Grammar Teaching and Learning in L2: Necessary, but Boring?

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Abstract: *This descriptive inquiry-based study targeted second language (L2) high school students' (n = 2321) and teachers' (n = 45) beliefs and perceptions about grammar instruction, specifically about grammatical accuracy, corrective feedback, and diverse forms of grammar teaching and learning. Results showed only slight discrepancies between students' and teachers' beliefs and perceptions, and very few differences according to the target language and students' gender or age. The main findings suggest that grammar instruction is perceived by both students and teachers as necessary and effective, but not as something they enjoy doing. Implications are discussed in view of the necessity to improve the teaching of L2 grammar, as students' retention rate and motivation in L2 programs may be affected by the perceived as necessary but "oh so boring" learning of grammar!*

Key words: *beliefs and perceptions, grammar instruction, English as a second language teaching, French as a second language teaching, inquiry-based study*

The teaching-learning process is often illustrated with the help of the didactic triangle,[1] which shows that learning is the result of the interaction or reciprocal influence of the three poles that constitute it: the student, the teacher, and the subject matter. In this respect, when considering how one best learns or how one can best structure teaching so that it leads, in this case, to the learning or acquisition of a second language (L2), it is important to look not only into what the teacher or the learner does in a teaching-learning situation, but also into what one expects from the other—that is, to verify if the tacit terms of the didactic contract are respected. Knowing how both parties perceive the efficacy of the ways in which teaching and learning are taking place is consequently of prime importance. Schulz (2001) outlined how important student beliefs are in terms of accepting the teaching they receive: "FL [foreign language] educators need to keep these beliefs or perceptions in mind when planning classroom activities, given that teaching activities need to be perceived in the learners' minds as conducive to learning" (p. 245). Indeed, not only do teaching practices need to be pedagogically sound, but they also need to be perceived as being so. Consequently, misunderstandings

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between students and teachers may arise about the true value of certain teaching practices if the two parties hold divergent views about the specific goals of the language class, such as the need for accuracy. Mismatched objectives may lead students to perceive the teaching as deficient, and teachers to perceive their students as unmotivated or uninterested. Following this reasoning, one may expect that difficulties will arise in the teaching-learning process if there is a clash between the teachers' and the students' beliefs and perceptions. Often, for example, teachers may be inclined to let errors pass by uncorrected, thinking that students may not welcome corrections. However, the opposite may in fact be true. Schulz (1996), for example, reported from one of her inquiry-based studies that students were "surprisingly positive toward negative feedback" (p. 346). In other respects, Kalaja and Ferreira Barcelos (2003) argued that "beliefs are considered one area of individual learner differences that may influence the processes and outcomes of second/foreign language learning/acquisition (SLA)" (p. 1).

Because the context or environment plays a crucial role in influencing how all the poles of the triangle interact with each other, it is important to study these interactions in different contexts. So far, studies investigating beliefs and perceptions have mainly targeted the adult population (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Etherington, 2006; Peacock, 1998; Schulz, 1996, 2001); to the researchers' knowledge, very few published studies, if any, have investigated teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions concerning specific issues related to L2 grammar instruction in high school contexts. Moreover, very few studies (with the exception of Schulz, 2001, and Loewen et al., 2009) have investigated L2 grammar instruction in relation to different languages. The present study attempted to fill gaps in research by investigating high school learners' perceptions of their own grammatical competence, and the importance for them of grammatical accuracy. It also collected information about students' receptivity to grammar instruction and,

more specifically, to particular types of grammar instruction (i.e., the effectiveness, level of difficulty, degree of interest, and degree of familiarity of different grammar teaching practices, including exercises, rule presentation, and corrective feedback). We gathered their teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the same issues at the same time for comparison purposes. We also took the age of the students (initial as compared to later years of high school) and learners' gender into consideration in the analysis of the data.

Beliefs and Perceptions

Basturkmen, Loewen, and Ellis (2004) defined beliefs as "statements teachers made about their ideas, thoughts, and knowledge that are expressed as evaluations of what 'should be done,' 'should be the case,' and 'is preferable'" (p. 244). They continued by citing Pajares (1992), who argued that beliefs influence one's perceptions or judgments. In fact, because perceptions come from one's belief system, the two concepts are so closely related that it is difficult to consider perceptions and beliefs separately.

Horwitz (1985, 1988) was one of the first researchers to investigate students' beliefs about language learning and teaching using the now widely known Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI). Horwitz's studies, along with some others done in the wake of the BALLI (e.g., Kern, 1995; Siebert, 2003), investigated more generally aspects such as aptitude, difficulty of language learning, nature of language learning, strategies, motivation, and expectations. They focused very minimally on beliefs and perceptions about the teaching and learning of grammar per se. Nevertheless they generally concluded that students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning differed in several aspects and that students seemed to be very concerned with corrective feedback and grammatical accuracy (Chavez, 2007).

Other relevant studies include Schulz (1996), who reported on data collected through multiple-choice questionnaires

inquiring about students' and teachers' views on error correction and the role of grammar. The answers from the 824 students and 92 U.S. university FL teachers (about 12 different languages were represented) indicated that the student participants were "relatively favorably disposed toward a focus on form, regardless of language" (p. 343). In general, however, teachers were somewhat less favorable toward focusing on form and error correction than their students. In addition, almost half the students claimed to like the study of grammar, while only 18% of the teachers actually thought this was the case. Schulz reported that there was a strong conviction among the students that grammar instruction is helpful in FL learning. Discrepancies in beliefs were found, however, among different groups of teachers. Of particular interest for later comparison with the results of our own study, English as a second language (ESL) teachers were less inclined than teachers of other languages to believe that the study of grammar helps in learning an FL or L2 and were less inclined toward error correction. French L2 students' and teachers' views were comparable to those of students and teachers of other FLs (with the exception of Latin, which always scored the highest on the grammar desirability scale).

Schulz's replication of her 1996 study, conducted the following time with Colombian FL students and teachers and published in 2001, compared the answers of these two groups of participants with the U.S. groups of the 1996 study. The results showed that the context had little impact on the students' and teachers' perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback. Most of the answers to the questionnaire failed to show significant discrepancies: "Data comparisons indicated relatively high agreement between students as a group and teachers as a group across cultures on the majority of the questions" (Schulz, 2001, p. 244). However, meaningful differences between the two cultures were observed on some items; for example, Colombian students demonstrated a stronger belief in error correction

and in the positive role of grammar in FL learning than U.S. students.

Discrepancies between teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions about grammar instruction were again evident in Hawkey (2006). One of the very few conducted with elementary, middle, and high school students, this study reported that students perceived a greater emphasis on grammar than what their teachers seemed to acknowledge: students rated the prominence of grammar exercises 5th in a series of 13 types of classroom activities, while teachers rated them 11th.

Another study focusing on language activities was Spratt (1999), which investigated, through a questionnaire, learners' preferences regarding 48 L2 classroom activities, including some grammatical ones, and teachers' perceptions of learners' preferences. The study surveyed 997 tertiary-level learners and their 50 teachers on service English programs at a university in Hong Kong. To summarize, Spratt reported that in most studies she surveyed, students expressed their preference for more traditional types of activities (e.g., Alcorso & Kalantzis, 1985; Barkhuisen, 1998; Yorio, 1986). In addition, a mismatch between students' and teachers' preferences was evident in some studies reviewed, including Brindley (1984), Nunan (1988), and Peacock (1998). In Spratt's study, although the main objective was not to compare grammar exercises and more communicative activities, raw scores reported on the items inquiring about preferences regarding these two types did not show a marked difference. Because the objective of the study was, as the title suggests, to determine "How good are we at knowing what learners like?" the study reported that "teachers were able to gauge their learners' preferences with accuracy for 54% of activities" (Spratt, 1999, p. 142).

Another study worth looking at in terms of beliefs and perceptions about grammar instruction is Etherington (2006). In her study, conducted with adult Chinese learners in a U.K. Higher Education English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context and using a 28-item Likert-scale questionnaire on beliefs and perceptions about grammar and grammar

learning, she concluded that beginner learners viewed grammar learning less positively than more advanced learners. However, the type of grammar that the learners wanted was one that was more in tune with their immediate needs.

Loewen et al. (2009) recently attempted with adult learners, as did we with high school students, to gather data on students' beliefs specifically related to grammar instruction and error correction, whereas most other studies reviewed so far only included these topics among many others related to language learning. Their study involved 754 U.S. university L2 students who were learning 13 different languages (including English, German, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, and Persian, but not French). The authors compared students' beliefs about grammar instruction and error correction using 37 Likert-scale items and four open-ended prompts. A factor analysis was performed on the quantitative data, and a content analysis on the qualitative data. Relevant results from the quantitative analyses included the following: grammar instruction was valued by most learners; learners of English were the least positive about the role or efficacy of grammar instruction in L2 learning; ESL learners also had "the strongest dislike of error correction and the least concern for grammatical accuracy" (Loewen et al., 2009, p. 97). It is worth noting that ESL learners were the group who reported having received the most grammar instruction, not in their current classes but in their first language (L1) learning in general. FL learners, who were more convinced about the need for grammar instruction and error correction than ESL learners, were native English speakers. The results of the qualitative analysis led Loewen et al. to offer the following conclusions:

> Although some learners obviously enjoyed grammar for its own sake, others were less positive, expressing an attitude of having to put up with it because it was beneficial (p. 99). […] the second prompt, *I don't like studying grammar because…*, probed the negative aspects of grammar study. In

response to this question, the resounding response was "It's boring" with a full 25% of the learners using that word or a synonym, such as "tedious," "monotonous," or "dry," for example. Other negative descriptors used included "difficult," "confusing," and "complicated." Over half of all learners responded with such negative comments. (pp. 99–100)

On the issue of error correction, Loewen et al.'s study brings results that contradict many others: "error correction was viewed separately [from grammar instruction], and somewhat negatively by the participants" (2009, p. 101).

Finally, a few studies related to beliefs and perceptions about language learning have investigated the possible relationship between these and individual differences such as gender. Siebert (2003), using the BALLI, as reported in Bernat and Lloyd (2007), investigated university ESL learners of diverse nationalities and found:

> a number of significant differences in beliefs among males and females in relation to language learning and strategy use, using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages. Findings revealed that male students were more likely than female students to rate their abilities high. […] Siebert also reported that 23% of females, as opposed to 47% of males, either strongly agreed or agreed that the most important part of learning a language is learning grammar. (Bernat & Lloyd, 2007, p. 80)

Bacon and Finneman (1992), using a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire of their own, found some differences between male and female learners in some aspects of language learning, but none dealing specifically with grammar learning. Studies comparing male and female students' beliefs about language learning are sparse, and their results are often contradictory. This may be due in part to other variables related to individual differences like age, stages of learning,

language learned, context, and so on. Because individual factors are being considered more and more in different studies, we decided, in order to address possible queries, to include gender and age as part of our analyses of the answers given to the questionnaire used in the present study.

The review of the above-mentioned studies brought only some indirect and fragmented data about teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions about specific practices related to grammar instruction, as most of the studies targeted larger topics related to language learning. The present research aimed at collecting much-needed information about specific grammar learning and teaching practices and used the bilingual Montreal context to investigate these issues in relation to two different languages. The study was conducted in the greater Montreal area (Quebec, Canada) with high school ESL and French as a second language (FSL) learners and teachers.
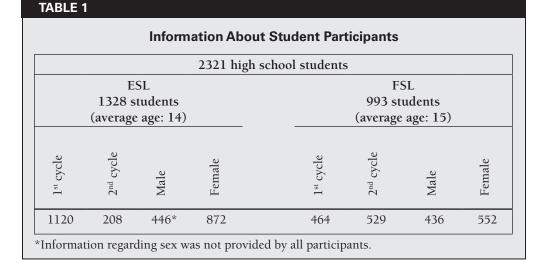
Research Design

In light of what has been mentioned so far concerning beliefs and perceptions about if and how grammar should be learned in an L2 class, and concerning the possible negative effects on the teaching-learning relationships of a mismatch between teachers and learners' beliefs and perceptions, the present study set out to investigate teach-

ers' and students' beliefs and perceptions of grammar instruction in the two official languages of Canada: French and English. The research questions that we report on in this article are the following:

1. What are FSL and ESL teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions about grammar instruction and, more specifically, about grammatical accuracy, corrective feedback, and grammar teaching and learning practices?
2. Do teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions about grammar instruction match?
3. Do gender and age have an impact on students' beliefs and perceptions about grammar?

We sought quantitative and qualitative answers to these three research questions in the present descriptive inquiry-based research through the use of a questionnaire administered to both the participating students and their teachers.[2]

Participants

Two thousand three hundred and twenty-one (2,321) students took part in the survey. Table 1 gives some relevant information about them. The questionnaire was administered to regular (core) L2 classes.[3] The breakdown of students in Table 1 takes into

TABLE 1

Information About Student Participants

2321 high school students							
ESL 1328 students (average age: 14)				FSL 993 students (average age: 15)			
1st cycle	2nd cycle	Male	Female	1st cycle	2nd cycle	Male	Female
1120	208	446*	872	464	529	436	552

*Information regarding sex was not provided by all participants.

consideration that the 5-year high school program is divided into two cycles: cycle one includes the first 2 years of high school, and cycle two the next 3 years. Female students outnumbered male students in ESL classes due to the inclusion of participants from a girls-only school. Popularity of the programs with one gender or the other was not a factor in this instance because both ESL and FSL are compulsory at all levels of high school in Quebec.

In addition to the students, 45 teachers took part in the present study. Information about them is found in Table 2. Female teachers outnumbered male teachers. Most teachers had several years of experience teaching an L2 (9.8 years on average). Native speakers teaching FSL were more common than native speakers teaching ESL, due to the French-speaking context in which this study took place (Montreal area).

In order to help describe the context, we can report that about 200 of the surveyed students were part of the 8 classes that took part in a related study (Simard & Jean, in press, n.p.) where we made classroom observations (60 hours of recorded class time over a period of 2 months) that revealed that the classes investigated were exposed to grammar instruction 34% of the total class time (one grammar-related intervention every 4 minutes and 45 seconds) even though the competency-based provincial curriculum is communicative in nature. We observed as well that grammar was taught quite explicitly in the L2 classes targeted. An analysis of the kinds of form-focused instruction observed showed that the interventions were more of the focus-on-forms types than focus-on-form. Vocabulary, syntactic structures, and inflectional morphology accounted for 84% of all grammar-related interventions (n.p.).

Instruments

The questionnaire for the present study was created from questions used in a previous study by one of the authors (Jean, 2005). These questions were derived from a discussion in focus groups about grammar instruction, during which specific themes about grammar instruction emerged. We consequently targeted five main areas of interest related to grammar instruction: perceived language competence, importance of grammatical accuracy in oral and written production, general receptivity to grammar instruction, receptivity to specific types of grammar instruction, and, finally, receptivity to corrective feedback.[4]

The questionnaire was made up of four parts. The first part, titled "Information," allowed us to gather general information about our participants. The second part, Part A, contained 14 Likert-scale type questions about grammatical accuracy, corrective feedback, and diverse grammar

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TABLE 2

Information About Teacher Participants

45 teachers							
ESL	FSL	Male	Female	Years of teaching	Years of teaching an L2	Native speakers	Nonnative speakers
19	26	11	34	11.7	9.8	ESL: 6* FSL: 23	ESL: 12 FSL: 2

* Two participants did not answer this question.

teaching practices. We present these questions later, along with the results.

Part B of the questionnaire inquired further about receptivity to different types of grammar instruction, specifically exercises. It sought opinions on two distinctive types of exercises: those that involve attending to meaning at the same time as attending to form (meaningful and communicative drills as labeled by Bratt Paulston, 1972), and those that focus exclusively on form (mechanical drills). The questions aimed at getting students' and teachers' opinions regarding the perceived usefulness, interest, and level of difficulty of these exercises as well as to inquire about how familiar students were with them.

Finally, Part C sought additional (and cross-referential) information about receptivity to grammar instruction. It consisted of three open-ended questions from which only the following one provided usable data: "Which word comes immediately to your mind when you hear the word *grammar*"?

Teachers' and students' questions differed only in respect to the point of view taken for answering the questions: The students answered according to their own perceptions as learners, and the teachers answered (with a few exceptions) according to what they thought their students' perceptions were.

The questionnaire was presented in the first or main language of the students (English for the FSL learners, and French for the ESL learners), and in French for the teachers (who were all fluent in French).

Procedure

After an initial trial of the questionnaire and relevant analysis of consistency, reliability, and feasibility, we administered the final questionnaire to all the participants inside a period of two months. Students and their teachers filled in the questionnaire at the same time. No interaction between the students or between the students and their teachers was permitted. They had all the time they needed to fill it in conscientiously.

Results and Interpretation

Teachers' and students' responses to the 5-level Likert-type questions appear here in terms of percentages of students or teachers having chosen each of the five suggested answers.[5] Choices of answers varied according to the question: excellent to poor, very important to not important, useful to not useful, interesting to not interesting, etc. Appendixes A and B give details about the questions, the answer choices, and the results. We grouped the answers to the open-ended question of Part C of the questionnaire into three categories (neutral, positive, and negative) in order to facilitate their interpretation (see Appendix C for the detailed results).

We discuss results first according to the following themes presented in our first research question: importance of grammatical accuracy, receptivity to corrective feedback on grammatical errors, and disposition toward grammar instruction in general and towards specific teaching practices. We also present them for both FSL and ESL students and teachers, and we highlight major differences between the two groups of students. We also highlight noteworthy observable discrepancies between students' and teachers' beliefs or perceptions in order to address research question number 2. As for the apparent influence of gender and age on students' beliefs and perceptions (research question 3), we discuss this briefly at the end of this section.

Importance of Accuracy

First, we asked an introductory question on the topic of accuracy concerning students' perceived ability to speak their L2 accurately (Part A, question 1). The data show that students rated their grammatical competence quite highly. Both FSL and ESL students rated their ability to speak the L2 accurately as "good" or "very good" (68% of all students), and their teachers generally agreed with their self-assessment.

Next, two questions in Part A addressed the issue of the importance of accuracy:

Question 3 inquired about how important it was to be able to express oneself accurately in an L2 (i.e., without grammatical errors), and question 12 asked about how much students would like to express themselves like a native speaker in their L2. The answers to question 3 reveal that students rated accuracy quite high in general, and that the ESL students assigned more importance to accuracy (91% of them rated accuracy as "very important" or "important") as compared to the FSL students (64% of them rated it as "very important" or "important"). The tendency was, however, reversed for the teachers: FSL teachers gave more importance to accuracy (92% of them rated it as "very important" or "important") as compared to the ESL teachers (only 63% chose these two ratings). All in all, however, almost the entire sample of students and teachers rated accuracy from "somewhat important" to "very important." The same pattern, especially for the students, was reflected in the answers to question 12: 76% of FSL students and 89% of ESL students answered that they "would like" or "would like very much" to be able to express themselves like a native speaker. Teachers were partly able to accurately assess their students' feelings: 58% of FSL teachers and 68% of ESL teachers thought that their students "would like" or "would like very much" to express themselves like a native speaker. Answers to these two questions show a general tendency toward a belief that accuracy is important. They also show that accuracy tends to be slightly more important for ESL learners than for FSL learners. It could be hypothesized that, because ESL learners are schooled in French, they are more used to the importance of grammatical accuracy as it is very much stressed in their French classes. The fact that almost all the FSL teachers (92%) rated accuracy as "important" or "very important" as compared to only 63% for ESL teachers could be further evidence that the French language is perceived as more rule- or norm-governed than English.

Receptivity to Corrective Feedback

Related to the topic of accuracy, we investigated the extent to which corrective feedback should be used with two questions: Question 13 inquired about the errors that should be corrected in oral production or interaction, and question 14 asked about errors in written production. We asked students when they thought their teacher should correct them, and the teachers when they thought they should correct their students. It appears from the results that students are very receptive to error correction. Indeed, 54% of ESL students answered that they should get their oral errors corrected "all the time," and 41% that they should be corrected when they "cannot make themselves understood." FSL students were a little less demanding on their teachers than ESL students. The majority (51%) estimated that oral errors should be corrected only when they interfere with communication. Still, 30% of FSL students thought that oral errors should be corrected "all the time." FSL teachers strongly agreed with their students, while ESL teachers indicated being more inclined to correct oral errors when students could not make themselves understood, or when the error was related to knowledge students should possess or to a grammar point covered in the lesson. As for written errors, students expressed a clear willingness to have all errors corrected (66% for FSL learners and 68% for ESL learners). Teachers, however, did not quite share students' enthusiasm for written error correction. As with oral errors, they mainly responded that they tended to correct errors that impede comprehension and errors on grammar points that should be known.

Disposition Toward Grammar Learning

One Likert-scale question in Part A of the questionnaire (question 2) and one open-ended question in Part C (question 1)

addressed the issue of how receptive students were to grammar instruction in general. To the question of how much students generally liked learning grammar in their L2, a little more than half the FSL students answered that they either "did not like it much" (29%) or "did not like it at all" (23%). The ESL students were a little less negative about it: 25% indicated "not liking it much" and 9% "not at all." In addition, while 11% of the FSL students mentioned that they liked learning grammar or liked it a lot, 25% of the ESL students gave similar answers. In our opinion, the discrepancies between the two groups may be due to the difference in the types of grammar instruction used in FSL as compared to ESL classes: We reported in Simard and Jean (in press) that, although the same amount of time was spent on interventions on form in ESL and FSL classes, FSL teachers spent considerably more time on traditional-type exercises than did ESL teachers. As for the teachers' perceptions about how much their students liked learning grammar, the results show that they generally matched their students' responses.

Further negative feelings about grammar instruction were evident in the answers to the open-ended question asked in Part C of the questionnaire: "Which word comes immediately to your mind when you hear the word *grammar*?" Appendix C includes the raw scores. The answers (633 for FSL learners and 895 for ESL learners) were grouped as "neutral," "positive," or "negative." For example, answers that included such words as *exercises, books*, or *dictionary* were rated as neutral; negative answers included words such as *boring, difficult*, or *useless*; and positive answers included words such as *interesting, easy*, or *useful*. Overall, very few of the students' answers were positive. Neutral answers were the most common. However, the fact that 26% of the comments from FSL learners and 28% from ESL learners were negative in nature brings further evidence that negative feelings toward grammar instruction do exist

among the L2 learners we investigated. As for teachers, we asked them the very same open-ended question as their students. (We did not in this instance ask them what they thought their students' perceptions were, rather just their own perceptions.) It is interesting to note in this respect that FSL teachers shared their students' opinions about grammar instruction; their comments were neutral and negative in about the same proportion. However, ESL teachers expressed more positive feelings: Neutral, negative, and positive comments were almost equally distributed, with 32% falling in the positive category.

Disposition Toward Specific Grammar Teaching Practices

As was the case for our inquiry involving classroom observations (Simard & Jean, in press), we were interested in getting a view of the different types of classroom practices used, including exercises and grammatical explanations. Question 6 inquired about how important it was for the students to practice grammar through specific grammar exercises rather than simply through speaking or writing. The majority of students (73% for FSL learners and 72% for ESL learners) expressed the opinion that it was "somewhat important" or "important." Teachers shared their students' opinions and were even more convinced of their importance, as a quite high percentage of them (23% and 32%) rated exercises as "very important."

Questions 10 and 11 of Part A of the questionnaire and Part B involved further probing on the issue of exercises. First, question 10 inquired about the usefulness of mechanical-type exercises (e.g., providing verbs in the indicated tenses in fill-in-the-blank exercises, transforming affirmative statements into negative statements, etc.). Students and teachers rated these exercises generally as "somewhat useful" to "very useful." Students seemed to find them even more useful than their teachers, as 18% of

FSL students and 28% of ESL students rated them as "very useful," compared to only 12% for FSL teachers and 5% for ESL teachers. As for the interest generated by this type of exercise (question 11), the answers indicated that such exercises are less interesting than they are useful. Indeed, the highest percentage of answers fell under the "not very interesting" choice for FSL students (36%) and the "somewhat interesting" choice for ESL students (36% as well). In general, ESL students found them more interesting than FSL students. (Again, we know from our observation research that FSL students are doing more of these types of exercises than ESL students.) ESL and FSL teachers found them in general "somewhat interesting."

Part B of the questionnaire, as described earlier, investigated more deeply the kind of exercises that students and teachers perceived as familiar, useful, interesting, and difficult. Detailed results for ESL and FSL students are found in Appendix B. As expected, students indicated that they were slightly more familiar with form-only exercises than with form-and-meaning exercises, even more so for FSL than for ESL students. As for the difficulty level, both groups did not find the form-and-meaning exercises more difficult than the form-only exercises, which came as somewhat of a surprise. Because VanPatten (1996) argued that attending to form and meaning at the same time is cognitively more demanding, we would have thought that our participants would have perceived it to be so. Concerning the interest generated by both types of exercises, it seems that communicating meaningful information as one is practicing a targeted form does not make the exercise more interesting from the students' perspective than if the form is practiced mechanically. Indeed, most ESL students rated both types of exercises equally as "somewhat interesting." FSL students, however, rated the form-only exercises as slightly less interesting than form-and-meaning exercises: 48% of FSL students rated the form-only exercises as "not very interesting" or "not interesting at all," while 35% of them gave the same ratings to form-and-meaning exercises.

Although students in general did not find the two types of exercise all that interesting, they did find them quite useful. The majority of ESL students (52%) rated both types as "useful," while FSL students rated form-only exercises generally as more useful than form-and-meaning exercises (63% rated form-only exercises as "useful" or "very useful," compared to 48% who gave the same two ratings for form-and-meaning exercises). Teachers generally agreed with students: they thought that their students were "familiar" or "very familiar" with both types of exercises, especially FSL teachers; they perceived form-only exercises, however, as slightly easier than form-and-meaning exercises; they believed generally that the form-and-meaning exercises were "interesting" while the form-only exercises were only "somewhat interesting"; and they rated both as "useful."

Finally, still with regard to students' and teachers' disposition toward different types of grammar instruction, we inquired about students' and teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the learning of grammatical rules. Questions 7, 8, and 9 of Part A addressed this issue. Both the teachers and students generally agreed with the fact that learning grammar rules is "important" or "very important." Surprisingly, students did not generally find learning the rules that difficult: The majority of ESL students (55%) were positioned around the "not very difficult" and "not difficult at all" choices, while the majority of FSL students (60%) opted for the "not very difficult" or "somewhat difficult" choices. Teachers perceived the level of difficulty of learning rules as slightly higher than did their students: ESL teachers (73%) rated understanding rules as "not very difficult" to "somewhat difficult" for their students, while FSL teachers (also 73%) rated this as "somewhat difficult"' to "difficult."

One final aspect about the learning of rules that was of interest to us was to find

out if the inductive (discovery) approach was used in these particular L2 teaching contexts and, if so, if it was perceived as useful and difficult (questions 9a, 9b, and 9c). A majority of FSL students (61%) reported that the discovery approach had been used at some point in their class as opposed to only 29% of ESL students. FSL teachers mainly agreed with their students, but ESL teachers did not: A much higher percentage of ESL teachers (74%), as compared to ESL students (29%), reported having used the discovery approach. As for how difficult this approach was judged, the majority of students agreed that it was in the range of "not very difficult" to "somewhat difficult," while FSL teachers rated it as "difficult" to "somewhat difficult," and ESL teachers as "somewhat difficult" to "not very difficult." Both teachers and students reported finding the approach "useful"' to "somewhat useful."

Role of Gender and Age

We also viewed the data in respect to gender and age (research question 3) and noticed only minor differences for both variables.[6] Slight differences occurred concerning the perceived importance of being able to express oneself accurately: 9% more girls than boys rated this as high or very high (83% as compared to 74%). We observed similar differences in percentages of answers in relation to the importance of learning grammar and to the usefulness of exercises and of learning rules. Girls, in general, seem to be more receptive to grammar instruction.

As for the role that age played in students' perceptions, we compared the results of the first cycle of high school (years 1 and 2) with those of the second cycle (years 3, 4, and 5). Differences in the range of 10 to 15% in the two highest degrees of the Likert scale were noticeable only in regard to the importance of accuracy: Older students found it more important to express themselves accurately than did younger learners.

Conclusion

The aim of this descriptive, inquiry-based study was to investigate the beliefs and perceptions of high school L2 learners of French and English and their teachers regarding different aspects related to grammar learning. As we proposed at the beginning of the article, knowing how each party in a teaching-learning relationship perceives teaching and learning practices could help maximize the language learning experience. If we hold this as true for all aspects of language learning, it is even more so for grammar instruction, because it has been pointed out as a possible impediment to motivation and retention in L2 classes: For example, a report from Canadian Parents for French (2004) indicated that a large percentage of students in core (regular) programs were blaming the grammar instruction they received for their lack of interest or motivation to learn the language, and for their eventual withdrawal from their French L2 program. We are not proposing, however, that students' and teachers' beliefs and perceptions should match perfectly in order to get the most out of a teaching-learning experience, but it is our understanding that when one understands the intent or the needs of the other, it is more likely that the teaching-learning relationship will be rewarding. That being said, this study, conducted with more than 2,000 L2 French and English high school learners and their teachers, revealed interesting results about the nature of the relationship of both parties with one aspect of the subject matter, namely grammar, and with each other as partners in the teaching-learning relationship. Even though this study includes the usual limitations related to the limited context and the possible response bias often reported with the use of quantitative self-report questionnaires, and even though the findings cannot necessarily be generalized beyond this student and teacher population, the results reported here contribute to the rare investigations conducted specifically in regard to grammar

instruction and practices with participants of younger ages, whom we should consider more often in second language acquisition research as they constitute the pool of students from which many language and education departments or faculties receive their enrollment.

Overall, and as an answer to our first research question, we discovered that these specific learners are quite sold on the need for grammar instruction. They welcome it because of its perceived usefulness for the production of accurate speech, both written and oral. They seem to value grammatically accurate speech and overwhelmingly embrace error correction, for their oral and even more so for their written production. These findings are very much in line with several studies reported on earlier, especially concerning the positive value of grammar instruction (Kern, 1995; Loewen et al., 2009; Schulz, 1996; Siebert, 2003). Our student participants value rule learning and exercises, even the most mechanical ones, even though they do not find them very interesting. Studies from Alcorso and Kalantzis (1985), Barkhuisen (1998), and Yorio (1986) also showed preferences for traditional types of activities.

As for the results associated with our second research question, very interestingly, but contrary to a number of studies (for example, Brindley, 1984; Nunan, 1988; Peacock, 1998; Spratt, 1999), students and teachers generally agreed about the benefits of grammar instruction. Where apparent mismatches between teachers' and students' beliefs and perceptions occurred, these pointed toward greater positive beliefs about the benefits of grammar instruction for learning a language on the part of the students rather than the teachers. Students believed even more than teachers in the value of error correction and in the usefulness of mechanical-type exercises. Of course, it could always be argued that experience and knowledge about language learning greatly influence students' and teachers' beliefs: If students were effectively corrected for every mistake they make (one

every 15 seconds, for example, as reported by Fanselow, 1977), their beliefs could be different and match more closely those of their teachers, who are aware that correcting every single mistake may have a detrimental effect on learning. The same could be said for mechanical drills. If students knew what research is telling us and what teachers know about their usefulness, they might have less positive views about them.

In relation to our third research question, related to the potential impact of students' gender and age on their beliefs and perceptions about grammar, girls generally indicated more positive feelings about grammar instruction, which neither confirms nor contradicts earlier studies as results in this area have been rather conflicting. As for the difference between younger and older learners in high school, the only noticeable difference occurs in regard to accuracy: Older learners value accurate speech more than younger learners.

The most revealing result of the study, however, is that these high school learners did not report liking learning grammar, but they reported valuing it. Indeed, a very low percentage of them reported liking it, especially FSL learners. It appears to us that high school learners and even their teachers perceive grammar as what we would call a *mal nécessaire* (a necessary evil). The results came out clearly in a Likert-scale question and in an open-ended question: Positive feelings about grammar instruction are rather rare. Even more surprising is the fact that teachers largely share their students' beliefs. They expressed proportionally as many negative comments as their students, although ESL teachers expressed more positive feelings than their colleagues in FSL. These results are somewhat similar to some reported earlier with adult learners: In Schulz's (1996) study, only half the learners claimed to like the study of grammar. Our results relate quite closely as well to the results obtained in Loewen et al. (2009, p. 99), in which 25% of the learners found the study of grammar "boring." However, in Loewen et al.'s study, it was the ESL learners

who had more negative feelings as compared to FL learners because of, presumably, the extended exposure to grammar they had in their L1. In our case, it seems that it is the present exposure to grammar in their FSL classes that brought up the negative feelings, as these students were mainly English speakers or speakers who had attended English schools since the primary grades and who had limited formal grammatical instruction in their L1 language arts classes (as evidenced in the provincial curriculum documents). However, ESL learners value grammar instruction for its efficacy more so than FSL learners, and this, as mentioned earlier, could find its explanation in the fact that ESL learners have received grammar training in their L1 French language arts classes (again as evidenced in the provincial curriculum documents).

Finally, we wish to point out that our results confirm results presented in the report by the Canadian Parents of French (2004) mentioned earlier, which reported that students do not enjoy the study of grammar. The report partially blamed grammar instruction for the lack of motivation among teenagers to learn an L2. Unfortunately, we have no data to compare receptivity to grammar instruction with receptivity to L2 learning as a whole, or even more generally to school learning. It may be that the methods used in schools are viewed positively because students trust their efficacy, but that studying and learning as a whole are seen negatively. In one case or the other, it is rather sad that methods viewed as effective are mostly not rated as enjoyable or even interesting. Maybe it is sheer utopianism to believe that all aspects of learning could be made enjoyable, but it is our belief that work needs to be done in order to make grammar instruction less of a burden on both teachers and students. Because students, teachers, and SLA researchers are now generally convinced about the need for form-focused instruction, as evidenced in diverse recent studies (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2002; Lightbown & Spada, 1990;

Loewen, 2005; Long, 1983), it is time to put our collective effort into improving our methods of teaching grammar so that they can be perceived at least as interesting (or enjoyable) as they are effective.

It was also disappointing to us that mechanical drills are the most familiar types of grammar exercise among high school students in a teaching context where government instructional guidelines have been considerably influenced by communicative, socio-constructivist, and competency-based approaches. Traditional teaching still seems to prevail in this context (see also Simard & Jean, in press) despite efforts to move away from it. We do not deny that certain values are attached to traditional teaching, but if it is perceived as "boring" one must question its true efficacy with learners. In this case, it cannot be said that because students and teachers share the same beliefs and perceptions about the efficacy of traditional grammar instruction, effective learning will necessarily result from the teaching. It is surely helpful for the teaching-learning relationship that students and teachers agree on the dullness of grammar instruction, but it would certainly be preferable if both groups could be brought to see grammar as less tedious. Should "boring" and "effective" continue to be considered as an inevitable contradictory pair of qualifiers in regard to grammar teaching practices? Should language researchers continue to accept that grammar instruction is a *mal nécessaire*? Is it unrealistic to contemplate that it could become a *bien nécessaire* (a necessary good) such that students commit to longer study in L2 learning and their chances of success improve?

The question is, of course, how we go about making grammar instruction less tedious now that we know from diverse research, including the present, that learners feel that they expressly need it. Different approaches to teaching grammar have been presented by different researchers in recent years. The practitioner is left with the difficult decision of choosing the one that will render the interrelation that is

happening between the three pillars of the didactic triangle (the learners, the teacher, and the content) most effective in the specific context he or she is teaching. Should the approach be integrated and isolated? Should it be based exclusively on focus-on-form principles and disown focus-on-forms? Should it be implicit or explicit? Deductive or inductive? How much discovery should be allowed and in which cases, and with whom?

In the face of these hard decisions, we would suggest to practitioners to keep in mind the following recommendations (not at all novel, but worth reiterating, perhaps) issued from our experience as L2 teachers, teachers' trainers, and researchers:

- *Kill two birds with one stone.* Choose an approach that does more than teach grammar. Start from the principle that grammar instruction should work as a catalyst for language acquisition, not purely as a way to learn the intricacies of the language and improve accuracy. As such, time spent on grammar instruction should also help learners develop vocabulary knowledge, oral and written competencies, cognitive skills, etc. A study by Jean (2005) compared a group of students exposed to communicative drills where they had to attend to both form and meaning to a group of students who used mechanical drills where they just had to attend to the forms. The results showed that the group that attended to both form and meaning did as well as the students who went through mechanical drills on measurements related to the knowledge of the formal properties of the targeted grammatical forms, did not feel overwhelmed by the added challenge, and, more important, showed improved vocabulary knowledge. The lesson to be learned is maybe that we should not undervalue students' abilities and cognitive skills.
- *Sell grammar instruction and one's approach to students.* Giving students the reasons for tackling a grammatical form

and how teachers are going to go about it can go a long way toward making students interested and motivated. Keeping as a principle that the rationale cannot exclusively be that studying the form is part of the curriculum, teachers should provide students with reasons why accurate use of the form improves communication. Students should first be able to see and hear the form in authentic discourse and then receive a communicative task that they will very likely better perform if they use the form. Teachers should also inquire about what students believe could help them improve their comprehension and production of the language, and negotiate with them the best ways to go about it, bringing results from research to back up proposed types of interventions. As Schulz (1996) pointed out, students' opinions about grammar instruction may be influenced by practices that have been "passed on from generation to generation of FL/L2 learners" (p. 348).

- *Narrow the gap for better transfer.* If exercises are used to practice a form, make sure that they are framed in contexts that narrowly resemble the ones in which students are going to use it, and that they reproduce language likely to be found in naturally occurring discourse situations. For example, teachers could use slogans in grammar exercises that aim at practicing the French imperative as part of a sequence leading to a project or final task involving some kind of advertisement campaign. Beware of the numerous textbook exercises that betray natural discourse (Calvé, 1994) as they contribute to building false representations in the learner's internal grammar.
- *One approach does not fit all.* The perfect and unique cure for boredom when studying grammar has not yet been found, nor will it. Each learning situation is unique. An exclusive and permanent choice between integrated or isolated, or between focus-on-form as opposed to focus-on-forms, or between inductive

or deductive does not necessarily have to be made. It is very likely that students would get tired of always using the same approach. Because not all grammar points have the same level of complexity or demand the same level of accurate use, it may not be pedagogically sound to teach them all in the same manner.

- *Grammar rules are not laws.* Language teachers would be well advised to treat grammar from a constructivist or descriptivist point of view rather than from a prescriptivist (juridical) point of view. Learners' frustration too often comes from the fact that rules in textbooks or reference grammars are presented as norms that must not be transgressed. Very soon, they find out that these rules get transgressed quite often in native discourse. They are then presented with the many "exceptions," or fine print of the law, which often puzzle and frustrate them. If, from the start, we were to show students that a rule is nothing more than a representation or a description that a grammarian has come up with to try to make sense of observed regularities and irregularities of a form so that learners in turn can make sense of them, then they may more easily accept grammar rules as helping tools rather than frustrating and boring objects of study. It would be even better if we could involve the learners in being critical of these descriptions and coming up with their own variations. A rule or law that is negotiated rather than imposed often has more chances of being used purposefully.
- *Only teach grammar when it is really necessary.* All too often grammar points are taught because they are listed in the curriculum. Students should first feel the need (on their own or through planned specific exposure) to study a grammar point. They must see how their hard work will bring their interlanguage a step ahead. Grammar structures are not all equally teachable. Formal and functional complexities as well as the scope of the grammar element are just a few

factors to consider. Forms to be taught should also be prioritized, taking into consideration the urgency of modifying specific deficient aspects of the learners' interlanguage.

- *Grammar learning is not necessarily less boring if we make it fun.* We end by expressing the view that the solution to boring grammar is not necessarily to start playing games with verb conjugations or other grammar elements. Games are too often just disguised meaningless drills. They provide a good diversion, but they do not go very far in helping learners to build language skills. Grammar instruction will still have to take place, and if not reengineered as discussed earlier will continue to cause boredom.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. The didactic triangle is a concept that is well documented, especially in the French and German literature (e.g., Astolfi, Davot, Ginsburger-Vogel, & Toussaint, 1997; Houssaye, 1988; Künzli, 1998). It is usually drawn with the teacher, the student, and the content as its pillars or poles. The content, in our case an L2 or FL, stands

at one point of the triangle. At another point is the learner, who interprets that content his or her way according to his or her experience, interest, concerns, cognitive skills, and set of beliefs. The teacher stands at the other pole and in turn uses his or her own experience, interest, concerns, professional skills, and visions of the subject matter and of the teaching and learning process to deliver the content. The three pillars of the triangle act in interrelation with the context in which the teaching and learning are taking place. Of particular interest for the present article is the relationship between the learner and the teacher, which is often referred to as the didactic contract (Brousseau, 1998). It takes into account the behavior expected from the learner by the teacher, and the behavior expected from the teacher by the learner.

2. We are cognizant of the fact that the use of questionnaires in research on beliefs has been criticized recently (Kalaja & Ferreira Barcelos, 2003) as too restrictive in the sense that they do not allow participants to use their own voices, as they "restrict respondents' choices by framing the answers according to a pre-established set of statements" (Ferreira Barcelos, 2003, p. 15). Ferreira Barcelos suggested that research on beliefs takes a new direction by using metacognitive and contextual approaches (interviews, self-reports, observations, case studies, diaries, etc.) instead of a normative approach (questionnaires and quantitative data). The suggested move in research brings very interesting information as evidenced in research by Alanen (2003), Hosenfeld (2003), Sakui and Gaies (2003), etc. However, this type of research can only be conducted with a very limited number of participants and as such is not always suitable to gather data on a large scale in cases where one wants to get a larger view of a situation. In our case, we would argue that students and teachers were given a voice in

the questionnaire in at least two ways: through focus groups held before the creation of the questionnaire to determine current themes or concerns on the issue of grammar learning and teaching, and through the use of open-ended questions. We carefully documented the context (which Kalaja and Ferreira Barcelos, 2003, considered as very important to take into account in studies on beliefs) through classroom observations (Simard & Jean, in press) as part of our larger study on grammar instruction. We used some qualitative data (open-ended answers in Part C of the questionnaire) to back up the information obtained though the Likert-type questions.

3. Regular L2 classes (as opposed to immersion classes, which involve teaching subject matters in French, or welcoming classes, which teach French to newcomers before they integrate into the mainstream) are called core L2 classes in Quebec. Core L2 English and French classes are compulsory from the first year of primary school to the end of secondary school. The number of hours per year students attend core L2 classes varies from around 40 to 175, depending on the grade level and the school. The Quebec school system is organized so that students spend 6 years in primary school and 5 years in secondary school. Students interested in attending university will have to do 2 years of junior college after completing their secondary school degree.

4. We administered the first version of the questionnaire to 180 first- to last-year high school students and 8 teachers. Comments about the administration of the questionnaire were collected by the research assistants at that time. They reported questions and difficulties that arose during the trial. Items were then analyzed in terms of missing responses and range of responses to further check for possible flaws in the questions (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 68). An internal consistency

analysis could not be performed as such, because of the diverse topics used in the survey and the limited number of questions related to each topic. However, it was possible to ascertain consistency by comparing questions that were related to each other; for example, questions about the use of grammar exercises in Parts A and B of the questionnaire, and about receptivity in general to grammar instruction in Parts A and C. Because results were of the same nature on these topics, they offered some measure of reliable internal consistency. After this initial analysis, we revised some questions (simplified or shortened) so that they could be more easily understood, especially by the youngest learners. We also adjusted instructions. In addition, contrary to a number of studies reviewed earlier that used a large number of items in their surveys and applied different statistical measurements, we decided that with our younger participants it was best to use a limited number of questions, each targeting one main area of concern. Our trial period taught us that younger learners spend a considerable amount of time on each question and often have a hard time deciding between the choices given.

5. We performed *t* tests and other inferential statistic analyses on the data, but these did not provide information that was more informative than the descriptive results in relation to the types of answers we were interested in. For example, even though most answers showed statistically significant differences at <.0001 between ESL and FSL participants for Part A of the questionnaire when we performed a *t* test (differences we hypothesized were due to the high number of participants and the low variance possible with a Likert scale), we did not think that the results of the *t* test were worth presenting or considering in this context because they did not help provide more informative answers to our questions. In this respect, Larson-Hall (2010), discussing the use of a *t* test with Likert-scale data, mentioned that

with large samples it is not uncommon for the test to provide statistically significant results (pp. 265–266). Following her recommendation to consider the effect sizes, we noticed that they were rather small. Therefore, we decided that examining the distribution of answers produced more meaningful insight into students' and teachers' beliefs and perceptions.

6. For reasons of space, and because very little difference was observable in relation to gender and age, we do not present the raw data.

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APPENDIX A

Results of the Likert Items of the Survey (questions 1–14)

TABLE A1

Question 1 Results

Student Q1: How would you rate your ability to speak French/English accurately (i.e., without grammatical errors)?

Teacher Q1: How would you rate your students' ability to speak French/English accurately (i.e., without grammatical errors) in consideration of their level?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students $N = 990$	ESL Students $N = 1314$	FSL Teachers $N = 25$	ESL Teachers $N = 19$
	%	%	%	%
5 Excellent	10.61	9.36	4	0
4 Very good	28.69	21.91	40	31.58
3 Good	42.12	43.76	40	47.37
2 Not so good	15.15	21.61	8	21.05
1 Poor	3.43	3.35	8	0

TABLE A2

Question 2 Results

Student Q2: How much do you like learning grammar in French/English (understanding rules, finding explanations, doing grammar exercises orally or in writing)?

Teacher Q2: How much do your students like learning grammar (understanding rules, finding explanations, doing grammar exercises orally or in writing)?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students $N = 990$	ESL Students $N = 1317$	FSL Teachers $N = 24$	ESL Teachers $N = 19$
	%	%	%	%
5 I/They like it a lot.	1.31	5.39	0	0
4 I/They like it.	9.19	19.51	11.50	5.26
3 It doesn't bother me/them.	37.37	40.39	33.33	47.37
2 I/They don't like it much.	29.49	25.28	45.83	42.11
1 I/They don't like it at all	22.63	9.42	8.33	5.26

TABLE A3

Question 3 Results

Student Q3: According to you, how important is it to express oneself accurately (i.e., without grammatical errors) in a second language like French/English?

Teacher Q3: According to you, how important is it to express oneself accurately (i.e., without grammatical errors) in a second language like French/English?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students $N = 989$	ESL Students $N = 1321$	FSL Teachers $N = 26$	ESL Teachers $N = 19$
	%	%	%	%
5 Very important	20.53	49.05	26.92	15.79
4 Important	43.38	42.24	65.38	47.37
3 Somewhat important	26.49	7.12	7.69	36.84
2 Not very important	8.09	1.36	0	0
1 Not important at all	1.52	0.23	0	0

TABLE A4

Question 4 Results

Student Q4: How important is it to learn grammar in order to **speak** better in French/English?

Teacher Q4: How important is it to learn grammar in order to **speak** better in French/English?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students N = 990	ESL Students N = 1320	FSL Teachers N = 26	ESL Teachers N = 19
	%	%	%	%
5 Very important	29.80	37.42	11.54	21.05
4 Important	39.80	43.71	73.08	47.37
3 Somewhat important	21.72	14.70	11.54	26.32
2 Not very important	7.58	3.26	3.85	5.26
1 Not important at all	1.11	0.91	0	0

TABLE A5

Question 5 Results

Student Q5: How important is it to learn grammar in order to **write** better in French/English?

Teacher Q5: How important is it to learn grammar in order to **write** better in French/English?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students N = 987	ESL Students N = 1317	FSL Teachers N = 26	ESL Teachers N = 19
	%	%	%	%
5 Very important	61.09	66.51	65.38	57.89
4 Important	27.56	28.17	34.62	31.58
3 Somewhat important	8.71	4.40	0	5.26
2 Not very important	2.03	0.68	0	5.26
1 Not important at all	0.61	0.46	0	0

TABLE A6

Question 6 Results

Student Q6: How important is it for you to practice French/English grammar through specific grammar exercises rather than simply through speaking or writing?

Teacher Q6: How important is it for you to have your students practice French/English grammar through specific grammar exercises rather than simply through speaking or writing?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students $N = 986$	ESL Students $N = 1313$	FSL Teachers $N = 26$	ESL Teachers $N = 19$
	%	%	%	%
5 Very important	9.13	14.32	23.08	31.58
4 Important	34.28	40.90	57.69	42.11
3 Somewhat important	38.64	31.99	19.23	15.79
2 Not very important	15.01	8.99	0	5.26
1 Not important at all	2.94	3.81	0	5.26

TABLE A7

Question 7 Results

Student Q7: According to you, how important is it to learn grammar rules in French/English?

Teacher Q7: According to you, how important is it for your students to learn grammar rules?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students $N = 987$	ESL Students $N = 1318$	FSL Teachers $N = 26$	ESL Teachers $N = 19$
	%	%	%	%
5 Very important	18.95	34.60	23.08	36.84
4 Important	40.12	50.68	53.85	36.84
3 Somewhat important	29.58	11.15	19.23	21.05
2 Not very important	8.51	2.58	3.85	0
1 Not important at all	2.84	0.99	0	5.26

TABLE A8

Question 8 Results

Student Q8: How difficult do you find understanding grammar rules in French/English?

Teacher Q8: In general, how difficult do your students find understanding grammar rules?

	Results			
Scale	FSL Students $N = 987$	ESL Students $N = 1318$	FSL Teachers $N = 26$	ESL Teachers $N = 19$
	%	%	%	%
5 Very difficult	9.75	5.49	23.08	5.26
4 Difficult	20.30	14.48	38.46	26.32
3 Somewhat difficult	29.95	24.70	34.62	31.58
2 Not very difficult	30.25	34.07	3.85	36.84
1 Not difficult at all	9.75	21.27	0	0

TABLE A9

Question 9a, 9b, and 9c Results

Student Q9a: Have you ever been asked to discover a French/English grammar rule from examples provided to you?

Teacher Q9a: Have you ever asked your students to discover a grammar rule from examples you provided to them?

	Results			
Scale	FSL Students $N = 979$	ESL Students $N = 1307$	FSL Teachers $N = 26$	ESL Teachers $N = 19$
	%	%	%	%
Yes	61.08	28.62	80	73,68
No	38.92	71.38	20	26,32
Student Q9b: If so, how difficult was it?				
Teacher Q9b: If so, how difficult was it for them?				
	$N = 597$	$N = 314$	$N = 22$	$N = 14$
5 Very difficult	7.71	8.92	5	0
4 Difficult	20.27	23.89	45	14.29
3 Somewhat difficult	36.52	28.98	35	64.29
2 Not very difficult	30.65	28.66	15	21.43
1 Not difficult at all	4.86	9.55	0	0

TABLE A9 (Continued)

Question 9a, 9b, and 9c Results

Student Q9c: How useful was it for your comprehension?

Teacher Q9c: How useful was it for your students' comprehension of the rule?

Scale	FSL Students N = 998	ESL Students N = 379	FSL Teachers N = 20	ESL Teachers N = 14
5 Very useful	10.87	22.16	25	14.29
4 Useful	38.8	41.16	55	57.14
3 Somewhat useful	32.44	22.43	20	28.57
2 Not very useful	13.21	6.60	0	0
1 Not useful at all	4.68	7.65	5	0

TABLE A10

Question 10 Results

Student Q10: How useful, in general, do you find the mechanical-type exercises used in French/English class (for example, providing verbs in the correct tenses, transforming affirmations into questions, etc.)?

Teacher Q10: How useful, in general, do you find the mechanical-type exercises (drills) used in language class to get students to practice grammatical rules?

Scale	FSL Students N = 988 %	ESL Students N = 1318 %	FSL Teachers N = 26 %	ESL Teachers N = 19 %
5 Very useful	17.11	28.07	11.54	5.26
4 Useful	41.60	49.77	34.62	42.11
3 Somewhat useful	27.33	15.71	42.31	36.84
2 Not very useful	11.03	4.40	11.54	10.53
1 Not useful at all	2.94	2.05	0	5.26

TABLE A11

Question 11 Results

Student Q11: How interesting do you find these exercises?

Teacher Q11: In general, how interesting do you find these exercises?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students N = 989	ESL Students N = 1317	FSL Teachers N = 26	ESL Teachers N = 19
	%	%	%	%
5 Very interesting	1.42	3.19	0	0
4 Interesting	10.21	25.59	11.54	21.05
3 Somewhat interesting	27.91	35.76	53.85	52.63
2 Not very interesting	35.69	22.32	26.92	15.79
1 Not interesting at all	24.77	13.14	7.69	10.53

TABLE A12

Question 12 Results

Student Q12: How much would you like to be able to express yourself in French/English as a French-/English-speaking person?

Teacher Q12: How much do you think your students would like to be able to express themselves as a native?

Results				
Scale	FSL Students N = 959	ESL Students N = 1308	FSL Teachers N = 26	ESL Teachers N = 19
	%	%	%	%
5 Very much.	41.19	69.27	11.54	26.32
4 I/They would like it.	33.83	19.80	46.15	42.11
3 It would be nice but not essential.	15.85	8.18	26.92	15.79
2 It is not one of my/their goals.	5.63	1.61	15.38	15.79
1 I/They really do not want it.	2.50	1.15	0	0

TABLE A13

Question 13 Results

Student Q13: When do you feel that your teacher should correct the grammar errors that you make while speaking? (More than one answer is possible here.)

Teacher Q13: When do you feel you should correct the grammar errors that your students make while speaking? (More than one answer is possible here.)

Results				
Scale	FSL Students N = 990	ESL Students N = 1314	FSL Teachers N = 26	ESL Teachers N = 19
	%	%	%	%
4 All the time.	30*	53.58	30.77	15.78
3 Only when I/they cannot make myself/themselves understood.	50.51	40.72	53.85	68.42
2 Only when the error is on something we/they should know or when the grammar point is the focus of the lesson.	31.89	22.91	46.15	52.63
1 Never.	3.94	1.98	0	5.26

* Percentages of participants who gave that answer. Totals are more than 100% because more than one answer was allowed.

TABLE A14

Question 14 Results

Student Q14: Which grammatical errors do you feel your teacher should correct in your written work (compositions, tests, etc.)? (More than one answer is possible here.)

Teacher Q14: Which grammatical errors do you feel you should correct in your students' written work (compositions, tests, etc.)? (More than one answer is possible here.)

Results				
Scale	FSL Students N = 990	ESL Students N = 1314	FSL Teachers N = 26	ESL Teachers N = 19
	%	%	%	%
4 All the errors.	65.86*	67.81	34.62	36.84
3 Only the errors that make understanding difficult.	23.84	21.69	46.15	52.63
2 Only the errors that are related to a grammar point we should know or that has been the focus of previous lessons.	17.98	22.91	61.54	57.89
1 Grammatical errors should not be corrected.	1.72	1.14	0	17.98

* Percentages of participants who gave that answer. Totals are more than 100% because more than one answer was allowed.

APPENDIX B

Students' and Teachers' Opinions About Two Different Types of Exercises: Form-Only and Form-and-Meaning

		Form-only (mechanical) exercises				Form-and-meaning exercises			
		Useful	Interesting	Difficult	Familiar	Useful	Interesting	Difficult	Familiar
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
FSL	5	23.51	4.24	3.33	53.58	10.49	5.55	2.22	14.93
Students	4	39.46	15.04	10.49	26.64	37.44	20.79	10.39	32.49
N = 993	3	24.12	30.88	28.66	12.61	32.09	34.21	26.54	30.07
	2	7.77	27.55	36.02	4.14	12.71	23.41	37.94	15.54
	1	3.03	20.18	19.27	0.71	3.83	12.41	19.37	3.43
ESL	5	25.36	8.18	2.42	37.02	18.47	7.65	2.27	20.51
Students	4	52.01	36.71	8.48	36.64	52.69	35.35	9.99	39.36
N = 1328	3	14.99	31.26	21.95	14.61	18.47	31.64	25.89	21.12
	2	3.94	14.46	34.22	6.36	5.90	16.43	32.70	13.02
	1	1.67	7.49	30.89	3.48	2.80	7.19	27.25	4.24
FSL	5	30.77	11.54	0	15.38	15.38	19.23	3.85	3.85
Teachers	4	24.62	23.08	15.38	65.38	57.69	53.85	7.69	50
N = 26	3	15.38	30.77	19.23	3.85	19.23	23.08	34.62	30.77
	2	11.54	26.92	53.85	7.69	3.85	0	42.31	11.54
	1	3.85	3.85	7.69	3.85	0	0	7.69	0
ESL	5	21.05	10.53	0	21.05	26.32	15.79	5.26	21.05
Teachers	4	47.37	31.58	10.53	42.11	52.63	57.89	10.53	52.63
N = 19	3	15.79	21.05	36.84	26.32	15.79	21.05	52.63	15.79
	2	10.53	26.32	42.11	10.53	5.26	5.26	26.32	10.53
	1	5.26	10.53	10.53	0	0	0	5.26	0

Likert scale:
5 = very useful, interesting, difficult, familiar.
4 = useful, interesting, difficult, familiar.
3 = somewhat useful, interesting, difficult, familiar.
2 = not very useful, interesting, difficult, familiar.
1 = not useful, interesting, difficult, familiar at all.

APPENDIX C

Answers to the question: "Which word comes immediately to your mind when you hear the word grammar?"

	Students		Teachers	
	ESL	FSL	FSL	**ESL**
Neutral answers (e.g., *workbook, exercises*)	N = 460* 73%	N = 615 69%	N = 17 65%	N = 8 36%
Negative answers (e.g., *useless, too difficult, boring*)	N = 167 26%	N = 255 28%	N = 8 31%	N = 7 32%
Positive answers (e.g., *easy, interesting*)	N = 10 2%	N = 32 4%	N = 1 4%	N = 7 32%
Total	N = 633	N = 895	N = 26	N = 22

* Number of comments made followed by the percentage of that specific type of comments as compared to the two others.