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Beliefs on the role of communication when teaching grammar

A qualitative study of two English teachers' perceptions on the role communication has when teaching grammar in Norwegian EFL classroom

Undergraduate thesis ((FOU)

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how two EFL teachers perceive the role of communication when teaching grammar. The thesis focuses on grammar teaching and communication, and what teaching approach best facilities both. Key concepts and approaches such as explicit and implicit grammar teaching, communicative language teaching, and sociocultural learning theory are addressed and explained in a way that is relevant to the research question in the theoretical framework of the thesis. The English subject curriculum is also described, as it specifies what pupils are expected to be able to do after finishing primary and secondary school. To answer the research question, a qualitative study has been done which contains two interviews with two EFL teachers. The findings of the interviews are reviewed, discussed, and related to the theory to shed light on important findings of the teachers' perceptions. The results showed that the teachers believe that communication is important when learning grammar, they try to include different approaches when teaching grammar and for pupils to be able to take part in society they need knowledge on communication; however, the teachers lacked knowledge of CLT and its importance.

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1. Introduction

It is stated in the core curriculum what the purpose of the education in the Norwegian primary and secondary school is. One of the purposes is that "the pupils and apprentices shall develop knowledge, skills and attitudes so they can master their lives and can take part in working life and society" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). To be able to take part in the working life and society one need knowledge of language, and in today's society English has become a global lingua franca used all over the world to communicate (Brown, 2007, p. 204). But how do pupils acquire the knowledge they need of a language to be able to communicate in the working life and society? What is the role of grammar when communicating? And what is the role of communication when approaching grammar teaching?

When looking at the history of English Language Teaching there have been several shifts in accordance with what was believed to be the best way to acquire English (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 4). Today, teaching and learning in meaningful contexts with communication and interaction between pupils, is what researchers state is the desired way of teaching English (Brown, 2007, p. 218; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This is reflected in the section in the English subject curriculum that define the relevance and central values. Here it is specified that the English subject should provide pupils with the foundation for communicating with others locally and globally, as well as prepare them for an education and a social and professional life that requires English-language proficiency in reading, writing, and oral communication (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). In the competence aims there are specified that after 10th grade pupils are expected to be able to "follow rules for spelling, word inflection, syntax, and text structure" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Because all pupils are expected to know grammar, the way the teacher approach grammar and perceives the role of communication will affect the learning outcome of the pupils as well as their ability to later take part in society.

When examining previous research that studies teachers` beliefs when it comes to grammar teaching, I found several from around the world, and some of their findings I found particular interesting (Choi, 2000; Mason & Payant, 2019; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). One study from 2014 investigated Turkish primary-level English teachers` beliefs and practice patterns of teaching grammar, and the reasoning behind these patterns (Uysal & Bardakci, 2014, p. 2). One of their findings were that "88% of the teachers stated that mechanical drills, exercises, and repetitions are necessary and/or helpful to support language acquisition; and 84% reported that they do not believe that English can be acquired without

explicit grammar instruction" (Uysal & Bardakci, 2014, p. 7). These statements impacted my research and I wanted to see if the same beliefs could be seen in the Norwegian EFL classroom as well.

Considering the questions introduced initially, and previous research, the current study will examine how teachers perceive the role of communication when teaching grammar and the research question for the study is:

What are EFL teachers` perception on the role of communication when teaching grammar in the Norwegian EFL classroom?

To answer the research question, I will first introduce relevant theory, before I present the method used in the current study. The method used is qualitative interviews, so in this section there will be a rationale for the choice of methodology as well as a description of how the interviews were conducted and how they were analyzed. After this the results from the interviews will be presented, and finally there is a discussion where the results will be discussed and compared to the theory introduced earlier.

2. Theoretical framework

The theory that one chooses means that one will focus on some areas while one opts out other areas (Postholm, Jacobsen & Søbstad, 2018). There are several different ways to answer the research question, and much depends on what theoretical framework one chooses. I started by asking myself: What have our lecturers at NTNU taught us about the best way for pupils to learn and approach grammar? Here, communicative language teaching was the first thing that came to my mind, as well as the basic grammar teaching approaches; explicit and implicit grammar teaching. The interviews I conducted resulted in talk about sociocultural learning theory, and how this affects the way the teachers teach grammar. I therefore chose to include this in the theory since it is relevant to the topic of the research paper. In addition, it was natural to include the English subject curriculum and the competence aims that states what the pupils should know about grammar.

2.1   The English Subject Curriculum and Competence Aims

The curriculum is the school's most important management document. It is these documents that provide guidelines for the actions that take place in school, and they have as commandment that children and adolescents have the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge that society believes are important at all times. The curriculum has the status of a regulation, so the

school is obliged to justify the teaching in the current curriculum. The competence aims in the curriculum state, among other things, what the pupils should be able to do after completing their education (Forskrift til opplæringslova, 2006). As written in the introduction, a competence aim in the curriculum for English after 10th grade state that pupils should be able to "follow rules for spelling, word inflection, syntax, and text structure" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). There are also defined core elements in each individual subject that state the most significant things the pupils should acquire in that subject. In the core element communication, it is mentioned that "communication refers to creating meaning through language and the ability to use language in both formal and informal settings" and that "the teaching shall give the pupils the opportunity to express themselves and interact in authentic and practical situations" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). While, in the core element language learning it is mentioned that learning pronunciation of phonemes, and learning vocabulary, word structure, syntax and text composition is important for pupils to obtain choices and possibilities in their communication and interaction (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

In addition to the competence aim already introduced, pupils are after year 10 expected to be able to "use key patterns of pronunciation in communication", "use knowledge of word classes and syntax in working on one`s own oral and written text" and "express oneself with fluency and coherence with varied vocabulary and idiomatic expression adapted to the purpose, recipient and situation" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

The competence aims and the core elements in the curriculum show us that language learning and communication are intertwined, and knowledge of both is expected of the pupils after year 10. As stated, the school is obliged to justify the teaching in the curriculum, meaning that it is vital to teach pupils how to communicate so that they can take part in society, and as indicated in the curriculum, the pupils need knowledge of grammar and language in order to communicate effectively.

2.2   Explicit and implicit grammar teaching

The goal of learning grammar is "that learners should be able to produce grammatical features in their output accurately and appropriately" (Ur, 2011, p. 510). Ur (2011) questions whether it is implicit or explicit grammar teaching that contributes to achieving this goal. Explicit and implicit grammar teaching are the two essential approaches when teaching grammar in an EFL classroom. An explicit approach to grammar teaching involves conscious awareness and deliberate study of grammar rules, while an implicit approach is learning without

conscious attention, and suggests that pupils should be exposed to grammar in meaningful contexts (Brown, 2007, p. 291; Scott, 1990, p. 779). Implicit grammar teaching is based on the way the grammar of the first language is acquired, such as through exposure from parents, teachers, and others without any conscious instructions (Ur, 2011, p. 510). Research from the Canadian immersion program showed that the speech of those who only had implicit teaching was characterized by some grammatical errors (Ur, 2011, p. 510). This is according to Swain (1995), because learners will only pay attention to one challenge at a time, and the first one is vocabulary. When vocabulary is mastered, the learners will pay attention to grammar, but to do so the pushed output hypothesis comes to play. This approach pushes the learners to communicate, and by forcing the learner to speak and write the learner refine their grammatical skills (Swain, 1995, p. 129-130). It also gives the learner opportunities to become aware of what they have knowledge of and to check hypotheses. Others suggests that pushed output is not enough to correct the grammatical errors that occurred with exclusively implicit teaching, and that some explicit teaching approaches, such as error correction and explaining, could contribute to higher level of grammar knowledge (Ur, 2011, p. 511). Ur (2011) concludes by stating that in foreign language teaching, an explicit component within "a communicative or task-based methodology will make a substantial contribution to the achievement of grammatical accuracy" (Ur, 2011, p. 511). This can be tied to the current study as it is researching how teachers` perceive the role of communication when teaching grammar, and the conclusion made by Ur shows that there is a need for some explicit instruction, but it needs to be within a communicative approach.

2.3   Communicative language teaching

Richard and Rodgers (2001, p. 156) state that with communicative language teaching (CLT) the ability to use the linguistic systems, such as phonological, morphological, or syntactic level, effectively and appropriately will be learned. Richards (2006) explains CLT by saying that it "can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the role of teachers and learners in the classroom" (Richards, 2006, p. 2). When looking at the goals of language teaching Richards is discussing in the statement, one can argue that there are two main competences: grammatical and communicative. Grammatical competence is the understanding of the components of sentences and sentences are formed (Brown, 2007, p. 219). Although grasping the principles of sentence creation is a crucial aspect of language learning, it does not guarantee success in utilizing the language for meaningful communication

(Richards, 2006, p. 3). The term communicative competence is used to describe the ability to succeed in utilizing the language for meaningful communication (Brown, 2007, p. 218-219). Knowing how to use language for various goals and functions, varying the language according to the situation and participants, and maintaining communication despite limitations in the language knowledge are all characteristics of communicative competence (Richards, 2006, p. 3). The goal is related to how learners learn a language, which was previously thought to be within the control of the teachers. Language learning has taken on a new meaning in recent years. It is the result of interactions between language learners and users, collaborative meaning production, paying attention to input and attempting to incorporate new forms into communicative competence, relating the learning to authentic situations, as well as experimenting with different ways of saying things (Richards, 2006, p. 4).

CLT marked the beginning of a shift away from traditional lesson formats that focused on proficiency in various items of grammar and practice through controlled activities like memorization of dialogs and drills. The shift describes the use of pair work activities, role plays, group work activities, and project work as the kind of classroom activities that best facilitate learning (Richards, 2006, p. 4). These types of classroom activities imply a certain role in the classroom for teachers and pupils. Pupils must participate in cooperative activities and listen to their classmates in group or pair work tasks, rather than relying on the teacher as a model. The teacher serves as a facilitator and monitor rather than a model for correct speaking (Richards, 2006, p. 5).

As a result, CLT can be seen as putting the learner at the center of the language learning process, with teaching focused on making language learning meaningful to the learner. As well as allowing the learner to experiment and try out what they have learned, use language freely without being constantly corrected, and have real-life encounters with the language to see how it relates to everyday life.

2.4   Sociocultural learning theory

"Sociocultural theory focuses on the causal relationship between social interaction and individual cognitive development" (Leonard, 2002, p. 178). The sociocultural perspective is based on Lev. S. Vygotsky`s (1896-1934) ideas about how social interaction affects the cognitive development, such as language development, and that learning occurs first through interactions with others such as peers, adults, and teachers, and then through individual internalization of social behaviors (Moen, 2013, p. 254). Internalization refers to how we as

humans absorb the data we collect through observation and interaction. The more we are exposed to a particular way of thinking, the more we internalize those cognitive patterns.

Scaffolding is a common educational method in the sociocultural perspective, in which the teacher supports pupils as they learn and develop new knowledge, then gradually steps back, and allows them practice on their own (Moen, 2013, p. 259). Scaffolding provides support, and serves as a tool, where it expands the field of business, and allows pupils to complete tasks that would otherwise have been impossible to perform. This is related to Vygotsky's study on the zone of proximal development, which is based on pupils current and potential development levels. The teacher will focus on this zone and provide support, but the support will gradually decrease as the pupil gains knowledge and independence (Moen, 2013, p. 259). This can be shown when teaching pupils new information, such as grammar, that lay in the potential development level. The teacher needs to support the pupils when adding new information, but then decreases the support so the pupils gradually will gain independent knowledge of the grammar.

3. Methodology

Qualitative method is used to understand and explain opinions specific people have about specific topics (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 95). In this way it is words that are aimed at describing and understanding people's actions and sensemaking (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 113). In the current study the source of data is interviews, and in the following section there will be a rational for the choice of interview, as well as a description of how the interviews were conducted, ethics and how I analyzed the interview data.

3.1 Rationale

Interviews are a great way to explore other people's perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and experiences. As Kvale (2007) expresses, interviews "provides a unique access to the lived world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions" (Kvale, 2007, p. 8) which means that interviews could be beneficial when investigating teachers` perceptions on the role communication when teaching grammar. Another advantage of doing qualitative interviews is that the small sample sizes will help examine the research question in a comprehensive manner where the perception of the participants is in focus (Kvale, 2007, p. 64). Previous research discusses how the beliefs the teachers have about grammar teaching will influence their goals, procedures, materials, and the

tasks they include in their teaching (Borg, 2018, p. 77). When producing my interview guide, I therefore attempted to make questions where I tried to obtain the teacher`s thoughts, perceptions, and attitude towards the role of communication when teaching grammar in the EFL classroom.

As stated in the previous paragraph, there are many advantages of doing qualitative interviews, the main one being that small sample sizes help investigate research problems in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, where there is generated rich and detailed data that preserve the participants perspective. However, there are limitations associated with using qualitative methods, and the small sample sizes are one of them. My research contains only of two interviews, and the two participants are English teachers at the same school. As a result of this, one can say that this research is mainly a study on what two EFL teachers' perceptions are about the role communication has when teaching grammar at one specific school. This makes it that the study is not a representative conclusion on the perception of all EFL teachers in Norway, but with the help of my own interpretation in the light of the selected theory, it can still give a relevant picture of Norwegian EFL teachers` perception on the role of communication when teaching grammar.

3.2   Conducting the interviews

During my student teaching period this spring I conducted interviews with two English teachers at the school I did my teaching practice at. The two teachers I interviewed are both English teachers at the school, but they have different areas they are more proficient in. I was at an international school, so they follow a slightly different curriculum than other schools in Norway, and their English course is called "English language and literature." However, both teachers have experience from teaching at public schools in Norway, and they both did their education at Norwegian University, meaning they have experience from the Norwegian curriculum.

The interviews were done in a semi-structured way, which is a way to understand the participants' perspective. The questions are being asked where it is natural to bring them into the communication. The knowledge construction can lead the researcher to ask questions that have not been planned in advance (Postholm & Jacobsen, 2018, p. 121). I had prepared most of the questions in my interview guide (appendix 1), and had planned to ask them in order, but during the first interview I changed the order based on how the communication was going. I also included two questions at the end of the interview guide which asked specifically about CLT to follow up on the answers given. Kvale (2007) states how adding more questions is one

of the strengths with a semi-structured qualitative interview, because there are themes to be covered and prepared questions, "yet at the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and question forms in order to follow up on the answers given and the stories told by the interviewees" (Kvale, 2007, p. 65). The first questions were introduction questions, that asked directly on how their annual unit plan looked like, as well as asking if there are explicit periods in the year where they would focus on grammar. Furthermore, I chose to use both direct and more indirect questions regarding the tasks and exercises used when teaching grammar, and I ended the interview by asking how they believe English is best acquired.

3.2.1   Ethics

Since this study is based on two qualitative interviews there are some ethical issues to take into consideration. In order to avoid having to apply to the Norwegian centre for research data (NSD), I chose to not record the interviews. I conducted the interviews while continuously writing down the responses. Before conducting the interviews, I approached the teachers and asked them if they wanted to participate in my study, and I told them both orally and written about my research question and the study I was doing. I informed them that by taking part in the interview they gave consent to participate in my study. The interviews were conducted in person and lasted for about 15 minutes each. To maintain the anonymity of the teachers that were interviewed they will in the current study be introduced as teacher A and teacher B.

3.2.2   Data analysis

The data material needs to be analyzed to be able to understand and gain access to it. Analysis is defined as the division of something into components or elements (Kvale, Brinkman, Anderssen & Rygge, 2015, p. 219). By breaking down the data material into smaller elements, it will give me a better opportunity to answer the research question the current study is based on. To carry out the analysis, I used codes and categories as a starting point. Coding is explained as breaking down text into manageable pieces (Kvale et al., 2015 p. 226). By approaching the data material in this way, it will lay a good foundation for being able to extract information. To code and categorize, I looked at both interviews and color-coded sequences that were similar. These sequences could be words, sentences, or whole paragraphs. After going over both interviews once, I realized that by changing the titles of some of the categories, I could merge them because they were congruent.

With the research question covering teachers` beliefs about the way grammar should be taught the analysis of the data material were based on what was said in the interviews. The

categories are theoretical as well as empirically based. This means that I have operationalized and used some theoretical concepts as categories because they were relevant to what was being said and at the same time included categories that originated from the data material. Based on the analysis the following categories were made:

- Sociocultural learning theory
- Communicative language theory
- How to implement grammar teaching
- Individual, explicit grammar instruction
- Experience from teaching

These categories will be used to present a summary of relevant findings from the interviews to the research question in chapter 4.

4. Results

In the following the results from the interviews I conducted will be presented, based on the analysis and categories introduced in 3.2.2. The results will be organized by the categories as, for the current study, I found it the most logical way of presenting the results from the analysis.

4.1 Sociocultural learning theory

When analyzing both interviews, I observed that both teachers implicitly described how they used sociocultural learning theory and therefore chose to include it as a category. They did not use the term, but they talked about their teaching and practices they used in the classroom in a way that describes sociocultural learning theory. Teacher B explains how it is beneficial to work in pairs or groups when repeating added information supplied by the teacher. This statement by teacher B is supported by teacher A, when asked about how English is best acquired:

> Scaffolding, as it helps pupils with being independent. I as a teacher give the pupils examples and show them how it is done. Then they work in pairs or groups, and at last they work individually and hopefully will implement the new learning.

> Here teacher A is expressing how scaffolding is a good method when teaching grammar, and both teachers have reflected on how implementing the information the teacher has given the pupils in groupwork will eventually help the pupils become more independent.

4.2   Communicative Language Teaching

When asked about how they understand the term Communicative Language Teaching both teachers expressed how they did not remember exactly the theoretical background behind the concept. However, both concluded that it was about how pupils learn through communicating with one another. In addition, teacher B had some more insight about the concept, and added that CLT is to use real situations in teaching, where pupils talk to each other in authentic situations like going to café, ordering food or giving directions. Even though neither teacher used the term CLT during the interview, except for when I implemented the term in the last questions, they both talked about the grammar teaching they do that in theory is CLT. Some examples when the teachers implicitly talked about CLT are: "I make the pupils talk about sentences in pair and find out what is correct," "we have a talk about why this and this is correct and why it works, and then we review rules together". These statements exemplify CLT because the teachers had an awareness on how talking about and reviewing sentences and rules together will help the pupils acquire new knowledge. This awareness is also shown in the statement made by teacher B about the importance of communication "because memorizing rules are not authentic and therefore not ideal for children".

4.3   How they implement grammar teaching

Examples mentioned in the interviewees´ descriptions of how they implement grammar teaching were fill in the blank questions, and then working on and talking through them together, games, quizlets, running dictation, and spot the mistake, correct the mistake. The teachers follow the same unit plan, and they both indicated how they write specific grammar that needs to be worked on that year in the annual unit plan. The annual plan then has this overall grammar goal that is implemented in all the units, so there will always be some grammar teaching in each unit. It was also specified by teacher A that they, in addition to the examples mentioned, try to have small writing prompts in most of the class periods, "as we have seen how just writing a paragraph a day has helped with addressing and correcting common mistakes, and it is a way to see how the pupils are doing grammar wise."

4.4   Individual, explicit work on grammar

This category was made because I saw the need for a category that accommodated what the teachers said about explicit grammar instructions that was worked on individually. Teacher A stated that "we do it, sometimes you just need it to learn the basics, we can't have too much of it, but I see it has its place and time." Teacher B had reflected on how explicit instructions,

patterns and repetition were being used when they saw the need to introduce new grammar information, but it was mostly done individually. They both expressed how grammar teaching does not need explicit instructions, but it can help to make pupils conscious about their mistakes, and they both admitted that they used it even though they said it was not necessary. Teacher A substantiated this by saying how we as teachers "just have to think about why the explicit instructions will work here."

4.5   Experience from teaching

Both teachers state that pupils have expressed how mechanical exercises are something they are familiar with, so it is a useful way when introducing added information and knowledge. Teacher B also mentions that "a lot of my pupils say that they are used to the traditional way of learning language." Based on the interview, it is not possible to know whether this statement, about mechanical exercises being the traditional approach when learning language, comes from the pupils or if it is the teacher`s perception. How some pupils are hesitant about talking English aloud with their peers because they do not feel like they have the knowledge of the language, was also a problem that the teachers expressed could arise in class.

5. Discussion

The current study sought out to examine what EFL teachers` perceptions are about the role of communication when teaching grammar, and to do so two teachers were interviewed. The general findings transpired from analyzing the interviews, was that the teachers believe communication plays a significant role when teaching pupils grammar, and in accordance with the curriculum, they believe that for pupils to acquire the language needed to be able to take part in society after their education they need knowledge on communication. They also implement grammar teaching in varied ways supported by CLT and sociocultural learning theory, and even though they believe explicit grammar instructions are not necessary they include them. Additionally, the interviews presented results that pointed to a lack of knowledge on the term communicative language teaching, and that the pupils are mostly familiar with mechanical exercises as the traditional approach for language learning. In the following these findings will be discussed further and tied to the theoretical framework.

In the interviews the teachers acknowledged the importance of communication when teaching grammar, but when the pupils did not have enough knowledge of the language, they were hesitant to speak, and the communication was not ideal. This idea is transpired in the

theory as well where it is stated that language learning is the result of interaction, communication, collaborative meaning production and experimenting (Richards, 2006, p. 4). While in the core element language learning in the English subject curriculum, it is stated that learning grammar is important for pupils to obtain choices and possibilities in their communication and interaction (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). These statements show that to learn grammar the pupils must communicate, but in order to communicate the pupils need knowledge of grammar.

The teachers in the current study believed that for the pupils to acquire the language needed to be able to take part in society, after their education, they need knowledge of communication. This perception of the role of communication in grammar teaching is in accordance with the curriculum. In the curriculum it is stated that the English subject should provide pupils with the foundation for communicating and prepare them for a society that requires English-language proficiency in reading, writing and oral communication (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). In the curriculum it is not stated how communication must occur, but communication is referred to as creating meaning through language and the ability to use language in both formal and informal settings (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Regarding this, the teachers interviewed considered pupils communicating with their peers as the main source of communication, while the teacher being a facilitator when introducing new information comes second. Pupils communicating with their peers is a form of communication that will provide the pupils with authentic situations and help them acquire language (Brown, 2007; Richards 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), but as the zone of proximal development states, the teacher has a significant role when pupils acquire knowledge of new information as well. The zone of proximal development is the distance between what pupils are capable of doing with no support, and what they can do with support from teachers or more capable peers (Moen, 2013, p. 259). This demonstrates the importance of teachers providing suitable learning experiences and assistance to pupils in order to help them achieve their potential development.

When describing how they implement grammar teaching, both teachers give examples that correspond with what Richards (2006, p. 4) describes as the activities that best facilitate learning. They give examples of exercises where they make the pupils talk about sentences and rules in pairs, and then review the rules together, fill in the blank questions and use real authentic situations in role play and teaching. The use of authentic situations in teaching is one of the fundamental classroom activities in the CLT approach (Richard, 2006, p. 5), and the teacher's awareness of this is shown in the statement made by teacher B about the importance of communication "because memorizing rules are not authentic and therefore not ideal for

children". This is justified in the curriculum as well which states that "the teaching shall give the pupils the opportunity to express themselves and interact in authentic and practical situations" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). Along with the specific exercises mentioned, the teachers stated how beneficial it is that the pupils work in pairs or groups when repeating added information given by the teacher. Richard highlights how the teacher is supposed to serve as a facilitator, and that the pupils must participate in cooperative activities, where they listen to their peers in group or pair work tasks (Brown, 2007, p. 218; Richard, 2006, p. 5). The teachers have reflected on why this is important, and mentions that implementing the new information, given by the teacher, in group- or pair work, will eventually help the pupils become more independent. This again correlates with the ideas of sociocultural learning theory and how cognitive development happens in social interaction (Leonard, 2002, p. 178). Scaffolding is specified by the teacher as examples of how English is best acquired, and the explanation on how they do it in class imply that they understand Vygotsky`s ideas and perspective of how learning first occurs through interaction with others, then through individual internalization (Moen, 2013, p. 254).

The implicit grammar teaching approach is tied in with how the teachers explain the annual unit plan for the English subject. Implicit grammar teaching is an approach where the learning occurs without conscious attention, and pupils should be exposed to grammar in a meaningful context (Brow, 2007, p. 291; Ur, 2011, p. 510). They state that they do not have specific periods that have a focus on grammar, but that they have some overall grammar goals so that it always will be implemented some grammar teaching in each unit. Games, quizlets and role play are mentioned as examples of implicit grammar teaching, but the small writing prompts are specified by the teachers as tasks they have had the most success with. In the writing prompts the pupils write about different topics related to the units, and these have helped the pupils address and correct grammatical errors. This correlates closely to the output hypothesis introduced by Swain (1995), that states how the learners will refine their grammatical skills if they are pushed to communicate, by speaking and writing (Swain, 1995, p 130). With the pushed output the learner will be able to experiment, and test hypothesizes, they have about the language. This again agrees with the CLT approach and how it is important to put the learner at the center of the language learning, where the learner is allowed to experiment and use the language freely in different types of communication forms in order to acquire grammatical knowledge (Richard, 2006, p. 5).

Initially I introduced a study on Turkish primary-level English teachers` beliefs about grammar teaching, where the teachers stated that they do not believe English can be acquired

without explicit grammar instruction. The teachers I interviewed did not share this belief and said that grammar teaching does not need explicit instructions. However, they admitted that they used it even though they believed it was not necessary. They felt that pupils are familiar with these types of exercises, so it could be a useful way of introducing new information and it can make pupils conscious about their mistakes. Richards (2006, p.3) agrees with this as he states that grasping principles of sentence creation is a crucial aspect of language learning but does not guarantee success in utilizing the language for meaningful communication. As seen in the results the teachers reflected on this by saying that they think about why the explicit grammar instructions will work when using it. This is supported by the findings in Ur`s (2011) article as well, where explicit instructions such as grammar error correction and explanation could contribute to higher grammatical knowledge. She however emphasizes that the explicit instructions have to be done within a communicative method to make a substantial contribution to the grammatical accuracy (Ur, 2011, p. 511). The teachers in the interview expressed how the explicit work usually was done individually by the pupils, which is contradicting what both Richard and Ur are stating in their research should be the way to implement explicit grammar teaching.

The interviews presented a lack of knowledge and understanding of the term CLT and both teachers expressed how they did not remember the theoretical background behind the approach. In the category communicative language teaching presented in chapter 4.2 it is mentioned that neither of the teachers used the term CLT except for when it was brought up in the interview question, and even then, it was rarely used. In the introduction it was mentioned that there is a substantial amount of studies from all over the world researching teachers` beliefs of CLT (Choi, 2000; Mason & Payant, 2019; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021; Uysal & Bardakci, 2014). These articles show that the concept is not just Norwegian or specific for the teacher education in Norway. The teachers in the current study also made assumptions that their pupils are mostly familiar with mechanical exercises as the traditional approach for language learning, which again does not correlate with the previous studies nor the theory presented in the current study with the research done on how pupils best acquire knowledge. Beliefs and perceptions will influence goals, procedures and the tasks included in teaching (Borg, 2018, p. 77). So, the teachers assuming that the pupils are more familiar with mechanical exercises could influence how they teach, and therefore the approach they believe their pupils will most effectively learn, and acquire, knowledge of language learning on.

6. Conclusion

The research question for the current study asked about how EFL teachers` perception on the role communication has when teaching grammar in the EFL classroom. Studying this is important because what the teacher perceive as important has a significant impact on what the pupils will learn and acquire of knowledge. The method used in the study was two qualitative interviews with EFL teachers. The general findings that transpired from the interviews was that the teachers believe communication plays a significant role when teaching pupils grammar, and in accordance with the curriculum, the theory of grammar teaching, CLT and sociocultural learning theory, they believe that for pupils to acquire the language needed to be able to take part in society after their education they need knowledge on communication. They also implement grammar teaching in varied ways supported by CLT and sociocultural learning theory, and even though they believe explicit grammar instructions are not necessary they include them. Additionally, the interviews presented results that pointed to a lack of knowledge on the term communicative language teaching, and that the pupils are mostly familiar with mechanical exercises as the traditional approach for language learning.

There are some limitations for the current study, one of them being that this is mainly a study on the perception of two EFL teachers at the same school, and there could have been interviews with EFL teachers from other parts of the country. Another limitation is that this is a study on perceptions and beliefs and the focus was therefore on interviews, but there could also have been an observation to see if what the teacher states in the interview is done in practice. This is also something future studies on the field could research. The findings from both the empirical study, which examined the teacher's opinion, and the theory presented conclude that in order to acquire knowledge of grammar, students must communicate, but in order to communicate, students need knowledge of grammar.

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Appendix

Interview guide

- Do you follow a plan for grammar teaching? Are there explicit periods in the year where you focus on grammar?
- What type of tasks do you include in the classroom when teaching grammar?
- If there are errors in the grammar when evaluating written or oral assignments, will this be worked on collectively or will each pupil work on their specific error individually?
- What is your relationship with mechanical drills, exercises and repetitions for language acquisition?
- How do you understand Communicative Language Teaching?
- What is your relationship with CLT?
- How do you believe English is best acquired? Does it need explicit grammar instruction?