Chapter 16

Comparing Teachers' Views on the Role of Grammar and Error Correction in Language Teaching with Those of Their Students

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Abstract

There has always been a great deal of controversy over grammar and error correction in language teaching. Furthermore, teachers and students might have their own specific views on these controversial issues, which makes the need for various investigations in this regard even more evident. Following the same line of research done by Schulz (1996; 2001), the present study primarily aimed at comparing teachers’ and their students’ opinions on the role of grammar and error correction in language learning. For this purpose, a 15-item questionnaire (an adaptation of Schulz’s original questionnaire) was distributed among 440 students together with their 76 teachers in Tehran. A comparison of standard deviations revealed that students and teachers were almost equally consistent in their attitudes toward both grammar and corrective feedback; however, the chi-square results indicated that there was a discrepancy between teachers’ and their students’ perceptions of grammar and, especially, error correction, which could reduce the pedagogical face validity and in effect the effectiveness of the learning process. Another general finding of the study was that the students, as compared with their teachers, held more strongly positive attitudes toward grammar and error correction. The results further showed that female students were generally more in favor of error correction as compared with their male counterparts. Among the most significant pedagogical implications of the study is the need to consider the teachers’ and students’ perceptions of grammar and error correction and the possibility of discrepancy between the two before organizing instruction.

Introduction

Teacher cognition has been defined and approached in various ways; however, all these different ways fall under the broader category of unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching. It could, in general terms, be defined as what teachers know, believe, and think. According to Borg (2006), this area of research can be viewed from two perspectives: themes and subject matter. The perspective of themes is further classified into the three categories of teacher’s language learning experience, teacher education, and classroom practice. The subject matter perspective is divided into two sections of literacy and grammar teaching. The perspective of subject matter can be generally categorized into two sections: literacy and grammar teaching. The latter, which deals with teachers’ knowledge of grammar, their practices in grammar teaching, and their beliefs about teaching grammar form the focus of this area of research.

A number of studies (e.g., Williamson & Hardman, 1995) focusing on teachers’ knowledge of grammar have emphasized the insufficiency of this type of knowledge among both pre-service and in-service language teachers. Others (e.g., Andrews, 1999) have compared the explicit knowledge of grammar or grammatical terminology of native speaker versus non-native speaker teachers. The conclusions almost agree on the point that native speaker teachers are less
competent when it comes to an explicit awareness of grammatical rules and terms.

Studies examining teachers’ practices in grammar teaching have mostly tried to find out more about how teacher cognition and practices in grammar instruction inform each other. The work done on KAL (Knowledge About Language) and TMA (Teachers’ Metalinguistic Awareness) highlighted the insufficient attention paid to the findings of SLA research by teachers, the distinction between declarative and procedural language knowledge of teachers, individual differences, and the role of experience (Borg, 2003).

Teachers’ beliefs about grammar teaching have also been researched, in a number of cases, in parallel with an assessment of students’ attitudes toward grammar. A comparison of the two variables constituted the core of the discussions presented in such studies (McCargar, 1993; Schulz, 1996; 2001), in all of which a discrepancy was found between teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward grammar teaching and corrective feedback. The present study primarily planed to pursue the line of research surveyed in the three studies done by McCargar (1993) and Schulz (1996, 2001) by further exploration of teachers’ versus students’ attitudes and beliefs on the role of grammar and error correction in learning EFL.

The incongruence found in many studies between teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about language learning has been argued to create a negative atmosphere in language teaching (e.g., Horwitz, 1988; Nunan; 1987; Schulz, 2001), due to the assumption that mismatches might decrease the pedagogical face validity and delimitate student motivation. The primary purpose of this study is to check for such mismatches in the context of private language institutes in Iran.

Review of Literature
As discussed above, the present research aimed at comparing teachers’ and their students’ opinions toward both grammar teaching and error correction. Below is a brief discussion of the major issues related to these two topics.

The war against grammar teaching
Grammar has been the subject of much debate not only in second language acquisition, but also in school curriculums for native speakers of English. In the context of school curriculum, criticisms leveled against teaching grammar went so far that the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the elimination of formal grammar instruction from the grade school curriculum in the US (Mulroy, 2003).

Krashen, in the minds of many, is the one who is readily associated with running a war against teaching grammar. Krashen’s Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis and the idea of comprehensible input vehemently attacked grammar instruction by arguing that people learn naturally, and, as far as comprehensible input is provided, there is no need to teach the rules of grammar (Krashen, 1980; 1981; 1982). In Krashen’s Monitor Model, the role of grammar was limited to that of monitoring the language production only when the three conditions of time, focus on form, and knowledge of the rule were present.

Chomsky’s Universal Grammar (UG) also casts doubts on the effectiveness of grammar teaching. Chomsky argues that all human beings are born with a set of principles which justify the developmental order of first and second language acquisition (White, 2003). Accordingly, teaching grammar would be useless, as learners instinctively follow their own UG, and they will only need the right input (also called positive evidence) (Schwartz, 1993). In the same line, it is argued that grammatical syllabuses cannot change the natural order of acquisition, and insisting on the immediate accuracy is an attempt in vain. Some others, however, such as Cook (2001), have considered a role for negative evidence. Assuming a role for negative evidence in the UG model of second language acquisition does not really
improve the status of grammar teaching because the role of grammar is limited to negative
evidence and explanations or practice will be absent.

The other major criticism of grammar teaching comes from the supporters of Lexical
Approach in which the focus of teaching is shifted from grammar to chunks of language
(Baigent, 1999). According to Lewis (1997), chunks of language – ranging from individual
words to, in some cases, full sentences – are independent lexical units conveying fixed
meanings. Proponents of Lexical Approach argue that people can learn a second language
better if they are taught the lexical items (the other name for chunks) as whole units instead of
receiving grammatical explanations or learning how to analyze sentences. As it is the case in
many other methods and approaches of language teaching, the primary support for Lexical
Approach comes from first language studies, where children have been reported to learn their
first language chunk by chunk, and not in an analytic manner (Willis, 1990).

Other criticisms of grammar come from today’s learners’ expectations. More and more
learners are taking English classes to become fluent in communicating with people of other
countries. Many of such learners do not really care about how accurate or standard
their English would be. Grammar teaching is usually not regarded as an effective device in helping
this big group of learners reach their communicative goal (Widdowson, 1978). Such an
argument has gained more urgency, especially in recent years, as learner-centered classes
have become more and more trendy, and, at times, learners themselves participate in
designing language syllabuses, or, at least, the syllabuses are carefully designed based on their
needs and wants (For examples of such syllabuses, see Long & Crookes, 1992).

The support for grammar teaching

After a period of intense attacks against grammar teaching, especially by the fervent
proponents of the strong form of CLT, once more grammar instruction received much of the
researchers’ and practitioners’ attention. This trend was strengthened by the fact that
grammatical competence was included as one of the four main elements of the communicative
competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). The new interest in grammar was, of course, practically
different from that of the older approaches to grammar.

Pienemann’s teachability hypothesis also favors grammar instruction. Based on this
hypothesis (Pienemann, 1984; 1988; 1999), although learners’ developmental stages are
rather fixed and cannot be easily modified through formal instruction, teaching grammar can
contribute to language learning by reinforcing it when the instruction matches the
developmental readiness of the learners.

Investigating the role of output in second language acquisition, especially Swain’s output
hypothesis (Dekeyser, 2007; Swain, 1995), has also led to further support for grammar
instruction. Swain (1995) states that output is a stronger device than input in involving
learners in deep mental processing of the language. Additionally, as Swain argues elsewhere
(2000, p. 99), output has the potential to take the learners “from the semantic, open-ended,
strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing
needed for accurate production.” Output has the potential to enhance the hypothesis-testing
ability of the language learners; it is through production and receiving feedback from the
interlocutor(s) that learners find the opportunity to test the hypotheses that they have formed
in their minds about how language functions (Ellis & He, 1999; Shehadeh, 2001). The role of
output is also traceable in promoting noticing, which is discussed below.

In contrast with the claims made by some researchers regarding the unconscious nature of
language acquisition (DeKeyser, 2001), the role of conscious attention to form in learning a
second language received growing attention (See Anderson, 1995; Tomlin and Villa, 1994;
Wickens, 1992), and many people started studying it. Schmidt’s noticing hypothesis is
probably the most well-known work done in this regard. According to the strong version of this hypothesis (Schmidt, 1993, 1994, 1995), conscious awareness of form is essential in learning. The weak version of noticing hypothesis regards noticing as only helpful, but not essential, in learning. The strong version has had its own share of criticisms, but the merits of the weak version are not hidden to researchers. Furthermore, there have been studies, such as Tomasello (1998), that show second language learners cannot simultaneously process the input from both aspects of meaning and form, and so if they do not focus specifically on form, they will fail to acquire it.

Many years of research in French immersion programs in Canada has revealed that input-rich environments and merely meaning-focused activities lead to high levels of comprehension and even fluency but fail to improve learners’ accuracy (Harley, 1992; Harley & Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1986). Considering the fact that some of the students spend almost 12 years in such immersion programs and still have serious accuracy problems in their productions, the argument is that some kind of grammar teaching is necessary. As Long and Robinson (1998, p.21) note, resolving the accuracy problems of immersion students would be possible either through “enhancement of positive evidence” or “through provision of negative evidence of some kind.”

Ellis (2006) also points to two reasons that make grammar teaching an essential part of a second language classroom. As the history of language teaching shows, learners have almost always expected to be taught some grammar. If this expectation is not fulfilled, then it might reduce the pedagogical face validity in the eyes of the students and negatively affect them. The other reason is that the systematic instruction of grammar makes the students feel a clear sense of progress.

The studies done on acquisition theory provide further support for grammar teaching. After years of research in this field, there is now little doubt that second language learners cannot become very accurate producers of language if they do not receive formal grammar instruction – even if they manage to achieve high levels of language proficiency. There are at least four reasons for this: age, communicative sufficiency, lack of negative feedback, and lack of pushed output.

Arguments for and against error correction

Error correction has been criticized on a few theoretical and experimental grounds. Schwartz (1993), for example, argues that positive evidence alone is sufficient for acquiring a language and that negative feedback plays no significant role. Truscott (1999, p. 441) states that it causes “embarrassment, anger, inhibition, and feelings of inferiority.” He also mentions interruption of classroom activities, inconsistent corrections, and ambiguity of corrections as other important reasons that render corrections ineffective. Chaudron (1998) also reports a number of studies that found out that corrections were not as effective as they were thought to be.

The opponents of error correction have gone further than that by calling it even harmful to the process of language learning (See Truscott, 1996, for an example of such an argument). Krashen was among those who vehemently attacked error correction. In Krashen’s Monitor Model (1981), according to its first hypothesis, it is acquisition (a mostly subconscious process), not learning (mostly a conscious process), that accounts for being able to communicate in a language. Another hypothesis known as Natural Order Hypothesis (Krashen and Terrel, 1988), further weakens the role of error correction, as it assumes a natural, predictable order in language acquisition, so teachers’ efforts in correcting students would be in vain just as parents’ corrections of their children’s utterances at the early stages of their lives. According to Krashen (1982), the role of error correction could only be traced, at best partially, in his Monitor Hypothesis when the three conditions of time, focus on form,
and knowledge of rules are all met. In most other cases, the idea of correcting students’ errors seems to be at odds with his Affective Filter Hypothesis. Pointing out errors could negatively affect the three personal variables of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Zafar, 2009).

Despite the large number of criticisms sharpened against error correction, there are many researchers (such as Bailey & Celce-Murcia, 1979; Lee, 1990; Li, 2010), who take a moderately positive position concerning error correction. Some others, while accepting the facilitative role of error correction, give instructions on how to improve its efficiency in classroom settings. Hendrickson (1978), for example, recommends that global, rather than local, errors should be corrected or that corrections should be done consistently and systematically.

Given that there has been a great deal of controversy over the advantages and disadvantages of teaching grammar and using error correction in language classrooms, an attempt was made in this study to compare teachers’ and students' opinions toward such debatable issues and also to investigate the role of gender in making any possible differences in the opinions of these two groups in this regard.

**Method**

The present study is a survey in terms of its design whose purpose is to describe and compare male/female teachers’ and students’ views on the importance of grammar teaching and error correction. The variables involved in this study are thus teachers’ and students’ perceptions of grammar and error correction and also gender.

The subjects of the study were chosen from male and female teachers and students of a number of private institutes in Tehran. The students were all adults (mostly between 20 to 30 years old), ranging from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate levels of English proficiency. The teachers were fairly varied in terms of their academic background and language teaching experience, but they were mostly young (between 25 to 35 years old). The method of sampling used in this study was convenience sampling. The institutes selected for the study were almost widely scattered throughout Tehran, and the classes included ranged from very small classes of 2 students to larger classes of 20. An overview of the 516 participants of the study is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Gender vs. role crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>333</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>516</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a survey, this study makes use of a questionnaire, exploring teachers’ and students’ ideas about the importance of grammar and error correction. The questionnaire used in this study was a modified version of a questionnaire used by Schulz (2001). This modified questionnaire consisted of 15 questions (10 questions on the role of grammar and 5 questions on corrective feedback) in two variations, one for the teachers and one for the students (For a detailed description of the modification process, see Yousefpoori-Naeim, 2011).

The modified version of Shultz’ questionnaire was translated into Persian and then piloted with 30 teachers and 40 students, and an informal interview was run with most of them afterwards. No special problem was pointed out, and most teachers and students had positive opinions toward the questionnaire. Only some minor modifications were made in terms of the appearance of the questionnaire at this stage.
Results and Discussion
Both female/male students as a group and female/male teachers as a group were found to be rather consistent in their views on error correction and, especially, grammar. Of the 15 items of the questionnaire, four items received significantly different reactions from female versus male students (Table 2). Items 7, 8, and 9 dealt with the subjects' opinions toward the role of error correction, and item 13 was concerned with grammar. In the case of the teachers, only one of the items of the questionnaire, number 10 (related to error correction), received a significantly different reaction from female versus male teachers (Table 3).

Table 2. Gender differences in students’ opinions toward grammar and error correction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
<th>(Sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1 (Grammar)</td>
<td>83.9 7.2 8.9</td>
<td>82.2 8.2 9.6</td>
<td>.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2 (Grammar)</td>
<td>66.7 13.1 20.3</td>
<td>65.3 15 19.7</td>
<td>.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3 (Grammar)</td>
<td>90.1 6.5 3.4</td>
<td>82.6 9.6 7.5</td>
<td>.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4 (Grammar)</td>
<td>35.4 21.6 43</td>
<td>34.7 27.2 38.1</td>
<td>.395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5 (Grammar)</td>
<td>69.5 18.2 12.3</td>
<td>72.1 19 8.8</td>
<td>.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6 (Grammar)</td>
<td>78.7 14.8 6.5</td>
<td>76.2 16.3 7.5</td>
<td>.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>8.2 8.9 82.9</td>
<td>15 12.2 72.8</td>
<td>.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>83.9 9.2 6.8</td>
<td>74.1 17.7 8.2</td>
<td>.033*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>4.8 3.1 92.1</td>
<td>8.2 7.5 84.2</td>
<td>.028*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>92.8 3.8 4.1</td>
<td>91.2 4.8</td>
<td>.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>95.6 2.7 1.7</td>
<td>91.2 5.4 3.4</td>
<td>.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 12 (Grammar)</td>
<td>91.4 6.2 2.4</td>
<td>91.8 4.8 3.4</td>
<td>.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13 (Grammar)</td>
<td>81.8 14.8 3.4</td>
<td>81 9.5 9.5</td>
<td>.013*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 14 (Grammar)</td>
<td>46.9 36.3 16.8</td>
<td>53.1 32 15</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 15 (Grammar)</td>
<td>69.2 18.5 12.3</td>
<td>69.2 18.5 12.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Gender differences in teachers’ opinions toward grammar and error correction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Female Teachers</th>
<th>Male Teachers</th>
<th>(Sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1 (Grammar)</td>
<td>65 10 25</td>
<td>75 11.1 13.9</td>
<td>.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2 (Grammar)</td>
<td>62.5 17.5 20</td>
<td>50 16.7 33.3</td>
<td>.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3 (Grammar)</td>
<td>87.5 10 2.5</td>
<td>88.9 2.8 8.3</td>
<td>.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4 (Grammar)</td>
<td>40 12.5 47.5</td>
<td>19.4 16.7 63.9</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5 (Grammar)</td>
<td>72.5 10 17.5</td>
<td>50 25 25</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6 (Grammar)</td>
<td>87.5 7.5 5</td>
<td>82.9 8.6 8.6</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>27.5 15 57.5</td>
<td>41.7 16.7 41.7</td>
<td>.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>75 12.5 12.5</td>
<td>69.4 2.8 27.8</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>37.5 7.5 55</td>
<td>44.4 2.8 52.8</td>
<td>.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>82.5 12.5 5</td>
<td>66.7 2.8 30.6</td>
<td>.006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>82.5 15 2.5</td>
<td>86.1 5.6 8.3</td>
<td>.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 12 (Grammar)</td>
<td>92.5 7.5 0</td>
<td>86.1 8.3 5.6</td>
<td>.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13 (Grammar)</td>
<td>70 17.5 12.5</td>
<td>68.6 20 11.4</td>
<td>.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 14 (Grammar)</td>
<td>71.8 5.1 23.1</td>
<td>50 20.6 29.4</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 15 (Grammar)</td>
<td>77.5 10 12.5</td>
<td>65.7 22.9 11.4</td>
<td>.316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to grammar, a significant difference was found in only one of the items in the student's group, so it could be concluded that none of these two groups evidenced gender
differences. However, significant differences between males and females were found among students and to a lesser degree among teachers. Among students, females show a stronger tendency toward error correction. Partially, this also holds true for the teachers, whose case indicates that more female teachers think that when students make errors in speaking English, they should be corrected. Such a finding might be due to the fact that females are generally more easy-going and feel less threatened when they are corrected because they are more socially oriented toward using communicative and social learning strategies (Politzer, 1983). The same point could also be inferred from how female students/teachers, in comparison with male students/teachers, answered question 6 (“It is more important to practice English in real-life situations than to study and practice grammatical patterns.”). Although the differences found between females and males were not statistically significant, both female students and teachers expressed a stronger tendency toward communicative tasks, which implies that females are more communicative.

Taking a look at Tables 2 and 3 above, one might conclude that gender plays a more significant role in the students’ perceptions of grammar and error correction than those of their teachers; however, such a finding needs to be approached with caution because the reason that fewer significant differences were found between male and female teachers might be due to the fact that they were more limited in number: 76 teachers versus 440 students. Chi-square test is sensitive to the number of subjects; significant differences are hardly found in groups with a very small number of subjects, while groups with a very large number of subjects might very easily yield a significant difference.

Unlike the two groups discussed earlier (female/male students and female/male teachers), there seems to be a considerable discrepancy between how students in general and teachers in general view grammar and, especially, error correction. Out of the 15 items of the questionnaire, 8 items showed significant differences between students’ and teachers’ opinions toward grammar and error correction (3 items dealt with grammar and 5 with error correction) (Table 4). It can be concluded that teachers do think of grammar and, especially, error correction differently from their students. Such a difference could probably be attributed to teachers’ knowledge of applied linguistics, which they have gained mostly in the teacher training programs that they have attended.

**Table 4. Differences between teachers’ and their students’ opinions toward grammar and error correction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>(Sig.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 1 (Grammar)</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2 (Grammar)</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3 (Grammar)</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4 (Grammar)</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5 (Grammar)</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6 (Grammar)</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11 (Error Correction)</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Item 12 (Grammar)</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item 13 (Grammar)</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 14 (Grammar)</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 15 (Grammar)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the interesting findings of this study is that significant differences between teachers’ and their students’ opinions were found for every single item dealing with error correction. As the related literature suggests, the issue of error correction is indeed controversial, and the results obtained in this study are very well in line with this fact.

Another point of interest is that, in the broadest sense, the results indicate that both teachers and students are generally in favor of grammar instruction and the use of error correction in the classroom. Both groups show positive opinions toward grammar and error correction in 13 out of 15 items; only in items 4 (“There should be more formal study of grammar in class.”) and 6 (“It is more important to practice English in real-life situations than to study and practice grammatical patterns.”), neither teachers nor students favored grammar. Of course, responding negatively to item 4 might not be due to the subjects’ negative opinion toward grammar. They might be already experiencing so high a level of grammar instruction in class that they do not feel that they need any more focus on grammar. Item 6, however, clearly puts a restraint on our claims regarding the generally favored role of grammar. Grammar is cherished, but not at the price of abandoning the practice of real-life tasks.

Finally, the results further show that the students are more strongly inclined toward grammar and error correction in comparison to their teachers. As discussed by Schulz (1996), students’ strongly positive attitudes toward grammar could be due to at least three reasons: they might be overly affected by the myths about the usefulness of grammar instruction, their perceptions might be influenced by the grammar-based syllabuses and discrete-point tests that they are used to, and their opinions might be based on their own classroom experiences full of grammar and corrective feedback. The teachers are more moderate in their views probably because they generally enjoy a vaster experience regarding both language learning and teaching. The teachers are also more under the influence of the academic knowledge of the field, so they are more cautious in their conclusions about the role of grammar and error correction and so are less affected by the prevailing myths exaggerating the importance of grammar.

The results of the present study are consistent with the results obtained in Schulz’s 1996 and 2001 studies. In Schulz’s studies, Colombian teachers’ opinions about grammar and error correction differed from those of Colombian students’ in 9 (out of 12) questions, and the same case held true for American teachers’ and students’ opinions. In the present study too, the teachers and students were found to have significantly different opinions in most of the questions, i.e., in 8 out of 15 questions. Of the 11 questions that were the same in Schulz’s studies, 6 questions were reacted to significantly differently by Iranian teachers and students.

The teachers’ and students’ overall preference for formal grammar instruction is also reflected in Schulz’s studies, and it is interesting to note that the teachers and students in all the three studies favor grammar up to a certain point, as when it comes to the practice of real-life communicative tasks, they prefer such tasks to formal instruction of grammar. This is actually concluded based on the mostly positive responses to item 6 (“It is more important to practice English in real-life situations than to study and practice grammatical patterns.”) of the questionnaire common in all the three studies. Additionally, the discrepancies between teachers’ and students’ opinions about error correction (as compared with grammar) were found to be more pronounced in both the present study and Schulz (1996). It is also interesting to note that, in both studies, the highest disagreement was found on the question dealing with the desirability of correcting oral mistakes. This further suggests that correcting errors in speaking is indeed a controversial issue.

There are other points of similarity between Schulz’s studies and the present one, one of which
is that female and male students were not very much different from each other. The differences were limited to only two items for Colombian students and three items for their Iranian counterparts. Schulz also showed that Colombian female students held more positive attitudes toward error correction, as it is the case with the Iranian female students. The results for male versus female teachers cannot be compared to those of Schulz’s 2001 study because the exact ratio of female versus male teachers is unknown in her study. Another point of similarity comes from Schulz’s 1996 study (p. 345), in which she reports that “with few exceptions, […] students hold more favorable attitudes toward formal grammar study than do the teachers as a group.” This is also in line with the results of the present study (as discussed above).

The results of the present study can be also compared with those of Baleghizadeh and Firoozbakht (2009). In both studies, students, as compared with teachers, were found to be more in favor of grammar and error correction; female students and teachers, in comparison with their male counterparts, held more positive attitudes toward these two issues; and, most importantly, there were sizeable differences between teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the same issues.

Burgess and Etherington (2002) found that both teachers and students held positive opinions toward grammar teaching, which is in line with the results of both Schulz’s studies and the present one. There exists, of course, a major methodological difference in the way Burgess and Etherington studied their subjects: They elicited students’ opinions indirectly through teachers, while in Schulz’ studies as well as the present one, a student version of the questionnaire was used to elicit their opinions.

Another point of similarity with the previous studies concerns the role of gender in teachers’ opinions toward grammar. Moini (2009) studied a sample of 130 teachers from different teaching contexts with different educational backgrounds, teaching experience, and genders. He found significant differences among the teachers in terms of all the four variables, except for gender. The results of the present study also found no significant differences between male and female teachers’ perceptions of grammar.

A study by Baleghizadeh and Farshchi (2009) done in the same context, Tehran, reported on male/female teachers’ relatively positive view on the role of explicit grammar instruction, which stands in line with the results of the present study. There was also a question in Baleghizadeh and Farshchi’s study that specifically asked for teachers’ opinions toward the usefulness of grammatical terminology. Again, the teachers’ high level of agreement with the helpfulness of grammatical terminology closely resembles the case in the present study.

As for the students’ opinions toward error correction, the results of the present study agree with those of the previous ones, such as Incecay and Dollar (2011) and McCargar (1993), in which students were found to be strongly in favor of corrective feedback.

**Conclusion**

Teaching grammar and error correction have long been among the most controversial issues in language teaching; therefore, it is not surprising to see that there are considerable variations in the way teachers and students think of these two issues. Such variations in beliefs and opinions could have a harmful effect on the process of language teaching and learning, especially when the discrepancy is found between the teachers and students because it is considered a threat to the pedagogical face validity (Schulz, 2001).

As for the major concern of the study, statistically significant differences were found between teachers’ and students’ opinions toward grammar and error correction. The results obtained in the present study also indicate that males and females (either as teachers or
students) are not significantly different from each other in terms of their opinions toward grammar and error correction. Among the more subsidiary findings of the study are the general inclination of female/male teachers/students to grammar and error correction. Females showed a stronger tendency to error correction (in comparison to males), and the students, irrespective of their gender, had stronger disposition to work more with grammar (in comparison with teachers).

Grammar instruction and error correction, like any other teaching and learning issue, are dependent on many other elements, such as learner variables and/or contextual factors. The formal study of grammar and error correction encompassing specific types of focus on form would prove to be more efficient when students have a desire for it. On the other hand, teachers’ perception of grammar can influence the quality of their teaching, as teachers would probably put more effort into teaching what they consider to be of high educational value. Thus, it is not always the qualitative or quantitative aspect of teaching grammar that matters; developing positive attitudes in students/teachers toward grammar is equally important too.

The results of the present study show that grammar and error correction are generally favorable among both teachers and students, and this makes one suspect the appropriacy of the strong versions of CLT, in which grammar is extremely deemphasized. When students want some level of focus on form but do not receive it, they might become frustrated. In the case of teachers too, there is likely to be some problems. For example, they might find teaching a language without dealing with its grammar difficult, or they might be reluctant to pay attention to their students’ expectations for teaching grammar and/or error correction. Besides, as the results of the study indicate that students are generally more inclined toward grammar and error correction in comparison to their teachers, such a consideration should be given even more weight.

Female students’ stronger inclination toward error correction, as compared with that of male students, can also have its own implications for classroom practice. To respond appropriately to this tendency of female students, teachers should embed more error correction in classes where all or most of the students are females.

The last but not the least important implication of the present study concerns the discrepancy found between teachers’ and their students’ opinions toward grammar and error correction, which, as discussed by Schulz, may lead to the lack of pedagogical face validity, which in turn could demotivate students, as their expectations would not be met through teachers’ classroom practice. Accordingly, it is of great importance to elicit students’ viewpoints before the beginning of any serious language program to avoid possible mismatches between the teacher’s and students’ views on grammar.

References
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Appendix A

English Questionnaire – Student’s Version

1. The formal study of grammar is essential to eventual mastery of the English language.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

2. I believe my English improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

3. The study of grammar helps in learning English.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

4. There should be more formal study of grammar in class.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

5. I usually keep grammar rules in mind when I write in English or read what I have written.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

6. It is more important to practice English in real-life situations than to study and practice grammatical patterns.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

7. I dislike it when my teacher or classmates correct me in class.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

8. I feel cheated if my teacher does not correct the written work I hand in.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

9. Teachers should not correct students when they make errors in class.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

10. When I make errors in speaking English, I like my teacher to correct them.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

11. When I make errors in writing English, I like my teacher to correct them.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

12. Grammar helps me write more accurate sentences.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

13. Learning grammatical terminology is helpful in learning English.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

15. Grammar helps me understand complicated sentences better.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree
Appendix B
English Questionnaire – Teacher’s Version

1. For adolescents or adults, the formal study of grammar is essential to the eventual mastery of the English language when language learning is limited to the classroom.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

2. Generally speaking, students' English improves most quickly if they study and practice the grammar.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

3. The study of grammar helps in learning English.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

4. Generally, there should be more formal study of grammar than is presently the case.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

5. Students usually keep grammar rules in mind when they write in English or read what they have written.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

6. It is generally more important to practice English in situations simulating real-life than to analyze and practice grammatical patterns.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

7. Most students dislike it when the teacher or the classmates correct them in class.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

8. Most students feel cheated if the teacher does not correct the written work they hand in.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

9. Teachers should not correct students' pronunciation or grammatical errors in class unless these errors interfere with comprehensibility.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

10. Generally, when students make errors in speaking English, they should be corrected.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

11. Generally, when students make errors in writing English, they should be corrected.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

12. Grammar helps students write more accurate sentences.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

13. Learning grammatical terminology is helpful in learning English.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

14. My students mostly ask me grammar questions.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

15. Grammar helps students understand complicated sentences better.
    □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ I don’t know □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree
Appendix C
Farsi Questionnaire – Student’s Version

1. مطالعه جدی گرامر دریادگیری نهایی زبان انگلیسی الزامی است.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

2. پراین باورم که اگر مطالعه و تمرین گرامر پردازی به زبان انگلیسی من بسیارسرع پیشرفت خواهد کرد.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

3. مطالعه گرامر به یادگیری زبان انگلیسی کمک می کند.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

4. درکلاس بايد بهشتیه گرامرپرداخته شود.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

5. هنگامی که چیزی به زبان انگلیسی می نویسم یا آنجه راکه نوشته ام می خوانم، معمولاً قواعد گرامری در ذهن خود مورومی کنم.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

6. تمرین زبان انگلیسی در موضوعی ها و شرایط واقعی از مطالعه و تمرین قواعد گرامری مهم تر است.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

7. دوست ندارم معلم یا همکلاس سیاست درکلاس اشتباه های من را تصحیح کند.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

8. اگر معلمی نوشته هایم را صحیح نکند، احساس ضرر می کنم.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

9. هنگامی که زبان آموزشی اشتباهی می کند، معلم می نماید آن را تصحیح کند.
   کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

10. هنگامی که در صحبته به زبان انگلیسی اشتباهی می کنم، دوست دارم معلم آن را تصحیح کند.
    کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0

11. هنگامی که در نوشتن به زبان انگلیسی اشتباهی می کنم، دوست دارم معلم آن را تصحیح کند.
    کاملا موافقم 0 نظری ندارم 0 مخالفم 0
12 گرامری به کمک می‌کند تا درون‌شدن جملات انگلیسی کمترشتابه‌اشته باشد.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق
O

13 یادگیری استراحت گرامری به یادگیری زبان انگلیسی کمک می‌کند.

0 کاملا موافق
O مخالف
O نظری ندارم
0 مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

14 معمولاً از علم سوالات گرامری می‌پرسیم.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق
O

15 گرامری به کمک می‌کند جملات بچیده را بهتری بفهمیم.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

Appendix D
Farsi Questionnaire – Teacher’s Version

1 در مورد جوانان و بزرگسالان، هنگامی که یادگیری زبان محدود به کلاس درس می‌شود، مطالعه جدی گرامر دریادگیری نهایی زبان انگلیسی الزامی است.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
0 مخالف
0 کاملا موافق
O

2 به طورکلی، اگر زبان آموزان به مطالعه و تمرین گرامربردارند، زبان انگلیسی آنها بسیار سریع بیشتر خواهد کرد.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

3 مطالعه گرامری یادگیری زبان انگلیسی کمک می‌کند.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

4 به طورکلی، در کلاس باید بهتره گرامربردازته شود.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

5 هنگامی که زبان آموزان چیزی به زبان انگلیسی می‌نویسند یا آنچه راکه نوشته اند می‌خوانند، معمولاً قواعد گرامرا در دهه خود مروری کنند.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

6 به طورکلی، تمرین زبان انگلیسی در موضع‌های و شرایط واقعی از مطالعه و تمرین قواعد گرامری مهم نیست.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

Appendix D
Farsi Questionnaire – Teacher’s Version

1 در مورد جوانان و بزرگسالان، هنگامی که یادگیری زبان محدود به کلاس درس می‌شود، مطالعه جدی گرامر دریادگیری نهایی زبان انگلیسی الزامی است.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
0 مخالف
0 کاملا موافق
O

2 به طورکلی، اگر زبان آموزان به مطالعه و تمرین گرامربردارند، زبان انگلیسی آنها بسیار سریع بیشتر خواهد کرد.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

3 مطالعه گرامری یادگیری زبان انگلیسی کمک می‌کند.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

4 به طورکلی، در کلاس باید بهتره گرامربردازته شود.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

5 هنگامی که زبان آموزان چیزی به زبان انگلیسی می‌نویسند یا آنچه راکه نوشته اند می‌خوانند، معمولاً قواعد گرامرا در دهه خود مروری کنند.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق

6 به طورکلی، تمرین زبان انگلیسی در موضع‌های و شرایط واقعی از مطالعه و تمرین قواعد گرامری مهم نیست.

0 کاملا موافق
0 مخالف
O نظری ندارم
O مخالف
0 کاملا موافق
در کلاس سیانشاه همکلاه نمی‌دارند، اگر مطلبی نوشته‌های زبان آموزان را صحیح تکنها، اکثر آنها احساس ضرض می‌کنند.

دانش آموزان اکثرزبان‌ها، در فهم مقصود زبان آموز اشکال ایجاد کنند، معلمان نیازی را برای تصحیح کند. مکرانه آن اشتباه در فهم مقصود زبان آموز، اشکال ایجاد کنند. معلم نیازی را برای تصحیح کند.

به طورکلی، هنگامی که زبان آموزان درصیب‌های زبان انگلیسی اشتباهی می‌کنند، معلم باید آن را تصحیح کند.

به طورکلی، هنگامی که زبان آموزان درنوشتن به زبان انگلیسی اشتباهی می‌کنند، معلم باید آن را تصحیح کند.

گرامری زبان آموزان کمک می‌کند تا درنویشتن جملات انگلیسی کمتراتشیبی داشته باشد.

پادیگیری اصطلاحات گرامری به یادگیری زبان انگلیسی کمک می‌کند.

زبان آموزان معمولاً از سوالات گرامری می‌پرسند.

گرامری به زبان آموزان کمک می‌کند جملات پیچیده را بهتری‌فرمیند.
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