Yemeni Teachers' Beliefs of Grammar Teaching and Classroom Practices

Nemah Abdullah Ayash Ezzi[1]

[1] Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of Hodeidah, Republic of Yemen

Correspondence: Dr. Nemah Abdullah Ayash Ezzi, Assistant Professor (ELT: TEFL, TESL), Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of Hodeidah, Republic of Yemen. Tel: 967-712-451-220. E-mail: nemahayash2000@yahoo.com

Abstract

Beliefs of in-service English teachers about grammar learning/teaching and the influence of such beliefs on their classroom practices remain relatively unexplored. More precisely, this study explores English teachers' beliefs about grammar learning and teaching. It throws light on the teachers' actual practices in the classrooms of 7th -12th grades, at several schools of Hodeidah. The main instrument of this study is the questionnaire used to collect data on teachers' beliefs and their teaching procedures in classrooms. It is administered to 80 teachers of 12 primary and secondary schools. Non-participatory classroom-observations are also made to back up the main data. It is found that teachers do possess a set of complex beliefs about learning and teaching grammar that are likely to be derived from their prior experience of teaching English. These beliefs are correlated with the suggested strategies used to teach grammar as correlation is significant at the 0.05 level though observations have shown that beliefs are not actually reflected in the classroom practices.Eventually, implications of this study are identified for effective teaching of grammar.

Keywords: beliefs, deductive, inductive, explicit, classroom practices, strategies

1. Introduction

1.1 The Place of Grammar in Teaching a Foreign Language

The place of grammar in teaching a foreign language is controversial. In teaching methods based on a structural syllabus (e.g., grammar translation, audiolingualism) grammar holds the primary focus but the advent of communicative language teaching and natural methods has radically changed this place. It has even suggested that teaching grammar is not only unhelpful but might actually be detrimental, on the grounds that teaching grammar does not correlate with acquiring grammar. Recently, research has demonstrated the need for formal instruction for learners to attain high levels of accuracy. This has led to a resurgence of grammar teaching, and its role in second/foreign language acquisition has become the focus of much current investigation.

1.2 Commonly-used Approaches to Grammar Teaching

Grammar is traditionally taught deductively. A deductive approach gives a presentation of a rule which is followed by example drills.

Another one is inductive grammar teaching in which learners are given many examples in different contexts and they are asked to work out the rules by themselves, and then apply them to various exercises to learn how they actually work in real language use. A third alternative to grammar teaching is a combination of both inductive and deductive approaches to benefit from the advantages of both, it is grammar based teaching (GBT). It is an approach recommended by Azar to grammar practitioners and believes that "placing specific grammar structures within their larger conceptual framework is more helpful to students than a random, piecemeal approach to explicit grammar teaching" (Azar, 2007). It takes the advantages of both inductive and deductive approaches.

1.3 Beliefs and Classroom Practice

Johnson (1994) suggests that teacher beliefs are neither easy to define nor study because they are not directly observable. What we do know is that teacher beliefs consist of tacitly held assumptions and perceptions about teaching and learning (Kagan, 1992) that they are generally stable and reflect the nature of the instruction the

teacher provides to students (Hampton, 1994).The term teacher beliefs refers to the rational underlying what teachers do; they are the explanation for the action ; they are why behind the what;"*they are conceptual systems which are functional or useful in explaining some domain of activity*" (Nespore, 1987:326).Ertmer (2005) describes beliefs as theories that "over time, become deeply personal that become entrenched well within a teacher's cognitive processes (p. 3). While the term classroom practice is used here to refer to "*the actual teaching periods at the schools*" (Borg, 2003: 86).

1.4 Explicit and Implicit Instruction

Following Krashen's (1981) distinction between conscious learning and unconscious acquisition of language, it has claimed that language should be acquired through natural exposure (i.e. implicitly), not learned through formal instruction (i.e. explicitly). It has also claimed that explicit grammar instruction would develop only a declarative knowledge of grammar which enables a student to describe a rule of grammar, but would not affect the procedural knowledge that enables students to apply grammar rules in language use or in communication (Ellis, 2001).

1.5 Teaching Grammar in Yemeni Schools

Yemeni teachers are obliged to follow the textbooks prescribed by the Ministry of Education viz. Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECY) in primary schools (7-9 grades) and secondary schools (10-12 grades). It includes pupils books, workbooks, teacher's books and cassettes. Aspects of the Structural and Communicative Approaches to ELT underlying this course so the content of CECY is a combination of language items (e.g. tenses) and language functions (e.g. describing) with some explicit focus on grammar (Bose, 2002).

Grammar is taught in the primary level (7, 8 & 9 grades) and the secondary level (10, 11 & 12) deductively through many examples for each of language items and functions. In 7-9 grades, grammar items presented are simple such as tenses , adjectives, adverbs and conditional if while the difficult items are reserved for the secondary classes such as passive voice, relative clauses and present participle. In each pupil book, the grammar items and the functional items are presented in each unit are summarized in the Language Review Sections with a few examples and necessary explanation for each item. This helps the teachers to focus their attention on the language items highlighted in each unit. In the workbooks 7-9, there are grammar activities based on grammar items for the learners to do on their own. In the secondary classes, explicit attention is paid to grammar items and language exercises for these items found in the workbooks under the title 'Language Study'. Language tables or models are provided for use in class and each model is signaled by the word 'Look!'. Exercises for oral and written practice follow the model (Bose, 2002).

However, Abduh (2008) points out that teachers' methodology and techniques in teaching grammar are not effective as they mostly focus on rote teaching of grammar rules (i.e. explicit instruction).

Consequently, more mastery of structures is emphasized. Practice is ignored or given less importance. It is also felt that the methodology as presented in the teacher's books is being mostly ignored or perhaps there is no awareness of this aspect. She has found that grammar is taught discretely and grammar items are introduced through separate examples, not contextualized. So, practice is not given the importance it deserves and students are not given chances to practice the grammar items in meaningful contexts. Moreover, the methodology and techniques presented in the Teacher's Book are mostly ignored by the teachers.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Explicit grammar teaching approach remains a feature of English language teaching in Yemen, at primary classes (7-9 grades) and secondary levels (10-12). Teachers use some techniques to teach grammar explicitly, e.g. using the tables of mechanical drills/models, using isolated, pre-manufactured examples and focusing on structures and ignoring language functions. It seems that students are not learning. Teachers rarely incorporate grammar items in other skills and rarely teach grammar items through communication.

Yemeni Students's level of grammar is low (Abduh, 2008). They may be able to state a grammar rule, but consistently fail to apply the rules when speaking or writing. There is a kind of disconnect between knowing the rules of grammar and being able to apply those rules effectively in the basic language skills. Although, there is a combination of the grammar items and the communicative functions of English in the CECY, teachers restrict teaching grammar to the explicit instruction and language structures are not presented in meaningful communicative contexts. Moreover, practice of using grammar items is insufficient and teachers mostly ignore the methodology of teaching grammar presented in the Teacher's book.

Since, it is now accepted that understanding teacher beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and teacher education programs (Johnson, 1994) there is a need to understand the underlying beliefs of in-service

English teachers about the importance of grammar in learning English and about grammar teaching, and to know their instructional classroom practices. Understanding teacher beliefs may improve their teaching practices and help in suggesting effective implications for implementation of teachers' professional development.

1.7 Purpose of the Study

Some studies have investigated the methodology of teaching grammar and classroom practices in the Yemeni context (e.g. Abduh, M. 2008), but no research has been carried out, to my knowledge, on in-service English teachers' beliefs and classroom practices with regard to grammar teaching in Yemen, in the primary classes as well as secondary schools. The purpose of this study then is to carry out such research with reference to the teachers of primary as well as secondary schools.

This study is an exploratory in nature. It aims to explore the beliefs of in-service English teachers and their actual classroom practices in regard to grammar teaching. Answers to the following questions are sought;

1.   What are the Yemeni teachers' beliefs about the importance of grammar in learning English and its role in teaching English as a FL?

2.   What are the teachers' actual classroom practices of teaching grammar?

3.   Is there a relationship between the teachers' beliefs and classroom practices?

2. Review of Literature

Research in language teaching in the last 15 years has provided much evidence of the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices. Much research has indicated that teachers possess a vast array of complex beliefs about pedagogical issues including beliefs about students and classroom practices (Berliner 1987; Borg 1998; 2003, 2006; Burns 1992; Shavelson & Stern 1981). Teachers' beliefs play an important role in understanding more about teaching practices and why teachers do the things they do. Shavelson and Stern (1981) suggest that what teachers do in the classroom is governed by what they believe and these beliefs often serve to act as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made. Beliefs provide a systematic justification process with which to plan, assess, judge, decide, accept, deny or act. They can influence the way teachers decide on their teaching (Woods, 1996) and dictate the approach and sometimes the success and failure of what is taught or learnt in the classroom (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996).Teachers' beliefs affect not only their teaching, but also filter new input, suggesting significant implications for the implementation of educational innovations and teacher development (Mohamed, 2006).They also form a structured set of principles that are derived from school practices, a teacher's prior experiences and a teacher's individual personality. Therefore, there is a growing realization of the need to understand the underlying belief systems of language teachers and the impact these have on their classroom practice (Borg, 2003).

In second language teaching, the study of teacher beliefs, as Richards, Gallo, and Renandya (2001) have pointed out, "*forms part of the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work*" (p. 42). Teacher beliefs have been examined to see how personal beliefs and knowledge of the pedagogical systems of teaching have informed the instructional practices and decisions of teachers of English as a second language (e.g. Borg, 2003; Burns, 1992; Golombek, 1998).

In the Asia-Pacific region, there have been a number of studies on teacher beliefs and grammar teaching (e.g., Farrell, 1999; Ng & Farrell, 2003; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001; Yim, 1993). Studies by both Ng & Farrell and Yim (1993) have investigated the extent to which teachers' theoretical beliefs influenced their classroom practices and found evidence to suggest that what teachers say and do in the classroom are governed by their beliefs.

However, beliefs clearly do influence what teachers do, teachers' instructional decisions do not always reflect their beliefs (Borg, 2006). The recent study of Farrell and Lim (2005) suggests that teachers do indeed have a set of complex belief systems that are sometimes not reflected in their classroom practices for various complicated reasons, some directly related to context of teaching.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

The subjects of this study are 80 in-service teachers who teach English to students of different levels 7-12 in twelve governmental primary as well as secondary schools in the three main districts at the governorate of Hodeidah, a seaport in Yemen. 35 teachers are teaching 7-9 grades students at primary schools while 45 are teaching students of 10-12 grades at secondary schools.

3.2 Instruments

In the studies of teacher beliefs and practices, questionnaires are usually used (e.g. MacDonald Badger & White, 2001). Questionnaires can be used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. Here, the main instrument is the questionnaire used for collecting teachers' beliefs. It is adapted version of the questionnaire used in Mohamed's exploratory study (2006). It targets both qualitative and quantitative data, as it contains close-ended items that require teachers to respond to statements on a four point scale, as well as open-ended items that invite teachers to describe or comment on an issue in detail. The beliefs' questionnaire used is designed to satisfy two main objectives. Firstly, it attempts to identify the beliefs teachers have regarding grammar and its role in English learning and teaching. Secondly, the questionnaire aims to obtain information about teachers' actual classroom practices regarding the teaching of grammar.

In particular, the instrument is intended to obtain answers to the following questions:

1.   Do teachers think that grammar is very important in the process of language learning?

2.   What role do teachers think grammar should play in language teaching?

3.   How do teachers report they deal with grammar in their own classrooms, particularly with regard to the following:

i.   their teaching approach

ii.   error correction

iii.   grammar in CECY and communication in English.

Content validity for this survey instrument has established through a review by a panel of experts and a pilot test. The panel of experts consisted of four experienced teachers, who are teaching staff at different universities. They have been asked to examine the clarity, suitability and validity of the instrument. Based on their recommendations, the questionnaire has been modified. The revised questionnaire has been piloted in three schools, with a total of 20 teachers. In addition to completing the questionnaire, these teachers are also asked to comment on the appropriateness, wording and the clarity of instructions. Further, revisions have been made to the questionnaire depending on the teachers' feedback. Explanations of some words used in the questionnaire have provided to make it easy for teachers to understand. For example, the word explicit is clustered with the word "direct" and the meaning of the word incidentally is given (i.e. there is no need to pre-plan grammar lessons). Also, it has got clear from the teachers' responses that 'first language' is an ambiguous term to them so the word "Arabic" is used instead.

The questionnaire solicits only four responses: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The reason for this is that a four-point scale facilitates a clear analysis of positive and negative responses; there is a tendency for many respondents to regress to the central point (#3 neutral) in a five-point scale - a matter which leads to some uncertainty in interpreting and discussing the findings.It consists of three separate parts. *Part A*, seeks personal information about the respondents, is included to find out if there are any relationships between teachers' beliefs and educational qualifications and years of teaching experience.

Part B consists of 22 statements about the teaching and learning of grammar, requires the respondents to rate each statement on a given four point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The 22 statements are categorized in order, according to the following components:

a)   The way students learn English grammar (statements 1 to 2)

b)   Importance of grammar in learning English (statements 3 to 6)

c)   Approaches used for teaching grammar (statements 7 to 13)

d)   Error-correction and students' communication in English (statements 14 to 18)

e)   Students' ability to understand grammar (statement no.19)

f)   Grammar in CECY (statements 20 to 22)

Part C focuses on teachers' actual practices and procedures to teach grammar in their classrooms. It starts with asking them about their approach of teaching grammar, giving them four choices either inductive or deductive or they use both approaches or they use none and have their own innovated approach. Then, it provides two tables in which a list of some strategies for teaching grammar is presented. Teachers are asked to rate the strategies according to how often they actually use them in their teaching and according to their effectiveness, as they think. Teachers are also invited to provide a list of any other types of strategies that they use and believe to be effective.

Some classrooms non-participatory observations (McDonough and McDonough, 1997) have carried out over a period of one month. Gebhard (1999) defines classroom observation as "*non judgmental description of classroom events that can be analyzed and given interpretation*" (p. 35). The purpose of the observations is not to evaluate the teachers' performance, rather observing the teachers in action allow a means of assessing the extent to which the teachers' beliefs and reported practices in the questionnaires correspond to what actually happen in the classroom. The focus of the observation is not on specific strategies in mind but on the actual classroom practices to teach grammar to back up the main data collected by the beliefs' questionnaire. The observations are not carried out specifically to each individual teacher of the participants of this study but they are irregular and randomly made to few English teachers in five schools (two primary schools and three secondary ones).

The researcher has attended some classes, i.e.12 periods of 45 minutes each, in which 12 teachers taught different grammar lessons. She has used observation sheet with some prompts on it (e.g. about which structures were being taught, how grammar was introduced, whether rules were made explicit and if so how, whether practice was provided, and how the teacher responded to grammatical errors).

3.3 Data Collection

The beliefs' questionnaires have been collected by the researcher with the help of some education-inspectors, head/masters-mistresses and English teachers who have distributed the questionnaires, hand-in-hand, to in-service English teachers (male and female), from 12 primary and secondary schools for boys and girls. Subjects are asked to return the questionnaires after one or two days. Some of the teachers have actually returned the questionnaires after a couple of weeks.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data are analyzed through calculating the frequencies and percentages that are listed in tables respectively. Also, Pearson correlations and the 2-tailed significance are calculated.

4. Results

4.1 Analysis of the Questionnaires

4.1.1 Part A

Table 1. Showing the qualifications of the teachers participated in the study

Items	No.	%
Teachers with B.Ed in English	55	68.75
Teachers with Diploma in English	6	7.5
Teachers with M.Ed in English	3	3.75
Others	5	6.25
No answers	11	13.75
Total	80	100

It is clear from table 1 that majority of the teachers participated in this study (68.75%) have Bachelor degree of Education, majoring in English, whereas few teachers (7.5 %) have Diploma in English and (3.75%) are with Master degree of Education, majoring in English. Some teachers (13.75%) didn't respond to this item and (6.25%) of them are with Bachelor of other majors (e.g. Arts). Thus, most of the teachers have graduated from the Faculty of Education in Hodeidah and have had pre-service training. Accordingly, they are often evaluated by inspectors from the Office of Education.

Table 2. Showing the teachers' years of experience of teaching English

Years of experience of teaching English	No.	%
1-5 years of teaching English	05	6.25
5-10 years of teaching English	35	43.75
10-15 years of teaching English	25	31.25
More than 15 years of teaching English	15	18.75
Total	80	100

Table 2 illustrates that many English teachers in schools are experienced as minimum years of teaching English is 1-5 and only 5 teachers out of 80 have 1-5 years of experience of teaching English, while others have many years of teaching experience.Thus, this study explores the beliefs of teachers who have spent many years in teaching English.

Table 3. Showing the place where teachers learnt English

Items	No.	%
Teachers who learnt English inside Hodeidah.	78	97.5
Teachers who learnt English outside Hodeidah.	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Table 4. Showing whether the teachers have exposure to English in their community

Items	No.	%
Teachers who have exposure to English in their community	20	25
Teachers who haven't exposure to English in their community	60	75
Total	80	100

Tables (3 & 4) indicate that many teachers of English lack exposure to English in their community. They haven't receive sufficient exposure to the language they teach, and this may affects on their use of English and accordingly on their performance in classrooms.

4.1.2 Part B

The statements of the beliefs' questionnaire are analyzed according to the following components.

A. The Way Students Learn English Grammar

Table 5. Showing the teachers' beliefs about the way of learning grammar

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Students can acquire English without teaching grammar (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).	7 8.8%	6 7.5%	42 52.5%	25 31.3%
2	Grammar is best learned naturally through trying to communicate.	10 12.5%	1 1.3%	46…. 57.5%	23 28.8%

Table 5 reveals that many teachers strongly/disagreed with that students can acquire English without teaching grammar and grammar can be taught naturally through communication. Thus, when the component of the way of learning English grammar is highlighted, it is found that many teachers believe that learning English can't occur without teaching grammar and grammar is best learnt formally, not naturally.

B. Importance of Grammar in Learning English

Table 6. Showing the teachers' beliefs about the importance of grammar

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
3	Grammar should be the main component of any language teaching course.	7 8.75%	7 8.75%	35 43.75 %	31 38.75%
4	Explicit/Direct teaching of grammatical rules is important for the mastery of English.	10 12.5%	2 2.5 %	49 61.25%	19 23.75%
5	Grammar should be taught to all levels of students (i.e. beginner, intermediate and advanced).	8 10.0 %	7 8.75%	43 53.75%	22 27.5%
6	It is important to focus on grammar in all English lessons.	45 56.25%	17 21.25	9 11.25%	9 11.25%

Statistics in table 6 show that more than half of the teachers strongly/disagreed with the beliefs that grammar should be the main component of any language teaching, English mastery results in explicit teaching of grammar and grammar should be taught to all levels of students whereas many teachers are with the belief that it is important to focus on grammar in all English lessons. To highlight the component of the importance of grammar, the study reveals that many teachers are with the idea of integrating grammar in all English lessons, as an important part of all English lessons, not with the idea of focusing on grammar as the whole in the English courses, as it isn't a guarantee of English mastery.

C. Approaches Used for Teaching Grammar

Table 7. Showing the teachers' beliefs about the approaches to grammar teaching

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
7	Grammar is best taught incidentally (i.e. there is no need to pre-plan grammar lessons)	55 68.75%	10 12.5%	13 16.5%	2 2.5%
8	Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how separate structures work.	10 12.5%	2 2.5%	46 57.5%	22 27.5 %
9	The major part of a grammar lesson should involve students in practicing structures.	4 5.0%	0 0	48 60%	28 35%
10	Students can improve their grammatical accuracy through regular practice of structures.	4 5.0%	3 3.75%	47 58.75%	26 32.5%
11	The main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the new grammar rule.	13 16.25%	2 2.5%	45 56.25%	20 25%
12	Practice of structures must always be within a full communicative contexts.	10 12.5%	1 1.3%	41 51.25%	28 35%
13	Drills are very useful exercises to learn and teach grammar .	7 8.8%	3 3.75%	41 51.25 %	29 36.25%

Observing the frequency counts in table 7, it is found that majority of the teachers don't believe in giving the practice of grammatical structures the main role in a grammar lesson. They don't care for accuracy and the practice of language within communicative contexts. Also, they don't believe in drills to teach grammar and are not with explaining how separate structures work in a grammar lesson, while many teachers are with the belief that grammar can be taught incidentally (i.e. without pre-planning the grammar lessons). However, there is a kind of contradiction in most of the teachers' beliefs regarding the procedures of teaching grammar inside the classrooms (e.g. although they don't focus on accuracy, they don't support the practice of structures within communicative contexts), the statistics here support those in table 6 which indicate that many teachers don't believe in the importance of grammar to be the main focus of English courses so it can be taught incidentally, without pre-planning.

D. Error-Correction and Students' Communication in English

Table 8. Showing the teachers' beliefs about error-correction and communication in English

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
14	If students receive explicit/direct grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.	7 8.75%	7 8.75%	54 67.5%	12 15%
15.	It is important to correct all grammatical errors in students' oral work.	45 56.25%	20 25%	5 6.25%	10 12.5%
16	It is important to identify all grammatical errors in students' written work.	8 10.0%	1 1.3 %	46 57.5%	25 31.3%
17	Students rarely become error-free because English grammar is very complex.	58 72,5%	12 15%	3 3.75%	7 8.8`%
18	You do not need to speak grammatically correct sentences to communicate well.	48 60%	22 27.5	5 6.25%	5 6.25%

Through the statistics in table 8, it is found that many teachers strongly disagree with that explicit grammar instruction is more likely enable students to correct their errors and that it is important to identify all students' errors in written work whereas many others strongly/agree with correcting all students' oral grammatical errors, speaking grammatically correct sentences isn't needed to communicate well in English, and with that English grammar is complex so students' rarely become error-free. Thus, when the component of error-correction is highlighted it is found that many teachers believe in correcting all students' oral grammatical errors and this may negatively affect students' communication and production of new sentences.

E. Students' Ability to Understand Grammar

Table 9. Showing the teachers' beliefs about their students' ability to understand grammar

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
19	Students generally do not learn the grammatical structures they are taught because they are unable to understand and remember rules.	8 10.0%	7 8.8%	43 53.75%	22 27.5%

Regarding students' ability to understand and remember grammatical rules, it is clearly shown in table 9 that many teachers strongly/agree with that students are generally unable to understand and remember grammatical structures teachers teach. This may indicate that many teachers have bad expectation about their students. This isn't encouraging, and negatively affects teachers' teaching and reflected in their performance.

F. CECY and Grammar

Table 10. Showing the teachers' beliefs about grammar in CECY

No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
20	Grammar in "*Crescent English for Yemen*" is difficult for teachers to teach.	45 56.25%	29 36.25%	3 3.8%	3 3.8%
21	Instructions and strategies given in the "Teacher's Book" for teachers to teach grammar are difficult to understand and follow.	57 71.25%	13 16.25%	5 6.25%	5 6.25%
22	It is usually difficult for teachers themselves to grasp and understand English grammar.	32 40.0%	41 51.25%	5 6.25%	2 2.5%

Table 10 shows that majority of the teachers agree with that grammar in CECY is difficult for them to teach and that instructions and strategies in Teacher's Book are difficult for them too. Moreover, it is difficult for teachers themselves to understand and grasp English grammar. So the difficulty level of grammar in CECY is high for the teachers. Thus, teachers are not motivated to find out the effective techniques to teach grammar effectively.

4.1.3 Part C

Table 11. Showing how the teachers actually teach grammar in their classes

The approaches	No.	%
a. You first present the grammatical rule then give examples to your students	30	37.5
b. You first give examples then ask students to discover the grammatical rule from the given examples	40	50
c. Both (a) & (b)	10	12.5
d. Neither (a) nor (b). Using another way	0	0
No answers	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Frequency-statistics in table 11 illustrate that teachers who are following inductive approach (50%) are more

than those teachers (37.5%) who are following deductive approach to grammar teaching while few teachers (12.5%) combine the two approaches and none of the teachers is using neither deductive nor inductive approach to teach grammar. Thus, half of the teachers teach grammar inductively, but do they actually teach in such a way? This will be revealed by the classroom-observations.

Table 12. Showing the most frequently-used strategies by the teachers.

Strategies	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
a. Translating English grammatical rules into Arabic	50	20	5	5
	62.8%	25%	6.25%	6.25%
b. Writing explanation of a grammar rule on the b.b.	6	4	30	40
	7.5%	5%	37.5%	50%
c. Providing as many examples as possible in teaching structures	1	3	11	65
	1.3%	3.8%	13.75 %	81.25
d. Correcting students' grammatical errors in the class.	1	7	12	60
	1.3%	8.75%	15%	75%
e. Eliciting the grammatical rule s from examples	1	8	24	47
	1.3%	10%	30%	58.75
f. Comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar	33	42	3	2
	41.25%	52.5%	3.8%	2.5%
g. Using Oral pattern-practice drills	2	4	42	32
	2.5%	(5%)	52.5%	40%
h. Using comparison and contrast between the grammatical structures of English.	8	7	40	25
	10%	8.75%	50%	31.25
i. Presenting grammatical structures in complete texts such as giving different structures in a short story.	6	2	40	32
	7.5%	2.5%	50%	40%

Table 12 displays the strategies which *many* teachers use, respectively ; writing explanation of a grammar rule on the black board, providing as many examples as possible in teaching structures, correcting students' grammatical errors in the class, eliciting the grammatical rules from examples, using Oral pattern-practice drills, using Oral pattern-practice drills, using comparison and contrast between the grammatical structures of English, presenting grammatical structures in complete texts such as giving different structures in a short story. However, *few* teachers use the strategies of translating English grammatical rules into Arabic and comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar.

Table 13. Showing the relationship between the teachers' beliefs and strategies.

	Strategies	Beliefs
Pearson Correlation	1	.232
Sig. (2-tailed)		.039
N	80	79

According to table 13, the correlation value between the teachers' beliefs and the reported strategies used to teach grammar is (.232) i.e.correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Although, the strategies used to teach grammar are correlated with the teachers' beliefs, beliefs are not necessarily reflected in the classrooms as it is shown by the observations, see 6.2.

Table 14. Displaying the statistics regarding the effectiveness of the strategies

Strategies	Not at all effective	Fairly effective	Effective	Very Effective
a. Translating English grammatical rules into Arabic	51 63.75%	21 26.25%	5 6.25%	3 3.75 %
b. Writing explanation of a grammar rule.	25 31.25%	20 25.0%	22 27.5%	13 16.25%
c. Providing as many examples as possible in teaching structures	0 0	4 5.0%	19 23.75%	57 71.25%
d. Correcting students' grammatical errors in the class.	00	8 10.0%	40 50 0%	32 40.0 %
e. Eliciting the grammatical rule s from examples.	3 3.8 %	7 8.8 %	22 27.5%	48 60.0%
f. Comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar.	7 8.8 %	8 10.0%	22 27.5%	43 53 75%
g. Using Oral pattern-practice drills.	9 11.25 %	17 21. 25%	32 40.0 %	22 27.5 %
h. Using comparison and contrast between the grammatical structures of English.	9 11.3 %	13 16.3 %	39 48.8%	19 23.8%
i. Presenting grammatical structures in complete texts such as giving different structures in a short story.	6 7.5%	10 12.5%	22 27.5 %	42 52.5%

Statistics of table 14 help to arrange the strategies in order and according to the teachers' responses, from very effective strategies to not all effective ones;

1. Providing as many examples as possible in teaching structures.

2. Eliciting the grammatical rule s from examples

3. Presenting grammatical structures in complete texts such as giving different structures in a short story.

4. Comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar.

5. Correcting students' grammatical errors in the class.

6. Using Oral pattern-practice drills.

7. Using comparison and contrast between the grammatical structures of English.

8. Writing explanation of a grammar rule.

9. Translating English grammatical rules into Arabic.

It is clear that most of the teachers consider the strategy of translating the grammar rules into Arabic not effective at all. This supports the statistics in table 12 as many teachers (62.8%) never use it. Although, 50% teachers rate the strategy of comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar as very effective, (30%) of them never use it and 52% rarely use it. This contradiction may be interpreted as that using a strategy frequently doesn't necessarily depend upon its effectiveness as many teachers consider the strategy of 'comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar effective' but they never or rarely use it.

Table 15. Showing the relationship between the frequently-used strategies and their effectiveness.

	Strategies	Beliefs
Pearson Correlation	1	.238
Sig. (2-tailed)		.034
N.	80	80

Table 15 indicates that the correlation value between the frequency of the suggested strategies used to teach grammar and their effectiveness is (.238) i.e. correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). This finding suggests that a frequently-used strategy should be effective while a rarely-used strategy should be less effective.

However, the teachers' responses show that some teachers may rarely use a strategy though they rate it very effective.

4.2 Data of Classroom Observation

Observations of 12 grammar lessons taught by 12 different teachers, i.e. participants in this study, are made. Through these observations, generalizations of the teachers' classroom practices can be made and a description of the general method employed in a grammar lesson by many Yemeni teachers is provided.

According to all the observations made, it is found that grammar was actually taught explicitly. Grammar rules were written on the blackboard and explained with three or four isolated examples. Students were made to produce their own sentences matching the rule written there. Few students responded as the participation group was not large. After about fifteen to twenty minutes, students were asked to read the instructions of the exercises in their workbooks aloud and give the answers for them. It seemed that students repeat and follow the rules on the blackboard without understanding. Students were rarely asked 'why' for correct answers or "why not" for incorrect answers. The opportunity to work out rules from examples were not given to students, cognitive and prediction skills of students were ignored. Students' oral errors were corrected almost immediately.

50 % of the teachers' reported responses indicate that teachers actually follow inductive approach (see 4.1.3), however, observations have made it clear that teachers present grammar rules through examples without remembering the fact that the students are required to infer the rules from contextualized practice, or go through the process of "discovery learning" (Ellis, 2001). Actually, they teach grammar deductively though they think they are practicing it inductively. This may make our students able to state a grammar rule, but consistently fail to apply the rule when speaking or writing. It may be true that teachers present grammar through different examples and Arabic use may be totally banned but observations have shown that all the observed classes had "the features of traditional classes".

5. Discussion

Consistent with the finding reached by much research (e.g. Berliner, 1987; Burns, 1992 ; Borg 2003, 2006), this study indicates that teachers (viz. in-service English teachers in Hodeidah) do possess a vast array of complex beliefs about pedagogical issues (e.g. importance of grammar) including beliefs about students (e.g. their ability to understand grammar) and classroom practices (i.e. approaches to grammar teaching). Also, these beliefs may be derived from the teachers prior experience of teaching English as majority of them have taught English for 10-15 years, as Borg (2003) has suggested before. Here, teachers' beliefs are correlated with the strategies used to teach grammar as correlation is significant at the 0.05 level though it is shown that teachers' beliefs are not actually reflected in the classroom practices and this is congruent with what Richards, Gallo, and Renandya's survey (2001) and Farrell and Lim (2005) have suggested before and diverge with Ng & Farrell and Yim (1993) who have suggested that what teachers say and do in the classrooms are governed by their beliefs.

6. Conclusion

This study suggests that almost all the English teachers in Hodeidah are experienced and qualified. But they have bad expectations of their students and their level of understanding the prescribed courses, as many responded, is below what is really expected from English teachers. It is found that teachers do indeed have a set of beliefs with clear contradictions. However, the stated beliefs are not reflected in their classrooms.

Furthermore, this study indicates that teachers appreciate the importance of grammar as a part of any grammar lesson rather its importance to be the main component of an English course, as a whole. It is revealed that inductive approach may not be understood well by teachers as many of them don't make students infer the rules from the given examples. Also, many teachers avoid specific strategies though they think they are effective.

Eventually, implications of this study can be identified. Teachers should concern about the quality of their teaching and be regularly provided with feedback on their teaching behavior. It is only after teachers become aware of their skills and weaknesses, they can begin to address how to improve their classroom practices.

Pre-service education alone is not adequate to properly prepare a teacher for a lifetime of teaching. Continued professional development is essential and in-service teachers need on-going training workshops to keep their knowledge abreast of the new techniques for teaching grammar and research evidence to show the effectiveness of innovations in teaching grammar.

Generalizations of this study may be applicable *to some extent* but we need much case-study research on English teachers' beliefs, comparing them with actual practices in the Yemeni classrooms.

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Appendix

Beliefs Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about your views of the role of grammar in teaching English in your classrooms. It is NOT an evaluation of you as a teacher. Also, it is NOT a test so there are no right or wrong answers. All your responses are confidential .I assure that the questionnaire will be used ONLY for the sake of this research.

Part A

Please answer the following questions about yourself. Please tick (√) next to your selected answer.

1. Gender: Male ☐   Female ☐

2. Academic qualifications: **(tick and complete)**

☐ A teachers' certificate in ………………………….……............

☐ A diploma in ……………………...

☐ A bachelor's degree in ………………………………………

☐ A master's degree in ……………………………………......

☐ Other (please specify)………………………………………

3. How long have been teaching English?

a. 1-5 years ☐   **b.** 5-10 years ☐   **c.** 10-15 years . ☐   **d.** more than 15 years ☐

4. What is the name of the school you are teaching in?**(complete)**………………

5. Which Grades are you teaching?

　　Grade 7 ☐ ……..Grade 8 ☐ …….Grade 9 ☐ ………..

　　Grade10 ☐ …… Grade11 ☐ ….. Grade 12 ☐

6. Where did you learn English?

a. In Hodeidah ☐   **b.** Outside Hodeidah ☐

7. Did you have exposure to English language in your community?

　　Yes ☐   No ☐

Part B

Tick (√) in the cells of the most appropriate answer you select on the given scale.

No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Students can acquire English without teaching grammar (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).				
2	Grammar is best learned naturally through trying to communicate.				
3	Grammar should be the main component of any language teaching course.				
4	Explicit/Direct teaching of grammatical rules is important for the mastery of English.				
5	Grammar should be taught to all levels of students (i.e. beginner, intermediate and advanced).				
6	It is important to focus on grammar in all English lessons.				
7	Grammar is best taught incidentally (i.e. there is no need to pre-plan grammar lessons)				
8	Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how separate structures work.				
9	The major part of a grammar lesson should involve students in practicing structures.				
10	Students can improve their grammatical accuracy through regular practice of structures.				
11	The main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the new grammar rule.				
12	Practice of structures must always be within a full communicative contexts.				
13	If students receive explicit/direct grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.				
14	It is important to correct all grammatical errors in students' oral work.				
15	It is important to identify all grammatical errors in students' written work.				
16	Students rarely become error-free because English grammar is very complex.				
17	You do not need to speak grammatically correct sentences to communicate well.				
18	Students generally do not learn the grammatical structures they are taught because they are unable to understand and remember rules.				
19	Drills are very useful exercises to learn and teach grammar .				
20	Grammar in "*Crescent English for Yemen*" is difficult for teachers to teach.				
21	Instructions and strategies given in the "Teacher's Book" for teachers to teach grammar are difficult to understand and follow.				
22	It is usually difficult for teachers themselves to grasp and understand English grammar.				

Part C

1. How do YOU actually teach grammar in your class?

a.☐ You first present the grammatical rule then give examples to your students.

b.☐ You first give examples then ask students to discover the grammatical rule from the given examples.

c.☐ Both (a) and (b).

d.☐ Neither (a) nor (b). Using another way which is……………………………

2. The following table shows some strategies that a teacher could use to teach grammar. Please indicate how often you use each of the given strategies in your teaching by using the "frequency" scale below. Tick (√)in the appropriate cells of the table.

Strategies	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
1. Translating English grammatical rules into Arabic .				
2. Writing explanation of a grammar rule. *i.e. teacher writes the structure on the black board. before explaining it to the whole class.*				
3. Providing as many examples as possible in teaching structures				
4. Correcting students' grammatical errors in the class.				
5. Eliciting the grammatical rule s from examples.				
6. Comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar. *e.g. comparing how the passive is used in English and Arabic grammars*				
7. Using Oral pattern-practice drills. *E.g. Teacher: He stole the picture. Class: The picture was stolen. Teacher: He left the door open. Class: The door was left open.*				
8. Using comparison and contrast between the grammatical structures of English.				
9. Presenting grammatical structures in complete texts such as giving different structures in a short story.				

3. Using 'effectiveness" scale given in the table below, please indicate how effective the given strategies to be used in a grammar lesson. **Tick (√)** in the appropriate cells of the table.

Strategies	Not at all effective	Fairly effective	Effective	Very Effective
1. Translating English grammatical rules into Arabic				
2. Writing explanation of a grammar rule. *i.e. teacher writes the structure on the black board. before explaining it to the whole class.*				
3. Providing as many examples as possible in teaching structures				
4. Correcting students' grammatical errors in the class.				
5. Eliciting the grammatical rule s from examples.				
6. Comparing English grammar with Arabic grammar. *e.g. comparing how the passive is used in English and Arabic grammars*				
7. Using Oral pattern-practice drills. *E.g. Teacher: He stole the picture. Class: The picture was stolen. Teacher: He left the door open. Class: The door was left open.*				
8. Using comparison and contrast between the grammatical structures of English.				
9. Presenting grammatical structures in complete texts such as giving different structures in a short story.				

4. Please write down any other types of grammar strategies (not mentioned in the above tables) that you use with your students, indicating how often you use them.

……
………………………………………………

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.