.5% disagreement. This result is rather surprising; it might be because of the aforementioned problems. Teachers value the use of authentic texts, but they also believe that they are time consuming and contain various structures and vocabularies. Adoption of suitable level for real-life tasks is not an easy issue, so they sometimes turn to one-sentence presentation of grammar. This technique could also be more in line with students' preferences when they can not gain satisfaction and a total understanding from authentic texts' presentation.

Among private institute teachers, statement 1.15 (*Students learn grammar more successfully if it is presented within a complete text*) had the highest frequency the responses of which were: 63.3% agreement, 26.7% no idea and 10% disagreement. In comparison with state high school teachers, it seems that private school teachers do not seem to have difficulty presenting grammar within authentic texts, which is actually what happens in reality. The books and exercises that these teachers use present grammar rather differently from those of state high schools. This means that in private institutes the grammatical points are usually presented inductively and through examples. Table 1 suggests that there is a significant difference between the mean scores obtained from both groups of teachers.

6.1.11 The role of practice

The role and types of practice are focused on in these five statements. 84.2% of state high school teachers agreed with statement 1.12 (*Productive practice of structures is a necessary part of the learning process*) while 85% of the private institute teachers agreed with it. 86.6% of the private institute teachers agreed with statement 1.14 (*Participating in real-life tasks with language is the best way for students to develop their grammatical knowledge*). Most of the teachers do not see any value in the application of decontextualized practice of structures without any full, communicative context. Table 1 suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between what teachers believe in both groups.

7. Discussion

This study revealed teachers' views regarding approaches to grammar teaching, students and teachers' difficulties with grammar teaching and teachers' beliefs about some of the related categories. The majority of teachers in both types of schools agreed that the knowledge of grammar for students and teachers is necessary. Their main concern, however, centered on the way grammar is presented. While many teachers agree that it is possible to learn grammar through natural exposure to language according to the results obtained, formal instruction still holds weight among them and there seems to be a greater agreement with the view that instruction-based teaching of grammar helps students produce grammatically correct language.

Although many participants reported that they believed in inductive, implicit, problem solving activities, and presentation through authentic texts, the findings revealed that formal instruction, the use of grammatical terminology, and explicit grammar teaching are still valued among EFL teachers. This indicates that theoretical practices become blurred in practice due to some contextual factors.

Teachers' beliefs about second language teaching and learning are critical factors influencing the types of decisions teachers make. The contextual factors which have the highest impact on teachers' decisions are student characteristics, their goals, interests, and affective states (Smith, 1996).

There has been a great amount of research regarding L2 teacher cognition. Based on most of these studies teachers' practices are influenced by a network of teachers' beliefs about learners' affective involvement, background knowledge, and cognitive processes, conceptions of language as use and usage; and teacher role as guide and manager (Burns, 1992). In Johnson's study (1994), for example, it was perceived that teachers' instructional practices were influenced by their personal images of L2 teaching and learning. Teachers' beliefs emanate from their own language learning experiences, their teaching experience, and their training courses (Woods, 1996). The findings of the present study confirm the same thing. As indicated before, the majority of state high school teachers believed in the effectiveness of explicit teaching of grammar and treasured instruction much more than natural exposure to language. Obviously, these beliefs shape their classroom practice and that is why we witness an orientation toward analytic teaching of grammar in Iranian high schools.

One rather surprising finding of this study is the positive attitude of state school teachers to the use of authentic materials in presentation of grammar, though it is completely inconsistent with what they practice in reality. Perhaps the roots of this type of belief could be attributed to their dissatisfaction with the way grammar is presented in Iranian national EFL textbooks.

8. Conclusion

Grammar teaching has always been a controversial issue during the history of language teaching. Therefore, there have been different arguments for and against its teaching as well as different approaches

to teaching this component of language. Although different approaches have come and gone, it is still one of the most important components of language and many of the students expect to be competent in this area. There have been lots of great textbooks teaching different techniques and activities to make this component more fun and memorable than before; however, this aim depends, to a great extent, on teachers' beliefs, perceptions and decisions.

There is now agreement in general education studies that teaching is a cognitive activity and that teachers' beliefs greatly impact their instructional decisions in the classroom (Tillema, 2000). As Borg (2003) suggests, "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (p. 81). Although the construct of teachers' beliefs is of great significance, it does not have a long history as it has been around for about three decades.

As a result, this study attempted to explore Iranian teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar and grammar instruction in language teaching in both state high schools and private language institutes. The findings of the study revealed that the teachers' beliefs in both settings more converge than diverge. They were different in some domains, though. For example, high school state teachers believed in the power of explicit teaching and the role of instruction much more strongly than their colleagues in private language settings. These beliefs, to a large extent, could be traced back to their long experience of teaching textbooks that heavily draw on deductive approaches to teaching grammar. Unless there is a radical change in the structure of Iranian national EFL textbooks, coupled with extensive, well-organized in-service training courses for state school teachers, there seems to be little hope for change in their teaching beliefs, particularly the ones that are a bit far from modern research trends.

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Appendix A

Gender: **Male** **Female**
 Educational degree: **High school Diploma** **B.A.** **M.A.** **PhD**
 Years of experience as a Foreign Language Teacher:
Less than one year **1-3 years** **3-5 years** **more than 5 years**

SECTION ONE: APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

Please indicate how far you agree with the following statements about the role and teaching of grammar in your English class. If you **agree** strongly mark **5**; if you strongly **disagree** mark **1**; and if you have no idea mark **3**. Please feel free to add any comments you wish to make. The answers are confidential.

Note: Remember that the following questions are intended for intermediate level.

Disagree						
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Agree
1. The role of grammar in language is as :						
a) A framework for the rest of the language_ a basic system to build everything else on.	1	2	3	4	5	
b) The building blocks of language which are combined to form a whole.	1	2	3	4	5	
c) Something which is added on to language proficiency: a refinement of more basic language knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5	
d) An equal pillar in supporting language proficiency.(other pillars could be knowledge about pronunciation, appropriacy or culture etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Students can learn grammar through exposure to language in natural use.						
	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Formal instruction helps learners to produce grammatically correct language.						
	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Student use of language does not involve conscious knowledge of the grammatical system and how it works.						
	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Students can improve their grammatical accuracy through frequent practice of structures.						
	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Students need a conscious knowledge of grammar in order to improve their language.						
	1	2	3	4	5	

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| 7. Practice of structures must always be within a full, communicative context. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Separate treatment of grammar fails to produce language knowledge which students can use in natural communication. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Students need to be consciously aware of a structure's form and its function before they can use it proficiently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The separation of work with a grammar focus from the rest of the language syllabus is useful. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Decontextualized practice of structures has a place in language learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Productive practice of structures is a necessary part of the learning process. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Grammar is best taught through work which focuses on message. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Participating in real-life tasks with language is the best way for students to develop their grammatical knowledge. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Students learn grammar more successfully if it is presented within a complete text. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Teachers should only correct student errors of form which interfere with communication. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Comparison and contrast of individual structures is helpful for students learning grammar. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Form-focused correction helps students to improve their grammatical performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Grammar is best taught through a focus on individual structures. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

SECTION TWO: STUDENT AND TEACHER DIFFICULTIES WITH GRAMMAR.

These are questions about how students and teachers deal with grammar in the classroom. Again please indicate your agreement or disagreement with these statements as above.

Disagree						Agree
1. My students find it difficult to transfer their grammatical knowledge into communicative language use.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. My students are motivated by problem-solving techniques for learning grammar.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. My students expect teachers to present grammar points explicitly.	1	2	3	4	5	
4. My students prefer to learn grammar from one sentence examples.	1	2	3	4	5	
5. My students prefer to find matches between meaning and structure for themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	
6. My students find it difficult to handle grammar presented within authentic texts.	1	2	3	4	5	
7. My students find authentic texts difficult because of the wide variety of structures which appear.	1	2	3	4	5	
8. My students find authentic text difficult because they are too culture bound.	1	2	3	4	5	
9. My students find authentic texts difficult because of the vocabulary used.	1	2	3	4	5	
10. My students cannot find form-function matches in authentic texts without explicit direction from teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Teachers find the use of authentic material too time-consuming.	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Teachers find it difficult to produce tasks of a suitable level from authentic texts.	1	2	3	4	5	
13. A lack of explicit grammar teaching leaves my students feeling insecure.	1	2	3	4	5	

14. My students find grammatical terminology useful.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Teachers find it difficult to correct student errors of grammar within a written communicative context.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Teachers find it difficult to correct student errors of grammar within a spoken communicative context.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My students find it difficult to improve the accuracy of their grammatical language within a totally communicative writing activity.	1	2	3	4	5
18. My students find it difficult to improve the accuracy of their grammatical language within a totally communicative speaking activity.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My students find it difficult to use grammatical terminology.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My students are frustrated by problem-solving techniques for learning grammar.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

The main 11 subscales

The role of grammar in language: 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.1c, 1.1d

Explicit grammar teaching: 1.20, 2.3, 2.13

The importance of instruction: 1.2, 1.3, 1.8, 1.10, 1.13, 1.19, 2.10

The role of declarative knowledge: 2.1

Consciousness in the learning of grammar: 1.4, 1.6, 1.9

Comparison and contrast of structures: 1.17

The use of grammatical terminology: 2.14, 2.19

Problem-solving activities: 2.2, 2.5, 2.20

Correction of errors: 1.16, 1.18, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, 2.18

Presentation of grammar through authentic texts: 1.15, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.12

The role of practice: 1.5, 1.7, 1.11, 1.12, 1.14