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**The teaching of English grammar based on the students' age:
Teachers' and students' cognitions and the classroom practice**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA degree in English with an orientation in Applied Linguistics from the National University of Córdoba, Argentina.

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Abstract

This thesis is a case study of six EFL classes in different educational settings in Bahía Blanca, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. It examines the cognitions of both teachers and students in these classes. The general aim of this work is to explore teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar considering students' age and compare them with both their students' cognitions and their own classroom practices. In doing so, mismatches between teachers' perceptions and students' expectations may be detected, as well as discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and pedagogical decisions. In order to achieve all this, a mixed methods design was adopted, using three different instruments (questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations), and content analysis and statistical analysis to interpret the data. Results show that, whereas half of the teachers coincide with their learners in their perceptions, the other half differed. In general terms, students seem to favour an explicit approach to grammar teaching and learning, especially adult learners. Instead, the teachers are more inclined towards implicit teaching and learning of grammar, regardless of the learners' age. However, for various reasons, their classroom practices were mostly explicit, often causing a mismatch. As previous research also suggests, those cases where inconsistencies are found emphasise the need to address teacher-student differences so as to avoid a negative impact on the teaching and learning process.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AdL	Adolescent learners
AL	Adult learners
BALLI	Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CV	coefficient of variation
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes

ESP English for Specific Purposes
FL Foreign Language
FLT Foreign Language Teaching
FonF Focus on form
FonFs Focus on forms
FonM Focus on meaning
GLL Good Language Learner
KAG Knowledge About Grammar
KAL Knowledge About Language
L1 First language
L2 Second language
LC Learner cognition
PLS Private language school
PPP Presentation, Practice and Production
SL Second language
SLA Second Language Acquisition
SS State school
TBL Task-Based Learning
TC Teacher Cognition
TEFL Teaching English as a Foreign Language
YL Young learners

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language in formal situations, in a classroom (a school, tertiary institution, university, etc.) at a state school or private institution, always brings about questions and doubts regarding the best way to teach this language. Among these, grammar is one of the main concerns: how to deal with it, whether to teach it in an implicit or explicit way, whether to adapt it to the students' ages or needs, etc. It is also true that the teachers' approach to grammar may also be influenced by the current methodologies suggested or even imposed on them by the school curricula, but most importantly, by the coursebooks chosen, which prescribe the way grammar should be taught.

As Cameron (2001) explains, "Grammar teaching in recent years has been as susceptible as other aspects of FLT to trends, the most significant of which (...) has probably been the swing away from grammar-translation methods through communicative methods and on to current ideas about 'focusing on form'" (p. 105). This means that the importance placed on grammar and the way it should be taught according to the different methodologies has changed considerably over time, with the result that nowadays, in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching situations, perfect grammar is no longer the aim and communication precedes accuracy. Cameron (2001) suggests that talking *about* the language is not the same as talking *in* the language, and that "it was a reaction to the lack of fluency and ease with the foreign language, experienced by many of those taught by grammar-translation, that led to the development of communicative language teaching (CLT)" (p. 106, italics in the original). Following the same trend, two new approaches were developed later on; namely, Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

However, this does not mean that the new approaches should avoid grammar altogether. On the contrary, grammar still plays a central role in classroom practices and materials (Ur, 2011). Thus, teachers should make an informed decision as regards how to teach it in the most effective way. Their ideas, previous experiences, expectations, knowledge and awareness of the teaching context, which are collectively referred to as

teacher cognition (TC), play a central role in this decision-making process. Studying “what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p.81) may help us understand the reasons underlying teachers’ pedagogical decisions and their classroom practices.

Beliefs are understood as representations, ideas, perceptions or views that both teachers and students have about all the aspects that comprise learning a second language, either in formal or informal contexts (Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013). In the case of teachers, beliefs act as filters or guides, consciously or unconsciously influencing their decisions related to different aspects of their teaching practices, including the way they reflect on and plan their lessons, and the way they interact in the classroom (Fives & Buehl, 2012). In fact, not only teachers’ but also learners’ beliefs should be taken into consideration, since students also hold strong views about their learning and their perceptions are not always in line with those of their teachers. The views of both are highly subjective and susceptible to change due to a number of factors. In learners, these include the experience of each individual as a learner, the methodology and materials he/she is exposed to, and the opinions of “significant others” (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013, p.2). On the other hand, teachers are influenced by personal or professional factors, differences between new beliefs and their current practices in the classroom, or changes in the teaching context that make them reevaluate their beliefs (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013). There are also other personal factors that affect both educators and learners, such as the personality or idiosyncrasy of each person, which makes them think and see things in a particular way. All this implies that teachers should be ready to constantly challenge their ideas by developing an awareness of their beliefs and how these influence their teaching practices.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The main concern that motivated me to research this topic has to do with one of the questions many EFL teachers ask themselves when teaching grammar: whether it should be taught implicitly or explicitly (DeKeyser, 2003). In broad terms, implicit teaching involves letting students deduce the grammatical rules for themselves while the main focus of the lesson is the content of what they are learning. In explicit teaching, however, the teacher plans and decides the grammar point to be taught and makes students

notice it, explains it and often uses specific terminology to refer to the grammar being taught (Ellis, 2009).

Being a teacher of English and working with students of all proficiency levels and of different ages in both state schools and private institutions in formal settings, I have to cope with the challenge of teaching grammar effectively, hence the relevance of this study and the conclusions that may be drawn from it. Many researchers suggest that, the older the students, the more explicit the teaching of grammar should be, since children are capable of learning implicitly without difficulty, but, as they get older and become adults, they start to gradually lose that ability (DeKeyser, 2003; Herschensohn, 2013). Hence, this study will focus on how teacher cognition drives the approach to grammar teaching (as implicit or explicit teaching) according to the students' age.

Teachers begin to build their beliefs early in life as second language learners and as students in general, from kindergarten and throughout their whole learning experience, and the beliefs might be more powerful and influential on their actual practices than the pedagogical knowledge developed at university and their teaching experience. What is more, early beliefs are strong and resistant to change even when new studies and methodologies are developed and contradict those beliefs (Borg, 2003). Educators may not be fully aware of the influence of their teacher cognition, and this may cause inconsistencies with their own practices.

In some cases, teachers hold strong beliefs about how to teach grammar but do not enact these beliefs in class due to various factors. Among them, we find teachers' negative self-perceptions about their knowledge of grammar or lack of confidence to explain or to answer students' questions about specific aspects of a grammar topic (Borg, 2001; Sánchez, 2014). Other factors such as the characteristics of the group, the classroom, or even the institution where the teacher works also intervene in their decisions (Borg, 2001; Buehl & Beck, 2015; Sánchez, 2014). Ur (2011) mentions various other aspects of the context of teaching/learning which exert a powerful influence on the way grammar is taught, such as the students' personalities, motivations, learning styles, discipline, etc.; available time for preparation and correction; aspects of lesson design and planning; pressure from parents, ministries of education or school principals; and so on. As an example of how these factors may influence teachers' decisions and practices, she claims that "even if a teacher is convinced of the validity of a task-centered approach with

incidental focus on form, he or she might decide not to implement such an approach because his or her students –or their parents—believe they learn better from systematic, traditional ‘focus on forms’” (p. 518).

Finally, some researchers highlight the importance of making teachers aware of the influence of beliefs so that they understand that there may be mismatches between teachers’ and students’ perceptions about what they consider the best way of teaching and learning a foreign language. These inconsistencies often have a negative impact on the teaching and learning processes, especially when the teachers’ approaches or practices are not the ones expected by their learners, which not only reduces the teacher’s credibility, but also prevents students from learning efficiently and in a motivated atmosphere (Ellis, 2008; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013; Schulz, 1996, 2001).

1.3 Literature review

1.3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this section is to review the most relevant studies that will serve as a basis for my own research and which may anticipate the results obtained in the present study. Therefore, this section is divided into teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about the teaching of grammar and how these relate to the teachers’ practices in the classroom as revealed by the available literature.

However, since it is not only teachers’ beliefs which influence their pedagogical decisions, this review also provides an account of other components of teacher cognition which intervene and sometimes explain the contradictions in teachers’ practices. Considering factors such as teacher’s knowledge about grammar (KAG) or awareness of the teaching context is relevant, because teachers are not always conscious of them, even though these may explain the effectiveness of their classroom practices.

1.3.2 Teacher Cognition

This section includes a review of studies where teachers are the main participants and which focus on three components of teacher cognition: beliefs, knowledge about

grammar and the teaching context (Borg, 1998, 1999, 2001; Nishimuro & Borg, 2013; Sánchez, 2014). The studies show how these aspects of teacher cognition influenced these educators' pedagogical decisions.

In some cases, teachers hold strong beliefs about how to teach grammar but do not enact these beliefs in class due to negative self-perceptions about their knowledge of grammar or lack of confidence to explain or to answer students' questions about specific aspects of a grammar topic (Borg, 2001; Sánchez, 2014). Other factors such as the characteristics of the group, the classroom, or even the institution where the teacher works also intervene in their decisions (Borg, 2001; Buehl & Beck, 2015; Sánchez, 2014).

Borg (1998) studied the role of grammar teaching in the classroom practice of a highly qualified teacher in an English language school in Malta with the aim of having an emic (i.e., subject-centred) perspective of the way the teacher's approach to grammar was influenced by his personal pedagogical system, his experience and his working context. The study was conceived from an exploratory-interpretive perspective and the instruments used to collect the data were two: pre- and post-observation interviews with the teacher and classroom observations. Teachers at this school were free to choose the content and materials for their lessons, so this was not a factor which prevented them from teaching according to their own perceptions. It is interesting to observe that, even though this teacher became a professional during the boom of CLT, he encouraged the use of L1 at all times, and dealt with grammar in ways which were not in line with this approach. When asked about this, the teacher often indicated that such practices had worked well for him as a student or mentioned reasons why he firmly believed those practices would be the most effective for his students.

In Borg (1999), the focus was on the grammar teaching practices that took place during two EFL teachers' lessons, drawing on information obtained through observations and interviews from a previous study. It was found that these teachers, who apparently preferred teaching grammar implicitly, or through a process of discovery, also included mini lectures on certain aspects of grammar. The reasons the teachers gave for doing so are similar in all cases: it worked well for them, students expect some kind of grammar instruction, not all grammar rules can be discovered easily, discovery of rules is effective but time-consuming, and grammar practice gives teachers diagnostic information about learners' needs.

In sum, these studies reveal that the teachers' implicit personal understandings of teaching and learning developed through educational and professional experiences are a relevant factor influencing their teaching, although not the only one. It is also necessary to consider both the teaching context and the teachers' perception of their KAG.

In Nishimuro and Borg (2013), a case study approach was chosen in order to study the cognitions and practices of three experienced Japanese EFL teachers in a private secondary school. The instruments were also interviews and classroom observations. It was found that, although these teachers acknowledged that they would like to give students the time to learn the language and use it communicatively, they also considered grammar an essential part of communication, so they needed to focus on it explicitly. This, together with lack of time to cover the syllabus and the need to keep up with their colleagues' pace, resulted in teachers giving more prominence to the presentation of grammar and less time to the practice stage. Interestingly, teachers' decisions were not informed by any current methodologies or recent ideas, but mainly based on the teaching context or their own experiences. In conclusion, when considering the different aspects of teacher cognition, it is also necessary to take into account the teaching context, as it may contribute interesting insights into teachers' pedagogical decisions.

Apart from teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and the teaching context, there is another component of teacher cognition which influences their instructional decisions: their Knowledge About Grammar (KAG). There appears to be a link between teachers' perceived KAG and their instructional decisions in the classroom with respect to grammar.

Borg (2001) observed and interviewed two teachers with more than 15 years' experience in TEFL: Eric, a native speaker of English, and Dave, a non-native speaker of English. The teaching context, i.e., the institution, the level and the learners' characteristics, is not specified in the study. It was observed that Eric and Dave's teaching of grammar was infrequent and generally not planned; it occurred when students asked questions or when the need to focus on a grammar point arose for other reasons. If they presented or discussed a grammar topic, they preferred it to be inductive and exploratory, asking questions and letting students analyse the grammar. In most cases, when someone had a question, the teachers asked students if they could provide the answer before giving it themselves, showing confidence to provide the answer if nobody knew it. However,

when students asked questions the teachers were not confident with, they just gave a short, straightforward answer which left no space for analysis and changed the topic quickly so as to avoid further questions, or adopted a defensive stance which was not typical of them. In other cases, they simply promised to find the answer for the following class. The teachers said that all this was due to their own insecurities about their KAG.

Sánchez (2014) studied the case of two Argentinian teachers who taught in a state secondary school to students aged 15-17 and obtained interesting results which also provide evidence of the clear connection between teachers' self-perception about their KAG and their instructional decisions. Each teacher used different approaches: one of them, Emma, followed a grammar-based approach and her classes were teacher-centred, whereas the other one, Sophia, used the Communicative Approach, with sporadic grammar lectures. In this case, Emma referred students' questions about grammar back to the class in the same way as Eric (in the preceding review) did but, unlike him, she did not do so because she was confident and was expecting an answer she knew, but as a strategy to give her time to think of an answer she was uncertain of. As for Sophia, despite the fact that her approach was communicative, she suggested that the teaching of grammar was really useful to raise linguistic awareness, encourage communication, motivation, etc. Nevertheless, her insecurity with respect to her KAG led her to avoid grammatical explanations and, when she had to deal with it, she answered students' questions quickly or gave the right answer to an exercise herself so as to avoid lengthy discussions about grammar.

All in all, both Borg's (2001) and Sánchez' (2014) studies suggest that when teachers feel unsure about how to explain certain questions students make about grammar, they change their attitude and behave in ways which are not typical of them. This shows how teachers' perception of what they know about grammar is also a relevant factor exerting a strong influence on their classroom practices. What is more, Sophia also mentioned time constraints, an external factor, to justify her short grammar explanations.

To sum up, it appears that teachers' pedagogical decisions are not only informed by internal factors such as their beliefs about teaching and learning and their perceptions of their knowledge about grammar, but also by external factors related to the teaching context. The literature reviewed shows how the presence of all these factors may cause mismatches between what teachers think and do. I agree with Borg (2009), though, in that

“mismatches between teachers’ beliefs and practices should not be a focus of criticism; rather, they present exciting opportunities for deeper explorations of teachers, their cognitions, their teaching, and the contexts they work in” (p. 167).

1.3.3 Students’ beliefs

The studies reviewed here have concentrated on students’ beliefs as regards grammar teaching and learning and how they compare to their teachers’ perceptions. To begin with, Schulz (1996, 2001) compared teachers’ and students’ perceptions as regards error correction and the explicit instruction of grammar at university level. In the first study (Schulz, 1996), a multiple-choice type questionnaire was administered to 340 university students attending different German language courses in the University of Arizona. A similar questionnaire was completed by 92 Foreign Language (FL) teachers. In general, the results show students’ conviction of the usefulness of grammar in foreign language learning, whereas considerable disagreement was found among teachers as regards explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback.

Years later, Schulz (2001) carried out a similar study, in this case with 607 Colombian FL students and 122 Colombian FL teachers in eight different postsecondary institutions in Bogotá. The instrument applied was also a Likert-type questionnaire. In this case, the study was a cross-cultural comparison study, since the researcher took into consideration the results obtained in her 1996 study with US participants. Similar results were obtained: in general terms, and although their opinions differed according to the foreign language each of them taught, educators tend to focus more on communicative, real tasks, with a slightly higher tendency for Colombian teachers to favour grammar study compared to the American teachers. On the contrary, both the US and the Colombian learners favor a more formal, explicit teaching of grammar, which they regard as essential for the mastery of the foreign language.

The results obtained in these studies were supported later by Brown (2009), who analysed the ideals of effective teacher behaviours of a vast population of university FL teachers (49) and their students (approximately 1,600) at the University of Arizona. A Likert-type questionnaire was also used in this case, and the results show that students were also inclined towards a grammar-based approach, whereas most of their teachers

preferred a communicative approach, with grammar embedded in real contexts. Both of Schulz' studies and Brown's highlight the need for teachers to enquire into their learners' perceptions and also to hold classroom debates in order to discuss the rationale underlying certain pedagogical decisions and strategies. Otherwise, "mismatches between FL students' and teachers' expectations can negatively affect the students' satisfaction with the language class and can potentially lead to the discontinuation of study" (Brown, 2009, p. 46).

Some of the reasons why students feel so strongly about traditional grammar might be that they believe in its usefulness because that is the assumption that has passed on from generation to generation over many years or because their own experience has led them to think that conscious focus on forms enhances learning (Schulz, 1996). These ideas are in line with Aro's (2009), who asserts that people begin to build their belief systems early in life, and that those beliefs are not altered easily. Much on the contrary, they become stronger and also influence the processing of new information (Nisbett & Ross, 1980, as cited in Aro). A longitudinal case study was carried out by Aro, examining the beliefs about language learning held by young Finnish learners of English attending elementary school. These students were interviewed in Year 1, when they were 7 years old; Year 3, when they were 10; and Year 5, when they were 12. A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data, and this instrument was used throughout the whole study, although the duration of the interviews and the interviewer were not the same in the three stages. Initially, 22 participants were involved, but over the years and for different reasons, seven participants withdrew from the study and only the 15 learners who participated from start to finish were considered.

In this longitudinal study, it was found that, at an early age, students' ideas as regards how to learn English were rather vague, and students had the impression that the language could be learned in different contexts and by various means. As they grow older, learners tend to associate the learning of English almost exclusively with the school rather than with the English they learn through the music they listen to, the TV programmes they watch or the help they receive from significant others such as their parents or siblings, probably due to the fact that in Year 3 they started studying English at school and thus their perceptions as regards learning a language changed.

Similarly, Nagy (2009) carried out a small study as part of a larger project in which the opinions and motivations to learn English held by primary students in Hungary were examined. The 49 participants were in 5th year and belonged to four primary schools from Budapest. The characteristics of the school were different: the reputations of two schools and their teachers were very good, and students started learning English at Grade 1; whereas in the other two schools, English classes began at Grade 4. The study included observations and interviews with some of the students at Grades 4 and 5. Apart from that, a special instrument was devised to analyse the learners' opinions and attitudes towards the learning situation. It consisted of open-ended questions and plenty of space to allow students the possibility to write as much as they wished and to choose from a set of smileys to show how they felt during the English lessons. The results indicate that students perceive the teacher and the learning materials as highly supportive of their learning of English. Furthermore, at least in the short term, students do not have an intrinsic motivation to learn the foreign language for the pleasure of learning or knowing English, and they do not see it as an opportunity for communication, but just as something necessary to pass the secondary school entry tests.

Unlike the students in Aro's (2009) study, whose ideas about learning a language seem to be rather vague, Kolb (2007) suggests that even at a young age (between 8 and 9 years old), students already hold a solid structure of beliefs and are well aware of their learning process, which causes a great influence on their behaviour and choice of strategies. Like Schulz (1996, 2001) and Brown (2009), Kolb emphasises that teachers need to know their learners' views and to provide the space for students to speak about them in order to benefit from them:

Apart from preventing mismatches between teachers' and learners' notions, insights into students' conception of the learning process can aid teachers in choosing appropriate learning activities to account for learners' needs. By listening to what learners have to say about the process of learning a foreign language, teachers become aware of different conceptions and learning styles. (2007, p. 238)

To conclude, even primary school children hold beliefs about the teaching and the learning of a foreign language. Being aware of what students think and taking their perceptions into account is crucial for teachers in order to understand the way learners

behave and perform in the classroom, but also to reflect on and modify their own practices. Finally, a comparison of the results of these studies shows differences in the learners' perceptions as regards the role of grammar in their learning process depending on their ages. In general terms, young learners tend to have vague ideas about how to learn English, and they believe it can be acquired in various ways. As they grow older, they start to place more emphasis on what they learn at school rather than on other, informal ways of learning the language (Aro, 2009; Nagy, 2009). For these young learners, learning takes place rather unconsciously and meaning outweighs form (Kolb, 2007). Nevertheless, when students reach secondary and postsecondary education, they begin to show a greater inclination towards an explicit teaching of grammar, and firmly believe in its usefulness (Schulz, 1996, 2001; Brown, 2009).

1.3.4 Conclusion

The present section has dealt with teachers' cognition in relation to grammar teaching and how teachers' practices in the classroom are influenced by this and also by other factors such as students' age and their own grammar learning beliefs. Some researchers highlight the importance of making teachers aware of the influence of beliefs so that they understand that there may be mismatches between teachers' and students' perceptions about what they consider the best way of teaching and learning a foreign language. These inconsistencies often have a negative impact on the teaching and learning processes, especially when the teachers' approaches or practices are not the ones expected by their learners, which not only reduces the teacher's credibility, but also influences their learning process (Ellis, 2008; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013) and may impact on their motivation (Schulz, 2001).

The present study aims at covering certain issues that have not been fully researched in the literature reviewed, and exploring contexts which, to the best of my knowledge, had not been studied before. Firstly, despite the potential influence of teacher cognition on learners, few of the studies mentioned above (Schulz, 1996, 2001; Brown, 2009) established a comparison between teachers' and students' grammar learning beliefs. This study compares the perceptions of both and analyses whether there are mismatches between them. Secondly, the context where my study is carried out is also

different from the previous studies, with the exception of Sánchez (2014), whose case study takes place in Argentina, in the context of a state secondary school.

Furthermore, I could notice that the studies which analyse teachers' beliefs are generally case studies, with a small number of participants, and with a specific set of instruments, which consist mainly of classroom observations and pre- or post-observation interviews (Borg 1998, 1999, 2001; Nishimuro & Borg, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Sánchez, 2014). The same is true for those studies which analysed students' beliefs (Aro, 2009; Nagy, 2009). On the contrary, the studies which involved both teachers' and learners' perceptions (Schulz 1996, 2001; Brown, 2009) included a larger number of participants and applied Likert-type questionnaires as the main instrument, probably because of the aim of the study and the number of participants involved, which required a more efficient way of collecting the data, especially in terms of time. Thus, the present study is also original in the sense that it uses multiple data sources collected through different instruments.

As a final remark, the studies reviewed here indicate that, for various reasons and regardless of the students' background (age, nationality, level of proficiency in the FL), students tend to favour traditional grammar instruction. Thus, I expect to find similar results in my own study. Also, the findings in my study could further validate the hypothesis that the teachers' and the learners' perceptions as regards grammar teaching and learning are similar, in which case these could be viewed as shared expectations of grammar teaching and learning. On the contrary, if both parties' perceptions are different, this study would challenge that view and would emphasise the importance of addressing those differences so that they do not have a negative impact on the teaching and learning process.

1.4 Research questions and objectives

This study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar?
2. What are students' cognitions about English grammar learning?

3. What similarities and differences are there between teachers' and students' cognitions?
4. What is the relationship between teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar and the way they teach grammar in the classroom?

In order to answer these questions, the following objectives were set:

General objective:

- To explore teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar considering students' age and compare them with both their students' cognitions and their own classroom practices.

Specific objectives:

- To determine teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar.
- To determine students' cognitions about English grammar learning.
- To compare teachers' cognitions regarding learning of grammar with those of their students.
- To relate teachers' cognitions with their own classroom practices.

1.5 Content of the chapters

In this chapter I have introduced the research topic and the reasons that motivated me to study it. I have also stated the problem that was addressed, reported on the state of the art in relation to the topics discussed here and stated the main objectives and research questions that guided this study. The subsequent chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter 2 includes the theoretical framework on which this study is grounded.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the instruments and procedures used to gather and interpret the data as well as the participants involved in the study and the institutions they belong to. It also describes the type of analysis chosen to process the data.

Chapter 4 presents the main results obtained. The first part is concerned with the results as regards teachers' and students' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar. The second part only deals with teachers' perceptions as regards the importance attributed to students' age when teaching grammar and teachers' attitude towards learners' errors. In the case of the students' cognitions, the results were obtained only through the analysis of the questionnaires, whereas in the case of the teachers' perceptions, data from the questionnaire, interview and classroom observations were used.

Chapter 5 includes the discussion and qualitative interpretation of the results, reviewing the research questions posed at the beginning of the study.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents the main conclusions and teaching implications derived from the results. The limitations and suggestions for further research are also mentioned.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

The present study analyses how EFL educators approach the teaching of grammar, and how their beliefs, together with other components of teacher cognition, such as knowledge about grammar, influence their instructional decisions. Students' perceptions are also analysed in order to reach better conclusions and have a wider view of how the cognitions of both parties involved influence the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, this chapter will deal with the concepts of cognition, beliefs and knowledge.

First of all, cognition is defined in relation to language teaching and learning. Due to the way in which beliefs are defined here and the instruments used to inquire into them, this study is anchored in the metacognitive and contextual approaches to the study of beliefs, which will be described after that. The concepts of beliefs and knowledge are also developed, as they are the two main components of cognition that this study focuses on. Since the participants will be asked about their beliefs about grammar teaching and learning, an account of the approaches to grammar teaching is included. Finally, given that this study also analyses the relationship between learners' age and the suitability of the approach to grammar teaching implemented, the last section discusses this aspect.

2.2 Cognition and Language Teaching and Learning

The study of teacher cognition (TC), i.e., “what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p.81), began approximately 40 years ago, when developments in cognitive psychology helped understand that studying teachers' mental lives was as important as studying their behaviours. In the 1980s, further research was carried out which helped understand the mutual interaction between teacher cognitions and classroom practices. At first, the ‘private mental work’ teachers constantly engage in when planning, evaluating, and deciding was not taken into consideration (Burns, Freeman, & Edwards, 2015, p. 585). One decade later, however, the interest in TC in relation to foreign language teachers arose, after TC in teachers of other subjects had been the object of research (Borg, 2006, 2009).

Given that teachers' and learners' cognitions will be studied here, it is necessary to establish what is understood by cognition, and which components of cognition this study is especially concerned with. In general terms, cognition refers to all the mental processes and activities involved in the acquisition, manipulation and processing of information (Colman, 2015; Sutherland, 1995). Cognition "begins with immediate awareness of objects in perception and extends to all forms of reasoning" (Warren, 2018), including all different forms of knowing and awareness, such as remembering, judging, imagining and even problem solving (VandenBos, 2015, p. 201). Cognition influences teachers' and students' view of the teaching and learning processes, and also teachers' pedagogical decisions, hence the importance of studying both teachers' and learners' cognition.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon in question, the field of teacher cognition is full of diverse and confusing concepts (Borg, 2006). The present study understands TC as "the store of beliefs, knowledge, assumptions, theories, and attitudes about all aspects of their work which teachers hold and which have a powerful impact on teachers' classroom practices" (Borg, 1999, p. 19). Teachers' experiences as learners, even at a very young age, inform such powerful cognitions about both teaching and learning that can influence teachers' behaviours throughout their whole careers (Borg, 2006). Borg (1999) also emphasises the potential that studying TC has to improve our understanding of L2 grammar teaching, which is the focus of this study.

As far as learners are concerned, this study sees learner cognition (LC) as involving what learners think, know, believe, and feel (Navarro, 2016). This definition is a reflection of Borg's characterisation of language teacher cognition and "recognises cognition as an overarching, often unconscious, unobservable phenomenon which carries a significant influence on an individual's behaviour" (p. 34). It is now widely recognised that researching students' perceptions is necessary in order to detect and deal with mismatches between learners' expectations and teachers' practices, as this may help improve motivation and learning (Ellis, 2008; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013). This means that learner cognition is as important as teacher cognition and as such, it will be part of this study.

In sum, cognition is an unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching and learning comprised by various components. These components include beliefs, knowledge,

theories, attitudes, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions and perspectives (Borg, 2003). Of all of them, two are of particular interest and will be further developed: beliefs and knowledge.

2.2.1 Approaches to the study of cognition

Now that the concept of cognition in language teaching and learning has been defined, the approaches to the study of cognition in which the present study is anchored are presented. In the mid-1980s the term ‘beliefs’ appeared for the first time in applied linguistics, and it was associated to metacognitive knowledge. By the end of the 1990s, research into learner beliefs started to diversify and took different forms, and studies were carried out along three lines of research: the normative approach, the metacognitive approach and the contextual approach (Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013). Two of the main features which characterise each approach are the way beliefs are understood and the research instruments used to inquire into teachers’ and learners’ beliefs. These were taken into account in order to define the approaches in which the present study is anchored.

2.2.1.1 Contextual Approach

Unlike the normative approach, where learners are judged and compared to an ideal good learner, and their beliefs may be seen as obstacles to their autonomy, the contextual approach focuses on the subjective nature of language learning (Barcelos, 2003). This approach assumes that beliefs depend on the context where they originate and that they are dynamic, social and variable (Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013), and context is not seen as something static, but as a phenomenon that emerges and is sustained in society and through interaction with others (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992 as cited in Barcelos, 2003).

Within this approach, studies use various types of data and methods for data analysis that seek to understand beliefs in the specific contexts in which they are studied. In order to take into consideration students’ perspectives, triangulation is common in this approach, so that most of these studies are qualitative, and use research instruments that

range from questionnaires and interviews to diaries, classroom observation, narratives, case studies, and discourse analyses (Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013).

The main advantage of this approach is its positive view of learners, understood as social beings interacting with their environment. However, the methodologies applied for these studies are time-consuming (Barcelos, 2003) and a certain degree of interpretive subjectivity may be present. Furthermore, some studies may be so context-specific that it would not be possible to apply them to other contexts (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

2.2.1.2 Metacognitive Approach

This approach understands beliefs as metacognitive knowledge, which consists of “the stable, stable although sometimes incorrect knowledge that learners have acquired about language, learning and the language learning process” (Wenden, 1991, p.163). This knowledge can be developed unconsciously or consciously, through advice learners receive from teachers, parents or classmates as regards how to learn. Although it is relatively stable, metacognitive knowledge changes with time so that students become cognitively more mature. This allows learners to become conscious of their assumptions, revise them, and be able to speak about them. The instruments used to collect data within this approach include semi-structured interviews, self-reports and questionnaires designed by the researchers (Wenden, 1991; Barcelos, 2003). One of the main advantages of interviews is that they allow learners to reflect on their experience and evaluate their own learning process (Barcelos, 2003). By means of this instrument, students analyse their cognitive processes and articulate their beliefs, making them conscious of the strategies and learning styles they use to their own benefit (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

Nevertheless, there are some limitations. Firstly, this approach infers beliefs only from learners’ intentions or statements, but not from their actions, so that a cause-effect relationship cannot be established between beliefs and actions. In this approach, beliefs tend to be associated with the application of strategies, to which a degree of efficacy is attributed. Thus, positive beliefs towards a particular task are generally interpreted as the application of successful and effective strategies, whereas negative beliefs lead to unsuccessful strategies which hinder students’ autonomy. Secondly, this approach does

not consider the influence the context may have on students' beliefs, as they are only associated to metacognitive knowledge (Barcelos, 2003).

2.2.2 Beliefs

One component of cognition that this study is particularly concerned with is beliefs. Beliefs are difficult to define because different terms are often used to explain their nature. This difficulty also has to do with the controversy that exists between beliefs and knowledge. It is claimed that beliefs are a type of knowledge, and knowledge is understood as consisting of a cognitive component and a belief component (Ross, 1980; Rockeach, 1968; and Nisbett & Ross, 1980; as cited in Pajares, 1992); or that knowledge is rather cognitive in essence, whereas beliefs are affective and evaluative (Nespor, 1987). However, there is also the claim that beliefs also have a cognitive component, and that knowledge is not free of affect and evaluation either:

[C]ognitive knowledge, however envisioned, must also have its own affective and evaluative component. The conception of knowledge as somehow purer than belief and closer to the truth or falsity of a thing requires a mechanistic outlook not easily digested. What truth, what knowledge, can exist in the absence of judgment or evaluation? (Pajares, 1992, p.310).

This demonstrates that it is not clear where to draw the line where knowledge ends and beliefs begin. Thus, the definition of beliefs may change according to the perspective from which they are viewed.

Throughout this study, beliefs, with reference to foreign language teaching cognition, will be understood in the way Kalaja & Barcelos (2003) have defined them: "opinions and ideas that learners (and teachers) have about the task of learning a second/foreign language" (p.1). This study also adopts Barcelos & Kalaja's (2003) view that beliefs are dynamic and susceptible to change, socially constructed and contextually situated, developed as a result of each individual's experience and sometimes paradoxical and contradictory. These characteristics will unfold in the coming sections.

2.2.2.1 Teachers' Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs refer to their educational beliefs, i.e., beliefs about their learners and their performances, the school context, the specific discipline they teach, etc. (Pajares, 1992). Barcelos & Kalaja (2013) characterise teacher beliefs as variable and changing from one situation to another, depending on contextual, social, cognitive, personal and experiential factors. Phipps & Borg (2009) also refer to this variability in the sense that teacher beliefs can exert a powerful, long-term influence on classroom practices, but at the same time, they are not always reflected in teachers' behaviour in the classroom.

Teachers start to develop beliefs about teaching and learning early in their lives, making these beliefs strong and resistant to change. The earlier a belief is incorporated into a person's belief system, the more difficult it is to change, even in the face of strong evidence or when such perceptions no longer represent reality accurately (Pajares, 1992, Nespor, 1987; Borg, 2006, 2009; Phipps & Borg, 2009). This is mainly because, unlike other professionals, teachers work in the classroom, a context that they know from their own experiences as learners, and where they have already been for a long time: "Student teachers arrive for their training courses having spent thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action. This contrasts with novices learning other professions, such as those of lawyers or doctors" (Borg, 2004, p. 274). This phenomenon, described for the first time in 1975 by Dan Lortie and known as apprenticeship of observation, explains many of the beliefs educators hold about teaching (Borg, 2004).

A distinction is made between core and peripheral beliefs (Pajares, 1992; Phipps & Borg, 2009). The first group includes a set of beliefs accumulated through experience, which are stable and exert a powerful influence on teachers' behaviour. Peripheral beliefs, however, are not held with the same amount of conviction (Phipps & Borg, 2009), and they are consequently less resistant to change. Hence, whereas teachers' practices do not coincide exactly with their stated beliefs (peripheral beliefs), they may be consistent with another subset of deeper, more stable and general beliefs about learning (core beliefs). This explains why attention to this distinction can be helpful to understand tensions between teachers' perceptions and actual classroom practices.

There is another reason which justifies the study of FLT teachers' beliefs. Assuming that one of the most salient features of beliefs is their resistance to change

(Phipps & Borg, 2009; Pajares, 1992), analysing beliefs may be a contribution for teachers to start questioning and modifying them. But analysing learners' perceptions is also necessary, as this can help teachers anticipate students' concerns and difficulties, and set more realistic goals (Kern, 1995).

2.2.2.2 Learners' Beliefs

The study of beliefs about Second Language Acquisition (SLA) began when research focused on the learner and the discussion of what makes a good language learner (Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013). This took place in the 1970s, with Joan Rubin's discussion of the good language learner (GLL). Since then, the study of foreign language learners' perceptions started to gain importance (Rubin, 1975, in White, 2008). Years later, in the 1980s, the boom of CLT contributed to assign a more active role to learners in the classroom (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013), and an interest in learners' needs and expectations began, as it was understood that these factors affect students' behaviour in the classroom (Ellis, 2008; White, 2008; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013).

In applied linguistics, research into learners' beliefs first appeared in the mid-1980s, with the development of the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), a Likert-type questionnaire devised by Elaine Horwitz to measure students' beliefs about language learning (Ellis, 2008; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013). After this pioneering study, other researchers like Anita Wenden continued researching learner beliefs, and showing that students are capable of expressing their attitudes and perceptions about many aspects of their learning process.

As Ellis (2008) explains, learners have a set of conceptions as regards what a language is and how to study it, which fall into two main categories: quantitative/analytic and qualitative/experiential. The first conception views the learning of a language mainly as the learning of grammar rules and places emphasis on translation, memorisation and acquisition of vocabulary in order to understand and speak in the target language. The qualitative/ experiential conception focuses on paying attention to the way the L2 is used, guessing meanings from the context, and taking advantage of opportunities to use the language in real situations. Some researchers have also included a third conception: self-efficacy/confidence in language learning, related to "how learners perceive their ability

as language learners and their progress in relation to the particular context in which they are learning” (Ellis, 2008, p.9). These conceptions are not mutually exclusive, and learners may hold mixed beliefs, falling into two or three of these categories. This supports the claims made by other researchers who have characterised beliefs as being often contradictory (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2003) and susceptible to change, as a result of the various experiences the students undergo throughout their histories as learners (Ellis, 2008; Kern, 1995).

As it can be seen, learner beliefs are a complex and often contradictory subject of investigation. Their study is necessary in order to avoid mismatches between learners’ beliefs and teachers’ classroom practices, which may ultimately result in a more successful teaching and learning experience.

2.2.3 Knowledge

Knowledge is the second component of cognition which will be considered. In the field of psychology, it is defined as the state of being familiar with or aware of the existence of something (which may include either awareness or understanding of factual information, or information about how to carry out certain operations), usually resulting from experience or study (Colman, 2015; VandenBos, 2015). The present work will find out how teachers and learners conceptualise the learning and teaching of the target language grammar in instructed SLA. In order to achieve this, the questionnaires included references to learners’ implicit and explicit, declarative and procedural knowledge. Besides, given that the concept of storage is present in the definition of knowledge, and it is closely related to memory, to which this study also makes frequent references, these concepts will be put forward.

As already mentioned, there is not a clear-cut distinction between beliefs and knowledge. Beliefs consist of ‘episodically’ stored information, drawn from experience or cultural sources of knowledge, with affect and evaluation as the main components distinguishing it from knowledge. On the other hand, knowledge is a stored body of concepts, rules and propositions, based on objective fact. It consists of semantically stored information, where all its constituents are organised in terms of semantic lists or associative networks (Abelson, 1978; Nespov, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Since information is

stored in memory, the process of knowledge storage is described in the following section, together with a definition and the distinction between short-term and long-term memory.

2.2.3.1 Knowledge storage in memory

Knowledge is represented in memory, “a *sensory register* where stimuli are initially recorded for a brief amount of time before being passed into *short-term* (or *working*) *memory* if attention is given to them” (Atkinson & Siffrin, as cited in Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 16, italics in the original). A difference is established between short- and long-term memory. Short-term or working memory consists of the active retention of a limited amount of information for up to thirty seconds (Williams & Burden, 1997), whereas long-term memory consists of an organised storage of information, which lasts longer (days, months or years), can be retrieved and used to create new knowledge (Colman, 2015; Rivas Navarro, 2008).

Given the limited capacity of our working memory, complex material needs to be broken down into smaller, manageable chunks so as to be stored in long-term memory. This can be done by rehearsal, by simply repeating the target item many times, or by associating meaning to it, so that it is linked to something already known, thus increasing the chances to be remembered. To this end, teachers should favour processes of acquisition of new information in an organised and meaningful way, where information is not simply accumulated, but can be retained, retrieved and used in successive learning processes (Williams & Burden, 1997; Rivas Navarro, 2008).

In order to achieve this, it is important to take into account each of the three stages of memory processing: encoding, which implies forming new memories; storage, which is involved in information maintenance; and retrieval, the process of gaining access to stored knowledge (Huddleston, n.d.). This process can be optimised for learners at the three stages. To make encoding more effective, for instance, learners should process new information as deeply as possible, especially by focusing on the meaningful aspects of the new information, rather than on its superficial, perceptual characteristics. For example, an individual is more likely to remember the word ‘shark’ if it is thought of as a type of fish, rather than associating it with other rhyming words, such as ‘park’, or remembering that it starts with ‘s’ (Huddleston, n.d.; VandenBos, 2015; Brown & Craik, 2000).

2.2.3.2 Types of language knowledge

Language knowledge is knowledge individuals possess of the different aspects of their first language or a foreign language (morphosyntactic, lexical, phonological), and which they use for comprehension or production. According to the degree of learners' awareness of the language used or the properties of the language features themselves, language knowledge has been classified as rule-based or item-based, declarative or procedural, implicit or explicit (Bialystok as cited in Ellis, 2005; DeKeyser, 2009).

Language knowledge is stored either as rules or individual items like lexical items. Thus, learners possess a dual knowledge system that coexists: rule-based knowledge and item-based knowledge. Learners draw on a specific type of knowledge depending on the needs (rapid, fluent communication or accuracy) (Skehan, 1998, as cited in Ellis, 2015).

Rule-based knowledge is knowledge of powerful, generative rules which learners use to communicate complex ideas concisely and accurately, provided they are given time to plan before they perform a task. Conversely, item-based knowledge is knowledge of ready-made chunks used by learners under conditions of time pressure, when they need to communicate rapidly and fluently. These items are acquired individually, and they are stored and retrieved as single items as well. (DeKeyser, 2009; Skehan, 1998, as cited in Ellis, 2015).

Rules can be stored as declarative knowledge, and become proceduralised through practice, as will be explained later (DeKeyser, 2009). However, even when rules are proceduralised, their use is often laborious, so in some cases, it is more useful to have a shortcut, i.e., to retrieve a stored chunk from memory rather than constructing an utterance by means of a rule. For instance, learners use the chunk "I don't know" as part of their classroom language even before they learn the simple present rule, since it is easier to remember it as an item (DeKeyser, 2009; Ellis, 2015).

As already suggested, there is a direct link between rule-based and item-based knowledge and declarative and procedural knowledge. In DeKeyser's (2009) words, declarative knowledge is "knowledge THAT something is" (p. 121), i.e., knowledge of words (such as the past form of irregular verbs), facts (e.g., some verbs in the past are regular and some are irregular), or concepts (such as the difference between the present and the past). It operates with awareness of what is known (Ellis, 2009). On the contrary, procedural knowledge is "knowledge HOW to do something" (DeKeyser, 2009, p.121),

such as knowing how to swim, ride a bike, or conjugate a verb, and as such, it is highly automated, as it operates without awareness (Ellis, 2005).

These two types of knowledge are associated to implicit and explicit knowledge. The former is intuitive and tacit: learners may be able to determine whether an expression is grammatical or ungrammatical, but they may be unable to explain why or what the underlying rule is. Explicit knowledge is conscious, consisting of facts that can be stated and explained, as in grammar rules (Ellis, 2009). Thus, we can now associate these four types of knowledge in the following way: implicit knowledge is procedural; for instance, a learner can fluently talk about a past event using past verb forms without awareness and without much hesitation, whereas explicit knowledge is associated with declarative knowledge, which is explicit and encyclopedic (Ellis, 2005; 2009). In the last case, for example, a learner may know a good number of past verb forms, but still be unable to use them fluently when he/she speaks about a past event, showing that the knowledge is not proceduralised. The explicit/implicit distinction is further developed in section 2.4.

Taking all this into consideration, to what extent can these different types of knowledge interact? To what extent can declarative knowledge become procedural through practice, or vice versa? This has been the subject of a long debate referred to as the interface hypothesis (DeKeyser, 2009). There are three different perspectives about this issue. The noninterface position rejects the possibility of explicit knowledge transforming into implicit knowledge or vice versa, as it is understood that these two types of knowledge make use of different acquisitional mechanisms, stored in different parts of the brain (Ellis, 2005; 2009).

Secondly, there is the strong interface position. In this case, it is claimed that not only can explicit knowledge be derived from implicit knowledge but also that explicit knowledge can be converted into implicit knowledge through practice; that is, learners can first learn a rule as a declarative fact and then, by dint of practice, can convert it into an implicit representation, although this need not entail the loss of the original explicit representation (Ellis, 2005, p. 144).

Finally, there is also the weak interface position. It implies that explicit knowledge simply contributes in speeding up implicit learning, by promoting certain processes believed to be responsible for that type of learning (Ellis, 2005, 2009; DeKeyser, 2009).

Hence, adopting the perspective of the strong interface position, it is possible to draw two main conclusions. First, that certain rules which learners memorise constitute declarative knowledge which may become procedural, provided students are frequently engaged in activities which foster such proceduralisation. Secondly, learners can also apply certain grammatical structures intuitively, without awareness of the underlying rules, and eventually be able to infer the rules from individual examples encountered in the input. Thus, they can become aware of the underlying regularity, for example, that polysyllabic adjectives follow the pattern ‘more... than’ in the comparative. In this case, implicit knowledge becomes declarative.

In conclusion, learners draw on different kinds of knowledge during language use. Some of these are related, and there are cases in which declarative knowledge can be converted into procedural knowledge.

2.2.3.3 Teacher’s knowledge about grammar

This section focuses on teachers’ knowledge about grammar (KAG), why it is relevant to the present study and how it impacts on practice. Towards the end of the 20th century, an interest in researching teachers’ language awareness began, together with an interest in learners’ language awareness and knowledge about language (KAL) (Andrews, 1994, 1999). KAL has been defined as “the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of language that enables them to teach effectively” (Thornbury, 1997, p.x). As mentioned earlier, TC includes beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions and perspectives (Borg, 2003). It is claimed that KAL is concerned with two of these components: knowledge and beliefs. Following Andrews & McNeill (2005), teachers’ KAL includes a declarative dimension, involving all their beliefs, knowledge and awareness of the language system, and a procedural dimension: how those beliefs, knowledge and awareness impact on their teaching practice. The same applies to knowledge about grammar (KAG), which is part of KAL, and it is specifically related to teachers’ cognitions about the morphosyntax of EFL and its teaching.

A lack of solid KAG, probably due to the fact that many teachers were taught during the post-traditional grammar era, with little attention given to grammar (Williamson & Hardman, 1995), could affect their capacity to teach grammar effectively.

Thus, researchers call for a more rigorous, cognitively demanding conceptual framework and knowledge base during teacher training, so as to help students understand the target language and how it is used (Williamson & Hardman, 1995; Svalberg, 2015).

Teachers' confidence in their own KAG plays a crucial role, which is as important as the measurable knowledge they possess. What is more, it often affects how much grammar teachers actually teach and how they do it (Borg, 2001; Svalberg, 2015). In relation to this, Borg (2001) states that "teachers who are more confident in their KAG teach more grammar. But (...) even when teachers are very confident in their KAG, they may minimize grammar work simply because they do not feel it is an appropriate instructional activity" (p. 27).

In sum, both language teaching beliefs and KAG are two important components of TC which interact with each other. Teachers' perceptions of what and how much they know about grammar have a great impact on their pedagogical decisions. Therefore, apart from studying teachers' beliefs as regards grammar teaching and learning, analysing their KAG may help explain the reasons underlying teachers' pedagogical decisions.

2.2.3.4 The construction of knowledge: teaching and learning

There is a direct link between information, knowledge, learning and teaching. Learning is the act or process of acquiring new information, knowledge or skills. This can be achieved by practice, observation, study or other experiences. Experiences are understood in the broadest sense, including occasional or spontaneous experiences of everyday life, as well as intentional and systematic experiences produced, for instance, by reading a text, or solving a problem. Learning is the result of organising the incoming information into a mental representation, i.e., an entity which stands for a perception, memory, thought, or another mental function. Learning produces a change which lasts for a considerable amount of time. What makes this change possible is precisely the incorporation of something new, implying a modification and reorganisation of what has previously been acquired (either knowledge or behaviour) (Colman, 2015; Galimberti, 2002; Matsumoto, 2009; VandenBos, 2015; Rivas Navarro, 2008).

The information stored in learners' long-term memory can be the product of associative learning, also relevant to this study. This type of learning is based on the

stimulus-response relationship, which promotes habit formation or associations. Through associative learning, a student can memorise something if he/she associates it to something else, such as the memorisation of capital cities, by associating the city to a country, or the memorisation of a telephone number, by associating the number to a person. In order to create this association in students' memory, the information must be the object of repetition, overlearning or frequent use (Rivas Navarro, 2008).

On the other hand, second language instruction or teaching is defined here as “any deliberate attempt on the part of the teacher or a capable peer to promote language learning by manipulating the mechanisms of learning and/or the conditions under which these operate” (de Graaff & Housen, 2009, p. 726). In order to analyse teachers' classroom practices, a classification of the approaches to grammar teaching is necessary, and it is described in the following section (2.3). Besides, as the perceptions of teachers and learners as regards explicit or implicit grammar teaching and learning are studied, this distinction is put forward in section 2.4.

2.3 Approaches to grammar teaching

Grammar instruction has been susceptible to trends in foreign language teaching, and teachers have been vulnerable to such fashions mainly due to the lack of a widely recognised theory of language learning and a solid empirical base for classroom practice (Long, 2000). Therefore, the way grammar can be effectively taught has been the object of debate and investigation for more than 50 years (Ellis, 2001). During this period, the discussion of and the organisation of grammar centred on the comparison of grammar instruction in different language teaching methodologies (e.g., the Grammar Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Approach, Total Physical Response, etc.) and different classifications of approach (process vs. product, analytical vs. experiential) (Burgess & Etherington, 2002).

However, more recent work has contributed to the adoption of new taxonomies for grammar instruction and its discussion, based on Long's (1991) criticism that “method”, as a set of global, prescriptive principles for foreign language teaching, is not considered a relevant construct in the discussion of how to improve FL grammar instruction. Among other reasons, Long claimed that methods tend to overlap, prescribing the same pedagogical practices for the treatment of grammar, and that teachers do not

follow a specific method, but combine features of different methods they find useful to teach grammar. Thus, instead of “method”, Long (1991) proposed a new taxonomy for grammar instruction, based on the identification of three approaches: focus on forms (FonFs), focus on meaning (FonM), and focus on form (FonF). These options were taken into account to describe the approach to grammar adopted by the teachers in this study and will be described below.

FonFs is the traditional approach to the teaching of grammar, in which the target language is divided into segments (phonemes, words, collocations, sentence patterns, functions, etc.) and presented to students gradually. Learners are supposed to synthesise all these segments for use in communication and to master them one at a time, with native-like proficiency. Some of the most frequent practices include “explicit grammar rules, repetition of models, memorization of short dialogs, linguistically ‘simplified’ texts, transformation exercises, explicit negative feedback” (Long, 2000, p. 181). The PPP model (Presentation, Practice and Production), which corresponds to an FonFs approach, still enjoys wide acceptance among foreign language educators and is the most commonly found in EFL commercial materials, especially at elementary levels (López Barrios & Villanueva, 2005).

In the second option, FonM, second language learning is conceived to proceed along lines similar to those followed in first language acquisition. Lessons are purely communicative and try to recreate the conditions of L1 acquisition, in the conviction that this is enough to learn the L2 successfully. Learners are responsible for analysing the target language, and learn it implicitly and incidentally. For instance, in immersion programs, or content-based lessons, which are characteristic of this approach, learners are presented with holistic samples of second language material and are supposed to induce the underlying rules from the language they are exposed to. The material is not graded, simplified or created in order to teach a specific linguistic element (Long, 2000).

Finally, FonF takes advantage of the strengths of both the interventionist and the noninterventionist positions formerly explained. In this approach, the linguistic elements are not taught at any specific moment, nor are they predetermined. Rather, they occur incidentally and in context, when students have a problem with production or comprehension, but with the focus of the lesson centred on meaning or communication (Long, 2000). FonF activities are not pre-planned, “but occur incidentally as a function

of the interaction of learners with the subject matter or tasks that constitute the learners' and their teacher's predominant focus" (Long, 2000, p. 185). The problem with this approach is whether this is feasible in the case of beginners in a FL context, as those involved in this study, as their exposure to input in the target language is limited, thus reducing their abilities for comprehension and production.

Now, given all these options, it is often challenging for teachers to decide on one grammar teaching approach which suits all the characteristics of a class group. In the context of this research, the grammar items to be taught are already predetermined by the curriculum design in the state schools and in the private language schools, by the textbooks chosen by the school heads. Consequently, if teachers are required to use a particular textbook, where the grammatical items are divided and presented separately, one at a time, we can infer that the most frequent approach in this context is FonFs.

As stated earlier, these three approaches were taken into consideration to classify the teachers' classroom practices. Apart from that, in order to establish a further classification of their practices, and to analyse the perceptions of both teachers and learners, the distinction between explicit and implicit grammar teaching and learning is key.

2.4 Teaching and learning grammar: intentionality and awareness

The explicit/implicit distinction originated in experimental psychology and the findings by Arthur Reber, and it was Krashen who introduced it into SLA (Housen & Pierrard, 2006; de Graaff & Housen, 2009). Nevertheless, what is understood by explicit or implicit grammar teaching varies considerably according to each teacher, and according to the particular view of each researcher. Thus, background reading of the works by Long (2000); DeKeyser (1995); Norris and Ortega (2000); Housen & Pierrard (2006); de Graaff & Housen (2009); Ellis (2009); and Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, (2009) led to the identification of the main features that characterise each approach. These were key to determine the type of approach used by the teachers in the classes observed for this study, and to compare the data with their perceptions as they were expressed in the questionnaire and the interview.

Explicit grammar instruction purposefully focuses learners' attention on a specific linguistic feature. This type of instruction may be deductive, "by providing the learners with a grammatical description of the rule" or inductive, "by assisting learners to discover the rule for themselves from data provided" (Ellis, 2009, p. 17). In an inductive approach, the aim of the lesson is teaching the target form, so this may often result in obtrusive lessons, i.e., communication of meaning might be interrupted in order to focus the learner's attention on form (Long, 2000; Housen & Pierrard, 2006). Long's (2000) FonFs is an approach characterised by explicit grammar instruction, as well as focus on form since, even when teachers draw students' attention to grammatical structures in context, as they arise incidentally in a communicative activity, the purpose is to induce noticing of the linguistic item. Furthermore, the use of metalinguistic terminology is also a frequent practice in this type of instruction (Housen & Pierrard, 2006).

In contrast, implicit grammar teaching is characterised by absence of rule presentation or attention to any particular linguistic form (DeKeyser, 1995; Norris and Ortega, 2000). Instead, learners are supposed to infer and internalise rules unconsciously, by being exposed to exemplars of a pattern without focusing on grammar, but on the meaning conveyed by them or the content dealt with in the text (Ellis, 2009). The objective is to engage learners in an active negotiation of meaning and exchange of authentic messages (de Graaff & Housen, 2009; Housen & Pierrard, 2006). In order to achieve this, there is minimal interruption of communication, so instruction occurs spontaneously, in an otherwise communication-oriented activity. Therefore, unlike explicit grammar teaching, there is no use of metalanguage (Housen & Pierrard, 2006; Long, 2000). For instance, Long's (2000) FonM is an approach where grammar teaching occurs implicitly.

Finally, teachers' reaction to learners' errors is also characterises the approach to grammar teaching as explicit or implicit. This study follows Ellis's (2009) suggestion that, when learners make errors in the use of a target structure and the teacher provides explicit correction or metalinguistic feedback, this is considered explicit instruction. Explicit correction implies the teacher overtly indicating where the error is and providing the correct version (e.g., "You need did instead of was"), whereas metalinguistic feedback involves some hint or indication as regards how to correct the error (e.g., "You need the auxiliary, not the verb 'be'") (Ellis et al., 2009). Explicit corrective feedback interrupts the flow of communication and activates learning mechanisms resulting in explicit L2

knowledge (Long, 2000; Ellis et al., 2009). On the other hand, implicit feedback often consists of recasts, in which the teacher replaces what the learner has said incorrectly with a corrected version. Provided this recast is not self-evident, i.e., that there is not an overt indication that the student has made an error, and no conscious awareness that something needs to be corrected, this is considered an implicit technique (Ellis et al., 2009).

As mentioned earlier, this study is concerned with teaching as well as with learning. Therefore, the distinction between explicit and implicit learning is described as follows. Learning is considered explicit when it takes place consciously; i.e., learners are aware of what they have learned, and can openly verbalise those linguistic elements or rules acquired (Ellis, 2009). Learning can be explicit and inductive or explicit and deductive, depending on how it takes place. When rules are taught, learning is explicit and deductive. Conversely, learning is explicit and inductive when students are asked to discover the rules for themselves, for instance, by analysing examples in a text, which implies learning from the particular (the examples) to the general (the rules) (DeKeyser, 2003).

In contrast, implicit learning takes place without intentionality and with no awareness of what is being learned. There is no rule presentation, and learners are not encouraged to attend to any linguistic forms (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Rules that have been learned implicitly cannot be verbalised, but learners' acquisition of these rules is evident in their behavioural responses (Ellis, 2009; DeKeyser, 2003).

All things considered, it would be unwise to omit that implicit instruction does not necessarily result in implicit learning in the same way as explicit instruction does not necessarily imply explicit learning. For instance, a teacher may teach the difference between definite and indefinite articles, while a student may implicitly acquire some vocabulary items mentioned in that lesson which were not intended to be learned. The opposite is also possible: implicit instruction may result in explicit learning, when students try to make sense of something they are learning and work it out explicitly (Ellis, 2009).

2.5. The relationship between learners' age and grammar teaching and learning

In this study, teachers' awareness of the relationship between learners' age and grammar learning is analysed, as well as their beliefs about age as an influential factor when teaching grammar. The consistency between these beliefs and the approach to grammar teaching is also studied.

This study supports the Piagetian view that children follow different stages in their cognitive development (Cameron, 2001), which may explain why they are capable or incapable of acquiring abstract concepts, such as grammar rules, according to their age. During the first stage, the sensorimotor stage (from birth- 2 years old), intelligence is demonstrated through motor activity, but with limited symbolic ability. In the preoperational stage (2-7 years old), children are more mature in their language use, they understand and use symbols and have a notion of the past and the future (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). In the concrete operational stage (7-11 years old), there is logical thinking and manipulation of symbols, but only related to concrete objects. Children are not capable of abstract thinking and use of logic rules until they reach the age of 11 and enter the last stage, the formal operational stage (Cameron, 2001; Huitt & Hummel, 2003). These different stages may help us understand how and why FL learners may benefit from different approaches to grammar teaching according to their age.

De Keyser (2003) also explains that children use certain mechanisms to learn a second or foreign language that vary greatly from those used by adults. Whereas young learners rely on language-specific learning mechanisms, and their learning occurs implicitly, adults seem to take advantage of their L1 knowledge and use their analytical abilities to think about how the structures of a second language work. This would imply that children take advantage of their implicit learning skills, whereas adolescents and adult learners need formal rule teaching in order to exploit their explicit learning abilities (De Keyser, 2003). As a result, adolescents and adult learners are said to have the advantage of making more rapid progress than children at the first stages of L2 acquisition, because of their greater cognitive maturity which makes them take short cuts. This means that, in the short term, they are superior to younger learners in their capacities for explicit learning, and thus they have a rate advantage, i.e., they learn faster with the same amount of instruction time. On the other hand, young learners are said to have an advantage in terms of ultimate attainment, given that many linguistic elements are

difficult to explain explicitly. Hence, although they may be slow at first, they achieve higher proficiency levels in the long term. This is what explains why younger learners tend to overtake older starters even when both have received the same amount of input (Muñoz, 2008, 2010; DeKeyser; 2003).

However, Muñoz (2010) argues that all these claims made about naturalistic SLA have been wrongly generalised to formal learning contexts, in which both the amount and the quality of input and exposure to the target language vary considerably. Thus, although young learners still benefit from learning implicitly through input consisting of songs, rhymes, stories and set phrases in a classroom-based situation, this type of learning works slowly and takes many years of massive exposure to input, which cannot always be offered to children in formal FL learning contexts (DeKeyser, 2000; Muñoz, 2010). On the other hand, the explicit instruction that adolescents and adult learners receive in these formal settings, which is suitable to their level of cognitive maturity, explains the advantage that they have over children after the same amount of instructional time (Muñoz, 2010).

In sum, these age differences have important implications which should be considered. The most salient implication is being aware of these age-related effects and the importance of adapting the approach to teaching grammar depending on the learner's cognitive abilities.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has described the theoretical underpinnings of the study. One of the main topics has been the concept of teacher cognition, with special attention to two of its components: beliefs and knowledge. This chapter has also included an explanation of the approaches to the study of beliefs in which this study is anchored, and a description of the main approaches to teaching grammar. The distinction between explicit and implicit teaching and learning was also explained. Finally, the relationship between students' age and the approach to grammar teaching has also been established.

All this served as a basis for the analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires, observations and interviews. This study was carried out in light of this theoretical framework, with the main purpose of examining the perceptions of teachers

and learners about explicit and implicit grammar teaching and learning. The following chapter presents the methodology of the study, with a description of the procedures for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous chapter presented the theoretical framework in which this study is anchored. This chapter describes and explains the reasons for the design chosen for data collection and analysis, which will be defined in the first part. Secondly, I will describe the context where the study took place, together with the participants and the instruments designed and used to collect the data. Finally, I will refer to the procedure for data collection and how the analysis was carried out.

3.1 Research Design

The present work is a case study of six EFL classes in different educational settings in Bahía Blanca, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Apart from limited time, there are other reasons which justified the choice of a case study for this research. First of all, because concentrating on a small number of participants and institutions allows for a more detailed and deep analysis. Moreover, given that the researcher is in contact with the participants and obtains primary data, new hypotheses, questions or experiences may arise which may be the object of new studies (Duff, 2008).

In case studies, the unit of analysis may be one or several individual subjects (e.g., a student or a teacher), a group (e.g., a class), a whole city, a country, etc. As Duff (2012) puts it, “the “case” (person) is not normally the phenomenon itself being studied (...); it is a case of *something* – of a phenomenon of interest” (p. 96, italics in the original). Besides, one advantage of involving several participants is that the researcher has more options for sampling, for reporting on the findings, and for discovering similarities and differences across cases (Duff, 2012, p. 105), the latter being one of the main interests of this study.

Another salient aspect of the case study is that “its goal is not to universalize but to particularize and then yield insights of potentially wider relevance and theoretical significance” (Duff, 2012, p. 96). This means that the results of the present work will be neither representative of the whole population of teachers and students of the city nor generalisable. However, it is innovative in the way the beliefs of both teachers and

learners are inquired, and in the fact that three different educational contexts were considered.

Data were obtained from multiple sources, another aspect which characterises case studies. The main reason for this is to better illustrate the complexity of the natural context under investigation. What is more, contrary to what is often assumed, case studies may gather data from qualitative as well as quantitative methods. Although it is true that qualitative data is particularly suitable for a rich description and interpretation of the phenomenon studied, specialists like Robert Yin and Patricia Duff emphasise the importance of devoting attention to and developing more and better mixed-methods case studies in applied linguistics (Richards, 2011).

In order to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this study, both quantitative and qualitative instruments were necessary, so a convergent triangulation mixed methods research design was the most appropriate (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Both the qualitative and quantitative data are collected during the same timeframe, but analysed separately and then merged and compared for the interpretation and discussion of the results. The quantitative data obtained through the questionnaires for learners will be used to analyse their beliefs about the learning of English grammar; and the questionnaire for teachers will be used to study their perceptions as regards different aspects of grammar teaching and learning. The questionnaire data will also be used to find similarities and differences between teachers' and students' perceptions; and also to find out whether teachers are aware of their students' beliefs. The qualitative data obtained through the interviews and observations will explore the relationship between teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar and the way they teach grammar. These data will also contribute to determine the extent to which teachers consider students' own perceptions.

A mixed methods design was considered the most suitable for two main reasons. Firstly, because converging and comparing the two different types of data will ensure a complete understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014); and what is not revealed by the numbers may be explained by words (Dörnyei, 2007). Secondly, because it also gives the possibility "to address more complicated research questions and collect a richer and stronger array of evidence than can be accomplished by any single method alone" (Yin, 2009, p. 63).

3.2 Context of the Study

This study was conducted in state schools and private language schools in Bahía Blanca. Private institutions were included in this study for two reasons. First, they were necessary to analyse classes in which students are 8 years old or younger, since in state schools in the province of Buenos Aires, English is compulsory as from 4th grade, but not before that. Secondly, the teaching and learning contexts in state and private schools are different in several respects: intensity of instruction, availability of educational technology, and appealing material are among some of the most relevant differences. Thus, finding out whether or not students of the same age think differently about the approach to grammar learning and whether these perceptions differ according to the educational setting could provide a valuable insight and lead to a rich discussion.

3.3 Participants

A total of six teachers and 78 students participated in this study. Six classes were observed and they were subdivided into three groups according to the students' age, since the main objective of this study is to observe the teacher's approach to grammar depending on their learners' age and the institutional context (public or private). The groups analysed were the following:

- Two classes of students aged 8-12 (referred to as 'Young Learners' throughout this study):

One of the classes was a group of 15 kids aged 8-10 at a private language school located in the centre of Bahía Blanca. A typical class has between eight and 16 students, which gives them the advantage of more personalised lessons than at state schools, where classes are generally larger. What is more, students at this level in this school have classes twice a week, each class lasting 90 minutes, which means that they also have more class hours than at state schools. They were in their 3rd year and their level was pre-A1. This level, as well as the level of English of the rest of the classes observed, corresponds to the description of the Common European Framework Reference Levels (Council of Europe, 2001). Students in this group used the coursebook "Yazoo 3" (Covill, Perrett, & Lochowski, 2011), together with its workbook, which they generally completed at home. They also worked with two readers throughout the year. Students at this language school

are also provided with extra material to practise and study at home, mainly consisting of booklets or sets of photocopies prepared by the teachers. Besides, all the classrooms are equipped with a smart TV, a CD player and Internet connection.

The other class was a group of 21 5th grade students aged between 10 and 11 years old attending a state primary school. This school, also located in the city centre, is characterised by a heterogenous population. In general, the socioeconomic situation of the students tends to be more favourable compared to that of students attending state primary schools located in deprived areas. All the students had a coursebook for the English lesson, called “Hop into English 2” (Ormerod, Shaw, & Tiberio, 2017). Like in all state schools in the province, students start learning English in 4th grade and have two 60-minute-lessons per week. Due to the small amount of time devoted to English and the fact that students often miss lessons for various reasons (because of personal problems, bus strikes, teachers’ strikes, school events, etc.), the level of the students was pre-A1, and relatively lower compared to that of students in the private language school. As stated earlier, a salient characteristic of the school and of this group as well is the heterogeneity of the school population, which was evident in this case in the level of English of the students. About a third of the students in this class also learned English in private institutions, and this was noticeable mainly in students’ participation and speed to complete the activities assigned by the teacher. In total, there were 26 students in the group, but not all parents granted their children permission to complete the survey, so only 21 students completed it.

- Two classes of students who are between 15 and 17 years old (referred to as ‘Adolescents’ throughout this study):

One of the classes was made up of 15 students aged 16-17 attending a 6th year class at a state secondary school. It is one of three secondary schools dependent on UNS (Universidad Nacional del Sur), an autonomous state national university. In these schools, students take a test of English and are streamed according to three different levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced. The group I observed was the elementary one, and most students had an A2 level.

This school shares the characteristics of university schools explained by Sánchez (2014):

Dependent on an autonomous state national university, university schools differ from other state schools in a number of respects such as the fact that their teachers are all qualified and subject-specialised, (...), the curricular content is more advanced than that suggested by the national curricular guidelines, and the students must pass highly competitive entrance examinations (p. 222).

The group observed belongs to the upper secondary school (*Ciclo de Especialización*), and this school is specialised in Agriculture (*Orientación en Agronomía*). After graduation, most of these students plan to study subjects such as agronomy, veterinary, or geology. Thus, the teacher designed a booklet which looks like an ESP book and is mostly focused on reading comprehension. It starts with a thorough explanation (in Spanish) of how to read a text in English. For example, it encourages students to look for transparent words, analyse prefixes and suffixes, identify the different parts of speech, look up words in a dictionary and find the correct meaning, etc.

The booklet contains texts about different topics they are familiar with, especially from zoology and botany. They also have a list of the most frequent tenses they will encounter in those texts, i.e., Present Simple and Continuous, Past Simple and Continuous, Present Perfect, Future forms, together with an example of the structure in the affirmative, negative and interrogative forms. It also describes the different uses of each tense (e.g.: Present Simple for routine, general truths, timetabled events, etc.) The booklet also contains exercises for students to develop reading microskills such as finding specific words, deciding whether the statements they read are true or false, answering questions (they are allowed to answer in Spanish), translating a paragraph, discussing questions orally (also in Spanish), etc.

The second class belonging to this age group was a group of 12 B1/B1+ students aged 15-17 attending another private institute in the centre of Bahía Blanca. This is one of the most renowned and prestigious language schools in the city for various reasons. First of all, it is the oldest language school in Bahía Blanca. The teachers who work there also contribute to its prestige, since most of them also teach in one of the two colleges with an EFL Teacher education programme (*Profesorados de Inglés*) of the city. Finally, this is the only authorised centre in the city to administer the Cambridge English Language Assessment tests, which adds to the good reputation this institute enjoys. These students, as well as the students from most private institutions, attend private schools as

well. They have a high exposure to the language since, apart from what they learn at school, they attend two 2-hour lessons a week. Students in this group used the coursebook “Insight Upper Intermediate” (Wildman & Beddall, 2014), together with its workbook, which they generally completed at home. In the study, 12 out of the 13 students participated.

These two groups are similar in size and age, but are different in other respects. To begin with, learners in the private language school have more contact hours (3 hours a week) as opposed to secondary schools (two 60-minute classes weekly). In the language school class, the teacher uses English most of the time and encourages students to do the same, resorting to Spanish only exceptionally, whereas in the state school the situation is completely the opposite. Finally, while in the state school the focus is mainly on the reading skill, in the private school there is a balanced practice of the four skills.

- Two classes of adult learners:

One class from a state secondary school for adults in the centre of the city was observed. These learners, ranging in age from 19 to 67, attended a 3rd year class, their last school year. Although the total number of students was 15, only 11 participated in the study and completed the questionnaire since, for different reasons, most of them had difficulty to attend the lessons: some of them have children, some others have jobs and their working hours coincide with the English timetable, in some cases there were bus strikes and they could not go to school, etc. As in the case of the state primary school, a salient feature of this class was the heterogeneity of the group as regards the level of proficiency, which varied from pre-A1 to A2. These students did not use a specific book, and the material they used to study was generally provided by the teacher and consisted mainly of photocopies from different sources.

One class of adult students from a private language school was also observed. This is the same private language school that the second group of adolescents attended. In this case, the group consisted of seven adult learners, most of them professionals or university students. Since most of them have jobs or study full-time and have other responsibilities, a salient feature of this class was the high level of absenteeism. As a result, only four students participated in the study, ranging in age from 22 to 31. Students in this group had an A1/A2 level and used the coursebook “Empower Elementary” (Doff, Thaine, Puchta, Stranks, & Lewis-Jones, 2015), together with its workbook.

These two groups share some characteristics; mainly, the fact that most of the students frequently missed classes, which resulted in constant revision of the topics studied. Students in these groups also showed a greater tendency to use the mother tongue than students in the other groups. As far as the differences are concerned, the same differences that were observed in the other state and private schools were also observed here. Students in the adults school do not have a coursebook, but use a selection of materials compiled by the teacher from different sources. Besides, their school facilities were basic in comparison to the private language school, where all the classrooms had a TV and CD/ DVD player, speakers and Internet connection.

All the classes were taught by a different teacher, all of whom have official EFL teaching qualifications and vast teaching experience, ranging from 11 to 29 years.

3.4 Procedures and instruments

As Borg (2009) explains, teacher cognition is not directly observable; it must be made explicit through certain methodological tools. Thus, the instruments which I designed and applied to collect the data aim at accessing not only teachers' but also learners' perceptions. They include a classroom observation sheet, questionnaires for the teacher and the students, and semi-structured interviews. All the instruments employed are presented in the Appendix.

3.4.1. Observations

Classroom observations were carried out in order to obtain direct information from teachers, especially about the teachers' approach to grammar, their class procedures and their interactions with students. Observations are useful in providing large amounts of information about the participants' behavior and actions within a particular context (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007), and also additional, unexpected information about the topic under study (Yin, 2017). This study took advantage of all these characteristics of classroom observation in order to determine whether teachers' beliefs were consistent with their actual practices. As Kern (1995) puts it, "classroom observation is particularly important in examining how teachers' beliefs are (or are not) manifested in

their instructional and assessment practices, and in attempting to identify what effects these manifestations may have on learners' performance and attitudes" (p. 82).

The type of observation that I carried out was nonparticipant observation, which is the most frequent in language teacher cognition research. The researcher sits at the back of the classroom, takes notes and does not interact with the teacher or the students (Borg, 2006). This type of observation was also structured, meaning that it focused on a particular issue, which in this case was the teacher's approach to grammar, with concrete observation categories defined in advance. In order to concentrate on this aspect in particular, a grid was completed during the observations, making this method more reliable and the analysis process easier (Dörnyei, 2007; Borg, 2006).

However, the procedure which involves the use of this instrument is not without its disadvantages. The most salient drawback is perhaps the one known as the "observer's paradox": the mere presence of the observer may alter the typical behaviour of participants in class, both teacher and students, and thus give an inaccurate picture of the classroom reality. The "Hawthorne effect" may also take place, when learners perform better simply because they are aware that they are the focus of investigation and tend to be cooperative with the teacher whose actions they believe to be under scrutiny (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Besides, students may also wish to perform better because they feel they are being evaluated and want to avoid being negatively judged.

Another weakness has to do with the fact that observations do not provide explanations or explicit information about why the participants behave the way they do in class. Therefore, it is usually necessary to combine observations with other data-collection methods (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

3.4.1.1 Classroom observation grid

As stated above, the observations focused mainly on the teachers' approach to grammar. Thus, an observation grid was specially designed for this study and used throughout the whole observation period so as to concentrate on this issue in particular, and in order to facilitate the subsequent analysis process (Dörnyei, 2007; Borg, 2006).

The first part of the observation grid is to be completed with background information: number of students in each lesson, age range, intended level of English,

duration of the lesson, and there is a space to add any other relevant information. Below that, there is a section about the general topic/subject of the lesson, and the grammar and vocabulary used. There are also sections for the observer to write down the amount of time devoted to grammar teaching, and to provide details about the techniques used by the teacher during the lesson (see Appendix).

After that, there is a section devoted to the teacher's observed approach to grammar teaching, which is divided into three main types: focus-on-forms, focus-on-meaning and focus-on-form, each of them with the most salient characteristics and the teaching methodologies often associated with each approach. Whenever a certain classroom procedure which could be associated with one of these three types was identified, it was entered in the corresponding section of the grid. This classification was taken from Long (2000), and was explained in the previous chapter. There were also seven questions under the heading *Strategies & Lesson Structure*, in order to keep a record of the way teachers sequenced grammar teaching, whether it occurred at a particular stage of the lesson, whether the teachers encouraged students' own discovery of grammar rules, etc. (see Appendix). All these questions were taken from Borg's (1999) questions for research on grammar teaching. The observation grid consists of two parts: one in which the information was recorded during the observation, and another one which was completed post-hoc.

Finally, there was a comments/observations section, in which I noted down information about the atmosphere in the class, classroom procedures other than those used to teach grammar, teacher-student or student-student interactions that I considered relevant for further analysis, the use of materials or the way certain activities were carried out in the class, etc. All these notes were a useful source of complementary data for triangulation with other data collected in this research.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

Four questionnaires were designed for this study: one for teachers and three different questionnaires for students, varying according to their age groups. The information gathered from these instruments served different purposes. Firstly, it was the main instrument that provided information about teachers' and learners' perceptions about grammar learning (in the case of both the teachers' and learners' questionnaire) and

teaching (in the case of the teachers' questionnaire only). Secondly, it allowed for comparison between the beliefs of both groups and made it possible to analyse the extent to which they coincided. Thirdly, in the case of teachers, the data obtained in the questionnaire was useful to confirm whether teachers' perceptions were consistent with their actual practices. Since interviews and observations may be biased due to the researcher's interpretation, triangulation by means of including the questionnaires guarantees more validity and reliability (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Questionnaires are frequently chosen as a method of data collection for various reasons. First of all, they are highly efficient in terms of time and financial resources. It is possible to gather important amounts of information in less than an hour and limited financial resources are necessary to produce and implement them. Besides, it is a very practical instrument to administer (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Dörnyei, 2003, 2007). Apart from that, once the data are collected, processing and analysing them is also relatively fast and simple provided the questionnaire is well designed and suitable computer software is used. Another important characteristic which makes it a reliable instrument is its versatility, which means it can be adapted to different needs (Dörnyei, 2003, 2007) and different ages, as is the case here, albeit taking care to design it in different ways according to the age group addressed.

On the other hand, questionnaires have a number of limitations. The most serious problem concerns the construction of questionnaires, as an ill-constructed questionnaire may lead to inaccurate results. It is also important to acknowledge that the answers to the questionnaires, both the ones answered by teachers and by students in the case of this study, may not fully reflect their perceptions due to the 'social acceptability' effect, by which respondents give answers that are not true (also called 'social desirability' or 'prestige bias' (Dörnyei, 2003)). Newby (2014) also calls it 'acceptability effect', and it refers to "the tendency for people to give responses that they feel are socially acceptable rather than ones they truly feel" (p. 312).

All the statements in the questionnaires belong to the group of 'closed-item' or 'structured' questions, in which, rather than allowing space for participants to answer freely and in their own words, they have a set of options to choose from (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Newby, 2014). This has important advantages. To begin with, the uniformity of measurement of closed-item statements makes them more reliable (Mackey & Gass,

2005). Besides, the respondent can answer the questions quickly, while at the same time it gives the researcher the possibility to handle large amounts of data easily. Although questionnaires are employed with primary school children as shown in the literature reviewed, they are not as frequently used as with older participants, and do not have a big number of questions or options to choose from. For this study, the Likert-type questions for these young learners are also very few in comparison to the other questionnaires.

For all the questionnaires, the BALLI was used as a model to structure the layout of the survey, the instructions for the respondents, the questions and the options. Some of the questions were adapted from the BALLI (especially the questions starting “The best way to learn a foreign language is by...”). The rest of the questions were originally designed for this study, based on the studies reported in the literature review, especially after reading the perceptions that those teachers and students held, in order to find out whether similar or different perceptions are held by the participants of this study.

The type of questionnaire designed in all cases is a Likert-type questionnaire. Rensis Likert, an American psychologist, developed this questionnaire in the early 1930s and, almost a century later, it is still widely used. In his original version, there were five scales for the answers to each question; namely, ‘strongly disagree’, ‘disagree’, ‘neither disagree nor agree’, ‘agree’, and ‘strongly agree’ (Dörnyei, 2007; Newby, 2014). The main advantage of these scales is that they solve the problem of the subjectivity and freedom of interpretation that the wording of the questions may cause. With multi-item scales, “no individual item carries an excessive load and an inconsistent response to one item would cause limited damage” (Skehan, 1989 as cited in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 104). For instance, if there is a statement with which participants either do not agree or disagree completely because the wording of the sentence prevents them from choosing an answer, multi-item scales give them the possibility to state that they partly agree or disagree. What is more, even when they are not sure enough to make a decision, respondents may choose the option ‘neither disagree nor agree’.

Considering the ages of the participants, all the questionnaires in this study vary in the number and complexity of the statements, and in the number of options given, so as to help respondents understand and answer the questions easily. The questionnaires for teachers and for adult students included the same five options as in Likert’s original version. The questionnaire for teachers consists of 33 questions, relatively more complex

than those for adolescents and adult students, relying on teacher's experience and knowledge about the terminology used and the approaches or techniques referred to in certain statements. For instance, one of the statements says: "I prefer to teach purely communicative lessons, where the focus is not the grammar, but the content presented, and to teach and work on the meaning of the content presented". This statement assumes teachers' previous knowledge of communicative or task-based approaches and a lesson with a focus on content or meaning versus a grammar-based lesson.

The questionnaires for adult students also had the same five options, and the number of statements was also similar (they were given 35 statements). But in this case, the statements are simpler and they do not assume learners' knowledge about any specific teaching approach or technique. For instance, two of the statements are: "The main focus of the lesson should be grammar" and "Grammar should be presented in context (for example, through a text)".

In the case of the questionnaire for adolescents, five options were given as well, although the names of the options were different from the original ones and had more informal expressions to make it more suitable to the participants' ages. Instead of 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neither disagree nor agree', etc., they were asked how far they agreed to each statement and were given the options such as 'a lot', 'not much' or 'not at all' (see Appendix). The questionnaire is shorter in this case, since students give their perceptions about 22 statements. Again, the complexity of the statements is also lower. What is more, before administering the surveys, students were asked whether they were acquainted with the terminology used in some questions (mainly the concepts of 'grammar' and 'vocabulary'), and in case students were doubtful, a brief explanation was given in order to ensure that respondents could understand the statements clearly and answer them truthfully. For example, one of the statements included is: "A good way of learning grammatical aspects is changing affirmative sentences into the negative and interrogative forms".

Finally, the questionnaire for young learners is considerably shorter, including only 12 simple statements, such as "I can learn English on my own (without my teacher's help)"; "I learn if I listen and practise songs, rhymes or poems". The options were also reduced to three: 'yes', 'no', 'I'm not sure', taking into account Dörnyei's (2003) suggestions. There is an emoji next to each option in order to help children choose how

they felt in each case, which is also suggested by Dörnyei (2003) (see Appendix). The reason why the questionnaires had fewer options and were accompanied by emojis is that, given the students' ages and their shorter attention span, it was necessary to simplify the instrument and make sure they understood it and completed it as precisely as possible, in order to obtain accurate results.

As the description of each questionnaire shows, there was a large number of questions to process and analyse, some of them asking participants to reflect on aspects which belong to the same area of investigation. For this reason, those statements which were related were subsumed under the same category and analysed together. This process is explained in detail in section 3.6.

3.4.3 Teacher's Semi-Structured Interview

The interviews for this study served two main purposes, the main one being to find out about teachers' perceptions as regards the teaching and learning of English grammar. Secondly, teachers were asked whether they were aware of their students' beliefs about the implicit or explicit learning of grammar and if they took those beliefs into account. As was explained earlier, triangulation was necessary not only to guarantee reliability, but also to gather data which was not possible to obtain with the other instruments. Besides, many questions that were asked in the interviews mirror some statements in the teacher's questionnaire. These questions were purposefully asked in order to prove teachers' consistency in their answers.

Semi-structured interviews are the most typical type of interview chosen not only in educational research in general, but also in applied linguistics research and in particular in the study of language teaching cognition, given the number of advantages they offer. The most important one is the flexibility of this kind of interview, which resembles a conversation rather than a formal exchange of questions and answers. The set of pre-prepared questions guides the interviewer, while at the same time it allows him/her to add interesting questions that arise as a result of the interviewee's comments (Borg, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007). This open-ended format also gives the interviewee the opportunity to discuss certain topics in more detail, giving him/her a more active role. Furthermore, interviews allow the researcher to "ask the same questions of all of the participants, although not necessarily in the same order or wording, and would supplement the main

questions with various probes” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). Thus, the researcher feels free to ask certain questions when he/she feels it is most appropriate to do so, and will probably obtain more information than if he/she follows a structured order.

Among the disadvantages of interviews, we find that they are time consuming, not only to set up and to conduct (Dörnyei, 2007), but also to transcribe. Besides, since it does not allow for anonymity, the social desirability effect that was explained earlier in the case of questionnaires may also apply here. Shy respondents may not provide sufficient or accurate information, which may also be a limitation when analysing the data and drawing conclusions (Dörnyei, 2007). Finally, it is an instrument which is subject to the researcher’s interpretation (Hall & Rist as cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Regarding its structure, the interview for this study is divided into five main parts, concerned with the teachers’ own experiences as students (section 1); their teacher training (section 2); information about the institution where they work and where the observations took place (section 3), their reflections and perceptions about the teaching of English grammar (section 4); and specific questions about the classes observed (section 5). The questions in this last section were all different, given that they depended on features observed throughout the observation period, but were mainly related to the selection, presentation and practice of grammar, the use of materials and their perceptions as regards the explicit and implicit teaching of grammar. Some of the questions were adapted or taken from Borg’s (1998) study of teachers’ pedagogical systems and grammar teaching. Nishimuro & Borg’s (2013) pre- and post-observation questions in their study of teacher cognition and grammar teaching in a Japanese high school were also used; the last group of questions was really valuable to elaborate the fifth section, devoted to questions about the lessons observed.

Finally, teachers were asked the so-called “final closing question” (Dörnyei, 2007), a space where they were asked whether there was anything else they would like to add that was not asked during the interview. Teachers were free to elaborate on any issue they considered relevant or expanded and explained the reasons for some choices in the Likert-type questionnaire.

3.5 Data collection procedure

Before being implemented, all these instruments were piloted with teachers and students who did not take part in this study. After the pilot test and a feedback session with these teachers and students, some questions both in the questionnaires and in the interview for teachers were modified, some others were omitted and new questions were added.

The data collection began with the observations, which took place from June to October, 2018. The observations extended over a period of 2 or 3 weeks, depending on how frequently each group had English classes, but in all cases, the groups were observed for 6 hours.

During the observation period, the questionnaires were administered. Following Mackey & Gass (2005), the questionnaires were in Spanish, in order to ensure that the questions were completely understood, especially by students, and that the answers truly reflected the participants' perceptions. The students' questionnaires were administered during class time, so as to enable students to ask questions and help them understand unclear questions. Moreover, this procedure guaranteed that all participants completed it, with the exception of minors whose parents had not granted them written permission. In order to ensure honest answers and given that identity of the students was not necessary for the purposes of the study, the questionnaires for learners were anonymous. In the case of the teacher's questionnaire, all the teachers were given the possibility to complete it outside working hours and ask questions or make comments during the interview session.

Once the observations in each class were finished, a meeting was arranged with the teachers for the interview. They took place after the observations in order to be able to ask questions about specific classroom procedures, activities or interactions with the students. They were conducted in Spanish and lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, depending mainly on each teacher's free time, predisposition and need to explain their answers with more or less detail. They were recorded, with the interviewee's permission, and then transcribed for a more thorough analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Teachers' and learners' beliefs about English grammar teaching and learning were accessed by means of different Likert-type questionnaires. The questionnaire items were subsumed into different groups according to the topics they were associated with. This process involved reading all the statements in each questionnaire thoroughly, making sure that all the statements were consistent in referring to the same aspect of grammar teaching or learning. For instance, in the case of the teacher questionnaire, statements referring to implicit learning of grammar were grouped together. Once the statements were classified into the same group, the average answer for each statement was calculated, so as to determine the degree of agreement of the six teachers with respect to each statement individually. Finally, a conclusion of what the teachers chose for each category was drawn.

There is only one case in which the questionnaire answers to one statement had to be inverted. It was in the case of statement 22 from the teacher questionnaire: "Not all grammar rules can be acquired implicitly." The rest of the statements belonging to this group referring to implicit grammar learning were stated affirmatively (statements 4, 7, 15 and 17; see Appendix). Thus, if teachers chose options 1 or 2 for any of these four statements, their choices reflected disagreement with implicit grammar learning. Conversely, if they chose answers 4 or 5, they showed agreement with an implicit approach. But in the case of statement 22, since it is negatively stated, the numbers were inverted. So, for example, if a teacher had chosen 1 ('completely disagree') for statement 22, this number was turned into 5, still reflecting preference for implicit grammar learning.

After the administration of the questionnaires and during this classification, a post-hoc analysis was carried out, in which some statements from the four questionnaires were left out in order to avoid difficulties in statistical processing. For instance, in the teachers' questionnaire, one statement asked teachers to give their opinion as regards the claim that an adult student cannot learn English grammar implicitly (see Appendix). Whether teachers agree or disagree with this statement does not necessarily imply that they favour an explicit or implicit approach. Nor does it allow us to determine to what extent teachers consider students' age in relation to the teaching of grammar. For this reason, statements of this kind were discarded.

Teachers' beliefs were compared to students' beliefs in order to find out whether each of the teachers who participated in this study held similar views with their group of learners. For this, a mean difference test, more specifically, a two-sample, independent group t-test was applied, using the software R. This indicated if the difference between teachers' and students' perceptions was statistically significant.

Teachers' cognitions were also compared with their own classroom practices. As regards teachers' classroom practices, all the data collected through the observation grid and the notes taken during the lessons were classified into three different categories: highly explicit, moderately explicit and implicit teaching of grammar. In order to define which practices belonged to which category, the key features of explicit and implicit grammar teaching described in the theoretical framework was revised, again taking into account the works by Long (2000), Housen & Pierrard (2006), de Graaff & Housen (2009), and Ellis, Loewen & Erlam (2009). The category "implicit" was not subdivided into "highly implicit" and "moderately implicit", given that teaching is mostly intentional. Even in content-based lessons, where the emphasis is placed on building non-language content, there is at some point a focus on grammar (Leaver & Striker, 1989; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). Data analysis software R was also used to apply a new t-test to compare the teaching practices (highly explicit, moderately explicit, and moderately implicit) with the preference for implicit or explicit grammar that each teacher expressed in the questionnaire, and determine whether these teachers' pedagogical decisions were congruent with their perceptions.

Finally, qualitative content analysis for the semi-structured interviews with teachers was applied. Content analysis involves examining written texts (the transcriptions of the interviews, in this case), highlighting extracts from these data which are assumed to be useful, searching for ideas and comments that lead the researcher from the particular text to themes of research interest (Dörnyei, 2003). Thus, after reading the transcripts several times as part of the coding process, five main themes were identified:

- Opinions favouring an explicit teaching of grammar;
- Opinions favouring an implicit teaching of grammar;
- Opinions favouring an explicit learning of grammar;
- Opinions favouring an implicit learning of grammar;

- The importance attributed to the students' age in relation to grammar teaching;

After identifying these themes and associating instances of words, phrases or sentences from all the interviews to these specific categories, interpretations and comparisons were made between teachers' opinions about these themes, the beliefs they expressed in the questionnaire and their actual classroom practices.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

As already explained in section 3.4.2, the data collected through the questionnaire were subsumed into categories for analysis and interpretation. The two categories below were used to analyse the data from the questionnaire, the interviews and the classroom observations:

- Teachers' and students' views of the teaching and learning of English grammar
- The importance attributed to students' age when teaching grammar

Other areas included in the questionnaire and the interview were not analysed here mainly due to insufficient responses or lack of significance.

Given that these are case studies, with a limited number of participants, with very specific groups, especially as regards the age and context of study of the participants, the results are neither representative of the whole population of teachers and students of the city nor generalisable. In fact, this study is innovative in that it inquires into the grammar teaching and learning cognitions of six EFL teachers and their learners in three different educational contexts, based on multiple data sources collected through different instruments.

4.2 Approaches to the teaching and learning of English grammar

4.2.1 Teachers' views

Teachers' attitudes towards the explicit and implicit learning of English grammar were investigated through the answers to six questionnaire items. As mentioned earlier, those statements concerning the same topic were subsumed together under the same category. In this case, teachers' responses to three statements about implicit grammar learning are reported; namely, questions 4, 17 and 22 from the teachers' questionnaire (see Appendix). In these questions, teachers self-reported their views on the efficacy of learning grammar implicitly; for instance, through exposure to songs, series or movies. In statements 5, 6 and 7, teachers gave their perceptions about learning explicitly, for

example, by memorising dialogues, phrases or sentences containing the target structure; or through activities that focus the learners' attention on the features of the grammatical topic under study, such as multiple choice or sentence transformation exercises. Tables 1 and 2 are provided below, showing the average answer for each statement, the standard deviation and coefficient of variation (CV). The response options for the questionnaire items ranged from 1 to 5: option 1 for complete disagreement with the statement in question, 2 to express disagreement, 3 was the neutral option ('neither agree nor disagree'), 4 implied agreement with the statement and 5 indicated complete agreement. Only one questionnaire item (statement 22) is stated negatively (see Table 1). Thus, if a teacher chose 1 ('completely disagree') in this item, this number was turned into 5, so that it still reflected preference for implicit grammar learning.

An individual analysis of each statement provides a more detailed account of the teachers' perceptions. Responses to the statements about implicit learning were analysed first (see Table 1).

Statements	Average	Standard deviation	CV
17. El aprendizaje de la gramática es mejor cuando se da de forma implícita; es decir, sin tener conciencia de que se está aprendiendo determinado tema o aspecto gramatical.	4	0.89	0.22
4. El alumno puede aprender y fijar aspectos o temas gramaticales sin la explicación del docente, a partir de la lectura de un texto o la escucha de un diálogo, una canción, o mirando una serie o película.	3.5	0.84	0.24
22. No todas las reglas gramaticales pueden incorporarse de manera implícita.	1.8	0.75	0.41

Table 1. Average answers given by teachers (N=6) to statements favouring implicit learning of grammar.

A strong tendency to favour implicit grammar learning is evident in the answers to statement 17, with an average response of 4, showing agreement among these teachers that grammar is learned more effectively without awareness of what is being learned. What is more, most of the teachers state that they believe this implicit approach can apply to the learning of all grammar rules, as the average answer for statement 22 indicates.

However, while these teachers report that they feel students learn more effectively without awareness, they seem uncertain whether learners can always do so, or by any means, as the answers to statement 4 indicate. This does not imply a contradiction, but a concern, as teachers seem to doubt whether there are limitations as regards how certain

grammar topics can be acquired, or whether at some point their explanations might be necessary.

In all cases, the coefficient of variation (see Table 1) is very low, which provides evidence of the homogeneity of the answers given by these teachers. This shows that, in general terms, the respondents share their perceptions, as similar scores were chosen.

Table 2 below shows the frequencies of answers related to explicit grammar learning.

Statements	Average	Standard deviation	CV
7. Una forma efectiva de aprender y recordar un aspecto gramatical es memorizando diálogos, frases u oraciones que contengan la estructura a aprender.	3.7	0.82	0.22
5. Una buena forma de ejercitar un aspecto gramatical es a través de ejercicios para completar con la opción correcta o ejercicios de tipo <i>multiple choice</i> (respuesta múltiple).	3.3	0.82	0.24
6. Una buena forma de aprender y fijar aspectos gramaticales es a través de ejercicios de transformación de oraciones de afirmativo a negativo o interrogativo.	3.2	0.75	0.24

Table 2. Average answers given by teachers (N=6) to statements favouring explicit learning of grammar.

If teachers are consistent with the previous answers, these results should not indicate complete agreement with an explicit approach. Indeed, the results related to explicit grammar learning do not contradict those reported above. What is more evident in this case is these teachers' impartiality, as the neutral option was preferred in these statements. Specifically, they do not feel so certain whether grammar-based exercises are effective to learn grammar, as demonstrated by the responses to statements 5 and 6. Answers to statement 7 fall in a scale from neutrality to agreement, thus showing a tendency to agree with the idea of learning grammar by the conscious effort of memorising dialogues, phrases or sentences containing the target structure. And again, there is homogeneity in the answers provided, as can be seen in the low value of the CV obtained for the responses to each statement.

In conclusion, a slight agreement with moderately implicit grammar learning is observed, although it is also felt that not all kinds of activities will help students remember and internalise grammar rules without awareness. So, it can be inferred that these teachers may engage in teaching practices which also favour implicit learning of the target grammar. This is analysed and discussed later. Besides, a high frequency of neutral

answers ('neither agree nor disagree') has also been registered, especially in the items about explicit grammar learning. This may indicate teachers' awareness of the effectiveness of both approaches depending on the characteristics and expectations of each class.

4.2.2 Young learners' views

Learners' beliefs about the explicit and implicit learning of English grammar were also analysed. To begin with, both groups of young learners (aged 8-12) were considered. Again, all the statements related to implicit grammar learning were subsumed under the same category, and the same procedure was applied with the questions about explicit grammar learning. In these statements, students self-reported their beliefs about learning by engaging in different productive and receptive activities, learning on their own, without their teacher's help, or on the contrary, with the teacher's explanations (questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12; see Tables 3 and 4).

As stated in the previous chapter, the response options for this age group were reduced to three: 1 indicates disagreement with the approach to grammar learning, 2 is a neutral answer and 3 shows agreement. Tables 3 and 4 show the average of responses to the statements about the implicit and explicit learning of grammar.

Statements	Average	Standard deviation	CV
6. Aprendo si escucho y practico canciones, rimas o poemas.	1.9	0.87	0.46
9. Aprendo si leo oraciones, historias, o cuentos.	1.6	0.65	0.41
10. Aprendo si veo videos o láminas.	1.6	0.76	0.46
12. Aprendo con juegos.	1.6	0.68	0.42

Table 3. Average answers given by young learners (N=36) to statements favouring implicit learning of grammar.

Replies to the statements regarding implicit grammar learning show students' disagreement with such an approach. In fact, in most cases the average responses are in a scale from disagreement towards neutrality, also indicating students' uncertainty. This is especially true of statement 6, with an average answer of 1.9. Secondly, the average response to statements 9, 10 and 12 is 1.6, suggesting that these learners tend to be unsure about or do not believe in the possibility of learning grammar incidentally, by playing

games, watching videos, reading stories or the like. This might lead us to conclude that these learners feel more comfortable with the teacher's explicit explanations. If this is the case, this should be reflected in their responses to the statements regarding explicit grammar learning presented below (see Table 4).

Statements	Average	Standard deviation	CV
3. Puedo aprender inglés solo (sin la ayuda de mi profe).	2	0.72	0.36
5. Aprendo si anoto explicaciones en un cuaderno.	1.7	0.87	0.50
8. Aprendo si escribo muchas oraciones con el tema nuevo.	1.5	0.69	0.45
4. Aprendo si me explica la/el profe.	1.3	0.58	0.44
7. Entiendo la diferencia entre “It is” y “They are”.	1.2	0.45	0.38

Table 4. Average answers given by young learners (N=36) to statements favouring explicit learning of grammar.

In fact, the results obtained are similar to those reported for implicit grammar learning. In this case, the highest average response obtained is 2 in statement 3, the neutral option. The average responses to statements 5 and 8 are in a scale between disagreement and neutrality, demonstrating learners' uncertainty about the possibility of learning explicitly. And the lowest average responses (in statements 4 and 7) reflect these learners' disagreement with an explicit approach. However, these results allow for an interesting interpretation. It was suggested that, since learners tend to reject the idea of learning grammar implicitly through songs, games, stories, etc., this might indicate a preference for the teacher's explanations. However, the average response to statement 4 does not support that view. In fact, if responses to statement 4 are compared to those of statements 3 and 5, it appears that learners agree more with the possibility of learning on their own rather than with the teacher's explanations.

In conclusion, there is not a clear preference for explicit or implicit grammar learning among these learners. Although the majority (35%) selected the answers favouring implicit grammar, the difference with the neutral answers and the answers in favour of explicit grammar is very small (29% and 28% respectively). In all cases, the coefficient of variation is near 0.5 or lower, indicating homogeneity in the answers provided by the 36 students.

4.2.3 Comparison between teachers' and young learners' beliefs

As described in the previous chapter, a two-sample, independent group t-test was calculated to study the difference between the average response given by each teacher and the average response given by their students in relation to the questionnaire statements regarding implicit and explicit grammar learning. Before the t-test, a comparison of variance F-test was done, since the population variances are unknown. The F-tests were necessary because the choice of t-test depends on the results obtained in each F-test. An alpha significance level of 5% was used in all the tests in this study. The results of these tests can be seen in Table 5.

Group	F-Test		t-test	
	<i>p</i> -value	Equality of variances hypothesis	<i>p</i> -value	Equality of means hypothesis
Celina and her students (Young learners, private language school, hereafter “YL-PLS”).	0.147	not rejected	0.00013	rejected
Marisa and her students (Young learners, state school, hereafter “YL-SS”).	0.302	not rejected	0.0004128	rejected

Table 5. *p*-Values from F-tests and t-Tests and results to measure the strength of relationship between student and teacher answers to statements regarding explicit and implicit grammar learning.

The comparison between each group of students with their teachers revealed different results from those reported for the young learners. The first group studied is the group of children at the private language school and their teacher, Celina. As the results show, Celina's perceptions differ from those of her students, and this difference is statistically significant (see Table 5). So, whereas most of this teacher's answers were either neutral (50%) or in favour of implicit grammar learning (33.3%), her students' opinions were more divided (40% of the answers favoured implicit grammar learning, 27.4% of the answers were neutral and 32.6% of the answers favoured explicit grammar learning).

The reason for Celina's choice may be linked to her perception, stated in the interview, that the teaching of grammar depends on students' cognitive maturity. She states that, unlike young learners, older students benefit from explicit grammar instruction:

Y en el caso de los más grandes, vos ahí ya podés dar una explicación más estructurada.

Besides, in another extract of the interview, Celina also refers to young learners' considerable potential for implicit learning:

*Cuando sos chico (...) de repente si vos das toda una explicación gramatical, te van a mirar con cara de 'no entendí absolutamente nada'. Pero por ejemplo, ellos aprendieron hace poco 'Let's...', 'Let's go to the break' [sic], o... por ahí si vos explicás exactamente **todo** el uso de 'Let's', no te van a entender, y ellos saben perfectamente cómo aplicarlo.*

Using the same procedure described above, the perceptions of Marisa, the teacher at the state primary school, were compared with those of her students. As in Celina's case, Marisa's average response to the statements about explicit and implicit learning of English grammar is not congruent with her students' average response; and again, this difference is statistically significant (see Table 5). However, there are two main differences between these two groups.

Firstly, unlike Celina, the mismatch in this case has to do with the number of answers favouring an implicit approach to grammar learning, which are much more frequent in Marisa's questionnaire than in the learners' questionnaire (66.7% of Marisa's answers vs. 39% of her students' answers). In fact, the students' perceptions tend to be divided, as in the case of the learners at the private language school (27% of the answers favoured explicit grammar learning, 34% of the answers were neutral and 39% favoured implicit grammar learning).

Secondly, whereas Marisa never opted for a neutral answer, this was Celina's most frequent choice. And this is precisely what may explain the difference between Marisa and her students: she is categorical in her choices, but her students' views tend to be more divided, as there is an even distribution of neutral answers and responses in favour of an explicit or implicit approach.

These results provide more evidence of the discrepancy between teachers' and students' perceptions documented in the literature review in the first chapter. What is more, the percentages reveal a stronger coincidence between the perceptions of both teachers and the beliefs of both groups of students rather than between each teacher with their corresponding classes.

4.2.4 Adolescents' views

In this age group, a high degree of uncertainty is noticeable, as regards both implicit and explicit grammar learning. Again, the questionnaire items will be analysed in two groups according to their reference to implicit and explicit grammar learning. In the first set of questions, students gave their perceptions as regards the possibility of learning English grammar without awareness, through texts, songs, dialogues, and the like (see Table 6). Responses to these items also range from 1 to 5, with the same options as in the teachers' questionnaire.

Statements	Average	Standard deviation	CV
1. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés a través de la lectura de textos.	3	0.88	0.29
2. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés a través de canciones, diálogos y otro tipo de material auditivo.	3	1.21	0.39

Table 6. Average answers given by adolescents (N=27) to statements favouring implicit learning of grammar.

The average response for both statements is 3, the neutral option. This means that students may be skeptical about implicit grammar learning. If we analyse the percentages of the options chosen as a whole, we observe that the neutral answer (“neither agree nor disagree”) was chosen very frequently (30.9%). Besides, there appears to be little variability in the answers provided by these students, as the CV in all questions is low.

Table 7 shows responses to the statements regarding explicit grammar learning. Although there is also a tendency to choose the neutral option, there are some statements whose average responses are worth considering. The strongest indication of agreement was found in the answers to students' belief in the importance of explicit explanations (statement 3), with a mean score of 4. However, concerning students' dependence on these explanations in order to understand grammar (statements 18 and 21), the average response was 3.3, suggesting uncertainty. Thus, although these learners state that they believe the teacher's explanations might help them learn grammar **better**, they do not feel they necessarily **depend** on them. Apart from that, this average response may also call into question the assumption made in the first chapter that, as students grow older, their demand for an explicit approach increases. This relationship between students' age and the approach to grammar is put forward later in section 4.3.

Responses to statements 5, 11 and 19 were very close to 4, in a scale from neutrality to agreement (see Table 7). This means that whereas some students are doubtful, others express a belief in the efficacy of acquiring grammar through explicit grammar learning activities.

Statements	Average	Standard deviation	CV
3. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés cuando el profesor la explica en clase.	4	0.92	0.23
11. Una buena forma de aprender y fijar aspectos gramaticales es hacer ejercicios como pasando oraciones de afirmativo a negativo o interrogativo.	3.8	0.92	0.24
19. Recuerdo más un tema gramatical si el docente lo explica en clase, ya sea en el pizarrón, a través de una presentación <i>Power Point</i> o <i>Prezi</i> o alguna presentación similar.	3.8	1.11	0.29
5. Aprendo y fijo temas gramaticales practicando ejercicios escritos.	3.7	1.14	0.31
7. Me cuesta aprender la gramática del inglés por mí mismo si el profesor no la explica.	3.5	1.01	0.29
20. Aprendo mejor un tema gramatical si copio la explicación teórica, ejemplos, y si lo estudio o trato de memorizarlo para la siguiente clase o para un examen.	3.5	1.25	0.35
18. Cada vez dependo más de la explicación del profesor para entender la gramática.	3.3	1.02	0.31
21. Es importante que los alumnos analicemos ejemplos e intentemos deducir cómo funciona la gramática sin que el profesor la explique.	3.3	1.03	0.31
4. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés leyendo las reglas y explicaciones que incluyen los libros que usamos.	2.9	1.19	0.40
10. Una buena manera de aprender y fijar la gramática es estudiando de memoria frases, oraciones o diálogos.	2	1.07	0.52

Table 7. Average answers given by adolescents (N=27) to statements favouring explicit learning of grammar.

As regards students' ability to learn grammar without any kind of explicit explanation (statements 7 and 20), there is less agreement than in the previous statements, as the average response is 3.5. The rest of the answers are all close to the mid point (3). This suggests learners' uncertainty about the effectiveness of learning grammar by reading explanations, or by analysing examples in order to deduce the underlying rules on their own. Finally, the lowest average response is provided in relation to the idea of learning grammar from phrases or memorised sentences (statement 10). There is homogeneity in the answers provided by these students to all the statements, as the low coefficient of variation shows.

4.2.5 Comparison between teachers' and adolescents' beliefs

Unlike the young learners and their teachers, the perceptions of both teachers of adolescents matched those of their students. Table 8 shows the answers to the tests applied to measure the degree of the relationship between teachers' and learners' beliefs. Again, the answers given by each group of students regarding implicit or explicit grammar learning were compared with those of their teachers.

Group	F-Test		t-test	
	p-value	Equality of variances hypothesis	p-value	Equality of means hypothesis
Corina and her students (Adolescents, private language school, hereafter "AdL-PLS")	0.873	not rejected	0.2393	not rejected
Isabel and her students (Adolescents, state school, hereafter "AdL-SS")	0.9	not rejected	0.05497	not rejected

Table 8. p-Values from F-tests and t-Tests and results to measure the strength of relationship between student and teacher answers to statements regarding explicit and implicit grammar learning.

As already mentioned, a comparison of variance F-test was done, followed by a t-test. There is evidence to suggest that Corina's average response about explicit and implicit learning of English grammar coincides with her students' average response (see Table 8). In fact, Corina's answers were balanced. She coincides with her students in having a high frequency of neutral answers (33.3% of her options were 'Neither agree nor disagree', and 32.6% of her students chose this option as well). However, they differ in the approach to grammar chosen: whereas Corina is not inclined towards a particular approach to grammar learning (33.3% of her answers favour an explicit approach and 33.3% an implicit one), about half of her students tend to prefer an explicit approach (44.5%).

One plausible interpretation is that this teacher does not favour a specific approach because she values the effectiveness of both, depending on the needs of each group of students. According to her, the singular characteristics of each class may demand the use of one approach or the other:

Creo que es un combo de todo, si no ya se hubiera resuelto el tema de la metodología hace mucho tiempo. Y hay que ver a lo que responde el grupo. Por ahí a algún grupo no le gusta hacer el "descubrimiento", u otros "no me digas, no me digas, yo lo sé, yo lo sé" ... y también hay que ver cuánto tiempo vamos a estar, o sea cuánto tiempo antes de

que resulte frustrante esto de descubrir, ¿no?... si podés ayudar con una guía o algo, también va a depender de lo que los chicos prefieran, de la estrategia que consciente o inconscientemente ellos tengan.

[La gramática] creo que debe ser enseñada, no sé si siempre explícitamente, o tal vez explícitamente en el momento, en el camino del aprendizaje que corresponda.

Results of the F-test and the t-test also confirm a match between Isabel's perceptions and those of her students (AdL-SS). While most of Isabel's answers show agreement with implicit grammar learning, her students' answers tend to favour an explicit approach. But the reason for the congruence observed in the tests might be that students do not fully reject the idea of learning grammar implicitly, as the percentage of answers favouring this approach is not so low. In fact, this percentage is higher than that of the other group of adolescents and the two classes of adult students (25%).

Besides, Isabel's mismatch with her students in the choice of explicit over implicit grammar learning does not imply unawareness of her students' needs, as demonstrated in the interview:

Bueno, diferentes realidades, depende del curso, depende de los alumnos, depende de la carga horaria. En esta escuela, apuntamos a gramática y a comprensión de texto. En otra escuela no; depende de la realidad.

Thus, it appears that the questionnaire answers reflect Isabel's opinion about what is effective for grammar learning in general, and at the same time they express the need to adapt the approach used depending on the requirements of each class. What is more, these teachers' preference for implicit learning may also be justified and based on their vast experience both as learners and educators.

A tendency which was observed in the two groups of young learners is repeated here: although there appear to be certain points in common between teachers and students, the coincidences are stronger between the two groups of learners as a whole, as the answers chosen by each class are very similar. It is yet to be determined whether the teachers' beliefs in favour of an implicit approach are consistent with their pedagogical decisions or whether, on the contrary, their practices are closer to their learners' perceptions of what they need in order to learn grammar.

4.2.6 Adult learners' views

Finally, adult learners' perceptions as regards implicit and explicit grammar learning were analysed. The 13 questionnaire items were classified accordingly: one of them referred to an implicit approach and the remaining 12 to explicit grammar learning. The results of the questionnaire item associated with implicit grammar learning are presented in Table 9 below. Again, responses to this item range from 1 to 5.

Statement	Average	Standard deviation	CV
26. El aprendizaje de la gramática es mejor cuando se da de forma implícita; es decir, sin tener conciencia de que se está aprendiendo determinado tema o aspecto gramatical.	2.7	1.44	0.52

Table 9. Average answers given by adult learners (N=15) to statements favouring implicit learning of grammar.

The tendency to opt for explicit grammar learning observed in adolescents is repeated here but, unlike both children and adolescents, in this case there are clearer indications of agreement with this view compared to the other age groups. Replies to statement 26 fall in a scale between disagreement with and neutrality regarding an implicit approach, a view shared by most students, since the CV shows homogeneity in the answers provided (see Table 9). What most of these students seem to object is the possibility of learning grammar implicitly, without awareness of the grammatical item being learned. Given these results, we would expect to find more agreement with explicit grammar learning. And indeed, learners tend to agree with such an approach (see Table 10).

Statements	Average	Standard deviation	CV
9. Aprendo mejor un tema gramatical si leo o copio la explicación teórica, ejemplos, y si lo estudio o trato de memorizarlo para la siguiente clase o para un examen.	4.2	1.01	0.24
16. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés cuando el docente la presenta y explica en forma explícita.	4.2	0.86	0.20
17. Una buena forma de aprender y fijar aspectos gramaticales es a través de ejercicios de transformación de oraciones de afirmativo a negativo o interrogativo.	3.9	0.91	0.24
18. Una buena forma de ejercitar un aspecto gramatical es a través de ejercicios para completar con la opción correcta o ejercicios de tipo <i>multiple choice</i> (respuesta múltiple).	3.9	0.91	0.24
14. Una forma efectiva de aprender y recordar un tema gramatical es repitiendo (en forma escrita u oral) oraciones sueltas donde la estructura a aprender esté siempre presente.	3.6	1.05	0.29
23. Puedo aprender aspectos o temas gramaticales comparando oraciones que poseen diferentes estructuras.	3.6	1.05	0.29

32. Una forma efectiva de aprender la gramática de inglés es a través del docente llamando la atención a sus alumnos a determinados elementos de la gramática en contexto, a medida que éstos surgen en forma incidental, no planeada.	3.5	0.83	0.24
15. Una forma efectiva de aprender y recordar un tema gramatical es memorizando diálogos, frases, etc. que contengan la estructura a aprender, pero en contexto.	3.5	0.91	0.26
21. Aprendo mejor y fijo aspectos o temas gramaticales a partir de la lectura de un texto.	3.5	0.83	0.24
22. Aprendo mejor y fijo aspectos o temas gramaticales a partir de la escucha de un diálogo, una canción, o mirando una serie o película.	3.5	1.24	0.35
5. A mi edad, es más difícil deducir las reglas gramaticales por mí mismo.	3.3	1.03	0.32
7. Recuerdo más un tema gramatical si lo aprendo por mí mismo, cuando puedo deducir la regla a partir de ejemplos.	2.9	1.30	0.45

Table 10. Average answers given by adult learners (N=15) to statements favouring explicit learning of grammar.

The highest average responses, above 4, are found in the statements which favour explicit explanations, especially if the teacher is involved in supplying them (statements 9 and 16). This confirms these learners' preference for explicit grammar, which is even stronger than that expressed by the adolescents. The answers to many of these statements fall in a scale between neutrality and agreement. Thus, these students seem to prefer learning grammar by engaging in activities that make them purposefully focus on a particular language point, for example, by repeating sentences with the target structure, by doing grammar-based exercises such as multiple choice or sentence transformation, or by comparing sentences containing different structures, as demonstrated by the responses to statements 14, 17, 18 and 23. The rest of the average responses which fall in this scale are 15, 21, 22 and 32. This reflects students' uncertainty about the possibility of learning grammar incidentally as it arises in a text, a dialogue or a song.

The lowest averages are found in the responses to statements 5 and 7, which in fact do not show disagreement, but neutrality. The answer to statement 5 deserves special attention since, as mentioned previously in this study, it was assumed that the older the students, the higher the demand for an explicit approach. However, the average answer to this statement is 3.3, not showing a strong adherence to the idea that age makes it more difficult to deduce grammar rules. The same was reported in the case of adolescents and will be further developed in section 4.3.

Finally, the lowest average (2.9) is found in the responses to the convenience of self-learning or deducing rules through examples in order to remember a grammar topic

(statement 7). This average shows these learners' uncertainty about the possibility of learning grammar in this way.

4.2.7 Comparison between teachers' and adult learners' beliefs

The comparison between each group of adult students and their teachers produced different results. In order to compare the perceptions of the adult students and their teachers, an F-test and a t-test were carried out. The results are illustrated in Table 11 below.

Group	F-Test		t-test	
	p-value	Equality of variances hypothesis	p-value	Equality of means hypothesis
Claudia and her students (Adult learners, private language school, hereafter "AL-PLS")	0.6468	not rejected	0.0458	rejected
Mónica and her students (Adult learners, state school, hereafter "AL-SS")	0.8672	not rejected	0.1946	not rejected

Table 11. p-Values from F-tests and t-Tests and results to measure the strength of relationship between student and teacher answers to statements regarding explicit and implicit grammar learning.

Claudia's perceptions are different from her students'. Whereas most of Claudia's answers are either neutral (50%) or favour implicit grammar learning (33.3%), more than half of her students' answers show preference for an explicit approach (56.7%). Much like Isabel (AdL-SS), it is possible that Claudia's questionnaire answers refer to her view on grammar learning as a whole, not only considering her class of adult students under study. Thus, although Claudia prefers implicit grammar teaching and learning because she believes in its effectiveness, she acknowledges that the characteristics of each class also determine the type of approach:

Depende del grupo, yo creo que no hay una regla, y que hay grupos que necesitan más la regla, y practicar, y te piden lo que necesitan, si es más ejercitación, se las das; y hay otros que no les gusta.

The second case refers to the adult students at the state school and their teacher, Mónica. At first, it might seem difficult to understand why the test shows a

correspondence between this teacher's perceptions and her students', mainly because half of Mónica's answers indicate preference for implicit grammar, but this approach is strongly rejected by her students (only 16.3% of the answers favour implicit grammar learning). The reason why there is more consistency between Mónica and her students than in the other case might be that, unlike Claudia, who tends to favour an implicit approach, Mónica's answers are more divided (50% for an implicit approach and 50% for an explicit one). So, this suggests that Mónica favours an approach in which students learn grammar without awareness, while at the same time she also acknowledges the advantages of explicit grammar learning, and in this sense, she is closer to her students' perceptions. Taking into account the opinions and comments made by these teachers, this is not surprising. In the interviews and during some conversations before and after the observations, most of them claimed that the older the students, the greater the demand for explicit grammatical explanations. What is more, Mónica claimed that her students' needs were taken into account, which was also noticeable during the observations, when she responded to her learners' demands for explicit grammatical explanations.

Again, more coincidences were found between the teachers and between the two groups of learners rather than between each teacher with their class. For instance, both groups of learners reject an implicit approach, as indicated by the percentages of their answers. This tendency is repeated in the six groups studied.

4.2.8 Comparison between teachers' beliefs and practices

Data from the surveys revealed teachers' preference for implicit grammar learning. Contrary to this tendency, the data gathered in the observations showed teachers' inclination towards an explicit approach to grammar teaching. As Table 12 indicates, for most teachers, highly and moderately explicit grammar teaching practices outnumber the implicit ones. As has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, the category "implicit" was not subdivided into two categories.

	Highly Explicit	Moderately explicit	Implicit
Marisa (YL-SS)	62.5%	25%	12.5%

Celina (YL-PLS)	42.86%	14.28%	42.86%
Isabel (AdL-SS)	66.66%	16.67%	16.67%
Corina (AdL-PLS)	76.92%	23.08%	0%
Mónica (AL-SS)	70.59%	11.76%	17.65%
Claudia (AL-PLS)	62.5%	12.5%	25%

Table 12. Percentage of classroom practices associated to highly explicit, moderately explicit and moderately implicit teaching of grammar registered per teacher during the 6-hour observation period.

Two cases are worth commenting: the first one is Celina (YL-PLS). She is the only teacher whose practices are the most balanced, as the percentage of explicit and implicit grammar teaching practices does not vary greatly. At the other extreme we find Corina's (AdL-PLS) practices, which are all explicit. No classroom practice was found which could have been associated with implicit teaching of grammar. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider that these practices correspond to 6 hours of observations per group, a small percentage of the whole academic year.

Further light on this issue is shed by the interviews carried out with these teachers. An analysis of the data seems to show a preference towards explicit rather than implicit teaching and learning. Figure 1 illustrates the number of references made by the six teachers in their interviews showing preference for explicit or implicit teaching and learning of grammar.

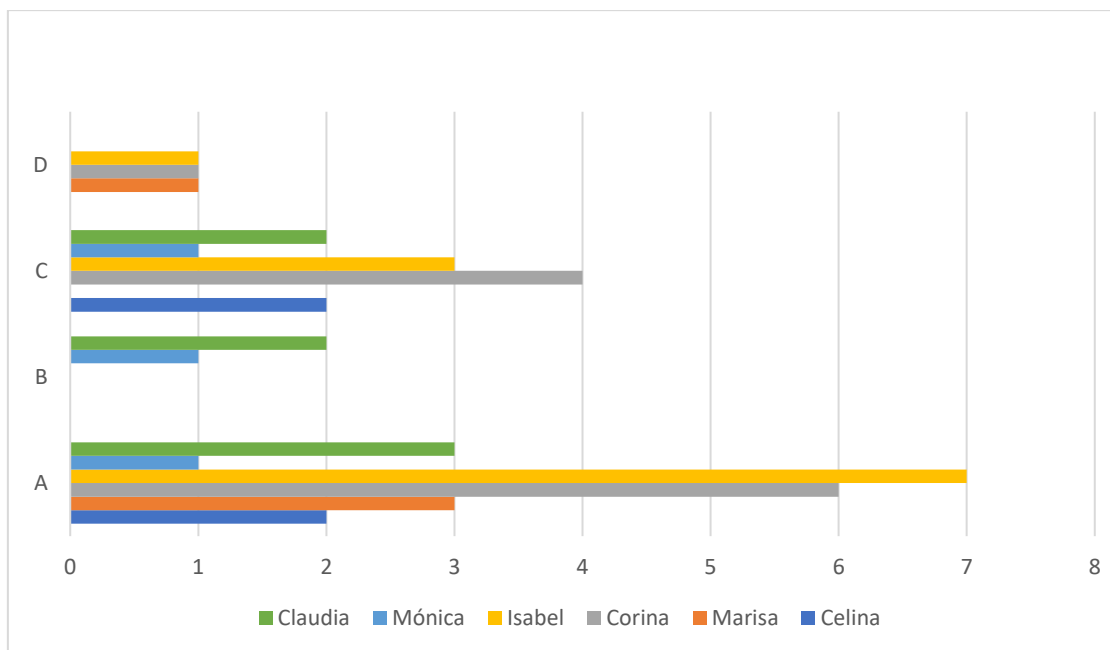


Figure 1: Number of references made by the 6 teachers in the interview showing preference for explicit teaching of grammar (A); explicit learning of grammar (B); implicit teaching of grammar (C) and implicit learning of grammar (D).

The transcriptions of the interviews were read thoroughly, and each time grammar teaching or learning was mentioned, those extracts were analysed and classified as expressing preference for an explicit or implicit approach. After this classification, the references made to explicit and implicit teaching and learning were counted and these numbers were used to create Figure 1, in order to determine and compare the teachers' views.

The figure shows that most of the references made about the teaching or learning of grammar favour an explicit approach, especially to grammar teaching (see "A" in Figure 1). The greatest number of references in favour of explicit teaching of grammar were made by Isabel, the teacher of adolescents at the state school, followed by Corina, the teacher whose practices were also found to be all explicit (see Table 12). It is also worth mentioning that the six teachers referred to explicit grammar teaching in positive terms, whereas only three did so regarding implicit grammar teaching.

Comments from these teachers in the interviews provide evidence for the belief that implicit grammar teaching and learning is possible and effective at a certain age, which is also supported by their questionnaire answers. However, there is also the view that, at a certain point, explicit grammatical explanations are needed in order to guarantee

that students understand and learn the target structure, because it may be necessary in the future at higher levels, and also because students themselves demand explicit grammar. The following excerpts from the interviews show this:

Como es una escuela de adultos, sí, siempre piden que... les gusta tener la explicación (Mónica, AL-SS).

Uno nota en los adultos que necesitan más agarrarse de la gramática, es como que lo piden, tienen que anotar la regla, todo lo tienen que anotar, los chicos no (Claudia, AL-PLS).

Sufrimos mucho cuando llegamos a un B1, B2, que los chicos de repente no saben cómo se llaman los tiempos verbales, entonces, como hoy por hoy todo lo que ellos aprenden es tan natural y fluye en forma tan natural, entonces siempre estoy recalcando: Present Simple, Present Continuous, Simple Past..., y bueno, “¿Cuál es el Present Continuous? (...) entonces siempre pensando en los años que van a venir... (Celina, YL-PLS).

Besides, although the interviews reveal a tendency to favour explicit grammar teaching and to value explicit knowledge, some opinions are expressed tentatively, suggesting that the approach also depends on the specific class being taught. For instance, Claudia indicated that she chose a different treatment for her learners depending on their characteristics:

Yo creo que no hay una regla, y que hay grupos que necesitan más la regla, y practicar, y te piden lo que necesitan.

This may explain why, although in their responses to the questionnaire most of these teachers appear to acknowledge the feasibility and advantage of learning grammar implicitly, in the interviews the tendency to favour explicit grammar teaching and learning is stronger.

These teachers' classroom practices match the opinions given in the interview, both favouring explicit grammar teaching and learning. However, these do not seem to be compatible with the perceptions stated in the survey. Thus, in order to compare and analyse the teachers' congruence between their answers to the questionnaire regarding the implicit/explicit learning of English grammar and their classroom practices, a comparison of variance F-test and a corresponding t-test were calculated. The data shown

in Table 13 enable us to claim that, whereas four of the six teachers differ between their perceptions and their actual practices, two teachers' beliefs match their pedagogical decisions. These differences are statistically significant.

Group	F-Test		t-test	
	<i>p</i> -value	Equality of variances hypothesis	<i>p</i> -value	Equality of means hypothesis
Celina (YL-PLS)	0.6606	not rejected	0.193	not rejected
Marisa (YL-SS)	0.9883	not rejected	0.01076	rejected
Corina (AdL-PLS)	0.005269	rejected	0.008653	rejected
Isabel (AdL-SS)	0.7353	not rejected	0.01168	rejected
Claudia (AL-PLS)	0.02135	rejected	0.05853	not rejected
Mónica (AL-SS)	0.9639	not rejected	0.02204	rejected

Table 13. *p*-Values from F-tests and t-Tests and results to measure the strength of relationship between teacher practices (implicit or explicit) and their answers to questions regarding explicit and implicit grammar learning.

The data used for these tests were of two types: first, the teachers' average answers to the questionnaire statements related to implicit/explicit learning of English grammar and second, the average of instances of explicit or implicit teaching practices identified during the observations. As explained in the previous chapter, using the classification of explicit and implicit teaching provided in the theoretical framework, a scale was devised. In this scale, highly explicit teaching practices received a score of 1, moderately explicit teaching practices scored 2, and implicit practices scored 4. This scale ranges from 1 to 5 so that the score applied to the Likert-type questionnaire equals the score applied for the classroom practices. Score 5 would correspond to highly implicit teaching practices but, as mentioned before, this does not apply to classroom-based SLA. Thus, for instance, if a teacher answered 1 to a questionnaire statement regarding grammar learning, it was associated to a preference for highly explicit grammar learning. Likewise, if a classroom practice was considered highly explicit, it was also assigned one point.

For Marisa (YL-SS), the difference between her perceptions and her actual practices is statistically significant (see table 13). This indicates a mismatch between her classroom practices and her self-reported belief in the effectiveness of implicit grammar learning, as stated in the questionnaire. For example, in the survey, she states that she believes grammar learning is better when it takes place without awareness. However, in the interview, Marisa suggests that her approach to grammar teaching is explicit:

[El presente continuo] ya lo vieron, yo se los expliqué, los elementos que hay que tener en el presente continuo. Ellos tienen en claro que tienen que ser tres elementos, y los tienen bien identificados, entonces yo me tomé el trabajo cuando empezó ese tema, ahí lo enseñé de antemano.

This explicit approach was also evidenced in one of the lessons observed, in which she conducted an oral review of the Present Continuous and asked questions about its formation: “¿Se acuerdan que vimos el Presente Continuo en la unidad anterior? ¿Qué tres elementos tenía?”. Once the students answered, the teacher wrote the structure of the Present Continuous on the board, together with an example sentence. Apart from this, most of her classroom practices were also highly explicit, as Table 12 shows.

Different results were obtained by Celina, the teacher of young learners at the private language school. On the one hand, the references which favour explicit grammar teaching in her interview are as frequent as the comments in the questionnaire supporting implicit grammar teaching. Besides, her teaching practices are balanced (see Table 12). And in the survey, most of her answers were neutral (50%), showing that this teacher does not easily favour one approach to grammar teaching over the other. All this explains the congruence between her perceptions and her actual practices.

As regards Corina (AdL-PLS), the results are in line with Marisa’s. Again, it was found that her beliefs and practices do not match (see table 13). This may be due to the fact that, as explained earlier, there were not any instances of implicit grammar teaching in the lessons observed, although her answers in the questionnaire do not favour any specific approach. In the case of Isabel (AdL-SS), her perceptions were also incongruent with her actual practices. One of the reasons that explains this discrepancy is the fact that most of her questionnaire answers favoured implicit grammar, whereas almost all of her classroom practices were associated with an explicit approach.

The t-test for Mónica (AL-SS) also suggests a mismatch between her beliefs and her pedagogical decisions: most of her classroom practices were explicit, although in the questionnaire, 50% of her answers were inclined towards an explicit approach, and the other half to an implicit approach. Finally, in the case of Claudia (AL-PLS), the results indicate congruence between her practices and her beliefs. In her case, explicit grammar teaching practices outnumber implicit ones. Even though this does not reflect her views on the questionnaire statements, where she favours an implicit approach over an explicit

one, the fact that 50% of her answers were neutral may explain this congruence; i.e., this might indicate that she acknowledges the advantages of both approaches depending on the circumstances.

In conclusion, there are two teachers whose beliefs are in line with their classroom practices, whereas in the other four teachers there is a mismatch. This claim is supported by the fact that all the differences were statistically significant. The comparison between the questionnaire responses and the answers in the interview had already shown an inconsistency. In those cases where incongruences were found, it appears that, although these teachers believe in the effectiveness of implicit grammar, they do not always act accordingly, at least with these groups of students, since explicit grammar explanations or discussions and numerous grammar-based activities were observed. As has been claimed earlier, one of the main reasons for these mismatches is that, although these teachers acknowledge the possibility of learning grammar implicitly, the specific characteristics of each class, together with other contextual factors, may be stronger than their beliefs and eventually influence these teachers' pedagogical decisions.

Finally, another feature which helps us distinguish an explicit or an implicit approach to grammar teaching is teachers' reactions to learners' errors. Implicit feedback in the form of recasts, in which the teacher rewords what the learner has said incorrectly counts as an instance of implicit teaching of grammar. On the other hand, overt feedback, in which the teacher points out where the error has been made or calls the student's attention and indicates how to correct it, is associated with an explicit teaching approach.

In the interviews, these teachers reveal an awareness of the implications of accuracy and fluency in their learners' production:

A veces pongo el acento bien en accuracy, pero eso no significa que los nenes lo incorporen en ese momento, pero yo creo que es necesario, como en la escuela, marcar dónde está el error y al tiempo, con atención, ellos lo podrán incorporar en la medida en que también puedan comunicarse (Corina, AdL-PLS).

Mi idea es la comunicación en la clase, que sea bastante comunicativa, que aprovechen para hablar y que se sientan cómodos, que no tengan miedo de hablar (...). Prefiero que cometan errores y después se los digo, pero que se larguen (Claudia, AL-PLS).

This is in line with teachers' answers to statement 14 in the questionnaire. The average answer in this case was 4.7, showing agreement with the idea that communication precedes accuracy (see Table 14). This is also consistent with teachers' answers to statement 13, which is completely the opposite: they were asked about the importance of students learning grammar with native-like accuracy, and with absence of errors both in oral and written form, but the average obtained in this case was 1.5. These teachers' answers are homogeneous, as the low CV for both statements demonstrates (see Table 14).

Statement	Average	Standard deviation	CV
14. Es importante que el alumno pueda comunicarse fluidamente y expresar sus ideas, aunque tenga errores gramaticales.	4.7	0.52	0.11
13. Es importante que el alumno aprenda la gramática con la exactitud de un hablante nativo y no cometer ningún error al utilizarla en forma oral o escrita.	1.5	0.55	0.36

Table 14. Average answers given by teachers (N=6) to statements about their attitudes towards learners' errors.

Furthermore, three teachers whose reactions to students' errors were registered during the observation period are Claudia (AL-PLS), Mónica (AL-SS) and Marisa (YL-SS). In all cases, their attitude towards correction was associated to an explicit approach to grammar teaching. All of them gave explicit feedback in different ways: by indicating where the error was, providing an explanation about the grammar topic or saying how to correct the error, or asking the whole class where the error was once teachers detected it. This approach is compatible with the rest of these teachers' classroom practices, which were also mainly explicit, and also with their references to grammar teaching in the interviews, also tending to favour an explicit approach.

4.3 The importance attributed to students' age when teaching grammar

The following section deals with students' age, and whether it is taken into consideration when teaching grammar. Four of the statements in the survey were designed to find out about teachers' beliefs concerning this variable; and the teachers were also asked about this topic during the interviews. Table 15 presents the average responses to the questionnaire statements. A close look at each of them explains the variety of the

answers obtained. The answer options ranged from 1 ('completely disagree') to 5 ('completely agree').

Statement	Average	Standard deviation	CV
1. Es importante tener en cuenta la edad del alumno a la hora de enseñar gramática.	4.3	0.82	0.19
23. La enseñanza implícita o explícita de la gramática está directamente relacionada con la edad del alumno.	3.5	0.55	0.16
26. A medida que el aprendiz avanza en edad, necesita una enseñanza más explícita de la gramática.	3.5	1.2	0.4
24. Los niños deben aprender inglés de manera implícita.	3	0.3	0.08

Table 15. Teachers' views about the importance of students' age when teaching grammar.

To begin with, teachers agree with the idea that the learners' age should be taken into account when teaching grammar, as the average answer for this first statement was 4.3. Thus, it is assumed that the way they approached the teaching of grammar in the lessons observed was the result of the consideration of their students' age. However, this does not necessarily mean that these teachers believe young learners benefit from an implicit approach and older students need more explicit explanations, as has been previously mentioned in this study and as demonstrated by the responses to statements 24 and 26. In fact, these teachers seem to be rather uncertain about the influence of this variable on learning, as the average answer to statement 23 (which indicates that grammar learning is associated with the learners' age) is 3.5. The answers to these two questions were fairly homogeneous, as shown by the CV.

In conclusion, although these teachers do not associate a specific grammar teaching approach to a specific age range, they report a belief in the importance and the relationship between grammar teaching and the learners' age. The analysis of the interviews confirms the importance placed to age and these teachers' awareness of the fact that children experience certain stages of cognitive development which should not be overlooked:

Difícil la pregunta, porque yo creo primero que depende de las edades (...) Creo que el tema de la enseñanza de la gramática es muy madurativa y hay que darle el tiempo al chico que lo procese, el cerebro necesita tiempo para procesar. Y en el caso de los más grandes, vos ahí ya podés dar una explicación más estructurada sin dejar siempre de hacer juegos (Celina, YL-PLS).

Bueno, lo del grupo particularmente, la edad (Corina, AdL-PLS, as part of her answer to the question “Is there any other factor that influences you when teaching grammar?”).

Y la edad cambia, sí, tiene que ver... con los chiquitos es totalmente diferente, todo tiene que ser juego y todo hay que tratar de mostrárselos de otra forma más lúdica. Ahora los grandes no (Claudia, AL-PLS).

The results in section 4.2 do not indicate the responding teachers’ preference for a particular grammar teaching approach, or a tendency for teachers of young learners to teach grammar more implicitly. Nevertheless, certain comments from the interviews account for the belief that, the older the students, the more explicit the approach to grammar teaching should be, not only as a consequence of teachers’ decisions, but as a result of learners’ demands:

Con los adultos hace mucho que no doy, pero era diferente la enseñanza de la gramática, tenía que ser como bastante más explícita (Corina, AdL-PLS).

Los que sí te lo demandan es el adulto, que quiere el vocabulario, quiere la explicación, pero los alumnos adolescentes o los más chicos aprenden ya de otra manera. A algunos ni les tenés que dar la explicación de algo que ya lo sacan, lo deducen (Mónica, AL-SS).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reported the results obtained from the data gathered through the questionnaire, interviews and classroom observations. It has been found that learners’ perceptions are different across age groups, with adolescents and adult learners showing higher degrees of agreement with an explicit approach. High percentages of neutral answers are also noticeable, indicating students’ uncertainty about the effectiveness of an explicit or implicit approach to learning grammar.

Teachers seem to favour an implicit approach in the answers provided in the questionnaire, which raises the problem of a mismatch between their perceptions and those of their students, and the impact this may have on their lessons and on their learners as well. Besides, the results from the questionnaires do not always match those obtained in the interviews and the observations, in which a preference for explicit grammar is clear.

In the next chapter these results are interpreted and discussed in light of the research questions posed at the beginning of this study. The findings of this study are also interpreted in relation to the previous research described in the literature review.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter discusses the main findings reported in Chapter 4, in the light of the literature review and the theoretical framework presented in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively. The interpretation and discussion of these results are based on the research questions and objectives that motivated this study.

5.1 Teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar

Research question 1: What are EFL teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar?

The main interest with this research question was to discover teachers' cognitions regarding implicit and explicit grammar teaching and learning, whether they favoured one of these approaches, and if there is a relationship between learners' age and the approach to grammar teaching and learning. The information obtained differs according to the instrument applied to inquire into these teachers' perceptions. Questionnaire data show that, although their answers are not always categorical, these teachers tend to favour moderately implicit grammar learning. There was also a high frequency of answers near the neutral option, possibly indicating that these teachers cannot choose a specific approach because they acknowledge the effectiveness of both, depending on the characteristics of each group they are teaching or the institution where they work, as they explained in the interviews:

Depende del grupo, yo creo que no hay una regla, y que hay grupos que necesitan más la regla, y practicar, y te piden lo que necesitan, si es más ejercitación, se las das; y hay otros que no les gusta, gente que “no me gusta para nada”, “no, no, yo esto no”, (...) lo voy llevando según el grupo (Claudia, AL, PLS).

Depende del curso y del nivel. Trabajo en una escuela bilingüe, con nenes de 6º grado que tienen un nivel de KET, que la gramática fluye sola, se dan cuenta solos y hay muchas cosas que ellos aprenden antes en inglés que en castellano (...) (Isabel, AdL, SS).

Depende del curso, depende de los alumnos (...). En esta escuela, apuntamos a gramática y a comprensión de texto. En otra escuela no; depende de la realidad (Isabel, AdL, SS).

Hay que ver a lo que responde el grupo. Por ahí a algún grupo no le gusta hacer el “descubrimiento”, u otros “no me digas, no me digas, yo lo sé, yo lo sé... y también hay que ver cuánto tiempo vamos a estar, o sea, cuánto tiempo antes de que resulte frustrante esto de descubrir, ¿no?... (Corina, AdL, PLS).

Apart from indicating that the approach to grammar teaching depends largely on each group of students, Corina’s statement demonstrates that there is also the view that not all students like rule discovery, but expect explicit grammar explanations. Tina, the teacher in Borg’s (1999) research, not only shares this view, but also believes that not all grammar rules can be discovered easily. Therefore, the neutral option may also have been chosen because, whereas these teachers seem to agree that students learn better through self-deduction and with less awareness, they are not so certain whether this is always possible, or if it works with all kinds of activities. In this sense, these ideas are similar to Tina’s. Much like Corina, Tina claimed that not all grammatical aspects are amenable to discovery work, although she considered it effective for grammar learning.

Both Corina’s and Tina’s perceptions correlate with Muñoz’s (2010) idea that certain claims made about naturalistic SLA do not necessarily apply to formal learning contexts as in the case of the classes surveyed in this study, in which the exposure to input is significantly reduced. The implicit learning from which many young learners often benefit takes many years of exposure to the target language which cannot be guaranteed in these contexts.

What is more, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, teachers’ attitude towards students’ errors also reflects the approach to grammar they prefer. The questionnaire results show that these teachers are more inclined towards an implicit treatment of errors, where communication precedes accuracy. These findings are congruent with those obtained by Schulz (1996), in which teachers also showed disagreement with explicit and corrective feedback.

However, this tendency for teachers to favour an implicit approach to grammar teaching is reversed in the interviews and in the observations, in which teachers showed a preference for explicit teaching and learning. In the interviews, teachers favoured an

explicit approach, especially when referring to adult students, who were said to demand explicit grammatical explanations. Nevertheless, these teachers expressed their opinion with some degree of tentativeness, as they claimed that, again, it all depended on the characteristics of each group. This may explain why, although they acknowledge the benefits of implicit teaching and learning as revealed by the questionnaire, other factors related to the teaching context led them to teach grammar explicitly. This reflects Barcelos's (2003) conception of beliefs within the Contextual Approach as dependent on and influenced by the context where they emerge.

As regards the relationship between age and grammar teaching and learning, the statement of the problem in the first chapter anticipated that the teaching of grammar tends to be more explicit with adolescents and adults. This is so because in naturalistic settings, children learn relatively easily through implicit mechanisms, but this ability may be gradually lost as they become older (DeKeyser, 2003; Herschensohn, 2013). Besides, as described in the second chapter, although SL/FL acquisition in naturalistic contexts is different from learning in a classroom context, in both cases young learners benefit from their implicit learning mechanisms, whereas older students need to take advantage of explicit explanations, which are more appropriate for their level of cognitive maturity and analytic skills (DeKeyser, 2000; Muñoz, 2010).

However, there is no evidence in the data to claim that these teachers approached the teaching of grammar based on these reasons. In both the interviews and in their answers to the questionnaire, these teachers show that they consider age an important factor when teaching grammar. However, this does not imply that teachers believe in a specific approach for each age group (i.e., implicit for young learners and explicit for teenagers and adolescents). In fact, the data from the classroom observations show the opposite, i.e., that explicit grammar teaching was the main approach chosen, regardless of the learners' age.

To sum up, it has been argued that teachers' pedagogical decisions are influenced by and are the result of various factors, such as the characteristics of each class (size, level of English, age, socioeconomic factors which might affect their learning), the setting and the requirements of the schools where they work (as regards materials, curriculum design or syllabus, etc.), the expectations and pressure from parents or school authorities, etc. (Borg, 2001; Buehl & Beck, 2015; Sánchez, 2014; Ur, 2011). But apart from that, all

teachers have their own set of beliefs about how to approach the teaching of grammar in the most effective way, which also influences their instructional decisions. These beliefs may have various sources, and they are often based on what has worked well for them either as students or as teachers with other groups, and in their teacher training experience.

Thus, as this study and others have demonstrated, teachers' pedagogical decisions are an interplay between multiple contextual factors and their own cognitions. This may help explain why teachers tend to favour a certain approach different from the one they apply in the classroom.

5.2 Students' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar

Research question 2: What are students' cognitions about English grammar learning?

In order to delve into learners' cognitions, a different questionnaire was used for each of the three age groups. In the following subsections, the results are discussed and compared with the research studies reviewed.

5.2.1 Young Learners

The results about young learners' perceptions about the learning of English grammar do not show a clear preference for learning grammar either through implicit or explicit mechanisms. In fact, there was a high frequency of neutral answers chosen. What is more, when the averages were not close to a neutral answer, all of them indicated disagreement with both approaches.

One reason why these learners chose these answers may be that their ideas about how to learn a language are rather vague, and their perceptions as regards how English grammar can be learned are varied and sometimes contradictory. This is what Aro (2009) found in her study, when learners in first year (aged 7) were asked how English could be learned and their answers expressed their belief that this could be done in different contexts and by various means. For instance, they believed English could be learned at school, in English clubs, by playing a game, from their parents, or from friends who knew the language.

In the same vein, Kolb (2007) also researched primary children's perceptions and identified five discrete language learning beliefs, shared by the group as a whole. And again, it was found that some of these beliefs contradicted others. For instance, students hold the view that language learning takes place by simply imitating language input, and thus, language production is considered to be merely reproductive. On the other hand, they also believe that language learning involves understanding the meaning of language input, contradicting the perception of learning by imitation. This supports the claim made in the second chapter that learners' beliefs are contradictory and susceptible to change (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2003; Ellis, 2008; Kern, 1995). Although in the present study there is no evidence of contradictory beliefs held by the groups of young learners, the fact that they were not inclined towards a specific approach to grammar learning may suggest that, much like the students in Aro (2009) and Kolb (2007), these learners' perceptions of how languages are learned are also quite vague and ambiguous and this prevented them to favour one approach over the other.

One significant difference between the previous works and this study has to do with the importance learners attribute to the teacher for learning to take place. In Aro (2009), many children expressed that in order to learn English, they needed someone to teach them, and in some cases, they even felt that learning simply depended on what the teacher did. Similarly, Nagy (2009) found that the children in her study relied heavily on the teacher and the learning materials. In the present study, however, students mostly disagreed with the statement "I learn if the teacher explains". What is more, the number of students' answers as regards the possibility of learning on their own suggested that some of them believed in the possibility of self-study.

Finally, another salient aspect reported in the previous chapter was the similarity between the perceptions held by the students at the state school and private language school. This is not an isolated case, as shown by Aro's (2009) longitudinal case study which revealed that, over time, learners' perceptions became more and more similar as a result of the influence of authoritative views (such as the school and the society as a whole) of what a language learner is like and what language learning is about. What is more, in this study and in other works described in the literature review, more similarities were found between the groups of students as a whole and between the teachers rather than between each class group with their corresponding teachers, as will be discussed later.

5.2.2 Adolescents

Similar results were obtained in the two groups of adolescents. Learners frequently chose the neutral answer in the questionnaire statements regarding implicit and explicit grammar learning. One of the most salient findings is that they are rather skeptical about the possibility of learning grammar by deducing the rules for themselves, without any kind of explicit explanation. However, in many questions regarding explicit grammar, students also opted for a neutral answer, showing neither agreement nor disagreement.

There are some cases, however, in which an explicit approach is favoured, especially when students agree that they need the teacher's explicit explanation in order to learn grammar, or that they learn better through explicit grammar presentations, and by doing traditional grammar-based activities. Although none of the works in the literature review analysed the perceptions of adolescents, these findings are in line with most of those studies, in which learners tend to favour an explicit, grammar-based approach (Schulz, 1996, 2001; Brown, 2009), and in which the students associate English with formal study, not with communication or with the implicit learning that could result from watching TV or listening to music (Aro, 2009; Nagy, 2009). Besides, it is worth mentioning that both groups of adolescents coincided in their views, as the percentages of neutral answers and answers favouring explicit and implicit grammar learning were very similar.

5.2.3 Adult learners

The views of the two groups of adult learners showed some similarities with the adolescents' opinions about grammar learning. Firstly, there was also a tendency to disagree with an implicit approach to grammar learning. In general terms, these students self-report uncertainty about the efficacy of learning grammar through deduction and without focusing on it directly. What is more, they tend to reject the idea of understanding English grammar without possessing an explicit knowledge of its rules.

Secondly, as far as explicit grammar learning is concerned, these students also show strong adherence to this approach, even with a higher number of average responses in the adults' questionnaire items than in the adolescents'. In fact, the questionnaire results show that there was no indication of disagreement with an explicit approach. These

learners report that they especially value the teacher's explicit explanation of grammar topics in class, and take notes of their explanations and examples, which apparently help them remember and learn the target structure better.

These results coincide with those obtained by Schulz (1996, 2001) in her studies of teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the role of explicit grammar study and error correction. In all cases, students tend to favour a formal, explicit study of grammar, or what Schulz calls a 'focus on forms'. One of the main similarities is that students agree that grammar practice is fundamental to learn English. Most of the university students in Schulz's research agree that their communicative ability "improves most quickly if they study and practice the grammar of a language" (2001, p. 345). Likewise, the adult learners in the present study placed considerable importance on grammar-based practice and they referred to the impossibility of understanding oral or written English without explicit grammar knowledge, as explained above. Thus, these findings are also congruent with Brown's (2009) work, in which learners tend to appreciate discrete-point grammar practice and formal grammar instruction.

Finally, another salient aspect is that, in Schulz' (1996) study, two different groups of learners are compared: US and Colombian post-secondary students. It was found that, generally speaking, both groups of students coincided in their perceptions about the role of grammar and feedback. Similarly, in this study, the results show that, regardless of the contextual differences between the two groups of adult learners, their answers went mostly in the same direction, the same as in the case of young and adolescent learners.

5.2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, these results run parallel to most of the findings reported in the literature review about learners' perceptions. It was suggested by Aro (2009) and Kolb (2007) that young learners generally have vague ideas about how to learn English, and they believe this can be achieved in different ways. However, as students grow older, there is a greater inclination towards a formal, explicit study of English, rather than what they can learn from songs or TV (Aro, 2009; Nagy, 2009, Schulz, 1996, 2001; Brown, 2009). In this study this holds true, and the tendency is especially clear in the two groups

of adult students, who are more aware of their language learning process and rely more on explicit teaching and learning.

It was mentioned earlier that students have a set of conceptions about how to study a language, which fall into different categories (see 2.2.2.2). It appears that most of these students' sets of conceptions (especially those of adolescents and adult learners) fall in the first category: quantitative/analytic. This category views the learning of a language mainly as the learning of its grammar rules. However, a learner's set of beliefs does not necessarily fall into only one of these categories, but may include certain perceptions belonging to other categories as well (Ellis, 2008). As regards how or when these beliefs originate, it is assumed that they are often the result of all the experiences learners go through, and as such, it would not be surprising if these views were contradictory or susceptible to change over time (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013; Ellis, 2008; Kern, 1995). So, one reason why these learners tend to support explicit over implicit grammar learning and teaching might be that there is an assumption, passed on from generation to generation, that explicit grammar work is more effective. Besides, another reason is that their own experience as learners has convinced them that explicit focus on form enhances learning (Schulz, 1996).

Apart from taking into account these results about teachers' and learners' perceptions, which were analysed separately and according to the age groups, it is also important to consider whether each teacher coincides with their students in terms of the approach to grammar learning and teaching chosen. The next section explores the results obtained in relation to this, together with a comparison with previous research documented in the literature review.

5.3 Comparison between teachers' and students' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar

Research question 3: What similarities and differences are there between teachers' and students' cognitions?

As has already been anticipated, inconsistencies between teachers' and learners' perceptions tend to have negative consequences on the teaching and learning processes,

either because teacher credibility is reduced, or because students' satisfaction with the language class is affected (Ellis, 2008; Brown, 2009; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013).

It was found that, whereas half of the teachers coincide with their learners in their perceptions, the other three show inconsistencies. My interpretation of the results obtained by the data collected for this study is that, where mismatches were found, these have to do with the fact that teachers' opinions tended to be more polarised, and students' beliefs more divided. Most of the teachers' answers were either neutral or in favour of an implicit approach to grammar learning, while students' answers tended to be more balanced, but still with a preference for explicit grammar study. These results are in line with those obtained by Schulz (1996, 2001) and Brown (2009).

In the studies by Schulz (1996; 2001), which analyse both teachers' and students' perceptions on the role of grammar and error correction in FL learning, considerable discrepancies were found between teachers' and students' views. The teachers were inclined towards a learning of grammar embedded in real, communicative tasks, where the focus is placed on meaning, communication, or information exchange rather than discrete-point grammar practice. Their students, however, expressed preference for an explicit focus on form and error correction. Thus, there is a lack of consensus between teachers and learners about the role of grammar, and more specifically, as regards explicit grammar study, as is the case with the six teachers in this study, who appear to slightly disagree with an explicit approach.

What is more, Brown (2009) also compared teachers' and learners' perceptions, but in this case, all the questionnaire items referred to the teacher or to teaching rather than learning. However, the results obtained were in the same line as those by Schulz: students are more favourable towards formal grammar instruction than their teachers. Although the questions in Schulz (1996; 2001) and in the present study focus on learning and teaching, whereas Brown's (2009) focus is only on teaching, the results are still comparable given that, if learners prefer learning grammar explicitly and receiving explicit negative feedback on their errors, this implies that the teacher's approach to teaching grammar is expected to be explicit as well.

Data from the studies by Schulz (1996, 2001) and Kolb (2007) suggest that the reasons why students believe in the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction are varied. Firstly, the choice of explicit grammar study may be associated with learners' own

personal experiences, which may have led them to think that a focus on form improves learning. Secondly, the way they have been taught and tested makes learners consider grammar teaching an essential part of the lesson. Thirdly, as already mentioned, students' beliefs are often influenced by those of their parents or older siblings. Thus, this preference for explicit grammar learning can be associated with the view, transmitted from generation to generation, that formal grammar study is useful. As Kalaja & Barcelos (2013) explain, the opinion of learners' "significant others" (p. 2) is powerful enough to cause an impact on their learning perceptions.

As regards the teachers, the choice of implicit grammar learning may be guided by what is considered appropriate by the foreign language learning field in general. Thus, their beliefs may respond to the "ideal" of a communicative classroom, where implicit grammar teaching is preferred over discrete-point grammar study (Brown, 2009). However, it has also been claimed that, although these teachers favour an implicit approach in the questionnaire, it does not mean that their classroom practices are also implicit (as will be discussed in 5.4), or that they are not aware of their students' needs for explicit grammar instruction. Much on the contrary, it seems that these teachers value the benefits of both approaches, and their pedagogical decisions ultimately depend on the teaching context and their learners' expectations, which are often associated with explicit grammar instruction. In this sense, these teachers resemble those in the studies by Borg (1998, 1999) and Nishimuro and Borg (2013).

Besides, it is important to consider that these teachers may have answered the questionnaire or interview questions reflecting on their teaching experience and knowledge in general, not in reference to the group of students that took part in this study and the way those students in particular should learn grammar. This may explain some of the discrepancies between teachers and learners observed. In fact, some of these teachers explained that, even with the same age groups, their teaching approach may differ due to other reasons:

Sí, sí, porque me pasa por ejemplo que tengo en dos escuelas, tengo dos cuartos grados diferentes, las mismas edades, pero el nivel de aprendizaje es muy diferente, entonces sí, tengo que adaptar contenidos como si fuera segundo grado, todo, hasta la forma de trabajarlo, de hacer un juego, todo todo... (Mónica, AL-SS).

[Hay] algunas cosas de la encuesta que por ahí dependen del grupo más que nada, cómo son ellos, lo que necesitan, lo que piden, su forma de ser, personalidades también (Claudia, AL-PLS).

Finally, it was also reported that within each age group, there are more coincidences among students as a whole and among the teachers, rather than between each class with their corresponding teacher. The same occurred in Schulz's (2001) study, which involved Colombian university students and their teachers, and compared their perceptions with American university students and teachers. The results showed high agreement between students as a group and between teachers as a group across cultures on most of the questions answered. As explained earlier, Aro (2009) concluded that, over time, learners' perceptions became more and more alike, as a result of the influence of the school authorities or the society as a whole. Thus, age might be a factor which explains why the learners in my study, as well as in others, hold similar views, even when the learning situations are not the same: different teachers, types of institutions, duration of the lessons, etc. What is more, the same was found in various other studies: "the large amount of commonality across the beliefs cannot be ignored. Perhaps there is a world culture of language learning and teaching which encourages learners of many cultural backgrounds to perceive language learning very similarly" (Horwitz, 1999, as cited in Kolb, 2007, p. 237).

To sum up, the reasons why teachers and learners favour one approach over the other are varied, and this often causes mismatches between students' expectations and teachers' classroom practices. It was also found that teachers' perceptions as a whole tend to be similar, and learners belonging to the same age group also to share the same views, even those from different backgrounds. Nevertheless, the fact that in this study, three of the six groups coincided in their views should not be ignored, as it reflects good teacher-learner communication, and also teachers' understanding of the group needs.

5.4 Congruence between teachers' cognitions and classroom practices

Research question 4: What is the relationship between teachers' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar and the way they teach grammar in the classroom?

Contrary to the results obtained in the questionnaire, in which teachers favour moderately implicit grammar learning, and in line with the interview data, the classroom observations reveal that these teachers engage mostly in explicit grammar teaching practices, regardless of the learners' level or age. Thus, congruence was found in the comparison between teachers' perceptions as expressed in the interviews and their classroom practices, which were both mainly explicit. However, when the questionnaire answers were compared to the teachers' instructional decisions, mismatches were found in four of the six teachers.

One possible interpretation for the mismatches is that their instructional decisions are based on their "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, as cited in Borg, 2004). Thus, although these teachers state that they believe in the effectiveness of implicit grammar learning, they presumably act according to earlier beliefs about language learning, acquired during their own experiences as learners and considered useful for their learners as well:

*Se machaca mucho a principio de año, primero presentamos los pronombres personales, cuál es el verbo que acompaña cada pronombre, posesivo, negativo... qué se yo... **yo lo aprendí así** [emphasis added] (Marisa, YL, SS).*

Lo que a mí me resultó por ahí yo lo aplico porque pienso que a los demás les resulta (...). Los gap-filling los sigo usando (Corina, AdL, PLL).

These results are similar to those obtained by Borg (1998; 1999) and Nishimuro and Borg (2013) in that teachers repeat certain practices associated with explicit grammar instruction which worked well for them during their own experiences as learners, even when they contradict their stated beliefs. These researchers examined the role of grammar instruction in the classroom practice of experienced EFL teachers, and the cognitions which underpinned those practices. The results revealed that the teachers expressed disapproval of formal grammar instruction, showed preference for teaching language communicatively or had even become teachers during the CLT boom (where explicit discussions of grammatical issues are not encouraged), but then provided explicit lectures on grammar, or elicited explanations of grammatical rules from the students. Among other reasons, these teachers justified their actions based mainly on the beliefs that this had worked well for them as learners.

Therefore, it seems that these teachers' prior language learning experiences exert such an impact which outweighs the influence that formal theory or new approaches to grammar teaching might have (Borg 2003). This constitutes one of the reasons that may explain the mismatches between teachers' perceptions and their pedagogical decisions.

Another revealing finding in this study was these teachers' belief that students expect explicit grammar instruction. In the interview, most of them agreed that learners generally demand these explanations, and that in some groups, this tendency is greater than in others:

Hay dos, sexto 'senior' y tercero 'junior, que exigen saber cosa por cosa: por qué sí, por qué no, y si yo lo digo así, ¿puede ser? ¿por qué no puede ser?, todo tiene que estar explícito, o sea, todo tiene que estar explicado y con una razón, por qué no o por qué sí (Corina, AL, PLS).

Ellos piden explicación [gramatical] para todo (Isabel, AdL, SS).

So, although these statements may be contradicted by the views expressed in the questionnaire, they are in line with these teachers' classroom practices, which were mainly explicit. Likewise, two teachers in Borg's (1999) study also referred to learners' expectations of formal instruction as a rationale for their pedagogical decisions.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, another aspect that characterises explicit grammar teaching is the use of metalinguistic terminology, which was observed in all of these teachers' lessons. Again, this contradicts the questionnaire results, which showed a preference for an implicit approach, where there is as little metalanguage as possible. However, in the interviews, these teachers support the idea that learners need to grasp this terminology in order to learn grammar more effectively, and because it may be useful in the future:

Ellos también parten de la necesidad de saber qué es un verbo, qué es un infinitivo, todo eso, que a veces en castellano no lo tienen muy claro, y se dan cuenta que lo necesitan (Mónica, AL, SS).

No puede ser que ahora está "prohibido" el análisis sintáctico de oraciones. Entonces vos decís: "pero los chicos tienen que reconocer cuál es el verbo, porque si no, no saben qué es un verbo en inglés". Y entonces no pueden armar la oración y no te la conjugan

(...). *Entonces eso es lo que yo machaco y les enseño: “Éste es el sujeto, éste es el verbo, y éste es el predicado...”* (Marisa, YL, SS).

Sufrimos mucho cuando llegamos a un B1, B2, que los chicos de repente no saben cómo se llaman los tiempos verbales, entonces, como hoy por hoy todo lo que ellos aprenden es tan natural y fluye en forma tan natural, entonces siempre estoy recalcando: Present Simple, Present Continuous, Simple Past..., y bueno, “¿Cuál es el Present Continuous? (...) entonces siempre pensando en los años que van a venir...” (Celina, YL-PLS).

As the interview passages reveal, the two teachers of young learners favour the use of grammatical metalanguage and suggest the importance of being able to be acquainted with this terminology at a young age. In the same vein, Endo and Tanaka, two teachers in the study by Nishimuro and Borg (2013), also used grammatical terminology very frequently. Tanaka argued that this knowledge is essential for lower-level learners to understand grammar better. In Endo’s opinion, grammatical terms give students a sense of security; i.e., students learn grammatical terminology to remember grammatical items and be able to check their knowledge of grammar.

In addition, it was mentioned that the teachers’ attitude towards learners’ errors also indicates the approach to grammar teaching. According to the interview and the questionnaire data, these teachers prefer to focus on fluency and communication rather than making errors salient, which is associated with an implicit approach. Contrary to this tendency, it was found that three of these teachers provided explicit corrective feedback in the lessons observed, which was compatible with their overall explicit approach to grammar teaching. The rationale for this decision may be related to the belief that, if errors are not made salient, students may not be able to detect and correct them, at least in Claudia’s (AdL, PLS) case:

Por lo general me gusta [que corrijan sus propios errores] porque son errores que ya los tienen y como para que lo aclaren, lo ven ahí y los ayuda a no cometer los errores nuevamente.

The teacher in Borg’s (1998) study also focused on learners’ errors for a similar reason: “grammar work in which students can focus on their own errors makes the students more aware of these errors and hence more capable of self-correcting in the future” (p. 28). Likewise, Eric, one of the two teachers in Borg’s (1999) research, also supports the view

that students like to be made aware of the errors they make, that grammar teaching creates this awareness and in turn improves learners' ability to self-correct their use of language.

5.4.1 Conclusion

It has been found that, unlike the studies described in the literature review, teachers' cognitions and practices do not always differ. Where discrepancies occur, however, it is important to understand and address them. It is also necessary to acknowledge that teachers' pedagogical decisions are the result of an interplay between multiple internal (e.g., pace of the lesson, student motivation, etc.) and external factors (such as parents' or principals' requirements, curriculum, resources, etc.) (Brown, 2009; Sánchez, 2014). Firstly, as has already been mentioned, the influence of teachers' early beliefs and their own experience as FL learners may exert some degree of influence on the decision to teach grammar explicitly (Borg, 2003; Borg, 2004). Secondly, the data from the interviews provide evidence of other reasons which lead teachers to make this decision: many students expect explicit grammar work in the class; some teachers believe they need to understand grammatical terminology and be able to deal with formal grammar study because they will need it in the future; and as there are some grammar rules or errors that cannot be deduced easily, so teachers feel they need to be explained.

What is more, a distinction was made between core beliefs and peripheral beliefs (see 2.2.2.1). This difference may explain some of the inconsistencies found between teachers' beliefs and instructional decisions. So, some of these teachers' practices may not be consistent with their peripheral beliefs, but congruent with their core beliefs, as the latter are stronger and more resistant to change and thus more likely to influence teachers' decisions. For instance, teachers may have stated that errors should not be made salient and that they prefer to focus on fluency, as a result of their peripheral beliefs, which are theoretically embraced and less influential in classroom behaviour (Phipps & Borg, 2009). However, their core beliefs, which are more powerful and experiential in nature (Phipps & Borg, 2009), might have led three of these teachers to correct students' errors overtly. The same may apply to the rest of the occasions on when inconsistencies were found.

As a final comment, it would be an omission not to refer to these teachers' KAG, as research question 4 also attempted to discover whether teachers' KAG affected their classroom practices. At the beginning of this study, it was mentioned and demonstrated with the works by Borg (2001) and Sánchez (2014) that teachers' insecurities about their own KAG may cause them to teach grammar in a way that does not correlate with their perceptions. However, this was not an issue observed here. What is more, none of these teachers justified their actions on the basis of doubts about their knowledge. In fact, all of them showed confidence in their own KAG and it was found to be solid in all cases, from the least to the most experienced teacher. Another aspect which has been registered in the literature review but has neither been mentioned nor observed in these teachers was absence of grammatical explanations or strategies to avoid them, which Borg (2001) and Sánchez (2014) did find. On the contrary, all these teachers answered students' questions about grammar and their explanations were clear, accurate and appropriate to their learners' age.

5.5. Chapter conclusion

It has been demonstrated that, in general, the beliefs stated by the six teachers who participated in this study are inclined towards implicit teaching and learning of grammar, regardless of the learners' age. However, for various reasons, their classroom practices were mostly explicit, often causing a mismatch. In many cases, it appears that their pedagogical decisions have an experiential basis (not compatible with their stated beliefs), rather than being the result of the influence of any methodological principles. In other cases, the characteristics of each class and their demands for a specific approach to grammar (especially adolescents and adults) were mentioned as the main reasons for the classroom practices observed. Finally, it has also been suggested that whereas some of these teachers' decisions were not in line with their stated, peripheral beliefs, they may be compatible with other deeper, core beliefs, which they may not even be conscious of.

Apart from that, it was found that whilst half of these teachers' perceptions were in line with those of their students, the other three differed. What is more, it was already shown that within each age group, the beliefs of the state school and the private language school learners were more similar than those held by each class group with their corresponding teacher's beliefs. Hence, there are some cases in which teachers' views are

shared by their students, and this implies that the expectations of both can be met, resulting in a more effective teaching and learning process. On the other hand, those cases where mismatches were found emphasise the need to address those teacher-student differences so as to avoid a negative impact in the classroom (Ellis, 2008; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013; Schulz, 1996, 2001).

In the following chapter, the main conclusions and pedagogical implications of these findings are discussed. The limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are also presented.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The aims of this final chapter are to present the main conclusions drawn after the analysis and discussion of the results, to explain the pedagogical implications of this study, to acknowledge the limitations and to suggest ideas for further research on the issues studied here.

6.1 Main conclusions

This study has aimed at discovering and comparing teachers' and learners' cognitions about the teaching and learning of English grammar, and also comparing teachers' cognitions with their own classroom practices.

The questionnaire results have shown that the six teachers who participated in the study seem to believe in the effectiveness of implicit grammar teaching and learning. Nevertheless, in their interviews, some teachers reveal the need to resort to explicit grammar explanations, especially with older students, who demand this approach. The observations carried out also demonstrated that these teachers mainly engage in explicit grammar teaching, regardless of the students' age.

Contrary to what teachers answered in the questionnaire, the students who took part in this study, especially adult learners, seem to favour an explicit approach. However, it was noticeable that young learners and adolescents do not feel strongly about one approach or the other, as there was a high frequency of neutral answers. Consequently, it was found that most teachers do not share their views with their students as regards the way grammar should be taught and learned.

Another aspect that was registered in the literature review was a tendency to avoid grammatical explanations. Nevertheless, this trend was neither mentioned by nor observed in these teachers. In fact, all these teachers showed confidence in their own KAG and it was found to be solid in all cases, from the least to the most experienced teacher. In the class observations, they all answered students' questions about grammar, and their explanations were clear, accurate and appropriate to their learners' age.

Finally, teachers consider their learners' age an important factor when teaching grammar. Therefore, the fact that these teachers do not show a tendency towards teaching grammar implicitly to young learners and more explicitly to adult students does not necessarily mean that they do not take their learners' ages into account. Instead, it appears that teachers have other reasons which justify their choice of explicit grammar for most of their classroom practices.

6.2 Pedagogical Implications

Results in this study seem to confirm that learners' expectations do not always match their teachers' classroom practices. It has been argued that such differences between learners and teachers may ultimately have an impact on students' motivation and desire to continue studying a foreign language (Brown, 2009; Schulz, 1996, 2001). For this reason, instructors should devote time to delve into students' beliefs, either through questionnaires or in-class discussions, in order to find out what their ideas about language learning are. Not only does this constitute valuable information for the teacher, who can keep students' perceptions in mind when planning their classroom activities (Schulz, 2001), but it also provides students with the reassurance that their opinions are taken into consideration (Brown, 2009).

More specifically, findings in this study and in other works have shown that, where inconsistencies occur, they are associated with teachers' inclination towards a more implicit approach to grammar teaching, favouring communication over an explicit focus on form. Students, on the contrary, tend to choose explicit grammar work. Thus, one important implication derived from these results is that educators should also share their views on how to learn the language most effectively with their learners. As Brown (2009) suggests, teachers should "help students understand some empirically proven principles of L2 learning (e.g., the importance of output, interaction, and negotiation of meaning) to justify exercises without a grammar focus or assignments graded for communicative effectiveness rather than for grammatical accuracy" (p.54). If these ideas are implemented, both teachers' and learners' expectations are more likely to be met, and students' motivation is more likely to be strengthened.

Besides, I agree with Borg (2009) that, whenever discrepancies exist, either about the approach to grammar teaching and learning or about any other aspect, these should be seen as a new opportunity for teachers and students to work on them. As this author puts it, “mismatches between teachers’ beliefs and practices should not be a focus of criticism; rather, they present exciting opportunities for deeper explorations of teachers, their cognitions, their teaching, and the contexts they work in” (p. 167).

This research has also found discrepancies between some of the teachers’ perceptions and their pedagogical decisions. Grammar teaching is the result of a complex decision-making process, rather than the application of a methodology which is considered the most effective but has not been thoughtfully chosen (Borg, 1999). Multiple internal and external factors come into play, and teachers’ core beliefs, accumulated through experience, often contradict other less influential, theoretically-based peripheral beliefs. As a result, teachers’ actual classroom practices do not always reflect their perceptions, as this study has demonstrated. This highlights the importance of teachers becoming aware of their own cognitions, especially regarding their beliefs about FL teaching and learning, and understanding the nature of those beliefs.

What is more, although this study could not associate the teachers’ approach to grammar teaching to their own insecurities about KAG, other researchers did (Borg, 2001; Sánchez, 2014). Therefore, we support Borg’s (2001) recommendation that teachers should develop realistic awareness of their own KAL, and in this case, especially KAG. Moreover, teachers should become conscious of how this knowledge impacts on practice, as much as beliefs, and be able to assess their own KAG, not only during training, but also during their whole careers.

All these suggestions made about FL grammar teaching and learning can be extended to other areas of FL teaching and learning as well. What is more, this does not exclusively apply to FL pre-service and in-service teachers and teacher educators, but also to teachers of other areas, who can benefit from analysing their own cognitions and contrast them with those of their students and with their own classroom practices.

6.3 Limitations of this research

This study is not without its limitations. To begin with, the fact that this is a case study implies that this is not a representative sample of the whole population of teachers and students in Bahía Blanca. While this was an advantage when the data had to be collected and manipulated, it does not enable us to make any generalisations to the rest of the local population or to other contexts. The results may also be biased by the unique characteristics of the institutions involved, the specific groups of teachers and students who participated, the time when this study was carried out and the limitations of the instruments applied. Consequently, this should be considered an exploratory study; any conclusions derived from it are tentative.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

Given that grammar teaching is an ill-defined domain in ELT, research on how teachers cope with such uncertainties in the classroom can help understand the nature of formal instruction (Borg, 1999). One aspect that deserves special attention is the relationship between grammar teaching and teachers' KAG, as it is a largely undeveloped issue (Borg, 2001). Although in the present study KAG does not seem to be a problem influencing teachers' instructional decisions, new studies could produce different outcomes.

Apart from that, as stated above, this is a case study, which does not aim at making any generalisations. However, it is innovative in its methodology. It analyses the grammar teaching and learning beliefs of three different student populations through different instruments which allow the researcher to make interesting comparisons. Therefore, given that, to the best of my knowledge, Bahía Blanca is an under-explored setting in the FLT area, it offers the possibility of replicability, probably including a representative sample of the whole population. Like this city, there may also be various other contexts which have not been studied yet, and where the same methodology and procedure could be applied.

Finally, this study has also revealed certain degree of uncertainty in the questionnaire answers provided by the students, especially young learners and adolescents, where the neutral option was frequently chosen. Therefore, future research

could attempt to use different data collection instruments that could be more sensitive to the characteristics of this population.

6.5 Personal comments

This study has been a great contribution and an invaluable experience, not only because it has taught me how to carry out research in this area, but also for my own teaching career. All the lessons that I observed and the interviews with each teacher have enabled me to reflect on my own practice and rethink of ways in which I could improve it. It has raised awareness of the importance of knowing, evaluating and questioning my perceptions as regards grammar teaching and learning. But apart from that, I have also become more conscious of the importance of inquiring into my students' beliefs, in order to know about their expectations and motivations to learn English. What is more, I believe this work may also help other colleagues who are interested in revising their own practices in the light of their own and their learners' perceptions on how to learn English grammar more effectively.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Classroom observation sheet

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SHEET

Date:	Number of Students:	
Year/ Grade:	Students' age:	
Level of English:	Duration of the lesson:	
School/ Institution:	Any other relevant information:	
Topic(s) covered in this lesson:		
GENERAL TOPIC/ SUBJECT:	GRAMMAR:	VOCABULARY:
Amount of time devoted to grammar teaching:		
What teaching techniques did the teacher use during the lesson?		
Teacher's approach to grammar*¹:		
- Focus-on-forms: explicit grammar rules, repetition of models, memorization of short dialogs, linguistically "simplified" texts, transformation exercises, explicit negative feedback, etc.		

<p>- Focus-on-meaning: learners are presented with comprehensible, holistic samples of communicative second language use.</p>	
<p>- Focus-on-form: briefly drawing students' attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, etc.) <i>in context</i>, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication.</p>	
<p>Strategies & Lesson Structure*²:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do teachers sequence grammar teaching activities in any particular way(s)? • Within the context of a whole lesson, at what stage(s) does grammar work occur? • To what extent do teachers explain grammar? How? • Do teachers encourage students to discover things for themselves? How? • Do teachers encourage students to become aware of grammar rules? How? • Do teachers encourage students to ask questions about grammar? • Do teachers check if students have understood and "learnt" the grammar under study? How? 	

Comments/Observations:

*¹based on Long, M. (2000). Focus on form in task-based language teaching. In R. D. Lambert & E. Shohamy (Eds.), *Language policy and pedagogy: Essays in honor of A Ronald Walton* (pp. 179- 192). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

*² taken from Borg, S. (2009). Studying teacher cognition in second language grammar teaching. *System*, 27, 19-31.

Appendix B: Questionnaire for students aged 7-12:

* Esta encuesta es anónima. Por favor no escribas tu nombre.

Parte 1 – Completar:

Tengo años.

Soy: nena / varón (tachar lo que no corresponde)

Empecé a estudiar inglés a losaños.

Parte 2

a) Nos gustaría que respondas a estas preguntas colocando un tick (✓) en la cara que mejor describe lo que opinás. Éstas son las opciones:




Sí!



Más o menos/No estoy seguro






No

Por ejemplo, si te gusta aprender inglés, dibujá un **tick (✓)** abajo de  para esta pregunta:

Me gusta aprender inglés	✓		

* Por favor elegí una solo opción para cada respuesta y no dejes ninguna sin responder.

	 Sí!	 Más o menos/ No estoy seguro.	 No
1. Aprender inglés es fácil.			

	 Sí!	 Más o menos/ No estoy seguro.	 No
2. Sé palabras sueltas en inglés (por ejemplo: “dog”, “four”, “pencil”).			
3. Puedo aprender inglés solo (sin la ayuda de mi profe).			
4. Aprendo si me explica la/el profe.			
5. Aprendo si anoto explicaciones en un cuaderno.			
6. Aprendo si escucho y practico canciones, rimas o poemas.			
7. Entiendo la diferencia entre “It is” y “They are”.			
8. Aprendo si escribo muchas oraciones con el tema nuevo.			
9. Aprendo si leo oraciones, historias, o cuentos.			
10. Aprendo si veo videos o láminas.			
11. Aprendo si repito cosas de memoria.			
12. Aprendo con juegos.			

Muchas gracias! 😊

Appendix C: Questionnaire for students aged 13-17:

* Esta encuesta es anónima. Por favor no escribas tu nombre.

Parte 1 – Acerca del alumno

Edad:

Género: M – F (tachar lo que no corresponde)

Edad a la que comenzaste a estudiar inglés:

Cantidad de años que hace que estudiás inglés:

Parte 2 – Acerca del aprendizaje de la gramática en inglés

* Nos gustaría que respondas a estas preguntas colocando una X debajo del número que elijas del 1 al 5 teniendo en cuenta lo siguiente:

1= para nada 2= no mucho 3= más o menos 4= bastante 5= mucho

* Por favor elegí un solo número para cada respuesta y no dejes ninguna sin responder.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés a través de la lectura de textos.					
2. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés a través de canciones, diálogos y otro tipo de material auditivo.					
3. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés cuando el profesor la explica en clase.					
4. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés leyendo las reglas y explicaciones que incluyen los libros que usamos.					
5. Aprendo y fijo temas gramaticales practicando ejercicios escritos.					
6. Aprendo y fijo temas gramaticales repitiendo ejemplos en forma oral.					
7. Me cuesta aprender la gramática del inglés por mí mismo si el profesor no la explica.					
8. Es mejor aprender la gramática a medida que la necesitamos, por ejemplo, para entender un texto, para escribir algo o para expresar una idea.					
9. Prefiero aprender un tema en particular (por ejemplo, el cambio climático) y a partir de allí la gramática que necesito para entender y hablar del tema.					
10. Una buena manera de aprender y fijar la gramática es estudiando de memoria frases, oraciones o diálogos.					
11. Una buena forma de aprender y fijar aspectos gramaticales es hacer ejercicios como pasando oraciones de afirmativo a negativo o interrogativo.					

	1	2	3	4	5
12. Puedo darme cuenta y aprender cómo funcionan algunos aspectos de la gramática sin la ayuda del profesor.					
13. No es importante que el docente explique gramática durante la clase.					
14. Me interesa aprender inglés para poder comunicarme, sin ocuparme de la gramática y cómo se usa.					
15. Lo primero que se debe aprender al iniciar una unidad es un tema de gramática, por ejemplo, el Pasado Continuo.					
16. Cuando era más chico, no necesitaba que el profesor explique la gramática y ahora sí.					
17. No es necesario que el docente enseñe gramática; puedo aprenderla por mí mismo.					
18. Cada vez dependo más de la explicación del profesor para entender la gramática.					
19. Recuerdo más un tema gramatical si el docente lo explica en clase, ya sea en el pizarrón, a través de una presentación <i>Power Point</i> o <i>Prezi</i> o alguna presentación similar.					
20. Aprendo mejor un tema gramatical si copio la explicación teórica, ejemplos, y si lo estudio o trato de memorizarlo para la siguiente clase o para un examen.					
21. Es importante que los alumnos analicemos ejemplos e intentemos deducir cómo funciona la gramática sin que el profesor la explique.					
22. Se puede aprender la gramática del inglés sin explicación; por ejemplo, viendo cómo se usa en un texto, una canción, etc.					

Appendix D: Questionnaire for adult students:**Creencias sobre el aprendizaje de la gramática en inglés**

Esta encuesta es anónima. Por favor no escriba su nombre en ella.

Parte 1 – Acerca del alumno

Edad:

Género:

Nivel de inglés:

Edad a la que comenzó a estudiar inglés:

Cantidad de años que hace que estudia inglés:

Parte 2 – Acerca del aprendizaje de la gramática en inglés

Indicaciones: para cada oración, indique con una X debajo del número correspondiente (1-5) si está:

1. Totalmente en desacuerdo
2. En desacuerdo
3. Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
4. De acuerdo
5. Totalmente de acuerdo

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Es importante conocer y estudiar la gramática del inglés.					
2. El foco principal de la clase de inglés debe ser la gramática.					
3. El foco principal de la clase de inglés debe ser entender el contenido de lo que se aprende.					
4. No todas las reglas gramaticales pueden deducirse sin la explicación del docente.					

	1	2	3	4	5
5. A mi edad, es más difícil deducir las reglas gramaticales por mí mismo.					
6. Es más difícil aprender un tema o estructura gramatical si está descontextualizado.					
7. Recuerdo más un tema gramatical si lo aprendo por mí mismo, cuando puedo deducir la regla a partir de ejemplos.					
8. Recuerdo más un tema gramatical si el docente lo explica en clase en forma explícita.					
9. Aprendo mejor un tema gramatical si leo o copio la explicación teórica, ejemplos, y si lo estudio o trato de memorizarlo para la siguiente clase o para un examen.					
10. Mi objetivo es aprender la gramática para poder utilizarla con fluidez al comunicarme, aunque al usarla presente leves errores.					
11. Mi objetivo es aprender la gramática con la exactitud de un hablante nativo y no cometer ningún error al utilizarla en forma oral o escrita.					
12. La gramática debe ser lo primero que se enseña al iniciar una unidad nueva.					
13. La gramática debe presentarse de manera aislada de un tema o vocabulario en particular, y luego aprender a usarla en contexto.					
14. Una forma efectiva de aprender y recordar un tema gramatical es repitiendo (en forma escrita u oral) oraciones sueltas donde la estructura a aprender esté siempre presente.					
15. Una forma efectiva de aprender y recordar un tema gramatical es memorizando diálogos, frases, etc. que contengan la estructura a aprender pero en contexto.					
16. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés cuando el docente la presenta y explica en forma explícita.					
17. Una buena forma de aprender y fijar aspectos gramaticales es a través de ejercicios de transformación de oraciones de afirmativo a negativo o interrogativo.					
18. Una buena forma de ejercitar un aspecto gramatical es a través de ejercicios para completar con la opción correcta o ejercicios de tipo <i>multiple choice</i> (respuesta múltiple).					
19. Los distintos temas gramaticales del inglés deben presentarse de a uno para poder aprenderlos, no más de uno a la vez.					
20. La gramática debe presentarse en contexto (a través de un texto, por ejemplo).					

	1	2	3	4	5
21. Aprendo mejor y fijo aspectos o temas gramaticales a partir de la lectura de un texto.					
22. Aprendo mejor y fijo aspectos o temas gramaticales a partir de la escucha de un diálogo, una canción, o mirando una serie o película.					
23. Puedo aprender aspectos o temas gramaticales comparando oraciones que poseen diferentes estructuras.					
24. Aprendo mejor la gramática del inglés cuando deduzco sus reglas por mi cuenta, como resultado del análisis y comparación de ejemplos concretos del uso de la lengua inglesa.					
25. El aprendizaje de la gramática en inglés debería ser incidental; es decir, que el aprendizaje de un aspecto gramatical ocurra mientras se está aprendiendo otra cosa.					
26. El aprendizaje de la gramática es mejor cuando se da de forma implícita; es decir, sin tener conciencia de que se está aprendiendo determinado tema o aspecto gramatical.					
27. Prefiero las clases puramente comunicativas, en las que el foco no sea la gramática, sino los distintos contenidos que se presentan y entender y trabajar con el significado de lo que se presenta.					
28. La exposición a distintos tipos de material en inglés de diversos temas es suficiente para analizar y aprender cómo funciona la gramática de este idioma.					
29. Es necesario que en algún momento de la clase/unidad el docente se detenga a enseñar gramática para que los alumnos puedan entenderla e incorporarla.					
30. No es necesario que el docente enseñe gramática; puedo aprenderla por mí mismo.					
31. Es el alumno y no el docente u otros organismos (directivos de la institución, diseño curricular, etc.) quienes deben decidir qué temas gramaticales deben aprenderse y cuándo, según va desarrollándose su sistema lingüístico.					
32. Una forma efectiva de aprender la gramática de inglés es a través del docente llamando la atención a sus alumnos a determinados elementos de la gramática en contexto, a medida que éstos surgen en forma incidental, no planeada.					
33. La enseñanza de la gramática debería seguir y respetar el interés de cada alumno, y no depender de la selección del docente u otros actores intervinientes.					

	1	2	3	4	5
34. Una buena oportunidad para aprender gramática es cuando el alumno tiene dificultades para entender o producir algo en inglés.					
35. Creo poder entender el inglés en forma escrita u oral sin saber su gramática en forma explícita.					

Appendix E: Questionnaire for teachers:

Creencias sobre el aprendizaje de la gramática en inglés

Parte 1 – Acerca del docente

Nombre y apellido:

Edad:

Género:

Antigüedad en la docencia:

Las respuestas a este cuestionario serán tratadas con estricta confidencialidad. Sólo se pide su nombre y apellido para que pueda ser identificado y así poder asociar sus respuestas con las clases observadas y la entrevista que ocurrirá posteriormente. Sin embargo, su identidad será reservada en todo momento, pudiéndose emplear un nombre ficticio en lugar del real.

Parte 2 – Acerca del proceso enseñanza-aprendizaje de la gramática en inglés

Indicaciones: para cada oración, indique con una X debajo del número correspondiente (1-5) si está:

1. Totalmente en desacuerdo
2. En desacuerdo
3. Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
4. De acuerdo
5. Totalmente de acuerdo

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Es importante tener en cuenta la edad del alumno a la hora de enseñar gramática.					
2. Los temas y el material impuesto por la institución o por el diseño curricular suelen ser limitantes a la hora de enseñar gramática.					
3. Prefiero dictar clases puramente comunicativas, en las que el foco no sea la gramática, sino los distintos contenidos que se presentan y entender y trabajar con el significado de lo que se presenta.					
4. El alumno puede aprender y fijar aspectos o temas gramaticales sin la explicación del docente, a partir de la lectura de un texto o la escucha de un diálogo, una canción, o mirando una serie o película.					

	1	2	3	4	5
5. Una buena forma de ejercitar un aspecto gramatical es a través de ejercicios para completar con la opción correcta o ejercicios de tipo <i>multiple choice</i> (respuesta múltiple).					
6. Una buena forma de aprender y fijar aspectos gramaticales es a través de ejercicios de transformación de oraciones de afirmativo a negativo o interrogativo.					
7. Una forma efectiva de aprender y recordar un aspecto gramatical es memorizando diálogos, frases u oraciones que contengan la estructura a aprender.					
8. Una forma efectiva de aprender y recordar un aspecto gramatical es repitiendo (en forma escrita u oral) oraciones que contengan la estructura a aprender.					
9. La gramática debe presentarse de manera aislada de un tema o vocabulario en particular, y luego aprender a usarla en contexto.					
10. La gramática debe ser lo primero que se enseña al iniciar una unidad nueva.					
11. Los distintos temas gramaticales del inglés deben presentarse de a uno para poder aprenderlos, no más de uno a la vez.					
12. La gramática debe presentarse en contexto (a través de un texto, por ejemplo).					
13. Es importante que el alumno aprenda la gramática con la exactitud de un hablante nativo y no cometer ningún error al utilizarla en forma oral o escrita.					
14. Es importante que el alumno pueda comunicarse fluidamente y expresar sus ideas, aunque tenga errores gramaticales.					
15. El alumno incorpora mejor una regla gramatical si la deduce por sí mismo.					
16. Es más difícil aprender un tema o estructura gramatical si está descontextualizado.					
17. El aprendizaje de la gramática es mejor cuando se da de forma implícita; es decir, sin tener conciencia de que se está aprendiendo determinado tema o aspecto gramatical.					
18. Es necesario que en algún momento de la clase/unidad el docente se detenga a enseñar gramática para que los alumnos puedan entenderla e incorporarla.					

	1	2	3	4	5
19. Una buena oportunidad para aprender gramática es cuando el alumno tiene dificultades para entender o producir algo en inglés.					
20. No se deben planificar de antemano los temas gramaticales a enseñar, sino que deben surgir a partir de las necesidades comunicativas de los alumnos.					
21. El foco principal de la clase de inglés debe ser entender el contenido de lo que se aprende.					
22. No todas las reglas gramaticales pueden incorporarse de manera implícita.					
23. La enseñanza implícita o explícita de la gramática está directamente relacionada con la edad del alumno.					
24. Los niños deben aprender inglés de manera implícita.					
25. Los niños que aprenden inglés no necesitan explicaciones de aspectos gramaticales.					
26. A medida que el aprendiz avanza en edad, necesita una enseñanza más explícita de la gramática.					
27. Es difícil que un niño entienda explicaciones explícitas de reglas gramaticales.					
28. Un adulto no puede aprender la gramática del inglés de manera implícita.					
29. Es el alumno y no el docente u otros organismos quienes deben decidir qué temas gramaticales deben aprenderse y cuándo, según avanza va desarrollándose su sistema lingüístico.					
30. El aprendizaje de la gramática debería seguir y respetar el "currículum interno" de cada alumno, no un currículum prescripto por el docente u otros actores intervinientes.					
31. Como docente es importante estar al tanto de las últimas novedades e investigaciones acerca del abordaje de la gramática.					
32. Es importante conocer las distintas metodologías y enfoques sobre la enseñanza del inglés.					
33. Es importante adaptar las metodologías y enfoques sobre la enseñanza de la gramática según el grupo de alumnos con que se trabaja.					

Appendix F: Teachers' semi-structured interview

Entrevista semi-estructurada para docentes

Sección 1: Experiencia como alumno

- a) ¿A qué edad comenzaste a estudiar inglés?
- b) ¿Considerás que la edad en la que empezaste a estudiar inglés tuvo algún impacto positivo o negativo en tu aprendizaje? ¿En qué sentido?
- c) ¿Recordás qué enfoque o metodología se utilizaba? ¿Qué opinás sobre ese enfoque/ metodología? ¿Hay elementos de ese enfoque/metodología que utilices hoy en día con alguno de tus alumnos?
- d) ¿Aprendiste la gramática de manera explícita, implícita o ambas? ¿Qué recordás de cada forma de aprendizaje?
- e) ¿Creés que tu propia experiencia como alumno influye en tu manera de dar clases hoy? ¿De qué manera?

Sección 2: Formación docente

- a) ¿Por qué decidiste ser profesor de inglés?
- b) ¿Cómo fue tu formación? (Lugar, duración, experiencia personal, etc.)
- c) ¿Qué enfoques o metodologías para la enseñanza se promovían?
- d) ¿Tuviste alguna limitación o lineamientos a la hora de llevar a cabo tus prácticas?

Sección 3: Institución en la que se desempeña

- a) ¿Tenés alguna limitación o lineamientos a la hora de llevar a cabo tus prácticas con respecto a material, metodología de trabajo, etc.?
- b) ¿En esta institución se promueve alguna metodología o alguna forma particular de abordar la gramática?
- c) ¿Tus alumnos de esta institución tienen determinadas expectativas con respecto a la forma de aprender inglés (especialmente gramática)?

Sección 4: Reflexiones y percepciones sobre la enseñanza de la gramática

- a) ¿Cómo decidís los temas gramaticales a enseñar?
- b) ¿Elegís los temas gramaticales de antemano o según surge la necesidad de enseñarlos a partir de un tema en particular trabajado en clase?
- c) ¿Cuál creés que es la mejor forma de enseñar gramática?
- d) ¿Cómo enseñás gramática actualmente?

- e) ¿Qué tenés en cuenta a la hora de enseñar gramática (características del alumno, material de trabajo, diseño curricular, lineamientos de la institución donde trabajás, etc.)?
- f) ¿Leés o consultás material actualizado para estar al tanto de las últimas novedades con respecto a la enseñanza de la gramática o de qué otra manera te mantenés actualizada/o?
- g) Al planificar y dictar tus clases, ¿priorizás la comunicación o la gramática a enseñar? ¿Por qué?
- h) ¿Adaptás tu forma de enseñar gramática según la edad de tus alumnos? ¿De qué manera?
- i) ¿Creés que la gramática siempre debe ser enseñada explícitamente?

Sección 5: Sobre las clases observadas

(This section contains different questions for each teacher).