Teaching L2 grammar:

A study of teachers' beliefs on frequency,

methods and approaches of teaching English

grammar in Swedish schools.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to study English teachers' approaches, methods and beliefs that link to teaching grammar to students in Sweden. The research has revolved around how frequently grammar is taught, what approaches are used and what methods are favored by English teachers in Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools. The respondents were 51 teachers recruited through a convenient sampling in the Facebook group "Nätverk för lärare i engelska". The study used a mixed method with a survey as the data collection instrument. The results show that English teachers in secondary schools and upper secondary schools in Sweden occasionally use grammar teaching. On a four-grade scale ranging from *Very Occasionally* to *Very Often* the mean response was 2.36. In terms of preferred approach, the results indicated that a planned approach was preferred by a small margin. These results are in contradiction to previous research on English grammar teaching in Sweden which shows that teachers prefer an incidental approach to grammar teaching. The present study indicates that teachers favored interactive methods of grammar teaching. The two most favored methods were the *Task-Based method* where students complete tasks in pairs or groups, and the *Communicative Language Teaching* where students learn through discussions. Analyzing teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching, the present study focused on the open-ended questions in the survey. The responses indicated that context to grammar teaching is extremely vital according to the teachers who responded to the survey. As previously mentioned, the present study contradicts previous studies in terms of preferred approach to grammar teaching. However, the present study coincides with previous research in terms of preferred methods both in international research but also in Sweden specifically, which is that teachers prefer interactive methods of grammar teaching that involve inductive learning.

Keywords Grammar teaching approaches, Grammar teaching methods, English language teaching, English teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching, Second language teaching and learning

Contents

1. Introduction

Early on when learning a language, students are introduced to grammar which can be either incidental, planned or both. Grammar teaching has a wide variety of approaches and methods, where common approaches involve the question of whether grammar teaching is explicitly planned by the teacher or incidentally done when given the opportunity. Instructing grammar learning has been debated for decades where the main discussion revolves around using a planned approach or an incidental approach. Furthermore, approaches can also be divided into deductive and inductive approaches, where the former entails that students are given abstract grammar rules with examples to work on and use, while the later entails that students are meant to discover the grammatical knowledge on their own while working with examples like phrases or texts. Knowing what approach and method to use or how to combine multiple ways of teaching can be a difficult task without extensive experience. The motivation for this research project is to gain a better understanding of how teachers in Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools prefer to teach grammar of English as a second language.

Traditionally grammar teaching is built on translating passages or literary works and deductively learning different grammatical rules and then applying them, either to answering questions or doing an exercise (Larsen-Freeman & Andersson, 2011). Comparing this to a more naturalistic approach which will be discussed later is for example, *the Direct Method* where the students learn grammar through discussions and visuals directly in the target language (Larsen-Freeman & Andersson, 2011). More recently, teachers focus more on communication and interaction by understanding the value of adding real scenarios to language acquisition and teaching grammar when the opportunity arises (Ciftci & Özcan, 2020). Considering the vastly different approaches that can be used in the same class depending on teachers' preferences, investigating approaches and methods of grammar instructions by English teachers in Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools is very interesting. The present study research English' teachers preferred approaches, methods, and their beliefs that link to grammar teaching. The research questions for the present study are:

1. How common and how often is grammar taught by Swedish secondary and upper secondary according to English teachers?

2. What are the teachers' approaches to teaching grammar?

3. What are the methods that teachers use when teaching grammar?

4. What are the teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching?

2. Literature review

This section aims to review theoretical considerations and previous studies on approaches to, and methods for grammar teaching for designing this study and discussing the findings.

2.1 Different approaches to teaching grammar

Second language teaching has been debated throughout history with various approaches and methods with different advantages and disadvantages.

Starting off, Rod Ellis (1990) discusses the contrast between the broad terms related to classroom learning and naturalistic learning of a second language. Learning a second language could be done in classroom or in a natural way, or through a combination both. Approaching language acquisition as naturalistic or classroom learning can also be related to grammar teaching and whether the approach can be seen as planned or incidental. An incidental approach, according to Ellis (2006), refers to grammatical issues or struggles occurring in activities that usually rely on communication. The teacher is then given the opportunity to help the students, depending on what problems arise throughout the exercise. This resembles a more naturalistic way of learning grammar since the grammar is mainly formed through taking in input and then applying it. On the other hand, traditional classroom learning resembles more planned exercises where specific grammar is taught and practiced. Furthermore, previous studies that focus on different approaches to acquiring a second language, which can be related to planned or incidental grammar teaching, such as form-focused instructions and meaning-focused activities. Form-focus instruction, as the name implies, is teaching grammar focusing on specific linguistic features or codes. The main goal of form-focused instruction is to help students learn specific uses of the grammar form that is being practiced. Which in turn will aid them in future situations where they need it (Ellis, 1990; Schurz & Coumel, 2020). However, how grammar is taught through form-focused instruction can also differ depending on the teacher and

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their preferred methods. An example of this is comparing *The Audiolingual Method* where students inductively gain grammatical knowledge through listening. Contrasting this with *Cognitive Code Learning* where students build their knowledge deductively (Ellis, 1990).

Deductive versus inductive grammar teaching has also been widely discussed in terms of application and effectiveness. Previous studies describe the different approaches as inductive as practicing something specific and throughout the exercise becoming more general (Nur, 2020; Koşar, 2021; Schurz & Coumel, 2020). For example, this could entail having a discussion or reading a passage and thereafter analyzing what gave the students problems and then practicing specifically on that grammatical structure. In contrast, deductive teaching is the opposite where the students practice general knowledge and then become more specific throughout the exercise (Nur, 2020; Koşar, 2021; Schurz & Coumel, 2020). This could be, according to Serliah Nur (2020), practicing a specific grammatical structure and then using it in some fashion, for example, in writing or in a discussion. These deductive and inductive approaches have also been described as traditional and modern. When discussing what approach should be favored, it is important to see that all different approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages, as Nur (2020) emphasizes. Studies show that teachers have moved towards more modern grammar teaching with more emphasize on communication (Sato & Oyanedel, 2019)

Some advantages and disadvantages of deductive and inductive teaching which Nur (2020) discusses are as follows. Deductive grammar teaching, while it gives little context to the target grammar rules and thus could limit the learner's ability to retain what is conveyed, is less time consuming than inductive grammar teaching. Inductive grammar teaching, on the other hand, gives context to what is later going to be practiced and allows the student to have an understanding of what is going to be taught. Kosar's (2021) research alludes to this as well and links deductive grammar teaching to be more successful in the short term while inductive teaching required more time but facilitated higher levels of permanent knowledge since the students to a larger degree are a part of the learning process. Furthermore, using an inductive approach can invite more student interaction and influence the lesson while a deductive approach is more teacher centered. In terms of a Swedish context studies show that teachers tend to lean towards an inductive teaching approach when teaching grammar, which aligns with Swedish

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curriculum. Grammar teaching also tends to only occur when needed and then preferably discussing the grammatical issue and involve the student in the process (Schurz & Coumel, 2020).

In summary, teachers preferred approach to grammar teaching has changed over time and moved toward a more modern approach in later years. This change entails that, teachers aim to use more incidental teaching that focus more on inductive learning rather that deductive learning to favor longer retention of knowledge. It can however be tempting to use deductive grammar teaching to prepare students for tests since it tends to be more effective in the short term (Kosar, 2021). As mentioned, previous research indicates that teachers in Sweden tend to favor an incidental approach to grammar teaching and tend to lean on more inductive ways of teaching grammar (Schurz & Coumel, 2020).

2.2 Different methods to teaching grammar

There are multiple different methods for instructing second language learning. The methods outlined in this study are not specifically methods of teaching grammar but second language learning as a whole. However, grammar teaching is a part of language teaching so in this case they will be considered methods of teaching grammar.
This study used seven of Larsen-Freeman & Andersson's (2011) distinctions as a baseline when studying teachers who teach English in Swedish secondary and upper secondary schools. Larsen-Freeman & Andersson's (2011) distinctions were also related to the concepts introduced previously. These concepts include, planned and incidental teaching (Ellis, 2006), deductive and inductive teaching (Nur, 2020; Koşar, 2021; Schurz & Coumel, 2020), focus on form and focus on forms (Ellis, 1990; Schurz & Coumel, 2020).

First, *Grammar-Translation Method,* which to no one's surprise, focuses on the students translating short passages to their native language. The students usually read an excerpt out loud together and work on specific vocabulary and grammar that posed a problem for the students. The students are also given the opportunity to ask some questions about the passage before moving on to comprehension questions that the teacher hands out. After working with the text, the students are given a specific grammar or vocabulary task. Furthermore, this method can also be used when teaching new grammatical items that the students have not encountered before.

Second, in *the Direct Method,* clearly contrasting with the *Grammar-Translation Method*, students are not allowed to translate, and the goal is to teach the intended learning solely in the target language. This method also requires reading skills but instead of translating the passage, the students read and understand the text through visual aids shown by the teacher. Thereafter the students follow up with questions relating to the text and the teacher helps the students understand through discussions and visual representations. The students and teacher then take turns asking questions and this discussion allows for multiple opportunities to teach grammar when problems or struggles arise, as incidental learning is a big part of *the Direct Method*.

Third, *the Audio-Lingual Method* focuses on correct grammar forms of spoken language. Unlike the *Direct Method* where the students themselves produce the grammatical structures from their own knowledge, *the Audio-Lingual Method* focuses on drilling specific grammatical structures through listening and repeating exercises. The students incrementally learn specific sentences and phrases word by word until they can use them easily without big effort. The students will then throughout the lesson learn a specific dialog that they will re-enact together to the best of their ability and then adapt it. This method, like *The Grammar Translation* method, focuses on planned grammatical instructions and is based on the students' learning through habit.

Fourth, while all methods reviewed so far have taken little to no consideration of the student as an individual, the *Community Language Learning* method does take the student's personal life into consideration. The teacher using the method tries to understand the students' struggles and aid the students to be able to have good discussions and, in the end, learn from the lesson. A typical lesson using the *Community Language Learning* method could be the students having a group discussion with the help of the teacher and recording it and creating a transcript. The students will create segments with the help of the teacher who can translate from their native language, the students will then record them in English and after doing this for some time the students will be able to put together the segments and make whole conversations.

Fifth, *Communicative language teaching* is a method that also heavily relies on speaking to teach grammar. Contrasting this to the previous method, the teacher dictates the discussion by handing out a specific topic that the students have to discuss. Rephrasing and unscrambling are also key exercises when using this method, either in smaller groups, pairs or whole class environments. An important difference from other

methods is the acceptance of mistakes during communication, this could in some ways be connected to more modern theories like translanguaging that will be presented later on in this literary section.

Sixth, the *Content-based Instruction* uses another subject as a vehicle for teaching a second language, mainly other theoretical subjects that students might have some prior knowledge of. This method gives students the opportunity to partake in more authentic communication that could be seen as more motivational since the material being used is more connected to a real subject or scenario.

Seventh, *Task-based Language Teaching* which entails using specific tasks that have a clear purpose and an expected outcome. The tasks are done together in class as well as in smaller groups. The teacher then takes notes on what mistakes are made and are then given feedback depending on their success in completing the task. The information the teacher has gained during this lesson is then brought to the next lesson where the lesson plan is based on how students performed and what they struggled with previously.

In addition to the seven methods Larsen-Freeman & Andersson's (2011) introduce, translanguaging is a more modern term that has been established in the last few years which relies on communication whether it be writing or speaking. At first glance it resembles the communicative method described previously but the main difference is that students are encouraged to use all facets of communication available. A very important concept to keep in mind when discussing translanguaging is that languages are not seen as separate. This means that communication is not seen as monolingual but instead more dynamic and the participants' own language repertoire will affect how communication in English is carried out (Canagarajah, 2013). This could be considered very advantageous when teaching grammar in a communicative setting since more students would be able to communicate and learn at a higher rate than if they were held back by not adhering to English speaking norms. Seals, Olsen-Reeder, Pine, Ash, Wallace, (2020) created a framework for translingual grammar material for younger language learners. Key aspects of this framework are that phrases, words or sentences must occur in both languages and repetition in different languages. In the classroom it is also important to allow students to communicate and build on what the other person is saying in different languages. Research also shows that this can

be applied in multiple different contexts and still have a positive learning outcome (Seals et al., 2020).

2.3 Previous studies on teacher beliefs on grammar teaching

Many studies have been done on how to teach grammar to second language learners and the main take away is that meaning is instrumental. The main debate has regarded whether to focus on forms or focus on form. Roger Barnard and David Scampton (2008) describe the differences being that focus on forms entails explicit grammar knowledge whilst focus on form is based on context of grammar. Moreover, the importance of teachers' beliefs on the subject should absolutely not be overlooked considering the fact that in the end it is in the teacher's hand to instruct grammar teaching to students. Teacher beliefs have great effect on teachers' choice of teaching method and how they act in the classroom, this in turn will affect student results (Van Vooren et al., 2012). Analyzing the evolution of grammar teaching in second language acquisition up until the early 2000s the main way of teaching grammar focused on formal instructions (Borg, 2003a). Barnard and Scampton's (2008) study clearly outline that grammar in language teaching is of great importance according to teacher beliefs. According to their research teachers favored using full texts to work with grammar instead of focusing on specific features and therefore preferred a focus on form when teaching grammar. However, the use of incidental grammar teaching was intertwined with a more planned approach on some occasions. Conclusions could then be drawn that a combined approach where the teacher might adapt their style of teaching depending on the situation and grammatical features could be favorable in many cases (Barnard & Scampton, 2008).

Continuing on this, teacher beliefs on grammar teaching in many cases are formed early on in when they themselves were a student and learning the language. This could be, in school, during their education and training to become a teacher or at home (Van Vooren et al., 2012). Borg (2003b) elaborates on this, claiming that teacher beliefs are formed early on when they themselves were learners, and that these beliefs are hard to adapt later on in their own teaching careers. Furthermore, when discussing specific approaches to grammar teaching and how teacher beliefs are affected, they are mainly influenced by the leading approaches in grammar teaching. These leading approaches are the previously mentioned *Traditional approach* that relies on explicit instructions by

using drills and exercises, and the *Communicative approach* where students use the language in discussions and communication (Van Vooren et al., 2012). Teacher beliefs on approach are not conclusive and can vary depending on location and level off students. The traditional method tends to be more favored amongst teacher beliefs with the communicative method being more popular among teachers in higher levels of education (Van Vooren et al., 2012).

Nazari, Boustani and Sheikhi's (2022) study describes the difference in how novice teachers approach grammar teaching before and after an eight-week course in grammar teaching that focused on developing teacher beliefs about grammar teaching in a more interactive way. This study highlights how teacher beliefs can be cemented early on in their lives and to change and adapt their way of teaching, alternatives must be given and practiced. The aim of the course was to help the teachers move away from a solely teacher led way of teaching grammar to a more learner engaged way of teaching. The result of this course was that the teachers believed that they had more of an overview of individual differences in students which led to more adaptable teaching. Furthermore, the teachers had a more dynamic view of grammar teaching that enabled them to use more than just a traditional approach to grammar teaching (Nazari et al., 2022). Relating this to Van Vooren et al. (2012) teacher beliefs tend to lean one way or the other when it comes to *Traditional* or *Communicative* grammar teaching depending on previous experiences as learners, it can be assumed that these teachers probably experience mostly Traditional grammar teaching in the past.

3. Method

This section describes the methodology of this study. This study uses a mixed method but is mainly quantitative considering the use of a survey. However, the survey has a few open-ended questions which enables the present study to engage in more qualitative discussions based on the data. The procedure of collecting data was done with the use of a Facebook group for English teachers who teach English as a second language to Swedish secondary schools and upper secondary schools. Therefore, the teachers previously mentioned act as the respondents of the survey. Lastly, the section presents how the data is analyzed with the use of previous research and studies.

3.1 Respondents

The respondents for this study came from a convenient selection considering the time frame of the study and the resources available. The respondents were teachers who teach English as a second language in Swedish secondary school and upper secondary school which is instrumental to be able to answer the research questions of this study. The source of respondents came from a Facebook group for English teachers who teach English as a second language in Sweden. The Facebook group used is "Nätverk för lärare i Engelska" and has six thousand members from all regions of Sweden. The range of respondents helped in strengthening the study since the respondents were somewhat diverse in terms of age, geographical location, experience and gender. In terms of age the participant group was diverse, the largest age group being 25–29-year-olds and then gradually tapering off for each subsequent age group. The most likely reason for this is that the younger participants might be more inclined to seek support online and be more active on Facebook compared to older and more experienced teachers. Gender however was very skewed in the respondent group with 40 out of 51 respondents being women. The consequence of this was that no conclusions could be drawn from the data in relation to gender. The same goes for the demographic question regarding the region with the majority of respondents being from Stockholm. The split between teaching in secondary or upper secondary school was very even with secondary school being marginally larger. Unsurprisingly the number of teachers with 0-4 years teaching outnumbered all other groups, this can be connected to the spread in age of the participants considering that the largest group were the youngest. What type of school was also relatively uneven with public school greatly outweighing private school. However, something to take into consideration is that the teachers who felt inclined to respond to the survey might have a positive outlook on grammar teaching when teaching English.

3.2 Data collection instrument: Survey

Data collection instrument for this study (see appendix A) is a survey designed to highlight teachers' preferred use of approach and method when instructing grammar teaching in Swedish schools. The survey used mostly multiple-choice answers that were built on a Likert scale with four alternatives that made the respondents take a stance instead of being able to choose a safe answer (Dörnyei, 2007). The open-ended

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questions are structured as specific open-ended questions where the respondent answers a specific question about grammar teaching and clarification questions that allow the respondent to explain something in more detail (Dörnyei, 2007). The survey was compiled of five sections where the respondents answered four of them. The first section describes the study and what the data provided by the respondents will be used for as well as informing the respondents about the consent they need to give in order for the data to be used in the study and that the survey is anonymous. The respondents then clicked *Yes* to continue and to give consent to participate in the study. The second section was composed of demographic questions where the respondents answered general questions about their gender, age, region, years teaching, if they teach secondary school or upper secondary school and if they teach in a public school or a private school. Demographic questions such as gender, age, teaching experience, region, teaching level, school were used to gather a profile for each respondent as well as testing variables to check if respondents differ in terms of these categories in relation to grammar teaching. The third section the respondents answered if they teach grammar or not when teaching English as a second language. If they answered *Yes* they proceed to the fourth section where they answer questions about how frequently they teach grammar and what approach they prefer whether they favor a more planned approach or a more incidental approach. Following this they evaluate how effective they believe certain exercises are when teaching grammar. Lastly, the teachers who teach grammar answered how much they agree with statements based on different methods of teaching grammar in English. Respondents who answered *No* to the question in section three if they taught grammar will answer the questions in section five which focus on the reasoning behind not teaching grammar in their English education and how they would implement it if they had to. In sum, the survey questions had to be well connected to the overall research questions to be able to analyze the data moving forwards. The following table shows what survey questions are related to certain research questions.

Table 1: Survey structure according to the research questions and what survey questions aid answer which research questions.

<u>Research question 1</u> How frequent is grammar teaching?	Section 3, Question 1 in Section 4 and the reasonings behind not teaching grammar from Section 5
<u>Research question 2</u> What approaches do teachers use?	Questions 2-7 in Section 4

Research question 3 What methods do teachers use?	Question 9-15 and qualitative answers from question 8 in Section 4
Research question 4 Teacher beliefs on grammar teaching?	Qualitative answers from question 17 & 18 in Section 4

The data collected from the data collection instrument was also analyzed in relation to a more modern theory on language teaching being translanguaging. The survey however ended up being fairly limited in terms of questions to be able to attain enough responses. Consequently, the open-ended questions related to favored methods of teaching grammar and beliefs on grammar teaching which hint at the use of translanguaging will be discussed. In sum, no generalized conclusions were able to be drawn in relation to translanguaging considering the limited amount of data but interesting answers from the respondents might open up an avenue for future research.

3.3 Data analysis

The categorized data was analyzed according to the research questions and what survey questions aided in answering them. The data was imported to SPSS to search for correlations between answers as well as the demographic questions that were then discussed in the discussion section. Important to keep in mind that due to the small sample size some correlations could not be generalized. The uneven split between men and women also contributed that no conclusions could be drawn from gender and that group will be treated as whole when analyzing.

The data collection instrument unfortunately made it possible for respondents to answer all questions even if they were not supposed to. Their answers might skew the results considering that the goal of the question is researching how often teachers who teach grammar teach it. However, the open-ended questions that some teachers have answered even though they should not have added significant value to the results and discussion throughout this study and were therefore added. Furthermore, the data collection was done through a Facebook group and considering that the survey and this study clearly focuses on grammar teaching and the different approaches and methods used, some teachers who might not teach grammar actively avoided doing the survey. This was important to keep in mind for the present study when answering the first research question.

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The data gathered from the survey was also categorized based on what research questions they aid in answering throughout the discussion in this study. As previously mentioned, the present study uses mostly a quantitative method with the main outlier being research question four "What are the teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching?" which was answered with the help of the open-ended questions in the data collection instrument.

4. Results

The result section for this paper will focus on answering the research questions. The research questions will divide this section and act as headers. To aid in presenting the results the survey questions were divided based on what research question they help to answer.

4.1 How common and frequent is grammar teaching?

This research question was fairly straightforward in terms of which survey questions aided in answering this. The survey questions used in Section 3 where the respondents answered if they taught grammar or not, the first question in Section 4 which dealt with the frequency of grammar teaching and lastly the reasons behind not teaching grammar in Section 5 where respondents who answered that they did not teach grammar could describe their thought process. The data revealed that teaching grammar among the teacher participants in Swedish secondary schools and upper secondary schools is very common. Out of 51 answers only three respondents answered that they did not teach grammar when teaching English as a second language. However, the Facebook post the respondents chose to answer stated that the study was about grammar use in Swedish schools, which in turn might have deterred teachers who might not teach grammar from answering the survey in the first place. Thus, the results for how common grammar teaching is in Swedish schools should be analyzed with caution. In spite of that, considering the overwhelming number of responses that said that they teach grammar it is possible that at least a majority of Swedish teachers who teach English as a second language in secondary school and upper secondary school teach grammar in their English classrooms.

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When it comes to how often grammar is taught by Swedish secondary and upper secondary English teachers, their answers to question one show that they do occasionally, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 2: Respondents answers for Survey question 1 (Section 4): How often do you teach grammar?

1 Very occasionally	2	4,16%
2 Occasionally	27	56,25%
3 Often	16	33,33%
4 Very Often	3	6,25%

The mean response to survey question one was 2.36. Individual variables including their ages, their pupils' levels (i.e.., secondary or upper secondary), years of teaching had no effect on their responses to how often they teach grammar, according to the non-parametric independent sample's tests in SPSS. To summarize, teachers in Swedish secondary schools and upper secondary schools on average use grammar teaching occasionally but not an overwhelming amount. However, this cannot be generalized due to the small sample size.

4.2 What are the teachers' approaches (e.g., Incidental/Planned) to teaching grammar?

The second research question was mainly discussed with the help of survey questions two, three and four regarding teachers' approaches to grammar teaching when teaching English as a second language and whether they favor a planned approach or an incidental approach. This was also related to different exercises that used different skills which aided in discussing why teachers might favor a certain approach over another depending on how effective they feel certain exercises are when teaching grammar.

First off, the data shows that the most common approach to English grammar teaching in Swedish schools is planned grammar practice. However, none of the approaches had an overwhelming percentage favoring them. As previously mentioned, the planned approach was used the most, where 44% of the respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that their grammar teaching was planned instead of being a by-product of other exercises. However, taking an incidental approach was not far behind a planned approach to grammar teaching. Looking at the responses, more respondents answered

Strongly Agree than the previous question about a planned approach, but fewer answered *Agree*. Furthermore, question four regarding whether the respondents only teach grammar when the opportunity arises in the classroom it is very clear that only a few teachers solely teach grammar spontaneously when the opportunity is given. This spread can be seen in the following table.

Table 3: Respondents answers for Survey questions 2, 3 and 4 regarding what approaches teachers have when teaching grammar.

Scale 1-4	Question 2 Planned	Question 3 Incidental	Question 4 Only when the opportunity arises
1 Strongly Disagree	4%	8%	52%
2 Disagree	42%	46%	29%
3 Agree	44%	31%	15%
4 Strongly Agree	10%	15%	4%

A Spearman's rank test for correlation between the answers about the planned approach and the incidental approach show a negative correlation between the two variables: $r(46)= -.64$, $p=0.000$. This entail fairly obviously, if teachers prefer using a more planned approach, they are less inclined to use an incidental approach and vice versa. Nevertheless, given that one approach is not overwhelmingly more popular than another it can be assumed that a majority of teachers prefer mixing their approaches instead of solely focusing on one at all times. The clear anomaly in this case is the use of grammar teaching only when the opportunity arises which a large portion of the respondents *Strongly Disagree/Disagree* with.

Comparing teachers' preferred approaches with what type of exercise they tend to favor when teaching grammar, teachers who mainly use a planned approach and answered that they *Strongly Agree* on question two also all answered that they *Strongly Agree* that grammar can be taught effectively through *Writing Exercises*. Taking this into consideration, even though most teachers agreed that *Writing Exercises* is the most effective way to teach grammar it can still be assumed that all this correlation is not a coincidence. On the other hand, looking at teachers who prefer a more incidental approach there are struggles to make any clear connections between preferred use of exercise that is specific for only incidental grammar teaching. Although, the preferred exercises overall are *Writing Exercises* that were deemed the most effective, as well as

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Reading and Listening which many respondents thought of as effective ways of teaching grammar. The use of *Discussion and Speaking Exercises* was also relatively favorable according to the respondents but not to the same degree as *Writing exercises* and *Reading and Listening*. Using Spearman's rank correlation test, an obvious correlation between teachers who favored speaking exercises and also tended to favor discussion exercises for grammar teaching: $r(46)= .68$, $p=0.000$. Furthermore, teaching experience had a weak negative correlation with using *Reading and Listening* for grammar teaching: $r(46)= -.36$, $p=0.012$. Similar negative correlations can be seen between the age of the teacher and using *Reading and Listening* for grammar teaching: $r(46)= -.32$, $p= 0.024$. The statistics indicate that older teachers with more experience may have less exercises focusing on *Reading and Listening* as an opportunity to teach grammar, although, to draw a conclusion, further investigation is necessary.

Teachers working in secondary and upper-secondary schools show differences in their beliefs on the effectiveness of grammar teaching through reading and listening, as a Kruskal-Wallis Test indicated: $H(1)= 5.101$, $p= 0.024$. Secondary school teachers are more positive than upper secondary school teachers for teaching grammar through reading and listening as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Difference between secondary school teachers compared to upper secondary school teachers view on if grammar can be taught effectively through "Reading and Listening".

Teaching level	N	Mean Rank
Secondary school	26	2.8
Upper secondary school	22	2

Continuing on, both a deductive approach where the teacher introduces abstract grammar rules to work with and an inductive approach where the students discover grammatical knowledge in exercises or texts being seen as the viable and effective, further illustrates that many teachers use multiple approaches when teaching English grammar. For example, the use of writing exercises would be mostly seen as deductive teaching while the use of discussions can be considered inductive. Following this, the open-ended question in Section 4 further confirms this mix in approach when teaching grammar. A good example of this is the following comment from one of the respondents:

> I believe in explicitly making visible the most important grammatical structures (e.g., verbs) through suitable grammar materials, but apart from that I believe that using the language is the most effective and motivating way of learning proper grammar. Teaching theoretical grammar (terminology) is a waste of time that should be avoided. (See appendix B)

This teacher seems to favor a planned approach to grammar teaching using some sort of grammar task method or illustrating specific grammar items before using them in practice. Nevertheless, the teacher also believes that using the language is the most effective way to learn grammar. This in turn, depending on the exercise, means that the teacher could be using discussion or writing exercises as their method in unison with more specific grammar practice.

4.3 What are the methods that teachers use when teaching grammar?

The third research question was addressed by survey questions 9-15 where the participants ranked different methods depending on how effective they felt they were. These short descriptions of methods are based on Larsen-Freeman & Andersson's (2011) methods of grammar teaching outlined in the literary review as well as discussing the answers in relation to translanguaging which has also been presented in the literary review.

First, taking what approaches teachers preferred into consideration, it is no surprise that methods that lean heavily on vastly different ways of structuring a lesson depending on how they prefer teaching grammar when teaching English as a second language. The two most effective methods of teaching according to the respondents were interactive exercises that feature group discussion that outline what grammar flaws can be discussed and practiced after. Second, by far the most effective method according to the respondents was giving students grammar tasks that they complete in pairs or groups and at the same time moving around the classroom and helping the students when needed. This is illustrated in the following two diagrams:
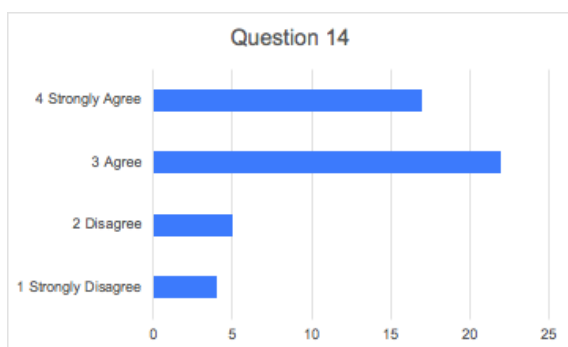
Figure 1: Respondents view on how effective Communicative language teaching is in relation to grammar teaching
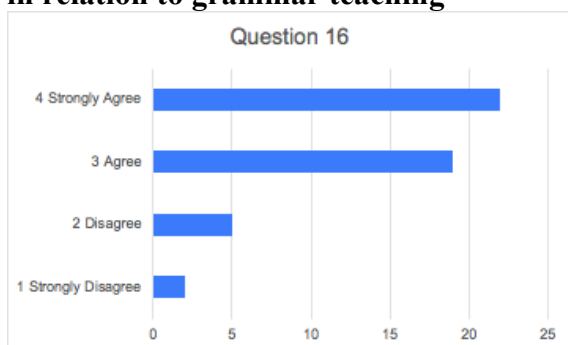
Figure 2: Respondents view how effective Tasked-based Language Teaching is in relation to grammar teaching

The first method clearly resembles the incidental approach that was described in the previous research question and the second method being more of a planned approach. This is related to writing exercises which was deemed the most effective type of exercises, which in turn could very possibly be adapted into grammar tasks. Furthermore, the use of drilling specific grammar entities was seen as very ineffective according to the respondents which could point to working on grammar tasks in pairs or groups being interpreted as being more focused on writing texts or dialog rather than repeating specific drills.

Continuing on, evidently, teachers who taught grammar in upper secondary school were more positive to *The Direct method* which entailed speaking only English when they taught grammar and helping students figure out grammar rules through reading passages, visual aids and answering questions. Using a Kruskal-Wallis Test the following results were given: $H(1)= 10.715$, $p= 0.001$ which show upper secondary teachers favoring *The Direct method*. This is also shown in the following table.

Table 5: Difference between secondary school teachers compared to upper secondary school teachers view on The Direct method in relation to grammar teaching.

Teaching level	N	Mean Rank

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Secondary school	26	1.9
Upper secondary school	22	3.1
Total	48	

The reason I claim these results as obvious is because students in upper secondary school in general are at a higher level of understanding than students in secondary school.

Moreover, a Spearman's rank correlation test shows a positive correlation between teachers who had a positive outlook on *Writing exercises* and a *Task-Based method* where students are given grammar tasks that they solve in pairs and groups. The breakdown for this was the following results that showed as previously mentioned a very mild positive correlation, $r(46)= .35$, $p=0.016$. As previously mentioned in the method section the survey did not ask any specific questions regarding translanguaging. Some of the responses could be interpreted as vaguely hinting at using methods that could open up for translanguaging in their grammar teaching. One example of this would be one of the respondents answering that they never correct their students when they are engaging in communication. Teachers who responded positively to *The Grammar Translation method* however might very likely be using translanguaging since that method embraces and uses both languages to better the grammatical knowledge in the target language.

4.4 What are the teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching?

This research question is mainly a qualitative question which used survey question 18 which was an open-ended question targeting teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching and why they feel it is important to teach. The general consensus among teachers is that they believe that grammar lays the foundation for the language and is therefore instrumental for their language learning. The main arguments for grammar teaching when teaching English as a second language are the following. As stated, many teachers believe that grammar can be seen as the foundation to build the language learning on. This can be seen in the following answers from Question 18 regarding reasons grammar teaching is important:

"In order to fully grasp a new language, you need the basics, and the basics is grammar and syntax. Therefore, grammar is very important!" [sic], "It's the

foundation of all language studies. A basic to advanced knowledge of grammar

makes language as a whole easier to learn." [sic] (Appendix B).

Furthermore, some teachers believed that grammar serves as a precursor to more advanced language knowledge that could enable students to attain a more professional and formal language that can help them later on in life. This can either be related to further studies which the following answers imply "To learn a language, grammar is needed to undergrad", "In order to reach the grades they want", or being able to comprehend and express themselves proficiently:

"To understand the language and to prepare them for the future (where a certain

standard is required whether one likes it or not)", "To improve students' abilities

to express themselves intelligibly in the target language.", "In order to be

understood correctly and to be able to communicate flawlessly." (Appendix B)

The most prominent belief amongst teachers was the importance of giving students the reason why and how a certain grammatical aspect is being taught. The use of context in grammar teaching was vital according to the teachers that answered the survey. Especially in terms of retention, the teachers believed that students would learn and use the grammatical knowledge in a better way if they were given the context rather than just drilling a specific rule without explaining why they were drilling it. This could be done with both explicit grammar teaching like the following answer "It's important to explicitly teach them what I call the basics, for example articles, third person -s. (Appendix B)", or the other way around:

"The important thing is to avoid teaching grammar BEFORE usage, because

without a real-world context in which to apply the new rules, I believe this

information will be almost impossible to make sense of in a limited working

memory." (Appendix B)

However, some teachers felt that grammar teaching did not need to be that prominent in language learning and concluded that students learn grammar through other means like reading, writing and communicating with each other. This divide in the qualitative answers is in line with the quantitative data and the split between a planned approach and an incidental approach as well as the most popular methods *Task-based Language Teaching* and *Communicative Language Teaching*. In sum, the majority of teachers answering the open-ended questions seemed to agree that context when learning grammar is vital for any type of grammar teaching and that explicit grammar teaching was believed to be the most effective.

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5. Discussion

This section aims to discuss the findings in the present study in relation to previous research outlined in the literary review and what the present study could entail for future research.

As the results show there is a clear divide in how teachers structure their grammar teaching when teaching English as a second language. The results of the present study highlights that the teachers in Sweden that teach English as a second language in secondary school and upper secondary school favor a planned approach when teaching grammar. This goes against a previous study done by Schurz and Coumel (2020) that was discussed in the literary review. That study indicated the opposite and that English teacher in Sweden instead favor an incidental approach to grammar teaching. However, it is important to keep in mind that the present study had a relatively small difference in what was more favorable in terms of approach. With 54% answering *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* when asked about a planned approach to grammar teaching and 46% answering that they *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* with incidental grammar teaching. Van Vooren et al. (2012) offers a possible explanation for this is that teachers with less experience tend to favor approaches that they themselves learned English with and that these views are created early on in the teacher (Borg, 2000b; Van Vooren et al., 2012). This is studied by Nazari et al. (2022) where novice teachers were studied before and after a course in grammar teaching where the participants changed their way of teaching grammar from a formal instruction approach to more of an inductive approach to grammar teaching. Relating this to the demographic of the present study, the biggest groups in the participants are teachers that are between the age of 25-29 as well as have less than 5 years of experience. Consequently, teachers with less experience might not have had the opportunity to be influenced by other colleagues and new theories of teaching grammar yet and therefore resort to using a teaching approach they see as familiar. Which, considering Borgs (2003a) findings that up until the early 2000s most of the grammar teaching was done through formal instruction, it can be assumed that many of the respondents in the aforementioned categories have experienced planned grammar teaching through formal instruction. Thus, the uneven demographic and the limited sample size of this study makes these result susceptible for questioning. Taking all of this into consideration, the results of the present study are not conclusive enough

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to challenge the results presented by Schurz and Coumel (2020) in their study. But further research would definitely be interesting considering the limited amount of research on this specific topic.

Continuing on this notion of approach to grammar teaching, the debate between focusing on forms or focusing on form. Barnard and Scampton's (2008) show that the teachers favor focusing on form over more explicit practices where the focus is on forms. The quantitative results for the present study show similar results to Barnard and Scampton's (2008) considering that the method deemed least effective according to the teachers was the *Audio-Lingual Method* which entails that the students drill specific grammatical entities until they have memorized them, which clearly resembles focus on forms rather than focus on form. However, contrasting this to some of the answers from the open-ended questions some respondents in this study specifically described using explicit grammar teaching to give students a foundation for further communication. This in mind, in relation what previous research says as well as the results of the present study could entail that mixing approaches depending on what is being taught, very well could be the most desired way of teaching grammar. Another somewhat unpopular method of teaching grammar was the *Grammar Translation Method* which can be because of the method being quite outdated and more related to traditional grammar teaching. However, it could indicate the use of translanguaging since it uses both languages together to help students learn grammar in a similar way that Canagaraja (2013) defines translanguaging. The few respondents that answered that they had a positive view of translation as a method could therefore be referring to *The Grammar Translation method* as it traditionally was used, that was outlined by Larsen-Freeman and Andersson (2011) or the more modern translanguaging framework created by Seals et al. (2020) where students translate and build discussions or together in both languages. However, no conclusions can be drawn from this since the study did not explicitly ask questions about grammar teaching through translanguaging, but it could be an avenue for further research.

This discussion can also be tied to inductive grammar teaching compared to deductive grammar teaching. Analyzing the results in this study, more teachers use a planned approach which could be described as both deductive and inductive teaching might be planned whilst deductive teaching rarely is incidental. The reason for this could also be that deductive teaching is more teacher led and limits interaction for the

students. For example, looking at the respondents preferred methods of teaching grammar the *Task-based Language Teaching* and *Communicative Language Teaching* are seen as the most effective. Larsen-Freeman & Andersson's (2011) outline these methods as interactive models where students either complete tasks together or partake in discussions that highlight grammar flaws that will be worked on in the future. Both of these methods can be used to teach grammar inductively since inductive grammar teaching would entail doing an interactive task or having a discussion then practicing a specific grammar entity related to that (Nur, 2020; Koşar, 2021; Schurz & Coumel, 2020). A case could be made that these methods could be used for deductive grammar teaching which definitely is the case. However, it would be fairly unconventional since both methods rely on interaction which tends to not be the case with deductive teaching since it tends to be more teacher led. Taking this into consideration, it is likely that teachers who teach English grammar in Swedish secondary schools and upper secondary schools tend to favor an inductive approach to teaching grammar. Which coincides with Schurz and Coumels (2020) study that showed that teachers in Sweden tend to favor inductive grammar teaching when teaching English.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this study was done to research teachers' beliefs on their own grammar teaching when teaching English as a second language in secondary schools and upper secondary schools in Sweden. The aim of this study was finding out the frequency of grammar teaching, what approaches/methods are preferred and teacher beliefs on grammar teaching. The present study indicates that teachers do not teach grammar extensively but that it should be included in English teaching. In terms of approach, they tend to favor a planned approach to grammar teaching, the results were however not overwhelming with an incidental approach being relatively favored as well. The present study concludes that English teachers in Sweden prefer interactive methods that include student cooperation and communication like the *Task-Based Method* or *Communicative Language teaching*. The limitations for this study were mainly the limited timeframe which resulted in a shorter window to gather participants to the present study. Furthermore, the study and the survey used was clearly related to grammar teaching which entailed those possible respondents that might have a negative

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view on grammar teaching refrained from answering the survey to begin with. Lastly, further research that could be done in relation to this study is researching what approach to grammar teaching is preferred in Swedish schools since the present study shows opposite results to previous research. More specific research on translanguaging as a method of teaching grammar would also be very interesting.

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Appendix A - Questionnaire

Section 1

Do you agree with using your answers as data in my degree project?

YES/NO

Section 2

Demographic questions:

Age:

Gender:

Region:

Teaching level (Gymnasiet/Högstadiet):

Years teaching:

Where do you work? (Private/Public):

Section 3

Do you teach grammar when teaching secondary(högstadiet)/Upper secondary(Gymnasiet) English?

YES/NO

Section 4

If the respondent answered YES on the previous question.

1. How often do you teach grammar?
   1 Very Occasionally - 4 Very Often

2. My Grammar teaching is mainly planned, and I allocate separate sessions for grammar teaching.
   1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

3. My Grammar teaching is mainly incidental (byproduct of other exercises).
   1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

4. My grammar teaching only occurs when opportunities arise in the classroom.
   1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

5. Grammar can be taught effectively through "Speaking Exercises".
   1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

6. Grammar can be taught effectively through "Discussions".
   1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

7. Grammar can be taught effectively through "Reading and Listening". 1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

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8. Grammar can be taught effectively through "Writing Exercises".
   1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

9. Do you use any other methods that have not previously been mentioned? (Optional)

10. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I make my students translate English to Swedish or vice versa to help student learn English grammar"
    1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

11. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I speak only English when I teach grammar and help students figure out grammar rules through reading passages with visual aids and answering questions about them."
    1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

12. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I make students drill and repeat phrases and sentences, through which they can learn and memorize grammar rules and sentence structures."
    1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

13. How much do you agree with the following statement? "My students and I together analyze our classroom conversations to reflect on grammar rules and patterns emerging from their own language. Recordings or translation can be used to analyze the conversation."
    1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

14. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I help my students engage in interactive activities, such as group discussions and language games without worrying about grammar, and then when everything is done, I try to teach grammar points that students struggled to use during interactive activities.
    1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

15. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I teach my students subject content in English (e.g. maths or social sciences), in which I also include grammar teaching."
    1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

16. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I give my students 'grammar tasks' that they can solve in pairs and groups. I visit my students to help with their tasks as well as to observe their struggles to design next grammar tasks."
    1 Strongly Agree - 4 Strongly Disagree

17. Please share if you have any other ways to teach grammar other than the ones above.

18. Why do you think teaching grammar is important?

Section 5

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If participants answered NO if they taught grammar.

19. Have you taught grammar in the past?

20. Why do you not teach grammar?

21. How would you introduce grammar teaching in your classes if you had to?

Appendix B - Qualitative answers

Question 8 - Do you use any other methods that have not previously been mentioned?
- Video or short lectures where rules and concepts are explained.
- I often collect common mistakes during different assignments/discussion and then work with that, so that they have a strong reason for why we go through that specific topic, given that many dislike practicing grammar
- Online grammar exercises
- Online practice
- Explaining the rules
- Not sure, but I like to use mentor sentences to explain grammar mistakes or rules. Sometimes I have students discuss what they think the error or rule is, and sometimes I give them task cards which we correct together later.
- Digital
- Grammar exercises
- Student essays
- A combination of all of the above.
- Online selfcorrect exercises
- Error analysis and exercises where one specific grammatical aspect is practiced

- No
- Analysing structures, exercises on paper or on computer, feedback on language use…
- Matching exercises on the computer
- Quizzes, online assignments, videos, work sheets

Question 17 - Please share if you have any other ways to teach grammar other than the ones above.
- I teach my students grammar in various ways. We talk and discuss grammar och struggles together. I also correct and explain those grammatical errors they do in written form so they learn to apply the rules. Not only memorize them.
- I believe in explicitly making visible the most important grammatical structures (e.g. verbs) through suitable grammar materials, but apart from that I believe that using the language is the most effective and motivating way of learning proper grammar. Teaching theoretical grammar (terminology) is a waste of time that should be avoided.
- I never correct my students when they speak, but I do correct it in writing.
- Games online with grammar and writing and memorising rules
- Klassisk grammatik undervisning. Prata om oregelbundna verb, låt eleverna skriva tre korta sagor, en nutid, en dåtid, en framtid, till exempel.
- Through peer review and continuous self-evaluation tasks.
- Games, puzzles etc.
- Working with excercises individually, including online activities. My students are at very different levels when it comes to language accuracy so there is little point in teaching them the same things. They work and learn grammar at different levels.
- I think that preparing a lecture with elements of student interaction brings great results. It's important for the teacher to lead and show the way while also letting the student share their thoughts.

Question 18 - Why do you think teaching grammar is important?

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- Without grammar, communication is not effective
- It's needed to write correctly and to be able to make yourself understood
- You must have correct grammar to be successful in any language.
- It is important because by understanding how the language works, the students can improve their writing and speaking skills. Very often it teachers them even about their own mother tongue grammar...
- Mainly because kids usually read/hear casual English nowadays and I want them to know correct and more formal English as well.
- In order to fully grasp a new language, you need the basics, and the basics is grammar and syntax. Therefore, grammar is very important!
- It gives students an idea of how language works, makes them think analytically and creates a basis for learning other languages.
- It is like the ground work for learning a language
- Many students feel what is correct grammatically but it's important to explain why to understand the language better and to be able to apply it on new things. It's also important that they know the vocabulary connected with grammar so that we easily can discuss grammar to improve for example texts that we have written.
- If you don't know a rule exists, how long does it take before you absorb it by accident. Once you know, then you can be reminded to apply it and eventually learn to remind yourself.
- It's important to explicitly teach them what I call the basics, for example articles, third person -s. But I don't focus mainly on grammar with grammatic phrases.
- The best way to improve writing proficiency, along with vocabulary expansion.
- I believe you can grasp grammatical rules by using the language, but this can be sped up significantly by making visible some of the rules. The important thing is to avoid teaching grammar BEFORE usage, because without a real-world context in which to apply the new rules, I believe this information will be almost impossible to make sense of in a limited working memory.
- It is essential in order to fully grasp the language, and to communicate effectively.
- It's not the most important thing unless it affects the understanding. But knowing the basis makes them feel more comfortable. However, they learn much grammar without formal instruction, through listening/reading.
- For L2 learners it is often easier to learn the language when they understand why…
- Learning through experience is better than just learning rules. It's important to learn how speak actually speak and write not just a load of rules.
- Otherwise my students will not become truly proficient users of English, however, grammar should not be the "star" of every lesson or assignment.
- Speak more fluent and be more confident
- Improve language, make students feel more secure after they feel that they have learned something.
- To learn English better
- In order to use the language correctly
- When learning an L2 it is important to understand the language structure and rules. That's knowledge one needs to learn compared to an L1 which is often something one doesnt need to learn, but knows automatically.

- Av samma anledning som att de fyra räknesätten är viktiga att kunna utantill i matte. Skapar en grund för bra språk.
- To understand the language and to prepare them for the future (where a certain standard is required whether one likes it or not)
- To learn a language, grammar is needed to undergrad
- It helps the students to increase both their learning and understanding.
- In order to reach the grades they want
- To improve students' abilities to express themselves intelligibly in the target language.
- In order to be understood correctly and to be able to communicate flawlessly
- Det är en avgörande del för att bli förstådd på engelska både skriftligt och muntligt.
- För att det är grunden i språket och många elever har behov av att ramar när de lär sig.
- elever är ofta mogna och analytiska och har lätt att ta till sig regler, de läser också fler språk där grammatik förekommer frekvent. Jag tror inte det 'skadar' att undervisa i grammatik men det är en mindre del av undervisningen. Har kollegor som inte alls undervisar i grammatik.
- To make students aware of certain aspects of the English language that a) differ from their native tongue and they haven't become aware of yet or b) give them tools to communicate as precise as possible.
- It's the foundation of all language studies. A basic to advanced knowledge of grammar makes language as a whole easier to learn.