GRAMMAR TEACHING METHODS IN AN EFL LESSON

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Kieliopilla on keskeinen asema englantia vieraana kielenä opiskeltaessa ja rakenteiden tuntemus on osa vieraiden kielten opetussuunnitelmaa. Menetelmät, joilla kielioppia opetetaan, ovat laajalti opettajien itse päätettävissä ja opetusmenetelmien kirjo on valtava. Opetus voi olla hyvinkin opettajakeskeistä ja tyyliltään luennoivaa tai puolestaan hyvin toiminnallista ja oppilaslähtöistä sekä kaikkea tältä väliltä. Tämä tutkielma toteutettiin kuvailevana tapaustutkimuksena, johon osallistui yksi englantia vieraana kielenä opettava alakoulun opettaja sekä hänen oppitunnillaan olleet 14 oppilasta. Tutkielman aihe oli kieliopin opetusmenetelmät, joten huomio keskittyi opettajaan, ei oppilaisiin. Tutkielman aineistona oli 45minuutin pituinen englannin oppitunti ja opettajan haastattelu havainnoidun oppitunnin jälkeen. Oppitunti sekä haastattelu litteroitiin ja analysoitiin laadullisen sisällönanalyysin keinoin.

Tämä tutkimus pyrki vastaamaan kysymyksiin 1) Mitä opetusmenetelmiä opettaja käyttää kieliopin opettamisessa? 2) Mikä opetusmenetelmän valintaan vaikuttaa? Tulokset osoittivat, että opettajan tyyli oli hyvin perinteinen ja opettajajohtoinen. Menetelmät, joita hän käytti opettaessaan kielioppia, olivat audiolingual metodi sekä grammar-translation metodi. Opetusmenetelmän valintaan puolestaan vaikuttaa oppilaiden lukumäärä, taidot ja luonteenpiirteet. Opettaja mainitsi myös ajankäytön olevan tärkeä tekijä oppitunteja suunniteltaessa. Tutkimusta voisi jatkaa lisäämällä osallistujien määrää ja siten pyrkiä yleistettävyyteen, tai seuraamalla kyseisen opettajan useampia oppitunteja ja päästä vielä syvemmin käsiksi hänen henkilökohtaiseen opetusfilosofiaansa.

Asiasanat – Keywords EFL teaching, grammar teaching methods, personal theory
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1   INTRODUCTION

The role of grammar in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching has gone through many changes from the grammar-translation method all the way to a communicative way of teaching, but the importance of grammar is still acknowledged and it is being taught worldwide (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 1-14). The ways of teaching it, however, are almost entirely up to teachers to decide.

The purpose of this study is to carefully describe the grammar teaching methods used by one English teacher in a lesson for 5th graders and to understand her reasons for choosing those specific methods. So the main participant of this study is an English teacher whose lesson I observed and then interviewed her to get a deeper understanding of her thoughts and feelings. This study focuses on the key features and interesting points that arise from the data that were collected by classroom observation, videotaping the lesson, and a recorded semi-structured interview. This thesis is a descriptive case study with ethnographic research features, and the form of analysis is content analysis.

First, I will shortly introduce the history of language teaching methods and discuss a few different views on grammar teaching. When teaching grammar, teachers make multiple decisions either consciously or unconsciously between, for example, direct and indirect teaching, teacher-centred and student-centred teaching, and deductive and inductive approach. What might affect this decision-making process is also discussed. Secondly, I will describe the participants and the research questions, as well as the data and methods of analysis used in the present study. Thirdly, the results will be introduced and discussed, and some transcriptions of the lesson and bits of the interview are added to back up the analysis. The study will conclude with summarising the findings and offering suggestions for further research and what could have been done differently.

2   TEACHING GRAMMAR IN EFL LESSONS

I will start this section by discussing the changing role of grammar and what grammar teaching means. Then I will continue to the options in choosing a grammar teaching method, for instance, whether to teach directly or indirectly etc. Finally, the reasons behind choosing the methods and teachers' personal theories are discussed. A study by Borg (1998) presents how these pedagogical options in grammar teaching are drawn upon.

2.1   The changing role of grammar

Grammar holds a central place in teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Over the years, however, the role of grammar has changed many times and it has not always been considered important in language teaching (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011: vi-vii). In the early stages of grammar teaching, the method that was in favour was the grammar-translation method, which mainly emphasized accuracy and grammatical knowledge, and teaching was highly from-focused. Then came the structural approach which gave more room for oral production, and the situational approach which used audio-visual methods. Drills were in favour at this time, so repetition took place in lessons. Another method that emphasizes the importance of repetition is audiolingualism, according to which learning a language is basically a question of habit formation (Johnson 2008: 166-167). After some time, focus shifted more towards communicative competence and the role of grammar was very small. However, people soon noticed that grammar should not be forgotten entirely even if the goal is successful communication and discourse. Being able to get understood and to understand others, there has to be a shared system (De Silva Joyce 1999). My attention is on the current state of grammar teaching, the state where the need for form-focused instruction and communicative language teaching goes hand in hand, and how the two can be put together successfully. (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 1-14)

To define the meaning of grammar teaching and grammar is not an easy task. There is not only one correct answer because grammar may mean very different things to different people and there are dozens of ideas and beliefs about how it should be taught. Ellis defines grammar teaching as follows:

> *Grammar teaching* involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it. (Ellis 2006: 84)

On the other hand, grammar can also be seen more as rules, as can be seen below:

> A *description of the rules* for forming sentences, including an account of the meanings that these forms convey (Thornbury 2004: 13, emphasis added).

In this paper, grammar is seen as a tool for actual language use, for instance communication, rather than Thornbury's (2004:13) definition: a description of the rules. I agree with De Silva Joyce (1999) and her idea of a shared system; grammar helps in understanding what is meant in communication. A shared system, of course involves some kinds of rules to successfully convey an idea but I would rather not use that word, a better one could be guidelines. I justify this decision by stating that communication can be understood even if a speaker makes some grammar mistakes by, for example, using a wrong tense or word order. The meaning is still likely to be understood even without perfect grammatical correctness. Later on in this study, also the teacher's personal conceptions of grammar will be discussed; her definition of grammar and its importance in language teaching.

2.2   Grammar teaching methods

When starting to teach grammar, some kind of initiation is always involved to underline a certain grammatical item. Teachers can do this by asking leading questions and that way getting the students active and involved, and then tell them which grammatical item it is that will be practiced. They may also choose a very different kind of approach, for instance, let the students themselves figure out what the topic of the lesson might be. The topic may not come clear until at the end of the lesson. In other words, teachers can make a choice between a *deductive* approach and an *inductive* approach. In the former, a

rule is introduced first and then followed by some examples where one can find this rule. This approach is fairly traditional and grammar-translation method usually follows a deductive pattern. Inductive approach, on the other hand, starts with giving examples from where students themselves can discover a certain rule. In the audiolingual method, for instance, rules are taught inductively (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 3). This way the rules might be easier to remember because students themselves are much more actively involved in the learning process. (Thornbury 2004: 29-55)

Identifying whether a method in action is deductive or inductive is only one of the tools that help to differentiate one method from another. Other tools that were used in the present study are identifying the methods' central insights, engagement of the learners' mind, the role of L1 in the classroom, and which of the four language skills are emphasized. The four skills are listening and speaking (also called the *spoken* skills), and reading and writing (the *written* skills). Another categorization is *receptive* skills (listening and reading) and *productive* skills (speaking and writing). One more tool that was used in the present study was the use of scales (drills) versus the real thing, actually using the target language in simulations of real situations, because their comparison helps in revealing the big ideas behind the methods. (Johnson 2008: 161-163, 267, 278)

According to Johnson (2008: 255-256), scales are regarded as stepping stones towards the actual language use, for example, conversation with friends or writing them a letter. Scales emphasize the importance of repetition, and one method that includes scales as one of its characteristics is the audiolingual method. The audiolingual method again, is known for its connection to behaviourism that has to do with little importance of the mind and no freedom of making choices. That freedom does not exist in scales; they are highly controlled so the use of imagination is in bare minimum. They concentrate on one small area of language, for example, pronouns in isolation. The actual language use, on the other hand, refers to the real thing that is the opposite of scales. The biggest difference between these two is the importance of the mind and the use of imagination.

Another choice that teachers can make when deciding their methods is between *direct* and *indirect teaching*. Direct teaching, which mainly consists of telling and explaining, is the traditional way of teaching in which knowledge is passed on through the teacher

and/or the textbook. "Teacher presentation (telling and explaining) is probably the most widely used exposition teaching method at the elementary and middle school levels" (Moore and Hansen 2012: 179). It is teacher-centered and teacher's role is to be the primary information provider. According to Moore and Hansen (2012), as well as Saloviita and Moilanen (2013), direct teaching with its teacher-centeredness is an effective way to provide information and help students master fundamental facts and rules. Moore and Hansen (2012) even give examples in which subjects this teaching strategy works best and one of them was grammar.

Direct teaching lessons usually follow a standard sequence of events and teachers often start these kinds of lessons by telling their students what they are going to learn, review prerequisite knowledge and skills, and then connect the new topic with students' prior knowledge. What teachers do next is the actual teaching of the content and after that they provide opportunities for students to practice the skills and process the information. Finally they assess students' learning. (Moore and Hansen 2012: 177) This kind of direct approach is said to be an efficient way to provide information quickly and the above mentioned lesson structure shows that rather clearly. However, direct teaching has its down sides as well and one of them is that it lacks in developing students' critical thinking skills. (Moore and Hansen 2012: 176) Indirect teaching, on the other hand, does exactly that. When teaching something indirectly, it can be done by means of, for instance, authentic activities that require developing ideas and discussions. Students are then much more actively involved in the learning process and possibly interact with each other, not only with the teacher.

Moore and Hansen (2012: 176) state that teaching methods should be selected carefully in order the teaching to be successful and effective. Each and every one of the students are individuals and have different level of skills, so teachers should be prepared to provide challenging activities for the independent students while assisting the ones who need help. When choosing teaching methods, Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 123-133) feel that student differences, including skills, educational background, language learning styles, such as visual and auditory, motivation, and experience, need to be taken into account. Other variables that I would include in this decision making process are student difficulties and error analysis because they help to decide which grammar issue needs to

be dealt in more detail and what to spent more time on. I would also add that keeping in mind the purpose of the lesson is helpful when deciding teaching methods. What Moore and Hansen (2012:176) regarded as the most helpful tool in the decision making was experience. Hence, trusting one's own personal theory is important but "varying the strategy can positively affect students' motivation to learn" (Moore and Hansen 2012: 177) is something that every teacher should remember.

2.3   Teachers' personal theories

Quite a lot of research has been done in the field of teaching methodology and teaching grammar in EFL lessons, but on what teachers base their instructional decisions in grammar teaching, is relatively unexplored; "the lack of attention to the cognitive bases of teachers' work in grammar teaching represents a gap in the research agenda for L2 teaching" (Borg 1998: 10). Borg (1998) presents a qualitative study on how EFL teachers approach grammar and what the factors behind their instructional decisions are. Borg concludes, based on studies by Clark& Peterson 1986, Kagan 1992, and Pajares 1992 that research has provided support for the assertion that teachers' classroom practices are determined by their personal pedagogical belief systems; stores of beliefs, knowledge theories, assumptions, and attitudes that play a significant part in shaping teachers' instructional decisions. That is the perspective from which the analysis of the study is done. Instructional decisions, again, include what kinds of materials teachers use, why they prefer a certain method over another, et cetera. The study was carried out at an English language institute in Malta in a Mediterranean centre for TEFL and the observed lesson was for intermediate- level EFL students, taught by a native speaker of English. The data gathering methods used in the study was classroom observation and a recorded semi-structured interview. In this paper, when teachers' personal theory is discussed, it involves also the concepts of Borg's personal pedagogical system.

What the study found out was that the teacher used learner-centred approach to teaching and chose his methods based on what he thought that students of that age needed and on what level their language skills were. So students' age, skills, and needs were taken into account when deciding the teaching methods. One of the ways he analysed their level of skills was error analysis and that helped him to design the programme. He let the

students themselves give suggestions how to correct their own errors after they had discussed what went wrong exactly. According to Borg (1998), the error analysis activities were designed to encourage students to investigate grammar and the teacher believed that inductive learning is more memorable for the students. The teacher also encouraged students to refer to their L1 when learning grammar and based his beliefs purely on experience and what he thought that worked well. By experience, he found it useful to point out similarities between the target language and the students' L1 because he felt it works as an eye-opener for them. In other words, the decisions were made based on his personal pedagogical system (personal theory), leaning strongly on experience. What was interesting was that he never rationalised his behaviour and decisions in terms of external forces, such as curriculum requirements or standardised tests, because in that specific school teachers were not obliged to follow any syllabus or textbooks. The teacher also tried to predict how his students would react to the use of explicit grammatical terminology when teaching grammar and modified his actions accordingly.

Study of this kind, authentic description of teachers' thoughts and actions, presents how pedagogical options in grammar teaching are drawn upon and what L2 grammar teaching actually involves! It provides a new point of view that is in need of further study to expand the aspects of the field of L2 teaching. Borg also mentions that this kind of study inspires teachers to analyse their own personal theories and what their teaching methods are based on. By doing so, they can find support for their actions and justify them. Personally, I feel that it is also important for teachers to analyse their personal theories because what they think of a language and grammar teaching is very likely to impact their students' thoughts and attitudes as well.

SLA (Second Language Acquisition) theories and all the research that has been done in the area offer only proposals how grammar can be taught, what might work etc. According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011:138), SLA theories can help teachers to understand how language learning and teaching might work but they are not in position to tell teachers what to do. This means that teachers might use these materials as tools to design their lessons but they have to try their effectiveness in their own classroom to see what actually works. "As an old saying goes, experience is the best teacher. This is

especially true when it comes to language teaching" (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 140). Based on Nassaji and Fotos (2011), what SLA theory has proved successful is multifaceted teaching because there is no one method that could cover all the dimensions of learning a language. Using various teaching methods is the key of successful teaching.

3   DATA & METHODS

In this section, I will start by introducing the participants of this study and the research questions. Then I will introduce the data gathering methods and describe how the data were analysed, including reasons for my choices.

3.1   Participants and research questions

The data were gathered in an elementary school in Tampere region in Finland in January 2013 by videotaping one lesson and interviewing the teacher. The main participant of this study was an English teacher with approximately 12 years of experience and the observed lesson was for 5th graders who study English as a foreign language. I chose this particular age group because they have been studying English for two years, so they were also familiar with learning grammar. In the present study, I do not use the teacher's real name for ethical reasons. Hence, she is called Raija Salminen. For clarification, the students and their learning outcomes do not have a part in this study; the focus is only on the teacher because this study is about teaching methods. Due to the scope of the research data, this study does not seek to make generalisations because it is a case study with an aim to describe and understand.

As discussed in the background section, teachers can make a choice between deductive and inductive approach, meaning the order in which a grammar point is taught; from rules to examples or vice versa. Also other tools that were discussed previously, such as the engagement of the mind and the emphasized language skills, help in deciding which grammar teaching methods are in action. However, it is rarely a clear cut because methods tend to overlap and co-occur so there might be, for example, two methods in

action simultaneously. The aim of this study is to point out which grammar teaching methods the teacher uses in the EFL lesson and to understand why she chose to use those specific strategies; what did she take into account when deciding which teaching methods to use. The research questions are as follows:

1. What kinds of grammar teaching methods does the teacher use?
2. What does the chosen method depend on?

3.2   Data gathering and methods of analysis

I chose to collect my data in a naturally occurring setting, which means that the teaching session would have taken place even without my presence, and I chose to do this because of the authenticity of the data (Nunan 1992: 53). Classroom observation enabled making interpretations and to get the overall picture on what was going on; how the teacher introduced the grammar topic, did she use grammar practise materials and what they were like etc. In other words, I could actually see the teaching methods in action. While the lesson went on and the video recorder taping it, there was time to take field notes on what I found interesting and important for the aim of the current research. Going to the field, making notes, and observing are all parts of ethnographic research features.

So in this study, I used an ethnographic approach to collect my data. According to Pitkänen-Huhta (2011:88), ethnography literally means writing about people and its aim is to understand the research subject. That was the aim of this study as well; I was not looking for any patterns or aiming for generalizing the results, but rather to get a deeper understanding of the teacher's thoughts and what influenced her decision making when choosing the methods. One reason why this study cannot be generalized is the fact that I only observed one English lesson. To get a deeper understanding why the teacher chose the methods she did, I interviewed her after the observed lesson. Interviews that take place soon after the mental events are called *retrospective interviews* (Nunan 1992: 116-117). The interview was *semi-structured*, so there was a certain theme and a few main questions but also room for extra questions that came up as the interview proceeded (see the structure of the interview in appendix). All the data were collected during one day and the interview was held in the same classroom where the lesson was observed.

A qualitative research method was chosen in order to get the answers to the research questions. The questions were about the teacher's own thoughts and feelings, her personal theory, so a qualitative research seemed more suitable for this purpose than a quantitative research. Because there was only one participant in this study, one can call this a *case study*. A case study is detailed and gives intensive information about, in this case, an individual and about her behaviour in a naturally occurring situation and the data is collected by several methods, including observation and interview (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007: 130-131). Thus, this study seeks to describe the grammar teaching methods used by one elementary English teacher and provide reasons for her actions that came up in the interview.

After collecting the data, I transcribed both the lesson and the interview in verbatim to get the data in a written form. I did the lettering in a more detailed way in points where I found the information to be relevant for the research questions. In addition, the form of analysis used in this study is content analysis, so the focus is on *what* is said. Content analysis felt most suitable for the purpose of this study because the focus in on a human being and her thoughts.

All in all, several methods were applied to collect the data; classroom observation, videotaping the lesson, and finally a recorded semi-structured interview. To summarise, this thesis is a descriptive case study with ethnographic research features, and the form of analysis is content analysis.

4   "LISTEN AND REPEAT"

In this section, the overall structure of the lesson will be provided, as well as some transcriptions. In addition, bits of the interview are added in several points to back up the analysis. It will also be discussed how the teacher's ideas of grammar teaching and her personal goals coincided and what affects her instructional decision making.

4.1   Structure of the lesson

For the purpose of a clearer structure and order, the lesson has been divided into three parts: initiation, teaching, and practising. However, these parts do overlap more or less because the actual teaching took place in the beginning and in the end as well. The lesson began like this:

> Example 1.
> Raija: Let's start by standing up first. OK. Good morning everybody.
> Students: Good morning Ms Salminen.
> Raija: Sit down please and take out your homework.

As we can see, the teacher started the lesson rather formally and it was done in English. I think it is quite safe to assume that this same pattern has occured many times before because all the students replied in unison and their actions seemed well rehearsed. Immediately after the greetings, however, the language switched from English to Finnish when they started to check the homework (this was done by the teacher circling around in the classroom and checking one by one that everyone had done the exercises). The teacher used English only when giving short instructions like "listen and repeat" or "take the page…", but usually she said the same things in Finnish as well. So, the main language of the lesson was Finnish, the students' and the teacher's L1, and English appeared only occasionally in instructions and, of course, in the textbook's exercises and activities. In the interview, when I asked her about the methods that she uses to teach grammar, the first thing she said was that she teaches grammar in Finnish. She justified her choice by saying:

> Example 2.
> Raija: Se lähtee niinku siitä. Ei, näille on ihan turha ruveta selittään mitään englanniksi kauheesti että noniin että siitä tulee väkisinkin sitä että suomen kielellä selitetään että katoppa nyt tässä on tällänen. *'That's the starting point. It would be useless to explain anything to them in English that much and it just has to be explained in Finnish, for instance, look, now we are dealing with…'*

This comment suggests that her belief about the use of Finnish was, at least in some level, based on experience but her thoughts are widely shared: "A deductive method involves giving rules, and in practice this will often have to be done in the learners' L1. It is often not practicable to explain grammatical rules to a learner (particularly at the early learning stages) in the target language" (Johnson 2008: 163). This does not,

however, directly imply that the methods the teacher used were deductive just because the rules were discussed in the students' (and the teacher's) mother tongue. The excerpt was given to back up the teacher's choice to use Finnish when giving instructions and dealing with grammar. Thus, the teacher made a clear instructional decision to teach grammar in Finnish so that was one of the things that helped me in revealing her teaching methods.

After checking the homework, the teacher introduced the new grammar topic by playing a rhyme from the textbook that the students were to listen carefully and then mimic it. This rhyme was full of singulars and plurals, the grammar topic of the day being singular and plural forms. The teacher did not tell the students the topic until the listening exercise was over, but gave a subtle hint in a form of a rhyme. The skills that were given emphasis this far were clearly spoken skills. The way she then started to verbally introduce the new grammar topic to her students was the following: she used some leading questions and that way stimulated the students to communicate and made them aware of what was about to come. Here is a transcript of what the conversation was like:

Example 3.
Raija: Mmm. No sitte. Jos katot näitä vaatekuvia täällä. Kummat näistä on yksikössä ja kummat monikossa ja mistä sen tietää?
          'Mmm, well then. If you look at these pictures of clothes here. Which ones are in singular and which ones in plural, and how do you know that?'
Student   Eiks se oo siinä et jos on aa edessä nii se on yksikkö? Ööö, noi a jumper, a dress..
          'Isn't it because if there is an 'a' before it so then it's singular? Umm, a jumper, a dress..'
Raija   No jos sulla ois pelkästään nää sanat nii tietäsiksä että ne on monikossa? (0:25) Eli oisko sulla joku vinkki niissä
          'If you'd only have these words, would you know that they are in plural? Is there some kind of a hint'
Student   No jos siel on s-pääte.
          'Well if it ends with s.'
Raija   Nii. Eli sitähän me on harjoteltu kolmoselta lähtien että kun meillä on yksikkö, esimerkiksi a jumper, nii miten sä tekisit siitä monikon? Vaikka tosta sanasta a jumper.
          'Yes. So that is what we have been practising since third grade that when we have a singular, for example a jumper, how do you change it into plural? That word a jumper, for instance.'

The teacher asking the students to give plural forms continued for a couple of minutes. One of the words they elaborated on was 'a night dress' and why they now had to add letters es to change it into a plural; a student knew the correct answer and then the teacher repeated the rule for the whole class that when a word's final letter is already s,

you then add letters es. I would say that this far the teacher used kind of an inductive approach because she did not explicitly explain any rules or such before listening the rhyme but she did move on to the rules rather quickly so perhaps the students did not have enough time to figure out the topic themselves. Next, they listened and repeated a song that was full of plurals:

> Example 4.
> Raija   Ja katotaas vähä tarkemmin työkirjasta, take out your writers and page 117. Sieltä meidän kielioppiasia. Ensi siel on laulu joka on täääynnä monikoita (reads the song out loud). Listen and sing.
> *'Let's look at this a bit more carefully from the workbook…There is our grammar topic. First there is a song full of plurals...'*

This far, the lesson was about initiating the grammar topic and familiarizing the students with it. This initiation part was very much focusing on spoken skills; there were mainly "listen and repeat" types of exercises, provided either by the teacher or becoming from a tape. These repetition drills restrict the students' freedom to make choices and use their imagination because there is only one correct way to do them and it is by repeating exactly what they have heard. The engagement of the mind then, is significantly small. I already discussed the audiolingual method and its typical features (scales, repetition, behaviourism…), and it seems that those features existed in the observed lesson rather clearly. Not only based on the repetition and the engagement of the mind did I conclude this, but also with the help of one of the tools in distinguishing a method in action; emphasized language skills. The audiolingual method's prioritised order of the language skills is listening-speaking-reading-writing (Johnson 2008: 165-166) and later on in the study, it will become clear that the order of the emphasized skills of the observed lesson was very similar indeed.

The second part of the lesson started after they had sung the song; the actual grammar teaching, so to speak. The teacher did not discuss about the song any further so they immediately continued to an exercise called 'the grammar gadget'. This was the theoretical part in the exercise book, including rules and examples of how to form plural words. The teacher pointed out the rules that had already been introduced to the students and then they once again listened and repeated the words. She asked the students how to form plural forms, for example, from 'a leaf' or 'a puppy', and then they discussed about the rules (it should be emphasized that discussion only took place between the

teacher and the students, not between the students themselves). Next they took a closer look to the grammatical rules from the final pages of the textbook where there was a grammar section of its own and repeated the irregular forms after the teacher. The series of books used was Yippee!.

What they did next was an exercise from the teacher's electronic guidebook that was projected on a screen in the front. The exercise was in Finnish. It was actually the only exercise that was not available for the students in their own books. It was the type of exercise where the students had to choose a rule that best fit in different examples. One question was why the plural form of 'a bus' is 'buses', and there were in total five different explanations from which the students were to pick the most suitable one. There were a few examples that the students had already been introduced to earlier in the lesson and those seemed to be the easiest ones. I concluded this based on how many students seemed to know the answer and how quickly they raised their hands. All in all, the middle part of the lesson was theoretical and the stress was clearly on grammar *rules*. The exercise from the teacher's guidebook made it very clear; its meaning was to show the students the variety of rules and to give them tools to identify in which cases certain rules apply and why. Hence, making students learn grammar rules has clearly an emphasis in the teacher's lessons.

The final part of teaching grammar in the lesson was practicing. The way the students practiced grammar was by doing exercises from the workbook independently. Note that the written work did not take place only after they had practised it orally, so it can be concluded that the order of skills is still consistent with the audiolingual method's order. While the students practised, the teacher went around in the classroom and monitored how they were doing. She helped some students when they needed it and gave further instructions for the fastest ones. That was actually the only type of interaction that took place while practising grammar (once again teacher-student interaction), so there was no interaction between the students. Of course the students changed a few words with each other every now and then but it was not part of any exercise or activity provided by the teacher. They had time to also check some of the exercises and that was done either by the teacher listing the correct answers or her choosing a student to give his or her answer. Before that, the teacher reminded the students about the importance of

meticulousness and that it was not "a speed contest". Also when they started checking the correct answers, the teacher said:

Example 5.
Raija   Niin ja muistatko mikä kokeessaki oli se itsearviointijuttu eli se tärkein juttu että korjaan virheeni tarkistaessani tehtäviä. Se on nyt se tärkein juttu sit ku lähetään yhessä tarkistamaan.
'Oh right and do you remember what in the exam was that self-evaluation thing so the most important thing was that I correct my mistakes when I check exercises. That is now the most important thing when we start checking the exercises together '

All in all, up to fifteen minutes was spent on the exercises (or drills) and most of the students got as much as five of them done. "One of the audiolingualism's central tenets is that learning a language is largely a question of habit formation, and for this reason a good part of the lesson is spent on drills, in an attempt to make using the grammar point an automatic habit" (Johnson 2008:10). The exercises were done in linear order and they were extremely similar; marking whether a word was singular or plural, or changing words and sentences into plurals. There were a few extra tasks in some of the exercises that were a bit more functional, using one's own imagination and creating sentences or reading with one's partner, but those exercises were left out. After practising, the teacher gave one grammar exercise for the students to do at home. However, the fastest students had already completed it in the lesson. In the interview, Raija said that it is important that students get grammar exercises to do at home as well because that way they get more practise.

4.2   Mismatch between the chosen methods and the wanted results

As it was mentioned, Raija's personal conceptions of grammar teaching and her definition of it are important for understanding the rationales behind her decisions.

Example 6.
Interviewer Mimmonen merkitys sun mielestä on kieliopilla niinkun kun kieltä opetaan ja kielen opiskelussa?
'How important do you think that grammar is in teaching and learning a language'
Raija   Onhan siinä. Ja nää on nyt jo viidesluokkalaisia että näille voi jo mennä sitä semmosta että noniin tässä on tää tämmönen sääntö (…) että se on niinku tärkeemmässä asiassa että opetetaan kielioppi kielioppina jo vitosilla. Mut sitte taas kolmosilla ja nelosilla mennään niinku sillä tavalla että se tulee siinä mukana. (…) Sanotaan että millä tavalla tahansa sitä opettaa ni kyllä se siellä mukana kulkee koko ajan."
'It is. And these are already fifth graders so you can say like okay here we have this grammar rule (...) and it is more important that grammar is taught as grammar for fitfh

graders. But for third and fourth graders it kind of goes along (...) Let's say that no matter how it's taught, it will always be there'

Raija then defines grammar more as rules than guidelines, so her conceptions differ from how grammar is seen in this paper but agrees with the one made by Thornbury (2004:13). She also mentioned that she uses grammatical terminology and talks explicitly about grammar rules for 5ᵗʰ graders. When observing the lesson, I did notice that she established grammar rules very clearly and gave them high meaning and importance. Raija also mentioned her goals in teaching:

Example 7.

Raija   Tärkeä osa kieltä. Mutta se ei oo mitenkään pääosassa (…) Meillä on kaikkea muuta; ne kappaleet on tärkeitä, sanasto on tärkeetä, ja se ei nouse mitenkään yli muiden (…) Se on osa meidän työkaluja että me osataan puhua näitä asioita(…) Että mä oon joskus sanonukki että kielitaito on sellasta että taloo rakennettas että ensi täällä tehään perustat ja sitte ruvetaan siihen aina laittaan lisää ja sit sä voit ku sulla on jo siellä olemassa sitä taitoo siellä että sä vaan niinku kasvatat sitä lisää. Siihen lisää kerroksia että semmoseen pyritään täällä semmoseen vankkaan pohjatyöhön että sitte ois helpompaa koulussa jatkaa että se on se tavote.

'Important part of a language. But not the most important one(...)We have everything else; chapters are important, vocabulary is important, so it does not have any higher status than other areas (...) It's one of our tools to be able to speak about these things (...) I have sometimes said that building up language skills is like building a house that first you do the foundations and then you start gradually adding more and more and once you have created enough skills, then you just gradually add more, add more layers so that is our goal here, building strong foundations so then it would be easier to continue at school…continuing is the goal.

What Raija said about grammar, signals that her goal of teaching is that students could actually use the target language communicatively in real life situations (the real thing), but also the exact opposite: to be better at school. Based on the interview only, the overall focus of the teacher's classroom practise could be seen as developing both accuracy and communicative competence. Having observed her lesson, however, I would say that the way she taught grammar actually developed more fluent and accurate use of English, not that much the real thing. So there seems to be a mismatch between what the teacher said and what she actually did, but my conclusions are based on only one lesson so no generalisations can be made. The way she could have completed both of her goals, getting the students to learn successful communication in English, as well as mastering grammar, form-focused instruction and focus on grammar should have been taught in a meaningful communicative context (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011).

It is not a clear-cut which method the teacher used the most in her lesson but I feel that the audiolingual method was clearly one of them because there were a lot of repetition in the lesson, the order of the emphasized language skills was the same as in the audiolingual method, the lesson was highly teacher-led, the engagement of the mind was minimal etc. "In much audiolingual teaching, there was no real thing practise. New structures were introduced and drilled. (…) The belief seems to have been that once a structure has been thoroughly drilled, no further exercising will be necessary; the structure will make its way from controlled classroom practise into everyday use without any further effort". (Johnson 2008:268) As I already mentioned, all the drills that were done during the lesson would probably have been gotten transferred more correctly in real-life conversations if those situations were practised in meaningful communicative context. According to Ellis (2006), grammar teaching that is only based on drills and explicit explanations is unlikely to result in fluent communication skills. However, he continues that there are disagreements about which method would be the most beneficial for teaching communicative skills, so it points to the need for more research. Nassaji and Fotos (2011) even state that the role of grammar teaching is the most controversial matter in the entire field of language pedagogy. "The controversy has always been whether grammar should be taught explicitly through a formal presentation of grammatical rules or implicitly through natural exposure to meaningful language use" (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 1). Therefore, I have no reason to criticise the way Raija taught grammar to her students.

There were a few other contradictions that came up and one them was Raija's example of building up language skills piece by piece that somewhat conflicts with the analysis I have done this far, pointing out that she has a slightly behaviouristic approach towards language teaching. Actually, I did not even expect that my findings would be one-sided, involving features from only one grammar teaching method. Teachers' personal theory may consist of several different ideas and their boundaries be quite blur. A distinction I was meant to do was between inductive and deductive approach but the observed lesson did not clearly represent one or the other. They were both used and even the teacher said in the interview that she uses both of them but feels that it is still very important to explicitly clarify the grammar topic that they are dealing with.

I would conclude that the lesson had many characteristics of an audiolingual method but some traits of other methods as well, for example, the grammar-translation method. According to Nassaji and Fotos (2011), the grammar-translation method is still widely used especially in FL teaching, even though it was introduced already in the end of the 18th century. It favours deductive teaching and explicit explanations of rules, as well as memorization and translating the target language to the L1. These do fit rather well with the activities that were done during the observed lesson. Especially the use of L1 in the lesson points to the grammar-translation method; the lesson was mainly in Finnish and the majority of the exercises required translation from one language into another. However, there are many similarities between the audiolingual method and the grammar-translation method so their boundaries are blurred. These similarities are the role of the teacher and the role of the students, the focus on learning grammatical structures (in a different way though), and that most of the interaction is between the teacher and the students (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011).

The use of grammar practice materials and exercises, in which the students were encouraged to practice the rules they had just been taught about, was clearly one of the teacher's methods to teach grammar. They were done individually and in a written form. The exercises had a big part in the lesson; there were altogether five singular/plural exercises during the lesson and they were performed in linear order from the textbook. Some of them required also translation. These grammar exercises were done after the teacher had explained the rules of how to form plural forms. To take just one of the exercises as an example, the students were required to fill the gap with a correct form. The singular form was already given, so they needed to change it into a plural, applying the grammatical rules that they had already practiced earlier. They were encouraged to look back on 'the grammar gadget' and the grammar section of their textbooks when completing the exercises.

The lesson was highly teacher-led and teacher-centred, and the students were mainly just information receivers. According to Saloviita and Moilanen (2013), teacher-led lesson is a good way to provide information but also to control what goes on in the classroom. The role of the teacher then is to be the authority in the classroom and usually whatever interaction takes place in the lesson is only between the teacher and

the students. Saloviita and Moilanen (2013) present a clear structure, phase by phase, of a teacher-led lesson. Their description of a lesson is almost exactly the same as the one made by Moore and Hansen (2012), mentioned in the discussion on direct teaching in the beginning of this study. According to both of these descriptions, the lesson begins with greetings and checking the homework, in other words, reviewing prerequisite knowledge. Next, the teacher introduces and teaches the new topic and then the students get to practise and process what the teacher had just taught them. After that, the teacher makes sure that the students have actually learned the topic by checking the exercises or asking questions, and finally the students are provided with homework from that same topic. The two corresponding descriptions, Saloviita and Moilanen (2013) and Moore and Hansen (2012), strengthen the concept of direct teaching even more and makes it more trustworthy to compare the observed lesson with these two descriptions. And the result was that Raija's lesson was indeed teacher-led and her method of teaching was much more direct than indirect.

4.3   Teacher's instructional decision making

There seemed to be a mutual understanding between the author of the textbook and the teacher's own assumptions of which grammar points and exercises were the most important ones for the students to learn and possibly to benefit from. Reasons that led me into thinking this were, first of all, the heavy reliance on the textbook and going through almost all of the provided exercises in linear order. Secondly, there were no activities outside the ready-made ones. Another explanation, however, could be that the teacher relied on the book for pure convenience because that is a rather effortless alternative. I would still lean towards some level of similarity in their personal theories. In the interview, I asked Raija what kinds of grammar practise exercises she prefers and her response was the following:

> Example 8.
> Raija   No meillähän on toi kirja. Että emmä oo hirveesti ku nää ensinnäki ne hukkaa kaikki monisteet jos mä niille niinku teen et mä yritän niinku minimoida sen et meil ei oo mitään. Ja tos on aikas hyviä tossa kirjassa (...)Mutta siis se että niis on monipuolisia ne tehtävät nii ei mun, MUN ei mee niinku aikani siihen että mää miettisin että voi ei tätä ei nyt harjoteltu yhtään.
> *'Well, we have that book. So I haven't that much because first of all they always misplace every handout if I do those for them so I try like to minimize that we don't like have anything. And the book has quite good ones(...) But because the exercises are*

versatile so my, MY time won't go like into thinking that oh no this thing hasn't been practised at all.'

Straight away Raija mentioned the textbook and how good exercises there are. So the justifications she mentioned for using the textbook was that the exercises are versatile and that she does not have to spend time on coming up with entirely new ones. I also asked her whether she prefers a specific, repetitive structure in her lessons or if she likes to change her teaching methods often and she responded that her students prefer a repetitive structure in the lessons and that they usually do everything in the same order and the same way, and that they are comfortable with it. So it is clear that it has become a routine for the students to do the textbook exercises because their teacher has not come up with exercises of her own. Repetetive lesson structure might again have something to do with the time constraints Raija mentioned. It is still a bit unfortunate because using various teaching methods is said to have a positive effect on students' motivation to learn (Moore and Hansen 2012: 177). However, she did refer to another book series that has only a few examples and one or two exercises of a grammar topic, so she then tries to come up with her own exercises and even make the exams herself because she is not happy with the ones that are made by the author of the textbook. This confirms my conlcusions about the similar thoughts of the teacher and the textbook used in the observed lesson and Raija even said herself that the exercises in the book are versatile. She continued by saying that not every exercise work with every class and that teachers' guidebooks have a lot of stuff where they are supposed to do all kinds of *fuctional* things:

Example 9.
Raija   Toinen ryhmä on tosi levoton. Ei onnistu. Mun täytyy niinku karsia kaikki semmoset pois, hyvin opettaja johtosta!
'Another group is very restless. Not going to work out. I have to cut down all those exersices, very teacher-led!'

I got a feeling that Raija probably does not appreciate functional activity types as much as more formal ones because they take more time and classroom management is somewhat more challenging than in teacher-centred lessons. She probably has experience on these kinds of activity types and them not working with a more restless group of students. Raija also mentioned that teachers' guides are more useful for teachers with less experience, referring to ready-made lesson plans that help the teacher

to get an overall picture of what should be done and how much time there is to be spend. She then added that she teaches one group where they can study much more freely and do things a little differently every now and then, just for the fun of it. According to Raija, how she teaches depends very much on what kind of a group is at stake.

Putting all these matters together gives us the answer for the second research question of this study; based on what does the teacher choose the grammar teaching method. What I managed to distinguish was classroom management, in other words, what the students are like. Classroom management issues seemed to have the most powerful influence on the teacher's instructional decisions in grammar teaching. Another matters she mentioned were time constraints, the number of the students, and their level of English skills. Here is a part of the interview where Raija mentioned the level of skills:

Example 10.
Raija   Mää tiiän että siinä on vähä hitaampia siinä toisessa nii me käytetään sitte enemmän aikaa siihen. Ja sitte taas ku on nää toiset jotka niinku äkkiä tekee kaikki nii mä annan sille sen mahollisuuden että ne saa tehä. Ja sitte teen ehkä vähä enemmän sillee että minä oon sitte vähä enemmän siinä sen toisen ryhmän kanssa ja et kaikki sais sitte ja jotenki kokis että on sellasta että otetaan huomioon.
'I know that there are a bit slower students in the other one so then we use more time in that. And with these others who like to do everything fast, I give them the chance to do that. And then perhaps I focus more on the other group so that everyone would feel that they are given attention'

Raija then varies the pace of her teaching depending on the level of skills of the students. The slower the students, the more time will be spent on helping them. This indicates that she considers her students as individuals which is the right thing to do according to, for example, Moore and Hansen (2012) and Nassaji and Fotos (2011).

5   DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, I will summarize the findings of this study and discuss whether I got the answers to my research questions. Then I will present some suggestions for further study and what I could have done differently and why.

The aim of the study was to describe the grammar teaching methods used by one elementary English teacher and also to provide and understand the reasons for her actions. It was a case study, so I did not seek to make any generalisations. The first

research question aimed at identifying and describing the methods that the teacher chose to use in one of her EFL lesson for the 5th graders. The results of the analysis of the videotaped lesson were the most useful ones in identifying which method was in action. What I concluded was that the teacher used traditional ways of teaching and the lesson was highly teacher-led, the role of the students being rather passive information receivers. The two methods I managed to distinguish were the audiolingual method and the grammar-translation method. How I came up with these two methods were with the help of identifying, for instance, the main language of the lesson, the role of the teacher and the students, and the emphasized language skills. My second research question focused on the teacher's reasons behind the chosen methods and I thought that getting an answer to that question helps me in understanding her personal theory of teaching. What I found out was that the chosen method depends on classroom management, the number and the level of the students, as well as time constraints, and came to this conlusion by analysing the interview. So both of the research question were answered.

What I could have done differently was to go through the recorded lesson step by step together with the teacher. That way she could have explained why she did things how she did without me asking questions and possibly interrupting her when she was about to say something very relevant for the purpose of the study. When I started to analyse all the collected data, I noticed that there were a few gaps that I would really have liked to get an answer to. One of them was about the methods Raija prefers to use and which ones she considers effective. I also could have asked her to fill in the missing gaps later on but somehow I felt that too much time had gone by and that she would not have remembered the events of that lesson anymore. After completing the study, I realised that I should have focused more on the teacher's personal theory and have more interview questions related to that, because the grammar teaching methods were quite easy to detect from the videotape. The need for further research for teachers' personal theory was also something I came across not until after collecting the data.

The present study is a case study, meaning that only one teacher participated in the research. That is why the results are impossible to generalise and they do not offer a very reliable overall picture of the teacher's personal theory and how she usually teaches grammar. Yes, I did have the interview as one of the data gathering methods but

what is said does not always correspond with what is actually done. For further study, it might be interesting to observe several lessons by the same teacher and then get more reliable results on what that teacher's personal theory is like etc. Another possibility could be to include more participants and look into these English teachers' similarities and differences. That way some level of generalisations could be made, for instance, in what ways grammar is taught for 5th graders in Tampere region. I would still choose to make a longitudinal study instead of adding more participants because as it was already mentioned, on what teachers base their instructional decisions in grammar teaching, is relatively unexplored. To site Borg (1998:32), "continuing work of this kind has a central role to play in providing realistic accounts of what L2 grammar teaching actually involves". He also mentions that it would inspire teachers to analyse their own personal theories and by doing so, find support for their actions and justify them. I feel that this kind of study would also help new teachers to create their own personal theories and then carefully select their methods of teaching, which was said by Moore and Hansen (2012:176) to be crucial for successful teaching.

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APPENDIX 1: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Kauanko olet ollut englannin opettaja?

- Ikäluokat

2. Kuinka suuri merkitys kieliopilla on mielestäsi kielen opettamisessa ja oppimisessa?

- Kieliopin määritelmä

3. Millä menetelmillä opetat yleensä kielioppia?

- Kielioppitehtävät
- Induktiivinen / Deduktiivinen

4. Miten valitset mitä menetelmää käytät? Mikä valintaasi vaikuttaa?

- Opettajan opas

5. Vaihteletko opetusmenetelmiä usein vai onko tunneillasi tietty kaava? Miksi?

6. Oletko huomannut jonkun menetelmän toimivan paremmin kuin muut?