



EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices for Grammar Teaching

A Qualitative Interview Study at Lower Secondary School in Sweden

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Abstract

Grammar teaching plays a crucial role in second language acquisition. However, in the specific context of lower secondary schools in Sweden, the emphasis on communicative language skills often overshadows the importance of grammar. This study aimed to examine the role of grammar teaching in EFL classrooms. Moreover, beliefs and practices for teaching grammar among EFL teachers were examined, as well as the extent to which the teachers' beliefs and practices aligned. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with five EFL teachers. The findings revealed that the participating teachers value teaching grammar in a meaningful context, emphasizing its functional aspects rather than focusing solely on form. Meanwhile, their practices did not fully align with those beliefs, as their teaching predominantly consisted of form-focused grammar activities. This misalignment was attributed to various factors, including the challenge of finding suitable teaching materials and the complexities of classroom realities. The results of the study are subsequently discussed, followed by the potential pedagogical implications that shed light on the complex nature of teaching. Moreover, it is highlighted that further research is needed to understand better the role grammar has in the EFL classroom in Sweden, for which the results of this study can provide a foundation of data as a point of departure.

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1 Introduction

The role of grammar in the EFL classroom has been a persistent topic during my teacher education. Conversations regarding how to teach grammar have been shared among students, teachers, and during teaching placements. It is noticeable that there is a prevailing skepticism regarding the importance of grammar, with many people perceiving it as difficult and consequently postponing it in teaching. This experience has raised important questions, such as how these thoughts impact EFL teaching since grammar is a crucial component that must be tackled to master a language.

The role of grammar in English education in Sweden is a topic of interest and debate. Notably, the syllabus for English in compulsory school (Skolverket, 2022b, p.38) provides minimal guidance on grammar or the specific content to be taught. The syllabus states that grammatical structures should be included in the productive and receptive content, but it lacks specificity regarding which structures should be included and the extent to which they should be taught (Skolverket, 2022b, p.38). Moreover, the syllabus emphasizes the communicative aspect of language learning, encompassing both form and function (Skolverket, 2022a, p.8). However, there is a tendency to prioritize function over form in language instruction in the Swedish context (Lundahl, 2021, p.181). In addition, the role of grammar is receiving attention in media, e.g., one opinion piece expressed concerns about how the guidelines for the National Tests are developing (Ruin, 2022). The guidelines allow students to achieve the highest grade for written production, even when their texts contain simple misspellings and basic writing errors. Nevertheless, the article by Ruin (2022) casts doubts on the message that this conveys to students. But depending on teachers' attitudes towards this shift, grammar teaching may be outweighed by other critical parts within an already packed EFL practice.

Thus, when there is an absence of clear instructions from governing documents, the way teachers address grammar had been found to be influenced by their own beliefs regarding grammar instruction (Borg, 2017, p.83). Beliefs are fundamental for teachers "to function in the complex context of classrooms" (Gill & Fives, 2015, p.1), and they affect pedagogical decisions. Hence, it can be interesting to examine the complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices since it can depend on several factors, such as teachers' learning experiences in the past, classroom environment, and the level of knowledge their students possess can all have an impact (Borg, 2003, p.104-105). Therefore, examining teachers' beliefs might contribute to a better understanding of their decisions in their practice. In what

ways do EFL teachers in Sweden perceive the use of grammar in the classroom? In what ways do they choose to implement grammar teaching?

Previous studies have examined EFL teachers' grammar beliefs and practices, but there seems to be a noticeable gap in examining this topic within a European or Scandinavian context (Ericsson & Wassén, 2022, p.20). There is a need to explore this context as EFL settings can differ in terms of conditions, curriculums, teaching cultures, etc. Therefore, the present study examines the Swedish context at the lower secondary school level, considering the author's background as an aspiring teacher at that educational level. The overall aim of this study is to investigate what role grammar teaching has in that specific context. Therefore, the aim of the study is split into the following research questions:

1. What are Swedish EFL teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching at a lower secondary school level?
2. What are the Swedish EFL teachers' self-reported practices for teaching grammar at a lower secondary school level?
3. To what extent do the teachers' beliefs and practices match?

The questions will be examined with the intention that they may contribute to a better understanding of EFL teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching. In addition, by examining these beliefs, the study should provide valuable insights that can support teachers in their classroom practice, ultimately benefiting students and helping them achieve the objectives outlined in the syllabus. This study also aims to assist teachers in recognizing a potential gap between their beliefs and practices, as doing so can facilitate their professional development. Furthermore, teachers are more likely to be motivated to modify and improve their instructional practices when they are aware of potential dissonance.

This paper will include a theoretical background (section 2) regarding the Swedish context, the definition of teacher beliefs, grammar teaching, and different approaches to grammar teaching. This is followed by a literature review (section 3) of previous studies of teachers' grammar beliefs and practices in the EFL classroom. Moreover, a presentation of the chosen method (section 4) will be provided. Next, the results will be presented (section 5), analyzed and discussed (section 6) together with potential pedagogical implications. The final part will conclude the study by providing some recommendations for further research (section 7).

2 Theoretical Background

This section explores the necessary theoretical perspectives and explains some of the terms used in this study. Firstly, the Swedish context will be presented, followed by the definition of teacher beliefs and the impact beliefs can have on teachers' practices. Next, a presentation will be given of how EFL literature describe grammar teaching. Lastly, various approaches to teaching grammar will be introduced.

2.1 The Swedish Context

The communicative skill is the primary focus when teaching English in the Swedish context. The English syllabus for compulsory school (grades 7-9) only mentions grammatical structures as one of many components of the productive and receptive skills (Skolverket, 2022b, p.38). Thus, the syllabus does not mandate teachers to include any obligatory grammatical content or structures in their teaching, nor is there a predetermined sequence available for teachers to follow (Skolverket, 2022a, p.17). Instead, grammar content should only be included if it can fulfill a functional purpose for the students. Skolverket (2022a, p.17) states that students will learn and utilize the structures more efficiently when there is a direct experience of the use and purpose of a grammatical structure. Thus, linguistics phenomena should appear in the language that students encounter, but no instructions on how to address grammar specifically is given. Consequently, teachers are responsible for interpreting the syllabus and deciding what, when, and how to implement their grammar teaching.

The emphasis on communicative skills is also reflected in the assessment criteria for grades 7-9 (Skolverket, 2022b, p.40). When assessing students' oral and written productions, the primary focus is their ability to communicate effectively and make themselves understood. Grammar knowledge is not supposed to be assessed as a separate skill; instead, it should be assessed as a part of the whole. The commentary material to the English syllabus (Skolverket, 2022a, p.24) provides more detailed information on the assessment criteria. It indicates that grammatical structures are part of the assessment qualities, in terms of e.g., variation, precision, and range.

Another relevant aspect of the Swedish context is the compulsory national tests administered to students in grade 9 to assess their English proficiency. These tests evaluate students' oral skills, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and writing skills, with a strong emphasis on communicative abilities. The results of these national tests hold

significant weight in determining students' grades (Erickson, 2020, p.1). Furthermore, the national tests are intended to support and guide teachers through assessment support, annotated answers, and teacher guidelines. While grammar is not a standalone objective in these tests, it is presented as an essential prerequisite (Erickson, 2020, p.2). Moreover, the distinction between errors that disturb comprehension and errors that destroy comprehension is emphasized, with the former being considered acceptable in students' productions (Erickson, 2020, p.3). However, a report by NAFS (the project: National Tests of foreign languages) on the national tests for English in grade 9 for the year 2021-2022 (NAFS, 2022) highlighted some concerns raised by teachers. While there were positive reflections on the test regarding students' written production, some teachers believed that the annotated answers at the A-level contained an excessive number of language correctness errors compared to previous years (NAFS, 2022, p.14).

2.2 Teacher Beliefs

Beliefs are essential in comprehending the identity and actions of teachers (Gill & Fives, 2015, p.9). However, "beliefs" is a broad term without a single agreed definition. This paper adopts Michaela Borg's (2001) comprehensive and well-phrased definition of beliefs. It states that a belief is "a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior" (Borg, 2001, p.1). As teachers' beliefs can encompass various aspects, pedagogical beliefs relating to their profession are particularly relevant (Borg, 2017, p.77). However, it is difficult to separate these beliefs and focus solely on one aspect since they have interconnections and influence one another (Buehl & Beck, 2015, p.69).

Buehl and Beck (2015, p.70) discuss how there is a relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, where the two parts influence one another. The relationship varies in strength depending on the context, and external and internal factors can cause a dissonance between the two. Possible internal factors include the teacher's experience, other beliefs, or self-reflection. External factors can be different classroom or school factors that teachers must adapt accordingly (Buehl & Beck, 2015, p.74). Moreover, it is essential, when studying beliefs, to recognize how teachers' beliefs can serve different functions, such as interpreting information, framing a problem, or guiding immediate action in the classroom. Some beliefs tend to stay consistent within the individual teacher, but it is possible for beliefs to change

over time (Buehl & Beck, 2015, pp.66–67). Consequently, changing beliefs can be a reason for dissonance between their beliefs and actual practice (Buehl & Beck, 2015, p.79). Buehl and Beck (2015, p.81) argue that teachers should strive for aligned beliefs and practices because they may experience a higher level of satisfaction, contributing to their long-term retention in the profession.

2.3 Grammar Teaching

Grammar forms a fundamental basis for any language, comprising a collection of principles and regulations that dictate how words should be used and combined in the language (Ljung & Ohlander, 1993, p.7). Therefore, grammar assumes a vital role in the communicative function of a language as it aids in conveying precise meanings during communication. Ljung and Ohlander (1993) claim that possessing grammatical knowledge is “a condition for all-round and creative communicative skills” (my translation) (p.8). However, achieving effective and suitable communication is not solely dependent on having grammatical competence (Cowan, 2008, p.5) because other aspects beyond grammar influence language usage and the selection of words and structures. Cowan (2008, pp.5-8) lists these factors, which include sociolinguistic factors related to the context and intended audience, as well as principles governing how information is organized and presented by native speakers. Additionally, languages are subject to change over time, another important factor to consider. As an EFL teacher, it is essential to acknowledge these factors when teaching grammar to students.

2.4 Approaches to Grammar Teaching

There are many approaches to teaching grammar in the EFL classroom, each with a different emphasis on either form or function. However, regardless of which approach is being used, grammar teaching cannot be seen as an entirely distinct element since all language aspects are interwoven. Instead, communication is founded on the idea of collaborative development of all language aspects working together (Tornberg, 2015, p.139). Furthermore, as an EFL teacher, it is essential to remember that “every teaching method works for someone somewhere” (Cook, 2016, p.51). Therefore, understanding the context of teaching and finding the most suitable approach for that specific context is key.

When form-focused instruction is used in the classroom, attention is put on the linguistic form through a planned or unintended instructional activity (Brown & Lee, 2015, p.466). This approach can vary and can take on different realizations in the classroom.

However, within the communicative framework, function-focused instruction is the most prevalent form of instruction as it is rare to find types without any focus on form.

One approach to teaching grammar is through an explicit presentation of forms, which aims to develop students' metalinguistic awareness of grammar (Brown & Lee, 2015, p.466). This explicit presentation can either be carried out deductively or inductively. A deductive approach is rule-driven, where the teacher presents the grammar rules and lets students apply the new rule in various tasks (Brown & Lee, 2015, p.467). This approach is often associated with more traditional grammar teaching methods, involving drills, fill-in-the-gap exercises, etc. In contrast, the inductive is a data-driven approach, where the teacher provides students with examples from which they are encouraged to extract grammar rules and patterns (Brown & Lee, 2015, p.467). The focus on function in these approaches can vary based on the teacher's preferences.

Another approach is to have an implicit presentation of forms when teaching grammar (Brown & Lee, 2015, p.469). Such an approach does not explain the linguistic rules using technical terms; instead, teachers' communication with their students is supposed to present the target form. By using authentic contexts, involving students' present actions, or using visuals, students will understand the meaning and interpret the communication.

Finally, a focus-on-form approach (FonF) aims to promote incidental learning by directing learners' attention to specific grammatical forms. At the same time, they participate in communicative tasks (Brown & Lee, 2015, p.469). By giving students a communicative "feel" for the language, they can better understand and apply grammatical structures. FonF is closely related to task-based approaches, as it allows students to develop a practical understanding of language instead of overwhelming grammatical rules.

3 Literature Review

In this section, recent research on the beliefs and practices of grammar teaching will be reviewed. It includes articles published from 2009 and onwards to paint an up-to-date picture of the field. Only studies focusing on EFL teachers at a lower secondary school level have been included. The following review has a thematic structure presenting relevant key themes in the following order; teachers' beliefs about grammar (section 3.1), the lack of congruence between their beliefs and practices (section 3.2), and the possible impact of different teaching contexts (section 3.3).

3.1 Teachers' Beliefs about Grammar

As mentioned earlier, teachers' beliefs undoubtedly impact their teaching in one way or another. Therefore, this section delves into teachers' specific beliefs about teaching grammar in the EFL classroom in different contexts, shedding light on their preferences and orientations.

When exploring teachers' beliefs about grammar, there has been a tendency to focus on the communicative aspect. In Badash et al.'s (2020) study, the beliefs of EFL teachers in Israel were investigated through a questionnaire. The findings showed how the beliefs leaned toward communicative rather than a more traditional grammar teaching. Similarly, Underwood (2012) conducted a study in Japan using questionnaires and focus-group interviews and discovered that the teachers expressed positive views toward a communicative approach when teaching grammar. They saw both instrumental and motivational benefits to this approach, which had been recently incorporated into the curriculum at the time of the study. Additionally, Souisa and Yanuarius (2020) found in their study of EFL teachers in Indonesia that the teachers valued communication and a focus on meaning when teaching grammar. Their mixed method approach revealed that the teachers believed applicable grammar should be taught purposefully.

When examining teachers' beliefs, specific school settings must be considered. Baleghizadeh and Farshchi (2009) compared two settings in their questionnaire: state and private schools in Iran. The teachers' beliefs were found to be more similar than different, with both groups emphasizing the importance of grammar in the EFL classroom. However, the study showed that their beliefs differ about explicit grammar teaching. Private school teachers tend to use an inductive teaching method and communicative tasks when teaching grammar. Meanwhile, the state teachers believed in teaching grammar with explicit instructions, and they did not strongly prefer focusing on meaning to the same extent as the private teachers did.

Moreover, some studies showed an inconsistency among the teachers' beliefs. For example, Deng and Lin (2016) conducted a study in China using questionnaires and interviews, which showed contradictory beliefs among the participating EFL teachers. While valuing drilling activities and metalanguage, they had a stronger belief in language meaning than language form and preferred inductive teaching. Another study by Sato and Oyanedel (2019) showed a similar inconsistency. The Chilean EFL teachers believed in communicative grammar teaching and group work. However, the teachers also hold contradictory beliefs,

such as resistance towards corrective feedback, a crucial aspect of communicative language teaching. This inconsistency in teachers' beliefs may be partly due to the influence of other factors that shape their beliefs.

Similarly, contradictory beliefs were also found in Ezzi's (2012) study in Yemen. However, contrary to previous studies, the beliefs did not lean towards communicative grammar teaching. Instead, grammar is believed to be learned formally rather than through communication. At the same time, teachers expressed resistance towards drills and grammar-only lessons. The specific context of this study included an obligatory textbook that EFL teachers had to use in their teaching. Despite this, teachers expressed a preference for teaching grammar incidentally. Therefore, this study exemplifies how teachers' beliefs may not be refined or cohesive.

3.2 Lack of Congruence between Beliefs and Practices

Having provided a picture of what teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching may look like, this section explores whether these beliefs are reflected in classroom practices. The reviewed studies conclude a slight divergence between teachers' beliefs and practices. The beliefs tend to be more communicative compared to their more traditional teaching practice (Badash et al., 2020; Deng & Lin, 2016; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Sato & Oyanedel, 2019; Souisa & Yanuarius, 2020; Underwood, 2012, 2017). In one of these studies, it is even highlighted by the teachers themselves when they confess that their beliefs do not always match their actual grammar teaching practice (Deng & Lin, 2016).

Phipps and Borg (2009) suggest that teachers' beliefs are multidimensional and can compete with other beliefs that influence their teaching practices. Their study of EFL teachers in Turkey, examined beliefs and practices through observations and interviews. The findings revealed that teachers' competing beliefs could explain why teachers did not always follow their beliefs. Such competing beliefs could be the need to keep students engaged and follow teachers' expectations and classroom management concerns. Moreover, Deng and Lin (2016) and Sato and Oyanedel (2019) highlighted the impact of teaching culture regarding different teaching approaches. For example, teachers often believe that students are accustomed to a particular way of teaching and would not approve or be motivated by a more communicative approach. Another factor is time constraints (Deng & Lin, 2016; Underwood, 2012), leading teachers to choose a deductive teaching approach instead of the preferred inductive approach in order to cover the curriculum content within the given time frame.

In addition, the reviewed studies revealed other factors influencing teachers' practice. One was the impact of teachers' experience, both from their teacher education (Badash et al., 2020) and from their own experience as learners themselves (Sato & Oyandel, 2019). Another factor was the external pressure that teachers experience to adapt their teaching to standardized examinations (Underwood, 2012; Deng & Lin, 2016; Badash et al., 2020). As a result, many teachers are forced to teach grammar rules to prepare their students for high-stakes tests, often at the expense of communicative skills. However, there are some indications of teachers helping their students succeed in standardized examinations while still incorporating communicative language teaching in their classrooms (Underwood, 2017). Additionally, Fitriyani et al. (2020) found evidence of a definite harmony between teachers' beliefs and practices in their study in Indonesia, where teachers who believed in implicit grammar instruction continued to follow that belief in their classroom practice.

From the studies presented in this section, the complex nature of teaching becomes apparent. The investigated dissonance between teachers' beliefs and practices can have many reasons. As an EFL teacher, you might have one scenario in mind for your grammar teaching, but you may be forced to adapt your teaching to the specific situation and context you face in your classroom. Additionally, as noted by Ezzi (2012), a misunderstanding on the part of the teacher might be the reason for the lack of congruence between their practices and beliefs. Teachers may think they are teaching in one way, but in reality, they are not.

3.3 The Impact of Different Teaching Contexts

Despite the substantial geographical spread of the studies reviewed, they all reached similar conclusions about the complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. The majority were conducted in Asia or the Middle East, without any studies representing the European context. Therefore, it is essential to consider the unique characteristics of each teaching context when examining the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. For instance, contexts that emphasize high-stakes tests or standardized examinations (Deng & Lin, 2016; Underwood, 2012, 2017) require a different approach than contexts that do not rely on such tests to the same extent. Underwood (2017) notes that teachers' practices adjust accordingly when high-stakes tests prioritize accuracy over fluency. Deng and Lin's (2016) study also shows that an exam-oriented education culture can hinder teachers from making a personal choice in how to teach grammar.

4 Method

Since this study aims to examine what role grammar teaching has in an EFL context, a qualitative research method was suitable. The chosen method creates flexibility and allows for the adaption of the interaction to suit the participants' situations. Furthermore, since this study tries to interpret and contextualize these teachers' grammar beliefs and practices, a qualitative research method is preferable (McKay, 2006, p.7). A quantitative approach could have been used instead to enable a more extensive sample of participants. However, such an approach would make it quite impossible for the participants to express their detailed thoughts and beliefs about the chosen subject, which is essential in this study.

First, information about the chosen participants will be presented (section 4.1), followed by descriptions of how the interviews were conducted (section 4.2). After that, the data analysis will be described (section 4.3). Last, the ethical considerations considered in this study will be presented (section 4.4).

4.1 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of five EFL teachers, all working at lower secondary schools in the same city in the western part of Sweden. The teachers are certified for teaching at this level, except for one who was studying at the teacher program while teaching. The criterion for participating was that they were teaching English at a lower secondary school level to ensure they had experience teaching grammar in the EFL classroom. The participants represented varying degrees of experience; with a mean value of 6.2 years and a median of 4 years. Further, they represented a division of three females and two males, and two schools (one larger urban and one smaller rural).

Within the framework of a student essay, a random sample was not possible, and consequently, a sample of convenience (McKay, 2006, p.37) was used when selecting the participants. Time and geographic constraints played a significant role when choosing this sample. Since the author had access to the schools and teachers from earlier courses in the Teacher Education Programme and previous jobs, asking for permission to conduct the study was less complicated. The selected teachers were asked to participate in interviews after having been informed about the purpose of the study. Further, written consent was given before conducting the interviews and the participants were promised confidentiality

throughout the study. The study has renamed the participants from their given names to Teachers A, B, C, D, and E.

4.2 The Interviews

Interviews are a suitable method for exploring teacher attitudes about language learning (McKay, 2006, p. 51) since they allow the respondents to explain and broaden their thoughts. For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to ensure that the researcher would obtain more detailed answers and still let the respondents answer the same questions (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015, p.85). An interview guide (see Appendix A or B) was created with inspiration from a previous study with interviews by Deng and Lin (2016). Using existing questions from a previous study can be beneficial since the questions have already been piloted, and in addition, the results can be compared (Clark et al., 2021, p.252).

The interview guide included two parts, part one included questions about their background and experience as teachers. The second part included open-ended questions about the necessity and purpose of grammar teaching in the EFL classroom, their grammar teaching in practice including which material they use, their interpretation of the syllabus, and lastly, whether their practice differentiated from their beliefs about grammar teaching. When needed, follow-up questions were used to clarify or expand the responses (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015, p.90).

The interviews were held in Swedish, the L1 for all participants. That ensured that the participants could fully express their opinions and thoughts spontaneously without being restrained by their L2 (English). Even though the participants are fluent English speakers, it is believed to make the interview as comfortable as possible for the participants. All interviews were conducted face-to-face at their workplace to make it convenient for the participating teachers. Holding individual interviews with the five teachers enabled them to not affect each other's responses and to make them reflect on their own beliefs. The interviews lasted for about 30 minutes each.

4.3 Data Analysis

All the interviews were recorded with a computer recording program to ensure the responses were objectively reported afterward (McKay, 2006, p.56). Note-taking could have been easier when transcription is unnecessary, but it would be too risky to miss important responses or extended passages when only taking notes. Thus, nothing got lost in the process when the

interviews were recorded, and the interviewer could entirely focus on the interviewee and potential follow-up questions. Afterward, the recordings were transcribed word for word manually, with exceptions for a few parts, which were rewritten to make the spoken language understandable. Some irrelevant parts were excluded, such as repetitions and filler words. The author has translated relevant parts of the transcribed material when presenting it in this study. Since Swedish is the author's first language, the translations of different terms seem accurate, even though it would be ideal to avoid any translations. However, the benefits of interviewing in the L1 outweigh the possible disadvantages when letting the participants express their thoughts spontaneously and detailed.

Subsequently, the data was coded into different categories to identify relevant themes. The concept of theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84) was followed, and themes and subthemes were identified when analyzing patterns within the data. A theme captures an essential aspect concerning the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). The theoretical background, literature review, and research questions were kept in mind during the analysis process. This approach was chosen because it is accessible to researchers with no previous experience, which is the case in this study, and because it is a flexible approach that can "summarize key features of a large body of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97).

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were considered to ensure the study follows good research practice. By following national ethical guidelines by the Swedish Research Council (2017), the author ensured that the study fulfilled the requirements of information, consent, and anonymity. All participating teachers were first given information about the study and its purpose in writing (See Appendix C). If they gave their consent to participate in the study, they had to sign a letter of consent (See Appendix C) stating that participating was voluntary. They could withdraw whenever they wanted, even after the interview was conducted. Furthermore, they were promised complete anonymity in the study. Consequently, to ensure that, all names of people and schools were erased and renamed when transcribing the interviews. Thus, no information can be deduced from an individual participant (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2015, p.50).

5 Results

The results from the semi-structured interviews with five participating teachers are presented in this section. It is divided into subsections which relate to the research questions. Firstly, section 5.1 details the participating teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching. Next, section 5.2 includes descriptions of their grammar practice in the EFL classroom. Lastly, the relationship between their beliefs and practices will be presented in section 5.3.

5.1 EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Grammar

This section presents the themes identified regarding the teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching in the EFL classroom at a lower secondary school level. It includes the various ways the teachers define grammar, the necessity of grammar in the EFL classroom, their attitudes towards grammar teaching, and where these beliefs originate from.

The participating teachers collectively view grammar as a set of rules guiding language construction, structure, and development. They recognize grammar as a crucial tool for achieving communicative competence, and they all highlight the need for grammar knowledge in order to communicate effectively and accurately. Teacher C mentioned that grammatical competence is something to strive for but believes it is unrealistic to use perfect grammar all the time. Likewise, Teacher E claimed that "in my classroom, perfect grammar use is not the most important part". Meanwhile, Teacher E also mentioned that grammar helps students consciously develop their language.

When asked about the need for teaching grammar in the EFL classroom, all teachers agreed that it is necessary, although their attitudes varied. Teacher D emphasized that grammar is always relevant, regardless of the circumstances. Teacher E explained that she enjoys grammar teaching, but her beliefs about grammar teaching vary in degree of importance based on the circumstances, such as assessment guidelines from the national tests. At the same time, Teachers A and Teacher C had somewhat negative attitudes toward grammar, which became apparent during the interviews. Teacher A referred to grammar as a "necessary evil" and explained that they think grammar is boring. Similarly, Teacher C claimed there is "a general consensus of grammar being really boring" and expressed how grammar can be tough. The same two teachers were the ones who expressed concern about student motivation and engagement when teaching grammar, which they thought should be considered by the teacher when choosing a teaching approach.

Furthermore, during the discussions about their beliefs regarding grammar teaching, all teachers emphasized the importance of having a clear purpose when teaching grammar. This purpose must be apparent and easily understandable for students as well. Most teachers believe that it is easier to present a purpose to the students when teaching grammar in a context. For this reason, they preferred to base their grammar teaching on students' written production in the classroom. A focus on function rather than form was emphasized by the teachers. They also valued when they were able to relate the grammar teaching to the current theme they are working with. Teacher D explained that grammar is not a central focus, but is included when necessary. This approach enables students to understand "Why would you need this in your own production?" (Teacher D). Moreover, the same teacher mentioned that this approach makes it easier for the students to comprehend grammar teaching.

None of the participating teachers found grammar-only lessons to be valuable. Similarly, most teachers did not find drills and fill-in-the-gap exercises useful in promoting student production. As Teacher B mentioned, such activities are not applicable to students' own production. In addition, Teacher D was also not a proponent of these activities but did discuss some potential benefits, such as using drilling activities for repetition or catering to the needs of specific student groups. Similarly, Teacher E considered grammar-only lessons as a practical option in some situations since teaching grammar in a context may be time-consuming. However, Teacher A believed this approach would only make the teacher's planning easier and provides no other benefits.

During the interviews, it became evident that the participating teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching have diverse origins, including personal experience as learners, teacher education, and teaching experience. For instance, Teacher E explained that using the language in a practical context was more effective than drilling exercises, originating from her own teacher experience. Teacher C stressed the importance of connecting grammar instruction to real-world situations. Their teacher experience has shown that students learn grammar better when they can apply grammar concepts to their production. Teacher B described their experience as a learner, emphasizing the need to feel the practical necessity for grammar knowledge before learning and understanding it meaningfully. Moreover, Teachers B and E highlighted that their beliefs about grammar teaching have evolved over the years.

5.2 EFL Teachers' Practices for Teaching Grammar

The interview data revealed valuable insights into the teachers' classroom practices when teaching grammar. During the interviews, the teachers discussed how they choose grammar content in relation to the guidelines from the current syllabus. There was also a focus on the materials used for teaching grammar, which often involved choosing between using the textbook available or not. The prevalence of grammar teaching in their EFL classrooms was also examined. Lastly, the participating teachers' views on assessment and grammar were explored.

5.2.1 Grammar Content

The results from the interviews showed that all but one teacher mentioned that they choose grammar material according to their students' level of development. Teacher B explained how students' knowledge is assessed at the beginning of a semester/year, which guides their grammar teaching for the upcoming period. Similarly, Teacher D described how the chosen material should fit the group of students and their language development. Consequently, there is no standard sequence of grammar content for a specific grade that the teachers follow each year. Teacher A argued that students differ in their proficiency level yearly and would not need the same grammar-teaching content. Moreover, Teacher E explained that there is no long-term plan for choosing content to include when teaching grammar.

The single teacher who did not have this approach when choosing grammar content, relied on the textbook to provide the grammar content to teach. This teacher argued that the textbook allowed for a natural progression and a logical order with the different chapters. In addition, they usually work with the textbook so that the grammar teaching can relate to the current theme. However, this teacher explained that the plan can change if recurring grammar mistakes are identified in the classroom, and those grammar structures are addressed. Similarly, other teachers highlighted the importance of identifying common grammar mistakes in the classroom and bringing that into their teaching. Another teacher added that students sometimes prefer specific grammar content, which also affect grammar teaching.

When asked about what grammar content they choose to include, discussions occurred about the fact that no grammar content is explicitly mentioned in the English syllabus. Teacher D valued how the syllabus allows teachers to choose grammar content that fits the specific students. Further, concern was expressed about a potential situation with a syllabus

including strict guidelines about content to include, and the teacher thought such a scenario would be very boring, both for teachers and students. To be forced to teach grammar structures that the students already knew would not be motivating. In similar ways, Teacher B described that it is a strength of the syllabus since it allows the teachers to teach in the way they like. Moreover, this implies that the students will meet different teachers and learn different things during their school years. Another teacher who valued the freedom of choosing grammar content with the current syllabus is Teacher C, who explained that this allows them not to have to teach “tough” grammar segments.

5.2.2 Material Used

During the interviews, the question of using a textbook or not in grammar teaching often arose when asked what material they used in their practice. For example, one teacher explained that they never use a textbook and instead opt for various online sources, or as the teacher stated, “anything, that works”. That teacher argued that this approach allows for more flexibility and customization of the material according to the current theme. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, another teacher heavily relied on the textbook for its structured plan, making lesson planning easier. However, this teacher sometimes supplements with additional materials found online or created by herself when the teacher feels the textbook material is insufficient.

The remaining three teachers took a middle ground on the use of textbooks. While a textbook is available, they use it selectively and in combination with other materials. The textbook is found to be beneficial, e.g., as a good resource whenever a substitute teacher was needed or as support and inspiration when planning their grammar teaching. However, they valued other material, such as literature used by their older colleagues or online sources, to have a greater quality and more relevance. These materials provide a variety and flexibility, which allows for a pause from the textbook or is brought in to cater to students’ specific needs. This material seemed to also consist of many fill-in-the-gap or drilling activities, just like the textbook does.

Despite these varied approaches, some teachers expressed frustration in finding appropriate and engaging grammar teaching materials. Much of the available material is either found to be too long, monotonous, or not suitable for their students’ age or grammar level. For example, one teacher explained that it is difficult to find material that focuses on the core without being too extensive and heavy. That teacher described how they used to create their

own materials but have had to abandon this practice due to time constraints and the need to adapt to their current students each year.

5.2.3 The Teachers' Approaches to Teaching Grammar

During the interviews, the participating teachers shared their practices and approaches to teaching grammar. Most commonly, explicit presentations of grammatical forms were used, typically in a deductive manner where teachers presented grammar rules or used the chosen material to introduce new structures before students practiced and applied them in different exercises. So, a form-focused approach was prevalent in their practice. However, all teachers said that focusing on function was also important. They emphasized the importance of relating grammar teaching to the current theme they were working on so that students could understand and see its applicability. However, one teacher reported using a different approach in their grammar practice, namely an inductive one. This teacher described grammar teaching as a treasure hunt where students were supposed to discover the rules themselves. Another teacher questioned the best approach for teaching grammar and expressed some doubt about their choices and approaches. Further, the teacher explained the difficulty in considering students' individual differences and finding an approach that works for everyone.

When asking about their grammar practice, most teachers have difficulty answering how often they teach grammar. It tends to vary; sometimes it is more often, and sometimes less often. However, grammar was generally taught once a month, and depending on the current theme, grammar would be taught more often, as when focusing on written production. One teacher mentioned that even though grammar is not explicitly taught in the classroom often, grammar is always apparent in the conversations with the students every week. Two other teachers explained that they would like to teach grammar more often, but other aspects restrain them as they feel that those are more important to teach.

All participating teachers explained their use of both Swedish and English when teaching grammar. They argued that using Swedish is beneficial since it takes less time for the students to understand, it makes it easier to introduce new concepts and terms, and they want the students to follow the instructions, or as one teacher stated, the weaker students need material in Swedish to understand the content. Even though a considerable part of grammar is taught in Swedish, some teachers expressed a need to use English as much as possible. The students must also hear the grammar terms in English, and depending on the grammar content, it is easier to teach in English e.g., indefinite articles.

In addition, the teachers shared their observations of how students perceive grammar teaching. For example, Teacher B explained that the students might find the grammar material difficult. Consequently, the teacher stated that it is essential that the students can understand the purpose and that “the students have to believe that I, as their teacher, only want what is best for them and that I am doing it for their sake” (Teacher B). Similarly, Teacher D noted that students rarely have negative attitudes towards grammar teaching because they can see its value. Another perspective was described by another teacher, who had preconceptions about the students’ attitudes but was surprised that the students actually liked the grammar teaching. Moreover, while one had no idea how the students perceived grammar teaching, another explained that their students had negative attitudes towards grammar teaching, just like the teacher had. That teacher questioned where these negative attitudes came from and that those must originate from someone or somewhere.

5.2.4 Assessing Grammar

The interviews also explored the topic of assessing grammar, and the participating teachers shared their views on how grammar is evaluated. They unanimously agreed that grammar is not assessed as an isolated skill but is assessed alongside other skills. In addition, one teacher explained grammar as a part of the whole when assessing students’ written production. Although some teachers acknowledge that good grammar is important for achieving higher grades, perfection is not necessary. Instead, students are expected to demonstrate a reasonable level of grammatical accuracy to receive a higher grade.

Furthermore, the teachers mentioned that grammar is connected to the grading criteria regarding flow, coherence, and clarity and can be used to assess students’ grammatical proficiency. One teacher mentioned how those criteria are described in the commentary material from the Swedish National Agency for Education, which provides great support for assessing grammar. Another teacher further explained how yearly national tests assessments are like continuing education that helps teachers stay updated on balancing their assessments.

5.3 The Relationship between Beliefs and Practices

Naturally, after asking about the teachers’ individual beliefs and practices, questions were asked about whether they thought their beliefs and practices aligned or if they would prefer to teach differently. Therefore, this section will also examine if the teachers’ beliefs and practices are congruent with the viewpoint of the interviewer. Lastly, some teachers raised concerns

about the future of grammar in the EFL classroom, considering the changes they have observed in education.

Several teachers identified aspects they would like to change about their grammar teaching, if possible. One teacher wished to be more of a grammar nerd in practice to facilitate communicating grammar knowledge to students. Another teacher wished for more time for teaching grammar and more experience in creating fun and creative lesson plans for grammar teaching. Moreover, the teacher-student expressed a desire to teach differently if not constrained by predetermined lesson plans. That teacher explained a wish to include more extensive grammar modules, fewer textbooks would be used, and the students would work inductively with grammar more often.

Two of the participating teachers expressed satisfaction with their grammar teaching. One teacher attributed it to the flexibility in teaching methods allowed by that school. However, a self-critical thought emerged during the conversation when this teacher questioned the impact on students and their education when different approaches and contents were used in the same school. The other teacher who was content with their grammar teaching also revealed insecurities about older colleagues who focus more on grammar in their teaching. This insecurity made the teacher question whether their teaching was sufficient, but at the same time, they believed it was because their students performed well on the national tests.

During the interviews with these EFL teachers, it became apparent that there is no complete harmony between their grammar-teaching beliefs and practices. The participating teachers mostly agreed that using drills and fill-in-the-gap activities when teaching grammar was not valuable for promoting student production and communicative competence. They also recognized the importance of grammar in developing communicative competence. However, their declared practices did not reflect these beliefs. They rarely mentioned a communicative focus or the communicative aspect of grammar when describing their practice. Traditional fill-in-the-gap and drilling activities were still included, focusing on form, when the teachers described the material they were using. The teachers explained that they continued to use these activities due to time constraints, limited availability of materials, effectiveness for weaker students, and ease the planning of grammar lessons.

However, some glimpses of harmony between their beliefs and practices were noticed during the interviews. The teachers strongly believed in teaching grammar with a clear and understandable purpose, which seemed to align with their practice. Some of them argued that

their grammar teaching had a practical necessity since it was mostly related to the current theme or area they were working on within the EFL classroom. In addition, the teacher who believed in inductive teaching and students identifying grammar patterns reflected on this in their practice since they included sequences of this.

The teachers participating in the study acknowledged that, in some cases, their teaching practices did not align with their beliefs about grammar teaching. However, when asked about these discrepancies, the teacher explained that other beliefs or circumstances were more important than grammar beliefs. For instance, Teacher B described their experience that the Swedish National Agency for Education and national tests place a higher value on skills such as content and expressing one's opinion rather than grammar proficiency when assessing student production. Similarly, Teacher E expressed their experience of grammar not being so important anymore and questioned the need for teaching it since other aspects are emphasized more.

In line with this, some other teachers also addressed the question about the future of grammar teaching in the EFL classroom. Teacher C questioned the role of grammar in the EFL classroom in the future, meanwhile considering the increasing digitalization of education. With the national tests set to be completely digital in a few years, the teacher wonders if grammar will still be necessary to teach, given that grammar checks are readily available to students. The teacher found this to be an interesting question and wondered how schools and teachers would adapt to these changes. In addition, Teacher D highlighted that many students have poor grammar knowledge, which could be due to their exposure to spoken English containing non-standard grammar through social media, videos, or music. Since accuracy is not always a priority in these forms of communication, it can negatively impact students' written production and grammar knowledge. The teacher explained that, sadly, this could also lead to difficulties in reading comprehension. However, to conclude this section, Teacher B emphasized that language is constantly evolving, so teachers and students must adapt and evolve with it.

6 Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

This study has sought to explore the questions of beliefs and practices of grammar teaching of a select group of EFL teachers in Sweden. Therefore, no generalization for a broader population can be made. However, the result still provides an opportunity for discussion, which will be presented in this section. The research questions of this study, along with

previous research and the theoretical background, will serve as a starting point for the discussion. Worth noting is the significant difference between the Swedish school context compared to other contexts examined in previous research, which makes it more difficult to compare this present study with previous research. Additionally, some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers at lower secondary schools will be integrated into the discussion.

The first research question asked about Swedish EFL teachers' grammar beliefs. The participating teachers agreed that grammar is an essential aspect of communicative competence but might not be the most crucial one. This approach of focusing on communicative goals aligns with many of the international studies (e.g., Underwood, 2012; Badash et al., 2020). In addition, some teachers in this study defined grammar as a tool for communicative competence, consistent with the views of Ljung and Ohlander (1993) and Cowan (2008). The teachers' practice reflected this perspective as they attempted to link grammar instruction with their students' written production or texts covered in class. As a result, their students' new grammar knowledge could enrich and clarify their communication. Some of the participating teachers argued that perfect grammar use is never the primary goal because other aspects of communication are more significant. This is consistent with the guidelines from national tests in English (NAFS, 2022), which put less emphasis on correct grammar use.

Another finding of this study is reflected in the results of Baleghizadeh and Farshchi's (2009) research, indicating that the teachers believed there is a need for teaching grammar in the EFL classroom. The participating teachers in this present study believed that grammar instructions were necessary for their EFL students. Furthermore, all the teachers valued applicable grammar taught purposefully, just like the results of Souisa and Yanuarius' (2020) research. The participating Swedish teachers believed grammar should be taught with a clear purpose relevant and applicable to students' production to connect grammar with the rest of the EFL teaching. This perspective of the Swedish teachers might be influenced by the commentary material to the English syllabus (Skolverket, 2022a, p.17) mentioned earlier, which values grammar teaching when it serves to clarify or enrich communication.

Unlike some of the previous studies (e.g., Ezzi, 2012; Badash et. al., 2020), this study uncovered the participating teachers' attitudes toward grammar, which were both positive and negative. Two teachers expressed negative attitudes, which seemed to stem from their own experience as learners finding grammar boring. One of them asked where students' negative

attitudes come from; perhaps the answer is from the teacher self. In terms of pedagogical implications, having teachers express grammar as a necessary evil or as something boring may negatively affect their teaching, even if they express its importance. While it may not be possible to love every aspect of what is being taught, it is essential to consider how one's attitude can impact teaching and students. Therefore, it may be necessary to reevaluate and adjust attitudes toward grammar teaching.

Next, the second research question asked about the Swedish EFL teachers' practice for teaching grammar. As the results showed, the participating teachers in this study mostly used a form-focused approach when teaching grammar. They described their explicit presentations of forms together with a deductive approach (except for one teacher who preferred an inductive approach), which is quite similar to the previous studies and their reported traditional form-focused grammar teaching (Badash et al., 2020; Deng & Lin, 2016; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Sato & Oyanedel, 2019; Souisa & Yanuarius, 2020; Underwood, 2012, 2017). However, in contrast to those previous studies, a focus on function was also prevalent in their practices in this present study.

In addition, according to some of the participating teachers, there appears to be a notable deficiency in grammar knowledge among students at lower secondary schools. For example, one teacher explicitly stated that their students had quite poor grammar knowledge. As a result, it seems to be necessary to teach a substantial amount of grammar content to enhance students' communication skills and provide clarity in their language proficiency. However, the interviews revealed that grammar was quite rarely taught since other aspects were prioritized. Therefore, less time allotted could indicate that there is not enough time to teach all the preferred grammar structures. Indeed, several participating teachers expressed a desire for more time to teach grammar.

Furthermore, as noted in the theoretical background, teachers are responsible for selecting grammar content, when, and how it should be taught. Considering these circumstances, a possible pedagogical implication can be that as an EFL teacher, it is crucial to have a thought-out plan to ensure all necessary grammar content will be covered. But also, to ensure possibilities to include those in their teaching in purposeful ways. Even though no grammar content is explicitly stated in the syllabus, the teachers at later stages, e.g. at upper secondary school and beyond, assume that the students have reasonable grammar knowledge when reaching that level in order to pass those courses. So, when teachers, like one of the participating teachers in this study, do not have a long-term plan for their grammar teaching,

students' grammar knowledge will likely suffer. This might be a consequence of the syllabus, which is somewhat open for interpretation, even though it can be beneficial, as mentioned by the teachers.

However, it is worth noting that none of the interviewed teachers in this study mentioned anything about aiming toward what the students are expected to know when they enter upper secondary school. That should arguably be mentioned when discussing how they choose grammar content to teach. That aspect might be evident for them, but it also leaves us asking whether they are missing a long-term plan for the students' future studies. Even though grammar is not such an important aspect to assess at the lower secondary school, it will be more critical when reaching higher levels in the education system. In terms of pedagogical implications, not aiming toward further education can have adverse effects, as it may leave the students far behind in some aspects which can lead to difficulties in the future.

Moreover, in the context of grammar practice, the participating teachers expressed issues about finding suitable materials. There were major differences in the materials used, even within these two schools in the same municipality. Some teachers expressed a challenge of dedicating substantial time, which they often lacked, to search for appropriate grammar materials that would effectively cater to their students' needs. In addition, they expressed how no material had it all, leaving them without convenient material. These circumstances prompt us to question the implications for students' learning experiences and the potential consequences of EFL teachers relying on diverse material for grammar instruction. Will students receive an equivalent grammar education? Alternatively, equivalence is perhaps an impossible target to actually reach when the Swedish syllabus for English lacks strict guidelines and is open for teacher interpretation.

Notably, an intriguing observation emerged during the discussion on the participants' grammar teaching. Surprisingly, none of the teachers mentioned grammar instruction with oral production, despite it being an integral component of the syllabus's assessment criteria and content for both oral and written production in the syllabus (Skolverket, 2022b, pp.38-41). Instead, the interviews predominantly revolved around strategies for connecting grammar teaching specifically to students' written production. This discrepancy raises questions about the extent to which teachers' practices align with the assessment requirements and expectations set by the syllabus. There is an equal emphasis on grammar in both written and oral production in the syllabus, which is not reflected in their declared practice.

From a pedagogical perspective, neglecting the explicit teaching of grammar in oral production may unintentionally send a message to students that grammar is less important when speaking. This aligns with the thoughts expressed by Teacher D, who noted that students are frequently exposed to spoken English with poor grammar in their daily lives. However, it is essential to consider that teaching grammar in the context of written production can also have implications for oral production. The knowledge and understanding gained through written practice can potentially transfer to improved grammatical accuracy in spoken communication. Nonetheless, it remains essential for teachers to explicitly address grammar in both oral and written production to ensure a comprehensive and balanced language learning experience for their students.

Lastly, the third research question explored the alignment between teachers' beliefs and practices and to what extent they matched. The results indicate no complete harmony, which is consistent with previous research. Despite valuing a communicative approach that emphasizes function in their beliefs, teachers' actual practices did not fully reflect this emphasis. Interestingly, some teachers acknowledged the inconsistency between their beliefs and classroom practices. This is consistent with the study conducted by Deng and Lin (2016), suggesting that teachers recognize the misalignment. While this awareness can sometimes lead to dissatisfaction when teachers feel external or internal constraints prevent them from teaching in the way they believe is the best (Buehl & Beck, 2015, p.80), it is crucial to recognize that this realization can also serve as a motivation for teachers to take action and actively work towards aligning their beliefs and practices. Therefore, promoting self-reflection among teachers regarding their beliefs and practices becomes essential, as well as identifying the factors that may influence that relationship. By doing so, educators can better understand the barriers and facilitators that shape the alignment between beliefs and practices, ultimately striving for a more cohesive and effective teaching approach, as highlighted in section 2.2.

Furthermore, when discussing the lack of congruence between teachers' beliefs and practices, various external and internal factors can be the reasons for a misalignment, as mentioned by Buehl and Beck (2015). One possible explanation for the misalignment is the presence of competing beliefs, as Phipps and Borg (2009) noted. In addition to competing beliefs, time constraints emerged as one external factor, which was consistently mentioned by the teachers in this study and echoed in previous studies by Deng and Lin (2016) and Underwood (2012).

Another influential factor identified through the interviews was the teachers' perception of the need to align their teaching with standardized examinations. However, unlike the findings of Underwood (2012), Deng and Lin (2016), and Badash et al. (2020), the Swedish teachers in this study allocated less time to rule-based grammar teaching. This difference can be attributed to the lower emphasis on rule-based grammar in the Swedish national tests. The local circumstances and standardized exam guidelines unique to the Swedish context shape the teachers' instructional priorities and what they choose to emphasize in their teaching. As a result, the Swedish teachers placed more emphasis on communicative skills, in line with the national tests, compared to the other teaching contexts examined in the previous studies.

7 Conclusions

The overall aim of this study was to investigate lower secondary EFL teachers' beliefs and practices for teaching grammar in Sweden. That involves also examining to what extent their beliefs and practices aligned. For this reason, a qualitative approach was adopted, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with five EFL teachers. The main findings showed that the participating teachers recognized grammar as an essential component of communicative competence, contributing to the clarity and enrichment of students' communication. Furthermore, they emphasized teaching grammar in a meaningful context and with a clear purpose. However, mixed attitudes toward grammar teaching were expressed, which were reflected in their declared practices.

While the teachers employed a variety of grammar teaching approaches, a predominant focus on explicit instruction was identified, despite their acknowledgment that such activities may not be optimal for promoting student production. In addition, the study revealed that the teachers faced challenges in finding suitable grammar teaching materials, and there was variability in the content covered, which raised concerns about the quality and equivalence of grammar instruction across classrooms. Furthermore, the study showed that there is no complete harmony between the teachers' grammar beliefs and practices, e.g., the emphasized communicative approach is not fully reflected in their practice. Competing beliefs and the influence of contextual factors were identified as potential causes for this misalignment.

Further research is needed to gain a broader understanding of EFL teachers' beliefs and practices for teaching grammar in Sweden. Incorporating classroom observations would

be advantageous to enhance the depth of examination, as they provide insights into teachers' actual practices rather than relying solely on their self-reported and potentially refined perspectives. It would be valuable to explore the motivational factors influencing teachers' choices of grammar content to teach and why some structures are deemed more important and necessary than others. Also, to shed light on whether they prioritize connecting grammar instruction with oral skills, or if they consider preparing students for further education. Additionally, investigating teachers' perspectives on the role of grammar in the future EFL classroom would be of interest. Will grammar teaching decrease in importance as the focus shifts even further toward communicative skills? Understanding the potential course of grammar instruction in light of these evolving trends would contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective language pedagogy.

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Appendix A – Interview guide

PART 1: (Introducing questions)

- For how long have you been teaching English? Or working as a teacher?
- How many schools have you been working at?
- Which subjects do you usually teach? More than English?
- What is your education? Do you have a degree to teach the subjects you teach?

PART 2:

Necessity and purpose of grammar

- I think we should start with the definition, what is grammar according to you?
 - o What do you include in that definition?
- What do you believe about grammar in the language classroom?
 - o Is it necessary to teach grammar?
 - o What is the purpose of grammar in the EFL teaching?
- If we don't mind the way you teach grammar right now, what do you believe is the most suitable way to teach grammar to EFL students?
 - o Do you know where this belief comes from?

Grammar teaching in practice

Read what the syllabus says about grammar in the English classroom

This means that there are barely any guidelines or regulations regarding what content to include in the grammar teaching. That gives us, the teacher, a great freedom and responsibility to choose what to include in our grammar teaching.

- How do you choose what grammar content to include or not in your teaching?
 - o How do you interpret the syllabus and its grammar parts?
 - o How do you include those parts/that content?
- Which approaches do you use?
(CLT or traditional grammar teaching?)
- What material are you using?
 - o What is the level of the material? Difficulty?
- What affects your choices of material?
 - o Benefits with that material? Disadvantages?

- Do you integrate the grammar in other elements?
- How often do you teach grammar?
- Which language do you use when you teach grammar? Why?
- What are your thoughts about assessment and grammar?
- How do the students respond to your grammar teaching?

- **Is your practice and beliefs differentiated according to yourself?**
 - o In what way?
 - o Would you like to teach grammar in a different way than you are doing now?
Why/why not?

- Do you have anything more that you would like to add about grammar teaching and grammar beliefs that you think we have missed?

Appendix B – Interview Guide in Swedish

DEL 1: (Introducerande frågor)

- a) Hur länge har du undervisat i engelska? Arbetat som lärare?
- b) Hur många skolor har du arbetat på?
- c) Vilka ämnen brukar du undervisa i? Något mer än engelska?
- d) Vad har du för utbildning? Är du behörig i engelska för åk7-9?

DEL 2:

- Jag tänker att vi börjar med definitionen, Vad är grammatik enligt dig?
 - o Vad inkluderas i det begreppet?
- När jag skriver denna uppsats på engelska kommer jag använda mig utav termen ”beliefs” när jag beskriver lärares tro/uppfattning/inställning/åsikt/attityd om grammatik i engelska klassrummet. Vad är din uppfattning om grammatik i språkklassrummet?
 - o Finns det behov av att lära ut grammatik? (på vilket sätt? Varför inte?)
 - o Vad är syftet med grammatik i engelska undervisningen?
- Om vi tänker bort hur du undervisar grammatik nu, vad tror du är det bästa sättet att lära ut grammatik på för EFL-elever?
 - o Vet du vart den uppfattningen kommer ifrån?
- Det är enbart i det centrala innehållet som grammatik nämns i den engelska kursplanen för åk.7–9. I både den receptiva och produktiva delen står det att ” Språkliga företeelser, däribland uttal, **grammatiska strukturer och satsbyggnad**, ord med olika stilvärden och fasta språkliga uttryck samt stavning, i det språk eleverna möter” respektive ” Språkliga företeelser, däribland uttal, ord och fasta språkliga uttryck, **grammatiska strukturer och satsbyggnad** samt stavning i elevernas egen produktion och interaktion”.

Det innebär att det inte finns särskilt mycket riktlinjer/bestämmelser kring vilket innehåll som ska inkluderas i undervisningen. Det ger oss som lärare en stor frihet och ansvar för vad vi inkluderar i vår undervisning.
- Hur väljer du ut vilket grammatik innehåll som ska ingå i undervisningen?
 - o Hur tolkar du kursplanen ang. grammatik?

- Hur inkluderar du dem delarna?
- Vilket tillvägagångssätt använder du i klassrummet?
(Kommunikativ språkundervisning – traditionell grammatik metod)
- Vilket material använder du?
 - Vilken nivå har det materialet? Är det svårt/enkelt för eleverna?
 - Vad påverkar dina val av material?
 - Vad är fördelarna med att använda ett sådant material? Nackdelar?
- Integreras det i andra moment/ämnen?
- Hur ofta undervisar du grammatik?
- Vilket språk använder du när du undervisar grammatik på engelska lektionerna?
Varför?
- Hur ser du på bedömning och grammatik? (står inget om grammatik explicit i betygskriterierna)
- Hur tas grammatiken emot av eleverna?
- Skiljer sig din grammatikundervisning i engelskaklassrummet sig något från din tro/uppfattning om grammatik? På vilket sätt?
 - Skulle du vilja lära ut grammatik på ett annorlunda sätt än vad du gör nu? Vad får dig att vilja göra det?
- Har du något mer du vill tillägga om grammatikundervisning eller uppfattningar om grammatik som du tycker att vi har missat?

Appendix C – Information Letter & Letter of Consent

Informationsbrev och förfrågan om att delta i en kvalitativ intervjustudie om högstadielärares uppfattning om grammatikundervisning i EFL-klassrummet samt hur grammatik arbetas med i praktiken.

Jag heter Lisa Wassén och studerar sista terminen på ämneslärarprogrammet med inriktning åk.7–9 i ämnena engelska och matematik på Göteborgs Universitet. I utbildningen ingår det att genomföra en studie som ska presenteras i ett examensarbete.

Studiens syfte är att undersöka engelskalärares syn på grammatikundervisning i EFL-klassrummet. Intervjufrågorna kommer att beröra syftet med grammatikundervisning, hur du väljer att arbeta med grammatik i engelskundervisningen, vilket material som används, om din uppfattning och praktik skiljer sig i någon aspekt samt huruvida du hade önskat undervisa grammatik på ett annorlunda vis.

Deltagande i studien innebär att en intervju kommer att genomföras som beräknas ta max 40 minuter. Hela intervjun kommer att spelas in på två enheter. Intervjuerna kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och namn på respondenter och skolor kommer att anonymiseras. Din medverkan är frivillig och kan när som helst avbrytas, även efter att intervjun är genomförd. Om du accepterar att medverka i studien kommer du att kontaktas via mejl för att bestämma en tid för genomförande av intervjun.

Hälsningar

Lisa Wassén
Göteborgs universitet
email address (information removed)

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Skriftligt, informerat samtycke till medverkan i intervjustudien av Lisa Wassén.

Jag har informerats om studiens syfte, om hur informationen samlas in, bearbetas och handhas. Jag har även informerats om att mitt deltagande är frivilligt och att jag, när jag vill, kan avbryta min medverkan i studien utan att ange orsak. Jag samtycker härmed till att medverka i denna intervjustudie som handlar om engelskalärares syn på grammatikundervisning i EFL-klassrummet.

Ort/Datum/År:

Namnunderskrift:

Namnförtydligande:

Ort/Datum/År:

Studentens underskrift:

Namnförtydligande:
