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Beliefs about Grammar Teaching: A Survey of Norwegian Students and Teachers at the Upper Secondary Level

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Runar Fossum

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Author: Runar Fossum

Supervisors: Associate Professor Eva Lambertsson Björk and Professor Kåre Solfeld

Abstract: Despite an increased interest in teacher and student cognitions in recent years, the body of research examining beliefs about grammar teaching is still comparatively small. The aim of this study is to investigate how Norwegian teachers and students at the upper secondary level view the role of grammar teaching and corrective feedback and to see how well-matched their views are. The study is quantitative in design and uses questionnaires to obtain data from 269 students and 15 teachers at two schools. The results suggest the students and teachers value grammar teaching highly but agree that communicative activities are more important than practising grammatical rules. The students are found to be less eager than their teachers to support a call for more grammar teaching. Both groups agree that written errors should be corrected, but an examination of their views on the correction of spoken errors reveals significant discrepancies. It is suggested that the teachers in the sample should exploit their students' favourable attitudes towards grammar teaching to better meet the requirements of the current curriculum.

Preface

I chose grammar teaching as the subject for my thesis not only because it interests me, but also because I have long wanted to find out what others think of it. My personal view is that grammar teaching has an important part to play and that it can help learners become more confident and accurate in their use of the language.

My views on the issue started to crystallise during my final year of lower secondary education some fifteen years ago. I had been studying German for some time but was aware that I had not made much headway. Although I knew quite a few words, I had no idea how to string them together and so did not feel confident about using them. To add to my frustration, I had realised the importance of the German case system but could not make any sense of it. Because I did not understand the system, it seemed to me that the words I thought I knew were appearing with different and arbitrary articles or endings every time I encountered them. Unfortunately, my teacher was unwilling or perhaps unable to provide answers to my questions.

At some point I procured a book on German grammar and decided to try to make sense of the case system on my own. My efforts soon took me on a proverbial voyage of discovery in which the fragments I had picked up during class – a fledgling collection of nouns, pronouns, prepositions, and the odd verb – started to slot into place. As my understanding of the language increased, my motivation to learn more about it soared.

These experiences taught me at least three things: First of all, motivation is key in language learning. A highly motivated learner can achieve impressive results even under adverse conditions; conversely, a discouraged learner may fail utterly in spite of the very best tuition. I also learnt that there are many different kinds of language learners and that I have tended to approach language learning rather analytically; the definition of grammar as “the business of taking a language to pieces, to see how it works” is one that always sounded right to me (Crystal, 2004: 10).

Finally, I realised the importance of language teachers and the beliefs they hold. The responsibilities of good teachers are most demanding: they must demonstrate the ability to meet the expectations of their students and to ensure their teaching styles are more or less

calibrated to the students' learning preferences. Whether or not teachers are able to fulfil these demands depends to no small degree on their ability to reflect on their own methodological choices as well as the needs of their students. Looking back, it is clear to me that as a young student I had developed expectations concerning language learning which were not met by my teacher; in a very real sense, my learning preferences conflicted with his teaching style.

As mentioned, I believe students can become more confident and accurate in their use of the language by learning grammar. For my own part, I would no sooner travel through unknown territory without a reliable map than set about learning a language without a dependable grammar to hand. As for the possible counterargument that English hardly constitutes unknown territory to Norwegian upper secondary students, I have met many students at this level whose English is so poor and rife with basic errors that it is difficult to comprehend they have been learning the language for nearly ten years.

The purpose of this study, however, is not to argue in favour of grammar teaching. Rather, it is to explore students' and teachers' views on the issue and to uncover some of the discrepancies that can be found in Norwegian classrooms at this level. It is hoped that this contribution will be of interest and perhaps even some practical value.

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1 Introduction

After having been out of favour for a number of years, grammar teaching has made something of a comeback in recent years and is increasingly being recognised as the “essential, inescapable component of language use and language learning” it has always been (Burgess and Etherington, 2002: 433). Nevertheless, it has been and continues to be the subject of considerable controversy, and several fundamental questions have been hotly debated: Should grammar be taught? If yes, then how can it best be taught?

At the same time, studies have shown that grammar teaching is one of the areas in which students and teachers often hold conflicting beliefs (e.g., Schulz, 1996, 2001; Burgess and Etherington, 2002). Such discrepancies, it has been claimed, can be harmful to the learning environment (e.g. Horwitz, 1988; Peacock, 1998, 2001; Schulz, 1996, 2001). While research on teachers’ beliefs has been driven by a growing acknowledgement that these beliefs exert a strong influence on teachers’ classroom practices, the beliefs of students – especially those at the upper secondary level – have not yet received as much attention (Jean and Simard, 2011: 468). As such, there is a general need for studies that investigate and compare teachers’ and students’ beliefs. More specifically, there is a paucity of such research in the area of grammar teaching, and this is particularly true of the current research situation in Norway. The present study represents an attempt to address this lack of research in the context of Norwegian upper secondary education.

1.1 Why grammar teaching?

When the communicative approach emerged in the 1970s it was a reaction against “a pedagogic tradition that favored the memorization of grammatical paradigms and the word-for-word translation of decontextualized sentences” (Kramsch, 2006: 249). No doubt there had been a disproportionate emphasis on grammar in previous approaches, most obviously in the grammar-translation method. Now, with the communicative approach – or communicative language teaching (CLT) as it eventually became known – communication itself became the central goal of language learning. Grammatical knowledge would no longer be at the forefront of the language classroom. This shift of perspective had a significant impact on the way languages were taught. Once communication had been established as the overarching goal, the teacher’s task was to help students move towards this goal by developing their *communicative competence*, which included not just knowledge of the language itself but also

the “ability to use the language appropriately” (Cook, 2008: 248). Students, in turn, were expected to participate actively by communicating with each other to solve concrete communication problems.

By the late 1990s, grammar teaching had been out of fashion for years, rejected “as being at best ineffectual and at worst an obstacle to [second language] learning” (James 1998: 243). Classroom grammar teaching may not have disappeared entirely, but its unfavourable status certainly reflected the lasting effects of the communicative upheaval decades before. Because the emphasis on communicative competence had all but displaced the traditional attention to grammar, it could well be claimed that the pendulum had swung to one extreme at this point. Following this analogy, the pendulum would have to swing back in the other direction sooner or later, and it seems clear that this process was well underway towards the end of the 1990s.

Doughty and Williams (1998), for instance, maintain that language teaching must be communicatively oriented but at the same time suggest that some measure of grammar teaching is generally beneficial (197). Spada (1997) claims certain linguistic features “not only benefit from [grammar teaching] but *require* it for continued development” (80, emphasis in original). Meanwhile Kramsch (2006), commenting on the developments of the past few decades, claims that communicative competence has often been “taken as an excuse largely to do away with grammar and to remove much of the instructional responsibility from the teacher who becomes a mere facilitator of group and pair work in conversational activities” (250).

It would be misleading, however, to say that grammar teaching disappeared completely with the advent of CLT. According to Thornbury (1999), grammar remained an important part of CLT courses even though it was “dressed up in **functional** labels: *asking the way, talking about yourself, making future plans* etc.” (22, emphasis in original). As for the state of grammar teaching in Norway, Mella (1998) suggests it has had its place in the Norwegian curricula for the better part of the last fifty years (6-7). With the current “rehabilitation” and renewed relevance of grammar teaching in the second language (L2) research literature (Burgess and Etherington, 2002: 433), however, it would seem that the case for grammar teaching in English courses is stronger now than it has been for a long time.

1.2 Why investigate beliefs and attitudes?

Developments in the L2 teaching literature do not automatically translate to changes in teachers' classroom behaviour. The teachers in a study conducted by Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) "rarely justified their approaches by referring to research studies or any particular methodology" (255). Indeed, studies of teacher *cognition*, i.e. what language teachers "think, know and believe", generally suggest teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching are influenced more by their own learning experiences than by research in this field (Borg, 2003: 96, 100). As a case in point, Borg (1999) related the pedagogical justifications of one teacher whose approach was largely communicative; because this teacher had been successful at learning foreign languages using grammar-translation methods, he chose to include similar methods in his own teaching (26).

Of course, the best way of knowing how teachers go about their tasks in the classroom is to observe them directly. As noted above, however, teachers' behaviour is strongly influenced by the beliefs they hold. These beliefs, then, offer a valuable source of information about teachers' motivations and practices. The exploration of beliefs can also yield insights that cannot be achieved through observation alone, for example concerning students' perceptions of what goes on or does not go on in the classroom. Such exploration is particularly important given the discrepancies that allegedly exist between teachers' and students' views of grammar teaching.

1.3 The current study

Using a survey-based quantitative approach, this study will investigate beliefs and attitudes concerning the role of grammar teaching and corrective feedback among teachers and students at two upper secondary schools in Norway. The study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- How do teachers and students of English at the upper secondary level view the role of grammar teaching and corrective feedback?
- Do teachers' attitudes concerning grammar teaching and corrective feedback match the expectations of their students?

Following up on the background information provided in the introduction, section 2 will give a review of key studies and concepts relevant to the study. Information on methods and

materials can be found in section 3. The results of the study will be presented in section 4 and discussed in section 5.

2 Review of key literature and concepts

In the following, a review will be provided of key studies and concepts pertaining to grammar teaching and research on the beliefs of teachers and learners.

It must be noted at this point that the research literature often prefers the terms *form-focused instruction* (FFI) and *explicit formal instruction* (EFI) over *grammar teaching*. Though the terms are not entirely synonymous, they all refer to instructional activity in which learners are encouraged to “pay attention to linguistic form¹” (Ellis, 2008: 963). In this study, *grammar teaching* will be used as much as possible; this term may sound somewhat more general than the other options, but it is one that teachers will immediately recognise as relevant to their own experience even if they have not had the opportunity to stay abreast of current L2 teaching literature.

2.1 Types of grammar

Grammar is an ambiguous term, and a multitude of different definitions could be given. To establish the type of grammar this study is concerned with, the four different types proposed by Cook (2008) will be briefly described:

- *Prescriptive grammar* seeks to establish what is acceptable and unacceptable language usage. It takes a normative rather than descriptive approach and *prescribes* how people should use the language in question.
- *Traditional grammar* deals with the parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.) and how these may be combined.
- *Structural grammar* concerns itself with elements at the sentence level and can be used to illustrate how these go together to form different phrase structures.

¹ *Forms* are to be understood as discrete linguistic elements of the target language. As Ellis (2001) explains, the term *form* can include “phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmalinguistic aspects of language” (2).

- *Mental grammar* can be thought of as the grammatical competence language users build up unconsciously and store in their minds.

(Cook, 2008: 19-23)

Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers are particularly interested in the fourth type, i.e. the grammatical or linguistic competence that learners accumulate in their minds (Cook, 2008: 22). Knowledge of one's own mother tongue or first language (L1), generally built up without conscious effort, constitutes a major part of this competence. A study such as the present one, however, which aims to investigate attitudes to the *teaching* of grammar, must necessarily revolve around the type of grammar students are likely to encounter at school – traditional grammar in some form or other. This sort of grammar dates back to the teaching of classical languages and serves a pedagogical purpose. It makes extensive use of grammatical terminology and is intended to furnish learners with the tools needed to analyse the target language (TL) and to understand its rules.

As Rutherford (1987) has observed, teaching grammar in this sense has been “central to and often synonymous with teaching foreign language for the past 2,500 years” (cited in Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988: 1). In spite of this, the fundamental question of whether or not grammar should be taught at all has been a source of considerable controversy. Writing in 1988, Celce-Murcia and Hilles posited that although no studies had provided evidence of explicit grammar teaching being essential, the “burden of proof rests on those who maintain that grammar instruction is irrelevant to language acquisition” (4). Researchers today generally agree that some attention to form is beneficial, but other related questions remain problematic (Doughty and Williams, 1998: 197). One of the most contentious issues concerns the degree of *explicitness* of grammar teaching.

2.2 Explicit versus implicit instruction

Explicit instruction emphasises the development of metalinguistic rule awareness² (Ellis, 2008: 879). Learners' attention is therefore drawn purposefully to isolated linguistic forms (such as plural endings or past tense markers) which learners are then encouraged to practise

² Metalinguistic awareness can be defined as “the ability to objectify language and dissect it as an arbitrary linguistic code independent of meaning” (Roth, Speece, Cooper, and de la Paz, 1996: 258).

in a controlled fashion (ibid.). Awareness of the learning process plays a decisive role and learners, it is hoped, will know and understand what they are practising. Grammatical terminology is used extensively to label parts of speech and to explain rules. Adherents of explicit instruction necessarily see L2 learning as different from L1 learning, which does not require any instruction (Cook, 2008: 40).

Implicit instruction, in contrast, is based on the notion that language rules are best learnt without awareness. No attempts are made to develop in learners an understanding of what is being learnt (Ellis, 2012: 275). Rather than point out discrete linguistic forms to learners, teachers try to *attract* learners' attention to these forms unobtrusively, i.e. without interrupting any ongoing communicative activity (Ellis, 2008: 879). Furthermore, the forms are given in context rather than isolated (ibid.). In the case of implicit grammar teaching, then, learners are encouraged to discover rules themselves.

Ellis (2008) reviewed a number of relevant studies and concluded – albeit with certain reservations – that explicit instruction has generally been found to be more effective than implicit instruction (881). Lichtman (2013) noted that some studies have suggested implicitly instructed adults can equal those who have received explicit instruction, but added that “this body of research is still small” in comparison to the large number of studies showing explicit instruction to be the most effective (95).

The question of how explicit grammar teaching should be has been and continues to be a source of much debate. It is sometimes commented, however, that the explicit/implicit issue should be seen as presenting a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Indeed, there should be no need for teachers to subscribe to one grammar teaching option only. Hulstijn (1995) is among the researchers who take a balanced, non-confrontational position on the issue, recommending

- that teachers opting for an explicit approach “never formulate a rule without providing illustrative examples” – after all, well-chosen examples are often more effective than rules; and,
- that students should only be encouraged to try to discover rules themselves if it is “almost certain” that they will be up to the task (375).

In Hulstijn's (1995) view, variety in teaching procedures is advantageous and there is no reason why teachers should not state rules explicitly in some cases and have students discover

the rules themselves in others (ibid.). Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988), too, defend “an eclectic approach to grammar teaching” (14). Theoretically, at least, teachers are free to choose the pedagogical options they deem most suitable in any given situation. In practice, however, this may not necessarily be the case. A case in point is found in Mella (1998), who claimed that grammar teaching at Norwegian schools has tended to be either highly explicit or practically absent from the classroom (6); we will return to this study a little later.

2.3 FonF versus FonfS and Krashen’s “zero option”

An important distinction featuring prominently in the research literature on grammar teaching is that of *a focus on form* (FonF) versus *a focus on formS* (FonfS). Introduced by Long (1988), the terms have become widely accepted in the L2 research literature. FonF prescribes that attention to form, i.e. to discrete linguistic elements of the TL, should be provided only during activities in which communication itself is the main goal (Long, 1997). Furthermore, such attention is warranted only when the need for it arises naturally, in other words when learners encounter problems while attempting to communicate in the TL (ibid.).

The notion that explicit instruction should be provided only when the need arises and only during communicative activities is very much at odds with traditional grammar teaching. The traditional approach, in fact, bears a great similarity to what Long (1988) referred to as FonfS (Ellis, 2001: 14). A FonfS approach involves the step-by-step teaching of isolated linguistic forms in pre-planned fashion; such treatment of isolated forms often constitutes the backbone of language course syllabi based on traditional approaches, with students and teachers working their way through these forms one at a time merely “because they are on the syllabus” (Harmer, 2007: 53). Long (1988) objected to this way of organising language courses and saw the FonF approach as a way of incorporating attention to form while maintaining an overarching emphasis on communication.

In order to understand why Long (1988) thought some attention to form should be incorporated, however, it is important to appreciate the context in which his influential paper first appeared. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Krashen, as part of his well-known and much-debated *Monitor Theory* of L2 acquisition, had argued strongly that grammar teaching played no role in language acquisition. Krashen (1981) believed the process of L2 acquisition is similar to the process children go through when acquiring their mother tongue or first language (L1). Children, of course, neither need nor receive any explicit instruction in their

L1; language is learnt naturally and implicitly, i.e. without conscious awareness of the learning process. Krashen (1981) maintained that the ability to acquire a language in this way is not lost at a certain age and that the same process of language acquisition is possible for children and adults provided there is sufficient *input*³.

Krashen (1982) reserved the term *acquisition* for this natural process, which contrasts sharply with *learning*, understood as a conscious process in which the language student learns about rather than acquires the L2 (10). Consciously learnt rules function as a *monitor* that overlooks and “edits” the utterances produced by the learner but do nothing to aid the actual acquisition of language (Krashen, 1982: 15-16). It follows from this separation of learning and acquisition that learners who spend their time practising grammatical rules may well boast considerable theoretical knowledge about the workings of the TL; they will not, however, be able to *use* these rules to achieve fluency in the language. Perhaps most importantly, Krashen (1982) claimed that “learnt” knowledge could never become “acquired” knowledge (83).

Rather than receive instruction, Krashen (1982) argued, learners should acquire language in *natural settings*, i.e. in stress-free environments where the primary emphasis is on communication and teachers provide comprehensible input⁴ exclusively in the TL (138). Such *naturalistic* learners, he claimed, would acquire language while those who receive explicit instruction would gain only theoretical knowledge of the language. The notion that instruction should be rejected altogether in L2 language learning is referred to as the “zero option” (Ellis, 2008: 843).

However, empirical studies conducted in the 1980s to compare the accomplishments of instructed learners and naturalistic learners found that instructed learners “progressed more rapidly and achieved higher levels of proficiency” than those who had received no instruction (Ellis, 2006: 85). Richards (1985) claimed that approaches favouring communicative activities over formal instruction and advocating comprehensible input as the sole ingredient needed in L2 acquisition were “intuitively very appealing” but rarely based on empirical

³ *Input* refers to “language that learners are exposed to” (Ellis, 2008: 957).

⁴ Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) define *comprehensible input* as “language addressed to the learner that he or she can understand” (1).

evidence (cited in Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988: 1). Against this background, many researchers accepted explicit instruction as generally beneficial but did not want a return to the way grammar traditionally had been taught.

Thus, Long's (1988) FonF approach sought to incorporate some grammar teaching or attention to form within a generally communicative approach and without including the weaknesses inherent in FonfS. Addressing some of the "major problems" of FonfS, Long (1997) described the approach as an inefficient "one-size-fits-all approach" that does not take into account individual learning styles and preferences and relies on simplification of the TL in order to get discrete linguistic points across in the course material. Furthermore, he suggested that a FonfS approach may hinder rather than help language learners:

The assertion that many students all over the world have learned languages via a focus on forms ignores the possibility that they have really learned despite it (studies of language acquisition in abnormal environments have found the human capacity for language acquisition to be highly resilient), as well as the fact that countless others have failed. (Long, 1997)

Long's statement is reminiscent of Krashen's (1982) point that "[o]ccasionally, we learn certain rules before we acquire them, and this gives us the illusion that the learning actually caused the acquisition" (87).

The FonF/FonfS distinction and the debate surrounding these concepts are illustrative of the polarised positions sometimes found in the debate on grammar teaching. Indeed, in claiming a FonF approach to be more effective than FonfS, Long (1988) referred to the latter as "neanderthal" (136). His research contribution, though widely recognised and frequently cited in the L2 research literature, has not gone unchallenged however. The perhaps fiercest criticism came from Sheen (2003), who rejected the alleged superiority of FonF as hypothetical in nature because of a lack of empirical evidence showing its effectiveness (227). Sheen (2003) also complained that researchers, despite this lack of evidence, have tended to promote FonF at the expense of FonfS (228).

2.4 Corrective feedback

Another central question in the L2 research literature is whether learners' errors should be corrected. The correction of learners' written and spoken errors often takes the form of *corrective feedback* (CF), which features strongly in traditional grammar teaching. CF has

been defined as “the indication from teachers, native speakers or non-native speaker interlocutors, to learners that their use of the target language is incorrect” (Lightbown and Spada, 1999, cited in Lim and Dass, 2014: 84). It is most commonly provided by teachers, but students are often encouraged to correct each other as well, an arrangement referred to as peer-to-peer CF (ibid.). To illustrate the debate on CF, a few of the most influential contributions concerning the correction of written errors will be given here.

Truscott (1996) defined the term *grammar correction* as “correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student’s ability to write accurately (329)”. The definition is a good one as improvement of accuracy is often cited as one of the major advantages of correcting learners’ written work. Unsurprisingly, Krashen’s (1981) view was that traditional error correction was “not relevant to language acquisition” (1). Truscott (1996), although not principally opposed to feedback, claimed research had shown grammar correction to be both “ineffective” and “harmful” and argued in favour of abandoning the practice (328). His claims stimulated an increased interest in the area and a considerable number of studies have since looked into the issue.

Responding to Truscott (1996), Ferris (1999) argued he had overlooked studies whose findings had favoured grammar correction and that his claim that grammar correction should be abandoned was “premature and overly strong” (2). Recent studies, too, have called Truscott’s (1996) claims into question. Van Beuningen, de Jong and Kuiken (2012), for instance, set out to test one of Truscott’s (2001; 2007) later suggestions that “the time spent on CF may be more wisely spent on additional writing practice” (cited in van Beuningen et al., 2012: 1). Interestingly, the subjects in their study who received feedback on their written work achieved higher accuracy in their next writing task than those who spent time practising their writing skills instead of receiving feedback (van Beuningen et al., 2012: 33).

2.5 Discrepancies between students’ and teachers’ beliefs

The FonF/FonfS and explicit/implicit distinctions discussed previously demonstrate just two areas in which researchers are divided. Even if teachers were to base their pedagogical choices to a greater extent on research, there would likely be considerable disparities in the methods chosen by individual teachers. As Borg (1999) points out, research has not yet managed to provide teachers with a “well-defined research base” on which to base their

practice (21). SLA research, though clearly extensive, has been “largely inconclusive” with regard to the type of formal instruction that should be recommended to teachers (ibid.).

The body of research looking into teachers’ beliefs and attitudes is growing steadily (Barnard and Scampton, 2008: 59). As Nunan (1995) has pointed out, however, perceptions of “how learning should take place” are held by students as well as teachers. Unless these perceptions are reasonably well-matched, students’ expectations are not likely to be met by their teachers; it has been firmly established that the resulting discrepancies can be quite detrimental to the learning environment (e.g. Horwitz, 1988; Peacock, 1998, 2001; Schulz, 1996, 2001). Addressing the issue of student-teacher discrepancies, Kumaravadivelu (1991) made the following observation:

[...] learning outcome is the result of a fairly unpredictable interaction between the learner, the task, and the task situation. From the teacher’s perspective, then, achievement of success depends largely on the degree to which teacher intention and learner interpretation of a given task converge. The narrower the gap between teacher intention and learner interpretation, the greater are the chances of achieving desired learning outcomes. (Kumaravadivelu, 1991: 98)

Kumaravadivelu (1991) was writing in the context of task-based learning, but the description above is likely to fit the reality of other methods as well. Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that the “gap” referred to above is often wide rather than narrow and that discrepancies exist in many classrooms due to students’ and teachers’ expectations being poorly matched. Schulz (1996), for instance, found that the students in her study were generally more in favour of grammar teaching and error correction than their teachers. There is abundant evidence to this effect in the L2 teaching literature even though students’ beliefs have not yet received as much attention as those of teachers (Gabillon, 2012: 94).

2.6 Grammar teaching at upper secondary schools in Norway

As Burner (2005) has pointed out, English as a foreign language (EFL) research in Norway has generally focused on levels below upper secondary education (10). However, a few researchers have looked into Norwegian upper secondary level teachers’ attitudes to grammar teaching. One of these is Mella (1998), who carried out two survey-based investigations of teachers’ beliefs in 1993 and 1998 and then reported his findings in his thesis published in 1998. In similarity with the present study, Mella’s (1998) investigation was aimed at the English foundation course, i.e. the course taken by all students during their first year of upper

secondary education. His surveys yielded many interesting insights; those most relevant to the present study are summarised in the following points:

- In the survey of 1998, a clear majority of the respondents defined their teaching style as communicative, which was not the case in the survey of 1993 (120).
- The 21 teachers in the second investigation devoted less time per week to grammar teaching than the 58 teachers in the first survey (117).
- Teachers in both surveys found it difficult to “draw practical conclusions on the basis of new linguistic theories” (125)

On the basis of his data, Mella (1998) noted a “clear tendency” that a growing number of teachers were adopting a communicative style “at the expense of the grammar-translation method” (128). It is clear, then, that CLT was on the rise at these particular schools at the time of the study. It is also worth noting, however, that grammar-translation methods – often seen as belonging to an academic, grammar-heavy style of language learning (Cook, 2008: 238) – still had a place at Norwegian upper secondary schools in the 1990s.

A few years later, Burner (2005) carried out an investigation of the teaching and learning of English grammar in the first year of upper secondary education. As a part of his broader research aims, he interviewed teachers about grammar teaching. Based on these data, he was able to make several points that are of interest in the context of the present study:

- Grammar features more strongly at the lower levels than in upper secondary education, where “there is little or no systematic grammar teaching”.
- In the first year of upper secondary education, grammar is what Norwegian students of English are least confident about.
- Teachers at the upper secondary level believe grammar teaching is beneficial for Norwegian 16-year-olds but they miss general guidelines for the teaching of grammar.
- Teachers believe their students generally consider grammar to be “dull, old-fashioned, useless, and meaningless”.
- Teachers tend to focus on known problem areas in English grammar.

(Burner, 2005: 7, 81, 97)

Burner (2005) also posited that “strong versions” of CLT had “overshadowed” points concerning grammar in the *Reform 94* (R94) curriculum, leading to a neglect of grammar in Norwegian schools (97). It is worth noting that his study was published in 2005, just before the introduction of the *Knowledge Promotion* educational reform (LK06) of 2006. The teachers he interviewed hoped there would be a strengthening of grammar teaching in the forthcoming curriculum but thought it likely that any new guidelines would be “even vaguer” than the existing ones (ibid.). See the next section for a discussion of the role of grammar teaching in LK06.

2.7 Grammar teaching and the English subject curriculum

As has been established, personal beliefs play a crucial role in shaping teachers’ classroom decisions. Chief among the other factors informing teachers’ practices, of course, are the curricula. The role of grammar teaching has varied depending on the priorities set forth in the different English subject curricula. For instance, Mella (1998) noted the emphasis on communicative competence in the R94 curriculum current at the time of his study and predicted this emphasis might have “consequences for the teaching of grammar” (109). The current English curriculum relevant for all first-year students at the upper secondary level was introduced along with the LK06 educational reform. Discussing the curriculum around the time of its appearance, Hasselgård and Dypedahl (2006) made the following observations:

Of all the new features of the new English syllabus one of the most conspicuous is that two of its three main areas concern language skills, and only one concerns content (culture, society and literature). This alone suggests that the syllabus involves a strengthening of the requirements for language competence. There is certainly no doubt that the requirements for language competence are more explicit than before, including, as they now do, definite aims for accuracy in spelling, grammar and vocabulary choice among the goals for communicative competence. (3)

An examination of the competence aims of the relevant curriculum seems to confirm these points. Although *grammar* or *grammar teaching* is not mentioned explicitly, competence aims such as the following leave little doubt as to the intentions of the curriculum planners:

- “express oneself fluently and coherently *in a detailed and precise manner* suited to the purpose and situation”
- “write different types of texts *with structure and coherence* suited to the purpose and situation”

- “use patterns for orthography, *word inflection* and *varied sentence and text construction* to produce texts”

(the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (UDIR), 2013, emphasis added)

Having noted, also, that the term *communicative competence* is not used in the latest curriculum, Hasselgård and Dypedahl (2006) speculate that the term has been left out because it has often been “understood and misunderstood in a lot of different ways” in previous curricula (3). It is worth recalling at this point Mella’s (1998) concern over the emphasis on communicative competence in R94 as well as Kramsch’s (2006) claim that the term has often been “taken as an excuse largely to do away with grammar” (250).

Interestingly, Kumaravadivelu (1991) pointed out that an emphasis on communicative language teaching had given teachers considerable flexibility in the way they chose to implement the curricula (99). Instead of teaching a “clearly defined list of linguistic objectives”, teachers based their classroom practice around general learning objectives (*ibid.*). As noted by Ellis (2003), “recent language pedagogy does not attempt to specify what the learners will learn, but emphasises how learning should take place” (cited in Gabillon, 2012: 94). Such flexibility may well inspire greater independence and self-sufficiency in teachers but, as Kumaravadivelu (1991) noted, a vagueness in pedagogical practices increases “the potential for misunderstanding and miscommunication” in the classroom (99).

Two years after their initial comments on the curriculum, Hasselgård and Dypedahl (2008) returned to the discussion and added that while the amount of grammar teaching in Norwegian upper secondary schools has tended to vary quite widely, “it is difficult to see how both explicit and extensive grammar instruction now can be avoided after the introduction of a new syllabus and new exams” (Hasselgård and Dypedahl, 2008: 11). Indeed, one may well wonder how students could be expected to achieve the precision, accuracy, and coherence necessitated by the aims of the LK06 curriculum without grammar teaching playing a significant role.

It is not, of course, the aim of the present study to investigate whether or not the new curriculum has inspired an increased focus on grammar at Norwegian upper secondary schools. What is being hypothesised here, however, is that grammar teaching in some form is

both necessary and beneficial given the requirements of the current curriculum. We shall return to this point in section 5.

3 Methods and materials

The study was primarily quantitative in design and relied on the use of questionnaires for data collection. Questionnaires offer many advantages, but tend to produce numerical data of a certain “unsophistication and limited scope” (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011: 377). To counterbalance this tendency, a qualitative element was incorporated by encouraging student respondents to leave comments at the end of their questionnaires.

This section will provide detailed information about the subjects of the study and describe the data collection instruments and procedures. The questionnaires used in the survey can be found in appendices 3-4; translated versions of these questionnaires are provided in appendices 1-2.

3.1 Subjects

The subjects consisted of 269 students and 15 teachers of English at two upper secondary schools in south-eastern Norway.

3.1.1 The students

143 girls and 116 boys took part in the survey. In addition there were 10 students who chose not to provide information about their gender. The students were all in their first year of upper secondary education⁵. 178 were from school A, 91 from school B. In addition, the questionnaires were piloted with 27 students and three teachers at school C.

English is a compulsory subject for first-year students at upper secondary schools in Norway; once students have completed this first year, they can move on to more advanced English courses or choose to end their English studies altogether. It seems reasonable to assume that students who do well at English will often continue their study of the language while those of their peers who struggle more may choose to focus on other subjects instead.

⁵ The first year of upper secondary education is referred to in Norwegian as *Videregående trinn 1 (Vg1)*. Students at this level are about 16 years old.

For this reason, the survey was conducted among first-year students so as to ensure the participation of a wider variety of students.

3.1.2 The teachers

Ten teachers working at school A and five working at school B participated in the survey, while three teachers from school C were part of the pilot test. Of the teachers taking part in the main survey, there were ten women and five men. Six of the teachers had been teaching English for five years or less, while nine had been doing so for more than ten years. Two of the teachers held a bachelor's degree (*adjunkt*); five held a bachelor's degree and additional courses (*adjunkt med tillegg*); one held a master's degree (*lektor*); six held a master's degree and additional courses (*lektor med tillegg*); the last teacher selected the "other title" option.

3.2 The questionnaires

The data collection instruments used for this study consisted of two questionnaires based on those used by Schulz (2001) in her investigation of Colombian post-secondary teachers' and students' perceptions of grammar instruction and corrective feedback. Schulz used similar questionnaires in a previous study (1996) in which she examined the beliefs of teachers and students at universities in the United States. Both questionnaires in this former study contained a number of statements that teachers and students responded to using a five-point rating scale. For her later study, Schulz (2001) then adapted these statements and had them translated into Spanish.

The centrality of Schulz's research was an important factor in choosing to use modified versions of her questionnaire items for this study; the studies referred to above have been described as the most influential "specifically examining L2 learners' beliefs about grammar instruction" (Loewen, Fei, Thompson, Nakatsukasa, Ahn, and Chen, 2009: 93). Furthermore, the fact that these questionnaire items had been thoroughly and extensively tested in two large-scale studies meant they could be used reliably for similar research purposes in this study.

Both questionnaires were written in Norwegian to ensure respondents would understand the statements fully. Distributing questionnaires in the respondents' mother tongue is often seen as a good way of increasing the quality of the data that is collected, provided, of course, that any translations are skilfully executed (Dörnyei, 2010: 49). As a native speaker of

both English and Norwegian I considered myself qualified for the task of reworking and translating Schulz's (2001) items to suit the purpose of my study targeting the upper secondary level. Nevertheless, the questionnaires had to be carefully piloted to ensure the wording of the items would be properly understood (see section 3.2.3).

3.2.1 Content and layout

Two separate questionnaires were used, one for students and one for teachers. Responses were elicited using a six-point Likert-type scale. Widely used in survey-based research, Likert-type rating scales present respondents with a number of statements related to a specific target. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they disagree or agree with each statement by marking one of the ready-made response options. Once the questionnaires have been completed, each response option is given a number so that scores can be worked out for the individual items (Dörnyei, 2010: 27). In the scale used for this study, 1 represented "disagree strongly" and 6 represented "agree strongly". The choice of an even number six-point scale was an attempt to encourage respondents to take "a clear stand" and to avoid anyone consistently checking the middle option (McKay, 2006: 38).

The student and teacher questionnaires consisted of fifteen and twelve *closed* items, respectively. Closed questionnaire items are questions or statements that do not require respondents to write out their responses; instead, respondents indicate their views by ticking or encircling one of several ready-made response options. Because these response options are easy to code numerically, this approach is very well suited for quantitative studies that make use of statistical analyses (Dörnyei, 2010: 26).

The two questionnaires both contained twelve statements concerning the role of grammar and corrective feedback, though with slightly different wordings. Following Schulz (2001), the student questionnaire included an additional three statements intended to probe whether respondents preferred to be corrected by their teachers or their peers. As mentioned, one open-ended question was also added at the end in the hope that students might provide some qualitative data. All the respondents were asked to provide information about their gender. Additionally, two closed items were included at the end of the teacher questionnaire to gather basic information about respondents' job titles and how long they had been teaching English.

Because the student questionnaire was to be administered by the students' teachers, efforts were made to keep it relatively short. It was with a certain reluctance at first that the schools – with their busy schedules – had accepted my request to conduct the surveys and it did not seem fitting to infringe too much on the teachers' classroom time. The questionnaire was therefore designed to have an estimated 15-minute completion time. Another important reason for keeping the questionnaire this short, of course, was the desire to keep students as focused and cooperative as possible. Language research surveys rarely cause great excitement in respondents and so “the optimal length is rather short” (Dörnyei, 2010: 12); this is perhaps especially true when seeking the participation of teenagers.

An additional advantage of keeping the list of items short was that it became possible to fit the questionnaire neatly on a single sheet of paper by printing on both sides; in addition to adding to the perceived brevity of the questionnaire, issuing just one sheet to each respondent avoided the problem of filled-in, stapled-together sheets becoming separated or lost.

3.2.2 Considerations regarding privacy

The decision to use paper- rather than web-based questionnaires for the present study was based primarily on privacy concerns. Although the items of the questionnaire could hardly be described as sensitive, considerations of privacy remain an essential aspect of any serious survey. Indeed, respondents are to be seen as subjects rather than “objects of research” and this perspective requires, among other things, that they be guaranteed “*confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability* in the research” (Cohen et al., 2011: 377-378, emphasis in original).

Paper-based approaches are certainly more time-consuming than web-based solutions but, provided no personal information is collected, they can be used to ensure near-complete anonymity for the respondents without any digital traceability concerns (Norwegian Social Science Data Services, n.d.). The students in this survey indicated their gender but were not asked to provide any other information. The questionnaires were administered and collected by their teachers, who did not pass on any information about the class or the students.

An added benefit of using paper-based questionnaires was that there was no risk of technical problems hampering the participation of any of the respondents. Wireless Internet

coverage is sometimes unstable at schools and it is not unusual for one or more students to experience problems while logging on to their computers. Considering such potential difficulties, the use of paper questionnaires was a good way of ensuring the survey did not take up more classroom time than necessary.

3.2.3 Piloting of the questionnaires

Although the items included in the questionnaires for this study had been used in previous studies, they still had to be field-tested or piloted with a sample of people similar to those who would be participating in the main survey and for whom the questionnaires had been designed (Dörnyei, 2010: 53). Pre-testing strengthens the reliability and validity of questionnaires and is crucial for their success (Cohen et al., 2011: 402).

The questionnaires were piloted with three teachers and a class of 27 first-year students at an upper secondary school separate from the schools where the main survey was to be carried out. The sample selected for the pilot test was in every way similar to the target sample of the main survey and none of the respondents was told that this was a pilot test. The results indicated the questionnaires were working well and the respondents had understood the statements. At this point the decision was made to add an open question at the end of the student questionnaire to try to procure some qualitative data.

3.3 Data collection procedure

The student data were collected in my absence through group administration of the relevant questionnaire. Sitting in their usual classrooms, students marked their responses directly on the questionnaires which were then collected by their teachers. This procedure of making the teachers responsible for the data collection was necessary because the survey had to be conducted in different classes simultaneously; furthermore, one of the schools specifically requested that the survey be carried out in this way so that it would be up to the English teachers when to administer the questionnaires. As for the teacher questionnaires, these were filled in by the teachers at their leisure.

As Dörnyei (2010) points out, group administration of questionnaires often produces very high response rates as students are, in a sense, “captive” in the classroom (68). This potential element of pressure made it all the more important that the students be properly informed about the survey as well as reminded that their participation was voluntary. The

teachers had therefore been provided with written instructions and additional information about the study which they read aloud to the students before administering the survey. Information about the main points and purpose of the study were also included in the questionnaire itself.

As I was not present when the data were collected, I cannot know with certainty that there were no disturbances in the classes during the survey. Incidents causing a possible contamination of the results cannot be ruled out as teachers were not instructed to keep the students from glancing across at the responses of their classmates. However, the mere presence of a teacher is likely to have kept the respondents “on track” most of the time. Moreover, as has been mentioned, the questionnaire itself was kept quite short in the hope that students would remain interested and not become distracted.

Once the questionnaires had been filled in and collected, the data were manually tabulated using Microsoft Excel. The resulting data files were then converted to comma-separated value (CSV) files so that they could be readily imported to a software system for statistical analyses; the analyses for this study were carried out using the SAS (Statistical Analysis System) University Edition. There were relatively few missing or invalid responses in the data collected during the survey – see the next section for further details on this. The high response rates could suggest that the length and layout of the questionnaire appealed to the students. Many students even took the time to add comments at the end (see section 4.6), which suggests they considered the subject to be of some relevance to them.

4 Results

In this section, the questionnaire results will be presented in detail. A general overview will be provided before the results are described in three separate subsections on the role of grammar (statements 1–7), attitudes towards corrective feedback (statements 8–12), and students’ views regarding peer versus teacher correction (statements 13–15). Section 4.5 will address differences in the response patterns of male and female students. Finally, qualitative data in the form of comments written by student respondents will be presented in section 4.6.

Note that student and teacher responses are treated together so that they may be readily compared. For further ease of comparison, the six-point scale used in the questionnaire will be collapsed into a two-point scale showing student and teacher attitudes for each statement.

Readers may refer to section 5 for the main discussion of the results, though some discussion will be included in this section as well. The questionnaires used in the study can be found in appendices 1-4.

4.1 General overview

In several cases, the responses of the students and their teachers were quite similar. This can be seen in figure 1, which shows the average ratings⁶ for statements 1–12. Note that statements 13–15 appeared only in the student questionnaire and so are not included in the chart below; these are treated in section 4.4.

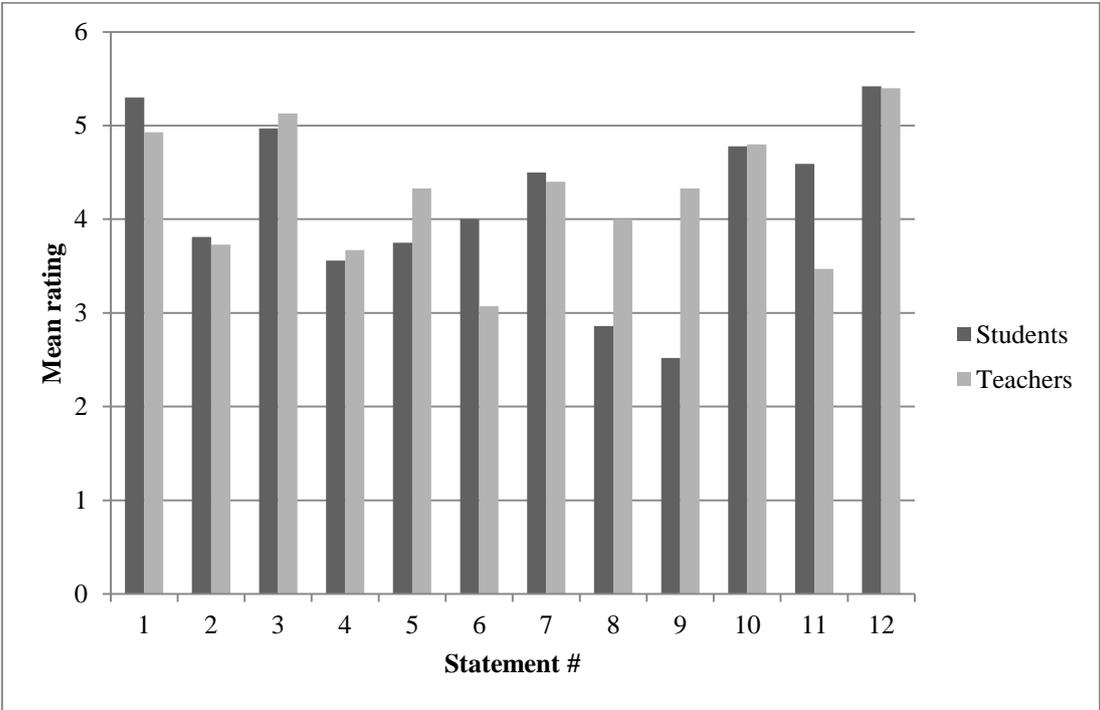


Figure 1: Chart showing average ratings for statements 1–12

Some statements revealed interesting differences in student and teacher views. Following Schulz (2001), discrepancies of 10 per cent or more are considered meaningful in this study (247, 252). Such discrepancies are found in six of the twelve statements that both students and teachers responded to; these are shown in the right column of table 1 below.

⁶ As mentioned previously, a six-point scale was used in which 1 represented “disagree strongly” and 6 represented “agree strongly”.

Table 1: Simplified presentation of statements 1–12 showing where the main discrepancies lie

Discrepancies < 10%	Discrepancies > 10%
The study of grammar is essential (#1)	There should be a greater emphasis on grammar (#5)
The study of grammar is the quickest way for students to improve their English (#2)	Students tend to keep grammar rules in mind (#6)
The study of grammar is a good help when learning English (#3)	Students dislike being corrected in class (#8)
Students like the study of grammar (#4)	Teachers should be reticent about correcting students' errors in class (#9)
Practising English in situations simulating real life is more important than practising grammar rules (#7)	Students feel cheated if teachers do not correct their written work (#10)
Teachers should correct students' written errors (#12)	Teachers should correct students' spoken errors (#11)

There were no missing or invalid responses in the teacher questionnaires. In the case of the student questionnaires, on the other hand, the number of missing or invalid responses ranged from one to sixteen; the exact numbers will be provided in the subsections that follow. Note that missing and invalid responses have been disregarded when calculating response percentages for the different statements.

4.2 Results concerning the role of grammar

The first seven statements of the questionnaire were designed to examine students' and teachers' beliefs concerning the role of grammar in language learning. Statements 1–5, though worded differently, are quite similar and all attempted to measure how grammar was regarded by the respondents.

Statement 1 investigated whether respondents thought the study of grammar was necessary for achieving a good command of English. As can be seen in table 2, students and teachers overwhelmingly agreed on this point. Almost 95 per cent of students and 93 per cent of teachers supported the claim. Furthermore, about half of all the student respondents agreed strongly, while most of the teachers (60 per cent) were a little more restrained in their support and ticked the “agree” box. Both groups produced high average scores (means) and relatively low standard deviation (SD) values, suggesting the respondents were quite congruent in their

perceptions. It is worth noting that only one teacher disagreed with this statement concerning the importance of grammar. There was one (.4 per cent) invalid or missing response to statement 1 in the student questionnaires.

Table 2: Questionnaire results for statement 1

<i>#1: The study of grammar is essential if one wishes to achieve a good command of English (student questionnaire) / Adolescents and adults who wish to achieve a good command of English must study and practise grammar (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	0.4% (n = 1)	0.7% (n = 2)	3.7% (n = 10)	7.1% (n = 19)	39.8% (n = 107)	48.0% (n = 129)	5.30	0.86
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	6.7% (n = 1)	13.3% (n = 2)	60.0% (n = 9)	20.0% (n = 3)	4.93	0.80

	Disagree	Agree
Students	4.8% (n = 13)	94.8% (n = 255)
Teachers	6.7% (n = 1)	93.3% (n = 14)
Discrepancy	1.9%	1.5%

The second statement, which suggested that studying and practising grammar is the quickest way for learners to improve their English, produced a slightly less uniform reaction in the respondents (see table 3). Most of the students (62 per cent) and teachers (67 per cent) agreed with the claim, and 30 per cent of the students agreed or agreed strongly. Most of the teachers who agreed with the claim, however, agreed only slightly. It would seem that the teachers in the sample were less inclined to agree with this statement than their students. There were five (1.9 per cent) invalid or missing responses to statement 2 in the student questionnaires.

Table 3: Questionnaire results for statement 2

<i>#2: The quickest way for me to improve my English is to study and practise grammar (student questionnaire) / The quickest way for students to improve their communicative ability in English is to study and practise grammar (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	4.1% (n = 11)	11.5% (n = 31)	20.4% (n = 55)	33.1% (n = 89)	20.1% (n = 54)	8.9% (n = 24)	3.81	1.26
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	13.3% (n = 2)	20.0% (n = 3)	53.3% (n = 8)	6.7% (n = 1)	6.7% (n = 1)	3.73	1.03

	Disagree	Agree
Students	36.1% (n = 97)	62.1% (n = 167)
Teachers	33.3% (n = 5)	66.7% (n = 10)
Discrepancy	2.8%	4.6%

Statement 3, which asserted that grammar is a good help when learning English, was supported by all the teachers and 95 per cent of the students. As can be seen in table 4, the respondents' beliefs seemed well-aligned in this instance: 29 per cent of the students and 20 per cent of the teachers agreed strongly, while 45 per cent of the students and 73 per cent of the teachers marked the "agree" option. There were two (.7 per cent) invalid or missing responses to this statement in the student questionnaires.

Table 4: Questionnaire results for statement 3

<i>#3: The study of grammar is a good help when learning English (both questionnaires)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	0.4% (n = 1)	0.7% (n = 2)	3.3% (n = 9)	21.2% (n = 57)	45.0% (n = 121)	28.6% (n = 77)	4.97	0.88
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	6.7% (n = 1)	73.3% (n = 11)	20.0% (n = 3)	5.13	0.52

	Disagree	Agree
Students	4.5% (n = 12)	94.8% (n = 255)
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	100.0% (n = 15)
Discrepancy	4.5%	5.2%

As can be seen in table 5 below, just over half the students (52 per cent) indicated that they liked the study of grammar (statement 4). Roughly 8 per cent selected the “agree strongly” response. The majority of the teachers (60 per cent) thought that students generally like the study of grammar. The discrepancies in student–teacher views were less than 10 per cent and so are not considered meaningful (Schulz, 2001: 247, 252). The student questionnaires contained eight (3.0 per cent) invalid or missing responses for this statement.

Table 5: Questionnaire results for statement 4

<i>#4: I like the study of grammar (student questionnaire) / Most students like the study of grammar (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	5.6% (n = 15)	17.8% (n = 48)	21.9% (n = 59)	27.9% (n = 75)	16.0% (n = 43)	7.8% (n = 21)	3.56	1.33
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	20.0% (n = 3)	20.0% (n = 3)	33.3% (n = 5)	26.7% (n = 4)	0.0% (n = 0)	3.67	1.11

	Disagree	Agree
Students	45.4% (n = 122)	51.7% (n = 139)
Teachers	40.0% (n = 6)	60.0% (n = 9)
Discrepancy	5.4%	8.3%

Statement 5 examined respondents’ reactions to the claim that there should be “a greater emphasis on grammar”. As can be seen in table 6, this statement elicited the first perhaps serious discrepancy in beliefs: while the vast majority of the teachers (93 per cent) agreed with the claim, only about 60 per cent of the students were as enthusiastic. Although most of

the students and teachers who were positive to the statement agreed only slightly, as many as 40 per cent of the teachers but only 16 per cent of the students ticked the “agree” box. It is interesting to note that only one of the fifteen teachers in the sample disagreed with the claim that grammar should feature more prominently than is currently the case; in contrast, 37 per cent of the students disagreed with the claim, though very few (< 5 per cent) disagreed strongly. Six (2.2 per cent) students gave invalid responses or did not respond to this statement.

Table 6: Questionnaire results for statement 5

<i>#5: I think there should be a greater emphasis on grammar in the English lessons (student questionnaire) / I think there should be a greater emphasis on grammar in the teaching of English than is presently the case (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	3.7% (n = 10)	11.9% (n = 32)	21.6% (n = 58)	36.4% (n = 98)	16.0% (n = 43)	8.2% (n = 22)	3.75	1.22
Teachers	6.7% (n = 1)	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	46.7% (n = 7)	40.0% (n = 6)	6.7% (n = 1)	4.33	1.11

	Disagree	Agree
Students	37.2% (n = 100)	60.6% (n = 163)
Teachers	6.7% (n = 1)	93.3% (n = 14)
Discrepancy	30.5%	32.7%

In statement 6, students and teachers were asked to respond to the claim that students “often keep grammar rules in mind when they write in English or read what they have written”. Most of the student respondents (68 per cent) agreed with this statement, as is clear from table 7. The majority of the teachers (73 per cent), however, rejected the claim. Thus, this statement revealed an interesting discrepancy; it would seem that the students in the sample depend on grammar rules (or, at least, think that they do) to a greater extent than their teachers are aware of. There was only one (.4 per cent) invalid or missing response to this statement.

Table 7: Questionnaire results for statement 6

<i>#6: I usually keep grammar rules in mind when I write in English or read what I have written (student questionnaire) / I think students often keep grammar rules in mind when they write in English or read what they have written (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	7.1% (n = 19)	11.2% (n = 30)	13.0% (n = 35)	26.0% (n = 70)	28.6% (n = 77)	13.8% (n = 37)	4.00	1.44
Teachers	6.7% (n = 1)	13.3% (n = 2)	53.3% (n = 8)	20.0% (n = 3)	6.7% (n = 1)	0.0% (n = 0)	3.07	0.96

	Disagree	Agree
Students	31.2% (n = 84)	68.4% (n = 184)
Teachers	73.3% (n = 11)	26.7% (n = 4)
Discrepancy	41.1%	41.7%

Despite the generally positive attitudes towards the role of grammar displayed so far, most of the respondents agreed with the claim made in statement 7 that practising English “in situations simulating real life” is more important than practising grammar rules. Moreover, students’ and teachers’ beliefs seemed to be quite well-matched in this instance with about 80 per cent of both groups supporting the statement. As is evident from the figures given in table 8, the distribution of student and teacher responses across the six different response options was remarkably similar. About 20 per cent of the respondents in each group agreed strongly with statement 7, while 60 per cent settled for the “agree slightly” or “agree” options. There were six (2.2 per cent) invalid or missing responses to this statement in the student questionnaires.

Table 8: Questionnaire results for statement 7

<i>#7: It is more important to practise English in situations simulating real life (e.g., taking part in role plays, conducting interviews, etc.) than to practise grammar rules (student questionnaire) / It is more important for students to practise English in situations simulating real life (e.g., taking part in role plays, conducting interviews, etc.) than to practise grammar rules (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	2.2% (n = 6)	2.6% (n = 7)	11.5% (n = 31)	30.1% (n = 81)	30.1% (n = 81)	21.2% (n = 57)	4.50	1.17
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	6.7% (n = 1)	13.3% (n = 2)	33.3% (n = 5)	26.7% (n = 4)	20.0% (n = 3)	4.40	1.18

	Disagree	Agree
Students	16.4% (n = 44)	81.4% (n = 219)
Teachers	20.0% (n = 3)	80.0% (n = 12)
Discrepancy	3.6%	1.4%

4.3 Results concerning corrective feedback

Statements 8–12 were intended to elicit respondents’ attitudes regarding corrective feedback. Statement 8, which asserted that students dislike being corrected by their teachers in class, provoked some rather interesting results (see table 9). Most of the teachers (67 per cent) agreed with the statement, whereas the majority of the students (64 per cent) disagreed with the claim and almost 20 per cent even disagreed strongly. Most of the teachers marked the “agree” option, while most of the students chose the “disagree” option to indicate their stance. There were seven (2.6 per cent) invalid or missing responses to this statement in the student questionnaires.

Table 9: Questionnaire results for statement 8

<i>#8: I dislike it when my teacher corrects my English in class (student questionnaire) / Most students dislike it when their teacher corrects their English in class (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	18.2% (n = 49)	26.8% (n = 72)	18.6% (n = 50)	20.8% (n = 56)	10.0% (n = 27)	3.0% (n = 8)	2.86	1.38
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	13.3% (n = 2)	20.0% (n = 3)	26.7% (n = 4)	33.3% (n = 5)	6.7% (n = 1)	4.00	1.20

	Disagree	Agree
Students	63.6% (n = 171)	33.8% (n = 91)
Teachers	33.3% (n = 5)	66.7% (n = 10)
Discrepancy	30.3%	32.9%

As can be seen in table 10, sizeable discrepancies resulted from statement 9 as well. It must be noted that students and teachers responded to two slightly different statements in this case. Nevertheless, the fact that teachers overwhelmingly (80 per cent) agreed that students' errors should be corrected in class only if they "could lead to misunderstandings" does not seem to reflect the views of the students: a clear majority (77 per cent) of the students rejected the notion that teachers should generally avoid correcting students' language in class, and as many as 27 per cent disagreed strongly with this statement. The student questionnaires contained seven (2.6 per cent) invalid or missing responses to this statement.

Table 10: Questionnaire results for statement 9

<i>#9: Teachers should avoid correcting students' language in class (student questionnaire) / Teachers should only correct students' grammatical errors or pronunciation in class if these errors could lead to misunderstandings (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	27.1% (n = 73)	28.6% (n = 77)	20.8% (n = 56)	8.9% (n = 24)	8.6% (n = 23)	3.3% (n = 9)	2.52	1.39
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	13.3% (n = 2)	6.7% (n = 1)	33.3% (n = 5)	26.7% (n = 4)	20.0% (n = 3)	4.33	1.29

	Disagree	Agree
Students	76.6% (n = 206)	20.8% (n = 56)
Teachers	20.0% (n = 3)	80.0% (n = 12)
Discrepancy	56.6%	59.2%

Statement 10 asserted that students “feel cheated” when teachers do not correct the written work they hand in. Students and teachers clearly agreed on this point, with both groups achieving almost identical mean scores (see table 11 below). Perhaps surprisingly, 12 per cent of the students disagreed with the statement. There were ten (3.7 per cent) invalid or missing responses to statement 10 in the student questionnaires.

Table 11: Questionnaire results for statement 10

<i>#10: I feel cheated if my teacher does not correct the written work I have handed in (student questionnaire) / Most students feel cheated if their teacher does not correct the written work they have handed in (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	0.4% (n = 1)	4.5% (n = 12)	7.1% (n = 19)	21.2% (n = 57)	34.6% (n = 93)	28.6% (n = 77)	4.78	1.12
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	40.0% (n = 6)	40.0% (n = 6)	20.0% (n = 3)	4.80	0.77

	Disagree	Agree
Students	11.9% (n = 32)	84.4% (n = 227)
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	100.0% (n = 15)
Discrepancy	11.9%	15.6%

As can be seen in table 12, statement 11 provoked some interesting differences in students’ and teachers’ response patterns. Here, the two groups responded to two slightly different statements expressing the notion that teachers should correct their students’ spoken errors. The teachers were divided on this point, with almost half (47 per cent) the respondents expressing disagreement. A clear majority of the students, however, agreed with the

statement, and 22 per cent agreed strongly. While just over half the teachers supported the claim, none agreed strongly. Six (2.2 per cent) students gave invalid responses or did not respond to this statement.

Table 12: Questionnaire results for statement 11

<i>#11: I want my teacher to correct me if I make errors when speaking English (student questionnaire) / Teachers should generally correct the errors that students make when speaking English (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	1.9% (n = 5)	2.6% (n = 7)	10.0% (n = 27)	26.8% (n = 72)	34.6% (n = 93)	21.9% (n = 59)	4.59	1.14
Teachers	6.7% (n = 1)	13.3% (n = 2)	26.7% (n = 4)	33.3% (n = 5)	20.0% (n = 3)	0.0% (n = 0)	3.47	1.19

	Disagree	Agree
Students	14.5% (n = 39)	83.3% (n = 224)
Teachers	46.7% (n = 7)	53.3% (n = 8)
Discrepancy	32.2%	30.0%

Following up on the previous item, statement 12 of the student questionnaire claimed that students want their teachers to correct their written errors. As is seen in table 13, the vast majority of students (95 per cent) agreed with this statement, with over half (54 per cent) agreeing strongly. Responding to the claim that they should generally correct their students' written errors, all the teachers agreed and 40 per cent agreed strongly. There were five (1.9 per cent) invalid or missing responses to statement 12 in the student questionnaires.

Table 13: Questionnaire results for statement 12

<i>#12: I want my teacher to correct me if I make errors when writing English (student questionnaire) / Teachers should generally correct the errors that students make when writing English (teacher questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	0.7% (n = 2)	0.4% (n = 1)	1.9% (n = 5)	4.1% (n = 11)	37.5% (n = 101)	53.5% (n = 144)	5.42	0.80
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	0.0% (n = 0)	60.0% (n = 9)	40.0% (n = 6)	5.40	0.51

	Disagree	Agree
Students	3.0% (n = 8)	95.2% (n = 256)
Teachers	0.0% (n = 0)	100.0% (n = 15)
Discrepancy	3.0%	4.8%

4.4 Results concerning peer versus teacher correction

The last three items of the student questionnaire examined whether students preferred to be corrected by their teachers or by their peers.

In statement 13, it was alleged that students prefer to sit in groups and be corrected by their fellow students rather than have their teacher correct them in front of the class. This statement produced two missing and 14 invalid responses (5.9 per cent), the most of any of the items of the questionnaire. The invalid responses came about because students responded by marking two response options or by placing their mark between two response options. The relatively high number of invalid responses suggests quite a few of the students had divided feelings concerning statement 13.

As can be seen in table 14, 56 per cent of the respondents agreed with statement 13, but most of those who agreed marked the “agree slightly” option. The statement produced an average score of 3.73, but the SD value of 1.59 showed responses were quite spread out.

Table 14: Questionnaire results for statement 13

<i>#13: I prefer to sit in a group and be corrected by my fellow students rather than be corrected by my teacher in front of the whole class (student questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	11.9% (n = 32)	11.2% (n = 30)	14.9% (n = 40)	24.5% (n = 66)	16.0% (n = 43)	15.6% (n = 42)	3.73	1.59

	Disagree	Agree
Students	37.9% (n = 102)	56.1% (n = 151)

In statement 14, students responded to the claim that they learn a lot when their teachers correct the errors of their classmates. As seen in table 15, just over 70 per cent agreed with this claim. The majority of the responses were concentrated around the “agree slightly” option, as indicated by the mean (4.00). Eight (3.0 per cent) students gave invalid responses or did not respond in this instance.

Table 15: Questionnaire results for statement 14

<i>#14: I learn a lot when my teacher corrects the errors made by my fellow students in class (student questionnaire)</i>								
	1 Disagree strongly	2 Disagree	3 Disagree slightly	4 Agree slightly	5 Agree	6 Agree strongly	Mean	SD
Students	5.6% (n = 15)	7.8% (n = 21)	13.0% (n = 35)	37.9% (n = 102)	20.4% (n = 55)	12.3% (n = 33)	4.00	1.30

	Disagree	Agree
Students	26.4% (n = 71)	70.6% (n = 190)

The vast majority of the students (81 per cent) supported the final statement of the questionnaire, which claimed that students learn a lot when corrected by their teachers in class (table 16). The few who disagreed (15 per cent), disagreed only slightly.

Table 16: Questionnaire results for statement 15

<i>#15: I learn a lot when my teacher corrects the errors I make in class (student questionnaire)</i>								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean	SD
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree	Agree strongly		
Students	1.9%	4.8%	8.6%	35.7%	29.0%	16.7%	4.40	1.14
	(n = 5)	(n = 13)	(n = 23)	(n = 96)	(n = 78)	(n = 45)		

	Disagree	Agree
Students	15.2% (n = 41)	81.4% (n = 219)

4.5 Concerning the differences in male and female students' responses

Efforts were made to investigate whether the differences found in male and female students' responses could be linked to gender. For this purpose, chi-squared tests for independence were carried out using the SAS University Edition. The calculations were based on data from the collapsed two-point scales to ensure the chi-squared tests could be used reliably⁷.

The tests yielded statistically significant results for responses to the following statements at a .05 level of significance; readers interested in the relevant p-values may refer to appendix 5.

⁷ It is generally accepted that chi-squared tests for independence require values of 5 or higher for all expected counts. This requirement was met by collapsing the six-point scale, i.e., by merging the three response options expressing disagreement into one option and doing the same for those expressing agreement. In this way, chi-squared tests for independence with one degree of freedom could be carried out to test the potential relationship between the categorical variables of gender (male/female) and disposition towards each statement (agreement/disagreement).

- “The quickest way for me to improve my English is to study and practise grammar.” (#2)
- “I think there should be a greater emphasis on grammar in the English lessons.” (#5)
- “I dislike it when my teacher corrects my English in class.” (#8)
- “I prefer to sit in a group and be corrected by my fellow students rather than be corrected by my teacher in front of the whole class.” (#13)

Male and female students’ responses to these four statements are given as percentages in figure 2 below.

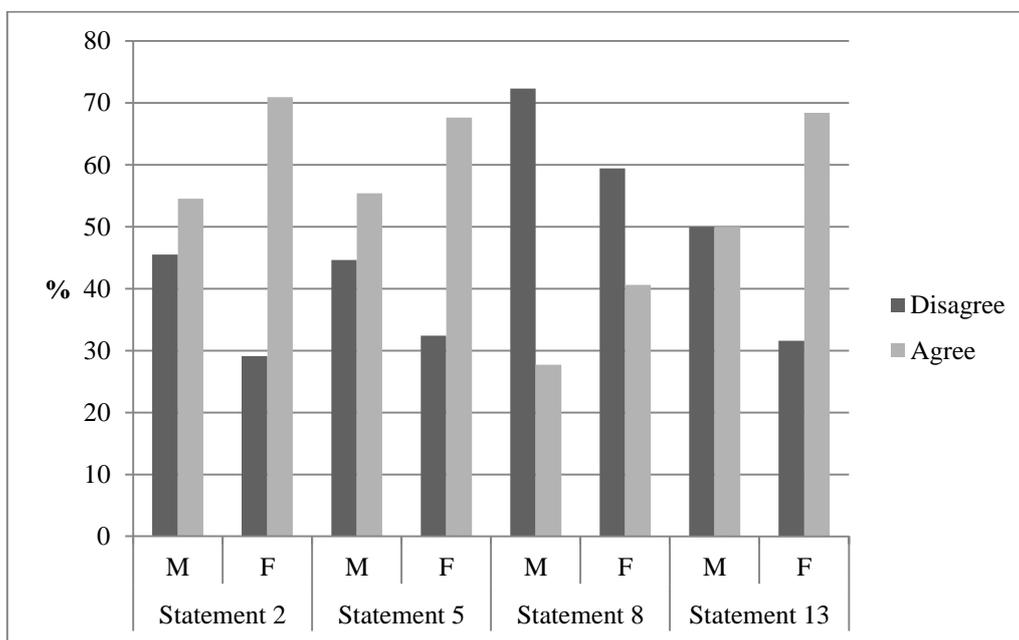


Figure 2: Chart showing the percentages of male (M) and female (F) students disagreeing and agreeing with statements 2, 5, 8, and 13

4.6 Qualitative data from the questionnaires

Almost a quarter of the students added comments in response to the open question at the end of the questionnaire. The 65 comments were provided by 38 female and 23 male students, as well as four students who did not supply information about their gender. The comments varied widely, but seemed to generally support the findings based on the quantitative data. In the following discussion, the comments have been organised in three categories depending on

the main ideas they convey. Some of the comments were several sentences long and expressed opinions which have been included in several of the categories.

There is little or not enough emphasis on grammar. 17 students expressed the view that there was not enough emphasis on grammar teaching in their English classes. Some even claimed that grammar was not included at all in their lessons. One of the students put it this way: “There should be more emphasis [on grammar] in the beginning, even at the upper secondary level, to give students a sound foundation to further develop their English skills” (01-126, girl). “There is far too little grammar teaching at upper secondary schools,” opined another girl (01-25). Two other students took the opposite view and wrote that there was sufficient emphasis on grammar.

Grammar teaching should be made more interesting or challenging. Ten students wrote that the grammar teaching included in their English lessons was too easy or simply boring. “[Grammar] is fine as long as it is new and not repetitive,” commented one of the respondents (01-132, girl). Another student wrote, “I don’t like working with the same 20 tasks one after the other, which is what the teacher often gives us” (02-051, girl). A third student asked whether grammar “could be learnt in fun ways instead of just swotting the rules” (02-023, girl). Taking a less optimistic view, another student described grammatical rules as “unnecessary and time-consuming” and added, “No one remembers them anyway!” (02-035, girl).

Grammar is important. Six students acknowledged the importance of grammar but did not state explicitly that there should be a greater emphasis on it. One of them noted that it is easier to write well “when you know the rules” (01-26, girl).

Several other views, though appearing less frequently, are interesting and worth mentioning. For instance, four students wrote that practising oral skills must take precedence over the study of grammar. “I think it is more important to emphasise the oral part,” commented one of them, “because this is what matters the most” (01-177, boy). Two other students made a similar point, claiming that grammar on its own is insufficient for learning English. According to two other students, however, the problem is that grammar itself is challenging or is presented in a difficult way.

Finally, a few comments provided further insights concerning the question of corrective feedback. “I’ve hardly ever known teachers to correct students in oral situations,” noted one student (02-006, girl). Another girl (02-059) said her teacher never corrected students in front of their classmates. A third student wrote that it is best to be corrected by the teacher, “only not in front of the entire class” (01-108, girl).

5 Discussion

The main purpose of this survey-based, quantitative study has been to explore the beliefs of both students and teachers at the upper secondary level with regard to the role of grammar teaching and corrective feedback. This is an important area of inquiry as numerous studies have shown that there are often mismatches between students’ and teachers’ views and that such discrepancies can affect the learning environment adversely.

Overall, and as an answer to the first research question – how do teachers and students of English at the upper secondary level view the role of grammar teaching and corrective feedback? – it was found that the teachers and students in this study value grammar teaching very highly. This is consistent with the findings reported in several other studies (e.g., Loewen et al. 2009; Schulz, 2001).

As an answer to the second research question – do teachers’ attitudes concerning grammar teaching and corrective feedback match the expectations of their students? – the results suggested students’ and teachers’ views were well-matched in the case of six of the twelve statements that both groups responded to (i.e., any discrepancies were less than 10 per cent). Again, there was strong agreement that grammar has an important role to play in language learning.

As for the role of corrective feedback, the teachers and students in this study overwhelmingly agreed that teachers should correct the errors students make when writing English. All the teachers agreed with this claim and the low SD value of .51 showed their responses were concentrated quite closely around the average score of 5.40, between the “agree” and “agree strongly” response options. 95 per cent of the students expressed their agreement on this point, producing an average score almost identical to that of the teachers; the higher SD value of .80, however, indicated their responses were less uniform. Interestingly, Schulz (2001) reported very similar results with more than 90 per cent of the

teachers and almost all the post-secondary students in her study agreeing that teachers should correct students' written errors (250). The results of the present study also showed that the teachers assumed their students would feel "cheated" if they handed in written work and it was not corrected. This assumption was confirmed by the vast majority of the students.

However, sizeable discrepancies resulted from the statements probing attitudes towards the correction of spoken errors. The great majority of the students believed that teachers should correct students' spoken errors in class and that such correction is helpful to students' learning. Most of the students also indicated that they learn a lot when their fellow students are corrected in class; the average score of 4.0, however, suggests a more tempered agreement in the case of this last item. In contrast, 80 per cent of the teachers thought they should correct only those spoken errors which could lead to misunderstandings. Responding to the claim that they should generally correct students' spoken errors, just over half the teachers expressed agreement.

The teachers in this study also overestimated the proportion of students who dislike being corrected in class; 67 per cent of the teachers thought students dislike such correction, but only 34 per cent of the students reported this to be the case. Nevertheless, a small majority of the students did indicate that they would rather be corrected by their peers than by their teacher in front of the class. In Schulz's (2001) study, the proportion of university level students agreeing with this last point was far lower, and many of the students were undecided on the question⁸ (250). Notably, though, 54 per cent of the Colombian students and 61 per cent of the US students indicated that they did *not* want to be corrected by their peers rather than by their teacher (*ibid.*). A possible avenue for future research would be to look more closely into Norwegian secondary and post-secondary students' views on peer versus teacher correction.

An important finding was that although the students valued grammar teaching highly, only half of them indicated that they liked the study of grammar. In other words, it was clear that they found the study of grammar to be more useful than interesting. A similar finding was reported in Jean and Simard's (2011) survey of upper secondary students and teachers of

⁸ It must be noted that the rating scale used in Schulz's (2001) study, unlike the one in this study, included a middle option for respondents who were "undecided".

English and French in the greater Montreal area. The results of their study suggested the students valued grammar but did not like it, i.e. they regarded grammar as “a necessary evil” (478). The very same expression was used by the Norwegian teachers in Burner’s (2005) study when asked what they thought their students’ view of grammar might be (83). 60 per cent of the teachers in the current study, however, thought their students liked the study of grammar to some extent.

Jean and Simard (2011) found that the teachers in their study, like their students, perceived of grammar as “necessary and effective, but not as something they enjoy doing” (467, 478). While the teachers in the present study were not asked whether they liked grammar teaching or not, they did overwhelmingly agree that there should be more grammar teaching in the English lessons. The students also supported a greater emphasis on grammar, but not nearly to the same extent as their teachers even though they had expressed a strong belief in the efficacy of grammar.

Furthermore, the results suggested the teachers in the sample underestimated the extent to which their students thought of grammatical rules when writing and reading in English. Whether the students are actually as aware of these rules as they claimed in the survey is another matter entirely – the possibility of response bias cannot be ruled out and it is of course possible that the students gave the responses they thought were expected or would be pleasing. On the other hand, the students appeared to be generally very much convinced of the usefulness of learning grammar and so it is certainly plausible that they make efforts to use the rules they know when writing and re-reading what they have written.

While it has often been found that teachers favour communicative activities to a greater extent than learners (Spratt, 1999: 149), this was not true of the respondents in this study; in spite of the generally positive attitudes towards grammar teaching, both groups agreed that practising the language “in situations simulating real life” was more important than learning the formal rules. Although at first glance this may seem to be a contradiction, this is not necessarily the case. As we have seen, there has been rather a strong emphasis on communication in previous curricula, and Mella’s (1998) findings suggested that in the late 1990s the communicative approach was on the rise within the schools included in his study. At the same time, however, the teachers in Burner’s (2005) study were clearly concerned about what they perceived as a lack of grammar teaching and hoped to see a greater emphasis

on this area in the future. Seeing a need for more attention to form does not necessarily equate to wanting to abandon a focus on communication. On the contrary, it may be hypothesised that many teachers simply share Kramsch's (2006) view that the emphasis on communicative competence has sometimes been disproportionate and has led to an unfortunate rejection of grammar teaching. Qualitative studies including interviews of teachers would be highly useful for exploring these hypotheses in a post-LK06 perspective.

The long-standing curricular emphasis on communication might also explain why students thought practice involving "real life" use of the language was more important than practising grammar rules. Then again, students are probably less concerned with the details of the curriculum than their teachers and other factors are likely to weigh in more strongly. For instance, one must keep in mind that Norwegian students' exposure to English does not take place primarily in the classroom. In fact, the language exposure that takes place outside of school, so-called *extramural exposure*, has been shown to play a major role in the lives of Norwegian students aged 15-16 (Ibsen, 2004: 44-5). Indeed, two of the respondents of this study left comments to this effect: One of the girls (01-83) claimed she had learnt "practically all" her English outside of school, while one of the boys (01-38) said he had "learnt more English online than at lower secondary school" and so was very eager to learn more grammar.

Near-constant access to digital technology means young people can access the Internet almost anytime they want, and there are clear indications that they do: In 2013, 98 per cent of young people aged 13-19 years spent time online on an everyday basis (Statistics Norway, 2014). A great deal of the online content is, of course, in English, and students who have friends in other countries are likely to make English their lingua franca. Owing to these factors among others, students probably experience a real communicative need for English quite often and are likely to appreciate the importance of good English skills, perhaps especially oral skills. If this is the case, it seems reasonable to assume that these experiences shape the expectations students bring with them into the English classroom.

What is perhaps most surprising, then, is not that students are in favour of communicative activities but rather that they hold grammar teaching in such high esteem. A teacher at one of the participating schools conjectured that many students are fond of grammar teaching because it does not force them to engage in any type of communicative activity. The theory is interesting but does not harmonise entirely with the results of this

study: Students may have rated grammar teaching highly but, as we have seen, they were not as enthusiastic as their teachers about including more grammar teaching in their lessons.

We might recall at this point the teachers in Burner's (2005) study who thought their students considered grammar to be "boring, rule-oriented, and old-fashioned" and would choose to exclude it completely from their lessons if they were able to (83). Although the students in the present study did not seem to enjoy the study of grammar, it is debatable whether they would choose to exclude it from their lessons. In fact, the high ratings of grammar teaching in the first part of the questionnaire as well as many of the students' qualitative comments presented previously suggest otherwise.

The results also indicated, on the basis of statistical analyses, that some of the differences found in the male and female students' responses could be linked to gender. Three trends emerged from the survey data in this regard. First, the girls in the sample seemed to be more in favour of explicit grammar teaching than the boys. Second, it would appear that the girls had a greater dislike of being corrected in class than the boys. Lastly, 68 per cent of the girls but only 50 per cent of the boys indicated that they preferred sitting in groups and being corrected by their peers rather than by their teacher in front of the whole class.

Studies looking into the differences between male and female students' beliefs about language learning have often produced contradictory results (Jean and Simard, 2011: 470). There have been relatively few studies of this type and, to the best of my knowledge, no studies have explored such differences at the upper secondary level in Norway. The results of the present study may be cautiously compared with those found in studies from other countries, but it must be borne in mind that most of those studies were carried out among university rather than secondary students.

Schulz (2001), for example, reported that female Colombian students believed more strongly than their male counterparts that "communicative activities were more important than grammar practice" and also "expressed a stronger desire for correction than did males" (247). In this study, no such tendency could be identified. Another study by Bernat and Lloyd (2007) found that male university level students believed more strongly than their female counterparts "that the most important part of learning a language is learning grammar" (cited in Jean and Simard, 2011: 470). As mentioned above, the girls in this study appeared to be

generally more in favour of explicit grammar teaching than the boys. The contradictory nature of these findings suggests the issue is a complex one and that there is a need for more research in this area.

5.1 Limitations

It should be noted that this study is based on data collected from a sample of convenience rather than one drawn at random. As is necessarily the case in much L2 research, the availability and geographical proximity of respondents trumped the desire to obtain a truly randomised sample (Dörnyei, 2010: 61). This, of course, reduces the generalisability of the results and means that the findings are restricted to the specific sample that has been examined.

It must also be acknowledged that the number of teachers included in the study (15) was rather low, in fact considerably lower than the minimum number (30) required for useful statistical analysis (Cohen et al., 2011: 144). For this reason, the teacher data were not analysed beyond the calculation of percentages used to comment on potential student/teacher discrepancies. An open-ended question similar to the one included in the student questionnaire might have been added to the teacher questionnaire so as to make better use of the modest teacher sample.

The inclusion of more qualitative data, for instance in the form of follow-up interviews, would have ensured greater reliability for the results as well as more elaborate answers to the research questions. I decided against such interviews, however, because of my own time constraints and because the schools and their teaching staff were very busy.

Studies on beliefs about grammar teaching at Norwegian upper secondary schools are few and far between, and those investigating the beliefs of both students' and teachers' are even rarer. However, despite the limitations of the present study, it nevertheless indicates certain tendencies and thus contributes to increased knowledge about grammar teaching in Norway.

5.2 Conclusion

The students and teachers in this study were well-matched in their high regard of grammar teaching, and the teachers believed very strongly that there should be a greater emphasis on

grammar teaching than is presently the case. The students were as convinced of the efficacy of grammar teaching as their teachers but expressed a certain dislike of it and were rather more reluctant to support a call for more grammar teaching in their lessons. Both students and teachers, however, agreed that engaging in communicative activities is more important than practising rules of grammar.

The main discrepancy identified in this study – that the students were generally more in favour of CF than their teachers – is consistent with the results of several other studies. As noted by Schulz (2001), “students, regardless of cultural origin, appear to share certain beliefs about the functions of formal education. They see the teacher as an expert knower whose role is to explain and provide feedback” (255). Consequently, the students rejected the notion that teachers should avoid correcting spoken errors. Interestingly, Jean and Simard (2011) suggest teachers often let errors “pass by uncorrected” because they believe – wrongly – that the students do not wish to be corrected (468). Clearly, when discrepancies are as large as those in this study pertaining to the correction of spoken errors, action should be taken to bring the teacher’s practices closer to the expectations of their students.

Considering the students’ highly positive attitudes towards grammar teaching, and given the requirements of the current English subject curriculum, it seems the teachers of these specific students would do wisely to include some form of grammar teaching in their English lessons. It is clear that the students in this study would not need convincing that grammar teaching has benefits to offer; the question, rather, is what sort of instructional choices are appropriate in a class of students who value grammar teaching but do not find it interesting.

Jean and Simard (2011) question whether traditional teaching can truly be efficacious if it is perceived as “boring” and call for efforts to try to make grammar teaching methods at least interesting, if not enjoyable (479). Working towards such a goal could be both challenging and rewarding for teachers. As has been noted, SLA researchers now agree that some attention to form is beneficial (e.g., Doughty and Williams, 1998; Spada, 1997; Loewen, 2005) but teachers still lack a “well-defined research base” in which to ground their practice (Borg, 1999: 21).

Lacking such a research base, teachers must be prepared to make their own sound pedagogical decisions concerning grammar teaching based on the wide range of teaching options available to them. This requires considerable theoretical knowledge as well as a thorough understanding of individual students' needs. Addressing the different learning styles that can be found among students, Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) recommend that teachers do not commit to one approach but rather vary their methods to accommodate different learning styles (5). Thornbury (1999) takes a similar position and puts it this way: "[S]ome learners demand grammar, others just want to talk. It's the teacher's job to respond sensitively to these expectations, to provide a balance where possible, and even to negotiate a compromise" (20). Of course, to be able to reach these goals it is vital that teachers learn about students' expectations and gain an understanding of the beliefs underlying them. More research on student and teacher cognitions is clearly needed, but it is hoped that this study has shed some light on the sort of beliefs and attitudes one may expect to find among Norwegian students at this level.

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Appendix 1: Student questionnaire (English version)

Grammar teaching in English – what do you think?

My name is Runar Fossum and I am writing my master's thesis at Østfold University College this spring. My thesis will look into the attitudes that students and teachers at the VG1 level have concerning the teaching of grammar in English. I would like to know a bit about your views through this questionnaire. It is only your opinions that count here, and there are no right or wrong answers.

It is important that you consider the questions carefully and respond honestly to them. This ensures the results will be as accurate as possible. The survey is anonymous and you must **not** write your name on this sheet.

There are 15 items on this sheet – remember to turn the sheet over! I would like you to read and make up your mind about each item. Then tick one of the boxes to the right.

Example:

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree	Agree strongly
I find grammar boring				X		

If it says "I find grammar boring" and you agree slightly with this statement, then tick the "Agree slightly" box to the right.

Read the 12 items below and tick one of the boxes for each item to indicate that you disagree strongly, disagree, disagree slightly, agree slightly, agree, or agree strongly. Thank you for your participation!

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree	Agree strongly
1. The study of grammar is essential if one wishes to achieve a good command of English.						
2. The quickest way for me to improve my English is to study and practise grammar.						
3. The study of grammar is a good help when learning English.						
4. I like the study of grammar.						
5. I think there should be a greater emphasis on grammar in the English lessons.						

	Helt uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig	Helt enig
6. I usually keep grammar rules in mind when I write in English or read what I have written.						
7. It is more important to practise English in situations simulating real life (e.g., taking part in role plays, conducting interviews, etc.) than to practise grammar rules.						
8. I dislike it when my teacher corrects my English in class.						
9. Teachers should avoid correcting students' language in class.						
10. I feel cheated if my teacher does not correct the written work I have handed in.						
11. I want my teacher to correct me if I make errors when <i>speaking</i> English.						
12. I want my teacher to correct me if I make errors when <i>writing</i> English.						
13. I prefer to sit in a group and be corrected by my fellow students rather than be corrected by my teacher in front of the whole class.						
14. I learn a lot when my teacher corrects <i>the errors made by my fellow students</i> in class.						
15. I learn a lot when my teacher corrects the errors I make in class.						

Have you got any other thoughts about grammar teaching in English which you would like to add?

Finally, I would like you to indicate whether you are a boy or a girl so that I can provide information about the gender of respondents.

Boy	Girl

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix 2: Teacher questionnaire (English version)

Survey: Grammar teaching and the English subject

My name is Runar Fossum and I am a student at Østfold University College. This spring I am writing my master's thesis, which will look into the attitudes that students and teachers at the VGI level have concerning the teaching of grammar in English. To this end I am conducting this anonymous survey among students and teachers. I am hoping the results will provide insights into how well-aligned students' and teachers' expectations are.

The questionnaire contains 12 statements. On the back of this sheet there are also three questions about your background. Read the statements carefully, then tick one of the boxes to the right.

Example:

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree	Agree strongly
I find grammar boring				X		

If it says "I find grammar boring" and you agree slightly with this statement, then tick the "Agree slightly" box to the right.

Read the 12 items below and tick one of the boxes for each item to indicate that you disagree strongly, disagree, disagree slightly, agree slightly, agree, or agree strongly. Thank you for your participation!

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree	Agree strongly
1. Adolescents and adults who wish to achieve a good command of English must study and practise grammar.						
2. The quickest way for students to improve their communicative ability in English is to study and practise grammar.						
3. The study of grammar is a good help when learning English.						
4. Most students like the study of grammar.						
5. I think there should be a greater emphasis on grammar in the teaching of English than is presently the case.						
6. I think students often keep grammar rules in mind when they write in English or read what they have written.						
7. It is more important for students to practise English in situations simulating real life (e.g., taking part in role plays, conducting interviews, etc.) than to practise grammar rules.						

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree	Agree strongly
8. Most students dislike it when their teacher corrects their English in class.						
9. Teachers should only correct students' grammatical errors or pronunciation in class if these errors could lead to misunderstandings.						
10. Most students feel cheated if their teacher does not correct the written work they have handed in.						
11. Teachers should generally correct the errors that students make when <i>speaking</i> English.						
12. Teachers should generally correct the errors that students make when <i>writing</i> English.						

Finally, I would like to ask you a bit about your background so that I can provide information about the gender, age, and education of respondents. Please tick the relevant boxes below.

	Male	Female
Sex		

	0-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
How long have you been teaching English?			

	Teacher	<i>Adjunkt</i> ¹	<i>Adjunkt m/tillegg</i> ²	<i>Lektor</i> ³	<i>Lektor m/tillegg</i> ⁴	Other
Title/utdanning						

Thank you for your participation!

¹ A secondary education teacher with a bachelor's degree

² A secondary education teacher with a bachelor's degree and additional courses

³ A secondary education teacher with a master's degree

⁴ A secondary education teacher with a master's degree and additional courses

Appendix 3: Student questionnaire (original version)

Grammatikkundervisning i engelskfaget – hva synes du som elev?

Jeg heter Runar Fossum og skriver masteroppgave ved Høgskolen i Østfold denne våren. Oppgaven min skal handle om hvilke holdninger elever og lærere på VG1 har til grammatikkundervisning i engelsken. Derfor er jeg interessert i å få vite litt om dine meninger gjennom dette spørreskjemaet. Her er det bare din mening som teller, og det finnes ingen riktige eller gale svar.

Det er viktig at du tenker nøye gjennom og svarer helt ærlig på spørsmålene. Da blir resultatene så treffsikre som mulig. Undersøkelsen er anonym, så du skal ikke skrive navnet ditt på dette arket.

Det er 15 punkter på dette arket – husk å se på baksiden! Jeg vil gjerne at du leser gjennom hvert punkt og bestemmer deg for hva du synes om det som står. Så setter du ett kryss i en av rutene til høyre.

Eksempel:

	Helt uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig	Helt enig
Jeg synes grammatikk er kjedelig				X		

Hvis det står «Jeg synes grammatikk er kjedelig» og du er litt enig i dette, setter du ett kryss under «Litt enig» helt til høyre.

Les gjennom de 15 punktene nedenfor og sett kryss for om du er helt uenig, uenig, litt uenig, litt enig, enig eller helt enig. Tusen takk for at du blir med på denne undersøkelsen!

	Helt uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig	Helt enig
1. Å lære grammatikk er helt avgjørende hvis man ønsker å beherske engelsk godt.						
2. Den raskeste måten for meg å bli flinkere i engelsk er å lære grammatikk og gjøre grammatiske øvelser.						
3. Å lære grammatikk er en god hjelp når man skal lære engelsk.						
4. Jeg liker å lære grammatikk.						
5. Jeg synes det burde være mer fokus på grammatikk i engelsktimene.						

	Helt uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig	Helt enig
6. Jeg pleier å tenke på grammatiske regler når jeg skriver på engelsk eller leser det jeg selv har skrevet.						
7. Det er viktigere å øve engelsk i situasjoner som ligner på det virkelige liv (f.eks. delta i rollespill, lage intervjuer, osv.) enn å øve på grammatiske regler.						
8. Jeg misliker det når læreren retter på engelsken min i timen.						
9. Lærere burde la være å rette på elevenes språk i timen.						
10. Jeg føler meg snytt hvis læreren ikke retter skriftlig arbeid som jeg har levert.						
11. Jeg vil at læreren retter på meg hvis jeg gjør feil når jeg snakker engelsk.						
12. Jeg vil at læreren retter på meg hvis jeg gjør feil når jeg skriver engelsk.						
13. Jeg liker bedre å sitte i gruppe og bli rettet på av medelevene mine enn at læreren retter på engelsken min foran hele klassen.						
14. Jeg lærer mye av at læreren retter <i>feilene til mine medelever</i> i timen.						
15. Jeg lærer mye av at læreren retter feilene mine i timen.						

Har du noen andre tanker om grammatikkundervisning i engelsk som du gjerne vil legge til?

Helt til slutt vil jeg gjerne at du setter kryss for om du er gutt eller jente slik at jeg kan si noe om kjønnet på dem som har svart.

Gutt	Jente

Tusen takk for at du ble med på undersøkelsen!

Appendix 4: Teacher questionnaire (original version)

Spørreundersøkelse: Grammatikkundervisning i engelskfaget

Jeg heter Runar Fossum og er student ved Høgskolen i Østfold. Denne våren skriver jeg min masteroppgave, som skal handle om hvilke holdninger elever og lærere på VG1 har til grammatikkundervisning i engelskfaget. I den forbindelse gjennomfører jeg denne anonyme spørreundersøkelsen hos elever og lærere. Håpet er at resultatene vil kunne si noe om hvor samstemte elevenes og lærernes forventninger er.

Spørreskjemaet inneholder 12 påstander. På baksiden er det også tre spørsmål om din bakgrunn. Les nøye gjennom påstandene og sett deretter ett kryss i en av rutene til høyre.

Eksempel:

	Helt uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig	Helt enig
Jeg synes grammatikk er kjedelig				X		

Hvis det står «Jeg synes grammatikk er kjedelig» og du er litt enig i dette, setter du ett kryss under «Litt enig» helt til høyre.

Les gjennom de 12 punktene nedenfor og sett kryss for om du er helt uenig, uenig, litt uenig, litt enig, enig eller helt enig. Tusen takk for at du deltar!

	Helt uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig	Helt enig
1. Ungdommer og voksne som ønsker å beherske engelsk godt, må lese og øve grammatikk.						
2. Den raskeste måten for elever å styrke sine kommunikative ferdigheter i engelsk er å lese grammatikk og gjøre grammatiske øvelser.						
3. Å lære grammatikk er en god hjelp når man skal lære engelsk.						
4. De fleste elever liker å lære grammatikk.						
5. Jeg synes det skulle være mer fokus på grammatikk i engelskundervisningen enn det som er tilfelle nå for tiden.						
6. Jeg tror elever ofte tenker på grammatiske regler når de skriver på engelsk eller leser det de selv har skrevet.						
7. Det er viktigere at elever får øve engelsk i situasjoner som ligner på det virkelige liv (f.eks. delta i rollespill, lage intervjuer, osv.) enn at de øver grammatiske regler.						

	Helt uenig	Uenig	Litt uenig	Litt enig	Enig	Helt enig
8. De fleste elever misliker det når læreren retter på engelsken deres i timen.						
9. Lærere burde bare rette på elevers grammatiske eller uttalemessige feil i timen hvis disse feilene kan føre til misforståelser.						
10. De fleste elever føler seg snytt hvis læreren deres ikke retter skriftlig arbeid som de har levert.						
11. Lærere bør generelt rette feilene som elever gjør når de <i>snakker</i> engelsk.						
12. Lærere bør generelt rette feilene som elever gjør når de <i>skriver</i> engelsk.						

Til slutt vil jeg be om noen opplysninger om deg slik at jeg kan si noe om kjønn, alder og utdanning på dem som har svart. Jeg ber deg krysse av i riktig rute nedenfor.

	Mann	Kvinne
Kjønn		

	0-5 år	6-10 år	Mer enn 10 år
Hvor lenge har du undervist i engelsk?			

	Lærer	Adjunkt	Adjunkt m/tillegg	Lektor	Lektor m/tillegg	Annen tittel
Tittel/utdanning						

Tusen takk for at du ble med på undersøkelsen!

Appendix 5: Results of chi-squared tests for independence

The table gives the proportion of male and female respondents disagreeing and agreeing with each statement, as well as the relevant chi-squared- and p-values.

Statement #	Disagreement (M)	Agreement (M)	Disagreement (F)	Agreement (F)	Chi-squared value	p-value
1	5.6%	94.4%	4.2%	95.8%	0.2849	0.5935
2	45.5%	54.5%	29.1%	70.9%	7.6488	0.0057
3	5.6%	94.4%	3.5%	96.5%	0.6693	0.4133
4	50.0%	50.0%	44.0%	56.0%	0.9464	0.3306
5	44.6%	55.4%	32.4%	67.6%	4.1492	0.0417
6	28.6%	71.4%	33.8%	66.2%	0.8490	0.3568
7	14.5%	85.5%	18.7%	81.3%	0.8255	0.3636
8	72.3%	27.7%	59.4%	40.6%	4.7151	0.0299
9	82.8%	17.2%	75.0%	25.0%	2.3521	0.1251
10	12.4%	87.6%	12.3%	87.7%	0.0004	0.9848
11	14.1%	85.9%	15.5%	84.5%	0.1078	0.7427
12	4.9%	95.1%	1.4%	98.6%	2.6758	0.1019
13	50.0%	50.0%	31.6%	68.4%	8.8962	0.0029
14	24.2%	75.8%	29.8%	70.2%	1.0342	0.3092
15	16.7%	83.3%	15.0%	85.0%	0.1351	0.7132