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Teaching English Grammar
Teaching Students in Sweden at Upper Secondary Level

Engelska
C-uppsats

Termin: Höstterminen 2006
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Abstract

Titel: Teaching English Grammar: Teaching Swedish Students at Upper Secondary Level

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Abstract: The purpose of this essay is to investigate what different ways there are to teach English grammar at upper secondary level and what guidance experienced teachers have to offer. This is done by studying different theorists’ ideas on language acquisition as well as what researchers’ opinions are on how to teach grammar. I have also interviewed seven experienced teachers who work at upper secondary level.

The results of this investigation show that explicit grammar teaching has decreased over the years and been replaced by implicit grammar teaching and communication exercises. Grammar teaching has become integrated with activities focusing on meaning and is taught more through examples than by using grammatical terminology. Since students frequently come into contact with English they are not thought to need grammar rules as much, since they learn the language in a native-like way almost. However, they repeatedly make some mistakes. Each teacher had different methods for dealing with these mistakes, but they seemed to be keeping in mind the students’ needs and the curriculum.

In this study, I will highlight some methods for teaching grammar, factors that can influence learning and provide information on some existing theories about how students learn their second language.

Nyckelord: Second language learning, second language teaching, teaching methods, grammar, teaching theories
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1. Introduction and aim

If words are seen as the building blocks of a language, then grammar is its foundation. One needs to organize words in a specific order and use morphemes correctly to express meaning. In the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2005), grammar is defined as “the study of the classes of words, their inflections, and their functions and relations in the sentence”. In a similar manner, the Oxford English Dictionary Online (2006) describes it as “the study of a language which deals with its inflexional forms or other means of indicating the relations of words in the sentence, and with the rules for employing these in accordance with established usage”. Grammar is what makes communication possible. Having knowledge of grammar gives the ability to express an infinite number of messages without having encountered them in exactly the same form previously. When Swedish students learn English there are many rules that are new for them and many rules they have troubles with. Helping students expand their knowledge of grammar will enable them to express themselves in a more sophisticated way. They will have the ability to adapt to subject and situation as well as being able to communicate in a well-structured manner. It is important that students not only pass subject requirements but also acquire tools for being able to use the English language in new circumstances and succeed in expressing themselves in new contexts.

Being a teacher student, I have the impression that our didactics teachers at the university want us to teach differently when we start working compared to how it is done today. They want us to adopt new approaches towards teaching and not simply fall back on the teaching we experienced while being students ourselves. Still, I consider it important to have a thorough knowledge of how experienced teachers teach today. They have valuable knowledge to share. Rather than ignoring the wisdom they have through experience, I think their knowledge is a good base to build on.

The aim with this essay is to learn about good ways to teach grammar at the upper secondary level. This is done by studying different researchers’ opinions on how to teach grammar and develop students’ grammar skills. I have also interviewed experienced teachers in order to find out as much as possible about their insights regarding grammar teaching.

2. Background

This section begins with a short survey of various theories of language learning from the last century (2.1). In section 2.2, some factors which are believed to influence second language
acquisition are accounted for, and in section 2.3, four approaches regarding grammar teaching are presented.

2.1 Theoretical approaches to language learning
The way we learn our first language (L1) has influenced the approach to teaching a second language (L2)\(^1\). Starting at the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century with behaviourism, three main theories regarding L1 acquisition and their implications for learning a L2 are presented.

2.1.1 Behaviourism
According to behaviourist theory, children learn their L1 through hearing the language by which they are surrounded. The children then imitate the utterances they hear and practice them, and receive feedback from people around them. This interaction can reinforce the children’s language behaviour and assist them in understanding when they produce correct language structures. It can either be done through positive encouragement on well-produced utterances, or through feedback on mistakes they make. This in turn forms habits in the L1 (Lightbown & Spada 1999:35).

Behaviourism has received criticism for not fully explaining why children who are supposed to acquire their L1 through imitation can produce messages they have never encountered before. Still, behaviourism has had an impact on how we view language learning and has influenced methods for teaching a L2. The basic principle of behaviourist theory is to place greater weight on habit formation than on an understanding of the underlying rules of a language. According to this school of thought, grammar should be taught through drills and memorization, from which students are expected to establish correct grammatical behaviour (Krashen & Terrell 1985:14). Descriptivist theorists, influenced by behaviourism, believe there is interference from the L1 on L2 acquisition (see 2.2.2). To be able to acquire the new grammar rules the students need to actively ‘unlearn’ the grammar habits of the native language. Thus, these theorists think that grammar should be taught through practising L2 structures that are different from those of the L1 (Heny 1994:162).

\(^1\) L2 in this paper refers to English for learners who do not have it as a native language.
2.1.2 Generative grammar and innatism

In the middle of the 20th century, generative grammar replaced behaviourism as the predominant theory on language and language learning. Noam Chomsky hypothesized that acquiring a L1 is possible for everyone due to one’s innate knowledge of how language works, and not simply a result of imitation, conditioning and exposure to language. This innate knowledge is thought to be a universal grammar (UG) that is accessible only during the critical period lasting from early childhood to adolescence (Lightbown & Spada 1999:36). After adolescence, the brain is thought to lose its plasticity and language acquisition becomes very difficult. Theorists of generative grammar and innatism argue that UG provides the explanation for how we can create utterances we never have encountered before. By coming across examples of how the grammar of a language works, the child’s innate knowledge is activated, and parameters of the UG are set. Over a period of time, the children’s knowledge of grammar structures is constantly refined.

Later, these theories were applied to second language acquisition. Krashen (1993:725) argues that learners of a L2 need to be exposed to grammatical structures that are just beyond the learners’ current level of proficiency, which he calls “i + 1”. In such cases, comprehension and acquisition will take place, since the language to which the learners are exposed will be understandable to them. The more exposure the students have, the more likely it is that they will meet “i + 1” language. Learning grammar structures by themselves does not lead to internalised knowledge of a language, according to Krashen (1993:725), since learners cannot focus on the form of a language while focusing on what they want to express. For even if learners know a certain grammar rule and can explain its function, this does not mean they can use the correct form when communicating, i.e. focusing on meaning.

Cook (1989:176) believes that once learners of a L2 meet sufficient examples of structures from a language, the UG’s parameters are set and language use becomes automatic. She thinks that no specific attention needs to be directed towards grammar teaching, because the parameters will be set through having access to a few examples of a structure. What needs more attention is how individual words behave in sentences. She further believes that UG is available also to adults, and that they can learn a L2 faster than younger learners since they have obtained more parameters. However, critics of UG theory claim that there is evidence of acquired automatic language structures becoming affected by knowledge, e.g. when learners overgeneralize a structure which they before could use correctly (see 2.2.2). This suggests that
“the acquisition of new knowledge […] somehow fits into an existing system and causes it to be transformed or ‘reconstructed’” (Lightbown & Spada 1999:42).

2.1.3 Cognitivism and information processing

More recent psychological theories suggest that language acquisition is a process where learners need to focus actively on grammatical structures. By noticing new structures and comparing them to previous knowledge, new concepts develop. According to the information processing model, children learning their L1 are active in their language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada 1999:41). Regarding L2, theorists

[…] tend to see second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge systems that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding. At first, learners have to pay attention to any aspect of language which they are trying to understand or produce. (Lightbown & Spada 1999:41)

The teacher of a L2 acts as a facilitator who encourages students to notice structures. Fotos (2002:137) claims that explicit instruction of grammar is necessary for developing a high level of L2 accuracy. If there is no grammar teaching, there will be stagnation. She mentions that teaching that focuses on the structure of a L2 is helpful for learners “even when communicative opportunities to encounter target forms are abundant” (Fotos 2002:137). This is because giving students grammar instruction helps them activate their previous knowledge and pay attention to the structures when they encounter them.

Critics of this theory believe that approaching language in an analytical manner does not let students acquire language in a natural way as e.g. communicative approaches do, which are use-oriented. Therefore, critics think that only learning grammar rules is not an effective way of helping L2 knowledge become automatic. Yet focusing on form has proven to increase accuracy according to Fotos (2002:137). She mentions e.g. the studies of Cadeirno, who did an investigation reported in 1995, and Ellis’s investigation from 1998. Their results were that formal instruction helps activate previous knowledge and that students benefit more from such instruction than from activities focusing on meaning.
2.2 Factors influencing L2 learning

There are some factors that researchers believe influence L2 learning and that need to be taken into consideration by the teacher. These aspects are mainly thought to be the students’ age, first language, aptitude, motivation, and anxiety.

2.2.1 Cognitive development

Children learning a L2 seem to manage to internalise the grammar without it being explicitly taught. By being surrounded by a language they eventually learn to use it. Adults and adolescents, on the other hand, seem more conscious of their learning and rely more on their analytical abilities. This generally leads to adults and adolescents acquiring a high level of L2 proficiency faster than children (Krashen & Terrell 1985:45). Adults managing to acquire a L2 contradict the theory of the critical period, which suggests that only children are able to learn languages up to an advanced level. Adults also usually possess a greater capacity to concentrate and, in addition, they possess more general knowledge. This facilitates the understanding of information that is presented to them and helps them make better use of it compared to children. “For every researcher who holds that there are maturational constraints on language acquisition, there is another who considers that the age factor cannot be separated from factors such as motivation, social identity, and the conditions for learning” (Lightbown & Spada 1999:67).

There are indications that adults and adolescents learn language in much the same manner they learn any other skill, which means that some acquire a high level of proficiency while others only acquire the language to some degree (Lightbown & Spada 1999:62). In contrast, if young children are in an environment that promotes language use on a daily basis they usually manage to learn their L2 and surpass adults (Lightbown & Spada 1999:67).

2.2.2 Transfer theories

Most linguists today agree that the L1 has some influence on acquiring a L2, but that it does not account for all the errors that occur (Dulay et al 1982:101). ‘Transfer’ can be both positive and negative. When transfer results in something correct because the rules of the L1 and L2 overlap, it is referred to as positive transfer. If, instead, the rules of the L1 and L2 are different and this results in error, it is referred to as negative transfer, also called ‘interference’.
Both Swedish and English are highly analytical languages. This means that they rely on word order to express specific types of meaning, e.g. agentivity (Færch et al 1984:103). In many cases, a Swedish sentence can be translated into English word for word (Svartvik 2000:244). Due to the similarities between the languages, Swedes have a built in free grammar and positive transfer can be said to occur. In several studies, researchers have noted that when two languages share grammatical patterns, the L2 is learned more rapidly than when languages are very different in their grammatical structure (Lightbown & Spada 1999:77).

Descriptivist theorists, influenced by behaviourist thought on habit formation, believe there are two instances when negative transfer results in more problems. Firstly, when the L1’s grammar is similar to the L2’s the learners might be led to believe that they can use the L1’s grammar rules (Heny 1994:169). The learners’ perception of the closeness between the two languages might lead to more transfer than if they believed that the languages were very different. Secondly, when a grammatical structure is not present in the L1, learners may not notice it in the L2. Instead of learners being confused by similar elements of grammar, they have the preconceived idea of a structure not existing. An example is Swedish students not being able to differentiate between adjectives and adverbs, since in the Swedish language there is not as great need to make any distinction (Heny 1994:163).

According to descriptivist theorists, teachers need to be aware of what grammatical differences there are between two languages to be able to predict what areas students will find difficult. This view has affected the way grammar books are written. Most English grammar books used in Swedish schools today draw attention to the differences between the two languages that students are known to have trouble with. The problem areas include the do-construction, word order in some cases, and certain inflections (Svartvik 2000:250).

Transfer appears to be a useful way of explaining certain difficulties L2 learners have, but there is no general agreement on how it should be defined. Heny mentions that when analyzing mistakes made by L2 learners it is difficult to decide what is transferred, whether it is a result of e.g. L1 sounds, word order patterns or ‘expectations’ of how a language is structured (Heny 1994:164). She also draws attention to research that shows that in many cases where L1 and L2 differ, students actually do not produce errors (Heny 1994:165).
Krashen and Terrell (1985:40) object to the descriptivist view of transfer. They think interference occurs only when learners have not yet acquired the L2 structure, in which case they rely on their L1. It is not a matter of transfer but rather the lack of L2 acquisition. Another explanation besides claiming that errors are a result of transfer might be that there is a phase called ‘interlanguage’. Interlanguage is a language system of its own during learners’ L2 development (Mason, online). According to this theory, the rules used by learners are neither of the L1 or the L2, but instead include L1 transfer, overgeneralization and simplification. Overgeneralization might result in the learner e.g. only using the present tense and simplification might result in the learner using phrases young native speaking children would use. Another phenomenon connected to interlanguage is fossilization. Mason (online) mentions Mukkatesh’s research, where students were noticed to repeatedly make the same errors on specific structures on which “no amount of grammatical explanation or of error correction had any effect”.

2.2.3 Aptitude and learning style

As mentioned in section 2.2.1, one theory suggests that language learning might be like the learning of any other skill. Some students seem to have the ability to learn languages easily, while others struggle. According to the two most widely used aptitude tests, MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test) and PLAB (Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery), some abilities are especially important for language acquisition. The different types of abilities are: "(1) the ability to identify and memorize new sounds; (2) the ability to understand the function of particular words in sentences; (3) the ability to figure out grammatical rules from language samples; and (4) memory for new words" (Lightbown & Spada 1999:53). Each student might have a better aptitude in one of the four areas and in a study Lightbown and Spada (1999) mention, students who were taught according to their strengths had a more rapid learning progress than when this was not done. For instance, students that had better analytical abilities had lessons that focused more on grammatical structures. Alternatively, learners that had better memory skills approached the language in a more functional, use-oriented way (Lightbown & Spada 1999:54). However, Krashen & Terrell (1985:40) hypothesise that “[h]aving high aptitude makes you a good learner but not necessarily a good acquirer. This may be an asset but it is certainly not sufficient for success in second language acquisition”. Other factors besides the four aptitude types for how students process information the best can also be the learning styles. For instance, some students are more visual and might learn a
language more readily from reading and writing (Lightbown & Spada 1999:58). Others might learn better through hearing or practically using a language.

2.2.4 Attitude and motivation
A key factor for students to do well in acquiring a L2 is motivation. This can be divided into integrative and instrumental aspects. To integrative motivation belong the students’ interest in the language or its future application as well as interesting topics that they want to pay attention to during lessons, and information appropriate to their abilities (Ur 1999:280). Instrumental motivation is instead external factors such as studying for someone else’s sake or to achieve more immediate goals. Both integrative and instrumental factors are found important for success in language learning (Lightbown & Spada 1999:56). The teachers can help improve both these aspects. They can show interest themselves during lessons, set specific goals for students to reach and discuss what benefits the students can gain from the assignments (Lightbown & Spada 1999:57). Teachers can also evaluate the results the students have achieved and give them feedback on how they have improved or what steps they need to take for advancement. Further, teachers can vary the tasks and topics and challenge the students (Ur 1999:281).

2.2.5 Anxiety
Anxiety when learning a L2 is connected to motivation (2.2.4), emotional states and self-esteem. According to Krashen & Terrell (1985:38), when students are relaxed and highly motivated they are more open to take in information and remember it. In addition, if they have low anxiety and good self-esteem they are more likely to interact during class. This indicates that in the classroom environment students need to feel relaxed in order for them to get more out of the lessons and not feel that they lose face if they make mistakes.

2.3 How should grammar be taught?
Teachers can choose to teach grammar explicitly. Explicit grammar teaching means that attention is paid to the language form, i.e. a grammatical structure is described in detail (Ellis 1998:49). The students can then be asked to use the grammar structure they have been taught in exercises. This teaching method is known as the deductive approach. Explicit teaching can also be done through indirect instruction or the inductive approach. In such cases, teachers give students exercises that present specific grammar structures. The students are then asked to explain what grammar rule is used in the exercises. The positive aspect of explicit grammar
teaching is that teachers can take into consideration the students’ level of knowledge and concentrate on structures with which they have difficulties.

There is also the option of teaching grammar implicitly. Using this approach, teachers choose not to mention grammar rules. When students are given assignments, there is no explanation of the grammatical structures they encounter in the exercises. The teachers’ objective is to assist the learners’ development of a linguistic behaviour that conforms to the rules, rather than the students being able to state the rule of the grammar they use (Larsen-Freeman 1991:292). Implicit teaching might have the advantage of not discouraging students that find it difficult to approach language in an analytical way.

Grammar can also be taught through communication exercises. Communicative exercises often focus on things that students can apply to their day-to-day circumstances or situations they might encounter. One example of a communication exercise is giving directions, where students can practise prepositions and vocabulary (Larsen-Freeman 1991:290). With this approach there is less control over the grammatical structures the students use, but their ability to manage conversations is likely to improve (Lightbown & Spada 1999:150).

Teachers can combine explicit grammar teaching and communication exercises in an approach called ‘grammar consciousness-raising tasks’. "Grammar consciousness-raising tasks combine the development of knowledge about problematic L2 grammatical features with the provision for meaning-focused use of the target language" (Fotos 1994:327). This approach involves of exercises where a grammatical problem needs to be solved. The students are asked to solve the exercises working together with their classmates and thus become engaged in what they want to say rather than only paying attention to the L2 structure. Positive aspects of using this approach is that the tasks can easily be assessed and there can be avoidance of using the native language, since the content requires the students to use L2 utterances.

3. Methods

The aim of this paper is to gain insight into how to teach English grammar in a good way at upper secondary level in Sweden. By interviewing experienced teachers, I have attempted to find out what they believe works best in their classrooms today. The interview questions (see Appendix 1) dealt with how they teach grammar, what grammar they want students to learn
and how their grammar teaching has changed over the years. The questions also regarded how the teachers assessed their students’ grammar knowledge and what material they used in their lessons.

3.1 Informants
I interviewed seven experienced teachers. Five of these worked in upper secondary school and two of them were involved in municipal adult education. All have more than 25 years of practise except one who has taught for 17 years. In the results section, the teachers will be referred to by the letters A-G, and in Appendix 2 there is more specific information on the number of years they have taught as well as their gender.

After having had a number of teachers recommended to me, I approached them via email and telephone, and scheduled meetings which were to last about half an hour. When I contacted them, I was happy to find a very positive response and was grateful for the teachers taking their time to participate in my study. My intention was to interview six to eight teachers so that my investigation would not be too large, yet contain a sufficient amount of information. In all, I contacted eight teachers, one of whom cancelled a meeting and we did not have time to reschedule a new meeting.

My intention was to interview teachers who had taught for many years. The reason for having experienced teachers was because I believe they are more likely to have tested different approaches to grammar teaching and to have reflected on what has worked best for them.

3.2 Interviews
A few days before the interviews were to take place, I sent the teachers the interview questions (see Appendix 1) so they could prepare in advance. During the interviews, when they answered the questions, I tried to let them interpret the questions quite freely, which led to varied but topic-related answers. Occasionally I added questions when I thought there was some need of clarification, but tried not to interfere too much. In addition, I tried to give the teachers time to think between each question. This usually led to the teachers having a chance to add more of their thoughts on the previous question. After the last question, I took the opportunity to ask them about matters that caught my interest during the interview, and asked them to expand on subjects I believed might be of importance. The interviews lasted
approximately half an hour. All teachers spoke English, except one who preferred to speak Swedish, and two who occasionally used some Swedish.

The meetings took place in quiet rooms in the school buildings where the teachers worked. The interviews were done with each teacher individually so that it would be easier to hear on the recording what they said. During the meetings, the interviews were recorded on tape and I also took notes. We went through each of the ten questions, and towards the end of the interview the teachers had the option of continuing to speak more freely about grammar teaching and learning.

4. Analysis and results

Each of the ten interview questions will here be presented in a subsection of its own, containing the teachers’ answers. Some of the questions are phrased more briefly compared to how they were expressed in the questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

4.1 Do you believe students need to learn grammar rules, or is it more important that they can apply them when speaking and writing?

All seven teachers agreed that they thought it was important that the students could apply grammar rules when speaking and writing. Teachers A and D mentioned that they rarely taught grammar rules explicitly, and that they mainly depended on students asking for rules. Teacher A said that his students thought they learned grammar in other ways than learning rules. Instead of using the explicit approach, teacher A gave his students examples of the right way of expressing themselves in English without giving them any details of grammar. This is the implicit approach. During the interviews all the other six teachers also at some point mentioned that they used this approach in their grammar teaching.

Teacher B said she thought it depended on the students whether they needed grammar rules. She mentioned that even though English is widespread in Sweden, and that students learn it almost in a native-like way, they still make mistakes. She therefore believed students could benefit from knowing grammar rules. Rules, she said, could often make language acquisition easier. Teacher C thought that if you have learnt a grammar rule explicitly, it eventually slips into the subconscious and becomes internalized. The students correct themselves occasionally until the knowledge is there without them having to think about it. However, he also mentioned that rules could be learned through e.g. listening and reading. Then the students
might not even notice that they are using certain rules. Teacher G thought rules needed to be introduced to the students, so that there was grammatical terminology to base grammar on. She thought she needed to explain less if she could refer to rules when students made mistakes when speaking.

Teacher E thought that knowing rules explicitly did not promote acquisition. In many cases, she thought students started to overgeneralize rules instead and make mistakes they had not made earlier. Teacher G mentioned later in the interview that students started to make mistakes if you explained grammar rules too deeply. Even if they had been able to use a structure, if you started giving them the rule, they could get all confused and then would not know what to say. In this case, teacher G thought it was better to give examples of the grammatical structures. She said it depended on the student and the level. She reasoned that since students in Sweden hear so much English, they “have it in their ear”. Instead of teaching rules explicitly, students should read the texts they produced silently to themselves, and if something sounded wrong then most likely it was wrong.

Teacher F thought age was an important factor concerning the teaching of grammar rules. Before the age of 16, she thought students had little use of learning rules, as they do not have the ability to internalise that knowledge when they are younger. She said the students might be able to apply the rule directly afterwards in an exercise or a test, but not in free speech or writing. Teacher G made the same observation but thought it was true of some adult learners.

4.2 How much time do you devote to working with grammar in the classroom?
Teacher C wondered about the definition of grammar. He wondered if by grammar teaching I meant working with a text in general or if it was working with certain sections in a grammar book. If grammar teaching was applied in a wider sense than working with a grammar book, then he taught grammar approximately fifteen minutes out of three hours a week. Teacher A said he used roughly 10% of his lesson time for grammar teaching. He said he never taught grammar to the whole group, but instead taught it more individually. Based on the students’ written assignments, he made notes of errors that students made and then e.g. handed out worksheets for them to practise on. They could also be asked to correct their own mistakes or explain what they did wrong and why. Teacher B said she taught grammar between 10-15% of the lesson time, but that it was difficult to specify because it varied depending on different things. She mentioned, for instance, that students who did not have basic grammar knowledge
needed more counselling. But this she would do individually or in small groups, so that it would not be boring for the other students. She went through more advanced grammar with them all. Another thing she mentioned was that it depended on what the class was working with. As teacher C explained, sometimes students want to work more with grammar, e.g. before the national tests are coming up.

Teachers E and F said they did not work very much with grammar. Teacher F mentioned that it depended on what the students were working with, and that she mainly went through grammar if many students made the same mistakes during e.g. a written assignment. But she emphasized that she did not regularly spend time going through grammar. Teacher E said she did not go through grammar rules, but rather explained to the students how the language works without using grammatical terminology. Teacher D said she never asked for rules but explained grammar and then practiced the structures. She also mentioned that for beginners she had more regular routines, learning approximately one structure per week. Teacher G also mentioned that beginners need a bit more structure. Regarding more advanced students, she taught the areas students had problems with. She estimated the grammar teaching to take up 25% of class time, and thought that it was important to practise the structures immediately after they were introduced.

4.3 Has the way you teach grammar changed over time since you started?
Teacher A spent 60 minutes on explicit grammar teaching once a week earlier in his career. After studying rules, the students were asked to learn examples by heart. Nowadays he taught rules differently. When students made the same mistakes he tried to explain what they did wrong and how it should be. He was not sure whether this approach led to better results, because the conditions have changed. Students today can learn a lot of English outside of the classroom. However, when they make the same mistakes repeatedly, he believed teachers should try to do something about it. Teachers C, D, E and F also mentioned that they used to teach grammar more explicitly earlier. Teacher C thought that since students today get in touch with English more often than before, they already know quite a lot without having to think about it. Still, in writing, he has noticed that students make many mistakes. Therefore, he did not think the change in approach led to better results regarding writing. However, their spoken English has become better. He also mentioned that today it is easier to talk to the class and the individual students about what they want to achieve. At the beginning of his career he
did not listen as much to the students, but after a couple of years as a teacher he realized the importance of working together with the students.

The fact that Swedish students come in contact with English more often than before was mentioned by teachers D and E as well. Previously, teachers had to explain structures such as the do-construction, negation, those who, which is not necessary today. However, there are some areas of grammar which the most proficient students today have trouble with that students in the past did not, teacher E also mentioned, such as the structure they were. This was logically explained then, but today students do not seem to comprehend that logic. For instance, if she asked the students to go back in their texts and look for third person singular structures, to see if they added the –s on the following verbs, they had great difficulties. Moreover, when they have made this error for a number of years, it has become fossilised she thought. In general though, students are not in as much need of grammar teaching, which is the reason why teacher A changed his approach to grammar teaching. He also said he changed his approach because the curriculum today expects a different teaching pedagogy.

Teacher B mentioned that students in the past were more motivated and knew grammatical terminology, which facilitated grammar teaching. Nowadays instead, she found different ways of explaining grammatical structures. She mentioned how she did not use terminology as much, or explained the terminology before practising examples. She also said she simplified the grammar so that the students learned the general use of a rule first. She thought the change in her approach had led to better results, because if she were to teach the old way, the students would not understand the rules, the way they are explained in grammar books. Teacher G thought it was easier to teach grammar through examples rather than by using grammar terms. But when teaching Spanish she brought in grammar terms more, because the students needed a foundation to build on.

Teacher F said she was very interested in grammar and thought it was necessary to know the grammar to be able to learn a language. However, in the 1990’s she went to a didactics course about language learning after which she changed her approach. She decided not to teach grammar and translation to the same extent as before, but do more reading, listening, talking and writing instead. Learning a lot of grammar, she thought, had very little effect on the students. If students were good at English, it was probably because they had the ability to
notice structures in the language from e.g. watching TV and reading. The new approach she thought had not led to worse results, but rather to the same or better results.

Two teachers also mentioned motivation as an important factor. Teacher A said he could not force his students to learn grammar; they needed to be motivated. Teacher D mentioned that if students study Swedish at the same time as English, they are more interested in rules and grammar, whereas native Swedish students generally hate grammar. That is why she tended to call it structures instead. Teacher D did not know if her students had better results today, but she concluded that she had not seen any drastic deterioration, and if students were motivated to learn something, they learned it.

4.4 Have you tried teaching grammar in a way that did not work very well?
Teacher C thought some factors might make learning grammar more troublesome. These included when lessons are held, such as the time of day, what day of the week it is, and if the students have tests in other subjects to think about. If a class is tired they are less focused than otherwise. He also mentioned that it depended on the group whether an approach worked or not. Teacher D said she tried to find out what the students wanted to achieve and taught accordingly. She mentioned how at the beginning of her career she taught grammar the way she liked to learn it best herself. This, she realized, did not always work in some classes.

Teacher G noticed that when she started to explain grammatical structures too deeply, students got confused. Then she thought it was better to leave explicit teaching and teach grammar in other ways. Teacher B thought that when structures are confusing, as with when to use there, it was better to simplify rules. She also thought it was better to leave out the more difficult rules and instead teach the ones that are more important.

Teacher A mentioned that as a teacher you have to make your own mistakes and try to remember what works. What might not work for one teacher might very well work for another. He also said that there was the possibility to change a lesson plan if something did not work, or if the students were not happy about something. He said that in such cases he asked them what they would like to do instead. He thought the students should decide. He mentioned that he tried to reach out to as many students as possible by getting to know them really well, by being attentive and by listening to them. If they disagreed, then they would
have to argue for why it should be different. But if he did not yet know them very well, then he could decide for them for the first few months as to what they would be taught.

4.5 How do you decide what areas of grammar students need to work with?
Teacher B said she had not used diagnostic tests for the last few years. Instead, she asked students to introduce themselves by writing a self-portrait. From this, she learnt a great deal. All other teachers mentioned that through the students’ use of language they could detect in what areas they had difficulties. For instance, teacher G mentioned that it is easy to test whether students know the past tense by asking students to write about what they did yesterday. Teacher D said she no longer used tests or asked students to fill in gap texts, but preferred to have them write a few lines, or finish sentences. By starting sentences in a certain way and then having the students complete them, she could check specific structures. Instead of focusing on isolated structures she wanted “the full language, the language used in communication”. Teacher A said he preferred gap texts, and phrases missing. He did have grammar tests before, but today he thought he could detect the students’ grammar problems in other ways. Teacher E mentioned that today diagnostic tests did not work very well because they created too much paperwork, which was impossible to keep track of when teachers do not have separate offices and the same classrooms from time to time. However, she thought it worked well at primary level because there these things were provided.

Teachers C, D and G used diagnostic tests at the beginning of a course to find out what level students were at. However, the diagnostic tests were not used to detect what specific grammar knowledge they possessed, which was also mentioned by teacher F. Teacher C said that at their school they mainly used the diagnostic tests to detect weak students, to be able to offer them help early on. He also mentioned that getting the whole picture of the students’ knowledge could take a couple of months. During a semester the students might receive one or two big tests and some small ones during lessons and sometimes as homework. Teacher C said he decided what grammar to teach through a variety of methods. He could work on areas that tended to come up in the national test, follow the course book, and teach grammatical structures with which students had difficulties.
Teacher G said she decided what areas of grammar to work with depending on the course. She said she mainly followed the course book and the course plan. In the A course\textsuperscript{2} she went through all the grammar there was time for. In the B course\textsuperscript{3}, she mainly worked with problem areas individually and more advanced grammar. Teacher B said that nowadays textbooks had a plan at the back of the book listing what the students are supposed to know at the end of e.g. the A-course, which she found helpful. She sometimes used the grammar rules and exercises and built on them.

Teacher F thought that at primary level the students might follow a certain progression in the course books, but not in upper secondary school. However, for the French and German classes there was more need of structure, because they started from the beginning, and she therefore tended to follow the course book. Teacher C mentioned that his approach to weaker students was different from his approach to more advanced students. The former would receive easier texts and they would study grammar for shorter periods, perhaps only 10-15 minutes at a time. Teacher A thought the authors of the course books could not specify what his students needed, and therefore he did not use the course books to any great extent. However, he would use parts of the book if there were good exercises, and then mainly the grammar parts.

### 4.6 Do your students have a grammar book?

Teachers A, B, F and G mentioned that their students could borrow grammar books. Teacher A did not know how much the students used them. Some, he thought, used it regularly while others not at all. Teacher G said she did not think the students used the grammar books very much, but thought it depended on how motivated they were.

Teacher A said that if there was something they had been practicing, he recommended the students to check certain sections in the grammar book, and told them to look up some examples. However, he said he did not read them out in class. Teacher B said she used the grammar book occasionally, e.g. when working with irregular verbs. She mentioned that some students want to take the grammar book home so that they can prepare themselves better, especially before a test. In addition, she thought it is important that the students know how to use a grammar book. Teacher F and G mentioned this as well.

\textsuperscript{2} Corresponds to CEFR level B1
\textsuperscript{3} Corresponds to CEFR level B2
Teachers E and F said they did not use grammar books during their lessons. Teacher E said she could make a handout with grammar exercises if necessary. Teacher F mentioned that if they talked about grammar, then there was usually a section at the end of the textbook they could use.

Teacher C said that at their school the students had grammar books. Sometimes the books contained sections related to texts they had studied. He mainly used them when the class worked more with grammar, during certain periods, e.g. in preparation for the national test, when the students were more motivated. Teachers D and G said they used grammar books earlier, but not anymore. Then they used it regularly, and had the students study one or two sections a week, according to a given plan. Today by contrast, teacher E follows the order of presentation of the grammar included in the textbooks in the beginners’ courses.

4.7 How do you test students’ knowledge of grammar? Has the way you test this changed since you first began teaching?

Teacher B mentioned that 30 years ago the students were tested more on specific grammar features in the national tests. The students could get e.g. minus four points for writing a instead of an. In the tests, the students were examined on e.g. the conditional, adverbs, and which verbs were followed by the –ing form. Therefore, the students prepared themselves accordingly. Today, there is much more focus on understanding, on students making themselves understood, being familiar with idiomatic expressions, and there is less focus given grammar. Teacher F observed that in the 1980’s, a part of the national test was called “words and grammar”. Nowadays the sections are: reading, listening, writing and speaking. However, she said that in the writing and reading part of the test where the students fill in gaps, the teachers could check the students’ grammatical knowledge as well.

Teacher F said that in the 1980’s they had many grammar tests where students translated from Swedish into English. Gap texts with grammar were also common. She still uses this method today, not only for checking the grammar but also for checking words. She believed gap texts are good for showing the students’ abilities. The reason for her change to being less grammar oriented was partly related to the curriculum, where the goals are e.g. to listen, understand, and talk. Grammar is not mentioned separately in the curriculum. Nevertheless, she said that if students can use grammar, they can talk and write so that other people understand them.
Teacher A too preferred gap texts as well as missing phrases, which also teacher D mentioned (see 4.1.5).

Teachers A, C, E and G mentioned that they mainly tested the students’ grammar through writing. Teacher A said he analysed the students’ language and made comments and afterwards asked them to correct what was wrong. If they continue to make the same mistakes they have to practise even more. There used to be grammar tests focusing on specific structures, he said, but today he detects the students’ problems in other ways. Grammar, he thought, should be integrated, and he never graded grammar specifically. Instead he graded students e.g. on writing exercises. Teachers C and G said that they did not test grammar for its own sake or ask students to state grammar rules explicitly.

Teacher B also said that sometimes students want to be tested on specific grammar points, especially weak students. They want to be able to prepare at home and know that they have understood the grammar.

Teacher F said that her students did a diagnostic test in the English C-course\(^4\) on a computer. The results showed that many of them had troubles using the relative pronouns, and the -s right in verbs with a third person singular subject, in the genitive and in the plural.

4.8 Have you found a method for working with grammar that works very well?

None of the teachers used a written lesson plan for each lesson. Teacher C said he found it important to have some kind of short-term plan and long-term plan. With experience it was possible to assess what the group and the teacher could achieve together and take that into account when planning a lesson. One of his teaching approaches towards grammar was that after students handed in a written assignment, they sat down with him in groups of four or five students at a time. Together they looked at their mistakes and the students had the opportunity to ask questions about them. Teacher C found it better to work with a small group than individually due to shortage of time. But he mentioned that it was acceptable to do it individually if the students wanted to.

\(^4\) Corresponds to CEFR level C1
Teacher G’s method was to explain a grammar point she wanted to deal with. She said she tried to explain it with some concrete examples and then worked with it right away to see if they understood so that the students could practice the structure.

Teacher E said she goes through a grammatical structure, then lets the students work individually. If they have any questions she answers them, and to all exercises she attaches a key. One of teacher F’s methods was to ask the students if they knew how something in the language worked and then wrote a sentence on the whiteboard. She asked them things like: “why is it like this, why do you use this and what does it mean, and can you compare it with Swedish”? Then they could repeat the structure a few weeks later or the next lesson. Sometimes she wrote down the sentences on an overhead film, and went through them quite quickly while the students said the answers. Teacher B had a similar approach to the one used by teacher F. But teacher B added that for some students it was the second time around they understood a grammatical structure. She also thought it was important to have clear and sometimes witty examples because then the students would remember better.

In addition, teacher B used something called logbooks. In these, students wrote short written assignments which they handed in to her. There she marked their errors, gave them rules, and explained things to them. If they did not understand, then the students could attend extra counselling. Once the students had corrected the assignments, they handed the logbook back to her and then received grades on the assignments. But more advanced grammar she prepared in class together with all the students. Another approach teacher F mentioned was underlining the mistakes the students made in written assignments. Sometimes she wrote the right version, but usually she just underlined a word or a phrase and then went through it with the students, one at a time. It took time, she mentioned, but she thought it was better than going through a lot of grammar in front of the class. She also said that she tried to have many talking activities in small groups. She liked having the students discuss things, because she thought they needed to practice talking. Students could be quite good at listening and reading. However she did not think they were very good at talking, because they were afraid, especially to talk in front of the class.

Teacher A mentioned some other approaches. He mentioned that he used the whiteboard quite a lot, and usually improvised. He said that he was in constant dialogue with his students, asking them to help him with exercises for the whiteboard. On other occasions, he could write
a grammatically incorrect phrase on the whiteboard and then ask them to explain why it was wrong. The students were asked to discuss the problem in groups and make up their own rules. Then they summed it up and tried to agree. The explicit grammar rule was thus formulated by the students themselves. Sometimes he said he did it in Swedish but otherwise he always tried to do it in English. He thought it was important to start with what pupils knew and build on that. He wanted to be quite sure the students understood what he was saying. This also meant that he did not use grammatical terminology. If the students did not understand something, he would give them more examples. Also if students said something grammatically incorrect during the lesson, they could deal with it straight away.

Teacher D thought it was important to make language learning feel as natural as possible. She believed learning a language is about communication. Language learning is about the students wanting to say something, and wanting to have tools for it. She thought some parts of language learning had to be structures, but emphasis should be on words, she thought. She often told the students to listen to English and read newspaper articles. English, she thought, should be used and heard, because then students would not find it as difficult to use themselves. Teacher D mentioned that she had met students who knew quite a lot of structures, but they did not dare to speak. That was one of her goals, to make her students confident about their language use so they could communicate.

4.9 Do you usually give your students a plan for the whole semester, including what parts of the grammar will be dealt with and in what order?

Teacher A said he planned the semester in class. He told his students what needed to be dealt with and they decided what and when they wanted to do it. Together they planned what should be done the present lesson and the next one. Once they had decided and accepted it, he made a handout and distributed it to the class. So there was always a plan he said, and it was important that the students took part. For instance, they might be working with their text books. Then they could decide which texts they wanted to work with and how they were to be tested, which way and when. He could suggest that the students work in groups or individually. But the plan never included grammar specifically. Teacher C mentioned a similar approach. He sometimes handed out a plan for a few weeks ahead and some parts he planned with the students, and not only grammar. He thought that it was not necessary to plan more than three weeks ahead together with the students because they had other subjects to think about as well. Teacher C could give them some ideas: reading, writing, watching a film,
some grammar. Then the students could choose. If the students take part in the planning and get a chance of doing it more than only once or twice, then it tended to get better and better. He mentioned that out of e.g. three lessons, he wanted to decide over one.

Teacher C also said he had an informal plan that the teachers at the school had made together. They looked at some structures students repeatedly used incorrectly. These were e.g. verbs, the difference between adjectives and adverbs and the genitive. Then he tried to cover those grammatical structures during the school year. The teachers also compared the English A and B course, discussed the national tests and helped each other in grading their students’ compositions. Teacher G said she sometimes had a term plan for the A and the B course. For instance in English B she taught certain points like the passive, word formation, -ing and the infinitive. However, she was not sure all the teachers gave their term plans to the students in written form.

Teachers B, D, E and F mentioned that they did not have term plans regarding grammar any more. If they had a term plan it accounted for which texts they were going to deal with. As teacher B explained it:

"Then I would get a heart attack. You would be so... So many lessons, they take them away from you, because so many things happen in school. Now you are two weeks behind schedule, now you are one month behind schedule, and well, it would be very frustrating."

Instead she could discuss with the students what grammar they were supposed to know when they finished their course, what they found important and what they needed to practice more.

Teacher E said she had to use a term plan around the 1990’s, because at that time parents wanted to know what was going on and thought things should be done in a certain way. Now she had the book as a sort of guide, which she added more up-to-date information and exercises to. But she mentioned that a plan might have been good in case she was sick, which the teacher filling in could fall back on.
4.10 What advice would you like to give future teachers?
Teacher F thought it was important to listen to the students and see what they needed to practice, and try to find things that interest them. If they think something is boring they will not learn anything. But of course, as a teacher you might have to go through things that students consider boring, but then you have to try find something that makes it more interesting. Variation was also important she said. It was good to use different types of methods and materials. Then she mentioned that it was encouraging for the students to be aware of what they know, what they are good at, bad at, what they can improve. Additionally, it is helpful for the students to know how they learn the best. They also need to be aware of why they are learning. For instance, “now we are reading this text because we are going to learn words”.

Especially reading and writing promote grammar acquisition, teacher F mentioned, because then it is obvious to the students if they make mistakes. Since students nowadays read very few books, in Swedish as well, it is good if they get familiar with reading books. Then they are more likely to continue to read English books, and thus keep the language more alive.

Teacher A said that if you have been successful in the classroom, try to repeat the method you used in the future and forget about what went wrong. Listen to the pupils, they are a good source of knowledge and have many ideas. To motivate them he found important, and that you meet them as individuals, and not only as a big group. He thought it is good to remember that what might not work in one group might work in another one. Especially if you do a lot of work in preparing a class, then it is good to try it on another one before you decide to forget about it. You can also ask the students why they thought it did not work. Talk to your colleagues; tell them about things that were successful and things that were not. Discuss with them and tell them what was appreciated in the class and problems that you faced.

Teacher B thought it was important for students to start learning the right way of expressing themselves early on in their education. She also said that grammar teaching should start with the simple structures and gradually move on to the more difficult ones. Teacher B thought that if the students got jobs where they have to write in English, it is important that they have a good command of the grammar. So she thought it was good to tell them that grammar is a tool that provides shortcuts to the language. Also, she mentioned that it is important to be positive as a teacher, for it affects the class in a good way.
Teacher C’s advice was to learn many ways of teaching, e.g. grammar. “There are many ways of reaching a goal, all of them are quite fine.” He recommended that the teacher students try different ways of teaching, and change them so they are suitable for you as a teacher and the different groups of students. He advised future teachers to be prepared to adapt to new situations that arise, and to be flexible. In addition, he recommended them not to be afraid to admit if they do not know something, not be afraid to make mistakes. It will be better next time he said. All experienced teachers have made a lot of mistakes and they have met groups where nothing works, according to teacher C. He added:

But on the other hand, when you feel you have a group where let’s say everything works, and that fantastic moment when you have these lessons, when you feel that everything is just fine. That is what is wonderful about being a teacher I think. It is still as rewarding as when I started.

Teacher D mentioned that it is important to be yourself, and feel good about being a teacher. Then you will be able to create a good atmosphere in the classroom. Make grammar as simple as possible to start with, as black and white as possible and then add more information as you go along. The more advanced your students are, the more difficult it is for them to know what to add to their knowledge. Sometimes you must challenge them, let them work with a text that might be slightly too difficult to show them that they really do not know everything.

Teacher E’s advice was to keep all the material, and make copies of what you find good. Organize the material so that it is easy to access. She mentioned that it is good to be attentive, and not prestige oriented. In addition, she thought you should not take it too personally if the students complained about finding the lesson boring from time to time.

Teacher G said that students should not learn rules for the sake of learning rules. She thought it was better to use the language as much as possible instead. She said that you can remind them of the structure, talk about the structure, discuss the structure, but not dwell on rules because they are not motivated to learn rules. If the students are motivated they will put it in their language. They will write, they will speak, and they will be attentive. Reading, she mentioned, was a big thing too. Students need to read books, so they recognize the structures in print. Then she concluded that motivation is very important for learning.
5. Discussion

Teachers are provided with some guidelines for how to structure their English lessons for second language learners. These are formulated in the course plan and the curriculum. One thing that is emphasized in the course plan is the development of an all-round communicative skill. However, grammar is not mentioned specifically. But in relation to the communicative aspect, the course plan mentions awareness of language and the ability for students to analyse. This gives the teachers the choice to include the teaching of grammar rules. As seen in the interviews, some teachers chose to include grammar, but some believed that communication exercises alone provide enough grammar acquisition.

What I believe communicative exercises mainly provide is fluency. Fluency in language has to do with being able to know what to say and how to express different matters (Fearch et al 1984:143). Among other things, it is to understand the ambiguity in the sentence “visiting great-aunts can be a nuisance” (Aitchison 2003:89). But accuracy has an important role as well in understanding ambiguity. Accuracy has to do with being able to express oneself with subtlety and correctness. It is chiefly taught through grammar exercises (Malmberg 1993:127). The combination of fluency and accuracy is what I believe can help students reach the level of proficiency they might need in their future work.

In a study on how well Swedish students do in English compared to seven other countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, and Spain, one of the conclusions were:


The study concludes that Swedish students are generally better at speaking and reading than writing, but that their knowledge is above average compared to the students in the other seven countries. This is very pleasing to see. However, the result that Swedish students are better at speaking than writing I believe implies that their fluency is better than their accuracy. When
the students are speaking, there are not as many requirements on structures. If they have difficulties in communicating a specific matter, they can choose to express themselves in a different way. In written assignments however, it is easier to evaluate the students’ grammar knowledge. Therefore, it appears that the students’ grammar knowledge is less developed.

Some grammatical aspects are more difficult to acquire than others. Students having difficulties with subject-verb agreement were mentioned by a few teachers during the interviews. The students were also said to have difficulties with relative pronouns, the genitive and the plural forms, when to use *it* and *there*, using the right tenses etc. I think that since students in many cases have produced the same errors for so long, they need more than to meet the correct way of using the structure in communication. I believe attention needs to be given to the specific structures. Most teachers in the interview seemed to focus on the parts of grammar that students had difficulties with, using the implicit approach. But I would like to promote the explicit approach as well, which I believe can be just as good a way of teaching. What is important is to not to teach structures in isolation. The rules should be taught in contexts, e.g. through sentences that students can relate to on a personal level.

I think one of the reasons teachers prefer not to teach grammar so much is that the students seem to have the preconceived idea that grammar is boring and frighteningly difficult. Two teachers in the interview said that they preferred to call the grammar rules *structures* instead, because the students found it less threatening. However, I believe that grammar does not only have to appeal to the analytical part of the brain. By teaching grammar in context, it can be made to fit more types of learning styles and student aptitudes. Thus, the students might find grammar more interesting. The students’ motivation is very important, and if there is something I would like to study further, it would be how the students experience these teachers’ approaches in relation to what grades they have in English. To sum up my thoughts on grammar teaching, I want to say that grammar is not something you do just because you have to, but it is what provides a shortcut to the language. Knowing and understanding a language, its underlying structure, is what shows that a person has command of a language.

6. Conclusion
My study demonstrates that the teachers in my investigation mainly use the implicit way of teaching grammar. The explicit way was more common some twenty, thirty years ago. However, some teachers have not abandoned that method altogether, and especially beginners
were thought to gain from being introduced to grammatical rules. This applied to other foreign languages as well, besides English. The teachers who also taught a second foreign language mentioned that in those classes they taught rules to greater extent.

The teachers seemed to consider grammar to be a central part of knowing a language, but since students are often negative towards grammar, teachers tend not to mention the word grammar, and not teach rules in isolation. Instead, grammar teaching today is more integrated with communication oriented exercises. In total, three of the teachers estimated that they worked approximately 10% with grammar, two that they barely worked with grammar at all and two that they worked quite a lot with grammar.

All teachers assessed their students’ knowledge through their use of the language and very seldom through tests on specific grammar structures. The teachers could see, mainly through writing assignments, what areas the students had difficulties with. They went through these areas with the students. Many methods were mentioned. Among them were corrections in the texts, talking about mistakes in groups and going through them in class.

Grammar books in general were not used very frequently. However, several of the teachers mentioned that they thought it was good if the students learned how to use them. The course books also seemed to replace grammar books to some extent. They appeared to work better because the rules were related to texts. This was often the advantage of the course books compared to grammar books, where only a few examples were presented out of context, and the language was also experienced as more difficult.

The fact that students come in contact with English more frequently than before was mentioned by almost all the teachers. One mentioned that students learn the language almost in a native-like way. Nevertheless, they still make mistakes, which was also commented on. Another change that was brought up was the students’ lack of understanding of grammar terms. Many teachers said that since the students do not understand grammar terms, they preferred to teach through examples rather than using grammar terminology.

Motivation was often mentioned as very important for the students to be successful. Therefore, as a teacher to be able to motivate the students seemed to be a valuable asset. Including the students in the lesson planning seemed a good way to motivate them.
Communicating with them in this way also gave the teacher a chance to see what the students wanted to achieve. Being able to see the students as individuals and to assess their knowledge was also considered essential. However, it was mentioned that getting to know the students took time.

Grammar learning is essential for it gives students the tools for developing their language. If in the future they get jobs when they need to deal with companies abroad, English is usually required, especially in the written form. Then knowing one’s grammar is important for having a good impression. For students to learn grammar through communication seems the more natural way of approaching a language than studying rules in isolation. However, when the same errors are repeated, teachers have to bring the students’ attention to those specific structures. Learning a language takes time. Often students have to repeat the same structure several times until it becomes internalized. But as several teachers said during or after the interviews, it is very rewarding to see when students finally get it. Their eyes light up.

In conclusion, there is not one way of teaching grammar that works. There are many approaches, and what might not work on one occasion might work on a different one, or with a different class. What might not work for one teacher might work for another. What is important is to enjoy teaching, not to be afraid of testing new approaches, and to discuss your lessons with your colleagues.
References


Appendix 1
Interview questions

How do you teach grammar?
1. Do you believe students need to learn grammar rules, or is it more important that they can apply them when speaking and writing?
2. How much time (approximately) do you devote to working with grammar in the classroom? (Try to give this in relation to the number of hours you have; e.g. “In a class that meets for 3 hours a week we spend about ½ hour on grammar every other week”; alternatively – if it is not possible to specify the time - “I never teach grammar to the whole group but let students do exercises on those parts of the grammar that they have problems with.”)
3. Has the way you teach grammar changed over time since you started?
   If yes: What made you change your approach?
   How did you change your approach?
   Did your new approach lead to better results?
4. Have you tried teaching grammar in a way that did not work at all or did not work very well?
5. How do you decide what areas of grammar students need to work with? Do you use a diagnostic test, do you follow the plan in the course book or do you use some other way of deciding?
6. Do your students have a grammar book? If yes, how much do they use it and in what way?
7. How do you test students’ knowledge of grammar? Has the way you test this changed since you first began teaching? (What was the reason for that?)
8. Have you found a method for working with grammar that works very well? (If yes, could I see a lesson plan for a lesson when this method was used?)
9. Do you usually give your students a plan for the whole semester, including what parts of the grammar will be dealt with and in what order? (If yes, could I see what such a plan looks like?)
10. What advice would you like to give future teachers?
### Appendix 2

**List of informants**

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