Teaching English grammar

A study of approaches to formal grammar instruction in the subject English in Swedish upper secondary school

Engelsk grammatikundervisning

En studie av formell grammatikundervisning i ämnet engelska på gymnasienivå i Sverige

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Abstract

The main aim of the present study was to identify examples of practical grammar instruction methods in an EFL/ESL classroom in Swedish upper secondary school. Data was collected through classroom observations and interviews. Four interview sessions were carried out with five teachers, and twelve observations were conducted in four different English classes. There are conflicting views and attitudes towards the role and place of grammar in EFL/ESL classrooms, but the participants agreed that the main goal of grammar instruction is to help students develop communicative skills. The interview results showed that four of the participants prefer inductive approaches, while the fifth regards deductive approaches as more effective. Characteristics such as student motivation, learning style, and experiences are considered equally vital for the choice of grammar instruction and application. The grammar instruction methods chosen and discussed are based on traditional structuralism, behaviourism, and the progressive natural approaches. Consistent with previous research, an eclectic grammar instruction approach was observed that blends both implicit and explicit methods to meet different learners' needs. The methodologies which are often practically applied include grammar-translation, audiolingualism, and content- and/or task-based instruction. Nevertheless, a communicative framework using the communicative language teaching methodologies is often in the foreground, resulting in a Systemic Functional Grammar, SFG, approach.

Keywords: grammar instruction, grammar learning, grammar acquisition, language development, second language, foreign language, EFL/ESL, Second Language Acquisition, SLA.

Sammanfattning

Huvudsyftet med den aktuella studien var att identifiera exempel på praktiska grammatikundervisningsmetoder som används i ämnet engelska som andra- och/eller främmandespråk på gymnasienivå i Sverige. Data samlades in genom klassobservationer och intervjuer. Fyra intervjusessioner genomfördes med fem lärare och det gjordes även tolv klassrumobservationer i fyra olika klasser. Deltagarna hade motstridiga åsikter och attityder angående grammatikens roll och plats i klassrummet, men de var överens om att huvudsyftet med grammatikundervisning är att hjälpa eleverna att utveckla kommunikativa färdigheter. Intervjuresultaten visar att fyra av lärarna föredrar induktiva metoder, medan den femte betraktar deduktiva ansatser som effektivare. Egenskaper såsom lärstil, elevernas motivation och erfarenheter betraktas som lika avgörande för olika metodval och tillämpning. De valda grammatikundervisningsmetoderna som diskuteras i denna uppsats baseras på traditionell strukturalism, behaviorism samt de progressiva, naturliga tillvägsgångssätten. Ett eklektiskt tillvägagångssätt som blandar både implicita och explicita metoder för att möta elevernas behov observeras, vilket är i linje med tidigare forskning. De metoder som ofta praktiskt tillämpas innefattar bland annat grammatik-översättning, audiolingualism samt innehålls- och/eller uppgiftsbaserade instruktioner. Ett kommunikativt ramverk med kommunikativa språkundervisningsmetoder är ofta i förgrunden, vilket resulterar i ett tillvägsgångsätt med fokus på systematisk funktionell grammatik, SFG.

Nyckelord: grammatikundervisning, grammatikinlärning, språkinlärning, språkutveckling, andraspråk, främmande språk, andraspråkinlärning.

Acronyms/Abbreviations

CBI   Content-based instruction
CLT   Communicative language teaching
GY11   Läroplan, examensmål och gymnasiegemensamma ämnen för gymnasieskola 2011 (Gy 2011) – The new curriculum for upper secondary school introduced in 2011
EFL   English as a foreign language
ES   Estetiska programmet (Aesthetics program)
ESL   English as a second language
L2   Second language
NA   Naturvetenskapsprogrammet (Natural sciences program)
OED   Oxford English Dictionary
SA   Samhällsvetenskapsprogrammet (Social studies program)
SLA   Second language acquisition
SNAE   Swedish National Agency for Education
SFG   Systemic Functional Grammar
TBI   Task-based instruction
UG   Universal grammar

Contents

1. Introduction and aims

When the word 'grammar' is mentioned, many people, laity and scholars, raise their eyebrows, questioning its place and role in the language classroom. Such a negative attitude has existed for quite a long time. For instance, Webbe questioned the place of grammar instruction as early as 1622 by maintaining that "grammar could be picked up through simply communicating" (Webbe cited in Thornbury, 2005:14). In contrast to Webbe, other scholars have put grammar in the driver's seat of the language development wagon. For example, Ur (1988:4) asserts that "there is no doubt that a knowledge – implicit or explicit – of grammatical rules is essential for mastery of a language: you cannot use words unless you know how they should be put together." Whereas some scholars, such as Ur (1988), advocate grammar instruction and a number of students have been awarded academic scholarships for grammar studies, there are still many people who are in awe of grammar as it might be found to be difficult and boring (Greenbaum, 1996:192; Yule, 2010:190).

Due to the status of English as the language of education and its "unique and special role" globally (Clark et al., 2008: 691), almost every nation includes it in their education systems. Various policy makers, including National Education boards, make efforts to design their curricula with the intention of directing and preparing the students for the communicative demands of a globalised economy. For example, English is a core subject in Sweden, and English at level 6 (B2.1, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)[1]) is one of the basic requirements for many courses in higher education. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE, 2011:53), students are expected to participate and "develop knowledge of the language […] ability, desire, and confidence to use English in a functional and meaningful context" in different communicative situations. However, the SNAE does not explicitly advocate the use of grammar instruction. This can be deduced from the specified goal, and the fact that grammar aspects are not included in the detailed core content in the curriculum. Instead, approaches which focus on language in practice and in meaningful contexts are central. Nevertheless, according to Ellis (as cited by Ruin, 1996:10), countless students' and teachers' personal experiences show that grammar teaching can help learners acquire a new language. However, students, theorists and practicing teachers alike recognise it as one of the foundations of language, regardless of the conflicting attitudes towards grammar. Thus, it is essential for language proficiency (Fengjuan, 2010:78). Therefore, grammar teaching is important when studying English as a

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[1] CEFR is a framework used as a benchmark of language ability.

foreign or second language (EFL/ESL). Consequently, the question arises as to what kinds of grammar instruction are practically applied in the EFL/ESL classroom.

The overall aim leads to the following, more specific research questions:

- What grammar instruction methods are applied in the EFL/ESL classroom?

- What views and attitudes can be found among teachers regarding the place and role of grammar instruction in the EFL/ESL classroom?

- Why do the teachers in the present study use certain approaches to grammar instruction?

The present study is based on classroom observations and interviews with English teachers in a Swedish upper secondary school.

2. Background

A review of selected studies on grammar instruction will be accounted for in this section. Some central concepts related to this particular study are presented in Section 2.1. Relevant empirical studies on grammar instruction are presented in Section 2.2, and in Section 2.3. a specific grammar instruction model is discussed.

2.1 Central concepts

Many language concepts are defined differently depending on the context and the person consulted. In this section working definitions of the three central concepts will be presented: grammar, deductive and inductive grammar instruction.

2.1.1 Grammar

The Oxford English Dictionary (the OED, n.p.) defines *grammar* as the system and structure of a language dealing with "inflexional forms indicating the relationship of words in a sentence." According to Crystal (2003:190), grammar is comprised of rules which control the way a communication system works. Examples of established rules are for instance:

1) subject-verb agreement; in the third person singular, present tense verbs take an *−s,* as in *She walk<u>s</u> to school every day* and

2) when an adjective serves as a modifier, the adjective comes before a noun, as in *a <u>red</u> dress*.

Similarly, Clark et al. (2008: 868) define grammar as "The systems of a language – phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and lexicon – necessary to form and interpret

sentences." Thus, the definitions from the OED, Crystal and Clark et al. focus on form as the goal of grammar, i.e., language structure.

Thornbury (2005:4) extends the grammar definition to include its functional dimension. He defines grammar as a process for making communication clear when contextual information is lacking. For example, if a person asks for directions by saying: *Stockholm please*? it would be difficult to understand the intended meaning (function) if the person asked lacks context (knowledge of Stockholm and why the question is asked). However, if the grammatical rules (syntax and morphology) are added to the meaning-carrying words, e.g., *In which direction is Stockholm, please?*, then a context is provided and the question becomes clear. On the other hand, Halliday and Mattiessen (2004:21) define grammar as a "central processing unit of a language, the powerhouse where meanings are created." Therefore, Thornbury, Halliday and Mattiessen emphasise the communication context which helps in creating meaning and thus provides the function of grammatical aspects in use.

To accommodate the perspectives of these two definitions, it is essential to use a holistic grammar instruction approach that focuses on both. Therefore, the scope of grammar discussed in the present study takes into consideration both form (structure) and function (use).

2.1.2 Grammar instruction

Grammar instruction refers to methods, i.e. systematic ways of grammar teaching, that are used to help learners develop competence in an unfamiliar grammar. Such methods include the description and analysis of particular forms and structures of a language. Grammar instruction also includes learning aids, exercises and a kind of language used by the teacher for instruction in the classroom referred to as 'teacher talk' (Mesthrie at. el., 2009:348). Furthermore, Grammar instruction helps learners to be aware of specific and 'correct' language properties (Ruin, 1996:99). Therefore, Grammar instruction can be defined as instructional techniques used to help learners pay attention to grammatical features.

2.1.3 Deductive vs. inductive grammar instruction approaches

According to Crystal (2003:191), deductive grammar instruction approaches refer to 'top-down', direct, and explicit ways of making students aware of grammatical structures. Teachers use grammar instruction to logically reason, explicitly explain, and demonstrate grammar rules from general to specific applications. The learners are expected to consciously develop required language skills. Therefore, the lessons usually start with the teacher presenting a rule, followed by the students practicing it. Eventually, the learners reproduce the desired pattern. For example, an explanation of the rule on how and when to use articles

is presented. Indefinite article: *a/an – modify non-particular or non-specific nouns. D*efinite article*: the – is used for particular or specific nouns.* Then examples are given, such as *a boy*, *an animal* and *the Ganges*. Following the teacher's demonstration, the students practice and reproduce the pattern with the goal to learn and apply the general rule (ibid). Therefore, the deductive grammar instruction approaches are generally referred to as present, practice, produce (PPP) methods (Harmer, 2001:31). In conclusion, deductive grammar instruction approaches are rule-oriented and do not focus on meaning/function and context of the communication situation. In contrast, inductive grammar instruction approaches are 'bottom-up' ways, which infer the grammatical structures implicitly. Students discover grammar patterns along the learning process from various and relevant communication contexts. Then, learners formulate and generalise grammar rules themselves through scaffolding, where they cooperate and collaborate to co-construct knowledge and receive/give formative feedback to each other (Crystal, 2003:191 ff).

2.2 A review of selected grammar instruction theories and approaches

Grammar instruction theories have undergone significant changes over time due to the long-standing and on-going discourse on the role of grammar in the L2 classroom. The discussion has contributed to an overflow of contradicting ideologies, methods, and principles (von Elek & Oskarsson, 1972:15). Nonetheless, grammar instruction was initially designed around two main approaches: 1) Structuralism, which is about analysing the elements of grammar focusing on making learners grammar experts. 2) Behaviourism, which is concerned with observable behaviour (Clark et al., 2008:13). However, new approaches with a different view on grammar evolved. For instance, the naturalistic grammar instruction theory – which promotes functional grammar instruction with the goal to help learners develop communication skills – was introduced in classrooms initiated by Halliday already back in 1956 (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:10; Thornbury, 2005:21; Halliday, 2014:XIII).

A brief discussion about some empirical studies regarding grammar instruction approaches will be presented in this section. The structuralism theory is dealt with in Section 2.2.1. In 2.2.2, the behavioural approach will be discussed; and in 2.2.3, the naturalistic approach is reviewed. Lastly, in Section 2.2.4, the systematic functional grammar theory is discussed.

2.2.1 The structuralism theory

The development of grammar instruction goes back centuries and is based in a traditional, structural view of language. Traditionalists focused almost exclusively on formal grammar, in the sense that meta-language – in other words, theory rather than practice – was central. Generally, the terminology of the grammatical patterns was based on the arbitrary

relationship between English and the dominant academic languages of the time. For example, the definitions and labels of 'parts of speech', including nouns, verbs, adjectives and others, were inherited from classical Latin and Greek (Greenbaum, 1996:192; Halliday & Mattiessen, 2004:51; Yule, 2012: 82). Furthermore, different aspects of language were separately and sequentially explained using already established rules. Learners were taught grammar as a subject-matter and were expected to master classifications such as sentence constituency (Crystal, 2003:192). Therefore, prescriptive grammar instruction was applied, based on what grammarians regarded as the standard/norm in relation to preferred 'model' languages discerned as proper and 'correct', (Lindblad and Levin, 1970:17, Yule, 2012: 84). The purpose or role of the traditional formal grammar instruction approach would be to 'learn about' or rather 'know about' the language and to promote the speaker in 'higher' social and intellectual circles. Grammar teaching was also unconcerned with the daily, regular 'language in use', as informal language style was regarded as incorrect (Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1988:3). The result was a negative reaction to grammar and grammar instruction – they were viewed as difficult, dry, boring, pointless and irrelevant (Greenbaum, 1996:190).

A well-established method that builds on the structuralism theory is grammar–translation. It focuses on the correct knowledge of language forms and inflection of words. The deductive approach (Section 2.1.3) is applied and the elaborated rule is later translated into the learners' first language (L1) using simulated/fake example sentences. Then, a bilingual dictionary is used into translate from L2 into L1 and vice versa. Practice of the modelled rule/aspect follows and learners are expected to memorise them (Thornbury, 2005:21; Ur, 2012:7).

Some of the shortcomings of the grammar-translation method are a lack of interactive practice and little or no attention to context. Furthermore, the method applies a sequential grammar teaching approach, covering grammar units in a linear, unpredictable manner from one aspect to another. However, according to Krashen (1981:127), language acquisition occurs in a predictable and predetermined nonlinear process. He suggests that some grammatical structures are learned earlier and others later. According to Pienemann's 'teachability hypothesis' (Pienemann as cited in Ur, 2012:79), teaching learners grammatical structures that they are not developmentally ready for might not yield positive results. Additionally, an exclusive focus on form corrupts its effectiveness since it neglects authentic and functional facets of languages, which are vital for L2 development (Kidist, 2011:17). Conversely, Ur (2012:78) appreciates the explicit methods of structuralism. She notes many legitimate objectives and reasons for using correct grammar, including being socially and linguistically appreciated, in particular for academic purposes. Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (2006:179) claim that in certain circumstances – e.g., when learners share the same

L1 background and interference occurs, leading to errors – teachers should not hesitate to provide form-focused and corrective feedback to help learners notice persistent errors.

2.2.2 The behaviourist approach

The behaviourist approach builds on the belief that learners are born with a blank slate – 'tabula rasa', i.e. born without built-in mental content. Therefore, nurture, with its external stimuli, and reinforcement through automatic processes, help learners develop skills, filling their empty brains with a determined content without being cognitively active. Hence, the behaviourism approach is based on practice, conditioned repetition, and learner response with the purpose to develop desired (mechanical) habits. Behaviourists also believe that L2 is unconsciously acquired in the same way as the L1. Therefore, grammar instruction which promotes aural–oral training, is encouraged (Thornbury, 2005:21; Sanz & Leow, 2011:23; Ur, 2012:4).

One of the methods building on the behaviourist approach is audiolingualism, which considers language learning to be a set of habits, i.e., mimicry, pattern drill/practice, and memorisation. Good habits are formed through drills and memorisation until a learner automatically masters the 'correct' language, and mistakes are not tolerated (Lindblad, 1969:12, 31; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:10). It also emphasises oral production, fluency, and accuracy using explicit instructions. Mechanical activities including repetition and substitution are used to avoid errors. Furthermore, grammar lessons are typically teacher-centred and start in the form of a dialogue, where the teacher models the native-like pronunciation. Then learners participate in repetitive drills without necessarily comprehending the meaning of the messages. If learners successfully build approved habits, they are rewarded to reinforce the habit (von Elek & Oskarsson, 1972:16; Sanz & Leow, 2011:35; Ur, 2012:6).

The most significant advantage of audiolingualism is its orientation towards the spoken language. However, there are a number of disadvantages, including the obstruction of cognitive development (purposeful learning) as the learners are passive and dependent on rote exercises (Lindblad, 1969:30; Greenbaum, 1996:192; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:34). As early as 1959, Chomsky strongly criticised the notion that language is a result of learned behaviour through stimuli and reinforcement, i.e., a 'habit structure'. Instead, he claimed that language is a natural element with creativity and productivity properties (Jakobovits and Miron, 1967:n.p). Additionally, audiolingualism also teaches language structures in a fixed order, which is claimed to be naturally disadvantageous in L2 development (Krashen 1981:12; Ur, 2012:79).

2.2.3 The natural approach

The natural approach concentrates on the learners' innate abilities to develop the language inductively (Section 2.1.3). For instance, Chomsky (von Elek & Oskarsson, 1972:33) suggested that all humans possess an underlying inborn knowledge of common features which helps them acquire and develop L1 structures. This innate, hard-wired capacity/competence (referred to as Universal grammar, UG) lets learners develop the rules and patterns of their L1 by instinct, provided they are exposed to it (von Elek & Oskarsson, 1972:34, 220; Clark et al., 2008:23). Because of UG, there are similarities in all languages. Therefore, all languages could be acquired in the same way using 'a creative construction process', whereby learners strategically go through a series of stages to acquire and produce accurate grammar (Hedge, 2000:11). According to this theory, inductive, implicit, and informal UG could help learners develop the target L2 grammar by mirroring the unconscious L1 development process (Lindblad, 1969:4–13; Krashen, 1988; Thornbury, 2005:21; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:15). In conclusion, the natural approach prefers grammar instructions which help learners to use their "natural" mental capacity effortlessly – while using learned skills and experience in real communication situations (Yule, 2010:6).

Krashen (1981:10) extends this natural approach by developing a number of hypotheses for a second language acquisition (SLA) theory. For example, he distinguishes between two language development processes: learning, which is a conscious process, and acquisition, its opposite. The acquisition process requires a meaningful context and interaction in the target language where the learner can concentrate on communication skills rather than form. In contrast, the learning process requires explicit, formal grammar instruction (Krashen, 1981:83). Willis (2003:51) supports Krashen by maintaining that, formal grammar instruction is used when context is not in focus. The gap between knowledge and practice might widen, since learners may not be able to implement what they learn in daily situations. In addition, Krashen and Terrell (1983:55) suggest that acquisition occurs *only* when learners understand messages through comprehensible input (what they call *i*), i.e., they understand what is heard or read in the target language. Therefore, learners should be provided with input/content, which is simple, interesting, sufficient and varied, relevant, realistic, and useful to them. Furthermore, the input should contain structures that are a bit above the learner's acquisition level, or *i+1,* to enable development and progression (Krashen, 1981:1, 21, 64, 100; Thornbury, 2005:21; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:143; Yule, 2010:192; Ur, 2012:6). Krashen and Terrell, (1983:58) suggest also that progressive natural approach is learner-centred and gives students a possibility to develop communication skills rather than learning *about* the target L2.

However, Krashen (1981:83) does not completely rule out the role of formal grammar teaching methods, since learners might need to monitor their language development. Instead, his monitor hypothesis suggests that if contextual and comprehensible information is lacking, grammar instruction would be used to help students communicate clearly (Thornbury, 2005:4). Therefore, learners should be provided with tools to help them edit and correct perceived errors. Grammar instructions could also help learners confirm acquisition for the purpose of language appreciation. However, these two specific roles of formal grammar teaching methods should only be used when learners have passed a specific biological period within language acquisition – *the critical period* – which is most likely not until after puberty for almost all language learners. Therefore, grammar teaching should be restricted to situations where it will not interfere with communication (Krashen and Terrell, 1983:57; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:67).

There is controversy concerning the natural approach in general but focusing on Krashen's distinction of implicit/output theory in particular. Elli (2008:419) citing Perner raises critics debate about the non-interface position, which suggests an absolute separation of implicit and explicit language knowledge. Perner (ibid) claims that it is a continuum rather than a dichotomy as implicit knowledge becomes progressively more explicit through automatization in children (ibid, Ruin, 1996:102). In addition, conscious grammar learning could help learners notice the forms after which they incorporate the acceptable structures into production (Willis 2003:8; Sanz & Leow, 2011:36).

One method based on the naturalistic approach is content-based instruction, CBI. CBI teaches language in general and grammar in particular through the content of academic subjects (comprehensive input) such as mathematics, history and biology. Teacher-talk within CBI is mainly in the target language. According to Yule (2012:190), CBI focuses on meaningful function, i.e., language in use, since it builds on learners' previous experience. The teacher is not the only source of input and correction feedback; peers and other relevant sources might be considered too. A typical CBI lesson could be carried out using thematic content in an integrated form where different subject teachers collaborate with the EFL/ESL teachers to provide comprehensive input (content). The lesson or project could follow the following steps: 1) an appropriate topic is chosen; 2) groups and tasks are created; 3) input/content is gathered in the target language; 4) problems are solved; 5) the results are shared and compared; and, 6) the final product is presented and published.

The major criticism against CBI is its tendency to promote and focus on content, instead of teaching the language itself. Students might have little interaction between group members as they usually divide the task and solve parts of it individually instead of in the project

groups. Furthermore, teachers might lack competence in carrying out CBI unless they are offered extensive training (Richards & Rodgers 2002: 200 ff).

2.2.3.1 Systemic functional grammar

Systemic functional grammar, SFG, essentially deals with sets of options/choices available in the language system for communication and how those options could be organised. Interrelationships between different sets of choices and the context/function are the basis for the kind of grammar instruction to be used. SFG focuses on developing grammar through practical use, since language in general, and grammar in particular, are organised systems or rather "meaning-making resources" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004:5). Grammar instructions within SFG present grammar aspects in meaningful contexts, e.g., educational, political, social and other contexts, relating to required functions or a specific communicative purpose (Hedge, 2000:49). The SFG approach focuses on the purpose (e.g visiting the doctor, inviting, shopping, asking for directions, etc.), context, and social function of languages. These purposes could be achieved when grammar instruction practices options to help students develop different text types/genres such as narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative. The intention to help students follow strategies that could help them make a transition from using informal/social language to formal/school language (Schleppegrell, 2004:113).

SFG theory is connected to the natural acquisition theory of L1, discussed in Section 2.2.3, in the sense that children are not taught grammar structures independently. Instead, the focus is on language as meaning making resource when users link linguistic choices to context they intend to realise (Schleppegrell, 2008:ix). Thus, users have possibilities to experience language function in genuine social contexts. Therefore, the L1 way of acquisition in a natural way could also be applied to L2 development – if different language aspects are bound to contextually meaningful ideas, learners would develop L2 realistically. Comprehensive input, or rather an entire text[2] of choice, could help learners understand grammar as an overall organised system. SFG avoids dealing with fragments of language aspects. Instead, the entire language system is used as a resource for the choices made to realise different functions. It also includes systematic analysis of the meaning of the different aspects in relation to each other. Grammar is conceptualised as a network with subsystems that interlink through different interfaces like lexicogrammar (i.e., the combination of syntax, lexicon, and morphology), even outside the language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004:18-24). Thus, grammar becomes a resource for communication rather than a set of rules. A lesson could

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[2] Text is an instance of language, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows the language (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:14).

therefore progress as follows: students are presented with a text and asked to analyse it. Then they discuss how the elements work together to reveal the different contexts. Finally, language aspects are highlighted to show how the choices produce different meanings. This process helps students to express meaning based on context and choice (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:3-5) SFG is not a formal theory with the naturalistic UG capacity to inductively learn grammar. Instead, SFG uses *text* as the basic unit, based on a situational context rather than isolated sentences, to analyse language systems. Learners become aware, explore grammatical and meaningful choices, and use grammar as a resource to create meaning. With different techniques such as comparison, sequences, gap filling, restructuring, elaboration and transformation, a chosen text could be used to teach grammar. Nevertheless, inductive methods, such as the Content-Based and Task-Based Instructions, discussed in Section 2.2.3, could be adapted to be used effectively within the SFG theory.

Zinn & Mcdonald, 2017:41 ff) discusses advantages of SFG, including its learner-centred approach as it focuses on effective and appropriate use of grammar rather than correctness. It also relates grammatical structures to meaning with a comprehensive input, which allows learners to make various choices leading to L2 development. As SFG tries to mirror culture, there is no bad or good grammar; instead, appropriate or inappropriate grammar is discussed depending on the social context. The foci are spoken form and contemporary actual usage rather than prescriptive language usage. Grammar instruction within SFG promote comprehensive social interaction which makes it a rich and holistic approach. It is also used naturally with relevant and meaningful material and thus could be applied with positive results in an EFL/ESL classroom. The main criticism of SFG is its informal nature, which makes it quite complex and thus difficult to implement (Fawcett, 1980:31).

2.2.3.2 Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) theory also belongs to the naturalistic tradition. However, unlike the traditional natural approach, it emphasises the importance of an external learning environment where acquisition activities are based on comprehensible input rather than the specific innate capacity of the learner (Krashen & Terrell, 1983:58). CLT focuses on what is needed in order to communicate effectively. Consequently, *communicative competence* – the understanding and effective use of language in meaningful communication – is the foremost goal. The learners' ability to communicate actively and intelligibly is central (Hedge, 2000:45; Willis, 2003:51; Ur, 2012:77; Yule, 2012:194).

CLT theory covers both cognitive and sociocultural aspects of language as it regards purposeful learning – together with interaction – as the major keys for language development. Because language is a 'social tool', CLT advocates its effective use with comprehensive input to facilitate genuine communication situations (Partanen, 2007:35; Section 2.2.3). CLT theory is learner-centred in the sense that the learners themselves actively discover complex ideas using implicit/inductive methods. Through scaffolding, the learners develop grammar in the same way that they acquired their L1, i.e., naturally (Ruin, 1996:113; Hedge, 2000:43, 190; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:15–20; Partanen, 2007:51; Hinkel, 2011:67; Yule, 2012:194). Teachers guide learners by providing opportunities to discuss and ask questions while at the same time encouraging individual learners' personal experiences to be the basis for making personal development. An explicit approach to grammar instruction, which separates language in isolated aspects, is avoided (Willis, 2003:52; Creese, 2005:145; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:110; Ur, 2012: 6, 220; McGarry, 2012:7; Yule, 2012:193).

Task-based instruction (TBI) is essentially the main methodology in CLT theory. TBI allows learners to interact in small project groups and support each other during a meaningful task, using the target language. Students might, for example, be offered to work with interdisciplinary projects through role-play or debate specific and authentic topics such as sustainable development problems. The learners acquire the L2 while making use of subject knowledge in other areas, for instance biology, economics, geography and civics. Collaboration and/or interaction in a genuine environment leads to effective and realistic communication and thereby L2 development (Hedge, 2000:43–74; Krashen, 1981:137; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:100; Ur, 2012: 7).

The main criticism of CLT theory is its extensive focus on students' self-guided activities. Implicit grammar instruction requires mature, motivated and secure learners who most likely are academically oriented. If students are left on their own, fumbling with informal language, they might lose interest (Ruin, 1996:113). Teacher confidence is also an issue when it comes to implementation, as teachers need to have appropriate knowledge and skills in linguistics (Hedge, 2000:69). According to Ur (2012:78), students should be helped to learn acceptable grammar and improve their proficiency in order to avoid penalties in 'high-stake' English examinations in advanced courses. Such courses require formal language activities and contexts, which CLT theory might neglect. Therefore, relating form to meaning and context is essential.

In conclusion, the approaches above with their respective methods fall into three main categories:

1) The traditional *structural* approach, which is *prescriptive* and based on arbitrary relationships, sets out to teach different word categories and corresponding rules.

2) The psycholinguistic *generative* formal approach, which emphasises the biological pre-wired cognitive capacity, is used to study descriptive general rules. Form, independent of meaning, is central.

3) The sociolinguistic *functional* approach, which is progressive, focuses on the underlying *meanings* of a grammar system. Meaning and function together help to shape form, depending on the grammatical choices in a given context.

As discussed in Section 2.2, each of these has its shortcomings and cannot suffice on its own in the classroom. Flexibility that allows various uses of the different grammar instruction approaches might give more positive and effective results. This requires the development of a working grammar instruction model; a practical model for effective grammar instruction has been suggested in previous research and will be discussed in the next section (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Ur, 2012:78).

2.3 Grammar instruction model – explicit, implicit, or both?

The approaches discussed in Section 2.2 do not individually lead to desired results in grammar development. Instead, more questions are raised regarding the role of grammar in the EFL/ESL classroom (Hedge, 2000:144). In this section, a brief discussion on how the different approaches could be used together to form a blended, or rather an eclectic, grammar instruction approach (BC & BBC, n.p.) will be carried out.

2.3.1 The eclectic grammar instruction approach

The eclectic grammar instruction approach refers to the use of a variety of techniques from a range of methods and approaches in one single situation (BC & BBC, n.p.). Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988:116) assert that a combination of techniques and interesting learning materials is effective in the EFL/ESL classroom. Different methods have different focuses, weaknesses, and strengths and therefore complement each other. For instance, when talking about the use of the apostrophe *s* to indicate possession in the following phrase: "His mistress's eyebrow", the meaning will be lost if both form and meaning/function are not dealt with at the same time. Hence, the need to establish both grammar-based knowledge and grammar-based practice should be considered when choosing effective grammar instruction (Ur, 2012:78).

Unique factors for each lesson opportunity obviously lead to variation in teaching strategies. Consequently, developing an effective model requires considering a number of factors, including when grammar should be taught and which grammatical aspects to focus on (Halliday & Mattiessen, 2004:4; Ur, 2012:7). Variables such as the learners' different maturation levels and intelligence, level of language development, study aim and motivation, should also be well-thought-out and prioritised when choosing the method (Willis, 2003:51). Individual teachers' personalities, training and background, as well as the purpose of a particular lesson, are also of great importance when designing an effective grammar instruction approach. Obviously, the grammar instruction must be adapted to fit individual classrooms (Lindblad, 1969:7, 28; Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1988:5; Hedge, 2000:179; Thornbury 2005:23; Ur, 2010:179). A desired model should also include accuracy since correctness is vital for L2 development. Rigid separation and isolation would make the meaning suffer and communication breakdown would likely follow. The teacher makes informed choices and decisions to manage the classroom situations based on his/her knowledge about the learners and the L2 aspects to be handled. However, a communicative framework, which pays attention to a communicative classroom with the goal to help learners develop communicative competence, should be central (Hedge, 2000:145).

Figure 1 shows a method profile with a wide continuum of approaches to choose from while designing an eclectic approach. The two following examples show how an eclectic approach could be used in an EFL/ESL classroom.

Figure 1 Method profile based on Lindblad and Levin (1970:25) and Thornbury (2005:23)

Structuralism: A lot of grammar <=========> Naturalism: Almost zero grammar

Formal/ theoretical	Functional/pragmatic
Deductive – overt	Inductive – covert
Metalinguistic awareness	Language use
Passive learners, i.e. substitution	Active learners, i.e. dialog
Explicit – form focus	Implicit – authentic input

Example 1 (Based on Hedge, 2000:72)

The lesson starts with a deductive activity; whereby explicit rule explanation and translation to L1 makes learners aware of a specific grammatical form. The learners practice with a variety of input such as text and film, before they become actively engaged individually in interactions to reproduce the rule in relevant and useful communication. Creation and expression of meaning is thereby acquired along the way. Learning aids, e.g., computers, are provided to create purpose, and the learners work on a task in groups to produce a blog or any other type of text. The production is published and learners get the possibility to have an authentic audience and receive feedback. In this example, the procedure is a mixture of methods whereby the first part is a structural approach with the grammar-translation

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method. The second part combines the TBI (see 2.2.3.2) with CBI (see 2.2.3) methods of the natural and SFG (see 2.2.3.1) approaches.

Example 2 (Based on Hedge, 2000:72)

The lesson starts with the students reading a text. They later discuss it in small groups, identifying sentence constituents and how their positions affect the meaning or idea in the sentence. As an example, they would identify adverbs in the sentences below.

- She <u>quickly</u> agreed to go to help me with the assignment. (Her agreement was quick)

- She agreed to help me with the assignment <u>quickly</u>. (She would help me quickly)

With help from the teacher, the class comes up with other fictive sentences similar to the ones in the text. The learners practice word order, which they later use as input, and work on producing and publishing a sentence structure handbook highlighting the different constituents with their specific functions. With the help of peer and teacher feedback, the learners then explain the rules in the handbook. In the first part, a communicative approach is applied, whereas a variant of the structuralism approach dominates the last part of the lesson.

In conclusion, the blended methods of an eclectic approach allow for a holistic strategy. The eclectic approach gives teachers a possibility to use the classic methodologies while adding a modern touch to the grammar instruction. It also allows the teacher to consider the context while choosing appropriate learning activities since a number of different approaches are used (Ruin, 1996:100; Ur, 2012:79). Therefore, the choice of practical rather than prescribed methodology is focused upon. However, it is essential to understand how grammar is learned so that an effective model relating to language development theories can be developed and applied (Gurrey, 1961:59; Willis, 2003:23, 93; Kidist, 2011:16).

3. Methods

The main aim of the present study was to identify examples of practical grammar instruction in an EFL/ESL classroom in an upper secondary school. In order to do so, in-depth and everyday classroom practice data needed to be collected. Therefore, a mixed method approach was advantageous (Angouri, 2010:3, 30; Denscombe, 2010:5, 137). Since the participants' 'natural' sociocultural behaviour, traditions, and practices are central, an ethnographic method was decided upon. This methodology is about defining characteristics of cultural anthropology through direct contact in order to collect first-hand data (Angouri,

2010:3; Denscombe, 2010:5). The collected data could provide insight into the teachers' beliefs, thoughts, and choices regarding grammar instruction. To increase the trustworthiness of the research, a triangulation approach was decided on, whereby collection and comparison of information from more than one source was necessary. Hence, methods that could "interlink and inform one another" were used (Denscombe, 2010:147; Hinkel, 2011:59). The methods initially considered included classroom observations, interviews, and an online survey questionnaire (Angouri, 2010:34). However, the study period was limited and it was difficult to engage participants as they never prioritised the present study in their busy schedules. Consequently, only the interview and observation results were collected. Since the study was carried out during the spring semester when activities such as the national examinations disorganise the timetable, it was difficult to get access to 'normal' classroom routines. The researcher was compelled to follow the schedule at the time, resulting in a small-scale case study with results that could not be generalised. In the following section, the participants will be presented and the ethical considerations will be discussed. Lastly, the interview and observation methods will be described.

3.1 Participants

Twelve English teachers in an urban, middle-sized upper secondary school were asked to take part in the present study. Five teachers (referred to as T1 & T3 who are female, and T2, T4 & T5 who are male) agreed and gave their written consent to participate in the study through email. The five teachers work at the same school, which has an explicit pedagogical profile using methods based on a multidisciplinary approach. The students have a number of subject-integrated projects where they work in small groups and co-operate towards a common goal. Four of the teachers were part of the classroom observation research while all five participated in the interviews (see Appendix C). All five participants are experienced and well-established EFL/ESL teachers and have English as their major subject. The four teachers who were observed have taught at all levels, i.e. 5, 6, and 7 (basic, intermediate, and advanced) of the new English curriculum for upper secondary school (Gy11) introduced in 2011, while T1 has only taught levels 5 and 6. Teachers at different levels were needed in order to find out if the levels determined the grammar instruction choices. The participating teachers teach students from only one school program each: Aesthetics and Media (Estet- och mediaprogrammet, ES), Natural Sciences (Naturvetenskapsprogrammet, NA), and Social Sciences (Samhällsvetenskapliga programmet, SA). Thus they belong to different teams, but they occasionally meet to make local teaching plans.

The students in the observed classrooms had basically the same L1 with a homogeneous linguistic background and similar social backgrounds.

3.2 Ethical considerations

The participating teachers were given general information about the study and an opportunity to ask questions regarding the ethics of the study. The teachers were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix C).

Although the focus of the study was on the teachers, the involved students were informed about the study and they all gave their oral consent. The oral consent was regarded valid since the learners were 17 years old and thus old enough to make such a decision. The participants were guaranteed that all collected data would be handled confidentially in order not to compromise their integrity (Denscombe, 2010:7).

3.3 Observations

The study was based on a deep but semi-structured and open-ended survey (Denscombe, 2010:175). The observation methodology allowed the researcher to witness in practice what happened in the EFL/ESL classroom. It was also crucial for data collection to concentrate on what was done in the classroom rather than on what was said. However, observation was interlinked to the interview methodology as both methods would likely shed light on the same questions, but from different viewpoints and thus yield results in depth. The observations provided direct and valuable evidence of what was being studied (Denscombe, 2010:197). The researcher acted as a passive participant and gained first-hand, detailed information of the teaching processes (Denscombe, 2010:205–7).

The four teachers were observed three times each and the lessons were 80 minutes each (4 x 3 x 80 = 960 minutes). Since the researcher had obtained the teachers' informed consent, (see Section 3.2) digital recording (mobile phone, computer and Dictaphone) was used throughout all the observations to avoid selective recall. An observation schedule form (see Appendix A) was used to reduce the risks of selective perception. Immediately after each session, data were processed from both the recorded material and the observation schedule (Denscombe, 2010:198).

3.4 Interviews

One of the goals of the study was to gain insight into the teachers' opinions, beliefs, feelings, and experiences regarding grammar instruction. Therefore, for the researcher to study the impressions gained through observations in detail, the interview methodology was regarded appropriate.

Semi-structured and open-ended guideline questions were used (see Appendix B) to allow for open discussions and to give free, first-hand, and detailed responses. The interviewees could then freely elaborate on their views as they had the possibility to answer complementary questions whenever necessary during the process (Denscombe, 2010:174). Therefore, the interviewees had several opportunities to develop their ideas. Since the teachers worked at the same school, the interview method required less travel time for the researcher.

Three of the teachers were interviewed individually and the other two at the same time because of timetable issues. One problem with the pair interview could have been that the participants relied on each other's responses. However, it was expected to provide a more varied discussion as it encouraged the teachers to consider each other's perspectives (Edly & Litosseliti, 2010:156; Denscombe, 2010:175).

4. Analysis and results

In this section the results of the present study are presented. In Section 4.1 the results obtained from the classroom observations will be discussed. The aim is to identify when, how, and which grammar instruction methods were practically carried out in the EFL/ESL classroom. In Section 4.2, the focus will be on the interviews, and the participants' views and attitudes towards grammar instruction in an EFL/ESL classroom.

4.1 Classroom observation results

Of the twelve lessons (80 minutes each) observed, five lessons dealt with grammar to some extent. The rest of the lessons had some recognizable grammar elements, but they were not central. Three lesson examples (coloured yellow in Table 1) exclusively aimed at teaching grammar and therefore are highly relevant for the present study. In Section 4.1, results obtained from the classroom observations will be discussed.

**Table 1.** Lesson content during the twelve observations in four classes

	Language aspects handled in observed lessons		
T1	Argumentative Essay	Parts of speech (Lesson 3)	Parts of speech
T2	Reading	Constituents – subject and predicate (Lesson 1)	Reading
T3	Adjectives, adverbs and prepositions (Lesson 2)	Speech exercise	Text analysis – Feminist literary criticism
T4	Reading	Reading	Book discussion

4.1.1 The eclectic model application in three different EFL/ESL classrooms

Depending on the grammar aspect (see Table 1) and the students' needs, different methodologies from the grammar instruction approaches (Section 2; Figure 1) were used, meaning the approach was eclectic.

Lesson example 1: The English 5 classroom on the Aesthetics Studies program

Two grammar instruction methods were applied in Lesson 1: the TBI and the explicit grammar-translation methodology (Section 2.2.1). At the beginning of the lesson, the students were asked to download an article about Twitter from the Internet (Appendix D). The article was partly used to discuss contemporary media and its purpose, and partly to work with the grammatical rule 'subject–verb agreement'. After a discussion about Twitter, T2 encouraged the students to identify the subjects and predicates in the sentences. Then, the students worked in small groups and tried to come up with a rule for subject-predicate agreement. Thereafter T2 explicitly explained how the rule works. Finally, the students practiced with a variety of paper slips (Picture 1) with simple sentence structures. The teacher's instruction and the students' discussion were partly done in the students' L1 and partly in English.
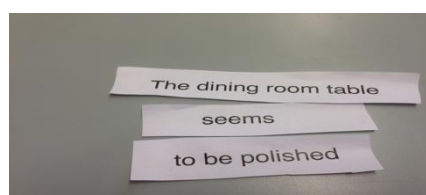
Picture 1. Subject-verb agreement

Firstly, the lesson blended the naturalistic approach and SFG theory, which regard interaction as vital to language acquisition. The learners were made aware of the language structures through authentic material, connecting the students to reality as they participated in an open-ended and spontaneous communication where they made different choices. The article (text) was used as comprehensible input dealing with familiar, understandable, and interesting topics for the learners. The text had a clear function and it was the basis for a purposeful conversation. Secondly, the teacher helped the students to develop the subject-verb agreement rule by means of the structuralism approach, which takes explicit and conscious grammar instruction methods as the basis for grammar study. However, a CLT approach (see Section 2.2.3.1) was at the centre of the lesson. The mixture of approaches in one situation resulted in an eclectic approach.

Lesson example 2: The English 6 classroom in the Natural Sciences program

Lesson example 2 had a clear grammar instruction section. The purpose of the lesson was to help the students work out the difference between adjectives and adverbs together with prepositions. However, T3 never explicitly told the students that they were working with these particular word classes. Popular celebrity pictures (see Appendices E and F) were the central learning materials used to motivate the students in the exercise. At the beginning of the lesson, the students were asked to individually identify a minimum of three celebrities from each picture. They compared the findings with each other using the target language and discussed, using the target language, why these particular individuals were regarded as international celebrities. Students later worked in small groups describing how, when, how often, and where the celebrities worked (adverbs). They also discussed what kind, how much, and which type of work the celebrities engaged in (adjectives). Lastly, the students discussed the placement of celebrities in the pictures in relation to each other, as a way to practice prepositions.

Examples: (adapted from Hedge, 2000:72)

1) President Obama <u>frequently</u> (adverb) takes group portraits during official ceremonies.
2) Ellen DeGeneres is a <u>frequent</u> (adjective) group portrait producer.
3) Albert Einstein sits <u>in</u> the front (preposition) of the picture.

The input (celebrity pictures: Appendices E & F) in lesson 2 met Krashen's (1981:80) comprehensive input requirement, as it was relevant, interesting, simple, and understandable. The input also provided the social content for the activity. Therefore, the CBI methodology was used (see Section 2.2.3).

However, there are profound differences in preposition usage between Swedish and English. Therefore, T3 explicitly explained how some English prepositions are used and then

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translated a number of examples into the L1 Swedish. After the presentation of the grammar aspect, the students did a drill exercise on phonology and 'accurate' use of prepositions in small groups. Later, individual students made written productions in form of a picture analysis essay, which were published on the class blog site. T3 emphasised the importance of practice by telling the students that, "there is no short-cut to learning how to use prepositions. You just have to practice them." This advice translates into some kind of a drill exercise in audiolingualism methodology (see Section 2.2.2) in which the students simply need to use rote exercises and learn by heart how English prepositions are used. Additionally, T3 was aware of the importance of incorporating L1 in the EFL/ESL classroom and so grammar translation and audiolingualism methods (see Section 2.2) were used to help students develop grammatical skills in particular and L2 in general.

In conclusion, both deductive and inductive procedures were used in lesson example 2, but they were included within a communication activity. The deductive methodology included audiolingualism where the learners were explicitly introduced to rules governing preposition use. They had repetitive oral structure practice in combination with inductive procedures, where the learners worked from examples and later applied the required and repeated rules. SFG theory was applied as the students worked on a task/text in which they identified the celebrities using a relevant topic as comprehensive input source to learn grammar. In summary, an eclectic approach with a combination of almost all the methods discussed in Section 2.2 was applied.

Lesson example 3: The English 6 classroom in the Social Studies program
Lesson example 3 was about English word classes. T1 started the lesson by giving direct explanations of word categories, i.e., she wrote labels with the parts of speech on the blackboard and then explicitly defined them. The students were encouraged to take notes, which would be used for later study. The students were required to translate and learn the category labels by heart and then they practiced constructing sentences using words belonging to the different categories. Grammar course books in the L1 as well as the Internet were used as complementary input sources. For this section of the lesson, T1 used the grammar–translation method to help the students develop their English grammar. Later on, small groups researched the word categories of their choice and were meant to become experts in those particular areas. In order to motivate and help the learners to actively engage, T1 included games and competition in the exercise. The groups produced and presented creative work using their expertise area of word class to the entire class. The choice of production media included songs, rap music, drama, photography and a grammar handbook. The production results were published on Internet channels such as YouTube,

giving the students a larger and authentic audience. A group of students with the 'best' production, elected by their fellow classmates, won a trophy. The research work followed the communicative approach with the CBI and TBI methods since students worked in groups around an assigned task with various kinds of content (see Section 2).

As discussed in Section 2.3.1, lesson example 3 combined techniques and interesting learning materials/input. It gave the learners an opportunity to work with systematic functional grammar with instantaneous choices and a comprehensive view rather than working with separated grammar aspects. Play activity led to creativity, put grammar into an enjoyable context, and thus provided active participation and effective practice. The mixture of methods led to application of an eclectic approach.

In conclusion, the teachers blended different methodologies, which confirms that both function and structure were regarded as equally important. The representative examples show how a Systemic Functional grammar perspective – through an eclectic grammar teaching approach (see Section 2.3.1) – was applied in practice in the EFL/ESL classroom.

4.1.2 Activities and materials used during the classroom observations

The observed activities were of a communicative character in the sense that they promoted oral as well as written interaction (Hedge, 2010:57, Yule and Powers, 1994:81 ff). The learners were engaged in relevant, realistic, meaningful and purposeful communicative activities. For instance, the example lessons (see Section 4.1.1) included discussions and written productions, with the purpose not only to learn grammar, but also to encourage information management, critical thinking, cultural analysis and to generally develop communicative competence. The students were given a chance to use the target language more often, and the lessons were not that difficult because they incorporated play. The communicative activities were difficult to assess, as they tended to have open-ended results based on the students' experiences. Such individualised oral grammar instruction lessons therefore tend to require much more preparation time than traditional ones. To be able to give relevant teacher–talk and feedback to each individual learner, the EFL/ESL teachers need to be more competent than L1 teachers.

The central material used was comprehensible input (Krashen 1981:83) in the form of familiar text/media, including modern information technology. The material was familiar, authentic and interesting to the learners. For instance, the celebrity pictures and the text about Twitter helped the students to develop grammar using their personal experiences while using social media. Nevertheless, it seemed difficult for the teachers to find and create

appropriate materials, so in lesson example 3, the teacher resorted to traditional tools, i.e., grammar course books.

In conclusion, the results show a preference for the communicative approach towards grammar instruction. Communicative activities and genuine materials encouraging the students to interact with each other, but also with society, were used solving problems within their life experiences. Grammar aspects were neither handled in isolation nor as a subject-matter, but as a resource for developing communicative skills (see Section 2.2.1).

4.2 Interview results

In this section the results of the interview are reviewed and discussed, showing how they interlink with the observation results. The discussion roughly follows the structure laid out in appendix B. Firstly, the teachers' views and attitudes towards grammar instruction will be discussed in Section 4.2.1. Secondly, in Section 4.2.2, the teachers' reasons for using only a particular grammar instruction will be presented. Lastly, in Section 4.2.3, the reasons for choosing particular grammar aspects, activities and materials will be reported.

4.2.1 The teachers' views and attitudes towards the place and role of grammar instruction

The teachers held contradictory views and attitudes towards grammar instruction in the EFL/ESL classroom: T4 had a positive attitude, whereas the others were negative. T4 thought that explicit grammar instruction is central for L2 development. He said that learners should be exposed to grammar rules early enough to allow them to practice frequently and often enough to master them. Otherwise, he feared that the learners could end up not developing an L2 altogether.

In contrast, the other four teachers were in agreement that language function/meaning should be focused on. Consequently, grammar instruction should not have a central role in the EFL/ESL classroom. T1's view follows the idea discussed in Section 2.2.3 that L2 is learned by mirroring the acquisition process of L1. She asserted that if students are provided with a natural learning environment with understandable messages, language acquisition would take place (Krashen, 1981:84, 120; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:197). T1 also emphasised the notion that explicit grammar instruction approach application should exclusively be applied in linguistics courses to encourage older and mature students to learn and appreciate the L2. This understanding is in line with Krashen's monitor hypothesis, which is about students' ability to monitor and edit their grammatical errors (see Section 2.2.3).

The four teachers who were negative towards explicit grammar instruction methods were also keen on mentioning their appreciation for the syllabus shift from grammar-focused to function-focused (see Section 2). T2 reasoned that students do not directly profit from grammar instruction and that is why the goals of gy11 syllabus focus on practical communication (SNAE, 2011:2). He said: "Upper secondary students are not ready for meta-language, but they should be competent enough to express themselves in different situations." T2 also mentioned the 'natural order' idea (see Section 2.2.1), which emphasises that grammatical structures are acquired in a pre-determined order. He said his students might not be ready for certain grammatical aspects. Therefore, students should not be taught grammar in a linear process and explicit grammar instruction should only have a minor role in the EFL/ESL classroom.

All the interviewees agreed that grammar matters, but four of them had the view that teaching grammar overtly does not give remarkable results. They attributed the students' failure to benefit from grammar instruction to negative experiences of overt grammar teaching on lower school levels. For instance, the teachers claimed that there is focus on fictive problems, rote practices, and pattern drills in primary schools. Practice is detached from reality because teachers persist in using rote activities while the students continue making mistakes. The application of this explicit deductive approach might make the students less prepared to use the language in a more natural and effective way (see Section 2.2.3). T3 recalled a student who had told her about a teacher in primary school who insisted on teaching grammar even though she had not mastered grammar herself. Grammar lessons always ended in mischief. T3 concluded that if students were forced to continue learning grammar through grammar instruction, which lacked comprehensive input, their motivation to develop a L2 would be jeopardized. T5 also recollected his own personal experience of traditional grammar classes and he could relate to the present situation. He said that the old-fashioned way of grammar-translation was "boring and fruitless" during his primary school education. He did not want his students to have a similar experience. T5's reaction against the traditional structural approach is in line with what is discussed in Section 2.2.1, namely that grammar becomes distant and unreal when it is not put into context; instead it becomes a matter of system classification and mastering unrealistic terminology (Greenbaum, 2006:192).

T2 discussed the teachers' need for balance since both fluency and accuracy are important goals to pursue in grammar development. He insisted that the aim of English teaching in upper secondary school should be to enable the students to produce language easily and smoothly by themselves. Therefore, a focus on function rather than form should be the

ultimate goal. Otherwise, focus on correctness and accuracy might not make direct sense to the students in the moment, as they might not be able to apply the acquired knowledge in their daily communication. Learners are mostly concerned with personal expression and interaction, and as long as they are understood, it does not matter that much to them what form they use. T3 and T5 discussed the importance of students expressing themselves freely, but pointed out that they should not make grave grammatical errors, which might affect the message delivered. T2 noted that the students' L2 level is high enough that they can balance and adapt communication to different aims, audiences, and situations with fluency and accuracy; explicit grammar instruction is unnecessary. T2's reasons follow Krashen's and Terrell's ideas that grammar instruction is necessary only if it does not impede communication (see Section 2.2.3).

T4, on the other hand, reflected on his own experience as a student taught with the traditional methods. He vented his concern about the students' inability to produce coherent text and fluent speech. He attributed the students' poor grammar competence to informal grammar instruction. He also referred to the commentary material on the English syllabus (SNAE, 2012:8-9) that suggests a need to develop all-round communicative skills, including grammar competence. He pointed out that students are required to work with form/structure, which to him confirms the need for explicit grammar instruction in the EFL/ESL classroom.

All the interviewees, except T4, were also of the perception that students start upper secondary 'knowing' most of the grammar rules. However, they cannot apply the rules in their daily language production. This observation is connected to the teachability hypothesis discussed in Section 2.2.1, which refers to learners not being ready for grammatical structures and having a gap between knowledge and practice. T4, however, claimed that diagnostic tests show that students have little or no knowledge of grammar at all at the beginning of upper secondary school. He went on to assert that if the students are not given explicit grammar instruction early enough and continuously, they will ultimately fail to develop the required skills. The students would not fulfil the syllabus requirements, if the situation and different purposes of the communication are not considered and fulfilled. This view is in line with one of the roles of grammar instruction, namely language appreciation, as discussed in Section 2.2.3. However, language appreciation (linguistics) should be focused on the target language as a subject-matter, which is far from the aim of grammar instructions at upper secondary level (SNAE, 2011). T4 contradicts this reasoning by saying that the students would not be qualified for higher studies if they lack basic grammar competence.

Regarding grammatical errors, correction, assessment and feedback, the teachers emphasised the importance of individualised teaching approaches. T1 mentioned the students' trouble with time management. The students do not give themselves enough time to check for errors before they hand in their assignments, resulting in productions with a lot of careless mistakes. However, when they are asked to do self- and peer-assessment, grammatical errors are minimised. T2 concluded that formal grammar instructions are necessary, but only if it is meant to help the students become aware of their developed skills. This conclusion is in line with Krashen's 'monitor hypothesis' (Section 2.2.3) in which students are taught grammar in order to develop their monitoring skills, which they use to check and adjust their metalinguistic abilities. However, students have individual needs, so this is not a general solution to all the problems that are likely to surface. Instead, T2 aims at being open to the students' suggestions as to what they would like to improve and how they would like to deal with different grammar aspects. As discussed in Section 2.2.3, individualised grammar instruction, which regards the natural order of acquisition and uses comprehensible input, would be appropriate to help particular learners acquire necessary communication skills. Nevertheless, there can be students at the upper secondary level who, for some reasons, aspire to better grammar understanding. T3 gave an example of a student who was worried about her grammatical development before the national examination. The student asked T3 for explicit grammar instruction and feedback, which T3 could not deny that particular student. After that incident, T3 voluntarily started a grammar workshop inviting all interested students. Teaching should be flexible enough that teachers can offer individualised instruction based on the students' needs and here an eclectic grammar instruction approach would be close to an optimal choice. T4 and T5 never provided a clear answer to the question about error correction and feedback.

All the participating teachers shared a positive view about using L1 in the L2 classroom, which was also noticed during the classroom observations. They emphasised the need to build on the students' experience when teaching the L2 since L1 acquisition could be used as meta-grammar to enhance the L2 development process. Their decision to use L1 in the EFL/ESL classroom is based on the directions given by SNAE (2011) in the English curriculum: "teaching should *as far as possible* be conducted in English." T2 elaborated more, saying that there seems to be an undertone or rather an acceptance of using L1 in case it is needed. T1 also teaches L1 and appreciated the way she could use L1 background knowledge in the EFL/ESL classroom. T2 mentioned his experience with Swedish preposition interference in English language production. He said that he purposely uses L1 as a comparison tool. They also commented on the many course books on the market that use L1 to describe L2. However, T5 initially could not remember using L1 in the English classroom,

but as he continued with the discussion he remembered that he actually did on occasions when he wanted to make students aware of their grammatical problems.

Regarding the teachers' impression of students' views on grammar instructions, the participating teachers also gave contradictory responses. T2 responded that his students complained about not receiving explicit grammar instruction. However, when he explained his ways of teaching grammar in contrast to what the students were used to, they understood and accepted his choice. On the other hand, T1 answered that her students would never prefer explicit grammar lessons as they regard them as "boring and a waste of time." T3, T4, and T5 claimed that they had not specifically evaluated their students' attitudes towards grammar instruction.

In conclusion, the interviews complemented the observations made in the classroom and provide a comprehensive answer to the research questions. The teachers' views and attitudes towards the place and role of grammar instruction in the EFL/ESL classroom generally affect their choices of grammar instructions. The contradiction between the teachers who participated in the study with scholars suggests that there is a need for a mixture of methods from a wide continuum (see Figure 1). Thus, an eclectic grammar instructions approach is appropriate and will help teachers to incorporate both the communicative and structural approaches in the classroom.

4.2.2 The teachers' reasons for using certain approaches to grammar instruction

The teachers' choice of particular methodologies was partly dependent upon their views and attitudes towards grammar instruction. Their choices also depended on factors such as: contexts, focused grammar aspects and lesson purpose, language tone and style, and the target group of students. The grammar instruction method chosen determined which activities, exercises and materials were used, and activities that included student interaction with concrete output were regarded by all interviewees as appropriate. Collaborative approaches encouraging the students to work together and co-construct learning materials were also common. T5 specifically pointed out that activities, tasks and materials that genuinely relate to real communication belong to the ultimate learning environment to which he aspires. Such an environment is suitable for the students' use of the entire language system and so they easily develop their communicative skills.

T4 emphasised the need for explicit grammar instructions as he claims that grammar in particular and English in general play a crucial role for higher education and international communication. He argued that if students are not encouraged to produce 'formal' English with 'acceptable' and correct grammar early enough, they might not develop 'adequate'

communicative skills and thus lose out to the current result-focused global economy. However, he acknowledges that L2 acquisition could be attributed to communicative contexts, but most of the higher education courses and their corresponding literature are in English. Many of the students in his class repeatedly fail grammar examinations and he attributes this to the absence of clear grammar instruction guidelines in the secondary school curricula. T4's concern is in line with what is discussed in Section 2.2.3.1, namely, the importance of being accurate, for the purpose of being prepared for higher education. Therefore, T4 has support from CLT theory critics who emphasise the need to help learners prepare for the future.

As mentioned in Section 3.1, all the teachers apply a multidisciplinary approach in which their students work with subject-integrated projects. All the teachers elaborated on the school's pedagogical profile and noted that there is often no room for 'pure' traditional grammar instruction methods. The teachers are more or less obligated to use communicative grammar instruction approaches with content-based and/or task-based methods. Four of the teachers (not T4) appreciated these methods. They teach grammar using the eclectic approach with focus on CBI, which allows the students to actively participate and interact with each other in different constructions. They also discussed the importance of play in the form of games, music, song etc. in the EFL/ESL classroom. They elaborated on how play can help the students develop a positive attitude towards grammar – it might boost their motivation for language development since play allows for a natural use of the L2.

T5 also specifically mentioned the importance of providing various relevant input sources to the students. He talked about the students being exposed to purposeful reading resulting in content discussion using the target language. Relevant input could also give students the chance to pick up the language implicitly. For example, writing productions such as blogs could provide opportunities to work on texts beyond sentence level, since learners develop more communicative skills as they work with larger entities like paragraphs, text structure, and organisation (Halliday & Mattiessen, 2004:14). T5's reasons for methodology choice are supported by Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988:149) who advocate text-based activities in a communicative framework (see Section 2.2). T5 asserts that through text discussion, students can develop their grammar implicitly. However, T3 pointed out that students' reading habits are declining, possibly due to the digital information era. To encourage students to read more, teachers should work harder to choose interesting and comprehensive texts.

4.2.3 Aspects, activities and materials

The participating teachers based their choice of language aspects, activities and materials first and foremost on the requirements set in the syllabus. The absence of grammar core content in the English syllabus (see Section 2.4) was one of the main reasons why the teachers decided to focus on the particular grammar aspects that they did. T3 and T4 expressed their concern, saying that individual teachers have to depend on their intuition to identify grammar areas to teach. This could cause inequality since different classes would not be guaranteed similar assessment grounds. They therefore advocate a joint local English teaching plan for their school. T1 and T2 never really worried about the lack of general grammar content since they were devoted to teaching based on the students' needs as they thought that *learning by practice* was the most effective way of developing L2. They chose teaching areas from the frequently made errors such as the -'s genitive, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and adjectives/adverbs. However, according to the 'teachability hypothesis' discussed in Section 2.2.1, these grammatical errors are regarded as difficult structures for intermediate learners – the students are not expected to acquire these rules because they are not 'ready' yet (Krashen, 1981:84–89). T5 emphasised the aim of teaching grammar, which is to help students develop communicative competence. If the students communicate conveying messages in the manner adapted to the situation, correctness or fluency should be the second priority. The Gy11 curriculum has the same line of reasoning, advocating communicative competence (see Section 2.4).

All the interviewees worked hard to find or create engaging and interesting learning aids that would be used in 'real life' communication activities. For instance, familiar and accessible tools such as digital equipment were often included in the lessons. Relevant tasks that facilitated easy use of the L2, such as songs and blog production, were central in all the lessons. The teachers were in line with the comprehension input hypothesis and the activities were positively directed towards the communicative methodology (see Section 2.2.3).

In conclusion, the interviews revealed the contradiction between the role and place of grammar instructions in the EFL/ESL classroom discussed in Section 1. Although all five teachers presented a unanimous positive view towards grammar, teaching grammar in an EFL/ESL classroom was debatable; four of them had a negative attitude towards having explicit grammar instruction in their classrooms. Additionally, these four teachers preferred the communicative language teaching method. One of them thought it necessary with overt grammar instruction since it prepares the learners for higher education on the global market. However, the interviewees were flexible in their choice of grammar instruction. An eclectic approach with individualised communicative approaches was preferred. Focus on

communicative competence through cooperative learning was central in all the classrooms in the present study (see Section 2.3.1).

5. Discussion

One of the aims of the present study was to identify examples of grammar instruction methodologies that were practically applied in the upper secondary school EFL/ESL classroom. In Section 4, the results of the study were presented and discussed in relation to previous research. This next section will discuss some aspects of the results presented in Section 4.2 which stand out.

First and foremost, due to the contradictory views and attitudes among the participating teachers towards the role of grammar instruction in the EFL/ESL classroom, the study results were complex and difficult to analyse. The contrasting sides seemed to have valid arguments for their choice and use of different kinds of approaches. However, the disagreement about *form-focused* and *function-focused* grammar development that surfaced among the teachers reflects the established contradictions in published research. Nonetheless, the teachers acknowledged form as a basis for language function and therefore form and function were regarded as equally important. The teachers aimed at integrating form and meaning in an authentic and relevant context in order to give the students an opportunity to develop the required communicative skills (see Section 2.3.1; Greenbaum, 1996:191; Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1988:7). In accordance with previous research, an integrated and/or eclectic grammar approach that might deal with grammar in a systematic and comprehensive way, was practically applied by the participants.

Due to the school's explicit pedagogical profile (see Section 3) and the English syllabus in Gy11 (SNAE, 2011), the participating teachers are more or less required to use a progressive communicative approach. This approach is learner-centred and students are given a possibility to socially engage in the 'real' world during the lessons. L2 is a social-cultural tool, (see Section 2.2.3.1) helping individual students use their personal experiences as input during the lessons (see Section 2.2.4). Learners are allowed to take part in meaningful dialogues and thus understand and manage their L2 development. The communicative language teaching approach with a sociocultural theory perspective was a common pedagogical framework in the classrooms (see Section 2.2.3.2; Gurrey, 1961:73).

The study never showed any clear evidence that the different course levels (English 5, 6, and 7) affected the choice of a particular grammar instruction. However, as pointed out earlier,

learners beyond the critical period of acquisition are usually highly motivated and often express a need for structural-based approaches (see Section 2.2.3). This is because they might have developed better strategies to reason and hypothesise about language – the higher the level, the more linguistics is needed, which is probably is probably not the case for upper secondary school students (Hedge, 2000:146; Lightbown & Spada, 2006:139). Therefore, some of the teachers' negative views and attitudes toward explicit grammar instruction could be justified.

Finally, there was a general consensus among the teachers that grammar matters. The teachers tried to be balanced while making approach choices as they practically applied an eclectic approach, which is in line with what the modern academic community suggests (see Section 2.2). The teachers acknowledged the need for flexibility and generally systematic grammar instruction was regarded as appropriate in the EFL/ESL classroom.

6. Conclusion

Classroom observations in four classrooms and interviews with the teachers were the methods used in the present study. The teachers were interviewed to find out their views and attitudes towards grammar instruction and why they preferred particular grammar instruction approaches over others. The classroom observations provided evidence for which methods were applied in practice in the classrooms.

Because the study was limited by the modest amount of data collected, the results should not be generalised, but instead, regarded as a sample case study. Nevertheless, the results reflect what has been suggested by previous research, which reveals a conflicting discussion about the place and role of grammar instruction in the EFL/ESL classroom. Conflicting ideas regarding different approaches, namely, traditional structuralism, behaviourism, and natural theory, are expressed by both scholars and the teachers in this study. For example, four teachers had a specific view that opposed the one suggested by both structuralism and behaviourism. They asserted that L2 acquisition is not based on external stimuli through explicit methodologies. They defended this view by referring to the shift from a form-focused to a function-focused curriculum and thus the reasoning that explicit grammar instruction has a minor role in the EFL/ESL classroom. On the other hand, the fifth participant had the view, which is in line with structuralism, that students need to be introduced to grammatical structures as early as possible through overt methods such as grammar-translation. He defended structuralism by referring to the curriculum commentary material, which gives

guidelines on focusing not only on function but also on form. He also claimed that explicit grammar instruction is essential for preparation for higher education.

There were a number of grammar instruction approaches applied in the EFL/ESL classroom. Four of the participating teachers preferred inductive to deductive approaches, while the fifth regarded the deductive approach as more effective. However, all five strived for a balance when choosing gramethods since they believed that there no single method could effectively help students develop their L2. Therefore, an eclectic approach, which blends different methodologies, was used by all of them. The practical application included four methods in this eclectic approach:

1. The grammar-translation method which, as the name suggests, uses 'translation' from L1 into L2 in order to learn grammar. Grammatical rules in a sequential order are explicitly taught, and learners are expected to practice the rules to develop the L2.
2. Audiolingualism is about habit formation through drills. Stimuli and response are central.
3. CBI, which focuses on using the target language to learn about other subjects, provides the students with authentic input and the teacher supports learners in the L2 development when needed.
4. TBI, which is used when students interact/engage in communicative activities around a specific task, uses the natural context of the interaction.

In both CBI and TBI, form is not focused on, but the outcome or the product of students' interaction is of great importance. Therefore, a holistic systemic functional grammar approach was applied to help students develop required communicative skills.

As stated above, conflicting views and attitudes existed among the participants in the present study. However, they agreed that function and form complement each other in helping the learners develop grammar competence. Because upper secondary school students have passed the critical period of L2 acquisition, they are not capable of acquiring L2 the same way as their L1; thus grammar instruction could probably be regarded as critical. Nonetheless, if balanced grammar instruction choices are made, the learners could be helped to develop language proficiency and therefore communicative competence. The teachers' choice of methodologies was dependent not only on characteristics such as student maturity, learning style, students' motivation, and experience, but also the aspects to be taught, such as language tone, style, and the students' needs.

The present study did not include the learners. However, it discusses a number of practical grammar instruction approaches with respective teaching methodologies, which could be used to develop strategies to understand why learners could prefer certain grammar

instruction to others. To generate more comprehensive results, I therefore recommend a larger scale study on the same topic including learners, especially in a heterogeneous and multilingual EFL/ESL classroom. The proposed study could be expanded to cover the students' views and attitudes towards grammar instruction. How students acquire/learn grammar in relation to language development theories is also a potential study question. I recommend further evaluation of different grammar instruction approaches in terms of improved proficiency while working on accuracy in other aspects of language development, such as writing.

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Appendix A – Observation schedule

Feature	Non-instructional (Natural - acquisition)	Mixed Instructions	Instructional (Nurture - learning)	
	Intuitive	Nature/Nurture	Form-based instructions	Functional-based instructions
Rule explanation			Ex. Explains of when to use -'s	
Interaction (Active learner)				
Input variation	Ex. Authentic learning situation			Ex. Questions, inquiries, proposals, dialog
Error correction/ Accuracy				
Language use/Fluency				
Repetition/mimicry/drill				
L1 use/Translation				
Teacher-centred				
Written language				
Oral/reading language				
Individual activity				
Pair/group activity		Ex. Pattern speech drill & task-based activity		
Creativity				

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Appendix B – Interview guideline questions

Qualitative interview – Order and depth of the questions do not matter. They are just guidelines to help cover the areas intended for to study.

1. How long have you been teaching EFL/ESL?
    a. Would you like to tell me your experience about grammar, both as a student and as a teacher?
    b. Do you teach grammar?
        ● How often do you teach grammar?
    c. How much time is devoted to grammar lessons?
        ● Would you like to use less/more time for grammar? Why?
2. What do you think about the grammar presence/absence from the curriculum?
    a. Do you think it is necessary to teach English grammar? Why/why not?
    b. What grammar areas do you teach most often? When and why?
    c. How do you go about choosing areas to teach?

3. How do you go about teaching grammar in your English classroom?
    a. How do you usually teach grammar?
        - What instructions do you give to students when teaching grammar?
    b. Do you use L1 when teaching grammar? Why/Why not?
    c. What works best for you when teaching grammar? (Which approaches instructions do you prefer (traditional–explicit/CB – implicit))? Why?
    d. What do you think is an effective way of teaching grammar? Why?
    e. Is there anything you would do differently if you had the possibility? What/Why?
4. What grammar activities do you prefer when teaching grammar?
    a. Which kind of exercises do you often give to learners of English? Why?
    b. What instructional material do you usually use? Why?
5. How do you go about grammar learning/acquisition assessment?
    a. What do you think students think about grammar?
    b. What do you think students think about your way of teaching grammar?
6. How do you deal with students' grammar errors?
    a. What kind of grammar errors do students make?
    b. Do you correct the errors, why/why not?
7. What and how much feedback is given to students on grammar activities?
8. What are the most common problems when you teach grammar?

Appendix C – Interview meeting request and time booking

Dear XXXX,

As I informed you in our earlier correspondence, I have started with the thesis process and I would be grateful if you could help me. On XXXX I will be at XXXX School and I hope you could please spare 20–30 minutes for an interview.

Yours sincerely,

Maureen Nalunga, Student teacher

Appendix D – Twitter article from BBC

Gopnik Adam. 2014. A point of view: Why I don't tweet. Retrieved April 30, 2014
    http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26066325

Appendix E – Social media pictures – self-portrait (selfie)

Appendix F – Celebrity picture

Famous People painting by Dai Dudu, Li Tiezi and Zhang An, 2006 on canvas. Retrieved April 04, 2014.
worldresources.tripod.com/mural_people.html