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Learning Grammar

A study of upper secondary level students’ attitudes and beliefs concerning the learning of grammar

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Abstract:

The communicative approach to language learning is widely taught in Western education, and yet its predecessor, the grammar-translation method, is still commonly employed in other parts of the world. In Sweden, the increasing popularity of the communicative approach is often justified by the high level of students’ communicative skills (Öhman, 2013). At the same time, students’ written texts and speech contain many grammatical errors (Öhman, 2013). Consequently, being aware of their tendency to produce grammatical errors, some students express beliefs regarding both the explicit and implicit learning of grammar (Sawir, 2005; Boroujeni, 2012). The objective of this thesis is to gain more knowledge regarding students’ beliefs concerning the learning of English grammar at the upper secondary level, in Sweden. With this purpose a survey was conducted in two schools in Sweden, where 49 upper-secondary English students participated. Qualitative and quantitative methods were applied to process the collected data. Despite some difference in the participants’ ages, there were many similarities in their attitudes towards the teaching and learning of grammar. The results show that the participants in both schools believe that only by applying both, explicit and implicit methods, can they obtain a high level of language proficiency. The results of this study can help teachers in planning different activities that enhance the students’ knowledge of grammar.

Keywords: explicit teaching, implicit teaching, grammar learning, upper secondary school
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1. Introduction
The communicative approach for teaching foreign languages and the grammar-translation method are used throughout the world. The communication approach is currently popular in Europe, and there are no signs that the popularity of this approach will diminish in the near future. The communicative approach is based on Krashen’s (1985) idea of comprehensible input. A primary goal of this approach is the development of communicative skills and fluency. An emphasis is placed on interaction, conversation and language use. Hence, there is less focus on grammar (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.110). When applying the communicative approach, the teacher does not aim to teach specific features of language, since the teaching focus is on the development of learners’ linguistic competence to the extent that the students possess sufficient language ability to interact successfully in various contexts.

The teaching of foreign languages in Sweden is based on the communicative approach. According to Öhman (2013) Swedish students are some of the best in Europe in terms of communicative competence. And yet, despite their good communicative skills, they still have a great number of grammatical errors in their written texts and oral productions (Öhman, 2013). Consequently, teachers concerns regarding the students’ knowledge of grammar, their individual needs and the possibility to combine the students’ needs with the goals outlined in Swedish National Curriculum and English syllabus, influenced the decision to investigate the applied teaching methods and the students’ attitudes towards grammar. Thus, the previous research of this author, which was a systematic literature review, focused on the way in which students at the upper secondary and university levels learn grammar. During that study it was revealed that student’s preferences regarding the way in which grammar is taught and classroom activities run, are often based on their previous experiences. Additionally, the results of the previous thesis indicate differences in students’ grammar errors and reveal that a possible explanation for these errors may be the interference from the student’s first language. Moreover, it was reported that despite learning grammar through the application of grammar-translation methods, where practicing grammar and translation into a learner’s mother tongue are the chief activities, students acquire a
passive knowledge that is difficult to apply in their spoken and written productions (Sawir, 2005; Yunus, Sulaiman, Kamarulzaman & Ishak, 2013).

Bearing in mind the results of the author’s previous research, and the popularity of the communicative approach in Europe, it would be of interest to conduct a study in Sweden and to gain knowledge about student’s attitudes towards the learning of grammar as well as to investigate student beliefs.

1.1 Aim and research questions
The aim of this thesis is to find out more about upper secondary level students’ attitudes to and beliefs towards English grammar. In order to achieve the aim the following research questions were posed:

1. What strategies for grammar teaching do students find beneficial for learning grammar?
2. What activities do students believe are beneficial for grammar learning?
3. To what extent can these strategies and activities be linked with implicit or explicit learning?

2. Background
This section includes a brief overview of Swedish steering documents concerning the teaching of grammar. Thereafter, several methods of the teaching of grammar, as well as learning strategies that are designed to facilitate learning, are presented. Bearing in mind the importance and relevance of previous scientific studies concerning students’ attitudes and beliefs with regards to learning grammar, several studies are also briefly introduced in this section.

2.1 The Swedish National Agency for Education on the learning of grammar
The primary objective for teaching English in Sweden, as described in the commentary materials for the subject of English, is development of the students’ communicative competence and linguistic confidence (Skolverket, 2011). Linguistic confidence comprises mastering vocabulary, phraseology, pronunciation, prosody and grammar (Skolverket, 2011). According to the syllabus for English courses 5 and 6, the Swedish National Agency for Education
does not mention grammar as being the main objective in the teaching of English at the upper secondary level. Nevertheless, grammar is one of the chief components of language, thus, the teaching of grammar needs to be included in language learning at the upper secondary level.

Additionally, the Swedish National Agency for Education recommends that the teaching of English should be conducted in the target language. At the same time, the level of language needs to be appropriate since “students should also be given the opportunity to develop correctness in their use of language in speech and writing, and also the ability to express themselves with variation and complexity” (Skolverket, 2012). These recommendations can be interpreted as follows: English needs to be used as a language for communication during the lessons. At the same time, when teaching English, the teacher needs to provide the input as well as to help students with the grammar issues in a way that students can develop a correct language.

Finally, Swedish syllabuses for English 5 and English 6 courses for upper secondary level are developed according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), and they are equivalent to levels B1 and B2 on a global scale. The learners of these courses are classified as Independent Users (Council of Europe, 2001). According to the description of level B1, learners can communicate with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; they have generally good control with noticeable mother tongue influence. Errors in their speech may occur, but it is clear what learners are trying to express. Speakers at the B2 level have good grammatical control. Occasional “slips” or non-systematic errors can still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect. “Users show a relatively high degree of grammatical control and do not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding” (Council of Europe, 2001, p.28). According to the description of the B- levels, the accuracy and the grammatical control over language production are stressed. Subsequently, the teaching of grammar at the upper secondary level should be given sufficient attention in order to help Swedish students develop a high level of language proficiency.
To summarize, the Swedish National Agency for Education recommends creating “natural” settings in the classrooms in order to facilitate the learning of language. Together with learning in the target language it stresses the importance of learning language structure, i.e. the development of correctness and complexity of the target language. With this purpose, good knowledge of grammar can help students to control their English speaking and writing and to use language at a more advanced level.

2.2 Grammar teaching methods, learning strategies and classroom activities

Brown defines learning strategies as “specific attacks that we make on a given problem” and adds that strategies vary considerably within each individual (2007, p.132). Also, two terms are defined and used by linguists and educational psychologists when describing language learning strategies: explicit and implicit learning. For the present thesis the definition and the distinction between these strategies are essential, since these strategies are relevant to one of the study questions, namely, to what extent strategies, chosen by the participants, can be linked with implicit or explicit teaching methods. Since these two strategies are important for the present study, their definitions are presented below.

Brown argues that explicit learning “involves conscious awareness and intention” (2007, p.132). Although Brown’s definition is broad, it relates to grammar learning because rules within language is knowledge that must be consciously learned. When writing about explicit knowledge, Ellis (2008, p.418) supports Brown’s definition by defining explicit knowledge as “conscious, declarative, anomalous, and inconsistent [...] and generally only accessible though controlled processing and planned language use”.

When considering explicit learning and explicit knowledge, Lightbown and Spada highlight the importance of settings. They state that explicit knowledge develops within the settings in which the focus is the learning of language. Language itself and teacher’s explanation of grammatical structures or vocabulary is provided in the learners’ first language (2006, p.109). Such settings resemble the traditional
Implicit learning is defined by Brown as “learning without conscious attention or awareness” (2007, p.132). The implicit knowledge is, therefore, informal and is used automatically (Brown, 2007, p.302). In line with Brown, Ellis (2008, p.418) describes implicit knowledge as “intuitive, procedural, systematically variable, automatic, and thus available for use in fluent, unplanned language use”. He adds that implicit knowledge is not verbalized. Furthermore, Ellis argues that implicit knowledge is only learnable before learners reach a critical age—e.g., puberty (2008, p.418).

When considering implicit learning, Lightbown and Spada (2006) point out differences in learning a second language in a non-instructional or “natural” setting and learning in the classroom. What are referred to as “natural settings” in this thesis are the settings in which the learner receives information and interacts in the target language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.109). Also, many people believe that learning “on the street” is more effective (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This belief may be based on the fact that long exposure to the target language or “a natural setting” is beneficial. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006, pp.53-67) implicit knowledge develops naturally when learners are constantly exposed to the input in the target language, such as listening to a conversation between native speakers, receiving different types of information, using the target language for different purposes, and in various social situations during the day. Additionally, Hedge (2000) supports this belief by arguing that repeated exposure to frequently occurring structures increases the development of the implicit knowledge.

Considering various methods of teaching language, Lightbown and Spada (2006) point to strengths and possible limitations of each method. Rather often students’ success in content-based courses is measured in terms of their ability to “get things done” in the second language, rather than on their accuracy in using certain grammatical features (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.110). As a result, when learning a language through the grammar-translation method, the learner might be
unable to communicate effectively in the target language. The lack of communicative skills can be demonstrated by insufficient communicative activities (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.110). Furthermore, Brown (2006) stresses that when there is too much focus on grammar or too much devotion to rules, the learners develop a dependence on correctness. Brown (2006) also adds that when learning a language using this approach, learners might focus on a specific form during the lesson. Nevertheless, they might fail to produce this form later in a natural setting. Considering the teaching of grammar, Larsen-Freeman (2003, pp.17-29) explains the limitation of the grammar-translation method in the following way: learners may construct correct utterances; however, they might fail to convey the correct meaning.

While considering the limitations of the grammar-translation method of teaching language, one also needs to mention the benefits, emphasized by Hedge (2000, p.151): Explicit knowledge is essential for learners as it helps them to identify gaps between their productions and the language produced by native-speakers. Thereafter, explicit knowledge can help students to monitor and check their language and increases their awareness of what needs to be improved. In addition, not only the grammar-translation method, but also the popular communicative approach has its limitations and benefits.

When considering the communicative approach, Larsen-Freeman (2003) expresses doubts about the notion that language can only be acquired only at an early age. She believes that the acquisition of language is possible during adolescence and even later. However, because the acquisition process slows down with age, the natural conditions of acquisition should be recreated in the classroom and an implicit teaching of grammar should be complemented with explicit teaching.

The Swedish National Agency for Education provides teachers with guidelines for developing students’ knowledge of language and the surrounding world (Skolverket, 2011). At the same time, teachers are given the freedom to choose teaching materials and various activities that should enhance the students’ communicative skills and grammatical competence.
Generally speaking, grammatical competence includes the mastery of pronunciation, syntax, morphology and the acquisition of vocabulary (Lundahl, 2012). In order to develop grammatical competence students must be involved in various activities in which they can apply different strategies to fulfil tasks. The definition of the strategies and activities, as either explicit or implicit, was found in Scott (2011): The explicit strategies are defined as teaching the rules and grammatical structures of the target language. The implicit strategies are defined as strategies by which students naturally develop the entire grammatical competency needed in order to communicate in various situations. When working with writing tasks students become involved in processes such as the organization of ideas; the organization of sentences into paragraphs; checking grammar; spelling and punctuation (Vince, 2004). This means that students must apply explicit knowledge in order to check the grammar in their written work.

Eclectic teaching approaches that combine a focus on form with communicative practice is described in Savage, Bitterlin and Price (2010). There, samples of activities and strategies for learning of grammar explicitly and implicitly are presented. When teaching grammar explicitly the teacher begins by introducing the grammar point being focused on and explaining it. The explanation may possibly involve using grammatical terms to do so (Savage et al., 2010, p.16). Thereafter, students can work with grammar exercises as well as, reading and listening comprehension exercises, which focus on the target grammatical structure.

In an implicit presentation, the target grammatical structure comes in contexts that can vary: the teacher can use pictures, illustrations from books, texts and even recorded communications (Savage et al., 2010, p.19). The main point of the implicit presentation is a high-frequency-repetition of the target structure. One can even apply a “hybrid” presentation “that introduces the grammar implicitly, in a meaningful context, and also includes an explanation of form, meaning, and use” (Savage et al., 2010, p.19).
According to McCarten (2007), development of grammatical competence is even possible during the process of acquiring vocabulary. When working with vocabulary students focus on various vocabulary forms and grammatical patterns. For instance, when learning verbs, students might also learn the verbs’ compliments i.e., “items and structures that must follow or that usually follow any particular verb, such as objects or infinitive verbs” (2007, p.6).

To summarize, both the communicative approach and the grammar-translation method have benefits and limitations that need to be taken into consideration. The combination of the communication approach and an approach where the focus is on the learning of grammar and translation rules, can be beneficial for students to develop communicative skills and grammatical competence. The implementation of both approaches seems to be possible within one classroom activity.

2.3 Previous research concerning students’ beliefs regarding the teaching and learning of grammar

Some scientific studies of learners’ attitudes and beliefs regarding language learning were considered in the first thesis. As the results in several studies are valuable for the present thesis a brief introduction of these studies is presented below.

Sawir (2005) presents a study conducted with 20 EFL students who were undertaking a bridging program to supplement their International English Language Testing System score; a score that is required for further studies at universities in Australia. The study aimed to determine the students’ beliefs with regard to learning grammar and their experiences acquired during the ten week courses in Australia. During the interview, the participants were asked questions about their previous experiences learning grammar. As all of the participants were Asian students, they were coming from a grammar-translation background, and their focus was on learning English grammar for the purposes of reading and writing. According to the participants’ answers, oral communication skills were almost totally ignored and there was no conversation practice in the classroom. Participants also identified a lack of listening comprehension exercises. Additionally, they also had few opportunities to use English outside the classroom.
At the same time, they were focused on avoiding grammatical errors because of the teachers’ negative reaction. After ten weeks studying in Australia, the majority of students still strongly believed in teaching grammar explicitly. However, they discovered the benefits of the communicative approach and task-based activities. Ultimately, the majority of students “strongly agreed that it was best to learn English in English speaking countries, where there was more linguistic input and more opportunities to learn” (Sawir, 2005, p.576).

Yunus, Sulaiman, Kamarulzaman and Ishak (2013) presented a study that was conducted in Malaysia. The objective of this study was to investigate the difficulties in learning English as perceived by Malaysian students. During the research, a semi-structured interview was conducted in order to collect data. The participants were six Malaysian students. During the interview, the participants were asked questions about their experiences of learning a second language, the difficulties they perceive, and, what they believe can help them to overcome these difficulties. The participants agreed that understanding spoken English, as well as speaking in English were two difficult tasks. In addition, students said that they “faced difficulty in applying grammar rules in discourse manner” (Yunus et al., 2013, p.134). The conclusion was that students’ poor speaking skills were due to a lack of opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Additionally, the students exhibited a lack of confidence in using English grammar as mistakes triggered negative responses, such as laughing in the classroom. These students believe that maintaining an English speaking environment in school might help them to become confident in applying grammatical knowledge, and, to overcome difficulties with speaking and understanding of English speech.

Boroujeni (2012) similarly presents the study of students’ and teachers’ beliefs regarding the teaching of grammar. The participants were 128 Iranian students and five EFL instructors. The study was based on data collected by applying a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. The main focus of the survey was to collect data that would demonstrate students’ and teachers’ beliefs on the effectiveness of different approaches in teaching grammar. The following approaches were chosen for investigation: Focus on Forms - an approach which
entails teaching discrete linguistic structures in separate lessons; Meaning-focused Instruction – an approach that requires the participants to treat language as a tool for achieving some non-linguistic goal rather than as an object to be studied; and Focus on Form – the result of attempts to find a middle way between form-focused and meaning-focused instruction (Boroujeni, 2012, p.1571). The result of the questionnaire showed that 90% of the participants saw the benefits of the Focus on Form approach. Also, the data, collected via the questionnaire, showed that only 12% of participants found the Focus on Forms approach helpful, and that 2.3% of participants could benefit from the Meaning-focused Instruction method (the participants of this study could choose more than one method when answering the questions). Boroujeni came to the conclusion that in general, in an Iranian EFL context, the Focus on Form instructional approach that emphasizes meaning with attention to form was favoured over a Focus on Forms approach, which is equated with the tradition teaching of grammar.

In another study, conducted by Simon and Tavernies (2011), presents the advanced learners’ beliefs regarding the learning and teaching of English grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The participants were 145 students who are native speakers of Dutch, and who studied English by using the communicative approach. Data was collected by dissemination of a questionnaire that contained both, a semantic scale and Likert scale. The results showed that according to students’ beliefs, knowledge of vocabulary was the more important form of knowledge for communication, rather than grammar or pronunciation. Thereafter, the majority of participants “mostly disagreed” with the statement that they paid too much attention to correct usage of English. They believed that a focus on correctness had a negative influence on their fluency. Learning “correct grammatical usage” was quite difficult according to them (Simon & Tavernies, 2011, p.908). The conclusion of this study was that the participants were positive toward in-class exercises as the most efficient tool for learning grammar. They also identified staying abroad and self-study as the best ways to improve their grammar knowledge (Simon & Tavernies, 2011, p.909).
As can be seen in the aforementioned research, students express beliefs regarding a combination of various methods of teaching grammar. They also seem to believe that it is easiest to learn grammar when a variety of activities are used.

3. Theoretical perspective

Since the 1960s, researchers’ interest towards the process of learning a second language has increased, as well as it has been described by the scientists from different fields such as linguistic and psychology. Subsequently, working on this phenomenon, researchers in education developed a variety of theories where different roles were ascribed to the function of grammar in the language learning process. Thus, different theories exist nowadays together with different opinions regarding the learning and teaching of grammar. Several language learning theories that are crucial for the present thesis are presented below.

3.1. Behaviorism

The behaviourist theory, founded by psychologist J.B. Watson, rests on the analyses of human behaviour in the stimulus-response interaction. Applied to the acquisition of a first language, this theory suggests that children learn their first language by connecting sounds with objects, action and events around them. Despite the fact that in language learning, the behaviourist theory is concerned with the acquisition of one’s first language, Lindahl (2012, p.192) argues that the linguistic behaviour and habits that are developed during the learning of the first language have an influence on the learning of a second language. According to the behaviourist theory, the correct linguistic behaviour needs to be encouraged whilst linguistic errors must be avoided. Hence, the errors, produced by the students in written texts and speech are corrected by the teacher. In so doing, the students’ become aware of the errors and, at the same time they are given the correct forms. The popularity of this theory decreased when Chomsky expressed his doubts regarding the fact that infants acquire the language of the people that surround them. According to Chomsky (1959) there is a difference between the linguistic input received by infants and the language they produce later. Conversely, Lindahl
(2012, p.193) argues that the majority of humans daily speech consists of words, phrases and expressions that have been used before.

**3.2 Krashen: Comprehensible input**

In 1970s and 1980s, Krashen developed a model of second language acquisition which consists of five hypotheses: The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, The Natural Order Hypothesis, The Monitor Hypothesis, The Input Hypothesis, and The Affective Filter Hypothesis. Since only three of these hypotheses have relevance to the present theses, they are introduced below.

The first hypothesis states that notions such as *acquisition* and *learning* are different: the first notion, acquisition, is the definition of an unconscious process whilst the second, learning, is a process that requires the learner’s conscious effort. According to the Acquisition-learning hypothesis, there are two independent avenues through which adults are able to develop linguistic competence. Adults can either consciously learn grammatical rules or absorb language the same way as children master their first language. According to this hypothesis, the ability to acquire language does not disappear in puberty. It is also argued that error correction does not influence the acquisition; yet, this method can be rather useful for learning (Krashen, 1985). The acquisition of a second language is strongly connected with the Input hypothesis. The input of a target language needs to be comprehensible and substantial for the learner to acquire the target language. In addition, the learners need to be motivated to acquire the target language otherwise the intake does not occur (Krashen, 1985).

The Monitor hypothesis is the most relevant of Krashen’s five hypotheses for the current study. This hypothesis explains how conscious and unconscious language learning mechanisms cooperate. The unconscious knowledge initiates a learner’s production in a target language while the conscious knowledge works as a *monitor* that controls and corrects the learner’s speech. The *monitor* can be used either before an utterance is pronounced or afterwards. In order for the *monitor* to function properly three important conditions need to be fulfilled: the *monitor* or learned competence needs to exist; the learners need time for using the *monitor*; and, finally the learners have to be involved in the monitoring process and focused
on form. Krashen (1985) adds that the monitor might be used differently by
different learners. Hence, learners can be divided into three groups: over-users,
under-users and the optimal monitor users. Monitor over-users are those who
constantly control their output and, hence, have poor fluency. Monitor under-users
are those who avoid using their conscious knowledge to control their output. The
optimal Monitor users are the learners who control their output when it is
appropriate. The learner uses the monitor when he or she realizes that a
grammatical error might alter the meaning of an utterance and there is a risk of
misunderstanding (Krashen, 1985). With regards to his hypotheses, Krashen
(1985) insists that the pedagogical goal of second language learning is to produce
optimal learners who could combine various strategies and activities as well as to
use both conscious and unconscious knowledge.

3.3 Swain: Output hypothesis
Comprehensible input is, however, not the only sufficient condition for second-
language learning. The output hypothesis of Swain (1995) identifies output as a
second important part of the process of language learning. Teachers use output in
order to evaluate students’ knowledge about topic. When considering output,
Swain (2005) argues that output plays an important role in the learning process.
Output helps students to notice a gap between their need to express themselves in a
target language and their abilities to fulfill it. The discovered gap pushes students
to explore language further and, subsequently, this enhances the learning process.
Furthermore, output helps students to test knowledge and to discover whether the
utterances that are produced by them are correct or not. Finally, Swain (2005)
discusses the metalinguistic function of output which means that learners can use a
target language to reflect on output. By so doing, they discuss the structures and
meanings of the utterances in a target language and, at the same time, they learn
more about the language. Swain is certain that learners need to be pushed by their
teachers to produce output in a target language because students’ oral and written
productions will demonstrate what areas need to be improved on, in order to
increase learning potential.
3.4 Long: Interaction hypothesis

The Interaction hypothesis identifies the learning of language as a result of the interaction between individuals. The learning of language takes place when one interlocutor who has a high level of linguistic competence adjusts his/her language to the level that is comprehensible for another interlocutor, who is in the process of learning the target language. The learner’s linguistic competence is enhanced during such interactions in which both interlocutors strive to achieve mutual understanding. In a classroom in which the described method is used, the students receive negative responses as soon as the teacher corrects the inaccurate phrases. Due to this negative response, the students identify the differences between their productions and the correct linguistic structures.

4. Material and Method

This section contains the description of the material and the chosen method, together with a description of the respondents of the survey. Thereafter, a description of the method that was used for processing the data collected as well as an explanation of the way this data can answer the research questions, are provided.

4.1 Chosen method

The material that is used in this survey consists of the students’ answers to various questions regarding the way they perceive how they learn grammar. A questionnaire, attached as an appendix was administered in order to collect the material for the current study. The questionnaire was developed according to the objectives for the teaching of a second language – perception, production and interaction- set out by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2012, p.1). Additionally, the ideas regarding the classroom activities and the methods for the teaching of grammar were borrowed from the teaching material for English 5 and 6 courses, such as “Blueprint A” and “Blueprint B” of Lundfall, Nyström and Clayton (2008).

The questionnaire contains a large number of close-ended questions, one open-ended question and one question in checklist format. According to McKay (2006,
“close-ended questions allow for more uniformity of responses and are easy to answer, to code, and to analyse. On the other hand, these open-ended question provides a narrow range of answers which limits the informants’ opportunities. In contrast, open-ended questions can provide richer data”. This type of question is rather easy to answer, as there are more opportunities for description. On the other hand, these questions can be extremely difficult to code and analyse (McKay, 2006, p.39). The quantitative method was applied for the analysis of the close-ended questions regarding learning strategies. This method was appropriate, since the answers to the close-ended questions were presented in numbers and such data requires numerical analysis (McKay, 2006, Cohen, 2007). The Likert scale used in the questionnaire consists of five and in some questions of four options. Additionally, the qualitative method was applied for analysis of the open-ended question and the question in checklist format. This method was chosen specifically for analysis of the data that is related to the second research question. According to McKay (2006), the qualitative method is applied when the results cannot be presented in numbers and, thus, they need to be described. Since different types of questions are used in the survey, the collected data cannot be presented in a statistical index. Thus, it was decided to apply the quantitative method for the analysis.

The questionnaire that was developed for the survey contains a number of questions concerning the learning of grammar through various classroom activities and strategies. The questions regarding classroom activities and strategies were collected and grouped into five sections, which are “Grammar and writing”; “Grammar and speaking”; “Grammar and reading”; “Grammar and listening” and “Grammar activities in the classroom”. Each section is related to one of the four language skills: writing, listening, speaking and reading. The last section includes the questions about the activities that students would like to have in the classroom in order to improve their knowledge of grammar in the target language. The majority of questions are close-ended, yet, the questionnaire also contains one open-ended question (see Appendix B).
4.2 Selection of informants
Due to the difficulties of obtaining true random samples a sample of convenience was used; this means that the researcher used participants who were available for the survey (McKay, 2006). The participants are a sample of students studying English at the upper-secondary level, from two schools in a town in Sweden. The participants were, at the time the data was collected, enrolled in English 5 and English 6 courses. Since there are comparatively few students at the high school in the town, it was decided to include students from municipal adult education (Komvux), identified as School 1 in this thesis, as well as students from the high school identified as School 2. In School 1, there were 14 participants (1 male and 13 females). The age level of the participants varies from 20 years, up to 37 years old. In School 2, there were 35 participants (16 males and 19 females). The majority of the high school participants were 18 years old. The total number of the informants who responded to this survey was 49.

4.3 Implementation
The survey took place in two schools during regular lessons. The information letters were distributed to all of the students. When the students’ consent forms were received, the questionnaires were distributed among the participants. Thereafter, the questionnaires with students’ answers as well as the letters of consent were collected by the classroom teachers and forwarded to the author of this thesis for further processing.

4.4 Method of analysis
The processing of data included three stages. Firstly, each of the possible answers of the close-ended questions was quantified as follows: “strongly agree”-1, “agree”-2, “disagree” -3, “strongly disagree”-4, “don’t know”-5. Secondly, the questions with four possible answers were processed separately. The participants’ responses to each question were counted. Thirdly, the questions, where the majority of participants chose answers 1 and 2, were selected. This selection is based on the aim of the research questions to define the most beneficial strategies and the classroom activities for grammar learning. Thereafter, the data was sorted to answer the research questions, i.e., the questions were categorized as examples of either learning strategies or classroom activities.
The strategies, identified by the students as the most beneficial were selected and the frequency is presented in table 3 (see Appendix C) and table 4 (see Appendix D). The frequency is explained as a number of participants, who chose one particular answer (McKay, 2006, p.42). In order to compare the results of the survey between the two schools the data was collected in table 5 (see Appendix E) and presented in figure 1. There, the number of answers 1 and 2 were totalled and presented as a percentage.

The data was also processed by applying the qualitative approach in order to answer the second research question. All data related to the classroom activities was collected and carefully described.
Finally, in order to answer the third research question, the most beneficial strategies and activities were categorized as either explicit or implicit learning and presented in table 1 and table 2.

4.5 Reliability

The reliability of the research can be increased by using several methods. Firstly, the reliability of the survey increases when the appropriate instrument is used for the collection of data. A questionnaire was chosen as an instrument for the survey, since this instrument made it possible to involve 49 participants. Secondly, the variety of questions allowed information that was relevant to the study questions to be obtained. Furthermore, the choice of appropriate methods for the processing of the data contributes to the reliability of the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.146). In the present thesis both, qualitative and quantitative methods were used to process various types of data.

For research to be reliable, it must also demonstrate that similar results can be found if the research were to be carried out on a similar group of participants in a similar context (Cohen, et al., 2007, p.199). Taking this into consideration the same questionnaire was used in both schools.
Finally, before the questionnaire was disseminated, piloting was used to increase the validity of the survey. In this case piloting consisted of giving the survey to a student from upper secondary school, in order to try to match the group that will be surveyed (McKay, 2006, p.41). The questionnaire was tested by a student to determine whether the questions were clear and whether they were perceived correctly. During the pilot phase some limitations were revealed and several minor changes, such as the wording of answer alternatives, as well the wording of some of the questions, were made. For example, the answer alternative “neutral” was replaced by “Don’t know”, and it was also added as an answer alternative to the majority of questions. Additionally, in section 2 “Grammar and speaking”, in question 4, the wording “native speakers’ production” was changed to “someone else’s production” since, according to the pilot, students often compare their answers with each other and with the correct answers that their teacher provides. So, these changes helped to improve the reliability of the questionnaire.

4.6 Ethical aspects
During the research the Swedish Science Council’s requirements concerning ethical aspects were considered and followed. According to the requirements regarding all researches, the individuals need to be informed about the project before they are asked to participate. With this purpose an information letter was sent to all the participants before the survey. Since all participants were 18 years old and over, each of the participants received the information letter personally. The letter (see Appendix A) contains information regarding the aim of this thesis and what participation in the survey entails. Emphasis is placed on the voluntary basis of participation. The personal information about the participants is used in such a way that it does not reveal the identity of any of the participants. As soon as the material collected during this survey is not required for the present thesis work, it will be destroyed. Upon conclusion, the participants and the classroom teachers will be informed of the results of the survey.

5. Results
In this section the results of the survey are presented. The first two subsections contain the results from an analysis of students’ beliefs regarding the most
beneficial strategies and classroom activities for the learning of grammar. The third subsection contains the result from the analysis of the tendency toward either explicit or implicit learning that the participants might have according to their answers.

5.1 Students’ beliefs regarding the most beneficial strategies for the learning of grammar

The survey aimed to find an answer to the question of which strategies are the most beneficial for learning grammar, according to students’ opinions. The strategies that were identified by more than fifty percent of the participants were chosen and considered as the most beneficial (see table 3 in Appendix C and table 4 in Appendix D). Tables 3 and 4 present the frequency of each received answer regarding the most beneficial strategies.

![Figure 1. The comparison of students’ beliefs on the most beneficial strategies](image)

Figure 1 demonstrates the students’ beliefs regarding the most beneficial strategies for learning grammar. The data reveals similarities in the students’ answers. The results show that strategy 2 - “Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is” - was preferred by the majority of the respondents in both schools. The respective school responses are given in the diagrams below. However, there were also students who did not use this strategy for the learning of grammar.
The similarity in students’ beliefs is also seen noticeable in strategy 8: “Listening exercises that practice specific grammar construction”. In School 1, more students chose the answers “strongly agree” than in School 2. There were also some students who did not know the answer to this question (see Diagrams 3 and 4).

The results also show that the answer “agree” regarding strategy 5 - “Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher” - had approximately the same frequency in School 1 and School 2 (see Diagrams 5 and 6). In this response, there were also students who chose the answers “don’t know” and “disagree” in both schools.
Some differences are seen in students’ answers regarding strategy 6: “Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases” (see Diagrams 7 and 8). In School 1, the majority of the participants agreed with the benefits of this strategy. There were also more students in School 1 than in School 2 who chose the answer “strongly agree” when answering this question. In contrast, in School 2, there were a significant number of students who did not consider this strategy as helpful. Subsequently, there were fewer students who chose the answers “agree” and “strongly agree”.

When analyzing the participants answers regarding strategy 7- ”Noticing different constructions while reading”, it becomes clear that the answers of School 1 students were more varied and that there were fewer students in this school who preferred this strategy, when compared with School 2 (see Diagrams 9 and 10). In School 1, there were students who disagreed and even chose the alternative “strongly disagree”, in response to this strategy. In contrast, in School 2, the majority of the students agreed with the benefits of this strategy.
Figure 2 presents the answers collected in both schools concerning the beliefs regarding the most beneficial strategies for the learning of grammar, which are divided by gender. From this figure one can see that an equal number of female and male participants agreed regarding the benefits of strategy 3- “Speaking with others in English”. The similarity is also seen in the answers regarding strategy 6: “Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases” and strategy 5- “Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher”. The answers regarding other strategies are not as agreeable, and the difference between females’ and males’ answers is the most noticeable in response to strategy 1- “Comparing own writing to other written English”.

```
Figure 2. The comparison of the male and female participants’ answers regarding the most beneficial strategies
```
5.2 Students’ beliefs regarding the most beneficial activities for the learning of grammar

Some questions of this survey concerned the activities that help students to improve grammar. According to the aim of this thesis, the most beneficial activities named in the questionnaire were selected. The data demonstrates that among all activities, mentioned in the questionnaire, the following five activities were identified as the most beneficial:

- Practicing grammar exercises from the textbooks.
- Explanation of grammar rules by the teacher.
- Reading different kinds of texts.
- Listening to native speakers.
- Speaking to others in English.

According to the frequency in students’ answers in School 1, “explanation of grammar rules by the teacher”, received the most responses in School 1, where all 14 participants expressed the helpfulness of this activity by choosing either the answer “very much” or “a little”. “Practicing grammar rules” and “Listening to native speakers” were identified by 13 participants as the most beneficial activities. “Reading different kind of texts” and “Speaking to native speakers” have also received a high number of responses, with 13 and 11 respectively.

The data collected from School 2, demonstrates rather similar results. Here, the activity “reading different texts” has received the majority of positive responses (“strongly agree”- 10 participants, “agree”- 20 participants). “Explanation of grammar rules” was named by 29 participants as a beneficial activity (“strongly agree”- 10 participants, “agree” – 19 participants). “Listening to native speakers” received 28 responses (“strongly agree”- 7 participants, “agree”- 21 participants). Although, “Practicing grammar exercises” and “Speaking to others in English” have fewer positive responses than other activities, with the total number being 20 responses each.

The open-ended question and the question in check list format are considered separately. The open-ended question allowed the participants to mention other activities that could help them in learning grammar. The question in check list
format contains some additional alternatives that according to the participants could help them to learn grammar. Not all participants answered these types of questions. However, among the answers one can see a pattern: the participants in both, School 1 and School 2 mentioned similar activities. In School 1 the participants named “Working with grammar exercises” and “Explanation of grammar rules” as the most desirable activities; while ”Listening to the TV and music”, “Speaking”, and “Reading books” were mentioned by only one participant.

In School 2, the participants named “Listening to native speakers”, “Listening to the music”, “Watching TV-programs and movies in English”, “Reading books and newspapers”, and “Speaking with each other and participating in discussions” together with “Working with grammar exercises in the textbooks” and “Explanation of grammar rules by the teacher”; as the most beneficial activities.

5.3 The tendency that the students have towards explicit or implicit learning of grammar

The third research question of the present thesis is concerned with a tendency toward explicit and implicit learning. In table 1 the most beneficial strategies are defined as either explicit or implicit ones. It can be seen that the majority of the beneficial strategies can be linked to implicit learning.

Table 1. The presentation of the strategies as explicit and implicit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Implicit</th>
<th>Explicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Comparing own writing to other written English</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Speaking with others in English</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Noticing differences between own and others’ production</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases by teacher</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Noticing different constructions while reading</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Listening exercises that practice specific grammar constructions</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One can also see the activities that are defined by the participants as the most beneficial for the learning of grammar. These activities as well as their linking to
either implicit or explicit learning are presented in Table 2. It seems clear that among the five activities, mentioned by the participants in the open-ended question, the activities that help to develop implicit knowledge dominate.

Table 2. The presentation of activities that help to develop implicit and explicit knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Developed knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Practicing grammar exercises from the textbooks;</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explanation of grammar rules by the teacher;</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading different kind of texts;</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listening to native speakers;</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speaking to others in English</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Discussion
In this section the results are discussed and compared to previous research. The theoretical perspectives are applied to the collected data, and then the study questions are answered based on the results. This section also contains a discussion of the limitations of this thesis.

6.1 Discussion of results
6.1.1 The strategies, identified by the participants as the most beneficial
In the present survey 49 participants took part, and data required for answering three research questions was gathered. The results show that the majority of the participants have identified eight strategies as the most beneficial for the learning of grammar. This indicates that the participants prefer to vary the strategies when they learn grammar. As Brown (2007) notices, to vary strategies is rather natural. Moreover, this result can be defined as positive since it is in line with Krashen’s statement regarding optimal learners. In addition, this result appropriates the aim that is stated in the Swedish National Curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) that students need to develop linguistic confidence as well as communicative competence.

The strategy, “Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistakes it is”, was chosen as the most effective strategy for learning grammar by 100% of participants in School 1, and 94% of participants in School 2. The popularity of this strategy can be explained by the fact that writing texts is one of the activities that students are rather often involved in. When working with their
own texts, students are given the opportunity to use their knowledge of grammar and to express themselves with variation (Skolverket, 2011). Moreover, to check spelling is one of the necessary components of the process of writing (Vince, 2004). Likewise, Swain (2005) also emphasizes the significant role of the output in the process of learning language. When learners try to write in a target language they receive feedback from the teacher that helps them to correct errors and to explore language further.

Even though the majority of participants agreed on eight strategies some similarities and differences in their answers can be seen. As it was previously mentioned, students’ answers were rather similar regarding the following strategies: “Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is”; “Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher”; and “Listening exercises that practice specific grammar construction”. On the contrary, the following two strategies were rated by the participants differently: “Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases”; “Noticing different constructions while reading”. The popularity of the strategy “Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases” was higher among the students in School 1 which is in line with the Behaviorists’ point of view and the Lindahl’s (2012) statement that teachers need to encourage students’ correct linguistic behavior. However, in order to interpret the low popularity of this strategy among the students of School 2 further investigation needs to be done. Thereafter, taking into consideration the fact that the average age of the participants in School 1 is higher than the one in School 2, the older participants preferred strategies such as “Comparing own writing to other written English”, “Speaking with others in English “, “Correcting mistakes by the teacher” and “Repeating correctly incorrect phrases by teacher”. In contrast, the participants in School 2 preferred to learn grammar by using strategies such as, “Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is”, “Noticing differences between own and others production”, “Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher”, “Noticing different constructions while reading”, and, “Listening exercises that practice specific grammar constructions”. These differences can partly be explained by the fact that the students of School 1 attend
distance English courses and have classes once a week. It means that these participants might rely much more on their previous experiences in learning grammar, since they work individually most of the time. However, in order to give any credible explanation, additional investigations must be conducted regarding the participants’ previous experiences in language learning, in English.

In addition, further patterns can be seen in Figure 2, where the most beneficial strategies identified by the male and the female participants are compared. The male and female participants prefer somewhat different strategies for learning grammar. This fact cannot be explained out of the available data and there is no applicable theory, in this thesis, which can account for gender differences in terms of the learning grammar. In order to make any suggestions about the correlation between gender and preferences in learning grammar, one needs to make a number of investigations where the number of female and male participants is preferably equal. Also, many other factors can be taken to consideration, such as the participants’ age, their interests, previous experience in the learning of grammar, and even their personality. Hence, further investigation of this phenomenon is required.

Ultimately, by comparing the results with previous research, some differences can be seen. First, students of upper secondary level of English perceive the correction of errors by their teachers rather positively. This strategy helps them to improve their grammar knowledge, while students in some other countries avoid making mistakes due to the negative reaction of their teachers (Yunus et al., 2013). Thereafter, Swedish students pay attention to the difference between their own and others production and they see speaking with others in English as a beneficial strategy. This fact relies on the positive classroom environment, which is essential for learning (Sawir, 2005).

6.1.2 The activities, identified by the participants as the most beneficial

When analyzing activities, named by the participants of two schools, five of them were defined as the most beneficial: “Practicing grammar exercises from the textbooks”; “Explanation of grammar rules by the teacher”; “Reading different
kind of texts”; “Listening to native speakers”; and “Speaking to others in English”. The participants of both schools gave rather similar answers. This means that by being involved in various meaning-focused activities, they can still switch their attention to linguistic features of English, which are considered as an effective method for developing language competence (Long, 1997). Working with grammar exercises was also mentioned in other studies as the activity that significantly enhances language learning (Sawir, 2005, Simon & Taverniers, 2011). However, to focus on grammatical forms solely might have negative effect (Lindbown & Spada, 2006, Brown, 2006, Larsen-Freeman, 2003); other activities must be included in lessons as well. The activity “Staying in English speaking countries” was identified as beneficial for learning grammar (Sawir, 2005). By staying in an English speaking environment, students can pay attention to how various grammar constructions are used in context. At the same time, students have the opportunity to participate in conversations and improve their fluency.

6.1.3 Linking the identified strategies and activities with explicit and implicit learning

The third research question of this study was to define whether the students at the upper secondary level prefer to learn grammar explicitly or implicitly. The results demonstrate that two explicit and three implicit activities were named by the majority of the participants. According to Krashen (1985) the learners use their learned competence only when it is developed. The survey results of this study show that the majority of the participants do use their monitor to control the correctness in their productions in English, and that they find this strategy reliable and effective. Also, the learners use the implicit activities that help them to identify similarities in and differences between their and others’ linguistic behavior. This fact demonstrates the topicality of the behaviorist theory and the output hypothesis in the learning of grammar.

However, the implicit strategies dominate in the results of the most beneficial strategies. At this particular study level the students are over 18 years old. By this age the acquisition of language definitely slows down and gives space to rather conscious learning (Lightbown & Spade, 2006, Brown, 2007, Ellis, 2008). Yet, it
does not disappear and the implicit strategies are clearly still popular among the students. Taken in the whole context, it appears that the participants see the combination of explicit and implicit learning as the most effective.

The results of the previous studies show that in general, students believe in traditional grammar-translation method complemented by various communicative activities. This blended method appears to give more opportunities for students to use their learned grammar and to enhance the development of their communicative skills (Sawir, 2005, Yunus et al., 2013, Boroujeni, 2012).

6.2 Limitations of the thesis
As with any study, this study has some limitations that should be identified. A questionnaire was chosen as the instrument to obtain data for the present thesis. This instrument was effective in that it allowed 49 participants to take part in this study, and to collect valuable information during a rather short period of time. There are, however, some limitations in applying a questionnaire. Many participants did not answer the open-ended question. This might be explained by a large number of close-ended questions that are rather easier to answer. This might mean, as well, that the majority of the students had difficulties into identifying other activities that were not included in the questionnaire.

Also, when applying a questionnaire, there is a risk that participants might not understand all questions correctly. During the survey there was no possibility to clarify questions for the participants, as could be done in an interview. Despite the pilot survey, one cannot argue that all questions were understood by the participants clearly, since the pilot study consisted of a single student. Finally, when creating the questionnaire, not all existing activities and strategies were included. This might have an influence on the results as well.

The results of the survey cannot be generalized as for this purpose a random sample of representative group should be used (McKay, 2006). In the present survey a sample of convenience was used (McKay, 2006).
7. Conclusion

The present thesis aimed to gain empirical knowledge about students’ beliefs on grammar learning at upper secondary level. With this purpose the survey was conducted in two schools in Sweden. The results of the survey show that the majority of students believe in a combination of explicit and implicit strategies and activities, for the successful learning of grammar.

The results demonstrate clearly that at the upper secondary school level, students tend to use previously learned grammar knowledge to monitor their language productions. According to Krashen (1985), the ability to control language productions consciously develops gradually while acquisition slows down. For adults, conscious learning is an important part of language development (Krashen, 1985). All participants of the survey are 18 years old or older, and in correspondence with their answers, the majority of them tend to apply explicit strategies. However, the implicit strategies are still highly applicable according to the participants. The similarity is seen in students’ choice of learning strategies: the explicit strategies were highly ranked by the participants. Yet, the number of the implicit strategies is larger. This means that implicit activities within the communicative method dominate in the classroom. Also, the activities that recreate natural settings are noticeably beneficial.

While it became possible to answer the research questions based on the collected data, general claims cannot be made. They can only be made on the basis of a large-scale survey, which is based on a random sample “in which inferential statistics have been used to verify that the results of the survey are not due to chance” (McKay, 2006, p.46). One cannot make any claims whether the participants are the optimal monitor users or not either despite the choice of both, explicit and implicit methods for improving their grammar knowledge. Since the collected data solely presents students’ beliefs, further investigation must be conducted.

8. Further research

The present study considers students’ beliefs and attitudes on the explicit and implicit learning of grammar in English. Bearing in mind the teaching goal to
produce optimal monitor users (Krashen, 1985), a field study might be conducted with the aim to investigate in what situations students monitor their productions in English. Data collected within such an observation can indicate the shortage of either “natural settings” for implicit learning or instructional setting for explicit learning. This information could be very useful for both, teachers and learners, as it would help to make teaching better adjusted to students’ individual needs.
9. References


Appendix A.

Information letter
Dear student!

I am looking for students to participate in a research survey concerning the teaching and learning of English in Swedish upper secondary schools. The survey will take about 20 minutes and will take place during w.40-41. The survey will be used primarily in my current thesis work at Högskola Dalarna. It will also help me to understand and meet students’ needs in my future job as a teacher. As participant, you will be asked to answer a number of questions. Your contribution to the survey will be greatly appreciated.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and all questionnaire responses will be treated confidentially. You may withdraw your participation at any time. It will not affect your studies and the grade for the English course in any way.

All data collected during the research will be used by me personally and will be destroyed after the grading of the current thesis work. This survey will be run by me, Petra Tuomas, and the results will be presented to your school at a later date. I am a student of a program for upper secondary school teachers.

I agree to participate in the questionnaire: Yes ☐ No ☐

_________________________________________________________
Signature, date, place

Contact information:
First and last name (print)____________________________________
e-mail: ___________________________________________________

Student: Petra Tuomas
Email: h11pettu@du.se
076-xxxxxxx

Supervisor: Christine Cox Eriksson
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023-778858
Högskola Dalarna
731 88 Falun
Appendix B

Questionnaire

The purpose of this survey is to gain information concerning your experience of learning and using grammar.

Background information

Where do you study English?
Upper secondary school (Gymnasiet) ☐ Komvux ☐

How old are you?
Under 20 ☐ 20-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ Over 40 ☐

I am male ☐ female ☐ other ☐

I. Grammar and writing

These questions concern your present writing activities and grammar learning.

1. Practicing grammar exercises from the textbooks helps me to improve correctness when I write.
   Very much ☐ a little ☐ not much ☐ not at all ☐

2. I compare my writing to other written English as a way to correct my grammar mistakes.
   Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

3. Explanation of grammar rules by the teacher helps me to write correctly.
   Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

4. I get better in writing when the teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is (for example, subject-verb agreement error).
   Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

II. Grammar and speaking

These questions concern your in-class oral activities and grammar learning.

1. Practicing grammar exercises from the course material helps me to improve correctness when I speak.
   Very much ☐ a little ☐ not much ☐ not at all ☐

2. Speaking to others in English helps me to speak more correctly.
Strongly agree ☐  Agree ☐  Don’t know ☐  Disagree ☐  Strongly disagree ☐

3. I correct my own mistakes while I’m speaking.

Strongly agree ☐  Agree ☐  Don’t know ☐  Disagree ☐  Strongly disagree ☐

4. I learn to use grammar constructions through noticing that someone else’s production is different from my own.

Strongly agree ☐  Agree ☐  Don’t know ☐  Disagree ☐  Strongly disagree ☐

5. When speaking, this helps me to speak more correctly:
   a. The teacher explains grammar rules.
   b. The teacher stops me and asks me to correct myself by choosing between two alternatives.
   c. The teacher repeats my incorrect word with a rising tone, but doesn’t give me the correct answer.
   d. The teacher corrects me by repeating correctly my words and phrases.

   III. Grammar and reading

These questions concern your in-class reading activities and grammar learning.

1. I notice different grammar constructions when I read.

Strongly agree ☐  Agree ☐  Don’t know ☐  Disagree ☐  Strongly disagree ☐

2. I improve grammar knowledge when I translate English texts into my native language and compare grammar constructions in the two languages.

Strongly agree ☐  Agree ☐  Don’t know ☐  Disagree ☐  Strongly disagree ☐

3. Reading different kinds of texts in English helps me to use the language more correctly.

Strongly agree ☐  Agree ☐  Don’t know ☐  Disagree ☐  Strongly disagree ☐

IV. Grammar and listening

1. The following in-class listening activities help me improve my grammar:
   a. Listening exercises that practice specific grammar constructions (such as the past tense).
   b. Listening to native speakers speak (these are people with English as a mother tongue).

V. Grammar activities in the classroom

1. How much do you think the following classroom activities help you to learn grammar?
   a. Working with grammar exercises
   Very much ☐  a little ☐  not much ☐  not at all ☐
   b. Teacher explanations of grammar rules
c. The teacher pointing out my mistakes and letting me try to correct them

2. What else would you like to do in the classroom in order to improve your grammar?

Thank you for your participation!
**Appendix C**

_Table 3. The strategies, defined as beneficial by students of School 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Numb.</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Numb.</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Numb.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing own writing to other written English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking with others in English</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing differences between own and others’ production</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases by teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing different constructions while reading</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening exercises that practice specific grammar constructions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix D**

_Table 4. The strategies, defined as beneficial by students of School 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Numb.</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Numb.</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Numb.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing own writing to other written English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking with others in English</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
differences between own and others’ production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases by teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing different constructions while reading</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening exercises that practice specific grammar constructions</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix E

**Table 5. The strategies, defined as beneficial by students of both schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills/strategies</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Comparing own writing to other written English</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher underlines the incorrect words and writes what kind of mistake it is</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Speaking with others in English</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Noticing differences between own and others’ production</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Correcting myself by choosing between two alternatives, offered by the teacher</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teacher repeats correctly incorrect phrases by teacher</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Noticing different constructions while reading</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Listening exercises that practice</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| specific grammar constrictions |       |       |       |       |