Investigating the Beliefs and Preferences of Pre-service Teachers as regards Grammar Instruction in EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

This research study aimed to investigate the beliefs of pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), their preferences in teaching grammar, and their views about the departmental courses as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation.

Accordingly, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of the participating pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language?
2. What are the preferences of pre-service teachers in teaching grammar?
3. How do the participating pre-service teachers evaluate the courses offered in the ELT department as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation?

The present study was carried out in the English Language Teaching (ELT) department of Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) in Northern Cyprus. The study followed qualitative research design. In the study both a questionnaire and a number of interviews were administered to 66 students (i.e. pre-service teachers) to gather data.

The first finding of the current study seemed to indicate that a great number of the participants believe in the essential role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. Next, the participating pre-service teachers reported that they

would probably prefer to teach grammar deductively in their own classes while many participants emphasized the importance of teaching grammar inductively. The findings of the study also revealed that majority of the participants found some of the departmental courses very useful because they thought these courses contributed highly to their readiness level in teaching grammar upon their graduation.

In conclusion, the study provided useful findings and made related implications for pre-service English language teachers in raising their awareness towards grammar teaching and the academic staff in the ELT departments in designing and redesigning their courses.

Keywords: Teachers' beliefs, grammar instruction, pre-service teachers.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, öğretmen adaylarının yabancı bir dil olarak İngilizceyi öğrenme ve öğretmede dilbilgisinin rolüne ilişkin inanışlarını, dilbilgisi öğretimindeki önceliklerini ve öğretmen adaylarının mezuniyetlerine yaklaşırken bölüm derslerinin dil bilgisi öğretimlerine hazır olmalarına katkısı göz önünde bulundurularak bu dersler hakkındaki kanılarını araştırmayı amaçlamıştır.

Bu bakımdan, çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularını sorgulamaktadır:

1. Araştırmaya katılan öğretmen adaylarının, yabancı bir dil olarak İngilizceyi öğretme ve öğrenmede dilbilgisinin rolüne ilişkin inanışları nelerdir?

2. Araştırmaya katılan öğretmen adaylarının dilbilgisi öğretimindeki öncelikleri nelerdir?

3. Araştırmaya katılan öğretmen adayları mezuniyetlerine yaklaşırken, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümünde sunulan dersleri, dilbilgisi öğretimlerine hazır olmalarına katkısını göz önünde bulundurarak nasıl değerlendirir?

Mevcut çalışma Doğu Akdeniz Üniversite İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümünde gerçekleştirildi. Çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemini izledi. Çalışmada İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümünde öğrenim yıllarını göz önünde bulundurarak 66 öğrenciye (öğretmen adayı) hem anket hem de çok sayıda mülakat uygulandı.

Çalışmanın ilk sonucu, katılımcıların büyük bir çoğunluğunun yabancı bir dil olarak İngilizceyi öğretme ve öğrenmede dil bilgisinin önemli bir rolü olduğuna inandıklarını göstermiştir. Bir diğer sonuçta, araştırmaya katılan öğretmen

adaylarının azımsanmayacak bir kısmı örtük dilbilgisi öğretiminin önemini vurgulamalarına rağmen, büyük bir çoğunluğunun kendi sınıflarında belirtik dilbilgisi öğretimini tercih ettikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları aynı zamanda öğretmen adaylarının çoğunun İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümünde sunulan bazı derslerin onların dilbilgisi öğretimlerine katkıda bulunduğuna inandıkları ortaya koymuştur.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma öğretmen adaylarının dilbilgisi öğretimine karşı farkındalıklarının artması konusunda ve İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümündeki akademik personelin derslerini tasarlarken (veya yeniden düzenlerken) yararlanabilecekleri bazı çıkarımlar ve faydalı sonuçlar ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmenlerin inanışları, dilbilgisi öğretimi, öğretmen adayları

To My Beloved Family

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Presentation

This chapter aims to present the background of the study, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. The significance of the study is also provided in this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

The spread of English as an international language around the world is undeniably fast. This growth actually proves the reason why English language teaching has become very popular in almost all countries in the world. Despite the focus on communicative aspects of language learning and teaching in the last forty years, the role of grammar is still viewed essential in teaching English as a foreign/second language. While some scholars (for example, Prabhu, 1987) were in favour of excluding grammar teaching in foreign language classes, others (such as Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Nassaji, 2000) emphasized the need for teaching grammar in communicative language teaching.

Also, some studies investigated the effectiveness of focusing on form (Celce-Murcia, 1991; Long & Crookes, 1992). The findings indicate that students with form-focused instruction outperformed those who had no instruction on the targeted forms (White, 1991). Nevertheless, there are some teachers who think that drawing students' attention to grammar may be harmful, especially when they are engaging in meaning.

In fact, it may be a challenge for especially inexperienced teachers to decide on the most appropriate type of grammar instruction, among many options.

Teacher beliefs may play an important role in designing instruction (Johnson, 1994; Wong, 2010). While some teachers are in favour of providing a lot of grammar exercises, others may be less enthusiastic about the grammar instruction. Many studies conducted to investigate teacher beliefs regarding grammar instruction revealed a strong relationship between teacher beliefs and their practices (Borg, 2003).

Ur (2009) emphasized the necessity of understanding the underlying beliefs of English teachers about the importance of grammar in learning English and about grammar teaching, and knowing their instructional classroom practices. Similary, Shavelson and Stern's (1981) research pointed out the influence of teachers' beliefs on their practices in classroom.

The term 'belief' can be defined in a variety of ways. In some contexts beliefs can be defined as "convictions or opinions that are formed either by experience or by the intervention of ideas through the learning process" (Ford, 1994; as cited in Borg, 2006, p. 36), while sometimes they are referred to "attitudes and values about teaching, students, and the educational process" (Pajares, 1993; as cited in Borg, 2006, p. 36). There is another related term, 'cognition' which is defined as "teachers' self-reflections; beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students and content; and awareness of problem-solving strategies endemic to classroom teaching" (Kagan,

1990; as cited in Borg, 2006, p. 36). As the definition itself shows cognition is a broader term which also includes beliefs.

Borg (2006) offers a thematic classification of studies on language teacher cognition which analyze cognitions of pre-service and in-service teachers. According to Borg (2006), pre-service language teacher cognition studies examine "the influence of prior language learning experience on pre-service teachers' cognitions, pre-service teachers' beliefs about language teaching, cognitions in relation to practicum experiences and pre-service teachers' instructional decision-making and practical knowledge" (p. 52).

Regarding knowledge of teachers, Roberts (1998) mention many types of knowledge, including content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Since grammar is defined as a pivotal part of both the content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, language teachers are firstly expected to be competent in the structures of grammar, and secondly they are assumed to have knowledge about how to teach this content knowledge to the learners, which is the general pedagogic knowledge.

Borg (2003b) analyzes teacher cognition in grammar teaching under three categories. The first category is related to teachers' knowledge about grammar which deals with prospective or practicing language teachers' explicit knowledge about grammar. The second category studies teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching, and finally the third category examines teachers' practices and cognitions.

Another point which is pointed out by Graves (2009) is that in recent years the focus is on understanding how teacher-learners as active agents become competent in teaching language, and it is getting more difficult to understand to know how to teach. Related to this, Borg (2009) claims that prior language learning experience has impact on pre-service teachers' understanding of teaching. In fact, he refers to Lortie's (1975) notion of the "apprenticeship of observation", which means that prior experiences of pre-service teachers as language learners shape the beliefs about teaching. In other words, pre-service teachers have already strong beliefs about teaching when they are at the start of teacher education. Regarding the sources of teachers' beliefs, Farrell (2009) proposes that teachers' beliefs are under the thumb of three main causes: teachers' own experiences as learners, the experiences they have gained from the teacher education program, and their socialization experiences.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

It is widely accepted that language teachers' personal pedagogical systems influence how they prefer to teach grammar Nevertheless, as Borg (1998) points out, second language (L2) teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar teaching has not received much attention. Therefore, ignorance of these cognitive bases of teachers' work causes a gap in the research agenda for L2 teaching.

This gap also exists in the context of the present research i.e. the English Language Teaching (ELT) department, at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), Famagusta, North Cyprus. In the 4-year undergraduate program, pre-service teachers in the ELT department at EMU take some grammar and methodology courses, in addition to many other courses; however, whether or not they manage to internalize what they have been taught usually remains unknown. In other words, there is a lack

of awareness about the perceptions of pre-service English language teachers towards grammar teaching, at least in the EMU context. An earlier study conducted by Özdemir (2010) in the same research context investigated pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching; however, that study had a very wide scope, grammar and its teaching being just small part of it. Therefore, this present study can be seen as an attempt to look into this matter more closely.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the beliefs of pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), their preferences in teaching grammar, and their views about the departmental courses as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation.

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What are the beliefs of the participating pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language?

2. What are the preferences of pre-service teachers in teaching grammar?

3. How do the participating pre-service teachers evaluate the courses offered in the ELT Department as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Language teacher cognition has been examined on the basis of a variety of curricular domains and especially on grammar teaching (Borg, 2006). Many researchers studied pre-service teachers' beliefs about various aspects of teaching English as a foreign language, including grammar instruction (Altunbaşak, 2010; Bahadır, 2011). There

are also a number of studies conducted in the research context to investigate pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching (Özdemir, 2010; Oktay, 2012). However, unlike these previous studies, this current study investigates the perceptions of pre-service teachers specifically as regards grammar teaching in the context of ELT department at Eastern Mediterranean University. In other words, it would not be wrong to claim that the present study is concerned with the pre-service teachers' perceptions of grammar instruction in the research context for the first time.

1.6 Summary

In this chapter, the background of the study, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study are presented. The significance of the study is also provided in this chapter.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Presentation

This chapter provides an overview of grammar and its types. It also reviews the place of grammar in language teaching and teachers' cognition about grammar.

2.2 Grammar and Its Types

2.2.1 Grammar

In the process of learning a foreign language, we cannot underestimate the importance of some specific rules of that language. These rules gather under a well-organized system which is known as 'grammar'. Grammar is defined in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as "the rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences, or the study or use of these rules" (2001, p. 619).

According to Lyons (1968), roots of 'grammar' are based on Greek philosophy which proposes that "it was a part of Greeks' general inquiry into the nature of the world around them and of their own social institutions" (p. 4). In fact, various definitions of grammar exist in the related literature. Jespersen (1933), for example, claims that grammar is concerned with the structures of languages, such as English grammar with the structure of English and French grammar with the structure of French, because "language consists of words, but the way in which these words are modified and joined together to express thoughts and feelings differs from one

language to another" (p. 15). However, it is not always easy to provide a definition of grammar which will be readily accepted by everybody. As Pelosi (1973) says, when grammar is investigated from a broader perspective, it is open to several interpretations. This view is shared by Töllinen (2002), who defines grammar as a system combining words to form meaning negotiation. According to Töllinen (2002), "the concept of grammar is far more complex depending on the point of view one takes" (p. 7). Another definition comes from Larsen-Freeman (2003), who views grammar as "a tool of exquisite precision, allowing us to create forms in order to express delicate shades of meaning" (p. 45).

As regards the teaching of grammar, Ellis (2006) states that grammar is traditionally seen as the presentation and practice of discrete grammatical structures. Yet, it definitely does not consist of only these steps. Therefore, Ellis (2006) points out a broader definition of grammar:

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

2.2.2 Types of Grammar

In order to decide what grammar to teach and how to teach it, language teachers are expected to be aware of types of grammar and how to use them in their teaching. Recently language teachers prefer dealing with pedagogical grammar mostly and they do not pay attention to the works of the theoretical linguists such as Chomsky and Halliday (Bourke, 2005). Odlin (1994) defines pedagogical grammar as "the types of grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the needs of second language students" (Bourke, 2005, p.1). Although language teachers believe they cannot apply the works of Chomsky and Halliday into their classroom practice,

Bourke (2005) claims that these works may still help language teachers to use pedagogical grammar and to understand the rationale behind their teaching grammar.

The classification for types of grammar varies a great deal according to different perspectives. Crystal (2003, as cited in Aslan, 2010, p. 10) suggests six types of grammar which are: i) descriptive grammar, ii) prescriptive grammar, iii) theoretical grammar, iv) reference grammar, v) pedagogical grammar, and vi) traditional grammar. Woods (1995, as cited in Aslan, 2010, p. 10), on the other hand, proposes a different classification of grammar types. According to this classification, the grammar types are as follows: i) prescriptive and descriptive grammar, ii) traditional grammar, iii) phrase structure grammar, iv) transformational generative grammar, and v) functional-systematic grammar.

As can be seen, these two classifications share common grammar types. A brief description of each grammar type will be provided below.

a) Prescriptive and Descriptive grammar

According to Seçkin (2002, p. 15), the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammar lies in "the attitude that one takes toward that language" (p. 15). Prescriptive grammar is defined as "a grammar with rules that make distinctions between correct and incorrect forms" (Aslan, 2010, p.11). Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (2002) propose that "prescriptive grammars are often based not on descriptions of actual usage but rather on the grammarian's views of what is best. Many traditional grammars are of this kind" (p. 415).

Descriptive grammar, on the other hand, comprises phonetics, phonology and semantics, in addition to syntax and morphology (Livia, 2006). According to Crystal

(1987), descriptive grammar is "an approach that describes the grammatical constructions that are used in a language, without making any evaluative judgements about their standing in society" (p. 88). Aslan (2010) claims that "descriptive grammar aims to describe language as it is actually used and represents speakers' unconscious knowledge or mental grammar of the language" (p. 13).

b) Theoretical grammar

According to Corder (1973, as cited in Aslan 2010), "theoretical grammars are generative grammars that linguists use to gain insight into human language. They are often called scholarly grammars trying to validate a particular theoretical language model" (p.13).

Crystal (1992, as cited in Aslan 2010) develops this argument and says that "theoretical grammar, in this context, goes beyond the study of individual languages, using linguistic data as a means of developing insights into the nature of language as such, and into the categories and processes needed for linguistic analyses" (p.13). Aslan (2010) claims that these views lead to "some uncertainty in the literature about the allocation of grammar books to the types of grammar" (p.13).

c) Reference grammar

A reference grammar is a prose-like description of the major grammatical constructions in a language, illustrated with examples. It is written for individuals who have some understanding of language as a universal phenomenon and who wish to learn how the particular language described fits into universal understandings of human language (http://www-oi.sil.org). The grammar book "A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language" (1985) by Quirk et al. can be given as an

example of reference grammar, although authors themselves label it as a descriptive grammar (Crystal, 1992).

d) Pedagogical grammar

Thornbury (1999) claims that pedagogical rules are "the rules that make sense to learners while at the same time providing them with the means and confidence to generate language with a reasonable chance of success" (p.11). Pedagogical grammar comprises of these rules. According to Cameron (2001), "pedagogical grammars are explicit descriptions of patterns, or rules, in a language, presented in ways that are helpful to teachers and to learners" and "learners are exposed to the pedagogical grammar in small amount in textbook units" (p. 100).

Regarding the use of pedagogical grammar, Aslan (2010) points out that language teachers and students benefit from pedagogical grammar, but they may have different purposes to use it. Cameron (2001) states "teachers need an overview and description of the whole of the language that is to be taught" (p.100). Regarding the differing aims of the native speaker teachers and non-native teachers, Aslan (2010) puts forward that "the aim of a pedagogical grammar for native speakers is to raise awareness of the mother tongue while a pedagogical grammar for non-native teachers aims to present the facts of language in a form which will help teachers to present grammar to their own learners" (p. 15).

e) Traditional grammar

The root of traditional grammar is believed to base on Latin and Greek grammars (Seçkin, 2002). In traditional grammar, language is claimed to consist of eight different segments: nouns, verbs, participles, articles, pronouns, prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions (Altunbaşak, 2010, p. 5).

Traditional grammar is usually associated with the grammar-translation method which accommodates reading and translation activities. In this method, teacher is the authority in the classroom and students are expected to do the activities teachers have planned. Explicit grammar rules are taught deductively, and students are expected to be conscious of the grammatical rules of the target language.

f) Phrase-structure grammar

The term 'phrase-structure grammar' was originally introduced by Chomsky (1957). It refers to a grammar which is based on the constituency relation. Blevins and Sag (2012) claim that

> Phrase structure grammars and associated notions of phrase structure analysis have their proximate origins in models of Immediate Constituent (IC) analysis…The central intuition underlying models of IC analysis was that the structure of an expression could be exhibited by dividing the expression into parts (its immediate constituents), further subdividing these parts, and continuing until syntactically indivisible units were obtained (p. 1).

g) Transformational - generative grammar

Transformational - generative grammar firstly came up with Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and it has been one of the most influential linguistic theories. According to Chapman and Routledge (2009),

> It is a systematic, objective, scientific formalization of grammar based on the belief that the structure of language is determined by the structure of the human mind, that all languages share some common, universal characteristics and that the species-specific creativity of human language – that is, the capacity of all native speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences they have never heard before – must be accounted for" (p. 232).

This theory is also claimed to reflect processes of language acquisition and language use (Chapman & Routledge, 2009). The aim of transformational - generative grammar is not to analyze sentences but to investigate generations of sentences in a language (Altunbaşak, 2010). Based on claims of Chomsky, it can be said that while using a limited number of rules, it is possible to produce infinite number of

sentences. In transformational-generative grammar, the surface structure and deep structure are examined. Deep structure is considered to exist in all languages, and therefore it is universal. On the other hand, surface structure is believed to differentiate between languages (Altunbaşak, 2010).

In transformational-generative grammar, grammar is scientific, not pedagogical. Transformational-generative grammar is considered as "a theory of the way the language system operates; it provides a model of a linguistic process which cannot be observed directly" (Lewis, 1972, p. 3). It reflects the speech potential of the native speaker so transformationalists make distinction between native speakers' competence which refers to their potential capacity to produce sentences and their performance which reflects what they produce in fact. Transformational-generative grammar aims to investigate the competence of native speakers, not to investigate their performance nor to prescribe the correct forms (Lewis, 1972).

h) Functional-systemic grammar

It is claimed that traditional language teaching approaches lost their popularities in 1970, and the main concern was shifted to dealing with meaning in social contexts (Altunbaşak, 2010). Due to this change in focus, it can be said that grammar has taken a more functional part in language teaching. According to Halliday (1994), languages develop to supply the needs of people day by day so they become more functional with respect to these needs. Therefore, a functional grammar can be considered a natural grammar in that it is possible to find the explanation of everything by considering how language is used.

2.3 The Place of Grammar in Language Teaching

Before summarizing how different methodologies in English Language Teaching (ELT) viewed the role of grammar in English as Foreign Language (EFL) or in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, it would be necessary to review the approaches towards grammar instruction.

2.3.1 Approaches towards Grammar Instruction

Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) propose that there are three approaches towards grammar instruction: grammar as rules, grammar as form, and grammar as resource.

2.3.1.1 Grammar as Rules

Most of L2 learners think that learning grammar is equal to learning the rules of that language, so they give much more emphasis to the knowledge of grammar. According to many language teachers, this provides learners a generative base to use language (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011).

The knowledge of grammar rules can be either explicit (i.e. metalingual and conscious) or implicit (i.e. intuitive and unconscious). This distinction is made clear in Krashen's (1981) Monitor Theory and Bialystok's (1979) research.

Krashen's (1981) Monitor Model of second language development is an example of a learning theory on which a method, the Natural Approach, has been built (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The Monitor Model attempts to explain the processes and conditions of language learning. According to Monitor Model, there exists a difference between acquisition and learning of languages. While acquisition is a subconscious process and takes place in natural environments (i.e., informal settings), learning is a conscious process and occurs in artificial environments (i.e.,

formal settings). This is true for grammar rules. Grammar rules are 'acquired' only naturally (i.e. subconsciously); yet they cannot be learned in this way. They are learned consciously and explicitly. Krashen (1981) claims that learning cannot turn into acquisition, and that learning is available only as a monitor. Richards and Rodgers (1986) define monitor as "the repository of conscious grammatical knowledge about a language that is learned through formal instruction and that is called upon in the editing of utterances produced through the acquired system" (p.18). Krashen (1981) maintains that the knowledge language learners get through formal instruction is available for use only in monitored situations, when the user focuses on form and, that it cannot be used in spontaneous production, when the focus is on meaning. Bialystok's (1979) theory, on the other hand, claims that formal instruction followed by formal practice is beneficial for both spontaneous and controlled performance.

About the explicit knowledge, Ellis (2006) says:

> Explicit knowledge consists of the facts that speakers of a language have learned. These facts are often not clearly understood and may be in conflict with each other. They concern different aspects of language including grammar. Explicit knowledge is held consciously, is learnable and verbalisable, and is typically accessed through controlled processing when learners experience some kind of linguistic difficulty in using the L2 (p. 95).

Explicit knowledge can further be divided into two as 'analysed knowledge' and 'metalinguistic explanation'. To have analysed knowledge, language learners are expected to be aware of how grammatical structures work consciously. On the other hand, metalinguistic explanation requires learners to have knowledge of grammatical knowledge and to be able to understand the explanations of rules (Ellis, 2006).

Implicit knowledge of the grammar, on the other hand, is "demonstrated through students' actual production of speech or writing in communication and does not imply the ability to explain underlying rules" (Ur, 2011, p. 510). Ellis (2006) also adds that

> Implicit knowledge is procedural, is held unconsciously, and can only be verbalized if it is made explicit. It is accessed rapidly and easily and thus is available for use in rapid, fluent communication. Most SLA researchers agree that competence in an L2 is primarily a matter of implicit knowledge (p. 95).

Besides this distinction, Ellis (2006) considers whether explicit knowledge is best taught deductively and inductively. He (2006) states that

> In deductive teaching, a grammatical structure is presented initially and then practised in one way or another; this is the first P in the present-practise-produce sequence. In inductive teaching, learners are first exposed to exemplars of the grammatical structure and are asked to arrive at a metalinguistic generalisation on their own; there may or may not be a final explicit statement of the rule (p. 97).

2.3.1.2 Grammar as Forms

There are some opposing views about the place of grammar in communicative language teaching. Some of the researchers argue that communication should not be interrupted and attention to grammar should be reduced through providing corrective feedback (Doughty & Varela, 1998, as cited in Sheen, 2002). The other researchers, on the other hand, advocate "separate attention to grammar and subsequent integration of the knowledge provided in increasingly communicative activity" (DeKeyser, 1998, as cited in Sheen, 2002).

As regards these two distinct points of views, Sheen, (2002) point out that there are two approaches in grammar instruction: 'focus on form' and 'focus on forms', two phrases which may be used interchangeably in the literature and lead to some ambiguity. The term 'focus on form' is used to refer to the cases when students'

attention is directed to linguistics elements "as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, pp. 45-46). Focus on form originates from the similarity between first and second language acquisition, because both of them require learners to get exposed to comprehensible input in a natural interaction. However, it is also claimed that there are some differences between first and second language acquisition: "that exposure is insufficient to enable learners to acquire much of the second-language grammar, and that this lack needs to be compensated for by focusing learners' attention on grammatical features" (Sheen, 2002, p. 303).

As can be seen, in focus on form approach, the focus is mostly on meaning but learners may be provided necessary information about linguistic forms when there is a need (Cook, 2001, p. 39). Harmer (2007) asserts that focus on form may take place at any stage of language learning process because students may pay attention to a linguistic feature, or teacher may need to attract their attention to that particular feature.

On the contrary, 'focus on forms' depends on the idea that foreign or second language learning originates from general cognitive processes so it leads to learning of a skill which is called 'skill-learning approach' (Sheen, 2002). This approach involves three stages:

1. providing understanding of the grammar by a variety of means (including explanation in the L1, pointing out the differences between L1 and L2;
2. exercises entailing using the grammar in both non-communicative and communicative activities for both comprehension and production;
3. providing frequent opportunities for communicative use of the grammar to promote automatic, accurate use (Sheen, 2002, p. 304).

According to Harmer (2007), many language syllabuses and course books are structured around a series of language forms. Teachers and students focus on them one by one because they are on the syllabus. This is called 'focus on forms' because one of the chief organizing principles behind a course is the learning of these forms.

As DeKeyser (1998, as cited in Sheen, 2002) asserts, focus on forms is "equated with the traditional teaching of discrete points of grammar in separate lessons" (p. 303). Nevertheless, Ellis (2006) puts forward the view that focus on forms approach should be confirmed on condition that it provides learners with opportunities to practice grammatical structures in communicative tasks.

2.3.1.3 Grammar as Resource

In this attitude, grammar is seen as a resource to be exploited in order to achieve a successful communication. In this vein, Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) say:

> a better approach is perhaps to see grammar as one of many resources that we have in language which helps us to communicate. We should see how grammar relates to what we want to say or write, and how we expect others to interpret what our language use and its focus (p. 71).

2.3.2 The Role of Grammar in Language Teaching Methods

According to Celce-Murcia (1991), when and to what extent grammar should be emphasized in class are controversial. Referring to Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence which considers grammatical competence as one of the components of communicative competence, Celce-Murcia (1991) puts forward the idea that grammar instruction is part of language teaching. She advocates "grammar interacts with meaning, social function or discourse- or a combination of these- rather than standing alone as an autonomous system to be learned for its own sake" (p. 459).

Among the teaching methodologies, the Grammar-Translation Method is the oldest and most traditional one. The fundamental purpose of learning a foreign language in this method is "to be able to read literature written in the target language. To do this, students need to learn about the grammar rules and vocabulary of the target language" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.17). In this method, grammar is taught deductively; that is, the grammar rules of the target language are provided to learners, and students are expected to memorize these rules to be able to use them in their own sentences.

The teachers who adopt the Direct Method are expected to teach grammar inductively, i.e. first, examples are provided to students, and then students are encouraged to elicit the rule themselves or make some generalizations from the examples (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

In the Audio Lingual Method, students are expected to use the target language for communicative purposes. Dialogues, which are taught through imitation and repetition, have important roles in presenting new target words and grammar structures. Drills are mostly used and grammar is taught inductively.

In Silent Way, learners are expected to develop independence from the teacher. The role of teacher in the Silent Way is to promote students' learning the target language so teachers set up situations to force awareness, and they observe the students silently and give clues when they need help. Grammar is not taught explicitly in this method. However, the structures of language are emphasized mostly.

In Desuggestopedia, although explicit grammar teaching is preferred, grammar teaching takes place minimally. It is assumed that "students will learn best if their conscious attention is focused not on the language forms, but on using the language. The 'paraconscious' mind will then absorb the linguistic rules" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 83).

In Community Language Learning Method, students are expected to learn how to use the target language communicatively and also to learn about their own learning. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), "Particular grammar points, pronunciation patterns, and vocabulary are worked with, based on the language the students have generated"(p.101).

In Total Physical Response (TPR), vocabulary and grammatical structures are emphasized over other language areas. These are embedded within imperatives, which are single words and multi-word chunks" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.115).

In Communicative Language Teaching, which aims to enable learners to communicate in the target language, learners need to have knowledge of linguistic forms, meaning, and functions and use all of them appropriately in social situations. In Communicative Language Teaching Method, "language function might be emphasized over forms… A variety of forms are introduced for each function. Only the simpler forms would be presented at first, but as students get more proficient in the target language, the functions are reintroduced and more complex forms are learned" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.131).

2.3.3 The Role of Grammar in Post method Era

With the emergence of dissatisfaction with the methods on the basis that no single method is the best method and all methods are "rather indistinguishable from each other at a later stage" (Brown, 1997, p. 3), researchers searched for an alternative method. The so-called 'postmethod' pedagogy empowers teachers by relying on their sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1990), and emphasizing a number of macro and micro strategies, 'fostering language awareness' being one of them (Kumaravadivelu, 1994).

Teaching grammar in post method era is greatly influenced by the shifts from focusing on teaching to learning processes. In fact, psychological and cognitive views toward learning such as noticing, consciousness raising, automatization, and control as well as the development of the notion of constructing the knowledge of language via collaboration (Vygotsky, 1962) have shook the firm principals of CLT. What is applied in recent approaches such as task-based teaching and content-based teaching is a combination of modified input proposed within interactions and deductive grammar teaching or focus on form teaching (Doughty, 2001). Such a process-based combination provides the learners with opportunities for being psychologically and socially involved in the process of learning the second language where grammar is viewed as a necessary device for the acquisition of communicative skills and improving the language proficiency of the learners.

2.4 Teachers' Cognition about Grammar

Having discussed the place of grammar in language teaching in general, it is also necessary to consider how language teachers perceive the significance of grammar in their own teaching. As Borg (1998) points out, L2 teachers' perceptions of grammar

teaching need to be investigated because language teachers' personal pedagogical systems influence how they prefer to teach grammar.

Language teachers' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs have been studied widely in teacher cognition studies. Teacher cognition, as defined by Borg (2003c), is an "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think" (p.81). Figure 2.1 indicates the factors which shape teacher cognition. According to this figure, teachers' own schooling, professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice (including practice teaching) all contribute to the teacher's cognition, that is, his/her beliefs, knowledge, theories, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions, and perspectives.
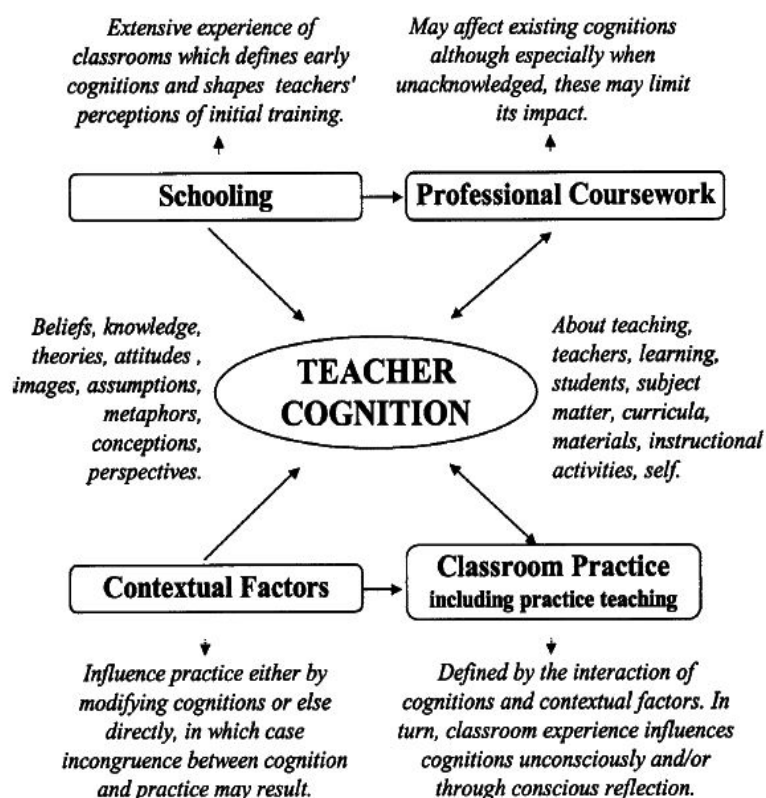
Figure 2.1 Teacher cognition, schooling, professional education, and classroom practice (Borg, 1997)

Teacher's beliefs are represented as tacit and unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the materials in teaching (Kagan, 1992). Beliefs are also defined as "the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning that teachers build up over time and bring with them to the classroom", and "teacher beliefs form a structured set of principles that are derived from experience, school practice, personality, education theory, reading, and other sources" (Richards, 1998, as cited in Güler, 2007).

According to Borg (2003a), the view that grammar teaching is a "monolithic enterprise" (p. 183) is no longer valid because it does not have universal principles and practices Accordingly, grammar teaching practices which take place in classroom should be considered in detail and the factors which affect teacher's decisions to apply these practices should be investigated. The teachers' practices and the reasons behind their choices are an essential part of understanding L2 grammar teaching (Borg, 2003a).

In recent years, educational research has shown that teachers' personal pedagogical belief systems designate their classroom practices and these pedagogical systems which include their beliefs, knowledge theories, assumptions, and attitudes affect how L2 teachers decide to give their instruction (Borg,1998).

According to Roberts (1998), language teachers are expected to have a teaching competence which includes six types of knowledge: i) content knowledge (of target language system, text types), ii) pedagogical content knowledge (how to teach / adapt content learners), iii) general pedagogic knowledge (classroom management,

repertoire of ELT activities, assessment), iv) curricular knowledge (of the official curriculum and resources), v) contextual knowledge (of learners, school, and community), and vi) process knowledge (interpersonal and team skills, observation and inquiry skills, language analysis skills).

Borg (2006) defines teachers 'content knowledge' as "knowledge of subject matter" and 'pedagogical content knowledge' as "subject-specific instructional techniques" (p.127). He also claims that content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of students are different from each other, but in reality, these categories are "melded together in complex and indeed inextricable ways" (as cited in Johnston & Goettsch, 2000, p. 461).

There is a variety of studies which investigate language teachers' practices and cognitions in relation to grammar teaching. According to Borg (2006), Brumfit (1996), Mitchell and Hooper (1992) considered teachers' actual beliefs and classroom practices and had a theoretical debate about the rationales and models for developing knowledge about language (KAL). Classroom observations and interviews were used to describe KAL practices in secondary English and modern foreign language (FL) classrooms and to indicate teachers' beliefs about language and about the role of explicit KAL in language education (Borg, 2006). The research findings revealed that there are important differences between English teachers and FL teachers. According to FL teacher, KAL is sentence-based explicit grammar work and it can be shown in their classroom practices. As regards the finding, Brumfit (1996) claims that teachers' own KAL was generally "patchy and idiosyncratic" (as cited in Borg, 2006).

Regarding the teachers' level of grammatical knowledge, Borg (2003) points out some studies which measure the potential (or practicing) teachers' knowledge about language. According to the findings of these studies, majority of the potential language teachers generally have inadequate levels of grammatical knowledge.

Considering the essential role of explicit understanding of language in the effectiveness of language teachers, Borg (2003) infers from the results of the related studies that language teacher preparation programmes need to pay more attention and time to the development of trainees' declarative knowledge about language. He further emphasizes that this kind of knowledge is just one part of the more globalized knowledge which language teachers must have in teaching grammar.

2.5 Summary

This chapter presented a review of approaches and attitudes toward grammar and its types. It also summarized the place of grammar in different language teaching methods. Finally, the chapter discussed the views related to teachers' cognition about grammar. The following chapter will focus on the method of the current study.

Chapter 3

METHOD

3.1 Presentation

This chapter aims to explain the method used in this study. The first section introduces the research design and the research questions. In the following sections, the context, participants, data collection procedures and data analysis are presented. In the last section, the limitations and delimitations of the research are discussed.

3.2 Overall Research Design

The aim of this research study is to investigate the beliefs of pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), their preferences in teaching grammar, and their views about the departmental courses as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation. In order to accomplish this aim, the study used qualitative research design.

Qualitative research is "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). Qualitative research is based on the assumption that individuals construct meaning by interacting with their social world. Qualitative researchers deal with the meaning individuals have constructed.

Patton (1985, as cited in Merriam, 2002) states that qualitative research is

an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their believes are like, what's going on for them, what their meaning are, what the world looks like in that particular setting….The analysis strives for depth of understanding.

Some major characteristics of qualitative research are pointed out by Merriam (2002). The first characteristic of the qualitative research is to understand the meaning people have constructed. The researcher in this study aimed to understand the reality individuals construct so the present study followed this characteristic.

Secondly, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). The aim of qualitative research is to understand the meaning so the researcher may respond or make some adaptations while collecting or analyzing data. In data collection process of the current study, the researcher clarified some points the participants were confused about.

Thirdly, qualitative research takes place in an inductive process. This means that "researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively deriving postulates or hypotheses to be tested" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). In the present study, too, the researcher did not have any hypothesis to verify or test.

The last characteristic of qualitative research is its being richly descriptive. It involves "descriptions of the context, the participants involved, the activities of interests" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). The current study also involves rich data coming from different sources such as students' experiences and anecdotes.

Besides qualitative research features, the researcher used some quantitative data as well. For example, the study had a survey which asked the participants' perceptions as regards grammar instructions. The obtained answers were analysed using descriptive statistics.

3.3 Research Questions

The major objective of the current research was to investigate the beliefs of pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), their preferences in teaching grammar, and their views about the departmental courses as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation.

The following research questions, then, steered the research:

1. What are the beliefs of the participating pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language?

2. What are the preferences of pre-service teachers in teaching grammar?

3. How do the participating pre-service teachers evaluate the courses offered in the ELT Department as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation?

3.4 Context

The current study was carried out in the English Language Teaching (ELT) department of Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). EMU is an English medium university in Northern Cyprus providing higher education to about 14.000 students from 68 different countries.

The English Language Teaching department was established in 1995 first within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Then, in 2000 it was moved to the Faculty of

Education upon the establishment of the Faculty. The ELT department aims to improve the quality of English language education.

The ELT department offers three programs, namely, the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in ELT, the Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in ELT, and the Ph D. degree in ELT. All of the programs of the ELT department are accredited by the Turkish Higher Education Council. As regards the student profile, there is a variety of students coming from different nationalities such as Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, China, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Belarus. Turkish students, however, outnumber the other nationality students (http://elt.emu.edu.tr/).

The four year BA program offered in the ELT department includes 58 courses with 159 credits. Sixteen of these courses are offered in the last year; 14 of them in the 2nd year; 14 of them in the third year, and the remaining 14 in the 4th year (http://elt.emu.edu.tr/).

As pointed out by Oktay (2012), it is possible to categorize the courses given in the ELT department under three categories: content area courses, teaching-related courses, and general culture courses. The following table indicates the distinction and number of courses in the ELT department.

Table 3.1 The distinction and number of courses in the ELT department.

Course Type	Content area courses	Teaching-related courses	General culture courses
Year 1	9	2	5
Year 2	9	3	2
Year 3	10	2	2
Year 4	6	6	2
Total	34	13	11

The purpose of the content area courses is to develop students' knowledge of language skills including their subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. (Oktay, 2012). Teaching-related courses emphasize aspects of teaching. Oktay (2012) claims that most of the teaching- related courses are offered in the last two years, i.e. third and fourth years. The third type of courses in the ELT department is the general culture courses which aim to help the students develop vital general skills and knowledge. These courses are mostly given in the first year because they provide the students to take advantage of the other courses in the coming years (Oktay, 2012).

3.5 Participants

The present study involved participants from the undergraduate students of ELT department at EMU. As required by research ethics, all participants (66 out of around 80 undergraduate students) gave their consent to participate in the study by filling the consent form (Appendix A). The participants were ensured that all the information they would provide would be kept completely confidential and be used only for the research purposes. Out of 66 participants, 40 of them were female while 26 of them

were male. As regards their year in the department, the distribution of students was as follows: 23 freshmen, 22 sophomores, 8 juniors, and 13 seniors.

The answers provided in Part I of the questionnaire reveal some important information about the participants' demographic characteristics as well as their experience in English language learning. For example, 41 of the 66 participants were female and the rest (25 in number) were male. Based on personal observation, the ratio of female and male participants looks similar to the general characteristics of students' population in most of the English Language Teaching Departments in Turkey.

The findings also show that 52 participants out of 66 have been learning English since primary school, 10 participants since secondary school, and 4 participants since high school. This finding may lead us to think that the participants have had quite long experience in learning English, a period during which they must have developed some awareness about the English grammar.

Another question in Part I asked what kind of school the respondents attended throughout their previous school years, (including primary, secondary and high school). The justification for inquiring about the school types the respondents attended (public or private) was to make a projection about the amount of exposure to English they have had in their earlier school years. In public schools the English lessons per week range between 4 and 5 hours while in private schools this amount may rise up to 8 hours or even more. Majority of the students (52 in number) answered it as public school. The rest of them (14 students) attended private schools.

Those who have studied English in private schools are assumed to have a higher amount of exposure to English than those who have not.

The participants were also asked whether they studied in English Preparatory School at EMU. Majority of them (38 in number) answered that they studied in English Preparatory School while the rest (28 in number) said they did not. This result shows the low proficiency level of the ELT students. In fact, students who apply to the ELT Department are expected to have a high language proficiency to follow the courses since the purpose of the education at ELT Department is not to teach the English language; rather it aims to teach the students (i.e. pre-service teachers) how to teach English. Therefore, this particular result is quite significant as it necessitates certain steps to be taken to help the students improve their English (including their grammar awareness) in the shortest time possible.

The last question in the first part of the questionnaire asked whether the participants had ever been in an English speaking country. The reason for asking this question was to investigate whether or not they experienced informal contexts where they were exposed to English language, which may have had an effect in their grammar knowledge or awareness. The number of the participants who said "Yes" to this question was 35 while the rest (31 students) gave a negative response. Out of these 35 students, 16 of them can be considered as native speakers because they were born in an English speaking country (mainly England) and lived there more than 5 years. Therefore, based on the responses obtained, it may be claimed that there was quite a heterogeneous student profile, and in this regard the ELT department at EMU can be considered quite distinct from the other ELT departments in other Turkish universities.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The data were collected through a questionnaire and interviews from 66 participants (i.e. pre-service teachers) studying in the ELT department. The aim of the questionnaire was mainly to gather the beliefs of the participants as regards the role of grammar in learning and teaching in English as a foreign language. To design the questionnaire, the researcher first sought relevant surveys administered in similar studies and found some (Kaya, 2010; Upton, 2005; Altunbaşak, 2010). The researcher adopted some statements about 'beliefs about grammar' form Kaya's (2010) and Altunbaşak's (2010) surveys. The part about the confidence level of participants was adapted from Upton's (2005) survey.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. Part I included background information about the participants. There were six personal information questions which ask the gender of participants, how long they have been learning English, the schools they mostly attended throughout their previous school years, if they studied in English Preparatory School at EMU and if they had ever been in an English speaking country.

In Part II, there were two sections which investigated the participants' beliefs about grammar. The first section included two statements which describe grammar: one statement was the description of grammar learning and teaching implicitly while the second statement was describing learning and teaching grammar explicitly. Respondents were asked to choose the statement which best reflected their opinion, and if they found none of them relevant, to write down their own definition. The second section included sixteen statements and required the participants to choose if

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they agree or, disagree with the statements or remain undecided. These sixteen statements in Part II of the questionnaire were grouped into five categories, namely explicit grammar teaching (items i, v, vii, ix), implicit grammar teaching (items ii, iii, vi, xi), the attitudes towards grammar (items iv, xii, xvi), how grammar should be taught in class (items viii, xiv, xv), and the effect of learners' age in grammar teaching (item x). However, the statements were placed in random order in order to elicit consistent answers from the participants and also cross-check the validity of the responses.

Part III included two questions which asked the participants to indicate their preferences in teaching grammar. The first one offered four options to the respondents about teaching grammar and required the participants to choose the most appropriate one which would show how they would prefer to teach grammar in their classes when they start grammar teaching. The second question was an open-ended question and asked the participants to describe how they imagine themselves as a teacher of English with respect to grammar instruction when they become a teacher of English.

In Part IV, there were four questions which investigated the participants' views about the departmental courses. The first question asked the participants whether or not they were ready to teach grammar in real classrooms and explain their reasons in their own words. The second question offered four statements about how confident respondents feel about grammar and its teaching, and required the participants to rate them on a 5-likert scale, 5 being extremely confident. The third question investigated what the participants thought about the courses offered in the ELT department as

regards the contribution of these courses to their own content knowledge. In addition, they were asked to indicate whether or not their beliefs changed after taking these courses. Finally, the fourth question asked what the participants' suggestions were to improve those courses.

The study also used semi-structured interviews as a means of data collection. According to McDonough, J. & S. (1997),

> Interviews in this category have a structured overall framework but allow for greater flexibility within that, for example in changing the order of questions and for more extensive follow-up reponses… The intervieweer, then, remains in control of the direction of the interview but with much more leeway. Although this format has characteristics of both other types (structured and unstructured interviews), it is usually regarded as being closer to the qualitative paradigm because it allows for richer interactions and more personalized responses than quasi-automaton interviewer armed with entirely pre-coded questions (p. 183-184).

The aim of the interviews was to get deeper and more detailed information from the participants. For this purpose, the researcher asked the interviewees who were selected on a voluntary basis to reflect on their answers in the questionnaire and invited them to elaborate on the reasons which might have been the underlying beliefs for their preferences. Three of the interviewees were students either in the 1st and 2nd year while the rest (7 in number) were senior students (i.e. 3rd or 4th year students). The interview included five questions. The first question asked participants' current beliefs about the role of grammar. The second question was related to participants' own experiences and/or anecdotes about learning the grammar of English language. Question 3 asked the participants' preferences in teaching English grammar as a prospective teacher of English. Questions 4 and 5 asked the participants' views and/or suggestions about the methodology courses they had taken.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The study took place in a set of pre-planned stages. As a first step, the researcher contacted the chair person of the English Language Teaching department to secure permission to carry out the research in the department. After receiving approval from the chair of the department, the researcher carried out a pilot study with a few pre-service participants in order to ensure the completeness of the content and the clarity of the instructions. Along with the feedback, the researcher made some editing and produced the final version of the survey. Then, the researcher contacted four instructors whose classes would be available to administer the questionnaire during their classes. According to the schedule prepared by the researcher, classes were visited one by one on different days. With the consent of the class instructor, the researcher herself conducted the administration of the questionnaire, which lasted between 15-20 minutes. During the administration, when asked, the researcher also made some explanations to the participants.

Out of 66 participating pre-service teachers who got involved in the study, only 10 volunteer participants agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted both in English and Turkish, depending on the interviewees' preferences. The interviews took approximately fifteen minutes in a relatively informal manner, and usually in classes which were available. The participants were asked the same questions in order to elicit richer information.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected for this study was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. To answer the first research question of the study ("What are the beliefs of the participating pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching

English as a foreign language?"), mainly Part II of the questionnaire was analyzed through descriptive statistics. Also, the responses given to the first and second questions of the interview were analyzed through content analysis in which the responses were grouped into categories to detect the emerging themes (Patton, 2002, p. 453).

In order to answer the second research ("What are the preferences of pre-service teachers in teaching grammar?"), the answers given in Part III of the questionnaire were analyzed by using both descriptive statistics and content analysis. The answers for the third question of the interview also served to investigate the preferences of pre-service teachers in teaching grammar either deductively or inductively.

In order to answer the third research question ("How do the participating pre-service teachers evaluate the courses offered in the ELT department as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation?"), responses given to Part IV of the questionnaire were analyzed. Similarly, the responses given to the fourth and fifth questions of the interview were analyzed in order to find out the participants' views about the methodology courses as well as their suggestions to improve these courses.

3.9 Limitations and Delimitations

Like all similar studies, this study has some limitations, too. Firstly, the study was carried out with only 66 participants (i.e. undergraduate students of the ELT department) in Eastern Mediterranean University. This number may sound small; yet, it should be noted that this figure comprises almost 75% of the total undergraduate students of the ELT department (88 in number).

As mentioned above, the data was obtained from the undergraduate students of the ELT department of Eastern Mediterranean University. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all ELT department students in other universities.

Finally, not all participants of the study had teaching practice experience except the micro-teaching sessions in the 3rd year and the practice teaching experience in the 4th year. In fact, teaching practice experience may have an effect on the beliefs and preferences of pre-service teachers about teaching grammar.

3.10 Summary

This chapter described the methodology applied in the study. Firstly, the research design of the study and the research questions were introduced then, the research context, participants, data collection instruments, procedures and data analysis were presented. Lastly, the limitations and delimitations were explained.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Presentation

This chapter provides the results of the present study. The results are presented based on the research questions: participants' beliefs about grammar, their preference in teaching grammar, and their views about the departmental courses offered in the ELT department as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation.

4.2 Pre-service teachers' beliefs about grammar

As mentioned before, the first research question in this study aimed to discover the beliefs of the participating pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. To this end, Part II of the questionnaire included two sections investigating how the participants defined grammar and also their beliefs about grammar. The first section consisted of two statements, each one defining grammar:

a. Grammar is a collection of prescriptive rules and concepts about the structure of the language.

b. Grammar is the necessary foundation of our ability to express ourselves.

While the first statement was favoring learning and teaching of grammar deductively, the second statement was describing grammar's role from the

communicative language teaching perspective and implying an inductive approach in teaching grammar. The respondents were asked to choose the statement which best reflected their opinion, and if they found none of them relevant, they would write down their own definition. Forty-eight of the respondents chose the first statement while the minority of them (13 in number) chose the second statement. In other words, the majority of the participants preferred deductive grammar learning and teaching. This may be related to their earlier language learning experiences. Despite the commonly used coursebooks which follow more communicative approach, some English teachers in public schools may have followed a more traditional teaching and focused on explicit grammar teaching. Also, the exams administered in schools may have had a wash back effect. In the ELT department, based on the researcher's own experience and observation, the importance of implicit grammar knowledge is emphasized and the inductive approach is recommended in methodology classes; yet, the responses may tend to teach grammar deductively since they haven't had any real teaching experience with which they would make a more realistic choice between deductive and inductive teaching of grammar. In other words, their earlier language learning experience may be more concrete than the current pedagogical impositions in methodology classes and thus much more effective. It may also be assumed that it is more difficult and challenging to teach grammar inductively because it may require more teaching experience. In other words, giving grammar rules directly can be the easy way.

What is interesting in the native-like participants' responses in this question is their choice. Out of 16 native-like participants, 11 of them chose definition (a) which represented deductive teaching of grammar. This result is unexpected because it was

assumed that grammar is learned/ taught inductively in an English-speaking country, i.e. an ESL context, unlike in an EFL context. Native-like English speaking respondents are assumed to have learned English grammar inductively, and thus they were expected to prefer teaching grammar in the same way when they become an English language teacher. Contrary to this assumption, they preferred to teach grammar deductively, as well. It can thus be concluded that most of the participants, whether native-like speakers or not, adopted a deductive approach to grammar teaching.

Out of 66 respondents, only five respondents chose to write their own definitions of grammar. One of the respondents claimed that grammar is not a set of rules; it is how to produce a sentence correctly and understandably, using some structures. Another respondent tried to explain what grammar is similar to the first statement and claimed that grammar is the collection of rules of the language and shows one's knowledge about that language. The other respondent simply said that grammar is needed for using the language appropriately. The last two respondents mixed the first and the second statements in their own way. One of them said that grammar is a collection of rules and structures of the language so it enables people to communicate effectively. The other one argued grammar is a group of rules that help to communicate properly. As can be seen, none of these definitions introduces a new concept to the definition of grammar. However, they all emphasize that grammar is an essential part language teaching.

The second section in Part II included sixteen statements and required the participants to choose if they agree or disagree with those statements or they remain

undecided. As mentioned in Chapter 3, these statements, which can be taken as representing the participants' beliefs about grammar, can be grouped into five categories:

- explicit grammar teaching (statements i, v, vii, and ix)

- implicit grammar teaching (statements ii, iii, vi, and xi)

- the attitudes towards grammar (either positive or negative.) (statements iv, xii, and xvi)

- how grammar should be taught in class (statements viii, xiv, and xv) and

- learners' age (statements x).

The four statements which reflect explicit teaching of grammar were related by the respondents as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Responses about the statements on explicit grammar teaching

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
i.	Grammar is learned best if it is taught explicitly (i.e., directly, by focusing on rules)	39	20	7
		(59,09%)	(30,3%)	(10,6%)
v.	Explicit/direct teaching of grammatical rules is important for the mastery of English.	43	8	15
		(65,15%)	(12,12%)	(22,72%)
vii.	The main role of the teacher in teaching grammar is to explain the new grammar rule.	30	18	18
		(45,45%)	(27,27%)	(27,27%)
ix.	If students receive explicit/direct grammar instruction, they are more likely to make fewer errors.	40	12	14
		(60,60%)	(18,18%)	(21,21%)

For the first (i) statement which reflects explicit grammar teaching, it can be said that most of the participants (39 in number) choose explicit grammar teaching. This result is in agreement with the results obtained in the earlier part of the questionnaire where the majority of the participants had expressed their preference in favor of explicit teaching.

Similarly, the statement (v) which was emphasizing the significant role of explicit teaching of grammatical rules in the mastery of English, was mostly found acceptable by the respondents (43 in numbers). However, 15 respondents remain undecided, and this figure may need special attention.

In statement (vii), which was defining the role of teacher as regards the teaching of grammar, it is shown that while the numbers of the ones who agree with this statement is high, the numbers of the others who disagree and undecided cannot be ignored. In other words, more than half of the respondents did not agree with the idea of limiting the main role of teacher to explaining the grammar rules only.

The responses gathered from the participants to statement (ix) also point out that majority of the participants (40 out of 66) believe in the impact of explicit grammar teaching on the number of errors.

The second category includes the responses given to other four statements which were on implicit grammar teaching (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Responses about the statements on implicit grammar teaching

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
ii.	Students learn English best without being taught grammar (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).	18 (27,27%)	28 (42,42%)	20 (30,30%)
iii.	Grammar is best learned naturally through communicative tasks.	43 (65,15%)	12 (18,18%)	11 (16,6%)
vi.	Grammar is best taught incidentally (i.e. there is no need to pre-plan grammar lessons).	12 (18,18%)	46 (69,69%)	8 (12,12%)
xi.	Grammar is acquired naturally; it need not be taught.	13 (19,69%)	37 (56,06%)	16 (24,24%)

The responses given to the statement (ii) (students learn English best without being taught grammar (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue) show that most of the participants disagree (28 people) or are undecided (20 people). This can be interpreted as the participants' tendency towards explicit teaching of grammar.

Statement (iii) supports the view that grammar is best learned naturally through communicative tasks. Most of the participants (43 people) agreed with this statement, implying that communicative tasks have great role in teaching grammar of English language. This result may seem to be contradicting the earlier responses of the participants, that is, the preference of deductive teaching of grammar. However, even in deductive approach, teachers are expected to create opportunities for students to practice the newly taught structures in meaningful and communicative activities.

Statement (vi) says grammar is best taught incidentally. Accordingly to the analysis results, most of the participants (46 people) do not believe that teaching grammar incidentally is best way of grammar teaching. In other words, it can be assumed that most of the participants would prefer pre-plan grammar lesson.

The statement (xi) suggests grammar is acquired naturally, and majority of the participants (37 people) do not agree with this statement, while 16 people remain undecided. This implies the view that grammar is learned/ taught in formal settings, i.e. the classroom.

Table 4.3. Responses about the statements on the attitudes towards grammar

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
iv.	Grammar should be the main component of any language teaching course.	43	11	12
		(65,15%)	(16,6%)	(18,8%)
xii.	Learning grammar is boring.	25	30	11
		(37,87%)	(45,45%)	(16,16%)
xvi.	Learning grammar is fun.	27	23	16
		(40,90%)	(34,84%)	(24,24%)

The statements (iv), (xii) and (xvi) reflect the attitudes towards grammar (either positive or negative). The responses given to the statement (iv) show that grammar is seen as an essential part of grammar teaching by most of the participants (43 people), while eleven people disagree and 12 people are undecided. Considering the participants' responses to the statement (xii) and (xvi), the number of participants

who consider grammar is boring or fun is close to each other (Table 4.3). Therefore, it can be concluded that the participants have different attitudes toward grammar.

Table 4.4. Responses about the statements on grammar instruction

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
viii.	Practice of grammar structures must always be within full communicative contexts.	49	8	9
		(74,24%)	(12,12%)	(13,63%)
xiv.	Practice of grammar structures must always be at sentence level.	31	17	18
		(46,96%)	(25,75%)	(27,27%)
xv.	Grammar structures are learned one at a time.	28	24	14
		(42,42%)	(36,36%)	(21,21%)

The next category included three statements which describe how grammar should be taught in class. According to the responses given to the statement (viii), majority of the participants (49 people) believe that the students should practice grammar structures within communicative contexts. However, the answers related to the statement (xiv) reveal a kind of confusion in the respondents. Although quite a high number of respondents (31 people) chose to agree with the statement saying that practice of grammar structures must always be at sentence level, a total of 35 respondents remained either in disagreement or undecided. This result, if looked at from the positive perspective, may still be in harmony with the previous statement (viii). In other words, the respondents' tendency for practicing grammar in communicative contexts is still valid. The next statement (xv) is also related to grammar instruction. The distribution of the responses, however, reveals a kind of

undecidedness about this issue (as regards the percentages of agreement and disagreement, 42,42% and 36,36%, respectively.

Table 4.5. Responses about the statements on learners' age

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
x.	Adult learners benefit more from the explicit grammar instruction than young learners do.	19	21	26
		(28,78%)	(31,81%)	(39,39%)

Finally, the responses given to the statement (x) indicated the respondents' views about the relationship between grammar instruction and learners' age. As can be seen in Table 4.5, there is not a clear-cut decision on this matter. The numbers of those who agree and disagree with this issue are almost equal, 19 and 21 respectively. On the other hand, the percentage of undecided respondents is higher (39,39%) than that of those who agree (28,78%) or disagree (31,81%). This result is not surprising when one considers the unresolved debate in the ELT literature on the role of age in learning a second language.

The findings obtained from the interviews support the questionnaire results, too. The first question of the interview asks the current beliefs of the participants about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English. Out of 10 interviewees, 8 of them emphasize the importance of grammar. While one interviewee says that grammar is not very important in language learning and teaching, another one expressed his beliefs about grammar's being complementary to other areas of language. During the interview, the researcher encouraged the interviewees to share their experiences and anecdotes of learning English grammar at school. The purpose was checking whether

they have positive or negative feelings about learning grammar. Out of 10 interviewees, 5 of them expressed positive feelings and the rest (5 in number) negative feelings about teaching and learning grammar. An interviewee who has positive feelings about learning and teaching grammar said:

> While I was learning English, we were given lot of examples which improved my grammatical knowledge. The home works were given and controlled by the teacher so that we could see our errors and learn the correct usage of the grammatical rules. First grammar rules were presented. Then we were expected to give an example related to that specific rule. Some words and grammar structures do not have equivalents in Turkish language such as Present Perfect Tense. At that point I was disappointed, but in general I had positive feelings about teaching and learning grammar.

Another student who has negative feelings about learning and teaching grammar said:

> Actually our English courses were mainly based on teaching grammar, so I should say that learning structures and forms was not interesting at all. We could have practiced the other skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing so I had negative feelings in general.

4.3 Pre-service teachers' preferences in teaching grammar

In Part III of the questionnaire, the participants' preferences in teaching grammar are investigated. This part includes two questions. The first question asks how the participants prefer to teach grammar in their classes when they start teaching. There are four options. The first option (a) is related to first giving the rule and then giving some examples to the students, which refers to deductive teaching. Eighteen participants indicated their preference for this option.

The second option (b) is related to first giving examples, and then asking students to discover the grammar rule from the given examples, which refers to inductive teaching. Nineteen participants prefer to give examples first, and then ask students to discover the grammar rule from the given examples.

The third option (c) includes both first and second option (a and b). Majority of the participants (28 in number) prefer this option. This finding implies that participants are rather undecided about the explicit and implicit teaching of grammar. In fact, the message which can be concluded from this finding is that how to teach grammar, in participants' eyes, depends on some other factors, and therefore it is difficult to make a firm choice. The best choice, then, can be combining deductive and inductive approaches to teaching grammar. This rationale sounds logical and correct.

The fourth option (d) includes neither first option (a) nor second option (b) and asks the participants to suggest another way of grammar teaching which they find more appropriate. However, none of the participants chose this option and thus no suggestions were made. The reason for this could be their lack of any suggestions.

To discover the participants' preferences in teaching grammar, the interview also asked how the participants prefer to teach English grammar as a prospective teacher. In other words, they were expected to state their personal approach (deductive or inductive). Out of ten respondents, majority of them (7 in number) prefer to teach grammar inductively, whereas the rest of the participants (3 in number) prefer deductive teaching of grammar. One of the participants who preferred to use inductive approach said:

> I prefer to use inductive approach, but I think that sometimes it may not work in lower levels. For example, in my practice teaching sessions, I expected my students – elementary level- to discover the rules and structures by themselves; however I saw that explaining the rules step by step was more effective. But I always gave them a chance to think about the structure at the beginning, generally in the warm-up stage, then I moved on the rules in the presentation stage. On the other hand, in my opinion the inductive approach works well in upper levels to motivate and engage learners for the duration of the lesson.

On the other hand, another student who preferred to use deductive approach stated:

> I will use deductive way of grammar teaching. Grammar rules and examples should be presented simultaneously. The students who do not have grammatical competence may have problems when they are taught inductively.

In the second question of Part III, the respondents were supposed to write how they imagine themselves as a prospective teacher of English with respect to grammar instruction. The participants were also expected to explain the place of grammar in their future teaching of English language. Out of 66 participants, 54 participants wrote and described the place of grammar when they started their profession in real life. When their writings were analyzed through content analysis, the following three attitudes emerged:

a. Grammar teaching is extremely important in language teaching.

b. Grammar teaching is not necessary in language teaching.

c. Grammar teaching should take place when there is a need.

a. Grammar teaching is extremely important in language teaching

According to the results, majority of the participants (38 in number) see grammar as an essential part of language, and thus the role of grammar in language teaching is important for them. They believe it is the basic element of language teaching so it will be in the first place and they will emphasize it largely in their classes by using different skills. Participants also believe that grammar is significantly important for learning English effectively and that students will have serious difficulties in language learning without grammar knowledge. Some participants also said that grammar is the first step in teaching foreign language because language is comprised

of rules. Five participants emphasized that grammar should be taught implicitly and with communicative tasks. Some of them believe grammar rules should be explained in examples and then the rules should be given, while other participants prefer to give rules first but expect some answers from our students. The other participants emphasized the fact that firstly language teachers themselves should know (or have an awareness about) the rules in order to teach them effectively. They also emphasized the role of grammar should be in a more communicative context. According to some participants, once you manage to learn the rules, you can apply them in your speech and writing. One participant wrote "While talking, even you don't remember what the specific rule is, you know that your structure is right".

b. Grammar teaching is not necessary in language teaching

The results of data analysis reveals that out of 54 participants six of them believe that teaching grammar is not the most important aspect of language teaching. Therefore, they advocate it should take second place in language teaching. They also explain that the reason why they do not prefer to teach grammar is related to the fact that grammar is very difficult as a lesson. Rather than teaching grammar, they prefer to teach the other language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking.

c. Grammar teaching should take place only when there is a need

The rest of the participants (10 in number) believe that although grammar is necessary, it should not receive the priority among other aspects of language such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. They prefer to teach grammar by using communicative tasks. They think grammar would be an important area but the focus should be more on learning how to produce sentences rather than on learning simply

rules. Another reason why they placed grammar teaching on the second rank is the fact that grammar teaching should be closely linked to the reasons why students learn English (whether they would sit in grammar-oriented exams or they would need English for communicative purposes).

The last section in the questionnaire (Part IV) included four questions. The first question asked if the participants feel ready to teach grammar in real classrooms by giving their justifications for their answer. According to the results, the number of the participants who feel ready to teach grammar is equal to that of those who feel they are not ready (33 people in each group). Those who said they are ready point out that they are confident about their grammar knowledge. They know how to teach and what to teach. The participants who are not ready believe that there are still a lot of things to learn about grammar. They do not feel ready to teach grammar in real classrooms because English is not their own native language. Some of them say they still have to learn some teaching techniques related to grammar.

4.4 Pre-service teachers' views about the departmental courses

The third research question was inquiring the participating pre-service teachers' views about the departmental courses as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation. For this purpose, the participants were firstly asked how confident they feel about teaching English grammar. They were requested to indicate their level of confidence on a scale of 5, 5 representing being extremely confident. For practicality purposes, the responses of 1st and 2nd year students were grouped and analyzed under the label of 'junior' students. Likewise, 3rd and 4th year students were labeled as 'senior' students and their responses were analyzed together.

Table 4.6. Junior students' (1st and 2nd year) responses about their level of confidence (n=45)

	5	4	3	2	1	Average
I feel confident about my own knowledge of grammar.	11	13	17	1	3	3.6
	(24,4%)	(28,8%)	(37,7%)	(2,2%)	(6,6%)	
I feel confident about my knowledge of teaching techniques of grammar.	9	9	13	10	4	3.2
	(20%)	(20%)	(28,8%)	(22,2%)	(8,8%)	
I feel confident about my knowledge of when and how much to teach grammar.	9	15	12	7	2	3.4
	(20%)	(33,3%)	(26,6%)	(15,5%)	(4,4%)	
I feel confident about my awareness of teaching grammar.	12	11	15	6	1	4
	(26,6%)	(24,4%)	(33,3%)	(13,3%)	(2,2%)	

Table 4.7. Senior students' (3rd and 4th year) responses about their level of confidence (n=21)

	5	4	3	2	1	Average
I feel confident about my own knowledge of grammar.	3	8	9	-	1	3.57
	(14,3%)	(38%)	(42,8%)	-	(4,8%)	
I feel confident about my knowledge of teaching techniques of grammar.	5	9	6	1	-	3.85
	(23,8%)	(42,9%)	(28,5%)	(4,8%)	-	
I feel confident about my knowledge of when and how much to teach grammar.	3	11	5	2	-	3.71
	(14,3%)	(52,4%)	(23,8%)	(9,5%)	-	
I feel confident about my awareness of teaching grammar.	8	6	5	1	1	3.90
	(38%)	(28,5%)	(23,8%)	(4,8%)	(4,8%)	

The responses of the forty-five junior students to the first statement show that majority of the participants (53,2%) feel very confident and confident about their

own knowledge of grammar. Actually, this appears to be an unexpected result because the majority of the participants (38 in number) have stated that they studied in English Preparatory School while the rest (28 in number) did not. It means that most of the participants did not have sufficient language proficiency before starting their studies in the ELT department. Therefore, it can be claimed that students believe they have developed their knowledge of grammar after starting to study in the ELT department. Similarly, 52,3% of the senior students expressed a high level of confidence about their own knowledge of grammar. In fact, to feel confident about their own knowledge of grammar upon their graduation is an expected result for senior students.

According to the responses given to the second statement, majority of the junior students (40%) feel very confident and confident about their knowledge of teaching techniques of grammar similar to senior students (66,7%). Considering the fact that the senior students have already taken some methodology courses, the high percentage (66,7%) about their confidence level sounds is quite normal. However, more than half of the junior students who have not completed these courses yet, also feel very confident and confident about their knowledge of teaching techniques of grammar, and this result is interesting to note.

In the third statement, junior students with a percentage of (53,3%) and senior students with a percentage of (66,7%) state that they feel very confident and confident about their knowledge of when and how much to teach grammar. The senior students have had micro-teachings and some teaching experiences although they are limited. Therefore, they may feel confident about their knowledge of when

and how much to teach grammar. On the other hand, the reason for the junior students' (especially the second year students') confidence level regarding when and how much to teach grammar may also be related to ELTE 205 Approaches in ELT I and ELTE 206 Approaches in ELT II courses that they have taken.

The responses gathered from the participants for the fourth statement show that most of the junior (51%) and senior students (66,5%) feel very confident and confident about their awareness of teaching grammar. Approaching to their graduation period, senior students may feel that they have developed an awareness of teaching grammar. The junior students' confidence about their awareness of teaching grammar can be attributed to the view that the courses they have taken so far may have had an important impact on their awareness of teaching grammar.

The third question in Part IV aimed to elicit what the participants think about the courses offered in the ELT department as regards their contribution to their content knowledge (i.e. their grammar knowledge in oral and written use), and pedagogical content knowledge (i.e. how to teach grammar).

Before reporting the results, it should be noted that not all students had taken all the courses that have been inquired about. Obviously the 1st year courses, namely ELTE 101 and ELTE 102 (Contextual Grammar I and II, respectively), had been taken by all participants (66 in number). The 3rd year courses ELTE 305 and ELTE 306 (Teaching Language Skills I and II, respectively), on the other hand, had been taken by 26 and 25 participants, respectively. Finally, only 16 participants had taken ELTE

411 School Experience and only 15 participants had taken ELTE 406 Teaching Experience by the time of data collection.

The table below indicates the participants' responses as regards the contribution of various departmental courses to their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge about grammar and its teaching on a scale of 3, 3 being 'very useful', 2 'useful', and 1 'not very useful'.

Table 4.8 Contribution of the courses to the participants' content and pedagogical knowledge

Courses	Its Contribution to Your **Content Knowledge**			Its Contribution to Your **Pedagogical Knowledge**			Have your beliefs changed after taking this course?
	3	**2**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**1**	
ELTE 101 Contextual Grammar I	36	27	3	27	31	8	30 Yes 16 No 20 I'm not sure
ELTE 102 Contextual Grammar II	37	27	2	27	31	8	31 Yes 17 No 18 I'm not sure
ELTE 305 Teaching Language Skills I	18	6	2	19	7	-	15 Yes 6 No 5 I'm not sure
ELTE 306 Teaching Language Skills II	18	5	2	18	7	-	15 Yes 6 No 4 I'm not sure
ELTE 411 School Experience	13	1	2	14	1	1	8 Yes 6 No 2 I'm not sure
ELTE 406 Teaching Practice (if relevant)	13	2	-	13	2	-	8 Yes 5 No 2 I'm not sure

Course policy sheets of ELTE 101, 102, 305, 306, 411 and 406 retrieved from the ELT Department reveal the aims and the learning outcomes of the courses. ELTE 101 Contextual Grammar I and ELTE 102 Contextual Grammar II courses aim to present and explain the basic grammatical structures of English language required for fluency and accuracy in a meaningful context. By the end of the course, students are expected to refresh their knowledge of using such important grammar points as tenses, articles and modals, to use the considered grammar points in various contexts, and to get acquainted with preliminary considerations of how grammar can be taught to non-native speakers of English. Moreover, classroom procedures emphasize both language development and language awareness (i.e., conscious knowledge of the grammar points and how to teach them) in ELTE 102 Contextual Grammar II course.

The responses gathered from the participants showed that most of the participants found the contribution of ELTE 101 Contextual Grammar I (36 in number) and ELTE 102 Contextual Grammar II courses (37 in number) to their content knowledge very useful. In the same vein, majority of the participants (31 in number) believed that the contribution of ELTE 101 and ELTE 102 courses to their pedagogical content knowledge was quite high. However, responses of the participants revealed that only 30 participants' beliefs changed after taking those courses. To put it in different words, 16 participants kept their beliefs about grammar and its teaching and 20 participants were not sure about it, which means that while the courses had impact on half of the participants, the other half was not influenced. This finding should be analyzed very carefully by the course instructors at the stage of course evaluation.

The main aim of ELTE 305 Teaching Language Skills I course is to study and apply techniques used in the stages of teaching vocabulary, listening, and pronunciation. By the end of the course, students are provided with a theoretical framework of how language content areas and language skills can be taught, and given a chance to use the theoretical framework in practice in class. The aim of ELTE 306 Teaching Language Skills II course, on the other hand, is to develop students' understanding of how to teach reading, writing, and grammar. By the end of the course, students are supposed to develop an understanding of how to teach reading, writing and grammar lessons, to write learning outcomes for a teaching point related to reading, writing and grammar lessons, to prepare comprehensive lesson plans using relevant teaching techniques and assessment procedures regarding all related variables, to perform their lesson plans successfully in their micro-teaching sessions, and to develop an ability to critically observe and evaluate someone else's teaching and to give constructive feedback

The responses about the contribution of ELTE 305 Teaching Language Skills I and ELTE 306 Teaching Language Skills II to the participants' content knowledge pointed out a favorable perception (18 participants). Although grammar teaching was only one component of language teaching practice activities in ELTE 305 and ELTE 306 and it was practiced in only for a few weeks during one semester, most of the participants still had positive attitudes towards grammar in those courses. For the contribution of ELTE 305 Teaching Language Skills I and ELTE 306 Teaching Language Skills II to the participants' pedagogical knowledge, the respondents mostly said those courses were very useful (17 and 18 participants, respectively). When the participants were asked if their beliefs changed after taking those courses,

most of them (15 in number) claimed their beliefs changed. Although they did not express in terms of which aspect their beliefs changed, it can be assumed that those methodology courses are more effective on changing beliefs because the participants could have opportunity to begin to practice in their own classes.

The main aim of ELTE 411 School Experience course is to develop students' (trainees') awareness as regards English language teaching and learning in an actual school setting by getting them to observe teachers and learners in English classes, the way the teachers organize their lessons, how they use different teaching methods and techniques, what kinds of activities and tasks they utilize, how they manage the class, how they deal with misbehaviour and discipline problems, and the ways they finish the lessons and evaluate their students' performance. By the end of the course, students are expected to develop an understanding of a school system, to develop an understanding of teaching and learning English in actual classes, to analyze sample English lessons, to observe a number of real English classes in terms of various aspects, to write reports evaluating and reflecting on their observations in real classes and to prepare a portfolio including all the work related to their school experience.

ELTE 406 Teaching Practice course aims to prepare prospective teachers for teaching in a real classroom environment. By the end of the course, students are supposed to develop an understanding of basics of lesson planning, to plan and implement microteaching sessions in ELTE 406 class, to reflect on teacher performance, classroom management, error correction, seating arrangement, etc. v after observing a series of lessons at prearranged schools, to plan and teach a series of lessons in a real classroom environment, to write reflection reports with regard to

their strengths and weaknesses (i.e. points to improve) after each formal teaching session and to write a final report evaluating their overall practice teaching experience.

For ELTE 411 School Experience and ELTE 406 Teaching Practice courses, results showed that majority of the respondents believed those courses had very useful effects on their content knowledge. Most of the participants also claimed those courses contributed to their pedagogical knowledge widely. It may be related to the fact that for the first time they could have opportunity to practice in a real classroom so they may have thought those courses had contribution on their pedagogical knowledge. As regards the responses gathered from the respondents about their beliefs, it can be said the number of the participants who claimed their beliefs changed with the ones who claimed their beliefs did not change or felt undecided was close to each other.

The interview also focused on the impact of departmental courses (especially the methodology courses) on participating pre-service teachers' readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation. Out of ten interviewees, three of them were junior students so they had not taken methodology courses yet. Still, these junior students asserted that even the courses they had taken up to then helped them to improve their awareness about grammar and its teaching. Other respondents (seven senior participants) also stated that methodology courses improved both their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, and thus prepared them for teaching grammar when they start teaching. For example, one of the students said:

> My four year education in ELT department has taught me a lot. My knowledge and awareness has risen in a great magnitude with the help of my

experienced instructors. Of course I have still some points that need to be improved, but I think that we achieved a lot in these past four years by being furnished well with content and pedagogic knowledge. Also, the general and specific knowledge, methods, techniques and skills that I learned and gained have in terms of language competence, classroom management, preparation, teaching strategies, and being able to evaluate myself as a teacher.

Another question of the interview asked the respondents to make suggestions to improve these courses. Out of ten participants, five students did not offer any suggestions. According to the responses of the rest of the students, they demanded more practice opportunities in teaching English in general and specifically in teaching English grammar. One of the participants said that "Micro teachings should start earlier so that we gain more practice. Micro teachings should start in the second year and, in the third year we should go and observe real classes. Also in the fourth year, teaching practice is not enough. There should be more time for it". Another participant put forward the idea that in the first year language improvement courses in general do not seem to make the expected impact on their language competencies.

To conclude, the data obtained from the participating pre-service teachers in the ELT department yielded some important information about their beliefs and preferences as regards English grammar leaning and teaching. In addition, the data included some useful insights about the contribution of some departmental courses to the pre-service teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study regarding the participants' beliefs about grammar, their preference in teaching grammar, and their views about the departmental courses offered in the ELT department as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Presentation

This chapter provides the summary of the research conducted. Following the presentation of the research, some implications are given. Finally, some suggestions are provided for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the beliefs of pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), their preferences in teaching grammar, and their views about the departmental courses as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation.

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What are the beliefs of the participating pre-service teachers about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English as a foreign language?

2. What are the preferences of pre-service teachers in teaching grammar?

3. How do the participating pre-service teachers evaluate the courses offered in the ELT Department as regards the contribution of these courses to their readiness in teaching grammar upon graduation?

The major findings of the study were as follows. Considering the responses of the participants to the questionnaire and interview, a great majority of the participants consider that grammar has an essential role in learning and teaching English as a foreign language and they believe that they will emphasize grammar largely in their future teaching. This finding is in parallel with what Borg (1998) puts forward about the relationship between beliefs and practice. In Borg's point of view, L2 teachers' perceptions of grammar teaching need to be investigated because language teachers' personal pedagogical systems influence how they prefer to teach grammar.

The second finding (related to the second research question) reveals that participating pre-service teachers would probably prefer to teach grammar deductively in their own classes whereas quite a high number of the participants emphasize the importance of inductive teaching of grammar. Therefore, it may be assumed that the participants are not decided about the deductive and inductive teaching of grammar because as they point out, they believe their preferences would depend on different factors such as age of the learners and their needs. In fact, knowing when to follow deductive or inductive instruction techniques in dealing with English grammar is a very important component of pedagogical content knowledge of a teacher, and therefore, the participants' undecidedness about these two approaches can be interpreted as a positive aspect.

The findings of the study also revealed that some of the courses offered in the ELT department (ELTE 101, 102, 305, 306, 411 and 406) are generally found to be contributing to the participating pre-service teachers' knowledge base in their teaching grammar. The participants also made some suggestions about these courses.

They believe there should be more emphasis on teaching practice so that they could have opportunities to apply what they have been taught to a real classroom context.

5.3 Implications

The findings of this study offer some implications both for pre-service teachers and the instructors teaching at pre-service teacher education programs. Examination of teacher beliefs about their roles in teaching grammar may help the pre-service teachers reflect on their roles. This will eventually raise their awareness about their personal identities.

Secondly, instructors teaching at pre-service teacher education programs need to conduct similar surveys in order to obtain feedback from the participants who attend the program so that they will be informed about the effectiveness of the courses they offer. In other words, the findings obtained in this study and other similar studies will help the course instructors evaluate to what extent their courses contribute to the participants' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. This feedback, in return, will be very beneficial in designing and redesigning their courses.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This present study can serve as a basis to launch further investigation in the field. For example, as a possible follow up, this study can be extended to investigate whether and to what extent pre-service teachers' beliefs about grammar and its teaching are related to their actual performance in micro teachings and teaching practice sessions.

Future research may also explore the participants' beliefs about grammar in their first year of teaching to compare the pre-service and in-service teachers' perceptions of grammar and its teaching.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form

April 5, 2013

Dear ELT Student,

As a partial fulfillment of my M.A. study in English Language Teaching department at Eastern Mediterranean University, I am investigating **the perceptions of prospective teachers as regards grammar instruction.** For this purpose, I will administer a survey. If you agree to participate in this research, please fill in the consent form below and complete the survey that follows. All the information you provide will be kept completely confidential and used only for the purposes of my study.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation

M. Merve DEMİREL
M.A. Student
Department of English Language Teaching
Faculty of Education
Eastern Mediterranean University
Famagusta, TRNC
E-mail: merve--05@hotmail.com

Consent Form

I understand what the research study is about and accept to participate in the study by signing below.

Name & Surname: ………………………..…..

Student Number: ……………………………

Year: 1st year (…)   2nd year (…)   3rd year (…)   4th year (…)

Signature: ……………………………

Date: …..…/………/……………

Appendix B: Questionnaire

SURVEY

Part I: Background Information

Please read each statement carefully. Tick (✓) the answer which is most appropriate to you.

1. Gender

    ---------   a. Male   ---------   b. Female

2. How long have you been learning English?

    ---------   a.   Since primary school

    ---------   b.   Since secondary school

    ---------   c.   Since high school

3. What kind of school did you mostly attend throughout your previous school years?

(i.e., primary, secondary and high school).

    ---------   a. Public school   ---------   b. Private school

4. Did you study in English Preparatory School at EMU?

    ---------   a. Yes   ---------   b. No

5. Have you ever been in an English speaking country?

    ---------   a. Yes   ---------   b. No

6. If your answer is yes, please specify **where** and for **how long.**

…………………………………………………………………………….

Part II: Your Beliefs about Grammar

1. In your opinion, which of the statements below describes best what **grammar** is? Please tick (√) the appropriate one. You can also give your own understanding (i.e. definition) of grammar.

.... a) Grammar is a collection of prescriptive rules and concepts about the structure of the language.

.... b) Grammar is the necessary foundation of our ability to express ourselves.

.... c) (Your own definition)..

....

2. Do you agree with the following statements? Tick (√) the appropriate option.

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
i.	Grammar is learned best if it is taught explicitly (i.e., directly, by focusing on rules)			
ii.	Students learn English best without being taught grammar (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).			
iii.	Grammar is best learned naturally through communicative tasks.			
iv.	Grammar should be the main component of any language teaching course.			
v.	Explicit/direct teaching of grammatical rules is important for the mastery of English.			
vi.	Grammar is best taught incidentally (i.e. there is no need to pre-plan grammar lessons).			
vii.	The main role of the teacher in teaching grammar is to explain the new grammar rule.			
viii.	Practice of grammar structures must always be within full communicative contexts.			
ix.	If students receive explicit/direct grammar instruction, they are more likely to make fewer errors.			
x.	Adult learners benefit more from the explicit grammar instruction than young learners do.			

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
xi.	Grammar is acquired naturally; it need not be taught.			
xii.	Learning grammar is boring.			
xiii.	Students have different learning styles. Not all students can learn grammar.			
xiv.	Practice of grammar structures must always be at sentence level.			
xv.	Grammar structures are learned one at a time.			
xvi.	Learning grammar is fun.			

Part III. Your Preference in Teaching Grammar

Please tick (√) the appropriate one.

1. How would you prefer to teach grammar in your class when you start teaching?

  --------- a. First I would give the rule and then provide some examples to the students.

  --------- b. First I would give examples, and then ask students to discover the grammar rule from the given examples.

  --------- c. Both (a) and (b).

  --------- d. Neither (a) or (b). I will use another way which is………………………………
     …………………………………………………………………………………….

2. How do you imagine yourself as a prospective teacher of English with respect to grammar instruction? In other words, what will be the place of grammar in your teaching?

     …………………………………………………………………………………………
     …………………………………………………………………………………………
     …………………………………………………………………………………………

Part IV. Your Views about the Departmental Courses

Please tick (√) either **(a)** or **(b)** below**,** and justify your choice.

1. Do you feel ready to teach grammar in real classrooms?

   ------------a. Yes, because ……………………………………………………………………

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

   ------------b. No, because ………………………………………………………………………...

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

2. How confident do you feel about teaching English grammar? Please tick (√) the box which best describes your confidence level.

   (5) Extremely confident
   (4) Very confident
   (3) Moderate
   (2) Not very confident
   (1) Not at all confident

	Extremely confident 5	4	3	2	Not at all confident 1
I feel confident about my own knowledge of grammar.					
I feel confident about my knowledge of teaching techniques of grammar.					
I feel confident about my knowledge of when and how much to teach grammar.					
I feel confident about my awareness of teaching grammar.					

3. What do you think about the following courses offered in the ELT department as regards their contribution to your **content knowledge** (i.e. your grammar knowledge in oral and written use), and **pedagogical knowledge** (i.e. how to teach grammar)?

Please **circle** the relevant number (**3, 2, 1**) to reflect your opinion about the contribution of these courses to your knowledge.

(3) Very helpful
(2) Helpful
(1) Not helpful at all

Courses	Its Contribution to Your **Content Knowledge**			Its Contribution to Your **Pedagogical Knowledge**			Have your beliefs changed after taking this course?
	3	**2**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**1**	
ELTE 101 Contextual Grammar I							Yes No I'm not sure
ELTE 102 Contextual Grammar II							Yes No I'm not sure
ELTE 305 Teaching Language Skills I							Yes No I'm not sure
ELTE 306 Teaching Language Skills II							Yes No I'm not sure
ELTE 411 School Experience							Yes No I'm not sure
ELTE 406 Teaching Practice (if relevant)							Yes No I'm not sure

4. What are your suggestions to improve those courses?

………

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Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Appendix C: Interview

1. What are your current beliefs about the role of grammar in learning and teaching English?

2. What do you recall about your experiences of learning English grammar at school? Do you have positive or negative feelings in general? Please share any anecdotes you have.

3. Now as a prospective teacher of English, how do you prefer to teach English grammar in English lessons in Turkish schools? What is your personal approach (deductive or inductive)? Why?

4. What do you think about the methodology courses you have taken so far? Do you think they influenced your thinking?

5. What are your suggestions to improve these courses?