

Opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching:
a study of Finnish upper-secondary-school students

Master's thesis

Mia Sormunen

University of Jyväskylä
Department of languages
English
December 2013

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Mia Sormunen	
Työn nimi – Title Opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching—a study of Finnish upper-secondary-school students	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Pro gradu–tutkielma
Aika – Month and year December 2013	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 83 sivua + 3 liitettä
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Kieliopin opettaminen on kautta aikojen ollut yksi ristiriitaisimmista asioista vieraiden kielten opettamisessa. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää suomalaisten lukiolaisten mielipiteitä englannin kieliopin oppimisesta ja opettamisesta. Tutkimus keskittyi oppilaiden mielipiteisiin englannin kieliopista yleisesti, palautteesta ja virheiden korjaamisesta, sekä kieliopin ja kommunikoinnin välisestä yhteydestä. Lisäksi tutkimus pyrki selvittämään, millaisia ovat tyypilliset kielioppitunnit, ja mitä asioita oppilaat haluaisivat tehtävän toisin kieliopin opetuksessa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin kyselylomakkeella kahdesta eri koulusta, ja yhteensä 98 oppilasta osallistui tutkimukseen. Kyselylomake sisälsi avoimia kysymyksiä, monivalintakysymyksiä, sekä osallistujien taustamuuttujiin liittyviä kysymyksiä. Monivalintakysymysten vastaukset analysoitiin tilastollisesti ja avointen kysymysten vastaukset sisällönanalyysin avulla. Vastauksia vertailtiin myös osallistujien sukupuolen ja englannin kielen arvosanan mukaan.</p> <p>Oppilaiden mielipiteet englannin kieliopista olivat todella positiivisia. Kieliopin opiskelu koettiin tärkeäksi ja hyödylliseksi, koska se auttoi oppimaan englantia. Kielioppi auttoi ymmärtämään, miten kieli toimii, ja antoi näin varmuutta kielenkäyttöön. Kieliopin opiskelu nähtiin myös vaativana ja tylsänä erityisesti, koska se sisälsi paljon poikkeuksia ja ulkoa opettelua. Oppilaiden mielipiteet palautteesta ja virheiden korjaamisesta olivat myös positiivisia. Virheiden korjaaminen auttoi oppilaita huomaamaan omat heikkoudet, ja oppimaan virheistään. Jokaisen pienen virheen korjaaminen ei kuitenkaan ollut heidän mielestään tarpeellista, sillä se koettiin lannistavaksi. Kyky kommunikoida ja vuorovaikutus toisten ihmisten kanssa koettiin tärkeämmäksi elämässä kuin pilkuntarkka kieliopin opettelu. Oppilaat, joilla oli korkeammat arvosanat, pitivät kieliopin opiskelusta enemmän, ja he myös suhtautuivat positiivisemmin virheiden korjaamiseen kirjoitetusta kielestä.</p> <p>Oppilaat kuvailivat tyypillisen englannin kielioppitunnin noudattavan perinteistä kaavaa, jossa kielioppiasia ensin esiteltiin oppilaille, ja tämän jälkeen kielioppia harjoiteltiin erilaisilla tehtävillä. Oppilaat olivat melko tyytyväisiä kielioppituntien rakenteeseen, mutta he myös toivoivat lisää pari-/ryhmätyöskentelyä, esimerkkejä, sääntöjä ja apua opettajalta, sekä vähemmän kirjoittamista.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords EFL grammar, foreign language learning, grammar teaching, feedback, error correction	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository Kielten laitos	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMAR.....	6
	2.1 Definitions of grammar.....	6
	2.2 Formal grammar instruction.....	7
	2.3 Consciousness-raising.....	10
	2.4 PPP	10
	2.4.1 Presentation.....	10
	2.4.2 Practice and production.....	11
	2.5 Associations with grammar.....	12
3	PREVIOUS STUDIES ON OPINIONS ABOUT GRAMMAR.....	13
	3.1 General opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching.....	13
	3.2 Opinions about feedback and error correction.....	18
	3.3 Opinions about grammar and communication.....	23
4	THE PRESENT STUDY.....	25
	4.1 Aims and research questions.....	25
	4.2 Choice of methodology.....	26
	4.3 Questionnaire.....	28
	4.4 Data collection and processing.....	29
	4.5 Participants.....	30
5	FINDINGS.....	30
	5.1 General opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching.....	31
	5.1.2 Open-ended questions: general opinions about grammar.....	36
	5.2 Opinions about feedback and error correction.....	44
	5.2.1 Open-ended questions: feedback and error correction.....	48
	5.3 Opinions about grammar and communication.....	54
	5.3.1 Open-ended questions: Grammar and communication.....	55
	5.4 Opinions about grammar lessons.....	64
6	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	70
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	82
	APPENDICES.....	84

1 INTRODUCTION

Grammar teaching has been one of the most controversial issues in the field of foreign language research. Theoretical and empirical developments have led to constantly changing approaches to grammar teaching (Nassaji and Fotos 2011:1-3). The biggest concerns have probably been whether the explicit or implicit method should be favored, and also, whether grammar teaching should take into account learners' communicative needs.

From the end of the 18th century and up to the beginning of the 20th century, grammar teaching was dominated by grammar-based approaches, in which studying grammar was considered to be the best way to learn a language (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 2-4). The Grammar Translation Method and The Audio-Lingual Method were the two well-known grammar-based approaches. The focus of The Grammar-Translation Method was on the teaching of rules and structures, and translations of texts from L2 to L1. The focus was on written language and parts of speech. However, the beginning of World War II developed a demand for oral communication skills in foreign languages, and The Audio-Lingual Method was a response to these needs. The Audio-Lingual Method focused on grammatical structures, and it studied structural and phonological aspects of a language. Language learning was a process of habit formation through memorization of patterns, an idea that had its roots in behaviorist psychology and theories of conditioning. However, the aim was not real-life communication skills, and the focus was not on meaning or context. The PPP model (Presentation, Practice and Production) is yet another well-known and still widely used grammar-based approach. In the PPP model, the target grammar point is first introduced to learners, after which they practice the grammar point in controlled and later freer activities, and finally, they are encouraged to use the structure in communicative exercises. The PPP model is introduced in more detail later in this study.

The grammar-based approaches were criticized, because they did not develop learners' communicative abilities (Nassaji and Fotos 2011:5-7). Language was regarded as a set of rules and structures to be learned, and knowledge of these should result in fluent language use. The communicative approach, introduced in the 1970s, was an approach that focused more on meaning and developing communicative abilities. This approach prepared learners for real-life interaction in a foreign language, and it focused on meaning instead of rules and structures. The communicative approach was affected by SLA theories, especially Krashen's model of comprehensible input and the difference between learning and acquisition. According to Krashen, learning was a conscious process, whereas acquisition was an unconscious one, and a foreign language should be picked up

by acquiring, similar to L1 acquisition. However, it has been criticized that a heavy focus on communication and abandoning grammar altogether is not successful, since learners are able to reach higher levels of proficiency with some focus on grammar (Ellis 1992: 49).

There are certainly several approaches to foreign language grammar teaching, and new ones are constantly developed. According to researchers, every approach has its pros and cons, but it is also important to note what learners themselves, and also teachers, think about grammar learning and teaching. Learners' opinions is an area of research that has been studied to some extent, but few studies (if any in Finland) have compared learners' opinions to those of teachers.

The present study aimed at investigating opinions that Finnish upper-secondary-school students had about EFL grammar learning and teaching. The main focuses were general opinions about EFL grammar, feedback and error correction, the connection between grammar and communication, and typical grammar lessons described by the students. The data was collected in Spring 2013 with a questionnaire. Statistical analysis was used in order to discover statistically significant differences between the respondents. In addition, content analysis enabled qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions. The opinions were also compared by gender and English grade to find out whether these had any impact. Since there are not many previous studies on upper secondary school students' opinions about EFL grammar (Jean and Simard 2011: 468), the present study will be able to provide new insights into the topic.

Chapter 2 of the present study presents the teaching of foreign language grammar, followed by previous studies on student and teacher opinions about grammar in Chapter 3. In chapter 4, the aims and methodology of the present study are explained. Chapter 5 reports the findings of the present study, and Chapter 6 summarizes the findings and discusses them in more detail, concluding with evaluation of the present study and suggestions for further research.

2 TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMAR

This chapter introduces teaching of foreign language grammar. Researchers have previously given a number of definitions of grammar, and the truth is that there is no one and only definition for the broad concept of grammar. Researchers have also introduced a number of different approaches to grammar teaching, and naturally, every method has its pros and cons. In addition, grammar is generally associated with many other concepts and words. For instance, one of the most typical is probably the word *rules*.

2.1 Definitions of grammar

Learners often have a very restricted understanding of what grammar is. They see grammar as a “set of complicated facts governed by rules which are full of exceptions” (Ellis and Sinclair 1989: 82). Grammar is “like the universe: it has no beginning, it has no end, it has no shape, it just exists and there is a lot of it!”. What is more, teachers and grammar books do not make enough attempts to clarify the concept of grammar (Ellis and Sinclair 1989: 82).

Lewis separates three aspects of grammar, as defined by Ellis and Sinclair (1986: 9-12): facts, patterns and choices. *Facts* are, for example, exceptions in a language (the plural of *man* is *men*, not *mans*), which learners should accept and learn without concerning too much about them. *Patterns* are chunks of language that learners use to produce new language. However, learners need awareness-raising in order to notice and pay attention to patterns. Patterns can be defined as partially memorized utterances that include a gap for a noun or a noun phrase. Using certain grammatical patterns depends on an individual’s personal *choices*. For example, a person asking “*How do I get to...?*” can fill the gap with *the restaurant, the bus station, the motel*, etc., so the person is using a pattern to communicate (Krashen and Terrell 1988:42-43). But, memorizing patterns does not require the acquisition or learning of rules, which is why learners at early stages of language learning use patterns relatively often (Krashen and Terrell 1988: 82-83).

Grammar is the study of what forms and structures are possible in a language, and why these forms and structures are acceptable (Thornbury 1999: 1-2). Traditionally, grammar is the study of syntax and morphology of sentences, in other words, how words are joined together in a particular order, and what kinds of words can fit into any one link in the chain. However, grammar is also usually linked to meaning (Thornbury 1999: 3). There are two kinds of meaning. First, there is representational meaning, which means that grammar is used to describe the world. Secondly, there is interpersonal meaning, which means that grammar helps us to interact with other people.

Especially, grammar facilitates making meaning clear when contextual information is not available, that is, when only language has to be used in order to get things done. For example, when a ticket inspector in a train says: *Tickets!*, there is little grammar present. However, the context helps listeners (in this case, the passengers) to understand the meaning. But, in a situation where a person is phoning another person to inquire a third person about airline tickets, the simple *Tickets!* would not be enough, and grammar is needed in order to express meaning with more than one simple word (Thornbury 1999: 3-4).

Grammar is also linked to function (Thornbury 1999: 6-7). A speaker can express one function with many different forms, and there is more than one meaning to a function. For example, a warning can be expressed in the following ways: *Look out! Be careful! Watch out!*, whereas the phrase *Do you drink?* can be used, for example, to offer a drink or to ask whether the other person is a drinker of alcohol. Therefore, the connection between grammatical form and grammatical function is not always clear.

Grammar is often defined by rules (Thornbury 1999: 11-12). The most common grammar rules that are taught in school are *descriptive rules*, which describe "the usual way that something happens", for example, "You do not normally use *the* with proper nouns referring to people." There are also *prescriptive rules*, which are "principles or orders which guide behavior, and say how things are to be done", for example, "Use *shall* for the first person and *will* for second and third persons".

2.2 Formal grammar instruction

There have been discussions among researchers whether we should teach grammar at all, and if so, how should we teach it? Usually, the answer is definitely *yes*, even though the results may not be visible instantly. But, formal instruction facilitates the L2 development. However, it should be noted that formal instruction may have a delayed effect on L2 acquisition. The linguistic knowledge may not necessarily immediately be utilized by learners, but they may benefit from it later (Ellis 1992: 53). This delayed effect can be a result of *noticing* (Thornbury 1999: 16). In order to learn a language, grammatical patterns and structures must first be noticed and identified, and awareness of them facilitates learning them later.

There are many other reasons why grammar should be taught. Grammar can be described as a "sentence-making machine" (Thornbury 1999: 15), and knowledge of grammar enables limitless opportunities to produce grammatically correct sentences. In addition, it has been suggested that learners who receive formal instruction are less likely to fossilize. Of course, this is not always the

case, since learning grammar can be self-directed. Grammar also helps to organize the language into *discrete items*, making learning and teaching it easier. Furthermore, formal grammar instruction is usually expected by the learners. Learners' previous classroom experiences can influence their expectations, and if formal grammar instruction has traditionally been a part of their learning, they expect to receive it (Thornbury 1999: 16-17). Moreover, "learners who receive formal instruction do appear to learn more rapidly and to develop higher levels of proficiency" (Ellis 1992: 49). In general, grammar teaching is focused on aiding learners to comprehend the structures they have learned so that they can be used in everyday communication. Hence, students ought to practice the structures in controlled, and later in more natural exercises (Ellis 1992: 232).

There are many reasons against formal grammar instruction. First, knowledge of grammar does not necessarily mean that this knowledge can be translated into skills and actual language use (Thornbury 1999: 18). As a result, a learner can, for example, inflect all the irregular verbs in English, but cannot use them to communicate meanings. Secondly, it has been argued that learning a foreign language can occur through acquisition, similar to first language learning (Thornbury 1999: 19). The difference between acquisition and learning is that acquisition is a natural process, in which the language is picked up only by communicating with other speakers of the language, whereas learning is a result of formal instruction. Thirdly, there is a natural order in which learners learn grammatical items. But, grammar teaching at school does not usually follow this order, which explains why it is not always successful, and hence, not considered necessary. Fourthly, learning lexical chunks rather than abstract grammar is considered more relevant (Thornbury 1999: 20). Chunks are longer than words but usually shorter than sentences. Chunk-learning provides learners with frequently used and formulaic expressions (*excuse me, here you are*), which are important in interaction, and play a relevant role in language development. Fifth, some learners today expect that learning a language is based on communication and the ability to speak, and these learners demand more practice of conversation than of grammar.

It has been suggested that the role of grammar in a classroom should be limited (Krashen and Terrell 1988: 57). The teacher should not try to cover all the grammar rules, since all the students will not even benefit from them, as individual learners have different learning styles. Moreover, when the focus is on communication, learners should not be concerned about grammar. The focus on grammar should occur when there is enough time available, when the focus is on form and not communication, and when the target grammar rules have already been studied by learners (Krashen and Terrell 1988:149). *The challenge principle* presents a view which emphasizes that teachers should be selective in their language material, because it is impossible to teach everything that there

is to know about a language. In addition, learners typically struggle with at least one aspect of a language (form, meaning or use), so the focus of the teaching of a grammar point should be on one of these areas (Larsen-Freeman 2003:45).

Two common, contrasting ways to teach grammar are a deductive and an inductive approach (Thornbury 1999: 29-30). In a deductive approach, or rule-driven learning, the starting point is a rule, followed by examples which illustrate the rule in use. Some advantages of a deductive approach are that, first, it "goes straight to the point", and therefore, it is a fast, efficient and simple way to explain the rules. Second, it allows more time for practicing. Third, it recognizes the role of cognitive processes in learning and respects the intelligence of a learner. Some disadvantages are, first, that learners' lack of adequate metalanguage can hinder understanding the explanations. Second, grammar explanations are usually teacher-centered, which does not involve the students. Third, a deductive approach can give the impression that learning a language only means learning rules. In an inductive approach, or discovery-learning, examples are the starting point, from which the rules are concluded (Thornbury 1999: 49-54). Some advantages of an inductive approach are, first, that the rules that learners find out themselves can be more memorable and meaningful to them. Second, in an inductive approach learners have an active role, which can motivate and engage them. Third, figuring out the rules practices problem-solving skills and encourages learner autonomy.

“Grammar is boring” is a statement that is often connected to grammar learning and teaching (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 21). However, it has been suggested that grammar is not boring, but the approach that teachers use when trying to engage their students in the learning situations can be. It is important for the students to be focused, relaxed and attentive, and the teacher should make grammar exercises meaningful in order this to occur.

Many grammar-based approaches introduce grammar rules as “a system to be learned in discrete steps” (Krashen and Terrell 1988: 175-176). The cycle consists of introduction, explanation, practice, application and testing, and it is used in teaching every new grammar structure. However, the teaching of grammatical items should be conducted in smaller units. The purpose is not to present all the possible rules connected to a structure at once, but to give learners time to acquire *subrules* and let learning happen piece by piece. This kind of order signals natural language acquisition.

2.4 Consciousness-raising

Consciousness-raising develops explicit knowledge of grammar. It aims at providing an understanding of the targeted grammatical element. The goal is “to develop declarative rather than procedural knowledge” (Ellis 1992: 234). Consciousness-raising activities attempt to isolate the target element in order to capture learners’ attention. There is a presentation or data included, which exemplifies the grammatical element, and even explicit rules can be illustrated. It is anticipated that the use of intellectual effort is required from learners in order to comprehend the target element. The clarification of explanations and rules will be supplied if learners fail to understand the grammatical feature. Finally, the learners have to explain the rule in their own words, but this stage is not obligatory (Ellis 1992: 234). Consciousness-raising aims at explicit knowledge of grammar; it does not require instant production of the structure, but develops the awareness of correct grammar. By helping learners to notice the grammatical features in the input they receive facilitates the process of learning (Ellis 1992: 237).

The major difference between consciousness-raising and practice is that consciousness-raising does not require repeated production from the learner, because the purpose is to raise his/her awareness of the target grammar point. The correct production of the structure is not needed at this stage of learning (Ellis 1992: 234).

2.3 PPP

A very typical model of EFL grammar teaching today is the PPP model (Thornbury 1999: 128). It is a standard model for grammar lessons, including three distinct stages: presentation, practice and production. This model assumes that “knowledge becomes skills through successive stages of practice” (Thornbury 1999: 128). In the PPP model, language is learned piece by piece, in discrete steps. The PPP model can be repeatedly used for lesson planning, and it enables teacher control of the content in the classroom.

2.3.1 Presentation

The first stage of the PPP model is presentation. The goal of presentation is to “help the learner acquire new linguistic knowledge” (Ellis 1992: 101). The teacher should be active at the presentation stage, and provide learners with the information of the target grammar (Ellis 1992: 101-102).

It has been suggested that teachers should avoid oral grammar explanations, or at least keep them short, simple and comprehensible. In addition, grammar explanations should be conducted in the target language, because the language used in explanations functions as input for learners. However, if the language used in the explanations is too complex for learners to comprehend, it can signal the fact that the grammar item or rule is too difficult for them at the particular stage, and teaching it should be postponed (Krashen and Terrell 1988: 144). If the learner is not developmentally ready to learn the target structure, it cannot be taught successfully (Ellis 1992: 236-237).

2.3.2 Practice and production

The next stages of the PPP model are practice and production (Thornbury 1999: 128). The practice-stage aims at accuracy, and the goal of the production-stage is fluency. Three different activity types have been distinguished (Ellis 1992:233): mechanical practice, contextualized practice and communicative practice. *Mechanical practice* contains strictly controlled activities. *Contextualized practice* is less controlled, encouraging learners to combine form and meaning. Contextualized practice types also demonstrate the structures in real-life situations. *Communicative practice* includes “gap” activities, in which learners participate in authentic communicative situations, still focusing on the form. The purpose of these exercises is to isolate the specific grammar structure and draw learners’ attention to it. The exercises provide learners with repetition of the target structure and opportunities to produce output including these structures. In addition, immediate or delayed feedback will be given on how well learners succeeded in their use of the grammatical structure.

However, traditional grammar teaching generally is a combination of consciousness-raising and practice (Ellis 1992: 235). At first, there is the stage of consciousness-raising, when a great emphasis on the structures is provided. This treatment of the structure can contain inductive or deductive knowledge. Secondly, the practice-stage aids learners in production of the grammatical structures. Ellis argues that grammar teaching cannot occur without some amount of consciousness-raising, since especially adult learners probably attempt to create rules even though no formal explanation of the target structure is provided.

It has been argued whether practice actually facilitates learning grammar (Ellis 1992: 236-237). Practicing “does not result in the autonomous ability to use the structure”, and controlled activities do not aid the learners to use the structure on their own, since they do not have the ability to “transfer knowledge from controlled to communicative practice”. Consequently, when learners start producing output independently, they do not use the linguistic data they have acquired at the practice stage. However, practice might benefit some learners, and learners’ language proficiency

even affects practicing, rather than the other way around. Thus, more competent learners would get more advantage of practicing, which is the opposite of what is probably generally believed among language teachers. Even though practicing might not be best for learning grammar, it does have great value in learning pronunciation and learning lexical chunks. The goal of practicing is implicit knowledge of grammar, which means that learners should be able to use the structures naturally in communication.

2.5 Associations with grammar

Grammar is usually associated with accuracy. But grammar should also be related to meaning. Larsen-Freeman (2003: 14) uses the sentence *It's a pencil on the table* as an example. If the person who says this utterance intends to point the location of the pen, then the form is correct but the meaning is incorrect. *There is a pencil on the table* would have been the correct form and meaning in this context. However, if the person's intention was to show identity of the object (*It's a pen, not a pencil, on the table*) then the first utterance would have been correct in meaning as well. This example illustrates how grammar is not always about the accurate form, but it has to do with meaning, too.

Another word that grammar is typically associated with is rules. Rules do give learners a sense of security, "something to hold onto", (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 14) and they illustrate the structure of a language. A rule gives "an explanation to a linguistic phenomenon", so it answers the question *how*. Reasons behind the rule answer the question *why*. Knowing the reason can help the learner to use the same logic that native speakers do, and possibly make learning the language less mechanical. Most importantly, it can make the learner see that grammar is rational, and this way it gives the learner more self-confidence. However, knowing a rule does not mean that the learner can refer to it when necessary. Moreover, rules do not have a lot to do with meaning, and they are abstract, including plenty of exceptions. In addition, many language learners create a memory of thousands of multi-word sequences, and use these formulas to control the language instead of relying on the rules.

Grammar rules should not be generalizations about the language, because grammar forms have also meanings and uses, which are important aspects to master (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 50-51). In addition, rules are never broad enough to include all the exceptions. Rules describe the grammar (language) as a static, unchanging system, while the truth is the opposite. Grammar is flexible and a language changes constantly.

Some conceptions among language teachers considering the teaching of grammar have been challenged (Larsen-Freeman 2003:9). Teachers should change their views of grammar teaching in order to change their students' dual attitudes towards grammar. When language teachers are asked what they associate with the words *grammar* and *communication*, the results are extremely different. With grammar teachers associate words such as *rules, structures, forms, memorizing, drills* and *boring*, whereas with communication the associations are words such as *meaning, the four skills, accomplishing some purpose, interacting, establishing relationships* and *fun*. Because of these views, no wonder grammar and communication sections in language textbooks are separated from one another.

3 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON OPINIONS ABOUT GRAMMAR

This chapter introduces previous studies on students' and teachers' opinions about grammar learning and teaching. Their opinions are considered significant in foreign language learning (Davis 2003: 2), because "people's behavior is shaped by their perceptions". Combining students' and teachers' opinions can help to find some revealing and helpful insights into their thinking processes and actions regarding language learning and teaching. "Beliefs affect behavior and... teachers' and students' beliefs influence language learning" (Davis 2003: 2). Mismatched objectives between teachers and students can lead learners to believe that the teaching is not effective and the teachers to see their students as unmotivated (Jean and Simard 2011: 468). Naturally, problems will occur if the expectations of these two groups do not match. For instance, teachers may be disinclined to correct errors, because they believe that students do not welcome corrections.

3.1 General opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching

Students may sometimes feel reluctant when it is time to move from a communicative exercise to a grammar exercise (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 7). However, students understand the value of studying grammar and they are willing to put the effort. Some students may even demand the teaching of grammar if it is not included in lessons. There are many reasons for this ambivalence. First of all, learning and memorizing grammar rules is a very traditional way to study a language, a way which students usually consider related to language learning. Secondly, learning grammar "gives students a sense of accomplishment; they feel that they are making progress". Thirdly, learning parts of language brings a sense of security, because students have something to hold on to when they for example encounter a linguistic problem. Fourth, students rely on the "generative capacity of

grammar rules", and the fact that knowing grammar rules helps them to produce and comprehend new utterances.

In a study by Jean and Simard (2011: 475) they investigated, with a questionnaire, how much learners generally liked studying L2 grammar. The respondents were ESL and FSL (French as a second language) learners in Canada. Of the FSL students, 29% said that "they did not like it much", and 23% "did not like it at all", which amounts to a little more than half of the FSL students. The ESL students were just a little less negative towards grammar: 25% answered "not liking it much" and 9% did not like it at all. In addition, 25% of the ESL students said that they liked learning grammar, whereas only 11% of the FSL students did so. The reason for this could be that, according to the researchers, FSL teachers used more traditional teaching methods than ESL teachers. To the question whether grammar rules were regarded as important, the respondents in the study thought they were "important" or "very important" (Jean and Simard 2011: 476). The students did not find grammar rules difficult either: 55% of the ESL students chose the options "not very difficult" or "not difficult at all", and 60% of the FSL students positioned around "not very difficult" and "somewhat difficult". Interestingly, the teachers recognized the level of difficulty of rules being higher: 73% of ESL teachers thought rules were "not very difficult" or "somewhat difficult", and of FSL teachers also 73% thought rules were "somewhat difficult" or "difficult".

The respondents in the study were asked an open-ended question "Which word comes immediately to your mind when you hear the word *grammar*?" (Jean and Simard 2011: 475). The answers were grouped as "neutral", "positive" or "negative". In general, few of the students' answers were positive, since 26% of the comments from FSL and 28% of the ESL learners were negative. However, neutral answers were still the most common, including such words as *exercises*, *books*, or *dictionary*. Negative definitions included words such as *boring*, *difficult* or *useless*, and positive definitions included *interesting*, *easy* or *useful*.

Based on these findings, it seems that grammar instruction is seen as "a necessary evil" (Jean and Simard 2011: 478-479): learners value it, and understand that it is useful and necessary, but it is considered boring at the same time. In addition, connotations attached to grammar and grammar instructions are relatively negative, probably partly because traditional drills seem to be the most familiar types of exercises that are used in classrooms.

In a study carried out with EFL and FL learners in Michigan State University by Loewen et al. (2009: 7-13), the learners answered a questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items and open-ended questions. When they were asked to answer the question: *I like to be taught grammar in the*

following ways..., more than 15% of the learners mentioned the use of examples. They also wanted to have grammar explanations that were "clear" and "detailed". In addition, one relevant theme in relation to how grammar should be taught was that the learners wanted grammar to be related to real life, for example, through real life examples. Interaction was important to the learners, and therefore, they favored games, activities and pair/group work in grammar learning. In contrast, when the learners answered the question: *I don't like to be taught grammar in the following ways...*, one of the relevant themes that came out was that the learners did not want to be left on their own in grammar learning. They did not like relying on textbooks only, and figuring out the rules themselves, and they also disliked memorization.

The study of student and teacher perceptions about formal grammar instruction is important, because it helps to design teaching to match the beliefs that students and teachers possess. In this way, students feel that the teaching is significant and successful. In a study conducted by Schulz (2001: 9) in the U.S., 824 students and 92 teachers were asked about the role of grammar instruction in second language learning. The vast majority of the students, 80% believed that formal study of grammar was vital for eventual mastery of a foreign language, whereas 64% of their teachers thought this was true. Of the teachers, 74% and 85 % of the students thought that formal study of grammar helps foreign language learning. However, only 18% of the teachers believed that students liked the study of grammar, but almost half of the students (46%) thought that they liked grammar. There was also a big difference between the teachers' and students' views on whether students kept grammar rules in mind when writing in a foreign language. Only 27% of the teachers thought that students thought about the rules when writing, whereas 68% of the students said that they kept the rules in mind when they were writing in a foreign language.

The strong positive attitudes towards grammar among learners can be accounted with the help of three factors (Schultz 2001: 12). First of all, the way foreign languages are taught can have an effect on learners' opinions, since the teaching includes plenty of form-focused instruction and "discrete-point steps". Secondly, the attitudes can be a result of a myth that considers grammar study useful, and this myth is passed from one generation of learners to another. Finally, learners' personal experiences of grammar, and feelings of success with the help of grammar can affect positively learner attitudes. The teachers' attitudes in the study can also be affected by their own personal experiences about their learners' success with formal grammar instruction. In addition, their own experiences of foreign language learning have influenced their views.

A study by Loewen et al. (2009: 7-14) investigated why learners liked or did not like grammar instruction. The participants in the study were EFL and FL learners in Michigan State University. Many learners liked grammar first of all, because they thought that it helped them to master the target language properly. Secondly, grammar was considered "a foundation upon which to build their L2 knowledge" (Loewen et al. 2009: 8). Thirdly, grammar helped the learners not only to learn the language in general, but it also helped them with specific areas of the language, for example, writing. Fourth, some extrinsic reasons to study grammar were mentioned, for instance, getting a better grade or succeeding academically. However, although some learners expressed that they liked grammar, they also admitted that they had to tolerate it because it was beneficial.

Polat (2009) studied English language learners' (n=40) and teachers' (n=30) opinions about grammar in Georgia. The study consisted of a questionnaire, evaluation and testing inventories, semi-structured interviews, in-class observations, course book analyses and anecdotal records. It was found that 80% of the teachers and 75% of the learners liked the teaching/learning of grammar very much (Polat 2009: 235). Of the students, 67% agreed with the statement "Grammar learning is equal to language learning". What is interesting is that grammar was considered the most important component in language learning, as 90% of the teachers and 88% of the learners agreed with this. Hence, the teachers and learners had strong positive beliefs about the role of grammar. According to Polat, the next statement "confirmed overall students' beliefs about grammar": "...I must study grammar if I want to improve my English... you cannot learn anything if you do not know grammar" (Polat 2009: 236).

Also negative attitudes towards grammar instruction have been found in a previous study by Loewen et al. (2009: 7-14). For the question why the learners did *not* like grammar instruction, the clear answer was: because it is "boring", with 25% of the learners in the study using this description or a synonym, such as "tedious", "monotonous" or "dry". Over half of the learners used some negative words when describing grammar in addition to these, for example "difficult", "confusing" and "complicated". Additional negative comments towards grammar had to do with rules and memorization of the exceptions. Grammar was considered time-consuming, and memorization was regarded as a burden. What is more, the learners expressed that grammar was not useful outside the classroom, and that its link to real life was not clear.

Polat (2009) studied whether teachers actually used the kinds of grammar teaching techniques that they supported in classroom. Overall, both the teachers and the students recognized the traditional ways of teaching/learning grammar, for example, drills. However, considering the more

contemporary techniques, for instance, communicative activities, 8% of the teachers and 73% of the learners said that they did not use or recognize these in class. Therefore, it is not surprising that more drills and analysis of structures were actually used in class than what the teachers and learners reported. Polat's study proposes that, in general, the learners stated more accurate beliefs about actual classroom practices. Approximately, one third of each class was dedicated to grammar teaching. In the study by Jean and Simard (2011: 472), it was found that 34% of the class time was dedicated to grammar instruction, which means one grammar-related intervention every 4 minutes and 45 seconds.

Jean and Simard (2011: 477) studied the relevance of gender in grammar learning, but there were only minor differences between the sexes. Overall, the girls seemed to be more welcoming towards grammar instruction. In addition, more girls than boys answered that it was important to be able to express oneself accurately (83% compared to 74%).

Teachers

It is important to investigate teachers' opinions about grammar, because they have an impact on their actual practices (Polat 2009: 230). In a study by Borg (2001: 27), language teachers were investigated for their knowledge about grammar (KAG), and how this affected their teaching practices. It was found that KAG had a great influence on the teachers' grammar teaching, especially in the following aspects: the extent to which the teachers taught grammar, their willingness to spontaneous grammar work, and the way they reacted to students' questions about grammar. Moreover, KAG had impact on the amount of class discussion about grammar and the way teachers reacted when students questioned their explanations and the kind of grammatical information that was provided to students. The teachers who were more confident about their KAG taught more grammar. However, even though a teacher might be confident in his/her KAG, he/she might diminish the amount of grammar, simply because he/she does not consider it a proper instructional activity.

Schultz (2001: 12) investigated language teachers in Colombia about their attitudes towards grammar in an interview. All the teachers admitted that they themselves had taken advantage of grammar instruction in their language learning. Furthermore, they all thought that many of their students had benefited from grammar instruction, and that many expected language analysis.

Aljohani (2012) studied non-native English language teachers' opinions (at tertiary level) about the importance of grammar instruction and correcting students' errors in Saudi-Arabia. The results

indicated that the teachers regarded grammar as an important tool in language learning, and plenty of time had to be allotted to grammar teaching (Aljohani 2012: 102). They believed that firstly, grammar helped their students to form sentences, and secondly, it helped them to improve accuracy. Thirdly, the teachers felt that form and meaning should be taught together, and therefore, examples are a better way to teach grammar than simply providing rules. In addition, meanings should be put into a meaningful context, for example, text or dialogues (Aljohani 2012: 103). Moreover, the teachers believed that drills and exercises were effective methods to focus on form. Regarding feedback on grammar, the teachers in the study agreed that students needed feedback, and correcting errors facilitated learning. However, the teachers thought that immediate feedback and correction was insignificant to grammar learning.

In their study on teacher opinions, Farrell and Lim (2005) examined two primary school English teachers and their opinions about how grammar should be taught. The results confirm what the previous studies have also noted: grammar teaching is crucial (Farrel and Lim 2005: 5-6). Importantly, the teachers thought that teaching grammar helped their students to use grammar structures correctly in writing. If they hesitated whether their students had learned a grammar point or not, they definitely would re-teach it. This clearly indicates how important grammar is considered. Moreover, drills were regarded as beneficial in grammar teaching, which originated from the teachers' own experiences as learners: they had benefited from drills themselves. As one of the teachers said: "drilling would help students to isolate and identify grammar mistakes in their writing" (Farrel and Lim 2005: 6). Both teachers in the study favored a traditional approach to grammar teaching (Farrel and Lim 2005: 8). Their lessons were mostly teacher-centered, where both teachers presented grammar structures and asked their students questions about their knowledge of the grammar points. In addition, metalanguage was used to explain grammar structures, for example: "singular noun must have a singular verb" (Farrel and Lim 2005: 8). Considering feedback on grammar, the teachers gave feedback at least on their students' written work. They would clearly mark where the error occurred in the text, and then write the correct form above the error. The possible reasons for these traditional teaching methods are not only time limitations, as both teachers indicated, but also their respect for traditional grammar instruction.

3.2 Opinions about feedback and error correction

Errors in language learning can be lexical errors (the wrong word for the meaning they wish to express or wrong form of the word), grammar errors (in verb forms, tense and sentence structure), discourse errors (errors in sentence organization and linking) or pronunciation errors in speech

(Thornbury 1999: 114). Of course, errors do not always fit to the previous categories, and there can be overlaps.

Since second language learners normally receive minimal input in the target language, compared to their first language, error correction is considered vital in order to prevent fossilization (Dekeyser 1993: 502). Errors can be considered to be proof of developmental processes in language learning, rather than bad habit formation (Thornbury 1999: 116). In order to prevent this development resulting in fossilization of the language, feedback on errors is necessary. However, error correction does not result in immediate improvement of language. Learners' individual characteristics can have an impact on how effective error correction is. These individual variables include previous achievement, extrinsic motivation and anxiety. So, some learners learn better with and some without error correction, and it has been suggested that error correction is more helpful for "better learners", since they possess more positive characteristics (Dekeyser 1993: 510).

There are many common ways to give feedback and correct errors (Thornbury 1999: 117-119). *Self-correction* entails that a learner corrects the error his/herself, whereas peer-correction means that learners correct each other. Self-correction can sometimes be prompted by the teacher. *Recasts* help the learner to notice an error. There are several different types of recasts. For example, in *clarification requests* the teacher signals to the learner that their message is unclear (*I'm sorry, can you repeat that?*), proposing that there may be a problem in form. Learners then repair their message, and this response to feedback is called *uptake*. *Reformulation* is a covert form of feedback that includes a correct form provided by the teacher. For example, when the learner says "*She has a beautiful eyes*", the teacher indirectly corrects "*Oh she has beautiful eyes, has she?*" The aim is that the learner will become aware of the correct form, but is not inhibited from continuing to talk. A distinction has been made between implicit and explicit feedback (Ellis 2006: 99). Implicit feedback entails that a teacher "disguises" the feedback, for example, in the form of a recast, whereas explicit feedback entails a direct correction or a metalinguistic explanation.

Students

In a study by Peterson and Irving (2007: 240-248), positive and negative opinions about feedback were found. The study was conducted with 41 secondary school students in New Zealand. The participants were asked to write down their opinions, and then discuss them in focus groups that were formed randomly. It was found that, first, feedback was useful, since it helped the students to improve their language, and it provided information on *what* should be improved and *how*. The students wanted feedback to enhance their learning, and show the gap between what they could do,

and what they should be able to do. Second, feedback showed learning progress not only for themselves, but also for teachers and the students' parents. However, feedback was considered irrelevant if it was considered unfair, not totally honest, not important in later life, or if it did not include a grade. In addition, the students seldom acted on the feedback that was given to them, and the teacher was regarded as responsible for their weak learning. Overall, the students did not have overly negative opinions about feedback. They understood that it was a part of education and strongly linked it to learning.

In a study by Lochtman (2002: 275-280), the amount of oral corrective feedback was investigated in Belgium. Tape-recordings of 12 lessons, taught by three different teachers were used to observe the feedback that students were provided with. The students in the study were secondary school students about 15 or 16 years of age. The results showed that 90 % of the students' erroneous utterances were corrected by the teacher. Over half of these corrections gave the student an opportunity for self-correction (55.8 %). One third (30.5 %) of the oral corrective feedback were recasts. However, there was often no learner uptake after a recast (52.5 % of the time). In addition, the more form-focused the activity was, the more there was teacher correction and initiations to self-correction.

Montgomery and Baker (2007: 86-94) studied students' and teachers' perceptions of teacher-written feedback on compositions. The students (n= 98) and the teachers (n= 13) in the study were in an intensive ESL program in Brigham Young University. A questionnaire was used to measure their opinions, and the students also evaluated their teacher's written feedback. It was found that the students perceived receiving more feedback than their teachers perceived giving. The students thought that they received from "some" to "a lot" of feedback on their writing. Since most of the students mentioned that they were satisfied with the amount of given feedback, it may suggest that the amount of feedback was adequate. If the students had answered receiving "none" or only "a little" feedback, it might suggest that there was not enough feedback. The teachers gave less feedback on global issues (ideas and content, organization, vocabulary) and more feedback on local issues (grammar and mechanics) than they thought they did. According to Montgomery and Baker, this could be because the teachers thought that local feedback better helped their learners to improve their writing. One major insight in the study was that the level of writing or a student's competence did not have impact on the amount of feedback that was given. Lower-level students did not get more feedback than upper-level students.

In a study by Lee (2008: 144-155), students' reactions to teacher feedback were investigated in two Hong Kong secondary classrooms. Questionnaires were used to find out about students' opinions, and they were also asked to evaluate their teacher's feedback and explain how it made them feel. In addition, interviews, classroom observations and feedback evaluations were used to collect data from the teachers. The students' grades and academic success were compared to the results of the study. The results showed that, overall, the students wanted more feedback from their teachers. However, high proficiency students were more interested in the teacher's comments than lower proficiency students, since 72.2 % of the high proficiency students and only 45.4 % of the low proficiency students wanted more feedback. In addition, it was discovered that 40.9 % of the low proficiency students wanted the teacher to respond *none* of their errors, whereas 77.8 % of the high proficiency students said that the teacher should respond to *all* their errors. Moreover, of the high proficiency students, 58.4 % gave positive comments about feedback, whereas the majority of the low proficiency students' (71.4 %) comments were negative. The students did not always understand the feedback they received. Of the high proficiency students, 90 % regarded the feedback that they received as comprehensible, whereas a bit over half of the low proficiency students thought so, and 22.6 % of them even thought that it was difficult to understand the feedback.

In a study by Loewen et al. (2009: 7-13), the learners answered a questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items and open-ended questions about error correction. The study was carried out with EFL and FL learners in Michigan State University. The results were analyzed to discover differences in beliefs among learners studying different target languages. In the study, some negative attitudes towards error correction in grammar learning were found. Among the EFL learners, error correction and grammatical accuracy were disliked the most, whereas Arabic learners had the most positive attitudes towards these areas.

Students and teachers

Students' and teachers' opinions about error correction have showed remarkable disagreements in previous studies. A number of disagreements are provided by Schultz (2001: 9-10). First, 90% of the learners in the study versus 30% of the teachers thought that learners should be corrected, when they make errors in speaking. This view was particularly interesting in the study, since in general it is expected that learners are unenthusiastic about the teacher correcting their speech. Secondly, 4% of the learners versus 22% of the teachers thought that learners disliked being corrected in class. Again, the teachers felt more negative about error correction than the learners. Thirdly, only 2% of

the learners felt that the teacher should NOT correct their errors in class, whereas 33% of the teachers thought so. However, there was a strong agreement among the learners and the teachers on correcting errors from written work, since 97% of the learners respectively 92% of the teachers thought that the teachers should correct errors in writing. Of the learners, 65% said they felt cheated if the teacher did not correct their written work, and even more teachers (80%) thought that learners felt cheated if the teacher did not correct written errors.

In a study by Davis (2003: 9), L2 learners and teachers were investigated on their opinions about grammatical error correction in Macao, China. The students agreed much more strongly than the teachers on that the teachers should correct their grammatical errors. In addition, the students thought that errors should be corrected as soon as they are made in order to avoid "the formation of bad habits", whereas the teachers did not agree so strongly on this.

Another study by Jean and Simard (2011: 474) in Canada examined learners' and teachers' opinions about feedback and error correction. They studied students and teachers in a bilingual context, the target languages being English (ESL) and French (FSL). The results of the study showed that the students welcomed error correction. Of the ESL students, 54% and 30% of the FSL students wanted their oral errors corrected "all the time". Of the ESL students, 54% and of the FSL students 51% wanted their oral errors corrected only when it interfered with communication. The FSL teachers strongly agreed with their students, but the ESL teachers were more inclined to correct oral errors when they hindered understanding the message. Considering written errors, the students were even more receptive to correction. Of the ESL students, 68% and of the FSL students 66% wanted their errors corrected "all the time". Surprisingly, their teachers did not share this view. The teachers were disinclined to correct written errors, unless they hindered comprehension, or the grammar point should have been well known by the student. In addition, accuracy was highly appreciated among the learners as well as the teachers, and being able to express oneself as a native speaker was a relevant goal.

These results suggest that error correction does not decrease language learners' motivation, as many teachers tend to believe (Davis 2003: 11-13). In addition, teachers usually think that error correction destroys learners' self confidence, which is why it is more important to raise learners' confidence than aim at error-free speech. Teachers may also be concerned about their parental role in education, and aim at meaningful communication, even if they have to do it at the expense of accuracy.

However, the results indicate that learners' attitudes towards error correction and explicit grammar study are more positive than is generally expected (Davis 2003: 14). Teachers may even be too sensitive and reluctant to correct errors, since learners expect to be corrected. Assuming that error correction immediately discourages the learner is wrong, and instead of avoiding it, the correction should be done clearly, but in a way that does not result in demotivation.

It is often important for learners to use correct language all the time, and unrealistic expectations can result in demotivation (Ellis and Sinclair 1989: 89-91). Generally, learners expect and believe that there is one correct answer to everything, and they are not aware that using certain grammatical patterns depends on an individual's personal *choices*. Thus, learners need enough exposure to language in order to expand their comprehension of the relationship between grammar and meaning. Grammar activities in foreign language classrooms are usually stressful, since the goal is correct language use, and judgment from the teacher can also affect students' performance.

3.3 Grammar and communication

Learning a foreign language can occur through interaction. In classrooms, teachers modify their speech to match the level of their learners the same way caretakers do with young children. This simplified input is significant, because it helps learners to identify phonological and grammatical units from the speech. In addition, Krashen's *Comprehensible Input Hypothesis* (Krashen 1982: 21) suggests that the input learners receive should not be beyond their level of proficiency, since only understandable input can help foreign language learning. Also Long's *Interactional Hypothesis* proposes that comprehensible input is a key to second language acquisition (Ellis 1992: 39-40). Modifications of input that try to solve difficulties in communication help to provide understandable input. An acquisition-rich environment consists of high frequencies of clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, self-and other-repairs. All these are methods to negotiate meaning. However, Interactional Hypothesis has been criticized (Ellis 1992: 39-40). While modifications of input may help communicative performance, it does not help learners acquire new linguistic features. Krashen's theory of comprehensible input was later complemented by Swain's *Output Hypothesis* (Ellis and Shintani 2014: 207), which suggested that learners had little opportunities to talk in the target language in a classroom, which is why they did not reach high levels of proficiency. Output from learners would help them to notice their weaknesses, experiment with the language, consciously think about the language and control the structures that they have already noticed and been exposed to before.

Communication tasks prepare students for real-life interaction (Thornbury 1999: 93). In communicative tasks, fluency is usually the goal. Therefore, it is important that the attention is on meaning, and not on grammatical form. In addition, communication tasks should encourage authenticity in language use, and enable learners to produce as free and as natural language as possible. Moreover, the task should have a communicative purpose, that is, learners should have the need to interact something to another person, for example, to get someone to do something. Repetition is also important in communication tasks: the target forms should be frequently produced by learners in order to automatization to occur.

In a study by Schulz (2001), conducted with foreign language students and teachers in the U.S., the vast majority of the teachers (80%) considered communication activities more important than grammar practice (Schulz 2001:9). The students valued grammar instruction more than their teachers, since 69% of the students thought that communication activities were more important. However, in a study by Loewen et al. (2009: 10) with EFL and FL university learners in Michigan, some learners mentioned that grammar instruction, especially memorization of the rules and exceptions, was very time consuming. Hence, they would rather use the time spent on grammar to improving their speaking skills. In one comment a learner mentioned that "Too much (grammar) is tedious and not as important as learning to speak", which shows that some learners valued communication more than grammar instruction.

Jean and Simard (2011) studied how important it was for students to practice grammar with specific grammar exercises, rather than just speaking and writing. The majority of the students, 73% of FSL and 72% of ESL students, thought that it was "somewhat important" or "important" (Jean and Simard 2011: 475). Moreover, usefulness of mechanical exercises, for example, drills, was considered "somewhat useful" and "very useful". Interestingly, the students seemed to value mechanical exercises more than their teachers. For example, 28% of the ESL students thought mechanical exercises were "very useful", whereas only 5% of their teachers thought so. However, even though mechanical exercises were considered useful, they were not seen as very interesting (Jean and Simard 2011: 478). What is more, it was suspected that if students were familiar with what research has told about the usefulness of drills, there might be less positive attitudes towards them.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

This chapter explains the research design of the present study. First, the aims and research questions are introduced. Next, the choice of methodology, data collection and analysis are discussed, including the designing of the questionnaire. Finally, information on the participants of the present study is provided.

4.1 Aims and research questions

Previous research has shown that students and teachers have similar opinions about grammar learning and teaching, but few studies have investigated the possible inconsistency in their opinions (Polat 2009: 230). In addition, few studies (if any in Finland), have investigated students' and teachers' opinions about specific topics in foreign language grammar instruction in upper-secondary-schools (Jean and Simard 2011: 468), since the majority of the previous studies have focused on adult learners. Therefore, there is a need to study this topic, and the present study can provide new and relevant insights into the field of grammar learning and teaching in Finland. Another important justification for the present study is its benefits for future language teachers. First of all, as it has been mentioned earlier, it is important that students' and teachers' opinions about grammar learning and teaching match, and the present study can provide teachers a great amount of information about their students' views. Secondly, this information can assist teachers to design grammar lessons keeping in mind the students' goals and wishes. Thirdly, it encourages teachers to be critical towards the methods they are favoring in grammar teaching, and perhaps to vary and adapt these methods to better match their students' needs and interests.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching held by Finnish upper-secondary-school students. The focus of the present study is, firstly, on general opinions about grammar instruction, and secondly, on feedback and error correction. The participants will be compared by gender and English grade in order to see whether these factors influence their opinions. Thirdly, the present study aims to find out what is the connection between grammar and communication in the students' opinion. Fourthly, the present study aims to discover how students describe a typical grammar lesson, and also, what should be done differently in grammar teaching in their opinion. The following research questions help in addressing the topic:

1. What are Finnish upper-secondary-school students' opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching?
 - 1a. How does gender and their grade in English affect their opinions?

2. What are the students' opinions about feedback and error correction in EFL classrooms?
 - 2a. How does gender and their grade in English affect their opinions?
3. What is the connection between grammar and communication in the students' opinion?
4. How do the students describe a typical grammar lesson?
 - 4a. What should be done differently in grammar lessons?

These research questions will be answered by collecting data with the help of a questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The students were asked a series of questions about whether they thought that grammar helped them to learn English, and how important a role grammar had in their learning. They were also asked to give reasons for their choices in order to get a deeper understanding of their views. Questions concerning error correction and feedback mainly measured their willingness to be corrected in the classroom. As to grammar and communication, the students were asked to list words that came to their minds when they think about the words *grammar* and *communication*, and they were also asked about whether grammar or communicative activities were more important. Finally, the students were asked to describe a typical grammar lesson, and also suggest what should be done differently in grammar teaching in their opinion.

4.2 Choice of methodology

This section discusses the choice of methodology for the present study in more detail. Since the present study focuses on measuring student opinions, a questionnaire with Likert-scale answer alternatives is a natural method to collect data.

Using a questionnaire for data collection has some disadvantages (Alanen 2011: 160). First of all, the participants may not be reliable, because they can participate anonymously. They might also leave some questions unanswered. Secondly, they may interpret the questions the way they like, or even misunderstand them. Thirdly, it has been criticized that the questions might guide participants to answer in a certain way. Fourth, the answers can be superficial and simple, since the amount of time that participants are willing to use filling out a questionnaire is usually quite short (Dörnyei

2003: 10-11). On the other hand, the advantages of a questionnaire include that it enables the collection of a great amount of data with relatively small effort, and in a short period of time (Hirsjärvi et al. 2000: 182). In addition, the same questionnaire can be used multiple times with different groups and in different settings and contexts (Alanen 2011: 160).

Multiple-choice questions are easy to respond to, since they do not require the participants to produce any free writing, and they do not take that much time. In addition, they are straightforward, and therefore commonly used on foreign language learning and teaching research (Dörnyei 2003: 43). Multiple-choice questions are suitable for measuring student opinions, because the different alternatives can represent degrees of an attitude, interest or belief. Moreover, coding multiple-choice questions is rather easy, and they offer reliable data. The disadvantage of multiple-choice questions is that they do not offer the participants an opportunity to use their own voice.

Open-ended questions give participants the chance to express themselves in their own words, and they also aid to explain the Likert-scale questions by giving more information (Alanen 2011: 151). In addition, some unexpected points might rise from the answers, and they can offer some descriptive quotes for analysis (Dörnyei 2003: 47). Open-ended questions offer rich data and new views on the subject, since the participants are allowed to give reasons for their answers, and that is why they were used in the present study. The open-ended questions in the present study were, first of all, *specific open questions*, that "ask about concrete pieces of information" (Dörnyei 2003: 48). Secondly, they were *clarification questions*, where the students were asked to give reasons for their answers to Likert-scale items. However, the challenge of open-ended questions is that they are difficult to code reliably. The answers need careful classification and coding, and it also takes time to answer them. However, since the number of participants in the present study was not too high (N= 98), using open-ended questions seemed reasonable. In the questionnaire, the open-ended questions are at the beginning, because then the participants have the energy and motivation to write thorough and carefully considered answers. All in all, open-ended questions help to get a deeper understanding of the students' opinions.

It is important to avoid questionnaires that are too long (Alanen 2011: 152), because completing them should not take too much time. In addition, a long questionnaire is not very motivating for the respondents. This questionnaire was approximately 5 pages long, in addition to the instructions, and the participants were given 15-20 minutes to complete it. When possible, some participants used even more time to fill out the questionnaire. Since the recommended and optimal length for a

questionnaire is no more than 4-6 pages, and time required to complete it should not go beyond 30 minutes (Dörnyei 2003: 18), the questionnaire in the present study met these criteria.

4.3 Questionnaire

The present study is based on the studies by Polat (2009) and Jean and Simard (2011). For data collection, these researches used a questionnaire, and it was used in the present study as well, with some additions, and it can be found in Appendix 1. The questionnaire contains both questions with Likert-scale answer alternatives and open-ended questions in Finnish, and it has three parts. In part one, question 1 is the same as in the study by Jean and Simard (2011). In part two, question 1 is taken from the study by Polat (2009), and questions 8 and 14 from that of Jean and Simard (2011). Last, in part three, questions 3 and 5 were also adopted from the study by Jean and Simard.

The questionnaire contained statements on a 4-point Likert scale. The four response alternatives, which measure the strength of the opinions, are: *completely agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, and *completely disagree*. A 5-point scale would have given the participants the opportunity to answer "somewhere in between", due to lack of knowledge of or experience with the topic (Alanen 2011: 150). But, since the questionnaire was targeted at intermediate learners of English, and it was expected that they have had plenty of exposure to EFL grammar during their school years, they were expected to be able to express their opinions having only four options to choose from. In addition, having a "neutral" alternative available, some respondents might choose it too easily to avoid making a real choice or to take the easy way out (Dörnyei 2003: 37), and therefore a 4-point scale encourages them to express their opinions.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part contained altogether four independent open-ended questions. Two open-ended questions asked what kinds of words students related to the words *grammar* and *communication*. The results of these questions were classified as "neutral", "positive" or "negative". In addition, two open-ended questions examined what kinds of grammar sessions students were used to in the classroom, and what aspects of grammar teaching could be changed or improved in their opinion.

The second part of the questionnaire contained 11 questions with Likert-scale answer alternatives that measured the students' general opinions about EFL grammar. The students were also asked to give reasons for their choices in order to acquire more information on the topic. Furthermore, this gave the respondents a chance to use their own voice.

The final part of the questionnaire contained four questions with Likert-scale answer alternatives about error correction and feedback. The respondents were also in this part asked to justify their choices. In addition, background information was asked in the end. This part is not considered demanding, so the participants were able to answer, even though they were tired after responding to all the other questions. The background information included the respondent's sex, and his/her previous grade in the English language.

4.4 Data collection and processing

The data collection took place in the spring 2012, and the data consisted of upper-secondary-school students' answers to a questionnaire containing questions with Likert-scale answer alternatives and open-ended questions. The schools in the present study were chosen randomly, since they were contacted in order to find out if they were willing to participate in the study. Two schools agreed to data collection, two groups from each school. All the groups consisted of second-year upper-secondary-school students. After consulting the schools, I personally visited both of the schools and gathered the data by means of the questionnaire. The students answered the questionnaire either in the beginning or at the end of the lesson, depending on the group and the teacher's preference. The schools did not differ in size, and both of them are located in a city area.

After the data collection the data were processed. First, Microsoft Excel was used to code all the answers to the questions with Likert-scale answer alternatives into numeric form. This was done by using the response alternatives from one to four. Secondly, these numeric forms were used to analyze the data with SPSS software. Thirdly, the responses from the open-ended questions were coded by theme, and also put into numeric form according to the number of times that they had been mentioned in the students' answers.

The calculations for the questions with Likert-scale answer alternatives were done by using the SPSS software. First, frequencies and mean values were calculated. Next, for each statement Pearson correlations were determined, and they were used to compare how similar or dissimilar the responses were between the respondents by grade. Pearson correlations were used to find out any statistically significant differences. The closer the value was to 1, the more similar the responses were, which means that there was no statistically significant difference between the responses. In addition, the results were cross tabulated by gender in order to see how similar or dissimilar the responses were between males and females, and this was done with SPSS as well.

The present study used content analysis to analyze the data from the open-ended questions. Content analysis allowed qualitative analysis of the data. Content analysis aims at getting an extensive and brief description of the phenomenon in question. In addition, it aims at clear and verbal representation of the phenomenon (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2011: 103-109). In the present study, data-oriented content analysis was used. In data-oriented analysis, the coding categories are derived from the data (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2011: 109). First, the answers in the present study were reviewed in order to discover similarities and differences in the responses. Second, the answers were coded thematically in order to get an extensive idea of the range of answers. Finally, the answers were also quantified into tables in order to illustrate their appearance in the data by frequency.

4.5 Participants

All the participants of the present study were Finnish upper-secondary-school students in two separate cities in Finland. There were altogether 98 students taking part in the study, from two different schools. The participants had to be able to reflect on their language learning and their knowledge of EFL grammar, which is why they had to be at a relatively advanced level in their language studies. In Finnish upper secondary schools, EFL grammar has a central role in the classroom. One of the main reasons for this is that students are trained to take the matriculation examinations, where knowledge of grammar is important. Hence, it was expected that the participants at this particular level would be able to provide relevant information on the topic. All the participants were on their second year of upper secondary school, which means that their age is between 17 and 18 years. Of the participants, 57% were female (n=56), and 43% were male (n=42).

Considering their success in English, the participants were asked to give their most recent grades in English in the questionnaire. In Finnish upper secondary schools, the evaluation scale is from 4 to 10, 10 being the best. Among the participants, the three most common grades were 9 (n=28), 8 (n=24) and 7 (n=20), which indicates that the majority of the participants were proficient in English. For comparison, only 7 participants replied their grade to be 5 or 6, and 14 participants said their most recent grade in English was 10. Five participants did not provide their recent grade in English.

5 FINDINGS

In this chapter, the participants' answers to the questions in the questionnaire will be discussed. The research questions functioned as themes for the discussion. First, the participants' general opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching are reported. Second, the participants' opinions about

feedback and error correction are presented. Third, the participants' views on grammar and communication are reported. Finally, the results from the independent open-ended questions are accounted for. A great deal of excerpts will be used to illustrate the points. In addition, the responses were compiled into tables thematically by frequency in order to visualize and clarify the findings. Since the students often mentioned several points in their responses, percentages for open-ended questions were not calculated.

5.1 General opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching

The first research question addresses the students' general opinions about EFL grammar. The questionnaire had a total of ten multiple-choice questions (see Table 1) and three open-ended questions related to these opinions. The numbers of the statements are the ones that were used in the original questionnaire, which is why they are not entirely in a chronological order in the tables. Even though the number of the participants in the present study is 98, not all participants answered every question in the questionnaire, which explains why the total number of the participants varies in the tables.

Table 1. Opinions about EFL grammar

Statement	1	2	3	4	n
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
1. The study of grammar is vital to master the English language properly.	1 (1.0)	7 (7.2)	35 (36.1)	54 (55.7)	97
2. It is possible to learn English well without the study of grammar.	14 (14.6)	35 (36.5)	34 (35.4)	13 (13.5)	96
3. The study of English grammar is completely useless.	88 (89.8)	9 (9.2)	1 (1.0)	0 (0.0)	98
4. The study of English grammar gives confidence to language use.	1 (1.0)	7 (7.1)	36 (36.7)	54 (55.1)	98
5. My skills in English improve fastest, if I study its grammar.	6 (6.2)	31 (32.0)	43 (44.3)	17 (17.5)	98
6. The study of grammar helps me to learn English.	2 (2.1)	5 (5.2)	41 (42.3)	49 (50.5)	97
8. I like the study of grammar.	5	31	45	16	97

	(5.2)	(32.0)	(46.4)	(16.5)	
10. There should be more teaching of grammar in English lessons.	11 (11.6)	60 (63.2)	21 (22.1)	3 (3.2)	95
12. I usually think about grammar rules, when I write in English.	9 (9.2)	24 (24.5)	43 (43.9)	22 (22.4)	98
13. I usually think about grammar rules, when I read a text I have written in English.	13 (13.3)	41 (41.8)	34 (34.7)	10 (10.2)	98

Response alternatives: 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3= somewhat agree, 4= strongly agree

First, the participants strongly agreed that the study of grammar was vital in order to master the English language, since altogether 92 % somewhat or strongly agreed with statement 1 (*The study of grammar is vital to master the English language properly*) (see the original statements in Finnish in Appendix 1), and over half of them (55.1 %) completely agreed. However, the participants were not unanimous over whether learning English was possible without a focus on grammar, which can be seen in the answers to statement 2 (*It is possible to learn English well without the study of grammar*). Of the participants, 35.4 % somewhat agreed that one could learn English without grammar, but at the same time, 36.5 % somewhat disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 13.5 % strongly agreed that learning English was possible without the study of grammar, whereas 14.6 % strongly disagreed. None of the participants strongly agreed and only 1% somewhat agreed with statement 3 (*The study of English grammar is completely useless*). The vast majority, 89.8% of the participants, strongly disagreed with statement 3. These results indicate that the participants understood the value and benefits of grammar, since no one regarded it as useless, but at the same time, some of them thought that learning English was not merely dependent on studying grammar.

Over half of the participants (55.1 %) strongly agreed with statement 4 (*The study of English grammar gives confidence to language use*). Again, only 1 % strongly disagreed and 7.1 % somewhat disagreed with this statement. Since 36.7 % also somewhat agreed with the statement, it can certainly be interpreted that grammar helps the learners to use the language properly, because they have a system that they can rely on whenever they are insecure. The answers to statement 5 (*My skills in English improve fastest if I study its grammar*) were rather divided. Of the participants, 44.3 % somewhat agreed and 17.5 % strongly agreed with the statement, but simultaneously, 32 % somewhat disagreed and 6.2 % strongly disagreed. The majority seems to think that grammar is the

fastest way to improve their skills in English, but a relatively significant percentage also disagreed with this.

The answers to statement 6 (*The study of grammar helps me to learn English*) were in line with answers to statements 1 and 4. Half of the participants (50.5 %) strongly agreed that the study of grammar helped them to learn English, and 42.3 % somewhat agreed, which means that altogether 92,8 % of the participants agreed with the statement. Only 7.3 % disagreed or somewhat disagreed with the statement. As for statement 8 (*I like the study of grammar*), only 16.5 % of the participants strongly agreed. Even though 46.4 % somewhat agreed with the statement, 32 % also somewhat disagreed with it. Interestingly, the results for statements 6 and 8 highlight the importance of grammar in the students' minds, since they definitely thought it reinforced their learning. However, a smaller percentage of the participants strongly agreed that they liked the study of grammar. This indicates that studying grammar is regarded as essential, but not necessarily pleasant.

The great majority of the participants (63.2 %) somewhat disagreed with statement 10 (*There should be more teaching of grammar in English lessons*), and 11.6 % strongly disagreed. Of the participants, 22.1 % somewhat agreed and only 3.2 % strongly agreed with this statement. These results clearly suggest that the participants had negative attitudes towards grammar, since the majority did not want to increase the amount of grammar teaching.

Of the participants, altogether 66.3 % strongly or somewhat agreed with statement 12 (*I usually think about grammar rules when I write in English*). As to statement 13 (*I usually think about grammar rules, when I read a text I have written in English*), 44.9 % of the participants strongly or somewhat agreed. Consequently, the students thought about grammar rules more when they were writing. No more than 9.2 % strongly disagreed that they thought about grammar when they were writing, and for reading the comparable percentage was 13.3 %. In the light of these findings it seems that the participants think about grammar rules more when they are writing in English than when they are reading. This can result from the fact that writing viewed as a process demands more thinking, and it is a slower process than reading, and therefore, an individual has more time to stop and think about the rules in writing. In addition, in writing an individual has to think about the language more deeply, and focus on producing structures.

Comparison by grade

The present study aimed to discover whether the participants' recent grade in the English language or gender had any impact on their responses. Pearson correlations were calculated for each

statement, and the closer the value was to 1, the more similar the participants' responses were, which meant that there was no statistically significant difference. Regarding the recent grade in English, statistically significant differences could be found only for statement 8 (*I like the study of grammar*) (see Table 2, for the full table, see Appendix 2).

Table 2. Comparison by grade

Statement		1	2	3	4	Grade	Total	Pearson correlation
8. I like the study of grammar.	n	2	11	13	1	4 -7	27	.273*
	%	(7.4)	(40.7)	(48.1)	(3.7)			
	n	1	9	9	5	8	24	
	%	(4.2)	(37.5)	(37.5)	(20.8)			
	n	1	9	21	10	9 -10	41	
	%	(2.4)	(22.0)	(51.2)	(22.4)			

* = statistically significant difference

For statement 8 (*I like the study of grammar*) the Pearson correlation was (.273), which meant that the higher a grade the participant had in English, the more s/he agreed with the statement.

Accordingly, the participants who were good at English also liked its grammar.

Comparison by gender

As to the relevance of the participants' sex, the present study aimed to find out whether there were any differences in the opinions between boys and girls. For each statement, the percentages of males and females were cross tabulated to show the significant discrepancies. Statistically significant differences could be found for statements 2 (*It is possible to learn English without the study of grammar.*) and 13 (*I usually think about grammar rules, when I read a text I have written in English.*) (see Table 3, for the full table, see Appendix 3).

Table 3. Comparison by gender

Statement		1	2	3	4	Gender	Total
2. It is possible to learn English well without the study of grammar.	n	11	22	15	6	Girls	54
	%	(20.4)	(40.7)	(27.8)	(11.1)		
	n	3	13	19	7	Boys	42
	%	(7.1)	(31.0)	(45.2)	(16.7)		
13. I usually think about grammar rules, when I read a text I have written in English.	n	3	29	17	7	Girls	56
	%	(5.4)	(51.8)	(30.4)	(12.5)		
	n	10	12	17	3	Boys	42
	%	(23.8)	(28.6)	(40.5)	(7.1)		

For statement 2, there was a significant discrepancy between the boys' and girls' responses. Of the girls, altogether 61.1 % strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement, whereas of the boys, only 38.1 % strongly or somewhat disagreed. Of the boys, 61.9 % strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement, whereas only 38.9 % of the girls strongly or somewhat agreed. Consequently, more girls than boys thought that learning English well was not possible without the study of grammar. The boys thought that one can learn English well even without studying its grammar, but not as many girls thought so.

For statement 13 (*I usually think about grammar rules, when I read a text I have written in English.*) significant differences between the boys and girls could also be found. Over half of the girls (51.8 %) somewhat disagreed with statement 13, whereas only 28.6 % of the boys did so. However, 23.8 % of the boys strongly disagreed with the statement, and only 5.4 % of the girls did so. So, more girls disagreed that they thought about grammar rules while reading a text they had written in English. But, the boys seemed to have stronger opinions about the statement, since more boys than girls strongly disagreed.

Summary

To sum up, the participants considered grammar important in order to master the English language properly (92 % somewhat or strongly agreed). However, their opinions about whether it was possible to learn English well without a focus on grammar varied, but no one thought that the study of grammar was completely useless. Most of the students thought that the study of grammar helped them to learn English, and therefore, it gave them more confidence to use the language. But, they

had divided opinions about whether the study of grammar was the fastest way to learn English. In addition, they were not unanimous about whether they liked grammar or not. The study of grammar was regarded as important, but not necessarily pleasant. As a result, the great majority did not want to increase the amount of grammar teaching in English lessons. Moreover, the students thought about grammar rules more while writing than while reading in English. The participant's recent grade in English had relevance: the higher a grade one had, the more s/he liked the study of grammar. Gender had some relevance to the results as well. First, more girls than boys thought that learning English properly was not possible without the study of grammar. Second, more girls than boys somewhat disagreed that they thought about grammar while reading, but at the same time, more boys strongly disagreed.

5.1.2 Open-ended questions: general opinions about grammar

Questions 7, 9 and 11 in the second part of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) asked for the students' general opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching. These open-ended questions were slots where the students gave reasons for their opinions. Next, the answers to these open-ended questions are reported.

Reasons why grammar helps the students to learn English

Reasons why grammar helped the students or did not help the students to learn English were asked in question 7. Next, the reasons that helped to learn English are reported. One reason why grammar helped the students to learn English was that it helped them to form meaningful sentences (see example 1):

(1) Jos osaa kieliopin on helpompi rakentaa sujuvia lauseita. (Student 82)

[If you know the grammar it is easier to form fluent sentences]

Another reason why grammar helped the students to learn English was that it increased their confidence to use English (see example 2):

(2) Tietää mihin järjestykseen sanat kuuluu laittaa, antaa varmuutta käyttää Englantia. (Student 29)

[You know in which order you should put the words, gives confidence to use English]

The third reason why grammar helped the students to learn English was that it helped them to understand the English language better (see example 3):

(3) Jos osaan kieliopin, niin osaan tietysti paremmin englantia eli se auttaa ymmärtämään mitä joku puhuu tai kirjoittaa. (Student 2)

[If I know the grammar, then of course I know English better so it helps to understand what someone is speaking or writing.]

The fourth reason why grammar facilitated learning was that it supported correct language use (see example 4):

(4) Auttaa, sillä tällöin puhuu oikeaa kieltä. (Student 27)

[It helps, because then you speak correct language.]

The fifth reason for grammar facilitating learning English was that it provided useful rules and structures (see example 5):

(5) Oppii erilaisia sääntöjä ja rakenteita, joiden avulla voin puhua ja kirjoittaa englantia. (Student 59)

[You learn different rules and structures, with the help of which I can speak and write English.]

*Reasons why grammar does **not** help the students to learn English*

It was also mentioned that grammar did **not** necessarily help the students to learn English, and the reasons that were given are reported next. One reason why grammar did not help them to learn English was that it did not help to communicate (see example 6):

(6) Ei juurikaan auta ainakaan puhumiseen, koska ei puhuessa tule mietittyä lauserakenteita tai kieliopin sääntöjä. (Student 5)

[It does not aid really, at least not speaking because you do not think about sentence constructions or grammar rules while speaking.]

The second reason why grammar did not facilitate learning was that grammar instruction did not teach new vocabulary (see example 7):

(7) Ei auta, koska kieliopin harjoittelu ei anna sanastoa. (Student 42)

[It does not help, because practicing grammar does not give vocabulary.]

The answers to question 7 are listed in Table 5 thematically and by frequency.

Table 5. Reasons why grammar helps/does not help the students to learn English by frequency

Reasons why grammar helps the students to learn English		Reasons why grammar does <u>not</u> help the students to learn English	
Response	Frequency (N)	Response	Frequency (N)
Helps in forming sentences	34	Does not help to communicate	8
Gives confidence to use English	19	Does not give new vocabulary	4
Helps to understand English	14		
Helps to use the language correctly	14		
Gives rules and structures	12		
Gives a basis for the language	6		

Helps in forming sentences, Gives confidence to use English, Helps to understand English and Helps to use the language correctly were the most frequent reasons why grammar helped the students to learn English. Quite frequent reasons were also that it *Gives rules and structures* and *Gives a basis for the language*. In contrast, the most frequent reasons for why grammar did not help learning were *Does not help to communicate* and *Does not give new vocabulary*. However, there were fewer reasons given for why grammar did not facilitate learning English than for why it did facilitate learning English.

For the participants, the study of grammar facilitated language learning and aided comprehension. Grammar was also a source of security, and knowing grammar increased a student's confidence to use English. In addition, grammar helped them to use accurate language. It gave the students important rules and structures, and it was considered the basis of the language. However, the study

of grammar was **not** helpful, because, it took time from communication and it did not provide chances to learn new words. However, overall the opinions about grammar were positive and appreciative. It seems that the participants who thought that grammar did not help them to learn English considered grammar to be separate from the other aspects of language. They did not see a connection between grammar and communication, or grammar and vocabulary. If grammar is always taught in separate sessions during lessons, it is not surprising that some students feel this way.

Reasons for liking grammar

Reasons for liking or not liking grammar were asked in question 9. Next, the reasons for liking grammar are reported. One reason for liking grammar was again its usefulness (see example 8):

(8) Pidän, koska tiedän sen olevan hyödyllistä elämässä. (Student 69)

[I like it, because I know that it is beneficial in life.]

Another reason for liking grammar was that it facilitated learning (see example 9):

(9) Se auttaa oppimaan. (Student 73)

[It helps me to learn.]

The third reason for liking grammar was that it was considered pleasant and easy (see example 10):

(10) Se on mukavaa, suht helppo (Student 71)

[It is pleasant, quite easy.]

*Reasons for **not** liking grammar*

The participants mentioned several reasons for not liking grammar, and these answers are presented next. One reason for not liking grammar was that it was considered difficult (see example 11):

(11) En pidä, koska se on vaikeaa. (Student 79)

[I do not like it because it is difficult.]

Another reason for not liking grammar was that it was boring (see example 12):

(12) Tylsää, kaavamaista. (Student 11)

[Boring, formal.]

The third reason for not liking grammar was too many exceptions to the rules (see example 13):

(13) Vaikeaa, sääntöjä ei tunnu olevan poikkeusten määrän takia. (Student 16)

[Difficult, there seems to be no rules because there are so many exceptions.]

The fourth reason for not liking grammar was memorization that was regarded as demanding (see example 14):

(14) En pidä, koska niin paljon ulkoa opeteltavaa. (Student 42)

[I do not like, because there is so much to memorize.]

The answers to question 9 are listed in Table 6 thematically and by frequency.

Table 6. Reasons for liking/not liking the study of grammar by frequency

Reasons for liking grammar		Reasons for <u>not</u> liking grammar	
Response	Frequency (N)	Response	Frequency (N)
It is beneficial	23	It is difficult	21
Helps to learn English	23	It is boring	20
It is easy/pleasant	18	Too many exceptions	10
		I do not like memorization	8

It is beneficial, Helps to learn English and It is easy/pleasant were the most frequent reasons for liking grammar. In contrast, *It is difficult, It is boring, Too many exceptions and I do not like memorization* were the most frequent reasons for not liking grammar. However, there were more reasons for liking grammar than for not liking grammar.

The description "necessary but boring" (Jean and Simard 2011) matches better than well with the students' opinions. The majority of the participants liked learning English grammar because they understood its value, but at the same time they acknowledged that it was challenging and even boring. The participants understood that learning grammar was worth it, even though they did not like memorizing the rules and exceptions to them, since it was demanding and took time and effort. Some participants genuinely liked grammar and it did not cause any difficulty to them. Learning a language can occur without rules or patterns, through exposure, but language learning in school usually means that some grammar patterns and instruction is involved. Some students may find this hard, because they feel that patterns and formulae are connected to mathematics, not languages. Moreover, grammar is regarded as boring probably because the methods to teach grammar can be old-fashioned, for example, including plenty of drills, or teacher-centered. Grammar instruction should engage students and let them be active, instead of a teacher lecturing about grammar rules in front of the class. This could increase students' motivation and interest in grammar.

Reasons why there should be more teaching of grammar

Reasons why there should or should not be more teaching of grammar in English lessons were asked in question 11. The participants had very strong and similar opinions about this statement. The reasons why there should be more teaching of grammar are reported next. One reason why there should be more grammar was because repetition was considered helpful (see example 15):

(15) Kertausta aina hyvä olla! Tahtoo jotkut perusasiat melkein unohtua. (Student 56)

[It is always good to have repetition! Some basic things are almost forgotten.]

Another reason why there should be more grammar teaching was that grammar is one of the key aspects of a language (see example 16):

(16) Kyllä, koska se on keskeinen osa kieltä ja se on joskus haastavaa eikä sitä opi heti. (Student 3)

[Yes, because it is a central part of a language and it is sometimes challenging and you do not learn it immediately.]

The third reason why grammar instruction should be increased was that it would enhance grammar learning (see example 17):

(17) Se on melko tärkeä osata ja mikäli sitä opetettaisiin enemmän, sen luonnollisesti oppisi paremmin.
(Student 70)

[It is quite important to know it and if it would be taught more, you would of course learn it better.]

*Reasons why there should **not** be more teaching of grammar*

The participants mentioned several reasons why there should not be more teaching of grammar, and the reasons for this are reported next. One reason was that the amount of grammar teaching was already adequate, and another reason was that grammar took time away from other activities, for instance, oral activities and vocabulary learning (see example 18):

(18) Mielestäni kielioppia on riittävästi ja muitakin alueita kuten puhetta ja sanastoa on tärkeä harjoitella. (Student 6)

[In my opinion there is enough grammar and it is important to practice other areas like speaking and vocabulary.]

The third reason for why there should not be more grammar teaching was that it was not regarded as useful (see example 19):

(19) Se on turhaa. (Student 49)

[It is unnecessary.]

The answers to question 11 are listed in Table 7 thematically and by frequency.

Table 7. Reasons for why there should/should not be more grammar teaching by frequency

Reasons why there should be more grammar teaching		Reasons why there should <u>not</u> be more grammar teaching	
Response	Frequency (N)	Response	Frequency (N)
Repetition is beneficial.	7	The amount of grammar is already adequate.	53
Grammar is a central part of the language.	6	There should be more practice of speaking/vocabulary than grammar.	16

It would help to learn grammar better.	6							
--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

It is unnecessary.	2							
--------------------	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Repetition is beneficial, *Grammar is a central part of the language* and *It would help to learn grammar better* were mentioned as the most common reasons for why grammar instruction should be increased. In contrast, *The amount of grammar is already adequate* and *There should be more practice of speaking/vocabulary than teaching of grammar* were the most common reasons for not wanting to increase the amount of grammar instruction. Even though reasons were given why there should be more grammar teaching, the frequency of reasons why there should **not** be more grammar teaching was much higher among the participants.

Again, the participants recognized the value and benefits of grammar teaching, but they thought that there was enough of it. Some of them even thought that the amount of grammar teaching should be reduced in order to dedicate time for vocabulary learning and speaking. It is true that especially in upper secondary school the amount of grammar teaching increases, compared to secondary school. The teaching of grammar includes plenty of rules and exceptions, which can be overwhelming for students, even though in the matriculation examination these matters are central. Overall, the students were homogeneous in their opinions about this specific question in the questionnaire, since the majority replied that the amount of grammar was adequate at the moment.

Summary

To sum up, the participants responded that the study of grammar facilitated language learning. Especially, it supported sentence formation and comprehension, and it increased students' confidence to use English. The students liked grammar because it was useful and it supported language learning. However, they thought that grammar did **not** help them to communicate and it did not enhance vocabulary learning, and they did not like grammar because it was boring, demanding and included too many exceptions. In addition, memorization was considered demanding. The respondents strongly agreed that the amount of grammar teaching in English lessons was sufficient. They thought that time should be dedicated to speaking and vocabulary learning as well.

5.2 Opinions about feedback and error correction'

The second research question asked for the students' opinions about feedback and error correction in the classroom. The questionnaire contained four multiple-choice questions (see Table 8) and two open-ended questions related to these opinions. The numbers of the questions are again the ones from the original questionnaire, which is why they are not entirely in a chronological order in the tables. Again, the total number of participants varies because not all participants answered every question in the questionnaire.

Table 8. Opinions about feedback and error correction

Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	n
1. Teacher should correct students' grammatical errors in English lessons.	3 (3.3)	10 (10.9)	39 (42.4)	40 (43.5)	92
2. I like my grammatical errors be corrected, if I make them in English lessons.	1 (1.0)	13 (13.4)	45 (46.4)	38 (39.2)	97
3. I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my written text in English lessons.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.0)	18 (18.4)	78 (79.6)	98
5. I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my spoken language in English lessons.	3 (3.2)	33 (34.7)	41 (43.2)	18 (18.9)	98

Response alternatives: 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3= somewhat agree, 4= strongly agree

Firstly, the students agreed that the teacher should correct their grammatical errors in English lessons, since almost 86% of the participants somewhat or strongly agreed with statement 1 (*Teacher should correct students' grammatical errors in English lessons*). Only 14.2 % somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement. Almost the same percentage of the participants (85.6 %) somewhat or strongly agreed with statement 2 (*I like my grammatical errors be corrected, if I make them in English lessons*). However, a slightly smaller percentage strongly agreed with statement 2 (39.2 %) than with statement 1 (43.5 %). Only 14.4 % of the participants somewhat or strongly disagreed with statement 2.

Statements 3 and 5 asked for the students' opinions about correcting errors in written and spoken language in English lessons. The vast majority of the participants (79.6 %) strongly agreed with

statement 3 (*I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my written text in English lessons*). Of the participants, 18.4 % also somewhat agreed with the statement. Only 2% of the participants somewhat disagreed, and no one strongly agreed with statement 3. As to statement 5 (*I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my spoken language in English lessons*) only 18.9 % of the participants strongly agreed. However, 43.2 % of them somewhat agreed with statement 5. At the same time, 34.7 % of them somewhat disagreed with the statement, but only 3.2 % strongly disagreed.

The participants' opinions about feedback and error correction were clear: the majority wanted their grammatical errors to be corrected by the teacher. The majority also liked that their grammatical errors were corrected, but more students somewhat agreed (46.4 %) than strongly agreed (39.2 %) with this. However, there was a significant difference in opinions between errors in writing and errors in speaking. The participants were more comfortable with the teacher correcting their errors in writing than in speaking. Reasons for this can be, firstly, that corrections to a written text are usually also made in writing, which means that the feedback is more private. But, feedback on speech can occur so that other students can also hear it, which can result in the student feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed. Secondly, it can be difficult for students to receive feedback while speaking, because it can be challenging to concentrate on it, and it can interfere with production. Thirdly, written feedback can be more efficient, because students can return to it later if necessary.

Comparison by grade

The present study aimed to find out whether the participant's recent grade in the English language influenced their responses. Pearson correlations were calculated for each statement, and the closer the value was to 1, the more similar the participants' responses were, which meant that there was no statistically significant difference.

Considering the recent grade in English, statistically significant differences could be found for statements 2 and 3 (see Table 9).

Table 9. Comparison by grade

Statement	1	2	3	4	Grade	n	Pearson correlation
1. Teacher should correct students' grammatical errors in English lessons.	1 (4.0)	1 (4.0)	15 (60.0)	8 (32.0)	4-7	25	.024
	0 (0.0)	4 (16.7)	6 (25.0)	14 (58.3)	8	24	
	2 (5.3)	4 (10.5)	16 (42.1)	16 (42.1)	9-10	38	
2. I like my grammatical errors be corrected, if I make them in English lessons.	1 (3.7)	4 (14.8)	15 (55.6)	7 (25.9)	4-7	27	.285*
	0 (0.0)	3 (12.5)	14 (58.3)	7 (29.2)	8	24	
	0 (0.0)	5 (12.2)	15 (36.6)	21 (51.2)	9-10	41	
3. I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my written text in English lessons.	0 (0.0)	1 (3.7)	9 (33.3)	17 (63.0)	4-7	27	.349*
	0 (0.0)	1 (4.2)	6 (25.0)	17 (70.8)	8	24	
	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.4)	41 (97.6)	9-10	42	
5. I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my spoken language in English lessons.	0 (0.0)	8 (29.6)	16 (59.3)	3 (11.1)	4-7		-.017
	1 (4.3)	7 (30.4)	11 (47.8)	4 (17.4)	8		
	1 (2.5)	17 (42.5)	13 (32.5)	9 (22.5)	9-10		

* = statistically significant difference

Response alternatives: 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3= somewhat agree, 4= strongly agree

For statement 2 (*I like my grammatical errors be corrected, if I make them in English lessons*) the Pearson correlation was (.285). This means that the higher a grade the participant had in English, the more s/he agreed with the statement. Consequently, the students who were good at English were more comfortable with error correction. For statement 3 (*I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my written text in English lessons*) the Pearson correlation was (.349), which also means that the higher a grade in English, the more the participant agreed with the statement. Accordingly, the good students were more comfortable with error correction in writing than the less proficient students. It is interesting that the recent grade in English had no significance for statement 4 (*I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my spoken language in English lessons*). Good students could have been expected to be more comfortable with error correction in speaking as well. Feedback on speech can occur so that other students can hear it too, and therefore, good students could have been expected to have more tolerance and confidence to receive this kind of "public" feedback.

Comparison by gender

The present study aimed to find out whether there were any differences in opinions between boys and girls. For each statement, the percentages of the boys and girls were cross tabulated in order to discover significant differences. A statistically significant difference could be found only for statement 2 (*I like my grammatical errors be corrected, if I make them in English lessons*) (see Table 10).

Table 10. Comparison by gender

Statement		1	2	3	4	Gender	Total
1. Teacher should correct students' grammatical errors in English lessons.	n	2	7	23	22	Girls	54
	%	(3.7)	(13.0)	(42.6)	(40.7)		
	n	1	3	16	18	Boys	38
	%	(2.6)	(7.9)	(42.1)	(47.4)		
2. I like my grammatical errors be corrected, if I make them in English lessons.	n	0	11	24	20	Girls	55
	%	(0.0)	(20.0)	(43.6)	(36.4)		
	n	1	2	21	18	Boys	42
	%	(2.4)	(4.8)	(50.0)	(42.9)		

3. I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my written text in English lessons.	n	0	1	7	48	Girls	56
	%	(0.0)	(1.8)	(12.5)	(85.7)		
	n	0	1	11	30	Boys	42
	%	(0.0)	(2.4)	(26.2)	(71.4)		
5. I want the teacher to correct grammatical errors in my spoken language in English lessons.	n	3	19	22	10	Girls	54
	%	(5.6)	(35.2)	(40.7)	(18.5)		
	n	0	14	19	8	Boys	41
	%	(0.0)	(34.1)	(46.3)	(19.5)		

For statement 2, there was a significant difference in the responses by gender. Of the girls, 20 % somewhat disagreed, whereas of the boys, only 4.8 % somewhat disagreed with the statement. None of the girls and 2.4 % of the boys strongly disagreed with the statement. The results show that many more girls than boys disagreed that they liked their grammatical errors to be corrected. This could indicate that the girls' opinions about error correction were slightly more positive.

Summary

To sum up, the participants' opinions about feedback and error correction were overall more positive than negative. First, approximately 86 % strongly or somewhat agreed that the teacher should correct grammatical errors made by students. Second, the majority agreed that they liked their grammatical errors to be corrected, but the majority did not strongly agree with this. Third, the difference between error correction in writing and in speaking was clear, since the participants were more comfortable with teacher correcting their errors in writing than in speaking. The participant's grade had some impact on the answers. The students who had higher grades in English had more positive opinions about feedback and error correction. The participant's gender did not have much relevance, but one significant difference was found: the girls more often than the boys somewhat disagreed that they liked their grammatical errors to be corrected by the teacher.

5.2.1 Open-ended questions: feedback and error correction

Questions 4 and 6 in the third part of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) were concerned with the participants' opinions about feedback and error correction. These open-ended questions were slots where the students provided explanations for their answers. The answers to these questions are reported next.

Reasons why grammatical errors should be corrected in writing

Reasons why grammatical errors should or should not be corrected in writing were asked in question 4. Next, the reasons why errors should be corrected are reported. One reason why grammatical errors should be corrected was learning from mistakes (see example 20):

(20) Virheistä oppii parhaiten, joten on tärkeää että ne korjataan. (Student 14)
[You learn best from mistakes, so it is important that they are corrected.]

Another reason why the students wanted their errors corrected in writing was that it helped them to know what they should pay attention to in the future (see example 21):

(21) Kun opettaja korjaa virheeni, pystyn kiinnittämään siihen liittyvän kielioppiasian opiskeluun enemmän huomiota. (Student 97)
[When the teacher corrects my errors, I can pay more attention to studying the grammar point.]

The third reason why errors should be corrected was educational goals, for example success in the matriculation examination, in the future that required good knowledge of grammar (see example 22):

(22) Jos virheitä ei korjata, en selviä yo:sta (Student 34)
[If the errors are not corrected, I cannot survive in matriculation examination.]

*Reasons why grammatical errors should **not** be corrected in writing*

Almost all of the participants wanted their errors to be corrected in writing, which is why there was only one reason mentioned why errors should not be corrected. The reason was that it was not always considered necessary (see example 23):

(22) Jos tehtävällä ei ole hirveästi merkitystä (arvosanallisesti) niin sitten ei tarvitse korjata. (Student 3)
[If the task has not much relevance (to grade) then it is not necessary to correct.]

The answers to question 4 are listed in Table 11 thematically and by frequency.

Table 11. Reasons why errors should/should not be corrected in writing by frequency

Reasons why errors should be corrected in writing		Reasons why errors should <u>not</u> be corrected in writing	
Response	Frequency (N)	Response	Frequency (N)
Learning from mistakes	75	It is not always necessary.	2
To know what to focus on in the future.	17		
Educational goals that require good grammar.	2		

Learning from mistakes, To know what to focus on in the future and Educational goals that require good grammar were mentioned as the most frequent reasons why grammatical errors should be corrected from written language. The only reason why errors should not be corrected was that *It is not always necessary*.

The participants wanted their grammatical errors corrected in writing, because they wanted to learn from mistakes. In addition, corrections provided the students with information on what they should improve in the future. Moreover, educational goals that required mastery of grammar were a reason for wanting error correction. Only two participants mentioned that the teacher should not correct errors because it was not considered necessary.

These results reveal that the students definitely value feedback in writing, and they have mainly positive opinions about error correction in writing. Clearly, it would not be fair towards learners to ignore all their errors, since it would not give them the possibility to improve their language skills and do better in the future. Furthermore, repeating the same mistakes over and over, and not knowing what went wrong, can result in learning incorrect forms, which can be difficult to correct later. It was positive to notice that the participants valued error correction for the sake of learning, and only a few mentioned direct educational goals, for example, matriculation exams.

Reasons why grammatical errors should be corrected in speaking

Reasons why grammatical errors should/should not be corrected in speaking were asked in question 6. The reasons why errors should be corrected are reported next. One reason why grammatical errors should be corrected in speaking was learning from mistakes (see example 23):

(23) Jotta voisin oppia virheistäni. (Student 24)

[So that I could learn from my mistakes.]

Another reason why errors should be corrected in speaking was that serious errors should be corrected (see example 24):

(24) Räikeät virheet, ei pilkuntarkkaa nipottamista, pahat virheet pitäisi saada korjattua. (Student 67)

[Serious errors, no meticulous nitpicking, bad mistakes should be corrected.]

*Reasons why grammatical errors should **not** be corrected from spoken language*

The students mentioned several reasons why grammatical errors should not be corrected in speaking, and these reasons are reported next. One reason why errors should not be corrected in speaking was that it did not encourage the students to speak (see example 25):

(25) Se ei rohkaise puhumaan jos aina saa huomautuksia virheistä. (Student 66)

[It does not encourage to speak if you always get comments on errors.]

Another reason why errors should not be corrected in speaking was that it was more important to be understood than focus on errors (see example 26):

(26) Puhuesssa on tärkeämpää, että viesti välittyy oikein, kuin että puhe on kieliopillisesti virheetöntä. (Student 26)

[In speaking, it is more important that the message gets across than that the speech is grammatically correct.]

The third reason why errors should not be corrected in speaking was that correcting small errors was not considered necessary (see example 27):

(27) Haluan, että räikeät virheet korjataan, mutta pieniin virheisiin ei mielestäni ole tarvetta puuttua.
(Student 38)

[I want obvious errors corrected, but there is no need to pay attention to small errors.]

The fourth reason why errors should not be corrected in speaking was that in speech grammar was not so important (see example 28):

(28) Puhutussa kielessä kielioppi ei ole tärkeintä. (Student 96)

[In spoken language, grammar is not the most important thing.]

The fifth reason why error correction was not necessary in speaking was that it was not considered pleasant (see example 29):

(29) No ei se välttämättä kovin kivaa jos tulee korjaamaan puheen päälle (Student 9)

[Well it is not necessarily very nice if someone comes and corrects over your speech.]

The sixth reason why errors should not be corrected in speaking was the fear of other students hearing it (see example 30):

(30) Ei ole hauska muiden kuullen. (Student 55)

[It is not fun while the others can hear.]

The answers to question 6 are listed in Table 12 thematically and by frequency.

Table 12. Reasons why errors should/should not be corrected in speaking by frequency

Reasons why errors should be corrected in speaking		Reasons why errors should <u>not</u> be corrected in speaking	
Response	Frequency (N)	Response	Frequency (N)
Learning from mistakes.	33	It does not encourage to speak.	16
Serious errors should be corrected.	11	It is more important to be understood.	13
		Small errors should not be corrected.	11
		In speech grammar is not so important.	8
		It does not feel comfortable.	3
		It is not nice if the others hear it.	3

Learning from mistakes and *Serious errors should be corrected* were the most common reasons why errors should be corrected in speaking. In contrast, the most common reasons why errors in speaking should **not** be corrected were *It does not encourage to speak*, *It is more important to be understood*, *Small errors should not be corrected*, *In speech grammar is not so important*, *It does not feel comfortable* and *It is not nice if the others hear it*. Many more reasons were mentioned why errors in speaking should **not** be corrected, but the frequency of reasons why errors should be corrected was also quite high.

Error correction in speaking was considered important, because it facilitated language learning. Serious errors can interfere with communication, which is probably why correcting them was considered important. However, error correction while speaking was not regarded as encouraging, and it could feel uncomfortable. Naturally, if the teacher keeps constantly interrupting a student who is trying to communicate, and even the smallest errors that are not relevant in the situation are corrected, it gives the impression that the aim of language use is perfection. As a result, students can be discouraged to speak, since they might feel that their speech should be prepared beforehand in order to avoid errors. However, the participants understood that not all small errors need correction, and that communicating a message was more important in speaking. Therefore, constant error correction by the teacher could be regarded as needless nitpicking. Furthermore, if other students

can hear the correction, it can be embarrassing for the student. The teacher should, consequently, avoid direct error correction on speech, and make it more implicit, for example, through recasts. In addition, the teacher could list the errors that students constantly make in speech, and discuss these in a separate lesson. Encouraging communication is more beneficial for learners, not aiming at error-free language use. As the results indicate, learning from mistakes was considered helpful.

Summary

To sum up, errors should be corrected in writing as well as in speaking mostly because learning from mistakes was considered useful. The correction of errors in writing was important, because it provided information on what to focus on in the future, and it helped to achieve educational goals, for example, to survive in the matriculation exam. However, error correction in writing was not always considered necessary. The correction of errors in speaking was important, because serious errors should be corrected. Errors should not be corrected in speaking, because it did not encourage the learners to speak. In addition, grammar was not considered to be the most important issue in speaking, and correction of all small errors was not essential. It was also mentioned that error correction in speaking did not feel good, especially if others could hear it.

5.3 Grammar and communication

The third research question asked for the students' opinions about the connection between grammar and communication. The questionnaire contained one multiple-choice question and three open-ended questions related to these opinions. First, the answers to the multiple-choice question, and then, the answers to the open-ended questions are reported.

Question 14 in the second part of the questionnaire asked for the students' opinions about whether it was more important to practice English by practicing conversation or by practicing grammar (see Table 13).

Table 13. Opinions about grammar and communication

Statement	1	2	3	4	n
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
14. It is more important to practice English by practicing conversation than by practicing grammar.	3 (3.1)	11 (11.3)	48 (49.5)	35 (36.1)	97

Response alternatives: 1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3= somewhat agree, 4= strongly agree

The majority of the participants agreed with statement 14 (*It is more important to practice English by practicing conversation than by practicing grammar*), since a total of 85.6 % somewhat or strongly agreed. Only 3.1 % of the participants strongly disagreed and 11.3 % somewhat disagreed with the statement. Apparently, the students thought that learning by practicing conversation was either more pleasant or more effective than learning the language through grammar practice. In general, learning English in a school setting includes plenty of formal practice, and there is not always so much time for free communication in the target language. Hence, when communicative exercises are introduced by the teacher, they are usually well received by students. The ability to communicate and have a conversation should be valued more than the ability to be grammatically correct, because constant concern about grammar can hinder production. Fortunately, the participants seemed to understand the value of being able to communicate.

5.3.1 Open-ended questions: Grammar and communication

Question 15 in the second part of the questionnaire asked the students to give reasons why they considered practicing conversation or practicing grammar more important. In addition, the first part of the questionnaire contained two independent open-ended questions that asked the students to list words that they associated with the words *grammar* and *communication*. Next, the answers to these open-ended questions are reported.

Reasons why practicing conversation was considered to be more important than practicing grammar

Reasons why practicing conversation was/was not considered to be more important than grammar exercises were asked in question 15. Next, the reasons why practicing conversation was considered to be more important are reported. One reason was that conversation was considered more beneficial in real life situations (see example 31):

(31) Keskustelu on käytännön tilanne, jotka ovat tulevaisuudessa asioita, jotka pitää osata. (Student 39)
[Conversation is a hands-on situation, and that is a thing in the future that you must know.]

Another reason why practicing conversation was considered to be more important than practicing grammar was that learning to speak was possible only by speaking (see example 32):

(32) Oppii keskustelemaan vain puhumalla, ei harjoittelemalla kielioppia (Student 89).
[You learn to speak by speaking, not by practicing grammar.]

The third reason why conversation was considered to be more important was that learning by speaking was considered most efficient (see example 33):

(33) Koska siten oppii paremmin, puhuminen on tehokasta. (Student 54)
[Because that way you learn better, speaking is efficient.]

The fourth reason why conversation was considered to be more important was that to be understood was more essential than correct grammar (see example 34):

(34) Sinua ymmärretään, vaikka ilmaisusi saattaa olla vähän sinne päin. Tärkeintä on konkreettisessa tilanteessa ymmärtäminen ja ymmärretyksi tuleminen. (Student 38)
[You are understood even though your expression might be a little out there. Most important in a concrete situation is understanding and to be understood.]

The fifth reason why practicing conversation was considered to be more important than practicing grammar was that speaking was more fun (see example 35)

(35) Koska keskustelu on hausempaa. (Student 55)
[Because conversation is more pleasant.]

*Reasons why practicing conversation was **not** considered to be more important than practicing grammar*

Many reasons were mentioned why practicing conversation was **not** considered to be more important than practicing grammar, and these reasons are reported next. One reason was that both were regarded as equally important (see example 36)

(36) On tärkeää, että näissä on tasapaino. (Student 51)

[It is important that there is a balance between these.]

Another reason why practicing conversation was not considered more important was that grammar was important also in a conversation (see example 37):

(37) Myös keskusteluharjoituksissa tulee huomioida kielioppi. (Student 70)

[Paying attention to grammar is also important in conversation.]

The third reason why practicing conversation was not regarded as more important was that in order to speak, grammar had to be learned first (see example 38):

(38) Ensin on hyvä osata peruskielioppi ja sitten vasta toteuttaa sitä käytännössä (Student 13)

[First, it is good to know the basic grammar and then to put it into practice.]

The fourth reason why practicing conversation was not considered to be more important was that learning by writing was more effective (see example 39):

(39) Itse opin enemmän kirjoittamalla, koska siitä tekemisestä jää jälki. (Student 31)

[I myself learn better by writing, because that act leaves a mark.]

The fifth reason why practicing conversation was not considered to be more important was that grammar helped in the matriculation examination (see example 40):

(40) Ylioppilaskokeissa kirjoitetaan ei keskustella. (Student 85)

[In matriculation examination, you write, not speak.]

The answers to question 15 are listed in Table 14 thematically and by frequency.

Table 14. Reasons why conversation exercises are/are not more important than grammar exercises

Reasons why practicing conversation was considered to be more important than practicing grammar.		Reasons why practicing conversation was <u>not</u> considered to be more important than practicing grammar.	
Response	Frequency (N)	Response	Frequency (N)
Conversation is more beneficial in real life.	37	Both are equally important.	10
Learning to speak happens through speaking.	17	Grammar is important to conversation.	8
Learning by speaking is most efficient.	12	Grammar must be learnt before speaking.	5
To be understood is more important than correct grammar.	12	Learning through written exercises is more efficient.	3
Speaking is more fun.	5	Grammar is important in the matriculation examination.	2

Conversation is more beneficial in real life, You learn to speak by speaking, Learning by speaking is most efficient, To be understood is more important than correct grammar and Speaking is more fun were the most common reasons why practicing conversation was thought to be more important than grammar exercises. In contrast, *Both are equally important, Grammar is important to conversation, Grammar must be learnt before speaking, Learning through written exercises is more efficient* and *Grammar is important in the matriculation examination* were the most frequent reasons why practicing conversation was **not** considered to be more important. However, the number of reasons why practicing conversation **was** more important was higher.

The participants valued practicing conversation, because they needed to practice their speaking skills for real-life purposes. The ability to communicate was appreciated, and to communicate a message successfully was more important than correct grammar. The development of one's speaking skills was considered possible only by practicing conversation. In addition, learning by speaking was fun and efficient. It is true that speaking skills are increasingly valued today, for example, in working life. It is better to make an effort and try to communicate a message than keep quiet and worry about making grammatical mistakes, and it was pleasant to notice that many participants had understood this. The practice of conversation is usually freer and implemented in pairs or groups, which could be why it was regarded as pleasant. In addition, some people learn better by speaking, so conversation tasks take into account different learning styles. However, for some participants it was impossible to value one skill over the other, and therefore, grammar and conversations were considered equally important. Moreover, the participants thought that knowledge of grammar was helpful in conversation. Practicing conversation was not always considered effective, and since it was not a useful skill in the matriculation exam, it was not found important. Naturally, knowledge of grammar gives a learner confidence to use the language. Knowing grammar makes it easier to produce fluent language, and over time, good mastery of grammar helps to produce speech automatically, without the need to focus on the rules.

*Words associated with the word **grammar***

Question 1 in the first part of the questionnaire asked the students' what kinds of words came to their minds when they thought about the word *grammar*. The students were asked to freely list the words that came to their minds, and the answers to this task are reported next. The words were categorized as positive, neutral or negative (see Table 15).

Table 15. Words associated with the word *grammar*

Positive words	Frequency	Ear for languages	4
Necessary	12	Exams	5
Easy	4	Comprehension	3
Funny examples	1	Features of a language	3
Neutral words	Frequency	School	1
Parts of speech	37	Teacher	1
Structures	31	Book	1
Word order	30	Negative words	Frequency
Rules	25	Difficult	23
Tenses	22	Exceptions	19
Mastery of a language	20	Boring	14
Studying	13	Memorization	12
Inflection	12	Nitpicking	11
Participial phrases	8	Complexity	11
Prepositions	8	Detachment	3
Punctuation	6	Time- consuming	2
Grammatical case	5	Colorless pages	1
Words	5		

The **positive** words that were associated with the word *grammar* were mainly adjectives (*necessary, easy*) or related to what made the learning of grammar pleasant (*funny examples*). The **neutral** words that were associated with the word *grammar* were, firstly, technical terms related to the learning and analysis of the language (*parts of speech, structures, word order, rules, tenses, inflection, participial phrases, prepositions, punctuation, grammatical case*). Secondly, the neutral words had to do with knowing the language (*mastery of a language, words, ear for languages, comprehension*). Thirdly, the neutral words were related to the school setting, where grammar is learned (*exams, school, teacher, book*). The **negative** words that were associated with the word *grammar* were, first of all, adjectives (*difficult, boring, time-consuming*). Secondly, the negative words were related to what made the learning of grammar unpleasant (*exceptions, memorization, nitpicking, complexity, detachment, colorless pages*). The number of the neutral words was the

highest, and in contrast, the number of the positive words was the lowest. There were many more negative than positive words associated with the word *grammar*.

There were no real-life situations associated with grammar, since it was strictly associated with formal language learning situations, analysis of the language, terminology and school setting. The neutral, technical words associated with grammar indicate that it may not always be clear for students how grammar is connected to actual use of the language, for example, to oral communication. Hence, it should be emphasized for them that grammar is not a separate part of the language, and it can be very beneficial in real life, because it helps to analyze the language and understand how it works. Grammar had negative connotations in the students' minds, since there were many negative adjectives associated with it. These adjectives are related to how difficult learning grammar, its rules and details can be. Nevertheless, grammar had positive associations as well, because its usefulness was understood, and learning it could be fun.

*Words associated with the word **communication***

Question 2 in the first part of the questionnaire asked the students' what kinds of words came to their minds when they thought about the word *communication*, and the answers to this question are reported next. Also here, the words that were listed were categorized as positive, neutral and negative (see Table 16).

Table 16. Words associated with the word *communication*

Positive words	Frequency	Technology	7
Social	8	Words	6
Friends	5	Internet	6
Important	5	Comprehension	6
Pleasant	5	Text	4
Politeness	2	Listening	3
Efficient	1	Social media	3
Fluent	1	Learning	3
Success	1	Life	3
Neutral words	Frequency	Presentations	2
Speaking	52	Small talk	2
Non -verbal communication	37	Foreign countries	2
Conversations	28	Feelings	1
Interaction	23	Meaning	1
Pair/group work	14	Not grammar	1
People	13	Restaurant	1
Sounds	13	Sign language	1
Communicating	11	Trying	1
Language	10	Negative words	Frequency
Messages	9	Insecure	4
Writing	9	Scary	3
		Difficult	2

The **positive** words that were associated with the word *communication* were generally adjectives (*social, important, pleasant, efficient, fluent*). In addition, the positive words were people (*friends*) or qualities (*politeness, success*) that are valued and usually involved in communication between people. The **neutral** words that were associated with the word *communication* were, first of all, related to communication between people (*speaking, conversations, interaction, pair/group work, people, communicating, small talk, presentations*). Secondly, the neutral words were related to communication through other activities than speaking (*non-verbal communication, writing, text,*

listening, feelings, sign language). Thirdly, the neutral words were means through which communication can occur (*messages, technology, internet, social media*). Fourthly, the neutral words included linguistic words (*sounds, language, words, meaning, not grammar*) or words related to language learning (*comprehension, learning, trying*). Last, the neutral words were situations or places where communication occurs (*life, restaurant, foreign countries*). The **negative** words that were associated with the word *communication* were only adjectives (*insecure, scary, difficult*). Again, the number of the neutral words was definitely the highest. However, the number of negative words was the lowest, since there were much more positive than negative words associated with the word *communication*.

The words associated with *communication* indicate that the word has mainly positive connotations in the students' minds. It is related to interaction between other people, occurring through different channels, and to real-life situations where the language is used. The students mentioned non-verbal communication, which shows that communication was seen as a phenomenon occurring without verbal language, for example through gestures. However, speaking was still the most common association with *communication*. The negative adjectives highlighted the fears that students can have towards communication and speaking in English. Communication can be considered difficult and scary for several reasons. For example, lack of vocabulary, uncertainty about pronunciation and, in general, the fear of failing can cause insecurity, which does not create positive attitudes towards communication.

Summary

To sum up, the participants considered practicing conversation more important than practicing grammar. The reasons why practicing conversation was considered to be more important were that the ability to have a conversation was more important in real life, and learning to speak was only possible by speaking. What is more, speaking was considered an effective and fun method to learn. The reasons why practicing conversation was not considered to be more important were that grammar was helpful in speaking as well, and grammar should be learned first in order to speak. In addition, learning by writing was regarded as more pleasant, and grammar was more important in the matriculation exam. However, it was also mentioned that practicing grammar and practicing communication was equally important. The words that were associated with the words *grammar* and *communication* were mostly neutral. However, there were more negative words associated with *grammar* than with *communication*. Words associated with *grammar* were mostly related to the

grammar terminology, whereas the words associated with *communication* had to do with interaction and real-life situations between people.

5.4 Grammar lessons

The fourth research question asked the students how would they describe a typical grammar lesson, and also if something should be done differently in grammar lessons in their opinion. Questions three and four in the first part of the questionnaire were related to these opinions. Next, the answers to these questions are reported.

Descriptions of a typical grammar lesson

The third question in the first part of the questionnaire asked the students to describe a typical grammar lesson. Next, the answers to this question are reported. First, typical grammar lessons had a familiar pattern, including presentation provided by the teacher, and then practice (see example 41):

(41) Opettaja kertoo mistä on kyse ja sitten tehdään tehtäviä. (Student 23)

[The teacher tells us what it is about and then we do exercises.]

Secondly, a typical grammar lesson included written exercises related to the target grammar point (see example 42):

(42) Käydään paperilta läpi, kirjoitetaan vihkoon, tehdään tehtäviä kirjasta esim. käänös lauseita. (Student 9)

[We go through the paper, write in the notebook, do exercises from the book, for example, translation sentences.]

Thirdly, a typical grammar lesson included oral exercises in pairs related to the target grammar point (see example 43):

(43) Kielioppia, kaverin kanssa suullisia harjoituksia. (Student 17)

[Grammar, oral exercises with a partner.]

Fourth, examples were usually used to illustrate grammar points (see example 44):

(44) Opettaja puhuu oppilaat kuuntelee, muutama esimerkki ja harjoituksia.

[The teacher talks and the students listen. A couple of examples and exercises.]

Fifth, a typical grammar lesson included focus on rules and exceptions to them (see example 45):

(45) Katsotaan taululta/muualta esim. monisteesta sääntöjä ja koitetaan pöntätä, sen lisäksi katsotaan muutama säännön poikkeuksen säännön poikkeus ja sen erityistapaus. (Student 65)

[We look from the board/somewhere else, for example from a handout, rules and we try to study them, in addition we look at a couple of exceptions' exceptions to the rule and its special case.]

Sixth, after a typical grammar lesson there was homework given for the students (see example 46):

(46) Opettaja kertoo pääasian, pari esimerkkiä ja sen jälkeen suullisia tai kirjallisia harjoituksia. Yleensä kirjallisia tehtäviä, joita tulee myös kotiin joku kipale. (Student 56)

[The teacher tells us the main thing, a couple of examples and after that there are oral or written exercises. Usually written exercises, a couple of which we get as homework, too.]

The answers to question three are listed in Table 17 thematically and by number.

Table 17. Descriptions of a typical grammar lesson

Response	Number
First presentation provided by the teacher, then practice	76
Written grammar exercises	63
Oral exercises in pairs	41
Examples	21
Focus on rules and exceptions	11
Homework related to the grammar point	6

First presentation provided by the teacher, then practice, written grammar exercises, oral exercises in pairs, examples, focus on rules and exceptions and homework related to the grammar point were the elements of a typical grammar lesson. The presentation-practice pattern was mentioned by the majority of the students. In addition, written grammar exercises were more common than oral pair exercises. Examples and focus on rules and exceptions were common aspects in grammar teaching, and also homework was typically part of grammar teaching.

It was positive to note that there seemed to be plenty of oral exercises in a typical grammar lesson, since they bring variety to lessons and usually engage students. But, even oral exercises can be very structured and formal, which is why they are not always as communicative as they should be.

However, it is probably impossible to pass a grammar point without some writing involved, because it is a traditional and reliable way to teach (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 7). Even though a focus on rules and exceptions was not mentioned too often, it can be interpreted that a presentation-stage usually involves some rules and possible exceptions to them. Of course, the presentation-stage can contain examples as well, but usually in a Finnish upper-secondary-school rules are one of the key aspects in grammar teaching, since they are important in the matriculation exam. Overall, the descriptions that were given for a typical grammar lesson were very traditional, including partly teacher-centered and partly student-centered elements. However, more functional activities, for example, games, could be introduced to grammar teaching in order to make it more interesting and versatile. But, it is worth considering if this is possible in upper-secondary-school. Students are getting ready for the matriculation examination, where they need to write and have knowledge of grammar. It is not necessarily advantageous for students to spend time playing games, if they do not consider it to enhance their learning.

What could be done differently in grammar lessons?

The fourth question in the first part of the questionnaire asked the students if something could be done differently in grammar lessons in their opinion. Next, the answers to this question are reported. First, grammar lessons were good as they were, and therefore, nothing should be changed (see example 47):

(47) Opin mielestäni näin hyvin, enkä lähtisi muuttamaan mitään. (Student 48)

[I think I learn well like this and I would not change anything.]

Secondly, there could be more pair and group work in grammar lessons (see example 48):

(48) Kaikki opetetaan hyvin. Paritöitä voisi olla enemmän. (Student 75)

[Everything is taught well. There could be more pair work.]

Thirdly, grammar lessons could be clearer (see example 49):

(49) Opettaja voisi selittää tarkemmin miksi juuri näin. Ja esimerkiksi subjektien ja objektien kaltaisten sanojen käyttö saa kieliopin kuulostamaan vaikeammalta ja sotkuiselta. Asiat pitäisi kertoa selkokielellä. (Student 93)

[The teacher could explain clearer why it is like this. And for example the use of words like subject and object makes grammar sound more difficult and messy. Things should be presented in plain language.]

Fourth, there could be more examples related to a grammar point in grammar lessons (see example 50):

(50) Esimerkkilauseita olisi hyvä katsoa enemmän, että uudet kielioppisäännöt eivät jäisi vain "roikkumaan ilmaan" vaan ne liitettäisiin esim. lauseisiin. (Student 88)

[It would be good to see more example sentences, so that new grammar rules would not just "hang in the air" but they would be connected to for example sentences.]

Fifth, there could be variety in learning methods in grammar lessons (see example 51):

(51) Uusia opiskelutapoja. (Student 28)

[New ways to study.]

Sixth, there could be more exercises in grammar lessons (see example 52):

(52) **Enemmän harjoittelua**, voisi olla myös enemmän töitä ryhmässä. (Student 59)

[More exercise, there could also be more group work.]

Seventh, there could be more guidance from the teacher in grammar lessons (see example 53):

(53) Enemmän kielioppitehtäviä, sillä niitä ei opi ellei tee tehtäviä. **Myös opettajan opastusta kielioppitehtäviin olisi kiva saada lisää.** (Student 3)

[More grammar exercises, because you do not learn unless you do them. Also it would be nice to get more guidance from the teacher.]

Eighth, there could be less writing involved in grammar lessons (see example 54):

(54) Voisi olla enemmän luovia ja toiminnallisia tehtäviä sekä esimerkkejä ja **vähemmän kirjoitettavaa.** (Student 37)

[There could be more creative and experimental exercises and examples and less writing.]

Last, there could be more rules given in grammar lessons (see example 55):

(55) Enemmän oppimista helpottavia sääntöjä. (Student 70)

[More rules that assist learning.]

The answers to question four are listed in Table 18 thematically and by number.

Table 18. What could be done differently in grammar lessons

Response	Number
Nothing should be changed	32
More pair/group work	19
Clarity to teaching	13
More examples	7
More variety in learning methods	7
More exercises	5
More guidance from the teacher	4
Less writing	2

The following changes were suggested to grammar lessons: *More pair/group work, clarity to teaching, more examples, more variety in learning methods, more exercises, more guidance from the teacher, less writing and more rules*. However, it was also mentioned that *nothing should be changed*. In fact, *nothing should be changed* was the most frequently mentioned in the responses. Consequently, the majority of the students seemed to be satisfied with the ways that grammar was taught. *Pair/group work* and *clarity to teaching* were the most frequently mentioned changes. In addition, *more examples, more experimental teaching, more exercises* and *more guidance from the teacher* were quite frequently mentioned changes. *Less writing* and *more rules* were not as common, but still mentioned in the responses.

The students wanted less writing and more pair and group work in grammar lessons, probably because it would make learning more fun and diverse, and learning from peers is beneficial. Probably for the same reasons they thought that grammar teaching should be more innovative, including some new elements in order to maintain interest. The students also wanted clarity to teaching, which is not surprising, since the learning of grammar usually includes plenty of memorization and rules. In addition, explanations provided by the teacher can be overwhelming, which can result in confusion. Students would probably prefer the use of "layman terms" in grammar teaching, instead of theoretical terms. For example, the words *subject* and *object* could be replaced with the words *doer* and *target* (in Finnish *tekijä* and *kohde*). In this way, the confusion caused by the difficult terms could be avoided, which could make grammar learning easier.

Examples are important in grammar teaching, because they connect the grammar point with actual language use. Therefore, students need examples in order to use the grammar point in their language. The more examples there are the better, since multiple encounters with a structure facilitate learning it. In addition, the students wanted more exercises and guidance from the teacher, and even more rules, possibly because they wanted to learn things properly. There is not always enough time available for a deeper analysis of a grammar structure, and students can be left feeling insecure about whether they have learned it or not. Especially in upper secondary school, the study of grammar can also occur independently. Therefore, more exercises related to the topic during the lesson, and available teacher assistance could improve grammar learning outcomes. The way grammar is currently taught may be considered effective, even though it is not always so pleasant, since the majority of the students did not want to make any changes to grammar lessons. However,

the students may not be aware of all the different approaches to grammar teaching, which is why they consider the current methods suitable. Some changes in grammar teaching routines once in a while could increase students' motivation and interest in grammar.

Summary

To sum up, a typical grammar lesson included presentation and practice stages of the target grammar point, in this order. This pattern was mentioned by the vast majority of the participants. In addition, a typical grammar lesson included written and oral exercises, but the number of written exercises was higher. Moreover, examples and focus on rules and exceptions were typical of grammar lessons. Usually, there was also homework that was related to the target grammar point. The majority thought that nothing should be done differently in grammar lessons. However, the following changes were suggested: there should be more pair/group work, grammar teaching could be clearer, there should be more examples, more teacher guidance and more rules. Less writing should be included, and teaching should be more experimental, introducing new ways to learn and teach grammar.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to discover what Finnish upper-secondary-school students' opinions are about EFL grammar teaching, feedback and error correction. In addition, the aim was to find out what the students thought about the connection between grammar and communication. Finally, the aim was to discover how they described a typical grammar lesson. The present study contained four research questions, and the answers to these questions are reviewed next.

Summary of the findings

The first research question asked for the students' general opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching, and whether gender or the participant's recent grade in English had any relevance to the answers. Overall, the students' opinions about grammar were favorable, since grammar was considered important in order to master the English language properly. Even though they thought that learning English was possible without grammar teaching, grammar was not considered completely useless. Knowledge of grammar facilitated language learning, aided comprehension and increased confidence to use the language, even though it was not necessarily the fastest or the most

pleasant way to learn. The students thought about grammar rules more while writing than while reading in English.

The open-ended questions revealed that grammar helped the students to use the language accurately, and it provided them with rules and structures. When grammar was not considered helpful, the reasons were that it took time away from communication, and it did not teach new vocabulary. Moreover, grammar was considered boring and difficult, and it included too many exceptions and memorization. The majority did not want to increase the amount of grammar teaching, because they thought that it was currently adequate, and time should be spent on speaking and vocabulary learning as well. But, it was also mentioned that there could be more grammar teaching, since repetition was regarded as beneficial to learning and grammar was one of the central aspects of the language. The relevance of recent grade was apparent in that the higher the grade was, the more the student liked the study of grammar. The relevance of gender was evident in that many more girls than boys thought that it was not possible to learn English properly without the study of its grammar. In addition, many more boys than girls thought about grammar rules while reading, but more boys also strongly disagreed that they thought about grammar.

The second research question asked for the students' opinions about feedback and error correction, and whether gender or the participant's recent grade in English had any relevance to the answers. The opinions about this question were more positive than negative. The vast majority of the students wanted the teacher to correct their grammatical errors. What is more, the majority liked their errors to be corrected, but they did not strongly agree with this. It was clear that the students were more comfortable with the teacher correcting their errors in writing than their errors in speaking. The participants who had higher grades in English had more positive opinions about feedback and error correction. The participant's gender had only little relevance to the answers: a bit more girls than boys somewhat did not like their grammatical errors to be corrected by the teacher.

The open-ended questions revealed that feedback and error correction were considered important in writing and in speaking, because learning from mistakes was useful. Feedback and error correction in writing informed the students about what they should improve and focus on, and achieving educational goals required that errors should be corrected. Error correction in writing was not always considered necessary, though. Error correction in speaking was considered necessary, because serious errors needed to be corrected. However, error correction in speaking could be discouraging. Correction of all small errors was not crucial, since correct grammar was not the main

goal in speaking. Error correction in speaking was even considered uncomfortable, especially if others were listening.

The third research question attempted to discover what the connection between grammar and communication was in the students' opinion. Practicing conversation was regarded as more important than practicing grammar by the majority of the participants. The open-ended questions showed that the reasons for this were that conversation was more important in real life, speaking was an effective and fun way to learn, and learning to speak occurred by speaking. The reasons why practicing conversation was not regarded as more important were that the knowledge of grammar was vital in speaking as well, some students preferred learning by writing, and grammar was important in the matriculation exam. For some participants it was difficult to choose one skill over the other, and it was mentioned that practicing grammar and practicing communication were equally important. In general, the words that were associated with the words *grammar* and *communication* were neutral. However, *grammar* had more negative word-associations than *communication*. The words associated with *grammar* were connected to grammar terminology. The words associated with *communication* were related to interaction and real-life situations between people.

The fourth and final research question aimed to find out how the students would describe a typical grammar lesson, and whether something could be done differently in grammar lessons. The results revealed that a typical grammar lesson consisted of presentation and practice stages of the target grammar points. Both written and oral exercises were typical in grammar lessons, but the number of written exercises was higher. Also examples, and focus on rules and exceptions to them were typical elements of a grammar lesson, and the practice often continued at home in the form of homework. The majority did not make any suggestions to improve or change grammar lessons, but some suggestions were made. First, the students wished for more pair/group work. Second, grammar teaching could be made clearer: there could be more examples, teacher guidance and rules. Third, there could be less written work, and the teaching of grammar could be more experimental.

Comparison with previous research

The findings of many previous studies support the results of the present study. First of all, many previous studies (Schultz 2001, Loewen et al. 2009, Polat 2009) have found out that students understood the value of grammar, because it was considered to facilitate language learning. The findings of the present study were comparable.

A previous study (Jean and Simard 2011) found out that grammar was considered necessary but boring. In other previous studies (Schultz 2001, Loewen et al. 2009, Polat 2009) the participants stated that they liked grammar learning a great deal, even though it was also considered boring. In the present study, the students did not strongly agree that they liked grammar, but the results indicate that grammar learning was considered necessary but boring. In the light of the findings from previous studies and the present study, it can be claimed that teachers have no reason to avoid teaching grammar, or be concerned that students dislike it. Previously, teachers have had more negative opinions about grammar than their students (Schultz 2001, Jean and Simard 2011), and they have thought that students find it demanding. In the end, students want to *learn the language*, and they are ready to invest in learning its grammar as well.

Negative opinions about grammar were found in previous studies (Jean and Simard 2011, Loewen et al 2009). First of all, grammar was regarded as boring and difficult. Other reasons for not liking grammar were that grammar was considered tedious, demanding and complicated, it contained too much memorization and exceptions to rules, and it had no connection to real life. The findings in the present study were similar.

Grammar can be challenging, but as mentioned before, students understand that it is worth studying it. It can be argued if it is even possible to make grammar teaching more fun and enjoyable. It is often a mechanic, formal method to study a language, but there are methods that minimize the amount of grammar teaching, for example, the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell 1988) and Focus on form (Ellis 2006: 101), in which grammar teaching is integrated in communicative exercises. However, it is worth considering if it is possible to abandon grammar in a school context, where students' proficiency levels vary, and different learning styles should be taken into account. In the end, all school subjects demand some memorization, and it is a natural part of learning. By practicing the structures of a language become automatic, and finally, facilitate language use, even though the results may not be visible instantly (Ellis 1992:53). Therefore, grammar has a connection to real life, since it is constantly present in a language. Students may not yet recognize this fact, because they may not have a very deep understanding of a language at an upper secondary school level, and separate grammar sessions in a classroom do not help to change their attitudes. It should be emphasized for students that grammar and language cannot be separated.

A previous study (Schultz 2001) has shown that it is very common for students to keep grammar rules in mind while writing in a foreign language. The students in the present study thought about grammar rules more when they were writing than when they were speaking. Usually, while writing

there is more time to think and modify the text as many times as possible, and hence, there is more time to think about the rules. Speaking is more spontaneous, whereas while writing a student can check the grammar from textbooks and use a dictionary in order to modify the message. Students may think about grammar rules more consciously in writing, however, grammar rules are probably present in speaking as well, but more unconsciously.

Grammar learning has been considered to give learners a sense of security (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 7), and it has been said to aid comprehension. The present study also discovered that the students considered grammar to help them understand the language, and it increased their confidence to use English. In addition, the students thought that grammar provided structures and rules, and especially helped them to form sentences. All these aspects are clearly important considering production of a language. The more structures and rules a student can master, the easier using a language probably is. However, focus only on rules can also hinder production, if it is not understood that rules should be applied into practice.

As to teachers, previous studies (Aljohani 2012, Farrel and Lim 2005) have shown that teachers consider grammar to help their students to form sentences and use the language accurately. Moreover, teachers in a previous study (Aljohani 2012) believed that learning grammar through examples was efficient. The results of the present study were comparable, which indicates that students and teachers can have matching opinions about EFL grammar. Matched objectives help teachers to plan teaching according to their students' expectations, which is important, since this can increase students' motivation and ensure that they are engaged in activities.

It has been previously argued (Davis 2003: 11-14) that error correction does not decrease learners' motivation, and learners' attitudes towards feedback and error correction are usually more positive than it is expected. Previous studies (Schultz 2001, Jean and Simard 2011) have pointed out that that students welcome feedback and error correction, and that they were more comfortable with error correction in writing, and the findings of the present study were also comparable. The majority of the students wanted their errors to be corrected, but they were more comfortable with correction of written errors than spoken errors. A previous study (Lee 2008) showed that high proficiency students were more interested in a teacher's feedback than lower proficiency students. The present study discovered that the higher the grade, the more positive a student's opinions about feedback were. As a result, the teacher should not avoid feedback and error correction, since students consider it useful. In addition, students may even feel cheated if errors are not corrected (Schultz 2001: 9-10). However, for weaker students feedback and error correction can have a negative

influence on their confidence to use the language, since "better" students are usually more confident language users. Naturally, overtly negative feedback is damaging for anyone, but it seems that legitimate feedback is considered very useful.

Findings from a previous study (Peterson and Irving 2007) showed that feedback helped students to improve their language use, because it provided information on what they should focus on in the future. The results of the present study were comparable. Feedback was most importantly considered an opportunity to learn from mistakes. In previous studies, error correction was not always considered necessary (Peterson and Irving 2007, Jean and Simard 2011). Especially in speaking, only errors that interfered with communication should be corrected (Jean and Simard 2011). The findings of the present study were comparable, since correction of all small errors, especially in speaking, was not considered essential, and only serious errors were worth correcting in speaking. Consequently, students recognize that writing and speaking are different processes, with different aims. In speaking, to be understood is the main goal and small errors are acceptable. In writing, errors are probably considered to be more noticeable. In speaking, one can constantly correct, but after writing an essay, for example, it is handed out to a teacher (or a peer) for error correction, and at this stage a student does not have a possibility to correct.

Students are surprisingly positive towards feedback and error correction, even though there seems to be a clear preference for error correction in writing. Students may be afraid of that if an error is not corrected, the incorrect form will be picked up, and learning the correct form may be impossible later. There seems to be a strong desire to *learn*. But are students' opinions actually this positive, or are their opinions affected by what they *believe* to be true? It is also worth considering if learning from error correction is always possible. For example, if a student is nervous while speaking, it is possible for him/her not to notice a teacher's correction or to just automatically repeat the correct form without any deeper consideration. Written feedback can also be useless, if a learner reads through the comments, but does not take action to correct the errors. In order to enhance learning, a teacher could demand students to produce another version of their texts, with corrections based on the teacher's earlier feedback. This would activate students to contemplate their errors more concretely. In speaking, a teacher could observe the common errors made by students, and discuss these at the end of the lesson. A formal teaching situation could activate students' thinking. What is more, learning from error correction may occur only after multiple encounters with the same error.

Regarding teachers, a previous study (Aljohani 2012) has proved that teachers believe their students to benefit from feedback and error correction, but another study (Schultz 2001) has shown that

teachers were more negative towards error correction than their students. Since the students in the present study were mostly positive towards feedback and error correction, it again indicates that teachers should not avoid error correction. However, it is natural that teachers take their students' feelings into account, which is probably one of the reasons why they are apprehensive about error correction.

Previous studies have revealed that students valued communicative exercises (Schultz 2011, Loewen et al. 2009). The ability to interact and communicate with other people prepared students for real-life (Thornbury 1999). In addition, grammar was considered to be so time-consuming that students rather dedicated time to practice of speaking skills (Loewen et al. 2009). Furthermore, teachers have valued communication even more than their students (Schultz 2011). The results of the present study were, again, comparable, as the students valued communication exercises more than grammar exercises. Communication was regarded as more relevant in real life, and it was a fun way to learn. However, it was also mentioned that grammar was helpful in conversation as well.

The importance of speaking skills is emphasized more and more in foreign language teaching today, and also students have understood it. In Finland, English has become a part of students' everyday lives (TV, movies, music), and not only the ability to understand the language, but also the ability to speak have become important. In working life, English language skills are almost taken for granted. Consequently, communication exercises prepare for real life, but they also provide opportunities for pair and group work, which brings variety to lessons. In general, communication exercises are considered to be less structured than grammar exercises. However, communication exercises can be quite formal and structured, and may not provide opportunities for authentic language use either. For example, in sentence translations speech may be involved, but this is not actually a very communicative exercise. More communicative would be, for example, to give students a familiar topic that they can freely discuss with a partner, and probably provide them with some vocabulary related to the topic.

Teachers may understand the value of communication better than students, but does it have an effect on their actual classroom practices? Teachers may believe that they emphasize communication in their teaching, but in reality, their lessons consist of mainly mechanical exercises, even though speaking were involved. It should be highlighted that speaking does not necessarily mean communication. Communicative exercises ought to allow students' free production by aiming at control-free and authentic language use.

In a previous study (Jean and Simard 2011), students associated mostly neutral words with the word *grammar*. The neutral words included, for example, *exercises, books* and *dictionary*. But, there were also negative (*boring, difficult, useless*) and positive (*interesting, easy, useful*) words associated with *grammar*. Previously, teachers have had very different associations with the words *grammar* and *communication* (Larsen-Freeman 2003). With the word *grammar*, they associated the following words: *rules, structures, forms, memorizing, drills* and *boring*. With the word *communication*, teachers associated the following words: *meaning, the four skills, accomplishing some purpose, interacting, establishing relationships* and *fun*. In the present study, the findings were very similar. Neutral words were most commonly associated with *grammar* and *communication*, but the word *grammar* had more negative word associations. The neutral words related to *grammar* were mostly related to grammar terminology, the positive words included adjectives (*necessary, easy*), and the negative words included adjectives or words related to what makes grammar challenging (*difficult, boring, exceptions, memorizing*). The neutral words related to *communication* were mainly connected to real-life and interaction between people (*speaking, conversations, interaction*), the positive words were mostly adjectives or people (*social, friends*), and the negative words were adjectives (*insecure, scary*).

All these studies indicate that generally technical and also negative words are associated with *grammar*. With *communication*, firstly, real-life connected words are associated, and secondly, positive words. This supports the idea that *communication* is considered more important and more interesting than *grammar*. *Grammar* teaching seems to be regarded as mechanical and formal, hence, it is not surprising that the word *grammar* has negative connotations. In addition, the connection between *grammar* and *communication*, and therefore real life, is not clear for students. Again, it should be understood that *grammar* is constantly present in a language, and not just a set of rules to be memorized. *Grammar* was considered boring, but necessary. Consequently, *grammar* teaching should not be abandoned, but it should be made more interesting in order to motivate students. However, not only students but also teachers had negative word -associations with *grammar*. Teachers should be able to inspire and motivate their students, but it may be impossible if their attitudes towards *grammar* are negative, too.

The PPP model introduced previously is a very common method to teach EFL *grammar* (Thornbury 1999). *Grammar* teaching can be deductive, in which the starting point is a rule, illustrated with examples. In addition, *grammar* teaching can be inductive, in which examples are introduced first, and the rule is discovered from the examples. The findings from the present study revealed that the PPP model was very frequently used in EFL *grammar* lessons. However, there were no references

to the production stage. It has been previously argued that it is uncertain whether learners can autonomously use the target grammar point in their output after presentation and controlled practice (Ellis 1992). But, the production stage is vital, since the aim of grammar teaching should be free production of target grammar structures in communicative situations. Nevertheless, to test whether students have learned a grammar point can be challenging without any control involved in the task. What is more, the testing should occur after a sufficient amount of time has passed since presenting the grammar point in order for students to have time to absorb it.

Examples and rules were both vital components of grammar lessons. In addition, despite the previously mentioned negative opinions about grammar learning and teaching, the students in the present study did not make many suggestions to improve grammar lessons. But, it was suggested that there could be more pair and group work, less writing, more innovative teaching, and teaching could be clearer with more examples and rules. Students probably have a very traditional image of what grammar teaching should be, and they expect rules to be provided by the teacher and drills, for instance. But, if students were familiar with different approaches to grammar teaching, they might be more critical towards the current methods of teaching it. It is natural that students want more examples, since examples provide more encounters with the target grammar point in a context. Examples make grammar teaching more meaningful, providing more than just disconnected rules. However, examples can be made-up and inauthentic, including sentences that are not relevant in real life, or sentences that would not be used in an actual conversation. Thus, it is worth considering if examples are always useful. They should be authentic, or at least practical in real-life situations.

Students in the present study wanted more pair and group work. Working together with peers usually involves speaking, which could indicate that students want to be more active and speak instead of listening to a teacher presenting rules. Inductive discovery-learning and problem-solving could be ways to activate students, and be a step away of the traditional teacher presents, students practice-model. But, some students might find this demanding and even intimidating, because they feel that they are left on their own in the learning situation.

Pedagogical implications

The results of the present study provide many pedagogical implications for English teachers. Grammar should definitely be included in the teaching of English in an appropriate amount, but time should be dedicated to other aspects of the language, for instance, speaking and vocabulary learning, too. What is more, alternative methods to teach grammar should be attempted. For example, the order of the stages in the PPP model could be changed, and inductive (rule-discovery)

learning could be favored. Moreover, it is important to maintain clarity in grammar teaching, and teacher assistance should always be available. Grammar should not be disconnected from actual language use. The connection between grammar, actual language use and meaning is vital, and it can be achieved by using context and examples in grammar teaching. Furthermore, there is no need to avoid error correction, because students may feel cheated if all their errors are ignored. All major errors that interfere with communication should be corrected, but in a way that does not decrease motivation or embarrass the learner. After all, error correction can feel uncomfortable, but its benefits in the long term are understood, which may be why it is considered necessary.

Grammar should not be neglected, since students certainly consider it to facilitate language learning, and it is not regarded as a "necessary evil". Students want to improve their English skills, and grammar is one certain way to learn, because it is a familiar and traditional method. Grammar is considered an important aspect of language learning, and given that English is a universal language and commonly used world-wide, students have the motivation to study the language, including its grammar.

Evaluating the present study, suggestions for further research

The findings of the present study aimed to find out opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching held by Finnish upper-secondary-school students. The findings are relevant when considering students' opinions about grammar in general. The study of grammar is considered useful and vital in order to learn English properly. Grammar provides information on how the language works, and therefore, facilitates learning English and increases confidence to use the language. The study of grammar is regarded as demanding and boring, too, especially because there are many exceptions and memorization involved.

Overall, students have very positive opinions about feedback and error correction, and they are more comfortable with error correction in writing than in speaking. Error correction is considered to help a learner to notice his/her weaknesses in English and learn from mistakes. More proficient students like the study of grammar more, and they are also more positive about the correction of errors in writing. However, nitpicking and correction of even the smallest errors is not necessary, because it is discouraging. Communication and the ability to interact is more important in real life than meticulous practice of grammar.

A typical grammar lesson still has the traditional PPP pattern, consisting of presentation, practice and production of the target grammar, and students are quite happy with it. However, this could be

due to the fact that they are not aware of other approaches to grammar teaching. In addition, the students did not mention a production-stage in their responses, which could indicate that grammar lessons consist of simply presentation and practice of grammar items.

The present study was partly quantitative and partly qualitative, and it aimed at discovering what kind of opinions Finnish upper-secondary-school students have about EFL grammar learning and teaching. The focus was on general opinions about grammar learning and teaching, and feedback and error correction. In addition, the focus was on the connection between grammar and communication, and descriptions of typical grammar lessons. Not many studies, if any in the context of Finland, have researched students' opinions about EFL grammar learning and teaching. Therefore, the present study was able to provide relevant insights into the field of grammar teaching in Finland.

Overall, the present study was successful, since the aims were accomplished and the research questions answered. The questionnaire that was used for data collection included multiple-choice questions, but also many open-ended questions and the students were asked to give reasons for their responses. Justifying own choices can be challenging for young learners, but even though responses were occasionally quite short, overall the answers were very thorough. Most of the students had answered every question in the questionnaire. It seems that the students had understood the purpose of the questionnaire, and they had answered as instructed. The topic seemed to interest the participants. First of all, they had a lot to say about it, which can be seen in the rich variety of the responses. Secondly, the questionnaire dealt with the topic on a practical level (for example, it asked for suggestions to improve grammar lessons), too, so the students did not have to reflect on abstract matters only. The teachers who agreed to participate in the present study with their students were very cooperative, and they dedicated precious classroom time to the data collection from their students.

One weakness in the present study was that it measured the students' opinions only once. However, a person's opinions can change over time and with age. Therefore, a longitudinal study in the future could provide information on how students' opinions develop or change over time, and whether age has any influence on the opinions. In the future, also teachers' opinions could be measured with a questionnaire. The questionnaire could measure their own opinions about EFL grammar, or what teachers believe their students think about grammar, and their responses could be compared to their students' answers. Another suggestion for future research could be to observe actual classroom practices, and compare these to the responses from the questionnaire in order to see whether these

two match. In addition, interviews could provide more profound answers, at least from teachers. A questionnaire may be a more effective method to collect data from students, because some might be disinclined to express their opinions in an interview.

Another weakness in the present study was that it gave a relatively narrow description of typical grammar lessons. In the future, a study of grammar lessons could be conducted through classroom observations in order to find out what types of exercises are actually used. These observations could reveal whether students are allowed to use the language freely, or if all exercises in grammar lessons are more or less controlled. In addition, the observations could give details about the structure of grammar lessons, and whether other methods than the PPP model are used in grammar teaching.

The present study showed that weaker students were less comfortable with error correction. A suggestion for future research could be to focus on weaker students and discover what the best ways to give feedback and correct errors are in their opinion. If more proficient students have more tolerance towards error correction and feedback, it would be important that weaker students receive feedback that does not discourage them even more, but would motivate and support their learning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alanen, R. (2011). *Kysely tutkijan työkaluna*. In P. Kalaja, R. Alanen and H. Dufva (eds.), *Kieltä tutkimassa: tutkielman laatijan opas*. Helsinki: Finn Lectura, 150-160.
- Aljohani, M.A.S. (2012). Grammar beliefs of in-service teachers. *British Journal of arts and Social Sciences* [online] 11 (1), 96-108. <http://www.bjournal.co.uk/BJASS.aspx> (5 September, 2013).
- Borg, S. (2001). Self-perception and practice in teaching grammar. *ELT Journal* 55 (1). Oxford University Press. <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/content/55/1/21.full.pdf+html> (13 June, 2013).
- Davis, A.(2003). Teachers' and students' beliefs regarding aspects of language learning. *Learning, Evaluation and Research in Education* [online] 17 (4), 207-222. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09500790308668303> (26 March, 2013).
- Dekeyser, R. (1993). The effect of error correction on L2 grammar knowledge and oral proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal* [online] 77 (4), 501-514. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/329675> (13 June, 2013).
- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: construction, administration and processing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ellis, G and Sinclair, B. (1989). *Learning to learn English*. Gateshead: Athaneum.
- Ellis, R. (1992). *Second language acquisition and language pedagogy*. Bristol: Longdunn.
- Ellis, R. (1990). *Instructed second language acquisition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ellis, R. (2006). Current issues in the teaching of grammar: an SLA perspective. *TESOL Quarterly* 40 (1), 83-103.
- Ellis, R. and Shintani, N. (2014). *Exploring language pedagogy through second language acquisition research*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Farrel, T. and Lim, P.C.P. (2005). Conceptions of grammar teaching: a case study of teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* 9 (2), 1-13.
- Hinkel, E. and Fotos, S. (eds.) (2002). *New perspectives on grammar teaching in second language classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hirsjärvi, S., Remes, P. and Sajavaara, P. (2004). *Tutki ja kirjoita*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus.
- Jean, G. and Simard, T. (2011). Grammar teaching and learning in L2: necessary but boring? *Foreign Language Annals* [online] 44 (3), 467-494. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2011.01143.x/pdf> (6 September, 2013).
- Krashen, S.D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Krashen, S.D. and Terrell, T.D. (1988). *The Natural Approach: language acquisition in the classroom*. New York: Prentice Hall International.

- Larsen- Freeman, D. (2003). *Teaching language: from grammar to grammaring*. Boston, MA: Heinle.
- Lee, I. (2008). Student reactions to teacher feedback in two Hong Kong secondary classrooms. *Journal of second language writing* [online] 17, 144 - 164.
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1060374307000835#> (12 November, 2013).
- Lochtman, K. (2002). Oral corrective feedback in the foreign language classroom: how it affects interaction in analytic foreign language teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research* [online] 37, 271 - 283. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0883035503000053#> (4 November, 2013).
- Loewen, S., Li, S., Fei, F., Thompson, A., Nakatsukasa, K., Ahn, S. and Chen, X. (2009). Second language learners' beliefs about grammar instruction and error correction. *The Modern Language Journal* [online] 93 (1), 91-104.
<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=73561a92-38e4-44c4-8698-9df0d2d5c7ab%40sessionmgr113&vid=2&hid=120> (1 December, 2013).
- Montgomery, J. L. and Baker, W. (2007). Teacher-written feedback: student perceptions, teacher self-assessment and actual teacher performance. *Journal of second language writing* [online] 16, 82-99. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1060374307000318> (1 December, 2013).
- Nassaji, H. and Fotos, S. (2011). *Teaching grammar in second language classrooms: integrating form-focused instruction in communicative context*. New York, Routledge.
- Peterson, E. R. and Irving, S. E. (2007). Secondary school students' conceptions of assessment and feedback. *Learning and Instruction* [online] 18, 238 - 250.
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959475207000710> (1 December, 2013).
- Polat, N. (2009). Matches in beliefs between teachers and students, and success in L2 attainment: the Georgian example. *Foreign Language Annals* [online] 42 (2), 229-249.
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/216014573?accountid=11774> (18 June, 2013).
- Schultz, R.E. (2001). Cultural differences in student and teacher perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback: USA and Colombia. *The Modern Language Journal* [online] 85 (2), 244-258. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/0026-7902.00107/pdf> (26 January, 2013).
- Thornbury, S. (1999). *How to teach grammar*. Harlow, Pearson Education.

APPENDIX 1

Hei!

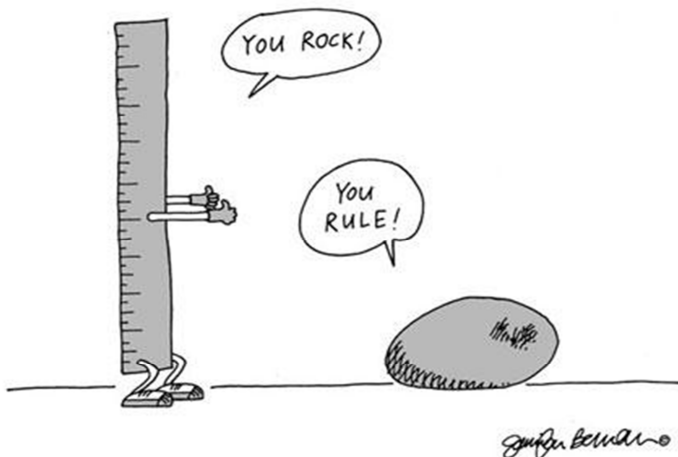
Opiskelen englanninopettajaksi Jyväskylän yliopistossa, ja tutkin oppilaiden käsityksiä englannin kieliopista ja sen opettamisesta. Tämän kyselyn tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisia käsityksiä oppilailla on englannin kieliopista, sekä kielioppivirheiden korjaamisesta. Pyydän, että vastaisit kysymyksiin itsenäisesti, omien näkemystesi mukaisesti. Kysymyksiin ei ole oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia. Tämä kysely on ehdottoman luottamuksellinen, eikä osallistujien henkilöllisyys tule kenenkään tietoon. (Lomakkeeseen ei tarvitse laittaa nimeä tms. tietoja.) Kyselyn vastaukset toimivat aineistona tutkimuksessani, ja tulokset ovat valmistuttuaan luettavissa Jyväskylän yliopiston verkkosivuilta. Minuun voi ottaa yhteyttä milloin tahansa, mikäli haluat lisätietoja tutkimuksesta.

Avustasi etukäteen kiittäen

Mia Sormunen

mia.m.sormunen@student.jyu.fi

Jyväskylän yliopisto, kielten laitos



KÄSITYKSIÄ KIELIOPISTA

OSA 1.

1. Luettele tähän vapaasti, **mitä sanoja sinulle tulee mieleen** sanasta: *kielioppi*?

2. Luettele tähän vapaasti, **mitä sanoja sinulle tulee mieleen** sanasta: *kommunikointi*?

3. Kuvaile omin sanoin, millainen on **tyypillinen englannin kieliopin opetustuokio**? (esim. tuokion rakenne, sisällöt, millaisia harjoituksia ym...)

4. Haluaisitko joitakin asioita **tehtävän toisin kielioppituokioissa**? Miten ja miksi?

OSA 2.**Vastaa seuraaviin kysymyksiin asteikolla 1-4:**

- 1 - täysin eri mieltä
- 2 - jokseenkin eri mieltä
- 3 - jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- 4 - täysin samaa mieltä

1. Kieliopin opiskelu on välttämätöntä, jotta hallitsen englannin kielen sujuvasti.

1 2 3 4

2. Englantia **on mahdollista oppia hyvin ilman kieliopin opiskelua.**

1 2 3 4

3. Englannin kieliopin opiskelu on täysin **hyödytöntä.**

1 2 3 4

4. Englannin kieliopin opetteleminen **antaa varmuutta** kielenkäyttöön.

1 2 3 4

5. Englannin kielen taitoni **paranee nopeimmin**, jos opiskelen ja harjoittelen **kielioppia.**

1 2 3 4

6. Kieliopin opettelu **auttaa minua oppimaan englantia.**

1 2 3 4

- 1 - täysin eri mieltä
- 2 - jokseenkin eri mieltä
- 3 - jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- 4 - täysin samaa mieltä

7. Perustele tähän, miksi kieliopin opettelu auttaa/ei auta sinua oppimaan englantia.

8. Pidän englannin kieliopin opiskelusta.

1 2 3 4

9. Perustele, miksi pidät/et pidä englannin kieliopin opiskelusta.

10. Englannin tunneilla pitäisi olla enemmän kieliopin opettamista.

1 2 3 4

11. Perustele, miksi kielioppia pitäisi/ei pitäisi olla enemmän.

- 1 - täysin eri mieltä
- 2 - jokseenkin eri mieltä
- 3 - jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- 4 - täysin samaa mieltä

12. Mietin usein kielioppisääntöjä **kirjoittaessani** englanniksi tunnilla.

1 2 3 4

13. Mietin usein kielioppisääntöjä **lukiessani** kirjoittamaani tekstiä englannin tunnilla.

1 2 3 4

14. On **tärkeämpää** harjoitella englantia **keskusteluharjoituksilla** kuin **kielioppiharjoituksilla**.

1 2 3 4

15. Perustele kohdan 14 vastauksesi.

KIELIOPPIVIRHEET JA NIIDEN KORJAAMINEN ENGLANNIN TUNNEILLA

1. Opettajan pitäisi korjata oppilaiden tekemät **kielioppivirheet** englannin tunneilla.

1 2 3 4

2. **Pidän** siitä, että **kielioppivirheeni korjataan**, jos teen virheitä englannin tunneilla.

1 2 3 4

3. **Haluan**, että opettaja **korjaa kielioppivirheet kirjoittamastani** tekstistä englannin tunneilla.

1 2 3 4

- 1 - täysin eri mieltä
- 2 - jokseenkin eri mieltä
- 3 - jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- 4 - täysin samaa mieltä

4. Perustele kohdan 3 vastauksesi.

5. Haluan, että opettaja korjaa kielioppivirheet puhutusta kielestäni englannin tunneilla.

1 2 3 4

6. Perustele kohdan 5 vastauksesi.

Taustatiedot

Sukupuoli: tyttö _____ poika _____

Englannin kielen arvosanani viimeisimmässä todistuksessani: _____

Kiitos vastauksistasi! :)

APPENDIX 2

Table 2. Comparison by grade

Statement		1	2	3	4	Grade	n	Pearson correlation
1. The study of grammar is vital to master the English language properly.	n	0	3	12	12	4 -7	27	.056
	%	(0.0)	(11.1)	(44.4)	(44.4)			
	n	1	2	8	13	8	24	
	%	(4.2)	(8.3)	(33.3)	(54.2)			
	n	0	2	14	25	9 -10	41	
	%	(0.0)	(4.9)	(34.1)	(61.0)			
2. It is possible to learn English well without the study of grammar.	n	3	10	11	3	4 -7	27	.056
	%	(11.1)	(37.0)	(40.7)	(11.1)			
	n	3	9	8	4	8	24	
	%	(12.5)	(37.5)	(33.3)	(16.7)			
	n	7	13	14	6	9 -10	40	
	%	(17.5)	(32.5)	(35.0)	(15.0)			
3. The study of English grammar is completely useless.	n	24	3	0	0	4 -7	27	-.048
	%	(88.9)	(11.1)	(0.0)	(0.0)			
	n	20	3	1	0	8	24	
	%	(88.3)	(12.5)	(4.2)	(0.0)			
	n	40	2	0	0	9 -10	42	
	%	(95.2)	(4.8)	(0.0)	(0.0)			
4. The study of English grammar gives confidence to language use.	n	0	1	14	12	4-7	27	-.004
	%	(0.0)	(3.7)	(51.9)	(44.4)			
	n	0	2	8	14	8	24	
	%	(0.0)	(8.3)	(33.3)	(58.3)			
	n	1	4	11	26	9 -10	42	
	%	(2.4)	(9.5)	(26.2)	(61.9)			
5. My skills in English improve fastest, if I study its grammar.	n	1	9	12	5	4 -7	27	-.041
	%	(3.7)	(33.3)	(44.4)	(18.5)			
	n	2	8	9	5	8	24	

	%	(8.3)	(33.3)	(37.5)	(20.8)			
	n	3	13	20	6	9 -10	42	
	%	(7.1)	(31.0)	(47.6)	(14.3)			
6. The study of grammar helps me to learn English.	n	0	1	13	13	4-7	27	.060
	%	(0.0)	(3.7)	(48.1)	(48.1)			
	n	1	2	12	9	8	24	
	%	(4.2)	(8.3)	(50.0)	(37.5)			
	n	1	1	14	25	9 -10	41	
	%	(2.4)	(2.4)	(34.1)	(61.0)			
8. I like the study of grammar.	n	2	11	13	1	4 -7	27	.273*
	%	(7.4)	(40.7)	(48.1)	(3.7)			
	n	1	9	9	5	8	24	
	%	(4.2)	(37.5)	(37.5)	(20.8)			
	n	1	9	21	10	9 -10	41	
	%	(2.4)	(22.0)	(51.2)	(22.4)			
10. There should be more teaching of grammar in English lessons.	n	2	16	8	1	4 -7	27	-.130
	%	(7.4)	(59.3)	(29.3)	(3.7)			
	n	4	14	5	1	8	24	
	%	(16.7)	(58.3)	(20.8)	(4.2)			
	n	5	27	6	1	9 -10	39	
	%	(12.8)	(69.2)	(15.4)	(2.6)			
12. I usually think about grammar rules, when I write in English.	n	1	8	11	7	4 -7	27	-.048
	%	(3.7)	(29.6)	(40.7)	(25.9)			
	n	2	6	9	7	8	24	
	%	(8.3)	(25.0)	(37.5)	(29.2)			
	n	5	9	21	7	9 -10	42	
	%	(11.9)	(21.4)	(50.0)	(16.7)			
13. I usually think about grammar rules, when I read a text I have written in English.	n	1	15	10	1	4 -7	27	.116
	%	(3.7)	(55.6)	(37.0)	(3.7)			
	n	3	5	12	4	8	24	
	%	(12.5)	(20.8)	(50.0)	(16.7)			
	n	8	18	12	4	9 -10	42	
	%	(19.0)	(42.9)	(28.6)	(9.5)			

* = statistically significant difference

APPENDIX 3

Table 3. Comparison by gender

Statement		1	2	3	4	Gender	Total
1. The study of grammar is vital to master the English language properly.	n	0	1	22	32	Girls	55
	%	(0.0)	(1.8)	(40.0)	(58.2)		
	n	1	6	13	22	Boys	42
	%	(2.4)	(14.3)	(31.0)	(52.4)		
2. It is possible to learn English well without the study of grammar.	n	11	22	15	6	Girls	54
	%	(20.4)	(40.7)	(27.8)	(11.1)		
	n	3	13	19	7	Boys	42
	%	(7.1)	(31.0)	(45.2)	(16.7)		
3. The study of English grammar is completely useless.	n	50	6	0	0	Girls	56
	%	(89.3)	(10.7)	(0.0)	(0.0)		
	n	38	3	1	0	Boys	42
	%	(90.5)	(7.1)	(2.4)	(0.0)		
4. The study of English grammar gives confidence to language use.	n	1	2	20	33	Girls	56
	%	(1.8)	(3.6)	(35.7)	(58.9)		
	n	0	5	16	21	Boys	42
	%	(0.0)	(11.9)	(38.1)	(50.0)		
5. My skills in English improve fastest, if I study its grammar.	n	1	21	22	11	Girls	55
	%	(1.8)	(38.2)	(40.0)	(20.0)		
	n	5	10	21	6	Boys	42
	%	(11.9)	(23.8)	(50.0)	(14.3)		
6. The study of grammar helps me to learn English.	n	1	2	25	27	Girls	55
	%	(1.8)	(3.6)	(45.5)	(49.1)		
	n	1	3	16	22	Boys	42
	%	(2.4)	(7.1)	(38.1)	(52.4)		
8. I like the study of grammar.	n	2	19	26	8	Girls	55
	%	(3.6)	(34.5)	(47.3)	(14.5)		
	n	3	12	19	8	Boys	42
	%	(7.1)	(28.6)	(45.2)	(19.0)		
10. There should be more teaching of grammar in English lessons.	n	6	31	15	2	Girls	54
	%	(11.1)	(57.4)	(27.8)	(3.7)		

12. I usually think about grammar rules, when I write in English.	n	5	29	6	1	Boys	41
	%	(12.2)	(70.7)	(14.6)	(2.4)		
	n	3	12	24	17	Girls	56
	%	(5.4)	(21.4)	(42.9)	(30.4)		
	n	6	12	19	5	Boys	42
	%	(14.3)	(28.6)	(45.2)	(11.9)		
13. I usually think about grammar rules, when I read a text I have written in English.	n	3	29	17	7	Girls	56
	%	(5.4)	(51.8)	(30.4)	(12.5)		
	n	10	12	17	3	Boys	42
	%	(23.8)	(28.6)	(40.5)	(7.1)		

* = statistically significant difference