

Teachers' Attitudes Toward Grammar Teaching in the Efl Classroom

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TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GRAMMAR TEACHING IN THE EFL
CLASROOM

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M.A. in English Language and
Literature and German Language and Literature at the University of Rijeka

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Abstract

The English language methodology and teaching English as a foreign language has been researched from many perspectives throughout the years. Constant change in the methods and approaches in teaching English especially teaching English language grammar is the main reason why this study is on teachers' attitude toward grammar instruction. This study is developed in order to collect, define teachers' attitudes toward grammar instruction in the EFL classroom and connect them with previous research and theoretical basis. The data were collected by means of an online questionnaire in English, which was uploaded on Google forms and distributed via e-mail, social media and websites (Županijski aktiv profesora engleskog jezika, HUPE-Hrvatsko udruženje profesora hrvatskoga jezika). The questionnaire had an open-access for two months and in that period it yielded a response rate of 33 participants. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed in Excel and SPSS. Participants expressed different attitudes toward teaching of grammar, students' needs, impact of grammar in the EFL classroom, the benefits and challenges of teaching grammar, and the impact of their language learning experience on the way they teach. Findings of this research are interesting because they show the real practice of teaching grammar among teachers and not theoretical implications.

Key words: English as a foreign language (EFL), English language teaching (ELT), Second language acquisition (SLA), English methodology, teachers' attitudes, grammar instruction

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1.Introduction

Grammar in the EFL classroom has played a great role a great role throughout the years and still does. Continuous changes of methods and approaches in grammar instruction in the EFL classroom contribute to the change of grammar instruction in EFL itself as well as to the changes in teachers' attitudes toward it. The major problem in the research is the discrepancy between theory and practice concerning grammar instruction in the EFL classroom as well as in the teachers' attitudes toward grammar instruction and the theoretical implications, suggestions

The aim of this thesis is to explore teachers' attitudes toward grammar instruction in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, it examines how grammar should be taught, the benefits and challenges of teaching grammar, students' needs related to it as well as the effect of their language learning experience on their teaching. Finally, it looks at the teachers' assessment of their teaching grammar according to the EPOSTL's descriptors.

The research on teachers' attitudes on grammar instruction in the EFL classroom has been done with the help of online questionnaire, access to which was opened for two months and in that period of time it collected 33 answers. The participants were answering on the multiple choice questions, evaluating their agreement and disagreement on the five-point Likert scale as well as answering the open-ended questions. The results were than statistically analyzed with the SPSS and Excel program.

The paper is divided in following sections:

The second chapter defines grammar from many different perspectives and approaches. Not only does it determine the differences between written and spoken grammar, formal and functional grammar, prescriptive and descriptive grammar but it also describes the most

important aspect of grammar for the EFL classroom - pedagogical grammar. It examines the methods in teaching grammar and their development throughout history as well as the approaches to grammar teaching. Great emphasis is also put on the benefits and challenges of teaching grammar and answering the question to teach it or not.

The third chapter provides information about the present study -the aim of the study and research questions, as well as the participants and research method.

The fourth chapter illustrates the data which were collected by the means of an online questionnaire and were analyzed in Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

In the fifth chapter, the findings are discussed from different theoretical perspectives.

Finally, the sixth chapter presents the conclusion, limitations and contribution of the study.

This study can contribute to the field of the English language teaching and methodology, i.e. teachers of the English language, ELT methodology trainers and pre-service teachers of the English language by giving them the insight in the historical development of methods and approaches as well as in the results and attitudes of experienced English teachers. Findings of this research are interesting because they show the real practice of teaching grammar among teachers and not theoretical implications.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. What is grammar?

The notion of grammar is very hard to describe. Grammar can be defined as “the way words are put together to make correct sentences” (Ur 2012, pp.76) a “set of rules specifying the correct ordering of words at sentence level” (Nunan,2003) or “a description of the structure of a language and the way in which units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language” (Richards, 1985) According to the latest edition of Oxford Dictionary, grammar is: “the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics” (Oxford Dictionary, 2017) From these definitions of grammar, it is evident that they mainly focus on the form of language, although this is not sufficient since by producing correct sentences, speakers also convey meaning.

2.1.1 Spoken and written grammar

In the EFL classroom there is a great difference between written and spoken language. Either because of the possibility to check the written text several times or because of the fact that the students can jot their ideas down and organize their thoughts. Spoken language happens “at the moment “and one does not have much time to form their ideas and to construct meaningful and grammatically correct sentences. There is a difference not only between written and spoken language but also between written and spoken grammar.

The grammar of spoken language has its own features and principles. Carter and McCarthy suggest that we finally need to make a difference between written and spoken grammar and have distinct, different rules for them (Michael C. R., 1995)

2.1.2. Formal and functional grammar

In linguistics a distinction between formal and functional grammar is made. Formal grammars focus only on form and put little or no emphasis on the semantics or pragmatics of language. Functional grammars see language as a tool for interaction and try to explain why some language forms are used in certain contexts, while in other contexts they would or could be misinterpreted.

A well-known approach of formal grammar is descriptivism or structuralism. Its main idea is that grammatical categories have nothing to do with meaning, but only with the structure within a sentence, and they aim to explain syntactic grammatical facts rather than their connection with pragmatics.

On the other hand, functional grammars are based more on use and meaning than on form. "...The rules and principles composing the language system can only be adequately understood when they are analyzed in terms of the conditions of use" (Rees-Miller, 2017, p. 150). A crucial element of functional grammar is finding grammatical structures at the level of discourse (Ronald Carter, 2001). According to Halliday's systemic functional theory we can differentiate between three types of meaning in grammatical structures: experiential meaning (how our experience and inner thoughts are represented), interpersonal meaning (how we interact with others through language), and textual meaning (how coherence is created in written and spoken texts) (Halliday 1978)

The differences between formal and functional grammars are best explained in the following example from (Ronald Carter, 2001, p. 35)

1. Mark McGuire and Sammy Sosa broke the home run record.
2. The home run record was broken by Mark McGuire and Sammy Sosa

A formal grammarian would seek the difference in the formation of these two sentences, the placement of the subject and the object, whereas a functional grammarian would be mainly focused on the differences in scope and perspective of these two sentences.

2.1.3. Prescriptive and descriptive grammar

Apart from the above-mentioned, linguists also tell apart prescriptive and descriptive grammars. Prescriptive grammars are very dogmatic and simply state what is correct and what is incorrect, right or wrong, grammatical or ungrammatical. In contrast, descriptive grammars seek to find the way in which people use language and describe it.

Historically the focus was on prescriptive grammar, but nowadays, in the “new era “of language, descriptive grammar has gained the upper hand. The following examples illustrate the basic difference between prescriptive and descriptive grammar (Nunan, 2003)

[...]

Everybody is ready now, aren't they?

What the cat did was ate the rat.

Neither Fred nor Harry had to work late, did they? (Celce-Murcia and Olsthain, 2003)

These sentences would be seen as incorrect and ungrammatical by prescriptive grammars because they do not follow basic grammar rules. On the other hand, these sentences would be

seen as “correct” by descriptive grammars because of the fact that they function as such in real-life situations. Each and every sentence in this example was produced by a native speaker of English, therefore, we cannot conclude that these sentences are ungrammatical. (Nunan, 2003)

2.1.4 Pedagogical grammar

The phenomenon of pedagogical grammar is important one for EFL. Its importance can be seen in the emphasis it puts on the different communicative roles that one grammar point can have. While the linguistic grammars are known as “complex linguistic analyses of language forms and functions”, pedagogical grammars are defined as “the types of grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the needs of second language students” (Odlin, 1994, p. 1) While teaching, teachers should choose specific grammar units, points adapted to students’ communicative needs, while bearing in mind the language functions they will be facing in real-life problems and situations where they will have to be able to use the target language. The functional perspective, i.e. approach to grammar is just the basis for pedagogical grammar that puts more emphasis on using authentic materials (expressions used by native English speakers to communicate) than on simplified materials (books for ESL/EFL learners). When compared with descriptive grammar, which tends to describe everything, pedagogical grammar is the best choice for the teachers and students who need simple, ‘easily-digestible’ explanations about what is correct and what is not. Pedagogical grammar, according to Swan (Michael S., 1994) is based on a good rule that consists of four crucial questions. Is the rule simple, is it true, is it clear and is the rule relevant? The most important thing about this is the fact that strong emphasis is put on all the different possibilities of using grammar units, forms. The key is raising the knowledge about the fact that there is no unified, correct way to express a certain meaning. (Fotos, 2001)

After discussing various approaches to grammar, the following chapter gives a brief outline of language teaching methods and their development, with a particular focus on the role and teaching of grammar.

2.2 Language teaching methods and grammar

Grammar has always been an important part of English language teaching, and a contentious issue as well. The role and importance of grammar has changed throughout history in line with changes in teaching methods and approaches. Methods in teaching English as a foreign language have waxed and waned, and have developed hand in hand with research in the field of language teaching. According to Johnson, “the history of language teaching does indeed display a bewildering variety of different methods and approaches, all jostling for our attention, often by means of extravagant claims 'learn a language in three months without any effort at all.’” (Johnson, 2008, p. 161). The Grammar-translation method is a method that was used, sometimes under different names, for many years. Not only did this method serve as a tool for improving students’ speaking and writing skills in their mother tongue as a result of becoming familiar with the grammar rules of a target language, but also for making students appreciate foreign language literature. The main focus of this method was on vocabulary and grammar as well as on reading and writing. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The characteristics of this method are the use of translations of texts in the target language into the native language and the deductive approach in grammar teaching. After being given the rules and exceptions students are asked to apply them in different situations, i.e. on different examples. Memorization plays a great role in the grammar-translation method. Not only do the students need to memorize vocabulary units, and native language equivalents, they also need to memorize each grammar rule and grammatical paradigm, for example, all the forms of a particular verb. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Although it has some positive aspects, the main problem of the grammar-translation method is the lack of communication. As a response to that the direct method was developed.

The Direct method prepares students for using a language communicatively and has one basic rule: no translation in the native language. In order to use language communicatively, students

need to learn how to think in the target language. Teaching with the direct method is based on the use of pictures, realia or pantomime, units connected with every day-life situation. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) Grammar is taught inductively, no explicit rules are given, and there is no major emphasis on the teaching of grammar per se. It can be said that this method is based on oral production and communication completely different from the grammar-translation but quite similar with the Audio-lingual method. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000)

Although being based on the communicative perspective in language teaching, the Audio-lingual method is not focused on the acquisition of vocabulary and its use in authentic situations but on drilling of grammatical sentence patterns. The Audio-lingual method has theoretical foundations in structural linguistics and in behavioral psychology. “The way to acquire sentence patterns of the target language was through conditioning-helping learners to respond correctly to stimuli through shaping and reinforcement “ (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, str. 35). The main goal of the Audio-lingual method is to make students communicate in the target language automatically and this can be achieved by forming new formation, habits. Grammar teaching is inductive without explicit rules. The Audio-lingual method is known for the phenomenon called the drill. Several kinds of drills are used in this method such as repetition, backward build-up, chain, substitution and question-and-answer. What is interesting is that the teaching of grammar is based on teaching grammatical patterns) and that students never write before they have heard a pattern several time. Great emphasis is put on oral/aural skills. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, str. 46). The Audio-lingual method is unusual in modern language learning and has largely fallen out of use as a methodology, as cognitive views of language learning and communicative accounts of language have led to other methodologies. (British council, n.d.)

After several attempts to bring the students along the way of language learning to the finish line, communicative competence, researchers came across several phenomena. First students were able to communicate inside the classroom but failed to communicate outside it, others

knew the linguistic rules but failed in the attempt to use the language. (Widdowson 1. , 2000). Hymes concluded that the students need something more and above linguistic competence. (Hymes, 2000). The above mentioned linguistic competence is part of the communicative competence. It consists of four components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. Linguistic competence is the knowledge of the language code, i.e. knowledge of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of sociocultural rules of use, i.e. knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately. The appropriateness depends on the setting of the communication, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. Discourse competence is the knowledge of how to produce and comprehend oral or written texts in the modes of speaking/writing and listening/reading respectively. It is knowing how to combine language structures into a cohesive and coherent oral or written texts of different types. Strategic competence is the ability to recognize and repair communication breakdowns before, during, or after they occur. If the communication was unsuccessful due to external factors (such as interruptions), or due to the message being misunderstood, the speaker must know how to restore communication. (Linguist, 2017). It is also very interesting to see the teacher's attitudes and notions they have about communication and grammar. In the following table we can clearly see what kind of associations teachers have about grammar and what kind of associations they have about communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, p. 9)

Table 1.

When I think of grammar, I think of...	When I think of communication, I think of..
Rules	Dynamic understanding
Parts of speech	The four skills
Structures, forms	Meaning

Word order in sentences	Accomplishing some purpose
Memorizing	Interacting
Red ink	Establishing relationships
Drills	Small group activities
Boring	Fun

We can see that the notions teachers have about teaching grammar and communication are quite opposite and more positive under the communication column. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand such 'problems'; trying to bring grammar and communication, i.e. form and use, together, not only in textbooks but also inside the EFL classroom.

These new perceptions lead to the shift from linguistic structure-centered approaches to the Communicative approach. (Widdowson 1. , 2000). As Larsen-Freeman puts it, “communicative language teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative approach by making communicative competence the goal of teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication“. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, str. 120). The main goal of communicative language teaching (CLT) is to endow the students to use the target language for communication, and in order to do so, they need to acquire all the four components of communicative competence. It is characterized through the use of games, role plays and problem solving tasks in the EFL classroom. These tasks need to fulfill three criteria (Johnson and Morrow, 2000): information gap, when one person in communication has information that the other person does not know, choice, when the students communicate they can decide what will they say and how, and feedback, when the speaker can evaluate if the communication achieved its personal goal. What is also characteristic for the CLT is the use of authentic materials and small groups/group work. Not only do the students work on the four skills equally, they also learn about cohesion and coherence. CLT is the base for the further development of

methods in teaching English as a foreign language, out of which arose content-based teaching and task-based teaching. In these methods rather than “learning to use English “students “use English to learn it” (Howatt, 2000, p. 137)

Main problem about CLT has been researched during the 20th century because of its minor emphasis on the grammatical aspect of language and have concluded that some kind of grammatical aspect should and must be incorporated into it. Out of this perspective arose the Form focused instruction (FFI). This method points up the importance not only of communication and fluency but grammar as well. (Long, 1991.). Hence, the researcher concluded that the communication and grammar should not be taught one without the other i.e. in isolation but should coexist one besides the other.

The most recent methods in teaching English as a foreign language are task-based teaching and task-based-learning. Task-based teaching arose from the procedural syllabus, an experiment called the Bangalore Experiment, which was carried out by an applied linguist called Prabhu. (Johnson, 2008)

The story behind this experiment does not go far from the *from how to what* era, but there is a slight difference between them. In a stage in which teachers are not anymore focused on form but are more focused on meaning, the main problem is the syllabus, since the focus cannot be mainly on the meaning when the teachers have to teach by the syllabus. Out of this 'phenomenon' came the 'fake' focus, i.e. teachers would ask students what they did during the weekend but would not be focused on the information given, but on their use of the simple past tense. This was Prabhu's main argument for developing the procedural/task-based syllabus. His syllabus did not have a list of tasks which students needed to solve in order to be proficient in solving tasks, but they were “vehicles for teaching something that is not mentioned at all in the syllabus: language “ (Johnson, 2008, p. 184)

The new era of task-based teaching may or may not much differ from Prabhu's view, but they have the same principle – to emphasize the importance of activities and tasks that students do in the EFL classroom. This raises the question of the nature of the task. Each task needs to have five characteristics: 1. in a task the meaning is primary – the main focus of the task is on the message, 2. there should be a communication problem to solve – students need to communicate to reach a solution, 3. it should be related to real-life activities – booking flights, making phone reservations, etc., 4. task completion has priority – the goal of the task is to complete it and solve the problem, not to produce language items and then stop, and 5. the assessment of the task is related to its outcomes – it should be clear that the completion of the task will result in a positive grade not because of the correctness of the students' language and correct use of grammatical structures, but because of providing a solution to a problem (Johnson, 2008, p. 185)

Why should we teach grammar by means of the TBT method? According to (Johnson, 2008) there are three main reasons why we should choose TBT: 1 Learning through focus on the message, meaning that the acquisition or learning of certain grammatical forms will be best learned if they are message-oriented. 2. Information processing: “fully proceduralised knowledge is required, so doing the tasks helps to proceduralise knowledge “., 3. Negotiation for meaning (NfM): situations in which students negotiate for meaning while trying to solve a problem helps them in the process of language acquisition.

2.3 Approaches to teaching grammar?

In the previous chapter many different methods and problems in teaching grammar in the EFL classroom have been described and discussed. The focus will now be on the different approaches to teaching grammar such as Present-Practice-Produce (Ur, 2012), Consciousness raising (Ellis, 2002), Form-meaning-use approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2001) as well as the inductive and deductive approaches to teaching grammar.

The most common approach to teaching grammar in the EFL classroom is Present-Practice-Produce. (Ur, 2012). A new grammatical rule or “language item,” is introduced and it is *presented* to our students, whether through explanation, elicitation or guided discovery. (Ur, 2012, p. 80) lists the following guidelines for presenting grammar:

- Provide students with the examples of the target feature in meaningful contexts before explaining it.
- Both say and write examples of the target form.
- Teach both form and meaning.
- You may or may not use grammatical terminology.
- Explain the grammar in the students' L1, unless they are proficient enough to cope with English explanations.
- Compare the English structures with an L1 parallel if you can.
- Provide an explicit rule

When the students try to use a new grammatical rule or “language item“ on their own in restricted output, i.e. controlled exercises, we call it *practice* (Jim, 1994). Typical practice activities include drills, multiple-choice exercises, gap-and-cue exercises, transformations etc. After the students have practiced the new form in the controlled exercises they can move on to *produce* some new oral or written texts while using the new language structure. Typical production activities include dialogues, oral presentations, and the production of sentences, paragraphs or longer texts.

There is a distinction between the practice and production phase. While in the practice phase students produce or should make few or no mistakes, in the production phase several answers will be acceptable. Accuracy, i.e. the ability to produce the correct form is the main focus of the practice-phase and fluency, i.e. the ability to speak naturally is the focus of the production-phase. (Kostoulas, 2017)

There is some criticism to this approach and it is largely based on the unclear and unreliable part of the practice and production phase by simply stating that there are students who will do great in controlled exercises but fail to produce anything authentic, students who will transfer the knowledge even in the production phase but will fail to do so outside of the classroom in authentic everyday-life situations. “It is not clear that forcing students to use certain structures to communicate in a practice activity will necessarily mean they will use these structures spontaneously later.” (British Council, 2017)

As we have seen in the presentation phase, a new language item is presented either through explanation, elicitation or guided discovery. A new language item can also be presented inductively or deductively. The deductive approach consists of pointing out a grammar explanation or rule followed by exercises that are designed to help the students master the point (Nunan, 2003). The inductive approach means going vice versa, from many examples and samples of language and “with the help of the process of guided discovery “students come up with a rule or grammar explanation. (Nunan, 2003). There is no unique answer to the question whether grammar should be taught deductively or inductively. Researchers say that the inductive approach is “better” because it results in a much deeper understanding of grammar. It requires “greater mental effort” and is therefore more efficient in the long run, although it requires much more time, teachers' preparation and patience than a grammar lesson based on the deductive approach. (Nunan, 2003). There are many times when an inductive approach such as using a consciousness-raising task is desirable because by using such an approach one is

nurturing the students' way of thinking, through which they can arrive at their own generalizations. (Larsen-Freeman, 2001)

The consciousness-raising (CR) tasks within the homonymous approach are described in the following section. Consciousness-raising attempts to make students understand the specific grammar feature and to flourish declarative "knowing the rules" in preference to procedural knowledge "being able to use knowledge in communication" of it. (Ellis, 2002). The main characteristics of consciousness-raising activities, as put by Rod Ellis, (Renandya, 2002, p. 168) are the following:

1. There is an attempt to isolate a specific linguistic feature for focused attention.
2. The learners are provided with data which illustrate the targeted feature and they may also be supplied with an explicit rule describing or explaining the feature.
3. The learners are expected to utilize intellectual effort to understand the targeted feature.
4. Misunderstanding or incomplete understanding of the grammatical structure by the learners leads to clarification in the form of further data and description or explanation.
5. Learners may be required (although this is not obligatory) to articulate the rule describing the grammatical structure

The emphasis of the consciousness raising is put on the explicit knowledge of grammar but without interfering with the metalanguage. Ellis claims that it is possible to develop an explicit knowledge of grammar without using or learning the metalanguage, although it may help to facilitate the learning of some structures. (Ellis, 2002). When compared to Present-practice-produce (PPP), the consciousness-raising approach is different in that it does not ask for the production of certain grammatical structure. It does not involve the practice and the produce phase but only makes the students aware of the grammatical item or structure. If we take a look at teaching grammar within these two approaches, we can conclude that there is a great difference between them, and although the presentation phase in PPP cannot function without

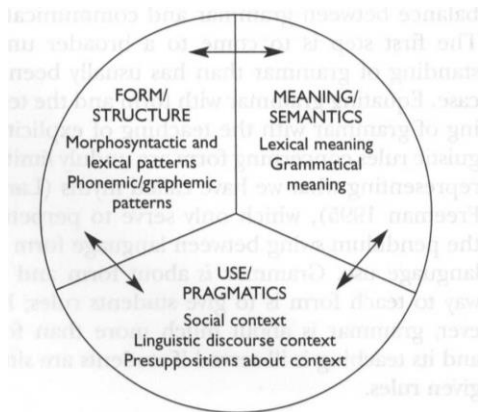
consciousness raising, the opposite is completely possible. Consciousness raising can and does exist without the practice phase from the PPP. As Ellis puts it:

“it is perfectly possible to teach grammar in the sense of helping learners to understand and explain grammatical phenomena without having them engage in activities that require repeated production of the structures concerned.” (Ellis, 2002, p. 169)

The Consciousness raising approach is not quite suitable for the young learners and for those learners whose learning needs are more oriented to ‘doing’ the language than to ‘studying’ the language. It is not an alternative to the communicative approach and activities but can and does serve as its supplement. (Ellis, 2002)

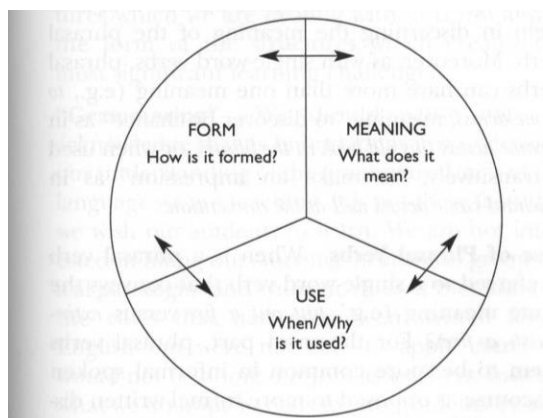
Grammar is about form and one way to teach form is to give students rules; however, grammar is about much more than form, and its teaching is ill-served if students are simply given rules. The following section describes the Form-Meaning-Use approach. Bearing in mind everything we have mentioned so far, the conclusion can be drawn that grammar is not only about form and rules, but it consists of three dimensions. (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Grammar expressions are not used only as forms (morphosyntax), they also carry meaning (semantics) and are used in different contexts and situations (pragmatics). The three-dimensional approach to grammar is presented in Picture 1. The arrows between each section represent the mutually-dependence between the fields. (Larsen-Freeman, 2001)

Picture 1.



Picture 2 shows the questions that teachers can ask their students about any grammar point.

Picture 2.



In the form-meaning-use approach the emphasis should be equally balanced and the students should master all the three dimensions of grammar. Teachers do not need to present all of the information to their students at once but may use this approach as a guideline for checking progress in the aspects students need further development in and the time they need to fully master all of them. It is not the teachers' job to fill the students' heads with syntactic rules but instead to "have students be able to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. " (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, str. 255). The most important fact in the form-meaning-use approach is the notion of *grammaring*. According to Larsen Freeman (Larsen-Freeman, 2001), teachers should not perceive grammar as knowledge that should be transferred to students but rather as a skill that should be developed. "By thinking of grammar as a skill to be mastered, rather than a set of rules to be memorized, we will be helping ESL/EFL students

go a long way toward the goal of being able to accurately convey meaning in the manner they deem appropriate. “ (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, str. 255). Diane Larsen-Freeman (Larsen-Freeman, Teaching language, 2003) has also identified two factors as potential problems. She explains that grammar is never boring and that it all depends on “*the point of engagement that most learning is likely to take place-when students are focused, relaxed, and attentive.*” (Larsen-Freeman, Teaching language, 2003, p. 21). However, it is not teachers’ job to entertain their students but to involve them into the whole process of grammar learning. Teachers cannot teach students every single thing about language but we can “*give them the tools to learn*” (Larsen-Freeman, Teaching language, 2003, p. 22)

The major problem of the form-meaning-use approach is the phenomenon of *sequencing*. There are no schemata in the acquisition of grammar structures, i.e. different grammatical structures can be acquired at different stages of L2 acquisition. “Rather than adhering to a linear progression, the choice of sequence would be left up to the teacher and would depend on the teacher's assessment of the student’s developmental readiness to learn “ (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, str. 263). It is important for teachers to know that they will be coming back to certain forms over and over again until they are completely acquired. Some of the structures will be acquired naturally, but there is a possibility that some forms will not occur in the language used in the classroom.

Each of the approaches described has some problems. Because of that special attention should be given to the teaching of grammar. Grammar has always been a contentious issue in the language classroom. The aim of this research is to examine teachers' perceptions of approaches to teaching grammar.

2.4 The benefits and challenges of teaching grammar, i.e. to teach or not to teach grammar?

We are all well aware of the fact that grammar is an important part of language and language classrooms, but have we ever asked ourselves the question why? Why exactly do we teach it and maybe even over teach it? In every foreign language course book grammar is on every single page. Whether it is “hidden” in some texts or explicitly stated in so-called grammar boxes, grammar is everywhere and, therefore, it should be taught.

A great debate is led about what benefits and challenges does the teaching of grammar have; are there more benefits than challenges and, above all, why do we, as teachers, need to teach it.

The following chapter discusses why grammar should (not) be taught and should include different perspectives.

According to Swan (Swan, 2002, p. 148) there are two main “good reasons” or benefits of grammar. Those are comprehensibility and acceptability. We need to convey meaning in communication, and to do so we need to make structured, comprehensible sentences, and to know how to make those sentences we need grammar (Ellis, *Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective*, 2006). What is needed is a balance between grammar items that are necessary and unnecessary for communication, i.e. meaningful, comprehensible communication. On the other hand, our students as future speakers of English want to be accepted in the English speaking society. There are situations in which our students can be judged as uneducated or unqualified based on their language and grammatical accuracy. As Swan wrote: “Potential employers and examiners may also require a high – often unreasonably high – level of grammatical correctness, and if our students’ English needs to be acceptable to these authorities, their prejudices must be taken into account.” (Swan, 2002, p. 152)

Vocabulary, for example, cannot be put in tables, timelines or any kind of system. We can try to organize vocabulary units based on synonyms, antonyms, themes, etc., but it remains “uncontrollable” . All that language leaves us with is grammar. *Grammar can be presented as a limited series of tidy things which students can learn, apply in exercises, and tick off one by one* (Swan, 2002, p. 149). It is, as the title says, very tidy and easy to “love”, especially by those teachers who like organized lessons and tasks.

Whether they are learning a language in private language schools or in the elementary/secondary school, the students’ urge to see their progress in learning is inevitable. The progress of students has several components and it is very hard and time consuming to design a test that would “measure” it, therefore, we can rely on grammar and tests based on it. *So we can easily end up just teaching what can be tested (mostly grammar), and testing what we have taught (mostly grammar)* (Swan, 2002, p. 149).

Not only is it easy to test, grammar also makes you feel secure and gives you a feeling of control. For a foreign language student, this feeling is needed and for us as teachers anything that contributes to students’ motivation is necessary. We should only be careful not to underestimate other aspects of language beside grammar that are not as organized as such. (Swan, 2002)

The role of teachers' power also plays a great role. The teacher can have the worst accent in the world when speaking, or a restricted vocabulary when compared with the students, but there is no chance that there will be a student who can confidently speak about grammar constructions. That gives the teacher a feeling of authority, power and superiority. Fortunately, there are few teachers who consider power to be a positive side of teaching (Swan, 2002).

What we can conclude is that although there is no general opinion on the reasons for teaching grammar upon which all teachers agree what should be bore in mind is the students' proficiency level and their cognitive abilities.

3. The present study

3.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of English language teachers toward grammar instruction in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom and to analyze the extent of the discrepancy between theory and practice, as well as to provide possible solutions to this problem.

The general research question is:

What are teachers' attitudes toward grammar instruction in the EFL? This is followed by five sub-questions:

RQ 1: How is grammar taught?

RQ 2: What are students' needs related to grammar?

RQ 3: What impact does grammar have in the EFL classroom?

RQ 4: How do teachers assess their teaching of grammar in terms of the key competences defined by the EPOSTL?

RQ 5: What are the challenges and benefits of teaching grammar?

RQ 6: Has the teachers' language learning experience affected their way of teaching grammar?

3.2. Participants

The sample comprised 33 EFL teachers. The Majority of the participants have 10 to 15 years of experience (36.4%), while 27.3% have 1 to 5 years of experience. 15.2% of the participants have 5 to 10 years of experience, 12.1% have less than 1 year, and none of the participants have 15 to 20 or more than 20 years of experience.

Most of the participants teach in elementary (66.7%), secondary vocational (12.1%), and private language schools (12.1%), while a minority of them teach in secondary grammar schools (9.1%).

3.3 Research method

The data were collected by means of an online questionnaire in English, which was uploaded on Google forms and distributed via e-mail, social media and websites (Županijski aktiv profesora engleskog jezika, HUPE-Hrvatsko udruženje profesora hrvatskoga jezika). The questionnaire had an open-access for two months and in that period it yielded a response rate of 33 participants.

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed in Excel and SPSS.

The questionnaire was partially based on a questionnaire designed by Abul Kalam Azad. (Azad, 2013)

The questionnaire consisted of fifteen questions divided into four parts. The first part elicited the participants' demographic data: their teaching experience and the type of school they work in. In the second part the participants were asked to rate 34 statements on a five-point Likert scale regarding grammar teaching, students' needs related to grammar and the impact of grammar in the EFL classroom. In the third part they were asked to rate five statements on a five-point Likert scale based on the EPOSTL's descriptors which identify the key competences

related to grammar teaching. The fourth part of the questionnaire comprised 10 open-ended questions eliciting information on teachers' experience, the way in which their learning experience affects the way they teach, and what they have learned from their experience with respect to grammar teaching. Their opinion on the benefits, challenges and goals of teaching grammar, as well as on the most challenging aspects of grammar for the students. The participants were also asked to answer the questions about what kind of training on teaching grammar they have received in the last five years and whether they would benefit from any additional formal education in teaching grammar. Finally, they were asked to describe the ways in which they assess grammar and what are the students' most common mistakes. A textbox for additional comments was also included.

4. Data analysis

Regarding the role that grammar plays in the EFL classroom, most of the participants (69.7%) agree that grammar helps the students to learn the language better, 60.6% agree that grammar is an essential component of foreign language teaching. whereas 51.5% disagree with the fact that grammar is not important for foreign language teaching. Less than half (48.5%) agree that grammar is important in oral communication and 48.5% neither agree nor disagree that grammar should be in the focus of foreign language teaching. Table 1 shows to what extent the respondents agree with different aspects and roles of grammar.

Table 1. Aspects and roles of grammar

	N	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Grammar is an essential component of foreign language teaching.	33	4.000	4.0	.7071
Grammar is not important for foreign language teaching.	33	1.727	2.0	.7191
Grammar helps the students to learn the language better.	33	3.848	4.0	.7550
Grammar is important in oral communication.	33	3.424	4.0	.8671
Grammar should be in the focus of foreign language teaching.	33	2.394	3.0	.7882

The other group of statements was related to students' needs related to grammar. 45.5% of the participants agree that students need conscious knowledge of grammar to improve their language as well as that grammar teaching makes their students more aware of mistakes (45.5%). As for the participants' opinion on whether accuracy activities are as important as fluency activities for their students, 39.4% agree while 36.4% neither agree nor disagree with that. On the other hand, there was no difference (42.4%) between these two groups of participants when asked if form-focused correction helped their students to improve their grammatical accuracy. Regarding their opinions on whether students should know grammatical terms, 39.4% neither agree nor disagree, 33.3% agree, while a small number (3%) of them strongly agree. Although 48.5% of participants agree that explicit grammar teaching can help their students feel secure, 51.5% of them also agree that explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for their students and 42.4% agree that students expect explicit grammar instruction. When asked if their students should be given explicit rules, the majority of the participants (36.4%) neither agree nor disagree, whereas 27.3% of the participants agree and 21.2% disagree. A minority (36.4%) believe that students find it difficult to improve their grammatical accuracy within a purely communicative approach, while the rest of the participants (27.3%) opted either for disagree or for neither agree nor disagree. 33.3% of the teachers agree that

students forget most of the grammar, while 27.3% opted either for disagree or for neither agree nor disagree. The majority (63.6%) of them agree that students know grammar rules but still make mistakes. In response to the question whether students can implement the grammar rules they learned in authentic situations, 54.5% neither agree nor disagree, while 42.2% of them disagree with the statement that students become more accurate when they learn grammar.

Table 2. Students' needs

	N	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Students need a conscious knowledge of grammar to improve their language skills	33	3.394	4.0	.8993
Students should know grammar terminology	33	2.606	3.0	.9663
Explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for my students.	33	3.455	4.0	.8693
Students should be given explicit rules	33	3.121	3.0	1.0535
My students expect explicit grammar instruction	33	3.394	4.0	.9663
Form-focused correction helps my students to improve their grammatical accuracy.	33	3.455	3.0	.7538
Explicit grammar teaching can help my students feel secure.	33	3.455	4.0	.8326
Grammar teaching makes my students aware of the mistakes	33	3.152	4.0	1.0038
Accuracy activities are as important as fluency activities for my students.	33	3.485	4.0	.9056
Students forget most of the grammar	33	3.061	4.0	1.0589
When students learn grammar, they immediately become more accurate	33	2.455	2.0	.8693

	N	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Students need a conscious knowledge of grammar to improve their language skills	33	3.394	4.0	.8993
Students should know grammar terminology	33	2.606	3.0	.9663
Explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for my students.	33	3.455	4.0	.8693
Students know grammar rules but still make mistakes	33	3.970	4.0	.6840
Students can implement the grammar rules they have learned in authentic situations.	33	3.212	3.0	.7809

The last group of statements were those concerning the teaching of grammar. The participants disagree that grammar is best taught in isolation (51.55%) 48.5% of them agree that grammar is best taught in a meaningful context, 54.5% fifty-four point five percent of them agree that grammar is best taught through games, songs and videos. Fifty-four point five percent of them agree that grammar is best taught gradually (54.5%), repetitively (57.6%), and inductively (39.4%). 42.5% of the participants agree with the fact that grammar is best taught within communicative language activities and 57.6% of them agree that grammar is best taught communicatively. They also agree that grammar should be practiced not only explicitly (42.4%), but also as part of communicative activities (69.7%). 48.5% of them agree that it should be integrated in the four skills. The participants neither agree nor disagree that grammar should be taught deductively (48.5%), that grammar rules are not important as long as the students speak fluently (33.3%), and that grammar should be taught explicitly (57.6%). They agree with the statement that grammar rules are not important as long as the student is accurate (48.5%)

Table 3. Teaching of grammar

	N	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Grammatical item is best taught in isolation.	33	1.970	2.0	.7699
Grammatical item is best taught in a meaningful context	33	4.364	4.0	.6990
Grammar should be taught through games, songs and videos.	33	3.879	4.0	.8572
Grammar should be integrated in the 4 skills	33	4.121	4.0	.7809
Grammar should be taught gradually.	33	4.394	4.0	.5556
Grammar should be taught repetitively.	33	4.212	4.0	.6963
Grammar should be practiced explicitly.	33	3.333	3.0	.9242
Grammar should be practiced as part of communicative activities	33	4.061	4.0	.5556
Grammar is best taught deductively	33	2.788	3.0	.9273
Grammar is best taught inductively.	33	3.455	4.0	.9712
Grammar should be taught explicitly	33	3.091	3.0	.7230
Grammar should be taught communicatively	33	3.909	4.0	.7230
Grammar is best taught within communicative language activities	33	3.697	4.0	.8833
Grammar rules are not important as long as they can speak fluently.	33	3.121	3.0	1.0234
Grammar rules are not important as long as the student is accurate.	33	3.515	4.0	.9056

As for the teachers ability to teach grammar in line with the EPOSTL descriptors, (David Newby, 2007) the majority of them (57.6%) agree with the following three statements: *I can introduce a grammatical item and help learners to practice it through meaningful contexts and appropriate texts* (57.6%), *I can introduce, and help students to deal with, new or unknown items of grammar in a variety of ways (teacher presentation, awareness-raising, discovery etc.,* (57.6%) and *I can evaluate and select grammatical exercises and activities, which support learning and encourage oral and written communication* (57.6%). The majority (63.6%) agree that they can use metalanguage if and when adapted to learners' needs and 51.5% strongly agree with the statement that they can deal with questions learners may ask about grammar and, if necessary, refer to appropriate grammar reference books.

Table 4. EPOSTL descriptors

	N	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
I can introduce a grammatical item and help learner to practice it through meaningful contexts and appropriate texts.	33	4.364	4.0	.5488
I can introduce and help students to deal with, new or unknown items of grammar in a variety of ways (teacher presentation, awareness-raising,discovery,etc.)	33	4.152	4.0	.7124
I can deal with questions learners may ask about grammar and, if necessary, refer to appropriate grammar reference books.	33	4.455	5.0	.6657
I can use grammatical metalanguage if and when appropriate to the learners' needs.	33	4.152	4.0	.6671
I can evaluate and select grammatical exercises and activities which support learning and encourage oral and written communication.	33	4.364	4.0	.5488

When asked whether their language learning experience affected the way they teach grammar, the participants wrote different answers. Some of them depicted negative experiences they had when learning grammar in a deductive way.

“It has affected in a certain way, but mostly in a way that I don't want to teach grammar deductively.”

“I was taught deductively and it was not helpful. It was boring and it did not make any sense. We learned the rules by heart so I decided to change the approach in my classroom.”

“I was always taught deductively. Although I know it is not always good to teach grammar in this way, sometimes I find it difficult to teach grammar without giving any rules at the beginning.”

Others claim that their language learning experience has affected the way they teach:

“We teach how we are taught” (sic!)

“I suppose everyone learns from their own experience.”

Others stated that their personal experience and motivation in learning a foreign language influenced their teaching methods:

“My language learning experience helps me understand better my pupils and their needs in learning the language.”

“I had a big motivation to learn English, so I do not expect much from students who do not show their motivation.”

“I was blessed with a teacher who wanted us to use language meaningfully and not know all of the rules and all of the translations by heart. Grammar translation method was prevalent in the 90s in Croatia, so she was cutting edge at the time. I'm trying to continue that tradition.”

“To me, grammar has mostly been presented through rules, so my objective is to give my students examples through which they can come up with a grammar rule and hopefully understand the use of a certain pattern.”

“I haven't learned each grammar rule in the same manner nor do I expect my students to do so.”

“I haven't had formal language teaching experience and I became a pretty fluent in speaking so I noticed that explicit instruction in grammar isn't necessary for fluency.”

“I didn't like the approach my secondary school teacher had so I'm trying to do it differently.”

In response to the question what they have learned from their experience as an EFL teacher with respect to grammar teaching, the participants listed four main ideas: learning styles, the importance of context in grammar instruction, the importance of repetition, practice and patience,

as well as a balance between what is important and what is not, what students like and the difference in their written and oral 'performance'.

The following extracts concern motivation and learning styles:

"Every individual has a different learning style so I provide them with both grammar rules and tasks"

"Students differ significantly in the way they learn and understand grammar"

"Each class is different and you have to prepare in a different way, try many things until you find what works best for them" (sic!)

"Practice in many various ways works, teacher should be patient in detecting the problems students face and in finding the appropriate ways of teaching and practising"

"Today, everything in class depends on pupils, motivation and effort." (sic!)

"Teachers are oppressed with terms like "wrong" or "forbidden" (way of teaching) by various experts, mentors or advisors. However, in the classroom they are faced with 20 pupils and each one learns grammar in a different way."

The second aspects concern the importance of context in grammar instruction:

"Students best react to teaching grammar if it is put in a context. We need to 'mask' it in an interesting activity so that they remember it"

"I've learned that it is best acquired when used in meaningful context.(sic!) Even if students know the rules they don't necessarily understand or recognize the context in which they should apply the rules."

"Realistic situations and examples makes it easier for students to understand as well as the graphic demonstration (if possible)."

"You need to explain to what purpose they are learning it and in which situations they are going to need it and then they accept it as it is."

The third emphasizes the importance of repetition, practice and patience, as well as a balance between what is important and what is not:

"Practice is everything."

"Repetition is key. Patience."

"Repetition is the mother of knowledge."

"Use simple examples and not many rules. Do many exercises, but revise and revise..."

"Teaching grammar is important."

"That grammar is not as important as some books would make you believe."

The fourth question reveals what the students like and the difference in their written and oral ‘performance’:

“It is difficult for younger students to fully comprehend the use of grammar in certain situations. They tend to make more grammatical mistakes when examined orally.” (sic!)

“Students make more mistakes when they practice grammar than when they use the same structures while speaking.”

“I have learned that no matter how innovative or imaginative my examples and classes are, there are still students who prefer strict grammar rules and exercises.”

“Students learn best when given explicit rules and examples.”

“Students hate grammar if you teach it deductively.”

“Up to certain age, grammar is too abstract for most of the pupils and sometimes it is a waste of time teaching it.”

“That students like when we discuss mistakes or right answers. After we do the exercise we discuss why we did what we did.”

“It's harder to explain it if our students aren't familiar with it in their L1. They learn better when it's taught inductively. Games are always welcome.”

Answers to the question about the main goal of teaching grammar can be put in three categories.

First, those claiming accuracy is the main goal of teaching grammar:

“Accuracy in communication.”

“Clarity and accuracy of language usage.”

“Being accurate in using language” (sic!)

“To make communication more accurate.”

Second, those who emphasized communication as the main goal:

“To become fluent speaker.”

“Grammar is one of the underlying tools of communicative competence, so I teach it as a tool. I always stress what a tense or a conjunction is used for.”

“To help students communicate and use grammar in a correct way when communicating with native speakers.”

“Improving communication skills” (sic!)

“To know how to implement grammar in everyday communication, without thinking about it extensively.”

“Being able to communicate better“.

“To avoid misunderstandings in communication“.

One participant stated that ...

“There is no one goal, grammar is a part of every skill necessary for learning a language“

As for the benefits of teaching grammar are, the participants identified two main aspects. The first emphasize self-esteem and confidence

“Feeling of secureness and self-esteem when using it.“

“Kids self-esteem“

“Students get more confident and more comfortable in using the language“ (sic!)

“Students get more confident when they use language.“

The second is related to the fact that grammar is perceived as concrete and specific.

“It is more exact than teaching other skills“

“It's concrete.“

When asked about the challenges of teaching grammar, participants identified problems related to students' interest and motivation

“Teaching grammar without boring my students to death... 😊“

“Make teaching more interesting“

“Students find it very boring and hard“

“Usually it is boring for children“

“Motivation of students.“

“It is hard to motivate students because they don't see its purpose“

“Students may find it boring occasionally, finding a way to make it more fun“

“Pupils not being mentally involved“

“Keeping your students awake!“

“Make it interesting and fun.“

“Very often, no matter what strategies you use, students find it boring. “

Another major challenge is the students’ understanding of grammar instruction:

“Teach it on a level that pupils can understand. “

“Making students understand“

“To make it as simple as possible and to adjust it to the level of children's knowledge. “

“Detecting the point in which students "get lost" and how to explain it in a simple, understandable way. “(sic!)

“Explaining it in simple terms the students can understand. “

As for the most common grammar mistakes students make, 45% of the participants wrote that their students make errors using the third person singular –s in Present simple. The other common mistakes are: the use of articles and word order. The most challenging aspects of grammar for their students are the use of verb tenses (73%)and articles (16%). As for the assessment of grammar, 55% of the participants assess grammar through written exams and tests and 18% of them do it through communicative exercises or oral examination.

When asked what kind of formal training they have received in the last 5 years, 30% of the participants attended some kind of seminars, 15% of them conducted research on their own, and 15% of them have not received any kind of formal training.

5. Discussion

The study has attempted to gain insight into teachers' attitudes toward grammar instruction in the EFL classroom. The findings show several interesting facts that have been identified as central problems in other studies.

When compared with Kalam Azad's (Azad, 2013) study, this research showed minor differences. Most of participants in Azad's research agreed with the statement that *students need a conscious knowledge of grammar to improve their language*, here the participants also agreed but only 45,5% of them. Bangladeshi university teachers agreed and 30% of them strongly agreed on the statement that *accuracy activities are as important as fluency activities for my students* where teachers in this research agreed but most interestingly neither agreed nor disagreed. This can be due to the difference between students' needs at the university and in elementary, secondary or private language schools. Quite contrary to these results are those related to whether *students expect explicit grammar instruction*. Surprisingly, 60% of university teachers agreed and 16.67% strongly agreed with this statement, while 42.4% of elementary, secondary and private language school teachers agreed with this statement and only 9.1% strongly agreed with it. It is interesting that the university students' needs for explicit grammar instruction are much higher than those of elementary, secondary or private language school students, although students at the university have probably had extensive grammar instruction throughout their education. According to the CLT explicit rules are not necessary for acquiring a language, more specifically young learners do not need explicit rules at all. Hence, 'drzavna matura' in Croatian high-schools does not assess knowledge of grammar per se, teachers rated their students' needs for explicit rules very high. There appears to be a balanced distribution of participants who believe that *grammar is best taught deductively* and those who believe that

it is *best taught inductively*. Forty-six point sixty-seven percent (46.67%) of university and 39.4% of elementary, secondary and language school students agreed with the inductive way of teaching, while 36.67% of university and 48.5% of elementary, secondary and language school students neither agreed nor disagreed with it.

The results of the study concerning the statement that students should know grammar terminology suggest that the participants do not agree with this, which is interesting when compared with the findings of Seyit Ahmet Capan (Capan, 2014, p. 140). One of the in this study participants even said: *"I use grammatical terms when I am introducing a rule. It helps learners to be familiar with these terms so that they can more easily understand where and when they can use this rule."* The reason why participants of this study do not perceive grammar terminology as important as pre-service teachers of English is due to the fact that the majority of them teach at elementary school. Bearing in mind that the cognitive development of elementary school students is not on the same level as that of high school students and students of higher education, we can conclude that grammar terminology is far too complicated for them to acquire.

The results show that students expect *explicit grammar instruction* (42.4% agreed). In our context grammar instruction is an important aspect of language learning. Students learn grammar explicitly in the L1 classroom and for that reason they assume that they will receive explicit grammar instruction in the EFL classroom. Consequently, students who have received explicit grammar instruction in grammar perform better than those who have not (Noris and Ortega, 2012). Additionally, explicit grammar instruction is easy to test. Once you have provided your students with explicit rules it becomes more accessible to test them.

One of the main problems related to grammar instruction is student boredom and lack of motivation. This could be due to the fact that teachers are teaching as they were taught and they

were probably taught in a more traditional manner, which resulted in insufficient motivation and willingness of students to learn grammar because of the teachers' approaches to grammar instruction.

Similarly, teachers' reasons why they teach grammar in a certain manner are probably due to their language learning experience (and state *we teach how we are taught.* " (sic!)). According to Swan (Swan, 2002, p. 150), we teach grammar because it made us who we are.

"Many foreign language teachers spent a good deal of time when younger learning about tense and aspect, the use of articles, relative clauses and the like; they naturally feel that these things matter a good deal and must be incorporated in their own teaching."

Interestingly, when describing the most common students' grammar mistakes, one of the answers was *Those that are different from Croatian (present Perfect, reported speech)*. This is important because of the interference of the L1 on the L2, where students transmit the rules of the L1 to the L2 while producing utterances. (Ellis, *Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective*, 2006)

Major number of participants disagreed with the fact that grammar should be taught in isolation that goes in line with communicative language teaching approach. Although the same approach (CLT) is based on the fluency, the participants neither agree nor disagree with the fact that the grammar rules are not important as long as the students can speak fluently.

They agree with the fact that rules are not important as long as students are accurate. Out of this finding the question arises: how it is possible not to know any grammar rules and define them as unnecessary yet expect your students to be accurate.

The EPOSTL descriptors gain positive answers but we cannot conclude that, the teachers assess themselves as competent to teach grammar yet it does not necessarily agree with them. research did not gain the insight in their extent to which they actually agree with them.

As for the what kind of mistakes do students usually make, teachers listed 3rd person singular in Present simple as the most common one. It seems as a simple error and it may be in the findings for one main reason, being the major number of teachers in elementary school. It can be because of this error do the large number of teachers agreed with the fact that grammar should be taught repetitively.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that teachers' attitudes toward grammar instruction in EFL are neither positive nor negative. Participants expressed different attitudes toward teaching of grammar, students' needs, impact of grammar in the EFL classroom, the benefits and challenges of teaching grammar, and the impact of their language learning experience on the way they teach.

According to the participants, grammar should be taught explicitly and in isolation. Through games, songs and videos, repetitively and it is also best taught communicatively as part of communicative activities. They also believe that students need to be taught grammar explicitly by means of explicit discussion of grammar rules and explicit grammar instruction. Students also know certain grammar rules but still tend to make mistakes.

When the impact of grammar is put into question, the results generally show that grammar helps the students to learn the language better. Grammar is considered to be an essential component of foreign language teaching.

As for the benefits of teaching grammar, the participants identified self-esteem and confidence as well as the fact that grammar is concrete specific. As for the challenges of teaching grammar, the participants emphasized students' interest and motivation, as well as difficulties in the understanding of grammar instruction.

Furthermore, the teachers positively assess their teaching of grammar in all of the key competences defined by EPOSTL.

They also generally believe that their language learning experience has positively affected their way of teaching grammar in the sense that they are aware of the fact what was wrong when they were learning a foreign language and now are teaching in the completely different ways, or they accept the influence they had and build upon it.

Although the study has reached some interesting conclusions, there are some limitations to it. The number of the participants is insufficient and the majority of them are teachers from elementary schools, which... There are not enough teachers from secondary vocational and grammar schools to be able to compare their attitudes toward grammar instruction. Furthermore, there is a high percentage of teachers who have less than 5 years of experience and low percentage of those with 10 to 15 years of experience.

In order to avoid these limitations, the study should be conducted once more, but only with teachers from secondary vocational and grammar schools, and data on attitudes toward grammar teaching from students of different age groups and at different levels of proficiency should be collected.

The study could be interesting to teachers, ELT methodology trainers and pre-service teachers of English language. Teachers of the English language can benefit from this study's findings in a way that they can read, in one place, the historical development of methods and approaches in teaching grammar as well as the attitudes of teachers with experience and change the way they see and teach grammar. Findings of this research are interesting because they provide insights into the real practice of teaching grammar among teachers and not theoretical implications.

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