Teachers’ Pedagogical Systems and Grammar Teaching: A Qualitative Study

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Despite the centrality of grammar in L2 research and methodology over the years, the cognitive bases of teachers’ instructional decisions in grammar teaching are relatively unexplored. This interpretive study focuses on this issue by analysing the teaching of grammar in an L2 classroom from the perspective of the personal pedagogical systems—stores of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes—that play a significant role in shaping teachers’ instructional decisions. The author examines the role of grammar teaching in the classroom practice of an experienced teacher of EFL and discusses the nature of the personal pedagogical system that influenced his practice. In particular, the study illustrates the manner in which the teacher’s instructional decisions in teaching grammar were shaped by the interaction of his pedagogical system, his educational and professional experiences, and the context of instruction. The author argues that research into teachers’ pedagogical systems can contribute to a fuller and more realistic understanding of L2 grammar instruction.

In the last 15 years educational research has provided ample support for the assertion that teachers’ classroom practices are determined to a substantial degree by their personal pedagogical belief systems (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). More recently, the lead provided by this work has been taken up in the field of L2 teaching, and a handful of studies have investigated the impact these pedagogical systems—the beliefs, knowledge theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold about all aspects of their work—have on L2 teachers’ instructional decisions (Burns, 1996; Johnson, 1994; Smith, 1996; D. Woods, 1996). Compared with the work carried out in mainstream education, however, “the unique filter through which second language teachers make instructional decisions, choose instructional materials, and select certain instructional practices over others” (Johnson, p. 440) is still relatively unexplored. In particular, little attention has been paid
to L2 teachers’ perceptions of the role of grammar teaching\(^1\) in their work and to the manner in which instructional decisions regarding grammar teaching are informed by teachers’ personal pedagogical systems. Given the central position grammar has occupied in studies of L2 acquisition (see Ellis, 1994, for a review) and in discussions of L2 teaching methodology (e.g., Batstone, 1994; Bygate, Tonkyn, & Williams, 1994), the lack of attention to the cognitive bases of teachers’ work in grammar teaching represents a gap in the research agenda for L2 teaching.

Research into the psychological context (Munby, 1983) of grammar teaching is also particularly important in view of the inconclusive nature of L2 acquisition studies of the best way to teach grammar. L2 teachers have been offered a range of pedagogical options, yet a major review of these has suggested that “it is probably premature to reach any firm conclusions regarding what type of formal instruction works best” (Ellis, 1994, p. 646). The teaching of grammar in the absence of well-founded guidelines is like a landscape without bearings, and research into teachers’ personal pedagogical systems suggests that to cope in such ill-defined situations “teachers create and internalise their own maps” (Kagan, 1992, p. 80). This article explores the nature of the maps L2 teachers utilise in determining the role and nature of grammar teaching in their classroom practice.

PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The initial aim of the study was to provide an emic perspective on the manner in which an L2 teacher’s personal pedagogical system informed his approach to grammar teaching. This involved describing how the teacher approached grammar in his work and exploring the rationale behind his decisions to do so. During the course of the study, however, it became clear that the teacher’s pedagogical system could not be adequately understood without reference to the factors that influenced its development and application, and a focus on these factors was consequently added to my research agenda.

The fieldwork was conducted in an English language institute in Malta, a Mediterranean centre for TEFL that caters each year to over 30,000 students of a variety of European nationalities. The school assigned students to levels (ranging from elementary to high intermediate) using an in-house placement test, and students on standard general

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\(^1\) Throughout this article, *grammar teaching* refers to instruction designed to enhance students’ awareness of the morphosyntactic features of a language.
English courses received 3 hours of instruction a day, typically spending 2–3 weeks at the school. Classrooms were modernly furnished with desk-chairs (which were generally organised in a horseshoe formation), whiteboards, overhead projectors, and electric fans (Malta is a warm country). Teachers at this school were not obliged to follow specific syllabuses or textbooks; rather, they were free to decide on the shape and content of their lessons and were encouraged to utilise the wide range of contemporary and less recent teaching materials available in the school’s resource room. The teacher whose practice is discussed here was a 40-year-old native speaker of English who had been involved in TEFL for over 15 years and who held qualifications in TEFL at both the certificate and the diploma levels. He was one of the most highly qualified and experienced teachers in his institute and was chosen for this study on the basis of his reputation as a professionally committed L2 teacher. The fieldwork for this study was conducted with a group of intermediate-level 18- to 35-year-old EFL students from Germany, Poland, Switzerland, and Italy. During the fieldwork, the size of the class observed fluctuated between six and eight students.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research I present here was conceived within an exploratory-interpretive paradigm (Grotjahn, 1987). Within this framework, the goal of research is to understand the inner perspectives on the meanings of the actions of those being studied. It is characterised by an idiographic conceptual framework (i.e., which focuses on the meaning of particular events), by its aim to generate rather than to verify theory (i.e., it does not set out to test a priori hypotheses), and by naturalistic rather than experimental research designs. This approach to research views knowledge not as an objective reality that the researcher describes scientifically; rather it acknowledges the personally constructed nature of all knowledge (Bassey, 1991). A consequence of this epistemology is that, from an exploratory-interpretive perspective, research is conceived as a task of interpreting human action by understanding why people behave in the way they do. Applied to the study of grammar teaching, this paradigm allows an exploration of how teachers approach grammar in their work and an understanding, from their perspective, of the factors behind their instructional decisions.

2 Details about these qualifications are provided in the course of the article. Malta is a small place, however, and in order to protect the teacher’s anonymity I am unable to provide any additional specific information about his background.
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection and analysis in the study were not linear but cyclical, which called for a sequential form of analysis (Delamont, 1992; Tesch, 1990). In practice this means that data were collected and analyzed throughout the period of fieldwork, with each successive stage of data collection being influenced by the analysis of the data already collected (in contrast, a linear approach to data collection and analysis would collect all the data before beginning to analyse them). This interaction between data collection and analysis emerges clearly in the description below of the procedures I followed.

1. I first conducted a 1-hour preobservation interview with the teacher in order to establish a profile of his educational background, reasons for becoming a teacher, experience of teaching, and general views about L2 teaching. I conceived of the interview as a semistructured conversation (Kvale, 1996) that focused on particular themes (see Appendix A) without being rigidly structured3 and in which my role was to interact with the teacher in order to explore in as open-minded a manner as possible the meaning he assigned to educational and professional experiences in his life. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

2. The next stage of the study consisted of 15 hours of classroom observations over a period of 2 weeks during which I obtained a detailed account of classroom events through qualitative field notes, audio recordings, copies of all instructional materials, and samples of students’ written work. My role in the classroom was that of a nonparticipant observer (P. Woods, 1986).

3. I analysed the observational data after each lesson for key instructional episodes—classroom incidents that generated questions about the rationale for the teacher’s approach to grammar. The use of a particular grammar teaching activity, the explanation of a grammar rule, a response to a student’s question about grammar, or a reaction to a student’s grammatical error, for example, were all seen to be key episodes as they prompted questions through which I could gain insight into the factors behind the teacher’s behaviour. An analytic memo recording the questions generated by the observational data was produced after each lesson (see Appendix B for an example).

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3 In interviewing of this type, the researcher uses an interview schedule as a guide to the themes that need to be discussed. Question order and wording, however, are adapted to fit the specific manner in which the interview develops. In addition, the interview may also cover issues that are not directly listed in the schedule but that may arise during the course of the conversation.
Through these memos conceptual categories in the data began to emerge.

4. A study of the categories identified in the analytic memos provided the framework for two postobservation interviews with the teacher, each lasting about an hour (see Appendix C for information on the interview schedule). In order to gain access to the teacher’s thoughts about the issues included in these categories, I presented him with key episodes from his lessons and prompted him to elaborate on them through a form of stimulated recall (Calderhead, 1981). The teacher talked about these episodes in a number of ways:
   - by commenting on what he was trying to do at a particular stage of the lesson and why,
   - by responding to assertions I made about his practice on the basis of what I had observed in the classroom,
   - by talking about how a particular episode fitted into the structure of his lesson, and
   - by explaining his decisions to make use of particular instructional activities and materials in his work.

5. These interviews were also recorded and transcribed in full, and all three interviews were returned to the teacher, who was asked (a) to check their accuracy (i.e., the extent to which the comments reported in the interviews were his) and (b) to answer additional questions asking him to clarify or elaborate on issues we discussed in the interviews. The teacher turned in written answers to these questions with the transcripts. These written responses were added to the interview data and were of particular value in filling in what would have otherwise been gaps in my understanding of the teacher’s work.

6. At this stage the interview data became the focus of the analysis. Through a combination of manual and computerised strategies, these data were initially coded according to a start list (Miles & Huberman, 1994) of conceptual categories derived from the interview schedules and the analytic memos based on the observations. Data not accommodated by the start list generated several additional categories, and through an iterative process of interview content analysis a structured list of categories emerged (see Appendix D). Summaries I wrote for each category provided at-a-glance access to

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4 The teacher made some minor changes to the transcripts to clarify what he had said during the interviews.

5 The coding, searching, and retrieval of the data was facilitated by the use of a qualitative data analysis program called NUD*IST (Qualitative Solutions and Research Pty., 1995).
the central issues in the teacher’s commentary on his work and facilitated the analysis of the relationships between categories. These summaries also reflected the crystallisation of many of the categories that had emerged from the analytic memos earlier in the study.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The presentation of the data in this article has been influenced by a belief that interpretive research is best communicated in a format that reflects the data collection and analysis procedures the research entails. Above I outlined how in this study the analysis of teaching behaviour generated interview data that provided access to the teacher’s cognitions; what follows maintains this relationship between the behaviour and cognitive components of the study. Thus the presentation of the data is organised around teaching behaviours that characterised the teacher’s approach to grammar work; I discuss these behaviours in turn with reference to the teacher’s own analytic commentary on them, and it is through an analysis of this commentary that the key features of the teacher’s pedagogical system emerge. This form of presentation mirrors and makes transparent to readers the inductive processes of data analysis that were central to this study; it also ensures that all assertions in the account are clearly grounded in the data from which they emerged.

Error Analysis

A recurrent mode of working with grammar employed by the teacher involved the analysis of students’ grammatical errors. Episode 1 provides an example of this strategy in action. The students had just finished an oral group-work activity during which the teacher was taking note of the language errors the students made. The teacher photocopied the sheet on which he was writing, distributed copies of it to the students, and asked them to discuss the questions on the sheet in groups. This is what the students received.

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6 See Appendix C for a list of areas of classroom practice that informed the selection of the teaching behaviours I illustrate in this account. The features of the teacher’s pedagogical system I discuss here are taken from Appendix D. A full discussion of all the categories listed in Appendices C and D is not possible in the space available; hence, this article focuses on recurrent teaching behaviours that provide insight into the predominant features of the teacher’s pedagogical system.
Episode 1
1. If you had two wishes what would they be?
Can you analyse the structure?
Does ‘had’ refer to the past?
Is the structure similar in your language?

2. Which is correct?
(a) Could/Can you tell me what do you want?
(b) Could/Can you tell me what you want?

When do we use an interrogative form?
When don’t we use an interrogative form? (EO.1:164–167)7

Error analysis of this kind occurred in each of the lessons I observed, and there are two issues to explore here: firstly, the rationale for basing grammar work on students’ errors and, secondly, the factors behind the particular instructional strategy the teacher adopted. With reference to the first issue, the teacher’s reasons for using students’ errors as the basis of grammar work were quite simple: Such errors provided the obvious starting place for designing a student-centred language programme. However, he added that

it’s also a little bit of a packaging exercise as well, in that if I can show them visually, on a piece of paper, that they are having problems with certain areas, that in some way validates even more the language focus stuff that they’re going to do during the course. (EI.2:17)

Basing grammar work on students’ errors was thus a strategy the teacher used to justify such work in the students’ eyes. In addition, the teacher felt that error analysis of this type would allow him to validate the fluency work in the course.

We do a lot of fluency work, and sometimes learners’ expectations of the language classroom differ from this reality. Giving them opportunities to focus on accuracy in language work that springs from (or is related to) these fluency activities helps these types of learners to accept more enthusiastically the fluency activities. (EI.3:245)

At least partly, then, his aim in providing a grammar focus based on students’ errors was to preempt concerns students might have developed about the course if such work had been absent from his practice. His

7 References to data follow these conventions: S1, S2, SS, and so on refer to individual or groups of students; EO refers to observation data; EI refers to interview data. Each extract also contains a reference to its location within the data corpus (e.g., EI.1:12 is Interview 1, Paragraph 12; EO.5:30–60 is Observation 5, Paragraphs 30–60). SB is myself.
beliefs about students’ expectations had a powerful influence on his behaviour here and did in fact emerge in the study as a pervasive influence on his approach to grammar teaching. Very interestingly, though, the teacher also indicated that the grammar points he fed back to students during error analysis activities were not simply limited to errors they had made on the day.

Occasionally when I’m writing down errors they’re making during speaking fluency, well first of all I’m discarding a lot of slips and a lot of errors which I don’t think are especially important . . . and I occasionally slip in something which they may not have made that day but is often made by students at that level, and I know instinctively and from experience that that is something which they need to come to grips with or they want to come to grips with. (EI.2:109)

Deciding which grammar points to include in error analysis activities, then, was not just a question of writing down students’ mistakes; it involved professional judgments about appropriate issues to focus on, judgments that the teacher felt he was able to make on the basis of his experience as an L2 teacher.

In terms of instructional strategy, the error analysis activities in the teacher’s work were designed to encourage students to investigate grammar. The questions in Episode 1 prompted students to think about grammar in different ways—to analyse the form and meaning of a structure, compare the structure with their L1, make grammaticality judgments, and inductively formulate a grammar rule. In discussing this investigative approach to grammar teaching, the teacher articulated a very clear rationale.

I think it’s all part of a learner-centred approach to teaching, based on the belief that people have a brain, have a lot of knowledge, are able to work things out for themselves, and the belief that if they are able to work things out for themselves, it’s more likely to be internalised rather than having it explained to them. . . . I think that gives them a sense of achievement, and this sense of achievement that students acquire is for me perhaps another factor of what a successful lesson is. (EI.2:101–105)

According to the teacher, thinking about grammar facilitates learning because it addresses both the cognitive and the affective needs of the students; cognitively, the teacher believed that inductively learned material is etched deeper in students’ minds; affectively, he felt that learning benefits from the sense of achievement thinking tasks can create in students. In discussing his beliefs about inductive teaching, the teacher also shed light on the contribution of his professional training as a teacher to the development of his personal pedagogical system.
In terms of the greatest influences on me in my development as a teacher there were my two tutors on the CTEFLA\(^8\) and the Diploma courses. On the CTEFLA, my tutor was so good at getting us to reach conclusions ourselves without hardly saying anything himself. The tutor on the Diploma likewise possessed this ability of eliciting without hardly telling us anything himself. I don't think he used to have an answer in his head which he wanted us to reach; he really did want us to reach our own conclusions. I think they were the greatest influences on me, and I found that when I taught I even copied the gestures they used to use, I was like a clone of them. The CTEFLA was the greatest learning experience I've ever had in my life. It emphasised learner centredness and the importance of motivation, it taught me so much about staying in the background and giving the learners their own space. It helped me to change my concept of what a teacher should be doing in the classroom. Inductive teaching was a revelation to me, and it really excited me. It helped me to start listening to students. The Diploma was a refinement of all we did in the CTEFLA. (EI.1:50–60)

This extract depicts vividly the powerful influence formal training had on his development as a teacher. His tutors affected him deeply through their skill at illustrating in their own work the methodological practices they wanted to pass on to trainees. His beliefs in the value of student-centred inductive work were thus firmly established during his initial training and later confirmed by further professional education.

In discussing his use of grammar activities in which the students were encouraged to investigate the language, the teacher also explained that

I actually think people enjoy the intellectual challenge sometimes, to think about grammar, to think about how the language falls together, and to work out possible solutions for themselves . . . and it’s also I find a useful way of sometimes pacing a lesson. I think that’s quite important actually. I think one of the main reasons why I have language focus sessions in a lesson is to pace it a little bit as well, more reflective time. (EI.2:57)

Further reasons for using thinking tasks emerge here: Another affective issue—that students enjoy thinking about grammar—had an

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\(^8\) The Royal Society of Arts Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults (CTEFLA, now Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults—CELTA) is an internationally recognised initial TEFL qualification. The teacher did this as a 4-week intensive full-time course. The diploma the teacher refers to is the Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults (DTEFLA, now Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults—DELTA). The teacher did this as a 1-year programme. The certificate program had a strong practical bias, with daily practice teaching real L2 students, an emphasis on classroom management skills, and practical demonstrations of communicative techniques of L2 teaching. According to the teacher, the DTEFLA refined issues raised at the certificate level and focused on more theoretical issues as well (e.g., cognitive styles and learning strategies). In assessing the level of detail the teacher provides about these courses during this account, readers should keep in mind that he completed them around 13 and 8 years respectively prior to this study.
important bearing on the teacher’s decisions. An important concept is also that of *reflective time*. This not only provided the cognitive and affective benefits already mentioned; it also had a classroom management role in that it allowed the teacher to vary the pace of a lesson. Classroom management issues continue to surface throughout the account as a shaping influence on the teacher’s work in grammar teaching.

Reference to Students’ L1

Another strategy the teacher regularly used in teaching grammar was to encourage students to refer to their L1. Question 1 in Episode 1 was a minor case of this; Episode 2 below is a more extended example (the students had just finished a pair-work speaking activity, and the teacher had asked them whether they had had any problems).

*Episode 2*

S3 says she has a problem using a particular structure: “Have been, continuous present, is it?” “The name doesn’t matter,” says the teacher, and he proceeds to write the following on the board:

- Je suis ici depuis deux jours
- Ich bin hier seit zwei Tage
- Sono qui da due giorni
- I _______________ 2 days.

The teacher asks, “Can you complete the sentence?” S2 says, “I have been here for 2 days.” “In many European languages,” the teacher explains, “a present tense is used where in English the present perfect is used. We can say ‘I am here for two weeks,’ but it has a different meaning, it means ‘now and in the future.’” (EO.1:98–133)

I asked the teacher for his opinion about the contribution to learning English grammar the students’ L1 could make.

Well, when I started out, using the students’ mother tongue was just anathema. . . . It was considered counterproductive. I like to see patterns myself and in my own language learning. . . . often if I see something which is similar to my own language, I just find it easier to take on board. And I think at least as far as Western European languages are concerned, our languages, in terms of patterns of grammar, have probably got far, far more in common than what they don’t share. I’ve seen it so often, when students are made aware, that, for example, conditionals exist in their language in almost exactly the same way, often that’s just been an eye-opener for them as well. So asking them to perceive, to look at patterns and relate them to their own language, I’ve often found that very useful. (EI.3:131)
The teacher joined the profession at the height of the communicative boom (the late 1970s—early 1980s), a time when the use of students’ L1 in the EFL classroom was virtually outlawed. A number of factors, though, had enabled him to change his position: His awareness of learning strategies that worked for him seems to have been important here; classroom experience had an equally important effect on shaping his pedagogical system—“I’ve seen it so often” were his words—and he expanded on this point when he explained,

I must say that a lot of this stuff regarding using the students’ own language, I actually haven’t discussed with a lot of people, and I haven’t read much literature about it . . . . a lot of it, I’ve arrived at conclusions on my own, through experience . . . but it is an evolution, it’s where I am at the moment. (EI.3:147)

This comment suggests that the teacher’s personal pedagogical system was informed by his perceptions of what worked well in the classroom. His observations here also indicate an awareness on his part of the dynamic nature of this system. Further support for the notion of an evolving, pragmatic pedagogical system that guided the teacher’s actions in teaching grammar continues to emerge in the discussion below.

Grammatical Terminology

Explicit discussions of grammatical issues were another recurrent feature of the teacher’s work. Both the teacher and the students used grammatical terminology quite freely in these discussions, suggesting that the teacher had positive feelings about the role grammatical metalanguage played in L2 learning. However, there were two particular incidents that questioned this initial assessment. The first occurred in Episode 2 above, when a student asked about the name of a tense and the teacher said, “The name doesn’t matter.” The second, culminating in the statement, “It’s not necessary to know these words,” is presented below. In this episode, the teacher was trying to elicit the correct form for the sentence, “Do you want that I come back home?” (The students had produced this incorrect sentence during an oral activity they had just completed.)

**Episode 3**

T: What do you say if you offer someone a cup of tea?
SS: Do you want a cup of tea?
T: What do you say if you invite someone to the cinema?
SS: Do you want to go to the cinema?
T: With a verb, *want* takes *to* and we can follow it with an object if there’s someone else. [Some of the students look puzzled.]

So what’s the correct sentence?

SS: Do you want me to come back home? (The teacher now writes this sentence on board.)

T: If I say *subject, object* do you understand?

[S1 says she does not, some of the other students say they do.]

T: *Want* is the verb. Who wants?

S: You.

T: So *you* is the subject. *Me* is on the other side of the verb. *Me* is the object. It’s not necessary to know these words, just to understand grammar books. (EO.4:90–93)

On the basis of these two incidents, I prompted the teacher to discuss the factors that influenced his use of grammatical terminology.

I think the students actually enjoy an intellectual spot in the lesson where they can reflect about language and consider language, and where they can actually talk about grammar . . . if there is an opportunity to do so and the majority of the people are included in the discussion, and nobody feels alienated by it in any way, I think I would take opportunities to do that. (EI.3:77–82)

The teacher’s comments here reveal his concern for the effect the use of grammatical terminology may have on the students, and it is in the light of this concern that the two incidents in Episodes 2 and 3 make sense.

I think what was happening there was that I felt that they might have been more confused or somehow threatened by the labels, and I just wanted to get to the crux of the language point, without using terminology which would in some way threaten or frighten them. (EI.3:83)

In telling the students that “the name doesn’t matter” or that “it’s not necessary to know these words,” then, the teacher was not implying that he felt terminology had no role to play in the L2 learning process; rather, he was making real-time decisions in response to potential complications he thought the use of terminology in those particular situations would have caused. This illustrates how the teacher’s behaviour was interac-
tively shaped by his perceptions of the students’ cognitive/affective state during grammar teaching.

In the course of our conversation, the teacher also identified ways in which he felt that a knowledge of grammatical terminology in students facilitated his work: It provided an economical and shared means of communication about language, it facilitated diagnostic work, and it equipped the students to function more competently as autonomous
investigators of language. This final point was high on the teacher’s agenda for his students, and he often assigned tasks such as those in Episode 1 as optional homework research before students discussed them together in class.

The pedagogical system that shaped the teacher’s approach to grammar, then, included the above beliefs about the role of grammatical terminology in the L2 classroom. His views on this aspect of L2 instruction, however, had not always been so positive. When he was first trained,

We were told never to use grammatical labels and to tell students that it would all come together naturally as a result of the communicative activities they did. (EI.1:62)

Earlier in this account, the teacher commented on the profound effect his initial training had on his practice, yet the views he held about grammatical terminology were in stark contrast to those his training had instilled. This radical change in the teacher’s views was sparked off by further professional training.

When I did the Diploma, the work we did on learning styles helped me become more aware of the fact that different learners may learn more effectively in different ways . . . so that now I’m more aware of the need to take into account the different learning styles a group of students are likely to have. (EI.1:48)

A significant professional experience—becoming aware of the notion of learning styles—provided him with the insight that enabled him to review the “don’t worry about grammar, it’ll all come together approach” (EI.1:144) he had adopted early in his career; it also enabled him to make sense of negative experiences that he had had earlier in his career—but that had no immediate effect on his practice—in which students had complained about this approach.9

Grammar Rules10

The explicit discussions of grammar in the teacher’s work also prompted me to investigate his beliefs about the role that grammar

9 Before he was aware of the notion of learning styles, the teacher actually thought that the students who disagreed with his grammarless approach to teaching were simply being difficult.
10 The previous section focused on the factors behind the teacher’s decision to use or not to use grammatical terminology in his work; this section analyses the procedures through which the teacher established grammar rules in his lessons and the extent to which he presented the rules to students as definitive truths about the language.
rules—descriptive generalisations about the form, meaning, and use of grammatical items—played in his practice. Episode 4 provides the basis of the discussion of this issue. The sentence When do you come back home? was on the board, and the teacher had asked the students to correct it.

**Episode 4**

S3: Does the question refer to the future?
T: Yes, it does.
S3: When are you coming back home?
T: What does that mean?
S3: It’s a plan.
[On the board, the teacher writes]

When do you plan to come back home?

have you decided

S4: Is When will you come back home? correct?
T [to the class]: What do you think?
S3: I’m not sure. When you ask with will it means she has just decided.

The teacher explains that normally this is true but that the problem with the future is that it is very complex. “As a help, not as a rule,” the teacher tells her that when and will are not used together. “Another guide,” the teacher says, “is that will is sometimes used to talk about the future, but perhaps there are other, more common ways of doing so.” (EO.4:13–18)

One point that emerges here is that the teacher did not preempt the discussion by telling the students what the rules are. He prompted students to think about the issue under focus and redirected individual students’ questions to the rest of the class. In keeping with the approach to grammar illustrated above, the teacher aimed to elicit the rule through an interactive class discussion rather than simply supplying the rule himself.

I find that when I learn languages I like finding out about rules myself. It helps me if I can perceive patterns, it really helps me. And I think that’s true for many students, and I think it’s part of their expectations too. And I see it as part of my role to help them to become aware of language rules, both grammatical and phonological and lexical, whenever possible, yes. And lying behind that is the rationale that if they can be guided towards a formulation of a rule through largely their own endeavours it is more likely to be internalised than if it was explained to them. (EI.1:55–57)

It is worth pointing out that the teacher’s belief in the value of encouraging students to make sense of grammar “largely through their own endeavours” did not imply an unwillingness on his part to provide direct guidance where he felt it was needed. This emerges clearly in the next extract, in which the teacher was responding to my query about the
extent to which he felt responsible for providing students with knowledge about the language.

I think it is part of my job [and] of course, it is normally part of students’ expectations. I think that also if I pointed them off in directions in which they could investigate further the language and deepen their knowledge of the language, then yes that would be helpful. But I think that at times the classroom situation, having a teacher there who has been trained, perhaps, to help it to become clearer for all the students, I think there is a place for that. (SB: for giving knowledge?) For leading students to a situation where they perceive that they need this knowledge and want this knowledge, and trying to lead them to an awareness of it themselves, and providing the knowledge if they can’t get to it themselves. Yes, that’s all part of providing knowledge. Whether they discover it for themselves through tasks I’ve designed, or whether I explain the grammar to them, I think it amounts to the same thing, I am providing knowledge. (El.3:42–43)\(^{11}\)

The teacher’s commitment to discovery-oriented work in grammar teaching did not prevent him from being responsive to the realities of classroom life. Thus there were times when, notwithstanding his efforts, students were not able to reach useful conclusions about grammar on their own, and in such cases he was willing to assume responsibility for providing this knowledge. There are clear examples of this in the episodes from his practice cited above.

In Episode 4 the teacher provided the students with “a help, not a rule”; he also used the term a guide in giving the students advice on when to use when and will; on another occasion, he gave the students a “90%” rule at the end of a discussion on embedded questions. I asked the teacher to comment on his behaviour in these episodes, and he explained the 90% case as follows.

I was covering myself. I think I made the rule up as formulated like that there and then, I think based on something which had happened in class, and I didn’t feel confident enough to say that is the rule without exceptions. So I was just covering myself, if they came up with an example which that didn’t apply to, so it was useful to term it in terms of a guideline and a help rather than a rigid rule. (El.3:63)

The teacher’s approach to grammar was largely unplanned; that is, he took decisions about what language points to focus on interactively (as opposed to preactively), usually on the basis of problems students had

\(^{11}\) The contrast between the conception of providing knowledge embedded in my original question (i.e., directly explaining) and that explicated by the teacher (i.e., both eliciting and explaining) is indicative of the potential of research of this type for revealing teachers’ personal conceptions of what grammar teaching is and what it involves.
during lessons (all the episodes presented in this account originated in this manner). This approach to grammar teaching often led to impromptu discussions of grammar points for which the teacher did not always have what he considered a watertight rule\textsuperscript{12}—helps and guides were a form of insurance in such situations. Guides were also useful, the teacher explained, when rules had several exceptions that he did not want to burden the students with as well as when he felt the whole rule was beyond the students’ current level of understanding. He elaborated on this last point in his next comment.

I think there is often a significant difference between the immediate aim of a part of a live lesson and the written explanation of a grammar rule in a grammar reference book. The teacher, who is under constraints of time and who is well aware of what her/his students can deal with orally/aurally at a moment in time, often needs to select and modify grammatical information in a way that a reference book doesn’t need to. (EI.3:230)

The teacher’s perceptions of the students’ readiness for learning at any point in the lesson, then, influenced his decision to provide them with user-friendly versions of grammatical rules. The teacher talked about this in terms of “conscious censorship” (EI.3:73) through which he avoided exposing students to detailed explanations of rules if he felt these would confuse them.

**Practising Grammar**

Another mode of teaching grammar that emerged in the teacher’s work involved the use of practice activities, in which students were encouraged to use (rather than investigate or talk about) specific grammatical items. Such activities were an integral part of the teacher’s approach to grammar.

The underlying principle of everything is that if you’re going to have a language focus, and there’s going to be conscious language learning in the classroom, then I think I would do practice activities as well. So they’ve reached awareness, they’ve come to a conclusion about a rule, then they need some kind of practice of that rule. That’s the underlying principle there. . . .

\textsuperscript{12}What he considered is the key phrase here; his behaviour was influenced by his own perceptions of his knowledge about grammar, and knowing the answers gave him the confidence to bounce students’ questions about grammar back to the class; when he was uncertain, however, he used words like guide or help, asked students for some time to research the issue, or else provided a direct response without encouraging students to discuss the issue any further. This last kind of behaviour, though, was atypical, and I only observed one instance of it.
as a general principle I give learners controlled (if possible, communicative) practice when it comes to accuracy work. (EI.3:203–248)

In discussing Question 2 in Episode 1 the students had analysed and made explicit a rule about embedded questions (e.g., *tell me what you want* as opposed to *what do you want?). The episode below describes the practice activity that followed this analysis.

*Episode 5*

“Choose someone you want to find out more about and write questions without *tell me* which you want to ask this person,” the teacher explains. The students work on their questions for a few minutes. The teacher moves around and monitors what they are doing. He also assists students who ask for help. When the students have finished writing their questions, the teacher explains, “When you are asked a question, try to answer as fully as possible. And try and ask the questions you’ve written by using phrases like *tell me* before the question word.” The students stand up, find the person they want to talk to, and ask and answer questions (e.g., “Tell me what your favourite food is”). (EO.2:47–58)

The practice activities in the teacher’s work shared certain characteristics that are illustrated in this episode. First of all, as the teacher noted in his comments above, they occurred after a grammar item had been discussed and a rule of some sort had been established. Second, the practice was oral, not written.13 Third, the students had some choice of what to say (i.e., they were never simply repeating sentences provided by the teacher or by an exercise). Fourth, the practice revolved around issues the teacher felt were of relevance to the students (e.g., in Episode 5 they practised questions while getting to know each other better).

One example of grammar practice in the teacher’s work occurred after the class discussion of the object pronouns in Episode 3. The teacher wrote the sentence, *Do you want _____ to come back home?* on the board and did a very quick round in which students were asked to repeat the sentence using different pronouns (*me, him, her, us, them*). The whole activity lasted a minute or two. I asked the teacher about this episode because it seemed somewhat traditional in comparison with the student-centred, inductive, meaning-oriented approach to grammar I had seen in his work. His comments threw further light on a basic factor behind his approach to grammar.

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13 There was one example of written grammar practice in the teacher’s work, but it was assigned as homework. In discussing written grammar activities, the teacher identified three reasons for using them—consolidation, diagnostics, and, importantly, giving the students something that they felt comfortable with on the basis of their previous experiences of L2 learning.
What I also use is change of pace activities, and I remember the one about the drill *Do you want me? Do you want him?*, it was a stimulus-response behaviourist approach, and I just felt it was appropriate at that time to somehow jazz up, increase the energy in the lesson, so I used that technique rather than giving them a written exercise or something quieter to do. So considerations of classroom pace are also primary there sometimes in the type of activity I get the students to practise for a language point we’ve discussed. . . . I think that’s one of the prime considerations for the type of activity I choose. (EI.3:203–207)

Classroom management issues had a powerful influence on the teacher’s instructional decisions in grammar teaching; thus, in this case, he felt an energising practice activity was necessary even though the activity reflected a “stimulus-response behaviourist approach.” In discussing this episode, the teacher provided further insight into the experiential influences on the development of his personal pedagogical system.

I’ve come to look at certain aspects of the traditional methods I experienced as a learner and today I’m willing to try them out with learners in my own classrooms, which is something I wouldn’t have done a few years ago . . . . Today I’m more aware of the fact that learners have different learning styles and that some aspects of traditional language learning can be put to good use in the communicative classroom. As long as I can put these traditional activities into some kind of context, I’m OK. And for many students it’s something they can relate to because it’s the kind of language learning work they’re used to. It’s taken me a while to come to realise it, but there were things that I enjoyed when I was a language learner which I feel more willing to try out in my own work today. (EI.1:44)

The teacher’s own foreign language learning experiences were themselves of the traditional grammar translation type. “I enjoyed this methodology, I was good at it” (EI.1:40), the teacher recalled, yet earlier in his career close adherence to the communicative principles he had been trained in meant that such activities were not part of his classroom repertoire. A heightened awareness of learning styles and of his own success as a language learner, however, over time had made him willing to utilise more traditional activities in his work. In fact, a central feature of his development as a teacher was the formation of a personal pedagogy in which aspects of traditionally exclusive approaches to L2 teaching coexisted and were drawn upon according to his perceptions of the demands of specific instructional contexts.

Grammar and Communicative Ability

Given that the overall focus of the teacher’s classroom practice was on developing fluent, communicatively competent users of English, I asked
the teacher what role he felt grammar teaching played in enabling him to reach that goal.

I’m not entirely convinced that any focus on accuracy in the classroom has any effect on students’ fluency in general. I’m trying not to exclude the possibility, perhaps the probability, that formal language focus at some point gets transferred into language which is acquired by the student. I wonder sometimes whether I’m also not covering myself with the students, by saying listen—if we do fluency activities all the time, I’m not sure how well that would go down with the students, basically. So, I feel that these are their expectations and I will do accuracy work. . . . I don’t necessarily believe that it’s going to help them. I’ve done this present perfect umpteen times with a million people. I still believe that nothing I’ve ever done in a classroom consciously with students, language focus, has actually helped them to acquire the present perfect, for example. (EI.2:45–53)

The teacher’s comment here may come as a surprise in the light of his approach to grammar explored in this account. However, considering the different reasons he gave for encouraging students to think about, talk about, and practise grammar, the absence of any direct reference to improved fluency does become clear. He seemed to believe there was a possibility that formal language work did enhance students’ ability to use the grammar studied in communicative speech, but the weight of experience (“umpteen times with a million people”) suggested otherwise. Similar sentiments were evident in the teacher’s comments on the value of the written grammar exercises he occasionally assigned.

I think probably, unconsciously, now consciously, that the main reason why I give it [written grammar] is, “Look, this is grammar, this is what you perceive as grammar, we’re doing this too, as well.” (EI.3:195)

Appeasing students’ concerns by showing them he was doing some grammar work was really what mattered for the teacher; classroom management issues were also important. As for improving the students’ ability to use the grammar taught for communication, it might occur, but the teacher was not very optimistic about this, and it was not the primary motive behind his decision to focus on grammar.

DISCUSSION: THE PEDAGOGICAL SYSTEM

In this section I discuss the outcomes of this study in the light of the educational literature on teachers’ pedagogical systems and examine the implications of such research for expanding current understandings of L2 grammar teaching.
The Components of the Pedagogical System

The literature on teachers’ pedagogical systems has identified a range of issues teachers have complex, interacting beliefs about. These issues include beliefs about students, themselves (i.e., teachers’ self-perceptions), the subject matter being taught, teaching and learning, curricula, schools, the teacher’s role, materials, classroom management, and instructional activities (Burns, 1992; Carter & Doyle, 1987; Cronin-Jones, 1991; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Grossman, Wilson, & Shulman, 1989; Munby, 1982; Olson & Singer, 1994; Smith, 1996; Taylor, 1987). This study supported this notion of complex, personalised pedagogical systems and illustrated the manner in which such a system impinged on the work of an L2 teacher with specific reference to the teaching of grammar.

In talking about his work, the teacher revealed a network of interacting and potentially conflicting beliefs about a wide variety of issues related not only to L2 teaching but also to teaching and learning in general. Thus, despite his belief that formal grammar work probably made no direct contribution to students’ communicative ability, he included such work in his practice for the following reasons.

1. Especially early in the course, grammar work is a form of packaging designed to preempt students’ concerns about the kind of course they are getting.
2. Grammar work based on students’ errors makes it more relevant to the students.
3. Grammar work based on errors the students make during fluency activities validates the latter in the students’ eyes.
4. Students enjoy the intellectual challenge inductive grammar work provides; this approach to grammar also enhances students’ sense of achievement.
5. Grammar activities allow the teacher to vary the pace of the lesson.
6. Grammar work in which students can focus on their own errors makes the students more aware of these errors and hence more capable of self-correcting in the future.
7. Grammar practice consolidates students’ understanding of grammar previously focused on; it can also serve as a diagnostic tool enabling the teacher to identify grammar areas the students need more work on.
8. Grammar work helps students perceive patterns in the language, which can facilitate learning. Encouraging an awareness of grammar rules or asking students to compare their L1 to English can thus be useful in this respect.
These findings provide the kind of insight into grammar-related instructional decisions that the field of L2 pedagogy currently lacks but that has clear potential for broadening current conceptions of the processes involved in L2 grammar instruction. I elaborate on this potential in the final part of this article.

The Role of Experience in Shaping the Pedagogical System

This study identified ways in which a teacher’s pedagogical system was shaped by educational and professional experiences in his life. In contrast to the findings of several studies into the effects of training on the beliefs and classroom practices of beginning teachers (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Goodman, 1988; Weinstein, 1990), the teacher in this study was profoundly influenced by his initial training. This experience introduced him to communicative methodology and developed in him beliefs in student-centredness that had an immediate and lasting impact on his practice and that were powerful enough to blot out, at least early in his career, beliefs about the value of explicit grammar work instilled by his own experience as a learner. This, too, is interesting, in the light of research suggesting that the power of pretraining beliefs is at least as strong as, or even actually outweighs, the effects of formal teacher education in defining beginning teachers’ classroom practice (Goodman, 1988). In this study, the beliefs instilled by the teacher’s initial training were so firmly rooted that negative classroom experiences early in his career (e.g., students’ complaints about the lack of explicit grammar) led to no immediate change in his work.

The powerful impact of the teacher’s initial training on his personal pedagogical system may have been due to a number of factors. One of these may have been the nature of the course, which was an intensive, full-time, 4-week programme (most of the literature I have cited is based on longer programmes). A second factor was definitely the teacher’s admiration for his trainers as well as their skill in blending course content and training processes by practising what they preached (i.e., they were reflexive trainers—Britten, 1985). Thirdly, the course had a strong practical orientation, with daily teaching practice sessions. In this way, the precepts of communicative teaching were strongly reinforced. The novelty the training experiences represented for the teacher, an open mind, and a willingness to learn on his part also probably contributed to making his initial training such an influential learning experience. The teacher’s in-service training, especially by introducing him to the notion of learning styles, also had an important formative effect on his personal pedagogical system. An awareness of this concept enabled the teacher to review and make sense of negative experiences.
earlier in his career. It also allowed him to become aware that the strategies that functioned for him as an L2 learner could also be put to good use in his work, even though they were generally not considered appropriate in a communicative classroom. And it also initiated in him the process of radically redefining the beliefs about grammar teaching that had been instilled by his initial training. The process he went through supports the claims made by studies that, drawing upon the conceptual change hypothesis (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982), have argued that in-service training will have a lasting impact on teachers’ classroom practice only when it addresses their existing beliefs (Briscoe, 1991; Crawley & Salyer, 1995).

Ongoing classroom experience continued the development in the teacher of a personalised, pragmatically oriented system of pedagogical beliefs and practical theories that was powerfully influenced by his perceptions of what worked well, but that in turn served as a filter through which he processed continuing experience. His beliefs about the use of students’ L1 in grammar teaching, for example, were based purely on experience. This system of beliefs also provided the teacher with a form of expert knowledge (Berliner, 1987) about L2 teaching that influenced his instructional decisions; for example, the teacher had mental representations of typical students (schemas) that allowed him to make predictions about students’ linguistic needs, expectations, and experience even before he met them. Expert knowledge also informed his interactive decisions about which grammar points to include in error analysis activities and which to ignore. Such decisions called for knowledge not simply about grammar (i.e., linguistic knowledge) but also about the grammar that the students needed or wanted and, hence, were most likely to benefit from.

Context and the Pedagogical System

It is also worth noting that despite numerous studies into “the social, psychological, and environmental realities of the school and classroom [which] mitigate or preclude the implementation of belief systems in decision making” (Kinzer, 1988, p. 359), external contextual factors did not appear to interfere with the implementation of the teacher’s pedagogical system. He consistently discussed his work with reference to his beliefs and his perceptions of the classroom and never rationalised his behaviour in terms of external forces he had no control over, such as parents, principals’ requirements, the school society, students’ characteristics, curriculum mandates, classroom and school layout, school policies, standardised tests, and the availability of resources (Beach, 1994; Brickhouse, 1990; Briscoe, 1991; Brown & Wendel, 1993; Carlgren &
Lindblad, 1991; Konopak & Williams, 1994; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1986; Taylor, 1987; Wilson, Konopak, & Readence, 1992). This is not to deny, of course, that basic choices in the selection of content, for example, must have been influenced by student-related variables such as age and level.

Instructional decisions also need to be considered in terms of internal contextual factors that, in contrast to external givens, surface during the course of instruction itself. The teacher in this study was sensitive to such factors, such as evidence of student understanding, and he seemed to have built into his personal pedagogical system ways of responding to these factors and even preempting potential complications they could cause. A clear example of this was the packaging exercise he did early on in the course; this was designed to appease students’ concerns about the nature of the programme by showing them that during the course he would pay attention to the accuracy of their language. Decisions about how directive he needed to be when grammar was being analysed were also influenced by the extent to which he felt students could usefully reach inductive conclusions about the grammar under study. Similarly, decisions about the use of grammatical terminology were also conditioned by his perceptions of how positively students responded to explicit talk about grammar. Of course, the notion that teachers’ instructional decisions are influenced by their real-time perceptions of classroom events is nothing new in itself; however, with specific reference to L2 grammar teaching it does raise interesting questions about the basis on which teachers decide to explain or elicit, to provide comprehensive or simplified grammar rules, to respond to students’ questions about grammar, and to react to their grammar errors, for example.

IMPLICATIONS

By focusing on teaching processes (rather than outcomes), this study represents a conceptual shift in research on L2 grammar instruction that gives new direction to the investigation and understanding of this facet of L2 pedagogy. The insight this study has provided into the behavioural

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14 In this study I did not investigate the relationship between the teacher’s practice and what students actually learned about grammar. This does not imply that the analysis of such relationships is not congruent with the kind of work I am promoting here or that the study of teaching effectiveness is not important for the TESL profession. Data that document students’ perceptions of, or reactions to, the practices that derive from a teacher’s pedagogical system can provide valuable insights into the processes involved in effective L2 grammar teaching. It is important, however, for the study of learning outcomes not to become divorced from an understanding of teaching processes, as it did in earlier process-product studies of L2 grammar instruction.
and psychological dimensions of grammar teaching—issues not addressed by traditional approaches to research in this field—suggests that continuing work of this kind has a central role to play in providing realistic accounts of what L2 grammar teaching actually involves.

Such accounts can be of particular benefit to L2 teacher educators, who at present can at best introduce trainees to pedagogical options in grammar teaching but cannot illustrate when, how, and why L2 teachers in real classrooms draw upon these options. The current understanding of this aspect of L2 teaching is so limited that L2 teacher educators do not even know whether the pedagogical options presented to prospective teachers bear any resemblance to practising teachers’ understandings of grammar teaching. The form of inquiry I have illustrated here addresses this problem by providing teacher educators with detailed, authentic descriptions of teachers’ thinking and action.

The stimulating portraits of L2 classroom practice that emerge from studies like this one can also be used in professional development contexts, not as prescriptive models of exemplary teaching but to inspire other teachers toanalyse their own beliefs (Clark, 1986) and to find support for or review the practical arguments (Fenstermacher, 1986) on which their own grammar teaching practices are based. The relationship between research and practice in grammar teaching implied here is thus no longer the unidirectional one assumed by process-product studies of this area of L2 instruction (i.e., that research informs practice); rather, it becomes a reciprocal relationship in which research is grounded in the realities of classroom practice but at the same time provides teachers with insights into teaching through which they can critically examine, and hence improve, their own practice.

In conclusion, studies of the pedagogical systems on which teachers base grammar instruction have much to offer the field of L2 teaching. Such research can contribute much-needed descriptive data about what teachers actually do in teaching grammar and clarify the processes it involves; it can provide a vivid portrait of both teachers’ action and their thinking that can serve as a catalyst in enabling teachers to examine their own grammar teaching practices; and it can contribute to the development of more sophisticated conceptualisations of L2 grammar teaching, which will provide the basis for forms of teacher education and development more in tune with the psychological context of instruction.

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APPENDIX A

Preobservation Interview

Section 1: Education

1. What do you recall about your experiences of learning English at school?
   • What approaches were used?
   • Was there any formal analysis of language?
2. Did you study any foreign languages? What do you recall about these lessons?
   • What kinds of methods were used?
   • Do you recall whether you enjoyed such lessons or not?
3. What about postsecondary education? University? Did the study of language play any role there?
4. Do you feel that your own education as a student has had any influence on the way you teach today?

Section 2: Entry Into the Profession and Development as a Teacher

1. How and why did you become an EFL teacher?
   • What recollections do you have about your earliest teaching experiences?
   • Were these particularly positive or negative?
   • What kinds of teaching methods and materials did you use?
2. Tell me about your formal teacher training experiences.
   • Did they promote a particular way of teaching?
   • Did they encourage participants to approach grammar in any particular way?
   • Which aspect(s) of the course(s) did you find most memorable?
3. What have the greatest influences on your development as a teacher been?
Section 3: Reflections on Teaching

1. What do you feel the most satisfying aspect of teaching EFL is, and what is the hardest part of the job?
2. What do you feel your strengths as an EFL teacher are, and your weaknesses?
3. Can you describe one particularly good experience you have had as an EFL teacher, and one particularly bad one? What is your idea of a “successful” lesson?
4. Do you have any preferences in terms of the types of students you like to teach?
5. What about the students? Do they generally have any preferences about the kind of work they like to do in their lessons?

Section 4: The School

1. Does the school you work for promote any particular style of teaching?
2. Are there any restrictions on the kinds of materials you use or on the content and organisation of your lessons?
3. Do students come here expecting a particular type of language course?

APPENDIX B

Extract From an Analytic Memo for One Lesson

Observation data were transcribed and analysed after each lesson. Key episodes were identified, and a list of questions generated by these episodes compiled. Questions were collated by category and summarised in analytic memos. In the extract below, the terms in italics are the categories that emerged from the lesson on which the memo was based.

1. **The use of metalanguage**: The teacher seems to expect a basic metalanguage from the students (“What kind of word are you looking for when you use this clue?” [verb]) but does not assume too much (“When I say **infinitive**, can you give me another example?”). How does he feel about the use of grammatical metalanguage? Does he see any purpose in getting students to develop their own metalanguage?

2. **Analysis of structure**: The teacher gets the students to analyse the structure of grammatical items (e.g., “If I had two wishes, what would they be?” = **If** + **past** + **would**). What is the teacher’s rationale for getting students to conduct such analyses? How does he feel this helps the language learning process?

3. The teacher seems to imply that **grammar books** oversimplify complex issues. Is this what the teacher believes? What are the teacher’s attitudes to grammar books? Is he suggesting that students should be exposed to the complexities of English grammar in full (“there are about 76 conditionals in English”)?

4. What are the teacher’s beliefs about **grammar practice**, the role it plays in learning and the way it should be handled? What about transformation exercises—“What is it?”—Tell me what it is?” What about “If you want to, try to use the information on the board” (the information was that describing the structure of a conditional sentence like **If I was a butterfly, I would fly**).

5. The teacher elicits **rules** for the use of interrogative forms and the word order associated with them by giving students a few examples, then getting them to complete an incomplete sentence describing the rule. What is the teacher’s rationale here? How does he feel about giving rules? What about “90%” or “normally” rules?

6. What about independent **language research** work outside the classroom? How does the teacher see this as fitting into his overall approach to teaching? How does he see it as helping the students?
APPENDIX C

Schedule for Postobservation Interviews

The schedule was divided into 12 areas of practice that emerged from the analysis of the analytic memos based on the observation data. These issues were discussed over the course of two interviews.

1. Accuracy and fluency
2. Handling students’ errors
3. Teacher role in grammar teaching
4. Students’ expectations and needs
5. Grammar rules
6. Selecting grammar content
7. Small-group grammar tasks
8. Grammatical terminology
9. Analysis of grammar
10. Grammar books
11. Grammar practice
12. Students’ L1 and translation

Each section of the interview schedule contained a lesson episode that prompted me to investigate the area, together with the questions the episode generated. Below is an example.

Students’ L1 and Translation

The teacher calls on students to refer to their L1 many times during the lessons.
S3 says she has a problem using a particular structure, “Have been, continuous present, is it?” “The name doesn’t matter,” says the teacher, and he proceeds to write the following on the board:

Je suis ici depuis deux jours
Ich bin hier seit zwei Tage
Sono qui da due giorni
I came here two days ago
I ______________ 2 days

The teacher asks, “Can you complete the sentence?” S2 says, “I have been here for 2 days.” “In many European languages,” the teacher explains, “a present tense is used where in English the present perfect is used. We can say ‘I am here for 2 weeks,’ but it has a different meaning, it means ‘now and in the future.’” (EO.1:98–133)

• What contribution to EFL can the students’ L1 make?
• With specific reference to grammar, how does reference to the L1 help?

During the same lesson, when he tells them to analyse the transcript, the teacher asks the students to tick grammatical structures that are “the same in my language” or to put a question mark next to items that look “very different to my language.” Students are asked to write translations of words they do not know. The use of bilingual dictionaries is encouraged.

• What beliefs underlie the teacher’s position here?

APPENDIX D

Structured List of Categories

The experiential category includes references to educational and professional experiences in the teacher’s life that had some bearing on an understanding of his current grammar teaching practices. The pedagogical category includes the teacher’s beliefs about a range of issues in L2 learning and teaching. The contextual category includes references the teacher made to the effect of external (e.g., time) and internal (e.g., students’ understanding) contextual factors on his practice.

1. EXPERIENTIAL
   1.1 General education
      1.1.1 Languages
         1.1.1.1 First language
         1.1.1.2 Foreign language
      1.1.2 University
1.2 Teacher education
   1.2.1 Joining
   1.2.2 Certificate / diploma
1.3 Teaching experience
   1.3.1. Early
   1.3.2 Ongoing
   1.3.3 As basis of beliefs

2. PEDAGOGICAL
   2.1 Language
   2.2 Language learning
      2.2.1 Facilitating
      2.2.2 Hindering
      2.2.3 Accuracy and fluency
         2.2.3.1 Rationale behind accuracy work
         2.2.3.2 Rationale behind fluency work
         2.2.3.3 Relationship between accuracy and fluency work
         2.2.3.4 Students’ attitudes towards accuracy and fluency work
         2.2.3.5 Teacher’s role in accuracy and fluency work
         2.2.3.6 Combining accuracy and fluency work
         2.2.3.7 Use of L1 in accuracy work
      2.2.4 Approach
         2.2.4.1 Communicative language learning
         2.2.4.2 Justifying approach to L2 teaching
      2.2.5 Materials
      2.2.6 Skills
      2.2.7 Planning
      2.2.8 Mother tongue
   2.3 Grammar
      2.3.1 Techniques
      2.3.2 Rules
      2.3.3 Books
      2.3.4 Terminology
      2.3.5 Students’ errors
      2.3.6 Timing
      2.3.7 Pacing the lesson
   2.4 Students
      2.4.1 Experience
      2.4.2 Expectations
      2.4.3 Needs and wants
      2.4.4 Rapport with
      2.4.5 Likes and dislikes
      2.4.6 Learning styles
      2.4.7 Fears
   2.5 Language teacher
      2.5.1 Role
      2.5.2 Characteristics

3. CONTEXTUAL
   3.1 Time
   3.2 Students
      3.2.1 Readiness for learning
      3.2.2 Problems
      3.2.3 Requests
      3.2.4 Level and age

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