

Teaching grammar: Language teachers' cognition and classroom practices

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In recent years teacher cognition research has attracted a great amount of attention among different scholars. The current study aimed to discover what the most prevalent perspectives of English language center teachers in Iran are regarding teaching grammar and how much these perspectives are consistent with teachers' actual grammar teaching practices as well as current principles of grammar teaching. An adapted version of Burgess-Etherington questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were gathered from 120 teachers, and the classroom teaching practices of 10 of them were observed and video recorded for further analysis. The results of the study showed that the teachers mostly had a proper understanding of grammar teaching issues and its current principles. However, their actual practices did not always go together with their stated perspectives.

Keywords: Teacher Cognition; Teaching Grammar; Teacher Education; Classroom Practices

1. Introduction

Those who are concerned with the practices of English language teaching have constantly been faced with diverse theories and models of second language acquisition as well as methods and approaches to language teaching. This has led the teachers' to become confused about which theory or model to employ and which approach or method to follow. Kumaravadivelu (2006) argued that factors which are thought by various models to influence language learning range from two (Krashen, 1981) to seventy four (Spolsky, 1989).

Drawing on perceptions from interdisciplinary fields such as second-language acquisition, cognitive psychology, information processing, schema theory, and parallel distributed processing model, Kumaravadivelu (2006) recognizes five key constructs that constitute the input-output interrelationship. These

include input, intake, intake factors, intake processes, and output. Input is defined as “oral and/or written corpus of the target language (TL) to which L2 learners are exposed through various sources, and recognized by them as language input” (Kumaravadevelu, 2006, p. 27). Intake is seen as what is internalized. Intake factors include “learner internal and learner external factors that are brought to bear on the psycholinguistic processes of language learning” (p. 29) and consist of individual factors, negotiation factors, tactical factors, affective factors, knowledge factors and environmental factors. Intake processes are defined as “cognitive mechanisms that at once mediate between, and interact with, input data and intake factors” (p. 45). They consist of inferencing, structuring and restructuring, and act as the central processing unit (CPU). Output is “the corpus of utterances that learners actually produce orally or in writing” (p. 48).

From the point of view of their importance, degree of influence, and interaction with other factors, each of above-mentioned constructs and factors have been more or less a matter of debate. For one thing, knowledge factors, which is knowledge of and about language and consists of language knowledge (implicit linguistic knowledge) and metalanguage knowledge (explicit linguistic knowledge), has been one of the areas with considerable amount of controversy. For another thing, Krashen (1985) discusses that explicit linguistic knowledge cannot change into implicit linguistic knowledge, and this has come to be known as the ‘no interface position’. Sharwood Smith (as cited in Ellis, 1993) believes that there exists a strong connection between explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge, and there is possibility for explicit linguistic knowledge to become implicit linguistic knowledge—known as the ‘strong interface position’. Finally, Ellis (1993) suggests “the weak interface position” based on which explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge are two distinct systems. According to this view, explicit linguistic knowledge does not transfer to implicit linguistic knowledge although it can facilitate the development of implicit linguistic knowledge.

Among knowledge factors, grammatical knowledge has been a matter of much controversy (Ellis, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). Richards and Rodgers (2001) say that from the beginning of the method era various positions have been taken on grammar teaching in English programs (cf., Salmani Nodoushan, 2006a). While in Audio Lingual Method, Situational Language Teaching and designer methods explicit instruction of grammatical items was strongly agreed upon, with the arrival of the communicative era, explicit grammar teaching was called into question. Proponents of communicative approaches thought that there is no need for explicit grammar teaching, and argued that students will subconsciously acquire grammatical features when they are presented with the overall focus on meaning and in a communicative context.

It is in this controversial context that the present study has been conducted with two main objectives. It tries to see what the potential discrepancies between teachers' theoretical perspectives and current principles of the teaching of grammar are. Findings will also make it clear how much teachers' perspectives are reflected in their classroom practices. The study, therefore, seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the potential discrepancies between teachers' theoretical perspectives and current principles of grammar teaching?
2. How much teachers' perspectives are reflected in their classroom practices?
3. What are the most prevalent perspectives on teaching grammar among Iranian EFL teachers?

2. Background

Reviewing current literature on grammar teaching, Nassaji and Fotos (2004) maintained that recent studies have cast doubt on the communicative view of grammar teaching and brought a renewed attention to explicit grammar teaching. They mentioned four factors as the driving forces behind a reconsideration of grammar instruction: (a) a needed degree of consciousness for language learning, (b) learner's passage through developmental stages, (c) inadequacies of communicative approaches to grammar teaching, and (d) the usefulness of grammar instruction. Different alternatives have been proposed including processing instruction, interactional feedback, textual enhancement, discourse-based grammar teaching, collaborative output tasks, and focused grammar tasks (Nassaji, & Fotos, 2004). Overall, there has been an increasing interest toward a 'focus on form' instead of a 'focus on forms'. Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2002, p. 419) describe focus on form as "the treatment of linguistic form in the context of performing a communicative task" and focus on forms as activities "where linguistic features are treated sequentially."

Simultaneously, Allwright (1991) maintained that the era of methods was by then over and they would work no more; hence, we teachers no longer have to follow the prescribed principles of methods. We have passed method condition toward a 'post method condition' (Kumaravadelu, 1994; Salmani Nodoushan, 2006a) in which a set of principles which are fixed, and a set of parameters which vary with regards to differences in context, are available to inform teachers (Widdowson, 2003). Ten principles of instructed language learning by Ellis (2005) and ten macro-strategies for language teaching by Kumaravadelu (1994) are among such principles. Thus, in the post method condition, teachers' autonomy and cognition have been acknowledged. This

acknowledgement was manifested in Allwright's (1992) notion of exploratory teaching in which research and pedagogy are linked together in language classrooms, and in Widdowson's (1990) model of pragmatic mediation. However, Widdowson (2003) maintains that teachers' cognition and autonomy are only useful if they are informed by comprehensive pedagogic theories and principles.

Ellis (1998) proposes four alternatives for grammar teaching which incorporate all the above mentioned alternative approaches to grammar teaching. The first approach is structured input and "asks learners to process input that has been specially contrived to induce comprehension of the target structure" (Ellis, 1998, p. 44). The second one is explicit instruction and is preoccupied with "whether to teach rules directly or to adopt activities that enable learners to discover the rules for themselves" (p. 50); the third approach, known as production practice, employs techniques to elicit production of target structures. Finally, the negative feedback approach focuses on learners' errors in communication to concentrate on a grammatical form and teach it. Batstone and Ellis (2009) propose three principles for grammar teaching—when using one of the above mentioned alternatives—and define them as follows:

The first is the Given-to-New Principle, where existing world knowledge is exploited as a resource for connecting known or 'given' meaning with new form-meaning mappings. The second is the Awareness Principle, which states that discovering new mappings between form and meaning is a process which necessarily involves awareness. The third is the real-operating conditions principle, whereby the process of acquiring form-meaning mappings is not complete until learners are able to practice them in a communicative context and through a primary focus on meaning rather than on form. (Batstone & Ellis, 2009, p.195)

Such advances in grammar instruction research (cf., Nassaji & Fotos, 2004) and the enormous alternatives and principles accessible for language teachers (e.g., Al Shalabi & Salmani Nodoushan, 2009; Batstone and Ellis, 2009; Ellis, 1998; Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen, 2002; Nemati, Salmani Nodoushan & Ashrafzadeh, 2010; Salmani Nodoushan, 2003, 2006a,b, 2007a,b, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) may have the outcome of creating some uncertainties in the minds of the teachers and making them confused. They may understand different principles and approaches inaccurately or attach unnecessary importance to one option at the expense of the exclusion of another. For instance, a teacher may not be familiar with what activities are appropriate to meet 'the real operating conditions principle' or he may

1 consider that for learners to gain grammatical competence, structured input
2 is fair enough. Thus, it appears to be essential to understand what teachers'
3 perspectives toward grammar (teaching) are in order to realize whether they
4 agree to the current principles of grammar teaching. This is for the reason
5 that teachers' cognition—i.e., their beliefs and attitudes regarding language
6 and language instruction—controls to a great extent what they actually do in
7 classroom, and an incongruity between their perspectives and current
8 principles will bring about unproductive classroom practices, therefore
9 leading to a class with little learning outcomes. Through an understanding of
10 what teachers think regarding grammar and grammar instruction, it appear
11 to be possible to help them overcome the above mentioned incongruity and
12 inform teachers, in teacher training programs, with regard to current
13 principles in order to have more effective language classes.

14 Table 1

15 *Applications of Research on Teacher Cognition ()*

Based on Borg (1999b, p. 23), insight into teachers' conditions allow us:

- to understand discrepancies between theoretical recommendations based on research and classroom practice and hence to attempt to explain the lack of influence on practice of educational innovation (Clark & Peterson, 1986);
 - to provide quality portraiture of teaching in all its complexity (Clark & Lampert, 1986);
 - to provide policy makers in education and teacher education with the basis for understanding how best to implement educational innovation and to promote teacher change (Butt, Raymond, McCue & Yamagishi, 1992);
 - to engage teachers in a form of reflective learning, by making them aware of the psychological bases of their classroom practice; to help teachers understand their mental lives, not to dictate practice to them (Clark & Lampert, 1986);
 - to understand how teachers develop (Tobin & LaMaster, 1995);
 - to develop a new conceptualization of teaching which supports and improves the quality of teachers' professional practice (Calderhead, 1987); and
 - to provide the basis of effective pre- and in-service teacher education and professional development (Goodman, 1988).
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16 Borg (1999b) conducted a study for researching teachers' cognition in
17 grammar instruction and summarized perceptions into instruction brought
18 about by teacher cognition study, illustrated in Table 1. In his work, Borg

observing and interviewing a native speaker teacher of EFL, illustrated that the way in which the teacher's teaching decisions in grammar instruction were formed by the interaction of his cognition, his educational and professional experiences, and the context of instruction.

In another study, observing and interviewing two teachers, Borg (2001) estimated the correlation between teachers' perception of their knowledge about grammar and their classroom actions and found a direct relationship between the two. For example, when a teacher was self-assured about his knowledge of grammar, he had a tendency to encourage spontaneous questions and express rules immediately, but when he did not feel self-assured about his knowledge of grammar, he changed his behavior. From these two studies (Borg, 1999b; 2001), Borg concluded that teachers should be acquainted with their own perspectives and knowledge about language and language instruction, in general, and grammar and grammar instruction, in particular. Borg (1998b) proposed 'data-based teacher development activities' as a useful technique in order to make teachers aware of their own perspectives; furthermore, Borg (1999a) argued and described another strategy comprising three stages for enhancing teachers' awareness. These three stages were: (1) Simply describe what teachers do in classrooms, (2) state the rationale behind them, and (3) evaluate the stated rationale.

In the same line of study, Phipps and Borg (2009) investigated the discrepancies between teachers' grammar instruction values and practices. A longitudinal observation along with an interview with four teachers were conducted. Based on the findings, they concluded that while teachers' values and practices are not in agreement, this is at the surface level, and that congruence can be noticed considering deeper levels. They ascribed this to the existence of core and peripheral values. Core values or beliefs are those general beliefs regarding language learning which are 'experientially ingrained' at the surface level, but peripheral values or beliefs are more specific ones regarding grammar and grammar instruction which are 'theoretically embraced' at deeper levels.

Borg's studies (Borg, 1999b, 2001; Phipps & Borg 2009) are advantageous in that they made use of observations as well as interviews as instruments in data collection procedures; however, a larger sample of participants could be more reliable and informative, and could help to gain more insights into teachers' actual perspectives. Instead, interviews may cause some participants to become too nervous to describe and explain freely their proper feelings. There are alternative data collection procedures such as questionnaires which allow for both a larger sample of participants and a reduction in participants' nervousness.

1 In their study, Burgess and Etherington (2002) explored the attitudes of 48
2 English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers toward grammar and
3 grammar instruction using a developed questionnaire. In the questionnaire,
4 they explored teachers attitudes toward the role of grammar in language,
5 explicit grammar teaching, instruction vs. exposure, declarative and
6 procedural knowledge, the importance of conscious knowledge, comparison
7 and contrast of structures, the use of grammatical terminology, problem
8 solving, correction of errors, presentation in authentic, complete texts, and
9 the role of practice. Following that, the researchers, using some open ended
10 questions, asked teachers to provide their comments to gain further
11 information about their perspectives. They reported that the teacher's
12 answers to these questions are generally compatible with their answers to
13 other questionnaire items. Yet, the fact is that reaching an understanding of
14 teachers' perception using only questionnaires as a data collection tool does
15 not seem to suffice, something which Burgess and Etherington (2002)
16 mentioned as one of the limitations of their study. They suggested that a
17 triangulation method through which the researchers could have used
18 observation of the teacher's actual classroom performance along with the
19 attitudes expressed through questionnaires, was an appropriate option.

20 Hosseinpour Moghaddam (2008) investigated the perspectives of 41 ESP
21 teachers around the role of grammar in ESP courses using the Burgess and
22 Etherington's (2002) questionnaire. He was to investigate whether there is
23 any differences among the perspectives of ESP teachers on various aspects of
24 grammar instruction, the amount of importance attached to the role of
25 grammar in ESP courses by ESP teachers, and the effect of participant
26 teachers' academic degrees (MA holders, PhD candidates, and PhD holders)
27 on their perspectives on various aspects of grammar and grammar teaching;
28 he also attempted to recognize which approaches and techniques toward
29 grammar instruction are common in ESP program classes in Iran. The
30 findings showed that while teachers had diverse views of grammar
31 instruction, they all highly valued the role of grammar in ESP classes.
32 Moreover, it was found that the academic degrees of participant teachers had
33 no significant effect on their views about different aspects of grammar and
34 grammar teaching. In this study, similar to Burgess and Etherington's (2002)
35 work, only one data collection instrument had been employed. Needless to
36 say, if we want to gain a greater understandings of teachers' perspectives, we
37 need to use a triangulation method and employ more than one instrument—
38 for instance a questionnaire along with classroom observation.

39 In another study, Farshchi (2009) adopted Burgess and Etherington's (2002)
40 questionnaire. In a comparative study on the role of grammar, he investigated
41 the perspectives of 117 teachers, from both state high schools and private
42 English language institutes. He reported that the perspectives of teachers

from both settings are mostly in agreement except for the three areas of (a) explicit teaching of grammar, (b) the role of instruction versus exposure, and (c) presentation of grammar through authentic texts. Here again, what seems to be the limitations of the study is the absence the observation of what actually happened in the classes. Taking all the above mentioned studies into account, a lack of studies which employ both a large sample of participants and a triangulation of data collection procedures is evident, something which the present study attempted to compensate.

The arguments around the death of methods (Allwright, 1991; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Salmani Nodoushan, 2006a) and the movement toward 'the post method condition' or post method era (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Salmani Nodoushan, 2006a) have left teachers with a plenty of principles and alternatives (e.g., see Batstone and Ellis, 2009; Ellis, 1998, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 1994) in all areas of language instruction including the teaching of grammar. While this abundance of principles and alternatives has caused an increase in the importance of teachers' cognition and awareness, it has also led to teachers' misunderstanding and confusion. Teachers may not interpret all principles correctly, or they may improperly disregard some and overemphasize others. Teachers may not create the proper balance between 'accommodation' and 'assimilation', in Widdowson's (1990) terms, when encountering a new theory—i.e., teachers may only assimilate new theories into their own belief systems rather than properly accommodating their belief systems to new theories. As a supplementary evidence, "the literature on curriculum innovation and implementation suggests that one of the causes of the discrepancy between prescribed theory and classroom practice may be teacher attitude" (Karavas-Doukas, 1996, p. 187).

Unintentionally, all these confusions and misunderstandings will be part of teacher's viewpoints about grammar and grammar instruction. Since perceptions influence behavior, teachers with such views of grammar and grammar instruction may use activities in classrooms which are not conducive to students' learning. Bearing this fact in mind, we need to know about teachers' perspectives to see whether they are in line with current teaching principles and to help them accommodate their views, if possible, in case there are discrepancies between current principles and their perspectives.

While some of the people who study English may attach an equal amount of importance to the acquisition of the four skills (of speaking, listening, reading, and writing), for most people studying English in institutes improving the speaking skill is seen as the primary goal. Undoubtedly grammar is one of the most important contributive sub-skills in speaking, as is the case for other

1 skills, and it helps both the accuracy and the fluency of the speakers'
2 produced utterances. Thus, teachers have to employ current sound principles
3 and helpful activities and practices to make the process of grammar teaching
4 and learning as efficient as possible. The effective instruction of grammar
5 appears unbearable unless teachers have an understanding of the currently
6 available principles and techniques. Taking these facts into account, becoming
7 aware of teachers' cognition of theories and principles of grammar
8 instruction and accommodating them, if possible, and when needed, is of
9 crucial concern. Moreover, studies aimed at investigating teachers' cognition
10 can provide us with a better understanding of what teachers actually do in
11 their classrooms, and of the processes that inspire their decision makings
12 (Borg, 1998a). This information is desirable particularly for teacher
13 educators who, currently, just provide teachers with alternatives without
14 making them aware of when, how, and why they should choose the proper
15 one (Borg, 1999a). It can also increase teachers' awareness of their own
16 attitudes of which they may not consciously be aware and help them to
17 become better reflective practitioners (Borg, 1998b).

18 Then, based on the above mentioned points, this study aimed at finding to
19 what extent English teachers' perspectives are in agreement with current
20 principles of teaching grammar and to what extent these perspectives are
21 reflected in their classroom practices.

22 3. Method

23 3.1. Participants

24 The data were collected from 130 Iranian EFL teachers teaching ($N=130$) in
25 English language institutes through a questionnaire. Excluding about 10 of
26 the questionnaires from data analysis due to respondents' failure to provide
27 enough information, the data from 120 questionnaires were used for final
28 data analysis. Then, 120 EFL teachers—i.e., 68 males ($n_m=68$), and 52 females
29 ($n_f=52$)—were the final participants of the study, 10 of whom also
30 participated in the qualitative data collection process (i.e., observation). The
31 teachers had different years of experience and held different academic
32 degrees.

33 3.2. Instrumentation

34 An adapted version of Burgess and Etherington's (2002) questionnaire was
35 used to collect data. This questionnaire was a five-point Likert-type
36 questionnaire, designed to provide data on teachers' beliefs and attitudes
37 toward grammar and the teaching of grammar.

The original version of the questionnaire consisted of three parts. Due to repetitiveness identified in some items, they were omitted in the process of modification (item # 11 from part one, and items # 11, # 12, # 15, and # 16 from part two). The third part of the questionnaire was totally omitted as it seemed to be irrelevant to the purpose of the study. Some minor modification in wording and ordering of some items also took place. Furthermore, for further comments the teachers were provided with an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire.

To capture practical aspects of the teachers' grammar teaching, a 22 item classroom observation checklist was also developed based on the items of the aspects of the adapted questionnaire. While the items of the checklist came from the adapted questionnaire of which the validity had been confirmed by its original developers, the validity of the checklist was also estimated by the current researchers. For its reliability to increase, the observation of the classroom practices of each of the teachers took place twice.

3.3. Procedures

Questionnaire data were gathered in a number of language institutes. The classroom grammar teaching practices of 10 of the participant teachers in questionnaire data collection were observed and video recorded for further analysis and reference. To facilitate the process of data analysis and reporting, both the questionnaire and the observation checklist items were classified into categories adapted from Burgess and Etherington's (2002) questionnaire.

4. Results and discussion

The aim of this study was to account for language institute teachers' values and practices regarding the teaching of grammar. As such, three sets of analyses were conducted: (1) teachers' grammar teaching perspectives, (2) consistency between teachers' perspectives and practices, and (3) convergence of teachers' perspectives and current principles of grammar teaching.

4.1. Teachers' grammar teaching perspectives

The analysis of the questionnaire data showed that the teachers mostly believed that practice plays the most important role in the learning of grammar. The second highly scored category of items was the category of current principles of grammar teaching. Among the supported principles were the role of students' world knowledge in form/meaning mappings, the role of awareness in form/meaning mappings, the role of conscious

knowledge of grammar in language improvement, and the role of practice in a communicative context in form/meaning mappings. Based on the findings, it can be argued that the teachers were aware of current grammar teaching principles. Problem-solving activities were also highly valued by the teachers. Another useful technique in teaching grammar, according to the teachers, is comparing and contrasting structures.

Three questionnaire items aimed to investigate teachers' beliefs regarding the role of explicit grammar teaching. Teachers showed that they were aware of the value of explicit grammar teaching. Regarding the role of grammar in language proficiency. The teachers believed that grammar is a refinement of more basic language competence. With more than 50% agreement, the teachers viewed that students find it difficult to transfer their grammatical knowledge into communicative language use—i.e., in the proceduralization of grammatical knowledge. The category of items measuring the value of consciousness in the grammar learning was not scored highly indicating that the importance of conscious knowledge is not well recognized by the teachers. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for teachers' perspectives.

Table 2

Participants' Perspectives on the Teaching of Grammar

Teachers' Perspectives	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The role of practice	4.12	.57
Principles of grammar teaching	3.75	.58
Problem-solving activities	3.63	.56
Comparison and contrast of structures	3.60	.95
Explicit grammar teaching	3.58	.73
The role of grammar	3.42	.55
Proceduralization of declarative knowledge	3.25	1.19
Consciousness in grammar learning	3.21	.85
The use of grammatical terminology	3.20	.79
Error correction	3.13	.65
Importance of instruction	2.80	.44
Presentation of grammar through authentic, complete texts	2.72	.64

The participants did not highly value the use of grammatical terminology but stated that their students consider it to be helpful. One category of items was to account for the teachers' beliefs regarding the utility of error correction for

grammar learning which showed that the participant teachers did not support the correction of errors. The teachers also were not strong supporters of formal instruction, believing that mere exposure to language is a sufficient means for learning grammar. Similarly, the participants did not value the presentation of grammar through authentic complete texts.

4.2. Consistency between teachers' perspectives and practices

To investigate the convergence of teachers' values and practices, observation data were compared with questionnaire data. The ten participants whose classes were observed strongly emphasized the role of practice, but in their classes only traditional kinds of practices rather than communicative ones were mostly implemented. Considerable incongruence was detected between teachers' stated views about the role of problem-solving activities and what they actually did in their classroom practices. All of these ten teachers were in agreement on the usefulness of comparing and contrasting structures for learning grammar and this supportive view was also observable in their classroom practices. Except for one, all of these participants stated that it is valuable to teach grammar explicitly and this was also manifested in their actual classroom practices. Although these ten teachers were not totally in agreement on attaching value to the role of grammar in language proficiency, it could be inferred from what happened in their classes that they really value grammar in their practices. The observed teachers, except for one, strongly accepted their students' difficulty in the proceduralization of declarative knowledge. Although in communicative activities are viewed as useful means of proceduralization of declarative knowledge SLA literature, these teachers rarely employed such activities in their classroom practices. Unlike one of the teachers who showed no orientation, the rest of them valued the role of consciousness in learning grammar. In their practices, this attachment of importance to the role of consciousness was noticeable. All of the teachers, except for one, viewed the use of grammatical terminology to be useful. Using grammatical terminology was observable in teachers' classroom practices; however, one of them did not use these kinds of terminologies as much as the emphasis he had put on them in filling in the questionnaire. Although none of the teachers attached importance to the role of error correction as a useful means for grammar teaching and learning process, all teachers, except for one, used error correction when the focus of instruction was on form rather than on meaning—i.e., they valued error correction only during structure practice activities but not communicative ones. None of the teachers thought that instruction plays an important role in the learning of grammar, but what took place in the classes revealed an apparent incongruence in values and practices, while teachers attached an indicative amount of importance to grammar instruction in action. Finally, grammatical structures, rather than

1 exposure to natural language and communicative language use, were selected
2 and focused on. On the part of the teachers, there was a lack of appreciation
3 regarding the usefulness of presenting grammar rules through authentic,
4 complete texts. This was also clearly reflected in classes for all of the teachers.

5 **4.3. Convergence of teachers' perspectives and current GT principles**

6 The current principles against which the perspectives and practices of the ten
7 observed teachers were compared were adopted from Batstone and Ellis
8 (2009). They defined these principles as follows (as was mentioned above):

9 The first is the Given-to-New Principle, where existing world knowledge
10 is exploited as a resource for connecting known or 'given' meaning with
11 new form-meaning mappings. The second is the Awareness Principle,
12 which states that discovering new mappings between form and meaning
13 is a process which necessarily involves awareness. The third is Real-
14 Operating Conditions Principle, where by the process of acquiring form-
15 meaning mappings is not complete until learners are able to practice
16 them in a communicative context and through a primary focus on
17 meaning rather than on form. (Batstone & Ellis, 2009 p.195)

18 The analysis of questionnaire data revealed that all of the observed teachers
19 were well aware of the current principles of grammar teaching; however,
20 they rarely followed these principles in practice.

21 **5. Conclusion**

22 The findings of the current study illustrated that in some areas of teaching
23 grammar, teachers' perspectives were not reflected in their actual practices
24 and convergence did not exist. Golombek and Johnson (2004) argued that the
25 existence of such contradictions is a driving force in the professional
26 development of teachers. It was also revealed that, in their classroom
27 practices, teachers did not follow the current principles of grammar teaching;
28 however, their stated perspectives were consistent with these principles.

29 Following focus-on-forms approaches, employing such techniques as focusing
30 on individual structures, presenting grammatical structures through one
31 sentence examples, comparing and contrasting language structures, and using
32 grammatical terminology, was the other finding of the present study. This
33 resounds Salmani Nodoushan's (2007a,b) emphasis on a cognitive approach
34 towards teaching grammar. However, as it is argued by Nassaji and Fotos
35 (2004), alternative approaches to teaching grammar informed by current
36 literature, moved toward focus-on-form techniques and approaches. There is
37 a responsibility on the part of teacher educators to inform their student

teachers of the existence and usefulness of such techniques and methods with the aim of enhancing their teaching practices.

Finally, in line with one the main principles of critical pedagogy which states that 'teachers should be empowered to be able to theorize what they practice and to practice what they theorize' (cf., Salmani Nodoushan & Daftarifard 2011), the finding of current study can be used to make the teachers become aware of their own perspectives and practices, and reflect better on their practices and seek for alternative, localized, and more appropriate ways of teaching to be followed in their classroom actions.

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