A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HOW ENGLISH TEACHERS’ BELIEFS AFFECT THEIR GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION

by

Athena Pualeilani Jackson

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Jessica Talada EdD, Committee Chair

James Swezey EdD, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe how beliefs about grammar affected the grammar instruction of 10 high school English teachers in central Florida. Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory of reasoned action guided the study since the theory shows the relationship between beliefs and actions. A phenomenological design with a transcendental approach was used, and data was collected through three methods: interviews, observations, and participant reflections. Data was analyzed according to Moustakas’ (1994) steps for data analysis. Data analysis included horizontalization, theme development, textural descriptions, structural descriptions, composite descriptions, and a synthesized essence of the experience.

Many participants admitted having limited knowledge of grammar because they did not receive much grammar instruction as children. Feelings toward grammar varied. Some expressed that grammar was an integral part of writing and communication, while one participant stated, “Grammar is just so eh, you know?” Another teacher compared trying to teach grammar to beating a dead horse: It was useless. There was no clarity or consensus on what learning and teaching grammar actually entailed, and it reflected in the pedagogical practices observed. The study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, so there were limitations to the observed teaching practices and data collected. The results of the research have practical implications for the implementation of Florida’s BEST standards that includes a comprehensive list of grammatical concepts. When asking English teachers to implement the new grammar standards, district and school leadership must consider teachers’ beliefs, past frustrations with teaching grammar, limited technical knowledge, and limited pedagogical knowledge specific to grammar, so that effective professional development can be designed and given.

Keywords: grammar, beliefs, instruction, theory of reasoned action, phenomenology
Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript to the woman to whom I owe everything: my mother. As a single, teenage mother from inconceivable circumstances, all the odds of being a successful woman were against her. With an astounding amount of perseverance, intelligence, and ambition, she achieved more success in her early life than most people who grew up in ideal conditions do in a lifetime. I can only credit my own success to having such a dedicated role model who taught me to never use obstacles or my circumstances as an excuse to not push forward.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Talada, for her guidance and support this last year. She was so kind and had such a beautiful energy from the moment I first reached out to her. There were many times when I felt a bit lost, but her reassurance was comforting, and for that, I will always be thankful. I would also like to thank Dr. Swezey, my other committee member. Dr. Swezey was actually my professor during the prospectus development, and without his direction and feedback, I know that I would not have been able to get through this process as quickly and successfully as I did.

I would also like to recognize the most unlikely of cheerleaders: my students. For the last year, I had students frequently ask me how my “book” was going. Of course, I tried to explain what a dissertation is, but they could not quite get past the idea that anyone would willingly sit down to write more than five pages. There was a beautiful reversal of roles where they, as students, supported and uplifted their teacher.
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List of Abbreviations

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)
Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
English Language Learners (ELL)
English as a Second Language (ESOL)
First Language (L1)
Kindergarten to 12th Grade (K-12)
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
Professional Development (PD)
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)
United Kingdom (UK)
United States (US)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The word “grammar” often has a negative connotation: It is viewed by many as elitist and archaic (de Castella, 2013). Grammar, however, is simply the set of rules that clarify how a language works, and all languages are subject to grammar (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). Many people born in Anglophone countries after the 1970s did not learn grammar formally in school, yet there is still a stigma surrounding the topic (Myhill & Watson, 2014). Grammar has made a comeback in English-speaking nations’ curriculums within the last decade (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; McCormack-Colbert et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015); however, after being largely absent from the English curriculum for nearly half a century, there is limited research on the topic. This chapter will lay the foundation for the focus on English teachers’ beliefs and how those beliefs affect their grammar instruction. This chapter will begin with background information on the historical and social aspects of grammar education. Information presented will also include an explanation of theoretical frameworks researchers have used to examine the topic. Then, I will describe my personal interest and stake in the topic, including a discussion of my philosophical beliefs. There will be a rationale for using the interpretivist research paradigm for the study. The focus will be narrowed down and lead to the identification of the research problem. There will be a brief description of the purpose of the phenomenological study and explanation of Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory of reasoned action (TRA), which was the basis for this study’s theoretical framework. The chapter will include a description of the study’s empirical, theoretical, and practical contributions. The research questions will be presented and connected to the theoretical framework. Finally, the chapter will conclude with definitions of key terms and a summary of the chapter.
Background

Grammar education has had a contentious history in the field of education (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Watson, 2015). Boivin et al. (2018) noted there has been little current research related to grammar for native English speakers, and they postulated that this was due to negative, perpetuated assumptions about grammar education. It is necessary to understand why grammar is a contested subject before examining some of the current research in which my study was situated.

Historical Context

In classical education, grammar was rigorously studied (Knight, 2006); in fact, secondary school in ancient Rome was called *grammaticus* (Gutek, 2011). Quintilian, a Roman educational philosopher, felt it was necessary to thoroughly understand grammar before pursuing studies in rhetoric (Gutek, 2011). Quintilian believed that a better understanding of language and ability to manipulate language allowed people to communicate more effectively (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). After the standardization of the English language in the 17th century, English grammar replaced the long-held practice of teaching Latin grammar as a primary focus in education (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). The actual methods for teaching English grammar also carried over from Latin education, especially with the focus on rote memorization of grammatical rules (Schenck, 2017; Spada, 2018). Until the mid-19th century, grammar was a significant part of the curriculum in the United States (US); there was a minor decline in grammar education in the later 19th century, but it received a renewed interest in the early 20th century (Lyman, 1922). Educators continued to practice traditional grammar instruction until the mid-20th century, which was when the educational system in the US experienced some of its most drastic changes.

American education had a tremendous shift in the 1960s due, in part, to the interest in
John Dewey’s educational theories (Hahl, 2013; Knight, 2006). One of the changes in education during this time was the move away from grammar instruction (Hahl, 2013; Schenck, 2017). The benefits of grammar instruction came into question as educators noted that simply having knowledge of grammatical rules did not necessarily result in better communication (McCormack-Colbert et al., 2018; Schenck, 2017). As grammar instruction became less common, English teachers focused on authentic communication skills (Schenck, 2017). In the 1980s, communicative language and whole-language teaching, which focus on fluency and effective communication, became the dominant practices and are still widely used in English classes today (Spada, 2018). Gartland and Smolkin (2016) contended, however, that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) returned some prescriptive grammar to the US because the language standards specify adherence to standard English conventions.

Most English-speaking countries went through similar changes in their educational systems, with almost all other English-speaking countries also ending grammar instruction in the mid-20th century (McCormack-Colbert et al., 2018). Half a century has passed since grammar was largely removed from the curriculum in most English-speaking countries, but in the last decade, nations like England and Australia reassessed the role of grammar in English education and reintegrated grammar into their national curriculums (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015). The return of grammar to the English curriculum raised a major concern: Many teachers today never received grammar instruction, so many teachers may be unable to teach it (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018). This renewed attention also caused former controversy and concerns to resurface (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015).
Theoretical Context

Some recent research on grammar education has focused on teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about the topic; however, most of the research was conducted outside the US, most of it related to English as a second or foreign language, and most of the studies used quantitative or mixed-methods designs. Although all research should have a strong theoretical basis, the use of theoretical frameworks in mixed-methods research is still evolving (Alavi et al., 2018). Few of the studies I found related to English teachers’ perceptions on grammar education used solid theoretical frameworks, which could have been due to their research designs. Although there were some limitations to these, there were three recent empirical studies closely related to the research I conducted.

In the UK, Watson (2015) conducted a case study examining a secondary English teacher’s reported beliefs on grammar and how those espoused beliefs affected pedagogical practice. Watson’s (2015) theoretical framework was based on the breakdown of the words belief and espouse. The term belief was primarily based on Borg’s concept of cognition, which Watson (2015) determined was comprised of a person’s “knowledge, values, and beliefs” (p. 334). Watson (2015) used Argyris and Schon’s definition of espoused “to characterise the beliefs articulated by the participant” (p. 335). Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) surveyed secondary English teachers in Australia with closed and open-ended questions. The aim of the research was to assess how well teachers felt they could teach grammar. Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) also framed their study with a breakdown of a key term: knowledge of language. Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) first examined the relational approach, which basically means that different aspects of a subject are interrelated and build on each other, in English education; from there, Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) used that same process to examine the concept of knowledge of language
and build their research questions. One of the more in-depth studies on teachers’ views on grammar was conducted in the UK using a mixed-methods design. Cushing (2019) first surveyed primary through secondary teachers on their views of grammar teaching. Cushing (2019) then conducted follow-up interviews with 24 secondary English teachers. Cushing (2019) did not identify a clear theoretical framework for the study, but the qualitative data was analyzed using Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) model on metaphor structure.

Three studies related to my focus were done in the UK and Australia. The research I conducted added to the gap of American teachers’ perspectives on the topic. There was also a lack of research that used an established, strong theoretical framework to examine the phenomenon. The research I conducted used Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) updated TRA and Borg’s (2003b) concept of teacher cognition as the theoretical framework. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) developed their original theory in 1980, and they spent decades applying their theory to research in various disciplines. The theoretical framework in Watson’s (2015) case study was partially based on Borg’s teacher cognition theory; there are overlapping ideas between the TRA and the concept of teacher cognition. Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory suggested that people’s intentions to perform behaviors are determined by behavioral, normative, and control beliefs; Watson’s (2015) definition of cognition included people’s “knowledge, values, and beliefs” (p. 334). In both the TRA and Watson’s (2015) concept of cognition, the three factors do not necessarily carry equal weight; the weight is dependent on each individual. This flexibility allowed the frameworks to be applied to the examination of various perspectives.

Social Context

The changes in grammar education were deeply rooted in the social concerns of the mid-20th century. The US was in the midst of significant social changes with events such as the
Supreme Court ruling on the desegregation of schools, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War. There were growing concerns with the effects of teaching standard English to students from families that did not speak standard English at home (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). In 1966, researchers at the Dartmouth Conference presented evidence negating the efficacy of grammar instruction (Myhill, 2018), which would have heightened the already existing apprehensions. Through the 1960s and 1970s, the critical-pedagogy theorist Freire (1970) argued that education was being used to manipulate and control minority groups. The teaching of standard English was viewed as a discriminatory practice that intended to control and demoralize different racial groups, so in 1974, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) published a statement condemning grammar instruction (Hahl, 2013). During that time, even traditional grammar schools in England began to close due to concerns about educational equality, discrimination, and social justice (Morris & Perry, 2017).

Social injustice and the poor treatment of minority groups are still a pervasive issue. Poor literacy rates in the US can be considered a form of social injustice (Weeden, 2019). Students with disabilities are scoring, on average, three years behind in reading compared to non-disabled students (Gilmour et al., 2019), and minority groups and socioeconomically-disadvantaged students are still considerably underperforming in reading (de Brey et al., 2019). The consequence of poor literacy in the nation is serious: There is a very strong connection between functional illiteracy and crime – with approximately 75% of incarcerated young adults being classified as functionally illiterate (Weeden, 2019). Grammar education may have been removed for valid social concerns in the 1970s; however, more recent research showed that teaching students the elements of language improves students’ economic mobility and provides them more career opportunities (Ajayi, 2016; Garland & Smolkin, 2016). England started funneling
money back into the development of traditional grammar schools in recent years, but the move was still met with criticism because of the pervading belief that grammar education is elitist and excludes certain groups of students (Morris & Perry, 2017).

**Teachers’ Role in Social Concerns**

Teachers care about social justice for their students, which teachers believe to mean “equal access to resources and equal treatment” (Lee, 2011, p. 3). When it comes to grammar education, teachers have been placed in a difficult situation where the continued controversy and social concerns seem at odds with the newer educational mandates. Brass (2014) noted that for many years, social-cultural philosophies dominated the field of English education because they recognized and valued the language of minority groups who were belittled by the beliefs in more traditional linguistic and psychological philosophies of language. For decades, educators were told that teaching grammar was useless and dismissive of minority students, but more recent research found that grammar is a key component of literacy education (Jean & Simard, 2013; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Schenck, 2017; Watson, 2015). Brass (2014) argued, “These ongoing shifts in academic research and theory…have made it harder for teacher educators, teachers and graduate students to stay abreast of the field’s proliferating theories, languages, practices and subject positions” (p. 125). Teachers are now expected to integrate grammar into literacy instruction and rapidly adjust their beliefs about the connection between grammar and social injustice. Even though knowledge of grammar is an important part of students’ literacy (Jean & Simard, 2013; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Schenck, 2017; Watson, 2015), teachers reported being unsure of how to approach teaching grammar and received little support in implementing the new addition to the curriculum in places where it was reintegrated (Cushing, 2019; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018).
**Situation to Self**

I recently completed my 11th year of teaching, nine of which I spent teaching English. I have taught English in three countries— the United States, Mexico, and Korea, and I have worked with students in five countries (adding Canada and Zambia to the previous list). As an English teacher, it is no surprise that I am interested in literacy and grammar, but my experiences with students around the world compared to my experiences with American students have really highlighted some of the deficiencies I believe exist in the English curriculum in the United States. A researcher’s worldview ultimately influences how research is conducted and interpreted (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Many of my life experiences and philosophical beliefs influenced the selection of my research focus, and they influenced the decisions I made while conducting my research. According to Knight (2006), philosophical beliefs can be categorized into three major focuses: “the nature of truth and knowledge,” “the nature of reality,” and the “questions of value” (p. 9).

I believe that knowledge can be acquired both through direct and indirect experiences. People learn through what they directly experience, but people also pick up knowledge by what they see and hear— whether from other people, books, videos, observations, etc. Just because something cannot be seen or heard, however, does not mean that it does not exist or cannot be learned. Knowledge exists beyond the senses simply by the fact that it is impossible for humans to know with certainty that something they do not see or hear cannot possibly exist. This idea that there is more to the world than what meets the eye is ontological in nature; for me, reality is a combination of what Knight (2006) termed “matter and spirit” (p. 18). The final aspect of my philosophical assumptions is axiological, which is belief on what is of value. As an educator, I constantly have to assess what is essential to teach my students in the limited time I have with
them. The term essential is subjective because it is based on what one believes is of value. I view essential as the knowledge needed to go out into the world and be a productive person, the knowledge needed to be able to cultivate and elevate oneself, and the knowledge needed to equip people with the power to stand up against mistreatment in the world. I tied these philosophical beliefs to my role as an educator because that role is an anchor of my identity. I think my epistemological and ontological beliefs aided me in my role as a researcher because I believe there is more to reality than what I can see or experience; as a phenomenological researcher, my role was to listen to other people’s realities and respect those realities as being true to them.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that qualitative researchers do not discover knowledge; qualitative researchers construct meaning of others’ experiences. Phenomenological research is based on a constructivist, or interpretive, paradigm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interpretivist paradigm seeks to understand the perspective of the subjects (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The epistemological underpinning of this paradigm is the existence of multiple realities that are context-bound (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My research employed a phenomenological design aimed at gathering data on teachers’ beliefs. The interpretive paradigm was appropriate for my research since I sought to understand my subjects’ perspectives; each subject’s perspective was based on his or her own reality and was based on his or her previous experiences with the phenomenon.

**Problem Statement**

Inadequate literacy education is a significant concern in the US (Weeden, 2019). In a recent national assessment of high school seniors, only 37% of students graduated reading proficiently; moreover, only 27% of students graduated writing proficiently (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2017). After decades of being absent from the curriculum
in English-speaking countries, grammar was reevaluated and acknowledged as a key component of literacy education (Jean & Simard, 2013; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Schenck, 2017; Watson, 2015). Recent research found that students’ literacy skills improved through direct instruction of broad grammatical elements, such as morphology (Gray et al., 2018; Helman et al., 2015), and focused grammatical concepts, such as subordinating and coordinating conjunctions (Hochman & Wexler, 2017). The renewed interest in grammar instruction led Australia and the UK to reintegrate extensive grammar instruction into their national curriculums in the last decade (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014); although to a lesser extent than other countries, the CCSS in the United States also integrated elements of grammar (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016; Myhill, 2018).

The problem is that teachers’ beliefs on grammar influence their instructional practices. Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) found that teachers believe grammar is an important component of English education, yet teachers admitted to insecurities in teaching it. Not only can teachers’ perceptions on grammar affect their pedagogical practices (Watson, 2015), but teachers’ lack of grammatical knowledge was also identified as a possible impediment to effectively teach it (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill, 2018; Watson, 2015). While these concerns have been somewhat addressed by researchers, Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) noted that there is still a need for a deeper qualitative study of teachers’ “actual knowledge and capacity to turn this knowledge into pedagogic” practice (p. 310).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe how beliefs about grammar affect the grammar instruction of 10 English teachers in central Florida. Beliefs are generally defined as “a kind of knowledge that is subjective and experience-based”
(Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017), and grammar is generally defined as the set of rules that clarify how a language works (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). For a theoretical framework, I used Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) updated TRA, which proposes that people’s behaviors are determined by behavioral, normative, and control beliefs, and Borg’s (2003b) theory on teacher cognition. The theories are fitting to examine the phenomenon in my research because the theories show the relationship between beliefs and actions, and I sought to describe teachers’ beliefs about grammar and how those beliefs translated into instructional practice.

**Significance of the Study**

Due to limitations of current research related to my topic, my research has some empirical and theoretical significance. My research also has some practical significance because of upcoming changes to Florida’s English standards.

**Empirical Significance**

This study added to the body of empirical research on the topic of grammar education for native English speakers. While Watson (2015) and Cushing (2019) studied teachers in the UK, and Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) studied teachers in Australia, there was a lack of research on English teachers’ perspectives from the US, which is a gap my research filled. Also, much of the data from previous research has been limited by the research designs used. Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) acknowledged that their research examined little more than surface-level perceptions because they only gathered data through a survey. A qualitative design produces rich, in-depth data that can be better used to explain the complex nature of experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
**Theoretical Significance**

My study also added to the body of research that has used Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) TRA as a framework. The theory has been used to guide both quantitative and qualitative research in the field of education. For example, Jones (2020) used the TRA to guide a quantitative study on online professors’ likelihood of using social media for their courses. Garner (2016) used the theory as the theoretical framework on a phenomenological study examining teachers’ lived experiences in teaching students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. There had been no other study using the TRA as a framework for qualitative research related to grammar. Using the theory in a new context further supported Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) assertion that their theory can be applied to the study of any topic.

**Practical Significance**

My research has practical value. It was important that this research was conducted in the US because the educational system in the US works differently than in other countries producing research on the topic. It was also important that this research took place in Florida because the Florida Department of Education (2020) published new standards to be adopted by the 2022-2023 school year, and those standards included a comprehensive list of grammatical concepts students must master each year. The last time teachers in Florida experienced a major change in standards was with the adoption of CCSS. When CCSS were implemented, teachers reported feeling ill-prepared to teach the standards because the training they received did not meet their needs (Gewertz, 2014). Teachers also complained about their lack of input and control over their teaching when CCSS were executed (Brass, 2014; Moni et al., 2014). Since there are new changes specifically related to grammar standards coming to Florida, it will be useful to have a better sense of teachers’ beliefs on the subject. As the state transitions to new standards,
understanding teachers’ beliefs will help district and school leaders make more informed decisions on professional development (PD) and support resources for English teachers.

**Research Questions**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) pointed out that researchers cannot examine every aspect of a topic in one study. Researchers must narrow down the “most significant factors to study” and formulate three to four research questions to address those factors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 78). Research questions are essential because they guide the study, and they also influence data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Central Question: How do English teachers’ beliefs affect their teaching of grammar?

The central question was framed according to the basic premise of the TRA. According to Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) theory, people’s behaviors are determined by their beliefs. The central question addressed the purpose of the study, which was to understand the connection between teachers’ beliefs and teaching. The sub-questions were to address the specific components outlined in the theory, which are behavioral, normative, and control beliefs.

Sub-Question 1: What are English teachers’ behavioral beliefs about grammar?

The first sub-question guided the examination of participants’ behavioral beliefs. Behavioral beliefs are the attitudes people have toward the intended behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), which in this case was learning and teaching grammar. The participant in Watson’s (2015) case study had a negative attitude toward grammar, and Watson (2015) determined that this negative attitude greatly affected how the participant approached grammar instruction. That study only focused on one teacher, so I thought it would be valuable to examine many teachers’ attitudes to better understand the overall phenomenon.

Sub-Question 2: What are English teachers’ normative beliefs about grammar?
The second sub-question was intended to help me understand teachers’ normative beliefs on the topic. Normative beliefs are what people perceive is the norm for the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). For example, some of the social concerns on grammar instruction from the mid-20th century were possibly pervasive in the English-teaching community, or less experienced teachers may have looked to experienced teachers for an idea of how to approach grammar.

Sub-Question 3: What are English teachers’ control beliefs about grammar?

The aim of the third sub-question was to gain insight on participants’ control beliefs. Control beliefs are what people think they have control over in relation to the behavior, such as ability level or environmental factors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). For example, a better understanding of participants’ knowledge of grammar from their own childhood education could elucidate some of the perceived ability levels teachers have with the subject.

Definitions

1. Beliefs- Beliefs are “a kind of knowledge that is subjective and experience-based” (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017).
2. Cognition- Teacher cognition is what “what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003b, p. 81).
3. Grammar- Grammar is “a set of rules that explain how a system operates” (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016, p. 391).
4. Literacy- On a basic level, it is the ability to read and write, but more complex definitions are emerging to include other types of text, such as visuals and digital mediums (Siegel & Valtierra, 2017).
5. Self-efficacy- Self-efficacy refers to “people’s beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning” (Bandura, 1994, p. 14).
Summary

Grammar is an element of literacy education that has received renewed attention, and it has been reintegrated into English-speaking countries’ curriculums. Teachers in those countries, however, encountered many issues with their own knowledge of the content and the pedagogy. Until now, there had been a lack of research on how English teachers in the United States felt about grammar and teaching it. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand English teachers’ beliefs on grammar and how those beliefs affected their teaching practices. Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) TRA informed the inquiry into teachers’ beliefs and the resulting actions because of those beliefs. This study contributed to the empirical body of research by giving a new perspective from teachers in the US. The research implemented a new application of the theory of reasoned action. Furthermore, there are practical contributions with this research that could help educational leaders in Florida prepare teachers for the coming changes to the state’s standards.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Before conducting research, it was first necessary to know what other researchers had examined and discovered about my topic. Having a thorough understanding of the literature helped pinpoint a gap in the literature to address, and it helped in explaining the significance of my study filling in that gap. In qualitative research, it is also necessary to situate a study within a theoretical framework. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that a theoretical framework can be thought of as a lens through which a problem is studied; it not only helps narrow the focus of the problem, but it also helps provide structure to that focus. This chapter will begin with an explanation of Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) TRA, which was used as a theoretical framework to examine how teachers’ beliefs affect their instruction. Since the TRA had not been used in previous research to examine grammar instruction specifically, the theoretical framework also integrated Borg’s (2003b) theory on teacher cognition, which has several overlapping concepts with the TRA; furthermore, Borg’s (2003b) theory has been applied extensively to research on grammar instruction.

The second half of the chapter will include a review of the literature related to grammar instruction and teachers’ beliefs on grammar instruction. The review of the literature will begin with an overview of language acquisition theories and how those theories affect grammar education. Then, the literature review will move on to research that connects teachers’ beliefs with their teaching practices, including various explanations of why stated beliefs and practices do not always align. The chapter will then narrow down the focus to the specific topic of research, which is teachers’ beliefs and practices related to grammar. There will be a thorough examination of the literature in different contexts, which will lead to an explanation on what gaps
exist. Finally, I will explain how my study addressed a gap in the literature and may contribute to the body of research on the topic.

**Theoretical Framework**

In qualitative research, a theoretical framework is used to help understand the phenomenon being studied (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Since I studied the connection between teachers’ beliefs and instructional practice, I had to find an established theory that clearly showed the connection between beliefs and actions. Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) updated TRA includes considerations of various factors that lead to peoples’ behaviors, and it is deemed applicable to the study of human behavior in any field. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) noted that over 1,000 empirical studies in scholarly journals used the TRA since its initial design in 1975. The TRA has been used extensively in educational research to examine the connection between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices. Since the TRA had not been utilized to study the topic of grammar instruction, it was also necessary to find an overlapping theory that has been used specifically in the context of grammar. Borg’s (2003b) framework for teachers’ cognition connects to the TRA in several ways, and it has been used to examine language teachers’ beliefs and practices in teaching grammar.

**Theory of Reasoned Action: Origin and Major Theorists**

Fishbein and Ajzen, who are both research psychologists, coauthored a book in 1975 that laid the theoretical framework for what they would later call the TRA (Fishbein & Azjen, 2010). The original framework for the TRA was based largely on learning and attitude theories from the field of social psychology (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). At the time, social psychology theories were categorized as behavior theories and cognitive theories (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The learning theories of mid-century psychologists, like Hull, Spence, and Tolman, were “explained
in terms of two basic conditioning paradigms,” which could be classified into the behavior or cognitive theories (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 22). Doob’s attitude theory was key to the overall formation of the TRA: Doob’s theory suggested that people’s attitudes are simply responses to stimuli (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The original premise of the TRA was that people’s attitudes toward a behavior could predict their intentions of carrying out the behavior.

After coauthoring another book in 1980, Fishbein and Ajzen took different paths with their research. In 1991, Ajzen, developed an extension to the TRA called the theory of planned behavior (TPB). The TPB included “the notion of perceived behaviour control,” which was absent in the TRA (Mulholland & Cumming, 2016, p. 94). The development of the TPB came at a time when experts in the field of social psychology were trying to create a unified list of variables that determine behavior, especially in the context of the HIV health crisis of the 1980s and 1990s (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Major theorists in psychology, including Bandura, came together to determine what variables influence people’s behaviors. Using their experience from many years of practical and theoretical application of TRA, the extension TPB, and the further development of theories in social cognitive psychology, Fishbein and Ajzen revised their TRA and published an updated book in 2010.

**Revised Theory of Reasoned Action**

On the most basic level, the revised TRA proposes that people’s behavioral, normative, and control beliefs lead to a behavior. Because people’s beliefs are often complex and multifaceted, the TRA includes other factors that influence a person’s actions (See Figure 1). Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) noted that the various factors and beliefs included in the model do not carry an equal weight in determining behavior; the influence each belief has on the final behavior is dependent on the individual and on the context. The initial consideration in the model is a
person’s background factors; those factors, such as personality and education, influence beliefs. Behavioral beliefs affect a person’s attitude toward a behavior, and that attitude is simply explained as a positive or negative feeling toward completing the behavior (Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Normative beliefs influence what a person perceives to be the norm for the intended behavior (Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Control beliefs are based on personal and environmental factors a person thinks will allow them to complete or not complete the behavior (Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). This is linked to self-efficacy beliefs, which were developed by the social-cognitive psychologist, Bandura (Barni et al., 2019). The combination of these beliefs does not directly result in behavior; instead, those beliefs create an intention for that behavior. A crucial step added to the framework was the factor of actual control people have in relation to the behavior.

Figure 1

Note. Figure is from Fishbein and Ajzen (2010)

**Control Beliefs and Self-Efficacy**

As noted in the previous section, control beliefs are linked to self-efficacy beliefs. The concept of self-efficacy was developed by Bandura from his social-cognitive theory on behavior.
(Bandura, 1994; Barni et al., 2019; Erdem & Demirel, 2007), and Bandura contributed to the unifying theory of behavior Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) later developed. Bandura (1994) described self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning” (p. 14); the use of the words belief and control shows the clear connection between Bandura’s work and the TRA. Self-efficacy is a key idea in which to focus when it comes to applying the TRA to an educational setting because teacher self-efficacy has been widely researched (Barni et al., 2019). In an educational context, self-efficacy “refers to a teacher’s belief in his/her ability to successfully cope with tasks, obligations and challenges related to his/her professional role” (Barni et al., 2019, p. 2). Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy affects their teaching practices (Erdem & Demirel, 2007), just as control beliefs impact action in the TRA.

Teacher self-efficacy is largely shaped by teachers’ own experiences, others’ experiences, social influence, and emotional reactions (Bandura, 1994; Erdem & Demirel, 2007), but factors, such as personal values, also influence teachers’ self-efficacy (Barni et al., 2019). All these influences on self-efficacy are also found in the TRA model, but self-efficacy research provides a narrower lens in which to examine the role of control beliefs in teachers’ actions. Teachers within high-performing schools have higher levels of self-efficacy compared to teachers at lower-performing schools, who believe that external factors are too much to overcome (Chambers & Hausman, 2014). Research revealed that teachers are unlikely to persevere through difficult tasks when they believe they have little control over a situation (Chambers & Hausman, 2014). Understanding this connection between teachers’ actions and their perceived control and/or self-efficacy will be illuminating when examining research on teachers’ beliefs and actions later in this chapter.
Theory of Reasoned Action in Educational Research

Both the TRA and TPB have been used extensively in educational research to study the connections between teachers’ beliefs and actual practices (Mulholland & Cumming, 2016). For example, Kurup et al. (2019) developed a questionnaire on teachers’ intentions of adopting science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) practices using the TRA; they found that model was useful in identifying clear connections between teachers’ beliefs and intentions. Barman and Barman (2016) successfully applied the TRA to a study on teachers’ adoption of problem-based learning. Much of the research using the TRA has been to examine teachers’ adoption of technology. The technology acceptance model (TAM) is based off the TRA and Bandura’s social-cognitive theory (Salleh, 2016), and it has been used successfully to examine English-language teachers’ behaviors in using technology to teach (Huang, 2017; Liu et al., 2017; O’Neill et al., 2018; Teo et al., 2016).

There have been numerous criticisms on applying the TRA to educational research. Basikin (2019) found that subjective norms were a significant predictor of behavior, but statistical analysis showed that attitudes were not. While the researcher acknowledged that the study focused only on one particular group of teachers with one intention, the researcher failed to recognize Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) remark that factors in the model carry different weights for different people and in different contexts. In that particular context, attitudes were not significant. Salleh (2016) also found that the various factors within the TAM, which is rooted in the TRA, were weak predictors of teachers’ technology use. A meta-analysis of 45 studies that used the TAM, however, determined that the TAM was a valid model for predicting teachers’ behaviors (Scherer & Teo, 2019).
Mulholland and Cumming (2016) argued that the TRA is not adequate for special education research because attitudes and beliefs are far too complex; however, they were working off an older model that did not thoroughly address various aspects of beliefs and attitudes. In a similar sense, Perrotta (2015) criticized the use of behavior models, like the TRA, because they are too restrictive and too linear; people are more complex, so their behaviors need to be studied on an individual basis. These are valid concerns, and within quantitative research, many of the nuances of people’s beliefs and behaviors could definitely be lost. Some of those concerns were addressed by using a phenomenological research design with rich qualitative data collection.

**Theory of Reasoned Action and Grammar Instruction**

While the TRA had been used to study English teachers’ beliefs and practices (e.g. Hidayat et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017; O’Neill et al., 2018), it had not been used as a framework for research on grammar instruction. The TRA has been used to explain and predict behaviors in various contexts that are often controversial, such as discriminatory behaviors and the HIV epidemic (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Considering the controversial nature of grammar, as discussed in the first chapter, it was prudent to select a flexible model for predicting behaviors when beliefs can vary greatly between people. The intention was also to reveal its suitability for examining behaviors in a context where control factors are often an issue. The fact that the TRA had not been used to examine grammar instruction specifically, however, meant that there was a limitation within the initial theoretical framework. To address that limitation, I also integrated Borg’s (2003b) theory on teacher cognition into the theoretical framework.
Teacher Cognition

Teacher cognition is defined as “what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003b, p. 81). Borg (2003b) postulated that teacher cognition is comprised of teachers’ schooling, professional education, teaching experience, and contextual factors (See Figure 2). There are clearly overlapping features of teacher cognition and the TRA, such as the focus on beliefs and factors influencing those beliefs. While the TRA was developed and initially studied in the broad context of social psychology (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), Borg’s (2003b) examination of teacher cognition was situated in the context of language teaching. Borg (1999a) evaluated theories related to grammar instruction after conducting research on English language teachers’ use of grammatical terms in the classroom (see Borg, 1999b), and that evaluation led to the identification of some early elements in teacher cognition.

Figure 2

Note: Figure is from Borg (2003b)
**Teacher Cognition and Language-Related Instruction**

Borg (2003a) connected teacher cognition to teachers’ decision making in the classroom; essentially, teachers’ beliefs and thoughts impact their instructional choices. When it comes to language instruction, educators’ teaching practices are influenced by their own language experiences, their beliefs about grammar, and students’ knowledge (Borg, 2003a). Borg (2003a) noted that teachers’ cognition about grammar instruction is highly complex, and in a later work, Borg (2018) highlighted the complexity further by remarking that teachers have countless beliefs, and those beliefs hold different, inconsistent weights in terms of influencing what and how teachers teach. This idea that beliefs hold different weights in determining action is another overlapping concept with the TRA. Several recent studies on language instruction in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context have used Borg’s theory on cognition (See Alharbi, 2019; Alsuhaibani, 2019; Bao, 2019; Yenesew, 2019). Furthermore, numerous researchers have used Borg’s concept of teacher cognition in research examining teachers’ beliefs and practices with grammar instruction in EFL classes (See Al-Qutaiti & Ahmad, 2018; Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Jerome & Samuel, 2017; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Sato & Oyanedel, 2019).

**Related Literature**

To better understand the connection between teachers’ beliefs about grammar and their instructional practices, it is helpful to first understand theories on language acquisition that have impacted grammar education. As defined in the first chapter, grammar is “a set of rules that explain how a system operates” (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016, p. 391), and in this context, the system is language. Despite providing a concrete definition, it is important to note that grammar is defined in many different ways because of varying views on what actually constitutes the
grammar of a language (Myhill, 2018). The differing definitions of grammar stem from differing views on language acquisition.

**Language Acquisition Theories**

The dominant theories for language acquisition are typically divided into two categories: people learn either through “innate ability” or experience (Tsvetkova, 2019, p. 79). In the 1960s, the renowned linguist Noam Chomsky claimed that people are born with an innate ability to learn a language (Chomsky, 1988; Tsvetkova, 2019). The social psychologist Piaget believed that language was learned through experience, and similarly, the social-cultural psychologist Vygotsky thought that language was learned through social interaction (Tsvetkova, 2019). These theories on language acquisition influenced each theorist’s respective ideas about the role of language in communication. Chomsky (1988) looked at language as a system that could be broken down into grammatical structures like phonology, syntax, and semantics. Social theories of language focused less on the structures of the language and looked more to the function of language in communication (Tsvetkova, 2019; van Rijt & Coppen, 2017).

This dichotomous view of language acquisition influenced the dichotomous nature of grammar theories (Myhill, 2018). Language instruction is either about accuracy (prescriptive) or about meaning (descriptive) (Myhill, 2018). Grammar education is either deductive or inductive (Jean & Simard, 2013). In reality, the theories on language acquisition and grammar are not necessarily as oppositional as they are made to be. For example, Chomsky (1988) acknowledged, “The actual use of language obviously involves a complex interplay of many factors of the most disparate sort, of which the grammatical processes constitute only one” (p.10). Unfortunately, the position of grammar instruction in Anglophone nations during the 20th century went from one
side of the dichotomy to the other, and it is only in the last two decades that the negative results of ignoring grammar for so long have started to be acknowledged (van Rijt & Coppen, 2017).

**Grammar in English Education**

Grammar has been an undervalued area in English education for decades (Myhill, 2018). As discussed in the first chapter, since the second half of the 20th century, English grammar instruction was regarded as an ineffective – and even a detrimental – focus in ELA. In the last decade, the UK, Australia, and the US reintegrated grammar, at least to some extent, into their English curriculums; however, it should be noted that the term “grammar” is not even used in all the standards, rather, grammatical concepts are referred to as metalanguage and language respectively in the UK and US curriculums (Myhill, 2018). The renewed interest in the last decade to reintegrate grammar into English-speaking countries’ curriculums has been concurrent with a rise in literature about the efficacy of teaching grammar to native English speakers. While controversies and contradictions still exist in the literature about how to teach grammar, research shows that teaching grammatical concepts can have a positive effect on students’ literacy skills (Collins & Norris, 2017; Gray et al., 2018; Hochman & Wexler, 2017; Jean & Simard, 2013; McCormack-Colbert et al., 2018).

Hochman and Wexler (2017) postulated that the poor literacy skills of US students are due to the pervasive notion that certain skills, like writing, are learned implicitly or vicariously through other learning processes. For example, Hochman and Wexler (2017) noted that many educators assume students will learn to write by reading. Reading and writing, however, are complex processes that require systematic, direct instruction (Hochman & Wexler, 2017). The fact that people learn grammar implicitly through language acquisition is also a reason some argue that direct grammar instruction is unnecessary (Tammenga-Helmantel et al., 2014;
Watson, 2015). The grammar people may learn implicitly, however, may not be the grammar that adheres to standard English. Gartland and Smolkin (2016) argued that while other dialects of English are legitimate and appropriate to use in certain contexts, it is necessary and beneficial for students to learn the grammar of standard English.

Research from the mid to late 20th century concluded that grammar instruction did not have a positive impact on literacy skills, but that research was rooted in the contradictory views of grammar:

None of the major studies have considered whether teaching grammar which explored the inter-relationship between grammar and shaping meaning in writing might lead to beneficial outcomes in writing performance, nor have they considered the role that classroom interaction might play in supporting transferable grammatical knowledge.

(Myhill, 2018, p. 9)

More recent researchers found that students’ writing skills improved when direct grammar instruction was integrated into the writing curriculum (Collins & Norris, 2017; Hochman & Wexler, 2017; McCormack-Colbert et al., 2018; Safford, 2016). The positive effects on students’ writing skills should not be surprising since knowledge of grammar is necessary to properly construct language (Hos & Kekec, 2015; Schenck, 2017). Myhill (2018) acknowledged that people learn language implicitly, but “explicit knowledge of grammar gives writers more conscious control and choice” (p. 5). McCormack-Colbert et al. (2018) argued that knowledge of grammar can help students with reading comprehension; furthermore, McCormack-Colbert et al. (2018) observed that students with dyslexia were able to learn foreign languages more easily after learning grammatical concepts.
The impact grammar instruction can have on reading, writing, and language learning is becoming an invaluable area for research. Literacy and communication skills, whether in written or oral form, are key aspects of everyday human life. Much of the communication done in today’s world is done through writing on digital platforms: E-mails, text messages, Facebook posts, etc. Without the ability to see or hear people as they communicate, the effectiveness of communication is largely determined by how well something is written. Because reading and writing are so deeply woven into most facets of everyday modern life, it is not surprising that “adult literacy contributes to personal empowerment, economic wellbeing, community cohesion and societal development” (McKay, 2018, p. 396). Knowledge of standard English, specifically, is connected to lasting success in education, which in turn leads to more career options and economic stability (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). Teachers play a central role in literacy instruction and development of communication skills, but how teachers view those components of literacy instruction, like grammar, can affect instructional practices.

Teachers’ Beliefs

Beliefs can be defined simply as “a kind of knowledge that is subjective and experience-based” (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). While the concept of beliefs and their definition may be straightforward, beliefs themselves are anything but simple. Other terms used synonymously with beliefs, such as “attitudes, perceptions, implicit theories, perspectives, opinions, and judgements” (Alsuhaibani, 2019, p. 723), reveal a multi-faceted concept reflective of the complex beings who espouse them. Teachers’ beliefs have been studied quite extensively, which is probably because there is evidence that teachers’ beliefs have one of the most significant impacts on what happens in the classroom (Alsuhaibani, 2019). Before examining the connection between beliefs and practices in relation to the narrower topic of my research –beliefs and
practices in teaching grammar—is necessary to first understand how teachers’ beliefs are formed.

How Teachers’ Beliefs Develop

There is no universally accepted definition of teacher beliefs or single explanation of how teachers’ beliefs are formed. Researchers even have conflicting ideas of what should and should not be considered a type of belief. Gilakjani and Sabouri’s (2017) definition of beliefs included the word knowledge, and they noted that teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge are aptly considered beliefs; however, Bannister (2016) separated the ideas of beliefs and knowledge, maintaining that “beliefs represent what is used as guidance in the absence of the knowledge” (p. 312). Despite some of the disagreements in what should and should not be considered a belief, there are four major factors that repeatedly appear in the literature on how teachers’ beliefs are formed: own educational experience (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Dos Santos, 2019; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017), content knowledge (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017), formal teacher training (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Berg & Smith, 2018; Dos Santos, 2019; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; McCrocklin, 2020), and teaching experience (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Berg & Smith, 2018; Dos Santos, 2019; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). These factors can fit into three major phases in an educator’s life: pre-teacher training, teacher training, and teaching.

Impact of Educational Experiences on Beliefs

People’s beliefs about education are molded and largely solidified during their school years (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Teachers’ personal experience with their own pre-college education is one of the most significant factors shaping their beliefs about education (Alsuhaibani, 2019), and as Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) noted, those preconceived ideas of education carry on to formal educator training. Those ideas then impact how that training is
filtered and received (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Pryor et al. (2016) argued that attempts to change teachers’ beliefs would have to be highly individualized since beliefs themselves are uniquely formed. Previous research seemed to support that notion since it indicated that formal teacher education did not cause any significant changes to teachers’ beliefs (Kavanz, 2017). More recent research, however, suggested that formal educator training can change pre-service teachers’ beliefs (Dos Santos, 2019; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Kavanoz et al., 2017; McCrocklin, 2020). While Alsuhaibani (2019) mentioned assertions from previous researchers that “teachers' beliefs are not rooted in theories of learning or teaching” (p. 723), Kavanoz et al. (2017) found that teacher education helped pre-service teachers “build links between theory and practice creating some changes in previous beliefs” (p. 131). What is evident is that experiences impact beliefs (Dos Santos, 2019; McCrocklin, 2020), so certain experiences within teacher preparation programs have the potential to impact beliefs. For example, McCrocklin (2020) noticed that pre-service teachers changed their thoughts on how to approach language instruction after participating in experience-based projects. In a study in New Zealand, pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs were tested before and after their student-teacher experiences, and there was a marked difference in self-efficacy beliefs after the practicum experience (Berg & Smith, 2018).

**Impact of Working in Education**

Even though there are, as stated earlier, differing opinions on what impacts teachers’ beliefs, every model and source included teaching experience as a factor. Teachers’ beliefs are often “context bound and situational” (Alsuhaibani, 2019, p. 723). Actual experience working in the classroom and educational system has been shown to affect teachers’ beliefs. Experience is a key factor in the development of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs since firsthand achievements or failures impact people’s attitudes (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018). School leaders are highly involved in
Teachers’ experiences and greatly influence teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Hallinger et al., 2017; Kin et al., 2018; Ninković & Florić, 2018; Thornton et al., 2020). Teachers “will struggle to accommodate dissonance between their current beliefs…and new expectations. Therefore, mastery experiences should be associated with…positive feedback, and coaching,” which is the role school administrators take (Thornton et al., 2020, p. 174). School leadership creates a school’s climate or culture, and it is “supportive cultures” that impact teachers’ beliefs on their individual and collective potential (Thornton et al., 2020, p. 171). Factors like leaderships’ attitudes (Hallinger et al., 2017) and styles play a role in the development of school culture, which in turn affect teachers’ beliefs (Kin et al., 2018; Ninković & Florić 2018). Even indirect leadership influences teachers’ beliefs, like policies and pressure placed on teachers for things like standardized testing, which causes teachers to develop negative beliefs about education (Gebril & Eid, 2019).

**English Teachers’ Beliefs**

Researchers have explored what influences English teachers’ beliefs, but most of that research has been done outside of Anglophone countries in the context of EFL. There are several consistencies between the formation of beliefs for teachers in general and English teachers specifically. One of the biggest influences on EFL teachers’ beliefs is their own experience learning English (Moodie, 2016; Oztruk, 2016; Rahman et al., 2017). English teachers in Korea claimed that their own English education experience impacted their beliefs on what they did not want to do as teachers (Moodie, 2016). EFL teacher preparation programs also have an impact on teachers’ beliefs (Kavanoz et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2017). Kavanoz et al. (2017) found that students finishing their EFL teacher preparation programs had different views on the best theoretical approaches for language instruction compared to freshman in the program; senior
students held more constructivist beliefs, whereas freshman tended to have more behavioristic beliefs. EFL teachers’ beliefs are also affected by subjective norms (Fajrinur, 2019; Teo et al., 2016). Fajrinur (2019) discovered that EFL teachers in Indonesia had positive beliefs related to teaching English, and positive support from peers was a contributing factor to that optimistic attitude.

Research on English teachers’ beliefs in English-speaking nations has been limited. The field itself is wrought with controversy and confusion: “Progressive [and] traditional oppositions have continued to influence mainstream conceptions of English teaching, divide the field, and structure how some teachers and teacher educators narrate experiences of professional conflict, tension, fragmentation and disjointedness” (Brass, 2014, p. 115). These conflicting ideas can be seen in the field through beliefs on how to teach core areas of the subject. For example, using lists for vocabulary instruction elicited either negative views from teachers who thought it was a dated practice or positive views from teachers who thought it was a practical approach (Bannister, 2016). Positive beliefs about teaching writing and about state standards were influenced by high levels of self-efficacy, content knowledge, and training to teach writing (Troia & Graham, 2016).

From Beliefs to Teaching Practices

Teachers’ beliefs are shaped through a complex set of experiences. While beliefs themselves are just abstract concepts within one’s head, those beliefs are no longer abstract when they manifest into actions. The connection between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices has been studied quite extensively. Teachers’ beliefs can outweigh many other factors when it comes to decisions on instruction (Alghanmni & Shukri, 2106; Alsuhaibani, 2019; Gilakjani &
Sabouri, 2017). Much of the literature on how teachers’ beliefs connect to their teaching practices can be examined through Fishbein and Azjen’s (2010) TRA.

**How Behavioral Beliefs Impact Teaching**

Behavioral beliefs “determine people’s attitude toward personally performing [a] behavior” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 43). Kumar and Lauermann (2018) found that teachers who were uncomfortable with students’ diversity were unlikely to modify teaching to meet diverse needs. Teachers are also likely to teach in alignment to philosophical or theoretical beliefs (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Motivation was found to be a bigger influence than teachers’ knowledge in impacting beliefs into teaching (Nghia, 2017).

**How Normative Beliefs Impact Teaching**

Normative beliefs play a big role in teachers’ instructional practices. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) explained, “If more important others are believed to approve than disapprove, and if the majority of important others perform the behavior, people are likely to perceive social pressure to engage in the behavior” (p. 43). While there are indications that peer teachers influence beliefs and practices (Huang, 2017; Supovitz et al., 2010), most of the normative beliefs examined by researchers revolved around leadership and policy. Dominant figures in schools, like principals, affect teachers’ decisions (Basikin, 2019; Supovitz et al., 2010). Policies—whether official or not—shape teachers’ beliefs and make them more “compliant” in their teaching practices (Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Basikin, 2019; Polesel et al., 2014).

**How Control Beliefs Impact Teaching**

Factors that can be categorized under control beliefs appeared most often in the literature examining beliefs and their impact on teaching. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) reasoned, “people…form beliefs about personal and environmental factors that can help or impede their
attempts to carry out the behavior” (p. 43). This was echoed by Altinsoy and Okan (2017) who noted that research shows that while teachers want to align their beliefs with their teaching, contextual factors impede them from doing so. Teachers commonly cited four factors that affected their control beliefs: time constraints (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Nghia, 2017), class sizes (Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Nghia, 2017; Suprayogi et al., 2017), limited resources (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Nghia, 2017), and curriculum limitations (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Altinsoy & Okan, 2017). One of the key concepts of control beliefs is self-efficacy (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Not surprisingly, self-efficacy was brought up repeatedly in research about teachers’ beliefs and actions. Teachers’ beliefs of self-efficacy influenced whether or not teachers were willing to implement inquiry-based learning activities (Voet & De Wever, 2019), differentiated learning (Suprayogi et al., 2017; Whitley et al., 2019), and technology (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Huang, 2017).

**Beliefs and Practices of English and Foreign Language Teachers**

As mentioned earlier, English teachers’ beliefs are impacted by their own educational experiences. Like teachers in general, English teachers’ beliefs affect how they teach their subject (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) stated, “Teachers make decisions about their classroom teaching regarding beliefs they have about language teaching and learning…[and] teachers’ beliefs have a great impact on their aims, procedures, their roles, and their learners” (p. 78). Research on English teachers’ beliefs and practices is quite extensive, but it has been largely focused on EFL teachers in non-English speaking countries. EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices are shaped by policy and their own handle on the language they are teaching (Flynn, 2015). EFL teachers are also impacted by their attitudes and biases against students (Altinsoy & Okan, 2017). Like all other teachers, EFL teachers’ practices are influenced by their
perceived ability to implement a lesson and contextual factors, such as class sizes and curriculum issues (Pilten, 2016).

Teachers’ thoughts on how languages are learned have a greater influence on their teaching practices than any theories or methods they are told to use (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). The biggest influence on beliefs about language learning is teachers’ own experience with learning another language. Albarbi (2019) found that despite Saudi Arabia implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) in 2004, teachers still use the traditional methods of teaching English with which they learned. In China, teachers’ beliefs and practices with corrective feedback matches more to traditional education in China than it does to methods teachers are suggested to use (Bao, 2019). In the UK, teachers of foreign languages were also found to approach writing instruction from the methods they were taught instead of utilizing more modern approaches (Anderson & Cuesta-Medina, 2019).

When EFL Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices Align

Out of 19 empirical studies on EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices, only three case studies found a strong link between teachers’ stated beliefs and actual classroom practices. The teachers in Mohtar et al. (2017) and Tuluce’s (2019) studies were experienced teachers with high levels of self-efficacy, which could account for those teachers’ abilities to align their beliefs and practices; however, the teacher in Jerome and Samuel’s (2017) study was a new teacher. The teachers in Jerome and Samuel (2017) and Mohtar et al.’s (2017) studies were skilled at giving feedback to help students learn and progress. Even though the teachers believed the students were low level, the teachers in Mohtar et al. (2017) and Tuluce (2019) did not use that as an excuse; instead, they acknowledged students’ levels and used it as a starting point for planning instruction.
There were four studies where teachers’ beliefs and practices aligned to a moderate extent. In Elgoudman and Yunus’s (2019) study, most of the teachers’ beliefs about integrating technology into literature instruction aligned with their practices, but there was one participant in the study who did not. The instructor in that study cited issues with student motivation as the reason (Elgoudman & Yunus, 2019). Guadu and Boersma (2018) observed that teachers had positive attitudes toward giving formative assessments, and quantitative data confirmed that most of the teachers’ beliefs aligned with their practices; however, when Guadu and Boersma (2018) factored in findings from qualitative data, the relationship was not quite as strong. Lan and Lam (2020) found that while the teacher’s beliefs and practices mostly aligned, the small incongruities were due to control factors, such as low-level learners. Setyaningrum (2018) studied teachers’ beliefs and implementation of CLT, and although most of the teachers had very strong, positive beliefs about CLT, implementation was not equally as strong for some. Setyaningrum (2018) determined that some teachers did not have the pedagogical knowledge and skills to implement CLT.

**When EFL Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices Do Not Align**

In most of the studies on beliefs and practices, teachers did not teach in alignment with their beliefs. There were numerous reasons for the lack of alignment, but there were overlaps between various studies. One of the most common reasons teachers’ practices did not align with their beliefs was because of practical reasons, like time constraints (Alharbi, 2019; Rahman et al., 2017; Terra, 2018). Chang (2020) and Phan (2018) both found that teaching demands made it difficult for teachers to align their practices with their beliefs. Students were another commonly cited reason for the incongruity (Chang, 2020; Phan, 2018; Shi et al., 2018); for example, the teachers in Chang’s (2020) study blamed students’ low motivation as a reason. Michel (2018)
and Hidayat et al. (2018) noted that a lack of resources was another common reason. The teachers in Hidayat et al.’s (2018) study also felt like they were not supported in what they believed should be taught. Not surprisingly, low efficacy was also cited in Gildalew (2018), Milton (2019), and Shi et al. (2018). Finally, limited experience and knowledge were another common reason for inconsistency between teachers reported beliefs and actual instructional practices (Hussain et al., 2019; Karimi & Dehghani, 2016; Shi et al., 2018).

**Beliefs and Practices of English Teachers in the US**

English teachers in the US are subject to great scrutiny (Moni et al., 2014). Teaching in an era of standardization and accountability has left English teachers with little autonomy in their teaching practices, which are driven largely by policy (Moni et al., 2014). Ajayi (2016) pointed out that the success of the CCSS rests largely on English teachers implementing it. Essentially, the expectation is that English teachers’ practices should align to the set standards, which does not appear to leave much room for the role of teachers’ beliefs. Ajayi (2016), however, noted that effective implementation of the standards rested on teachers’ knowledge, values, perceptions of different cultures, and confidence. Although Ajayi (2016) did not specifically label those factors as beliefs, they are all elements that would be factored into the TRA model. English teachers interviewed for Broemmel et al.’s (2020) research mentioned contextual factors, like district requirements and standards, as impediments to teaching according to their beliefs, but teachers’ practices were still driven by their individual perceptions. Normative beliefs were a factor in teachers’ practices as they mentioned looking to their colleagues for guidance on their own practices (Broemmel et al., 2020). Contextual factors and a poor sense of self-efficacy were also noted in a novice literacy teacher who felt like the realities of teaching led her to act in contradiction to her beliefs (Knotts, 2016).
It is evident that English teachers’ practices align more with their beliefs after more years of teaching (Broemmel et al., 2020), especially as new teachers may feel too “overwhelmed” to make that alignment or challenge the contextual factors affecting them (Knotts, 2016). This could be attributed to a rise in teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs as they gain more experience; however, efficacy beliefs do not change significantly once they are established (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018). Self-efficacy beliefs are “more amenable to change during the early phases of learning to teach” (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018, p. 459). Teachers’ beliefs are generally hard to change even after intervention (Broemmel et al., 2020; Jenkins, 20198; Wilkinson et al., 2017); Broemmel et al. (2020) postulated that English teachers’ alignment of beliefs and practices was due not to a change in beliefs but to a persistence to find teaching practices that aligned to the beliefs.

**Changing Teachers’ Beliefs**

Although much of the research presented thus far points to teachers’ beliefs being largely stagnant, there is research indicating that teachers’ beliefs can be changed in certain conditions. Teachers’ beliefs appear to be most malleable in pre-service education (Best, 2017; Florez & Basto, 2017; Sheridan, 2016) and in the first year of teaching (French, 2017). Best (2017) found that pre-service teachers’ pedagogical beliefs could be changed by providing pre-service teachers with immersive, hands-on practice of instructional concepts. In another study of pre-service teachers’ beliefs, 84% of the participants’ beliefs about teaching changed after their practicum (Florez & Basto, 2017). In both studies, the change in beliefs was caused by first-hand experience with the pedagogical concepts. First year teachers experience belief changes due to emotional stress that coincide with difficult, first-year developmental phases (French, 2017).
Changing experienced teachers’ beliefs is possible through effective PD (Vreys et al., 2018); it should be noted, however, that some researchers believe effective PD simply changes teaching practices, not beliefs (Wilkinson et al., 2017). Borg (2018b) argued that the belief change and practice change does not happen in one prescribed order: “prior belief change will stimulate subsequent change in practice, while in others it is only successful practical experience that will motivate changes in beliefs” (p. 84). Herrington and Daubenmire (2016) warned that one of the reasons traditional PD is rarely effective in changing teachers’ beliefs is because that is the focus of the PD. Many PDs are developed with the view that teachers are “technicians, workers who are supposed to follow a manual to produce student results” (Herrington & Daubenmire, 2016, p. 1). Effective PDs are developed with an awareness and acknowledgment of teachers’ beliefs, not a focus on trying to change those beliefs (Borg, 2011; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Er & Kim, 2017).

Borg (2011) noted that in the context of language teachers, they probably have little experience in addressing their own beliefs and may not fully understand why they are asked to do so. In addition to PDs taking the time to acknowledge beliefs, the design and the experience of the PD facilitator can have a big impact (Borg 2018a). PDs are more likely to change teachers’ beliefs when the PDs meeting teachers’ emotional and psychological needs (Aelterman et al., 2016). Professional collaboration during PDs is another important element (Borg, 2011). In very recent research applying Borg’s (2011) guidelines on effective PD for language teachers, teacher collaboration and reflection impacted teachers’ understanding and approach to grammar instruction (Collet & Greiner, 2020).
Grammar Instruction: Beliefs and Practices

Despite the fall away from teaching grammar in English-speaking countries, English grammar has been a staple of English education in the EFL context. There is a significant consensus from EFL teachers around the world on the importance of teaching English grammar to EFL students (Ahmad et al., 2017; Alghanmi & Shukri, 2016; Al-Qutaiti & Ahmad, 2018; Fitriyani et al., 2020; Hos & Kekec, 2015; Nurusus et al., 2015; Ong, 2017; Polat, 2017). Because grammar instruction never went away in the EFL context, much of the research done related to English grammar instruction has been abroad. The research done on the topic of grammar in the EFL context is important to consider for its potential relevance to grammar instruction in the US. Schenck (2017) aptly noted that while grammar has been absent from the US curriculum due in part to the belief that grammar is learned implicitly during first language (L1) acquisition, the policies failed to consider the increasing number of students in the US whose first language is not English. Although students learning English in the US are labeled as English language learners (ELL) or English as a second language (ESOL) students, English teachers in the US often assume the role of EFL teachers when they are teaching ELL.

Beliefs about Grammar

Beliefs about grammar are shaped by three key factors: personal experience with grammar, education, and formal knowledge of grammar (Alghanmi & Shukri, 2016). This is not surprising since it aligns with research on how language and English teachers’ beliefs are formed. While other research has found teachers’ beliefs to be a key influence on their teaching practices, research indicates that grammar instruction is especially sensitive to teachers’ established beliefs (Alghanmi & Shukri, 2016). Of all the factors that influence teachers’ beliefs
Beliefs about teaching grammar are usually dichotomous: Grammar instruction is thought to be either implicit or explicit, integrated or decontextualized, communication focused or form focused. Alghannmi and Shukri (2016) noted that there are inconsistent beliefs about grammar instruction in the EFL field since there are inconsistencies in methods and theories on language instruction. Liviero (2017) argued that theories on language learning have little influence on language teachers’ beliefs, and that their beliefs were already solidified before entering the profession. A review of the literature did reveal many inconsistencies in how EFL teacher think grammar should be taught.

More teachers believed that explicit grammar instruction should take precedence over implicit grammar instruction. Teachers in Alghannmi and Shukri’s (2016) study noted that while they thought implicit grammar instruction was better, many believed that explicit instruction is often necessary. Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) found that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy believed more in implicit instruction, whereas teachers with less experience believed in explicit instruction. Fitriyani et al. (2020) observed that teachers in Indonesia think explicit grammar is the better approach, and more specifically, Graus and Coppen (2016) stated that teachers think complex grammar is best taught explicitly. Only the teachers in Murtisari et al.’s (2020) study believed that most grammar instruction should be decontextualized, although they conceded that integration was sometimes suitable. The teachers in Ahmad et al. (2017) and Dos Santos’s (2019) studies believed more in integrated grammar instruction. Overall, most EFL teachers believe that grammar instruction should focus on improving students’ communication in English (Ahmad et al., 2017; Alghannmi & Shukri, 2016; Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Deng & Lin,
Few teachers believed that grammar instruction should be form-focused; Polat (2017) found that older teachers were more likely to believe in form-focused instruction. This could be due to the influence of their own language education since communicative approaches are more contemporary.

**Grammar in EFL: From Belief to Practice**

When teaching practices actually align with teachers’ beliefs about grammar, it is often because teachers have a higher sense of self-efficacy and more thorough knowledge and understanding of grammar (Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2019). Al-Qutaiti and Ahmad (2018) also found that teachers were more likely to teach grammar as desired when students were a higher level. In China, the curriculum changes to focus more on communication elements of English align with the beliefs teachers espouse (Deng & Lin, 2016), which Bao (2019) considered to be more social and student-centered.

Actual teaching practices in grammar, however, seem to be more decontextualized and form-focused (Ahmad et al., 2017; Dos Santos, 2019). Researchers in the field believe this actual practice is due to the pervasive “belief that form of grammar needs to be mastered first before its use can be learned, acquired or internalized” (Ahmad et al., 2017, p. 138). Reasons for not aligning grammar beliefs and practices are the same reasons teachers give in other contexts: time constraints (Ahmad et al., 2017; Alghannmi & Shukri, 2016; Dos Santos, 2019; Fitriyani et al., 2019), policy (Altinsoy & Okan, 2017), available materials (Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Alghannmi & Shukri, 2016), low-level students (Altinsoy & Okana, 2017; Alghannmi & Shukri, 2016; Fitriyani et al., 2019), and low self-efficacy (Ong, 2017).
Grammar in English-Speaking Countries

Despite there being an increase in grammar-related research, there has been relatively limited research in recent years on the role of L1 grammar instruction in Anglophone countries (Boivin et al., 2018). This lack of focus on English grammar instruction for L1 is likely due to the continued skepticism about the efficacy of grammar teaching (Boivin et al., 2018; Schenck, 2017). Watson (2015) maintained that the question now is not whether or not grammar should be taught; instead, the question is how it should be taught. While the debates and controversy surrounding grammar instruction have caused issues with its reimplemention, Boivin et al. (2018) argued that the most significant concern should be over teachers’ limited knowledge to actually implement any meaningful grammar instruction.

Beliefs about English grammar in the L1 context differ significantly from the EFL context. There is quite a bit of confusion among English teachers as to what grammar instruction even entails (Myhill & Watson, 2014). Teachers in the UK espouse overwhelmingly negative views about grammar (Bell, 2016; Cushing, 2019; Watson, 2015). Some English teachers believe grammar is tedious and takes time away from more important focuses in ELA (Cushing, 2019; Watson, 2015). In collecting quantitative data, Bell (2016) found that teachers made positive remarks about the value of grammar; however, in talking to teachers, Bell (2016) found that teachers voiced very different views. This inconsistency in teachers’ beliefs and confidence about grammar between the results of quantitative data and open-ended questions were also found in Macken-Horarik et al.’s (2018) research. The negativity toward grammar is made much clearer when considering that most teachers feel nervous about teaching grammar (Bell, 2016; Myhill & Watson, 2014), find grammar instruction challenging (Bell, 2016; Watson, 2015), have little knowledge of grammar (Bell, 2016; Cushing, 2019; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Watson,
2015), and have little confidence in teaching it (Cushing, 2019; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015). Cushing (2019) analyzed qualitative data for metaphor constructions and found that grammar is often compared to a rule book and a virus.

Myhill and Watson (2014) attributed many of the negative views to perpetuated beliefs stemming back to the 1960s and the condemnation of grammar teaching. Researchers also attribute the negative beliefs to teachers’ lack of knowledge of grammar (Bell, 2016; Cushing, 2019; Watson, 2015). A contributing factor to most English teachers not having much knowledge about grammar is that most English teachers have literature backgrounds (Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015). Most teacher-preparation programs in the UK and US do not include learning about grammar pedagogy (Cushing, 2019; Myhill & Watson, 2014). Watson (2015) recognized other factors harming implementation, such as contextual issues (classroom) and curriculum issues.

The only study that included actual observations of grammar teaching practices was in Watson’s (2015) case study. The teacher’s negative views reflected in teaching practices: She did not view grammar as a priority, and she approached grammar in a prescribed, decontextualized way (Watson, 2015). Teachers who have low self-efficacy for teaching grammar are “more likely to hold prescriptivist, rule-bound views of grammar” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 50). While very limited, there were some positive views of grammar from some English teachers who felt like grammar could help students better understand the language and use it to improve their writing, which aligns more to some of the emerging research about using grammar to help with rhetoric (Myhill & Watson, 2014).
Research on Grammar Instruction in the US

Grammar reemerged, albeit to a limited extent, in the US curriculum with the implementation of CCSS (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). The entire shift to CCSS was met with opposition, but there was particular criticism for some of the changes in ELA moving away from whole-language instruction (Ryan & Goodman, 2016). Gartland and Smolkin (2016) argued that integrating meaningful grammar instruction into ELA has the potential to benefit students both in their education and “socioeconomic mobility” (p. 392). While Gartland and Smolkin (2016) acknowledged the valid concerns and reasons teachers stopped teaching grammar in the first place, Gartland and Smolkin (2016) noted that there was no “replacement pedagogy …with the unfortunate consequence that many teachers today have had no firm grounding in this important language arts component” (p. 393). Like teachers in the UK and Australia, many American teachers are very weary of their ability to teach grammar (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). As a consequence, the language standards in CCSS that address grammatical components are often taught with worksheets. Gartland and Smolkin (2016) pointed out that teachers with little self-efficacy for teaching grammar tend to move more toward prescriptive grammar teaching, which aligns to the findings in Myhill and Watson (2014) and Watson (2015). Onalan (2018) claimed that teachers with low efficacy in teaching grammar simply avoid teaching it.

Gaps in the Literature

There was a general sense from the literature on how L1 English teachers felt about grammar instruction. There was little research, however, on how those beliefs translated to teaching practices. Watson (2015) and Cushing (2019) conducted qualitative research on teachers’ beliefs about grammar and discussed pedagogy; however, those studies were done in the UK, and only Watson’s (2015) research included any observations of teaching. There were
no in-depth studies of American English teachers’ beliefs on grammar, and there were no studies on how those beliefs translated to teaching practice. Watson (2015) called for further study of how teachers’ beliefs translated into practices because “While there is a developing body of work which explores teachers’ attitudes to grammar, there have been limited attempts to investigate how these attitudes influence pedagogy” (p. 334). Nurusus et al. (2015) also called for further research on teachers’ beliefs and practices of grammar since those beliefs are often complex and could have significant implications for practice; Nurusus et al. (2015) believed that further research on the topic could help create a better framework for teachers to teach grammar. A lack of a strong pedagogical framework for teaching grammar was also a reason Watson (2015) gave for the need to further research in the area. Onalan’s (2018) research was limited by only examining teachers’ reported beliefs and contended that that research with in-depth interviews and observations was needed. Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) also felt that a study was needed with a “deeper account of [teachers’] actual knowledge and capacity to turn this knowledge into pedagogic or rhetorical ‘know-how.’ Whether through face-to-face interviews with individuals, focus-group discussions, or classroom observations of teaching, we need a far richer study” (p. 310).

**Rationale for Research**

Borg (2018b) argued that research examining the connection between teachers’ beliefs and actions is valuable because it helps teachers realize the discrepancies between their stated beliefs and practices; furthermore, that internal awareness and discussion can prompt change. The purpose of my transcendental phenomenological study was to examine how English teachers’ beliefs about grammar affected their instruction. Since this study took place in Florida, it addressed the lack of research conducted in the US about the topic. In 2020, the state of Florida
released new English standards that included a comprehensive list of grammatical concepts students must learn; these standards will be implemented by the 2022-2023 school year (Florida Department of Education, 2020). When considering the many apprehensions L1 English teachers have about teaching grammar and the fact that Florida teachers will soon be expected to teach it, I thought it would be valuable to gain some insight into Florida teachers’ thoughts about the topic. Having a better idea of those beliefs and how they translate into practice could help school and district leaders pinpoint areas for PD (Borg, 2018b). Borg (2018b) also noted that research in this area can help determine needs in pre-service teachers’ training. The intention of the study was also to add to the limited qualitative data that existed on the topic, which as noted in the previous section, various researchers deemed a limitation in the literature.

Summary

There is extensive research on grammar instruction in the EFL context, but there is little current research on English grammar in the L1 context. Since there has been a resurgence of grammar in the curriculums of Anglophone nations, it is an important area of study. English teachers generally have a negative view of grammar instruction, and many English teachers today cannot adequately teach grammar because of their limited knowledge of linguistics. Teachers with limited knowledge and low efficacy for teaching grammar tend to use prescriptive, ineffective methods that contribute to the negative images surrounding the topic. The little research that has been done about teachers’ beliefs on English grammar instruction has been in the UK and Australia. There is virtually no research on the topic from the US. My research addressed the gap in literature coming from the US, and it also addressed the lack of in-depth qualitative data with teacher interviews and observations.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Grammar is a component of literacy education that has received renewed attention in recent years (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; McCormack-Colbert et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015). The resurgence of grammar instruction has occurred in almost all English-speaking nations, yet there is still little current research on grammar education for native English speakers (Boivin et al., 2018). There has been some research in the UK and Australia examining teachers’ perspectives on grammar (Cushing, 2019; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Watson, 2015), but there was no current research on the perspectives of teachers in the US. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe how English teachers’ beliefs about grammar influenced their teaching practices.

This chapter will include a description of the phenomenological research design implemented for this study along with a rationale for selecting the transcendental approach. The research setting and participant selection process will be detailed. All the procedures taken to conduct research will be shared in a detailed manner that would allow for replicability and transferability. I will describe my role as a researcher and discuss how I addressed the issue of researcher bias. There will be an overview of the data collection methods and a comprehensive explanation of the data analysis process. The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research will be explained, and it will be demonstrated how trustworthiness was established in this research. Finally, how ethical concerns related to the participants, data collection, and data storage were mitigated will be addressed.
Design

Research methodology is typically divided into two broad categories: quantitative and qualitative (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). The two research methods are distinct because they are based on different philosophical assumptions (Gall et al., 2007). Quantitative research is rooted in positivist philosophy (Gall et al., 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which deems that “logic, measurement and the utilization of deductive reasoning to prove absolute truths can be applied to the study of phenomena” (Kelly et al., 2018). Data is collected and represented numerically, and it is analyzed through statistical methods (Gall et al., 2007). Essentially, the aim of quantitative research is to quantify whatever is being investigated (Rahman, 2017). In contrast, qualitative research is rooted in constructivist philosophy (Gall et al., 2007; Kelly et al., 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One of the main tenets of constructivism is that reality is subjective to the one experiencing it (Gall et al., 2007). Qualitative researchers seek to understand “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meanings they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recognized four defining characteristics of qualitative research: The purpose is to understand the phenomenon from participants’ perspectives, the researcher is the main data collection tool, “the process is inductive,” and the result is “richly descriptive” (p. 17). While qualitative research is sometimes looked down upon because it is not bound to the same linear, positivist path as quantitative research (Choy, 2014), qualitative research does have structure through its “use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 8). The ability to understand beliefs and assumptions is considered one of the strengths of the qualitative method (Choy, 2014). A qualitative method was most appropriate for my research because my aim was to understand
participants’ beliefs and to develop a detailed description of how those beliefs informed their instructional practices. A quantitative approach would not have been appropriate for my research since detailing participants’ complicated experiences and beliefs is best done through descriptive terms, not numbers.

**Phenomenological Design**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified common designs in qualitative research: phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and case study. The phenomenological design is based on the idea that the perception of an experience or concept is determined by the one who experiences it (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological design is used to study a group of people who have experienced the same phenomenon and to “[describe] the common meaning…of their lived experiences” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). The result of a phenomenological study is a description of the “essence or basic structure of experience” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 26). A phenomenological design was apt for my research since my purpose was to understand the beliefs of a group of participants, English teachers, who have all experienced the phenomenon, teaching grammar. Other qualitative designs did not suit my research as well as phenomenology; for example, ethnography focuses on a groups’ culture, which is unrelated to my focus. Narrative analysis centers on gathering people’s stories about specific experiences, and while experiences were a central focus in my research, simply relaying information on teachers’ experiences was not the entire aim of my research. A case study would also have been ill-suited since experience with grammar is not necessarily bound to one specific context.

**Transcendental Phenomenology**

The transcendental approach to phenomenology was founded by the philosopher Edmund
Husserl (Kakkori, 2009), who was “concerned with the discovery of meanings and essences in knowledge (Moustakas, 1994, p. 27). Research using the transcendental approach to phenomenology focuses on the “description of the experience of the participants” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). This contrasts another type of phenomenology, hermeneutical, which is based on the interpretive focus of the experiences of others (Horigan-Kelly et al., 2016).

Hermeneutical phenomenology is based on the work one of Husserl’s students, Martin Heidegger. The premise for Heidegger’s interpretive focus is the impossibility that a researcher can be completely objective; even if a researcher is aware of his or her own biases, every description made is filtered through the researcher (Horigan-Kelly et al., 2016). Transcendental phenomenologists seek to mitigate the issue of researcher bias through the process of epoche (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994), also referred to as bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The process of epoche, which is a researcher’s inward exploration of biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), helps the researcher transcend subjectivity to look at the phenomenon through an objective angle (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing involves researchers being completely open about their own assumptions and experiences with the phenomenon and setting those beliefs aside (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); by making themselves aware of their biases, researchers can proceed consciously and cautiously with the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I selected the transcendental approach because the goal of my research was to understand and describe the beliefs of my participants, not my own. I have my own beliefs on the phenomenon, but I could not capture the essence of the phenomenon for a group of people just through my experience and perspective.

**Research Questions**

Central Question: How do English teachers’ beliefs affect their teaching of grammar?
Sub-Question 1: What are English teachers’ behavioral beliefs about grammar?
Sub-Question 2: What are English teachers’ normative beliefs about grammar?
Sub-Question 3: What are English teachers’ control beliefs about grammar?

**Setting**

The study took place in a suburban county in central Florida, which had approximately 375,751 residents in 2019 (United States Census Bureau, 2021). These were the three largest racial and ethnic demographic groups: 55.8% White of Hispanic or Latino descent, 31.8% non-Hispanic White, and 14.1% Black or African American (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). The county’s school district had approximately 72,000 students enrolled in the 2020-2021 school year (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], n.d.). The racial demographics of students were approximately 78% White, 14% Black, 3.5% Multiracial, 2.4% Asian, 1.9% Native American, and .53% Pacific Islander; about two-thirds of students were of Hispanic descent (FLDOE, n.d.). A little more than half the students in the district received free or reduced lunch, and there were approximately 12,500 ELLs (FLDOE, n.d.). The district had 25 elementary schools, nine middle schools, and ten high schools; the district also had numerous charter schools and non-traditional high schools under its authority. The district was led by a superintendent, assistant superintendent, and five school board members.

There were 10 high schools in the district, but by error, I only included nine schools in the applications to conduct research; this error will be addressed later in the limitations of the study. There were nine schools in the initial pool of potential schools for research. Principals from seven schools granted permission to recruit potential participants. In initial recruitment stages, there were participants from four schools showing interest in the study. After five potential participants decided not to proceed, the remaining ten participants came from two
schools.

The study took place within two high schools in the district. School One was a large school with approximately 2,300 students in the 2021-2021 school year. Although the school had a STEM orientation, it was largely a traditional high school with 50-minute classes on a seven-period bell schedule. The demographics of the school mirrored the district’s overall demographics: Most students in the school were of Hispanic descent, and a little over half the students received free or reduced lunch. School One was a low performing school with a D as a school grade. School Two also had a STEM focus, but it was a smaller high school with approximately 300 students in the 2020-2021 school year. They worked on a block schedule, and classes were 90 minutes long. The school was public, but students were screened for acceptance. This school had a greater proportion of White students of non-Hispanic descent, and only a third of students received free or reduced lunch. School Two had an A school grade. Two observations were conducted in person at School One, two observations were conducted in person at School Two, and six observations were conducted virtually through Microsoft Teams, which was the digital platform for virtual classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. Three interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams, and seven interviews were conducted in classrooms at School One.

Participants

It is recommended that a phenomenological study have 3-10 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I selected 10 participants for the study because that was the minimum requirement for dissertation research at Liberty University. Purposeful sampling is necessary in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research because “the goal is to select cases that are likely to be ‘information-rich’ with respect to the purpose of
the study” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 178). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that purposeful sampling is often based on some type of criteria. Criterion sampling helps ensure that all the participants have experienced the same phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gall et al., 2007). Participants for this study had to be certified high school English teachers with at least one year of experience teaching English; this second requirement was necessary since teachers in their first year of teaching were less like to have experienced the phenomenon being studied. I sent recruitment emails to all English teachers at schools where principals had granted permission and for whom I was given contact information (see Appendix D for Recruitment Email). Initial recruitment emails were sent to 85 potential participants.

Potential participants were screened by email. No potential participants were disqualified based on not meeting criteria. A total of 15 potential participants replied to the recruitment emails and qualified for the study. Three potentials backed out because they did not think they would have a relevant lesson for me to observe. One potential had just returned from maternity leave, and while interested in the research, was too overwhelmed to participate. Another potential participant was busy with work and personal matters, so she offered to participate in May if I had not found enough participants by then; it was not necessary to contact her again as I was able to secure all 10 participants between February and April. Eight participants worked at School One, and two participants worked at School Two. Participants were certified English teachers from two different high schools. Participants’ demographic information and years of teaching experience are presented in Table 1. Participants were given pseudonyms.
Table 1

Participant Demographics and Years of Teaching Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Race (Ethnicity)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Black (Hispanic)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Mixed (Hispanic)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>White (Hispanic)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Black (African American)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>White (Hispanic)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Pseudonyms used

Procedures

This section details the steps taken during the research process. I initially applied for approval to conduct research through Liberty University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the end of October 2020. Because of a technical error that went unnoticed until the end of November, the IRB application was not officially submitted until the end of the fall semester in 2020. The application was processed in January 2021, and after making necessary corrections and adjustments requested by the IRB, I resubmitted my application and received approval in early February 2021 (see Appendix A for IRB Approval Letter). During the fall, I also contacted the Research, Evaluation, and Accountability Office at the district in which I wanted to research
(see Appendix C for Permission Request Letter), and I was sent an application form to complete. I submitted the application and received approval from the district in December 2020 (see Appendix B for District Approval Letter). As I waited for IRB and district approval to conduct research, I had two experienced reading teachers at my school screen the interview questions, observation protocol, and reflection logs. They provided feedback about the topic and questions, but no changes were suggested.

The district requires researchers ask permission from school principals before contacting potential participants, so I emailed the high school principals with the permission letter I received from the district (see Appendix B for District Approval Letter). There are ten high schools in the district, but I only contacted nine principals. In my application to the IRB and to the district, I made the mistake of not including one of the schools on my list for potential places to research, and I did not notice the mistake until I already had my participants secured. By mid-February, I had received permission from six of the nine principals to recruit at their schools. A seventh gave permission in March, and the last two principals simply never replied to my requests. I requested the names and emails of the English teachers. I was given these names and emails through the principals themselves and through secondary contacts I was told would have accurate lists of English teachers. I sent out an initial round of recruitment emails to 85 potential participants (see Appendix D for Recruitment Email).

The response to the initial round of recruitment emails was very limited. I had three replies expressing some interest in the research topic, but the teachers had concerns about the observations since they rarely taught anything related to grammar or simply integrated it into writing lessons. The potential participants thought that they had to teach a complete, separate lesson of grammar for the observation even if that was not their typical approach. Because of the
confusion, I sent emails to the 85 potential participants clarifying the observation portion of the research. I noted that the intention was to observe teachers approaching grammar how they typically did so; for example, if they usually taught grammatical concepts during a writing lesson, that would be a perfect time for me to come observe. I received more replies from potential participants, and I began to screen them. I confirmed that they were certified teachers and had taught English for at least a year. As soon as a potential participant qualified and agreed to be in the study, I emailed the consent form. Upon receiving a signed consent form, I scheduled the interview and observation. I secured five participants in February, two in March, and three in April.

I began data collection as soon as I started securing participants. I collected data for some participants while still trying to recruit others. All scheduling was done through email. I confirmed all interviews and observation dates by email the day before they were scheduled to happen; some interviews and observations were conducted on different dates because of scheduling conflicts. The interviews and observations were done either in person or on Microsoft Teams, and this was determined during scheduling. There had to be flexibility with this because of the Covid-19 pandemic; for example, some participants only had digital classes during the 2020-2021 school year, so the only option was to observe their classes virtually. I also offered the option to conduct the interviews virtually if anyone was uncomfortable interviewing in person due to health concerns.

I conducted three interviews through Microsoft Teams at the request of the participants. I had physical copies of the protocol (see Appendix F for Interview Protocol), my computer, and my phone for recording. The participants appeared to be in their own classrooms during the interviews, and I was in my classroom with the door secured. The remaining seven interviews
were conducted in person in secured classrooms at School One. All the interviews were done after school. The interviews were audio-recorded using the Rev Audio and Voice Recorder Application on my phone, and I paid for the transcription service. After conducting interviews with participants, I took the time to explain the reflection logs that I would be asking them to complete. The logs were reflections on their lesson planning and instructional choices over the course of four weeks (see Appendix H for Reflection Template). I sent the template of the reflection logs to participants on the same day I interviewed them.

I scheduled four observations to be done in person, so I reminded participants of my visit the day before to avoid any delays from office staff at their schools. During the in-person observations, I sat in locations that were near the back or along the sides of the class so that I would not disturb teaching or learning. I took the appropriate protocol for the observations (see Appendix G for Observation Protocol); I took notes on my computer for the in-person observations. The other six observations were on Teams, so I reminded participants that I had to be digitally invited into the class or meeting in order to observe. Since I had Teams on full screen during digital observations, I had to take notes by hand on printed protocol charts and later type them. I did not audio or video record any of the lessons, but some of the teachers did record their digital lessons; this was simply something they were already in the habit of doing for absent students. While I produced some reflective notes during observations, I wrote most of my reflective notes after completing observations.

After the interviews and observations, I followed up with participants within a few days and thanked them for their time. I reminded them that I would reach out again when four weeks had passed from their interview for a friendly reminder about the reflection logs. A few participants required follow-up emails about the reflection logs. Within two days of returning the
logs, I gave participants $20 gift cards of their choice.

Data analysis began once all data had been collected, which was at the end of May. I used Microsoft Word files to organize and analyze data. Data was analyzed according to steps laid out by Moustakas (1994). I began data analysis with bracketing to address my biases with the topic. I followed with horizontalization and theme development. From there, I wrote textural and structural descriptions for individual participants. At that point, I sought feedback from participants by sharing the descriptions, and the participants were comfortable with the descriptions as written. I wrote composite textural and structural descriptions, which were then combined and further reduced to describe the essence of the phenomenon. Before finalizing my conclusions, a resource teacher from my district with a doctorate in education conducted a peer review of my research process and results.

The Researcher's Role

My primary role as a researcher was to be an objective observer collecting data. Moustakas (1994) contended that in transcendental phenomenology, researchers must rise above “everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings” so that phenomena can be “revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide-open sense” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Bias, however, is a natural part of human nature. This innate bias is why Heidegger veered from transcendental phenomenology to interpretive phenomenology: What a researcher observes is still filtered through their own subjective self, so it is impossible to be completely objective (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). To help reduce the issue of bias when conducting a transcendental phenomenological study, researchers must practice bracketing (Moustakas, 1994; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Basically, bracketing entails researchers openly acknowledging any beliefs and biases they have related to
the phenomenon being studied; by recognizing these potentially harmful beliefs, researchers are able to consciously set those beliefs aside during data collection (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

I studied a phenomenon that I have experienced. Understanding and experiencing the same phenomenon as my participants allowed me to better appreciate their commentary and struggles, but I also had to be cognizant of these biases and assumptions as I collected data so that I was not projecting my own experiences onto the data collected from others. Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers write a complete account of their own experiences before collecting data to help with the process of epoche. Before collecting data, I addressed my biases by asking myself all the questions and writing a complete account of my experiences and beliefs related to the phenomenon. Through the process of epoche, I became aware of my feeling that I had been, in a sense, robbed of part of my education: I never received grammar instruction in my childhood education. As a teacher, I had been dissuaded from spending time teaching students any grammar. It was vital to be aware of my personal feeling of frustration so that what I heard, saw, and read as a researcher was not filtered through those emotions.

**Data Collection**

No data was collected from participants until all necessary approvals and consent were gained from Liberty University’s IRB, district, principals, and participants. In a qualitative study, researchers must gather a minimum of three types of data on the same phenomenon to achieve triangulation; the term triangulation comes from the naval practice of using “multiple reference points to locate an object’s exact position at sea” (Creswell, 2015, p. 538). Phenomenological researchers aim to describe a phenomenon or a lived experience, and since human experience is complicated and multi-faceted, data collection must reflect that complexity. Using multiple, varied sources increases credibility and allows for cross-verification of findings. The most
common forms of data collection in qualitative research are interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For my research, I collected data from participants through three means: interviews, observations, and researcher-generated documents.

**Interviews**

Interviews are the backbone of data collection in qualitative research and contribute to a better understanding of participants’ perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews with participants provided the greatest amount of data from any of the data collection methods I used, and the interviews helped me uncover answers to each of the research questions. Interviews were necessary to thoroughly understand how English teachers’ beliefs about grammar were shaped, especially by gathering information on their background factors. Interviewing teachers provided an in-depth idea about their feelings on teaching grammar, especially since I was able to probe and use follow-up questions as needed during the interviews. While I was able to get a sense of how teachers felt about teaching grammar during the observations, the interviews were really where I could ask questions about their feelings.

The interviews took place on scheduled days after school. The interviews took place in teachers’ classrooms or on Microsoft Teams to ensure privacy and minimize disruptions. I conducted the interviews and audio-recorded them on my phone using the Rev Audio and Voice Recorder Application; I used the application’s transcription service. I used interview protocol (see Appendix E) and took very limited handwritten notes. Patton (2002) suggested that interviews be semi-structured with open-ended questions. I developed the interview questions and arranged them according to Moustakas’ (1994) interview guide.

**Interview Questions:**

1. Please introduce yourself to me.
2. What was your childhood education like?

3. Please describe what you remember about the literacy instruction you received in your K-12 education.

4. Please describe what you remember learning about grammar in your K-12 education.

5. How do you remember feeling about grammar and the way it was taught during your K-12 education?

6. Please describe your confidence in your own understanding of English grammar and why you feel that way.

7. What types of ideas have teachers you work with espoused on teaching grammar?

8. What type of support or training have you received through your school or district on teaching language standards?

9. How do you feel about having to teach the current grammar-related standards?

10. How would you describe your experience and confidence in teaching grammar?

11. How do you typically approach teaching the language standards to your students?

12. What contexts or situations would you say have most influenced or affected your beliefs and actions on teaching grammar?

13. What else do you think would be relevant for me to understand your perceptions on what we have discussed today?

The first question was based on Moustakas’ (1994) recommendation that phenomenological interviews start with the researcher and participants getting comfortable with each other. After establishing trust, the researcher can have the participants consider the phenomenon in question (Moustakas, 1994).
Questions two through five were written to get a comprehensive idea of teachers’ own experiences in their childhood education. Researchers consistently identified teachers’ lack of grammar education as a negative factor in the implementation and teaching of grammar standards (Cushing, 2019; Gartland & Smolkin, 2016; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill, 2018; Schenck, 2017; Watson, 2015). These questions align with the background elements and control beliefs of my theoretical framework, which were necessary components in creating a rich description of teachers’ beliefs.

Question six asked teachers to describe their confidence in their own knowledge of grammar. Teachers’ own subject knowledge is a factor that impacts teaching efficacy, and teachers with a better understanding of grammar are better able to teach it (Myhill & Watson, 2014); furthermore, teachers’ confidence with their knowledge and ability to teach influence pedagogical practice (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

Questions seven and eight elicited information on subjects’ normative and control beliefs. Peers and supervisors can greatly influence teachers’ instructional practices, especially when there is collaboration around instruction (Supovitz et al., 2010).

Question nine assessed teachers’ attitudes toward teaching grammar. In a single-participant case study, Watson (2015) noted that the teacher’s negative attitudes toward grammar made the teacher closed-off to teaching grammar in any meaningful way. Other empirical research has shown a clear link between teachers’ attitudes and the efficacy of their teaching (Arenas, 2009).

Questions 10 and 11 asked teachers to consider their confidence in teaching grammar and how they approach it. Tschannen-Moran & Johnson (2011) noted that confidence is a key factor in teacher self-efficacy. Macken-Horarik et al. (2018) found contradictions in teachers’ reported
confidence in grammatical knowledge and their confidence espoused in teaching grammar. These discrepancies were found when comparing results of quantitative and qualitative survey data: Teachers were more open about their insecurities in the open-ended questions (Macken-Horarik et al., 2018).

Questions 12 and 13 gave the participants a chance to share any other thoughts they felt were relevant to the topic but were not addressed through previous questions. These questions were developed based on Moustakas’ (1994) suggestion to end the interview by asking participants if there is anything else significant they need to share about the experience or phenomenon.

**Observations**

The second data collection tool was the observation of participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined observations as the use of the five senses to observe the phenomenon. The second research question for my study focused on participants’ feelings on teaching grammar, and while the interviews gave participants a chance to explain their feelings, the observations gave me a chance to see how the participants appeared to feel while teaching. Part of the overarching research question for the study was also to determine how teachers’ instructional practices were affected by their beliefs on grammar. I asked participants to allow me to observe a lesson in which they planned to teach at least one grammatical concept or language standard. Each participant was observed teaching once during a class period; class periods at School One were 50 minutes, and class periods at School Two were 90 minutes.

I used an observation protocol (see Appendix F) for taking field notes and guiding what I observed. The protocol included descriptive, interpretative, and reflective field notes, which are standard components of observational protocol (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the observations, I focused primarily on the participants and the instructional practices. In the
observation protocol (see Appendix F), I noted specific elements to observe about the participants: the process of introducing the topic, eye contact with the class, voice, body language, attitude toward the topic, confidence in lesson delivery, ease in explaining the concept, ease in answering students’ questions, and instructional strategies used. The observations allowed me to see what decisions teachers ultimately made about teaching grammar and how they seemed to feel about those choices. I was a nonparticipant observer while in the classrooms. A nonparticipant observer is directly in the room but just watching and taking notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also conducted observations virtually through Microsoft Teams due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The virtual observations did affect the ability to thoroughly assess elements in some observations. For example, some teachers did not turn on their cameras during the virtual lessons, so I could not make notes on their eye contact and body language. In cases like those, conclusions about confidence stemmed more from voice, attitude, and explanations.

**Participant Reflections**

Almost any type of document can be analyzed in qualitative research. The three most common types of documents are categorized as personal, official, or popular culture (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Document analysis is “used to supplement interviews and observations” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 162), but documents that exist before data collection do not always have information focused or relevant enough to the specific research topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that researchers sometimes generate documents for analysis, such as diaries or activity logs. Participants wrote weekly reflections on their lesson planning and instructional choices over the course of four weeks to gather data specific to my focus. I emailed a template for the reflection (see Appendix H for Teacher Reflection Template), and teachers emailed them back when they were completed. The template had various questions and prompts
that asked teachers to reflect on their selection of standards, inclusion of grammar-related standards, plans to teach the standards, reasons for those choices, and thoughts on how they felt the lessons went. Since the observations were only snapshots of their teaching, the reflections provided extended insight into how teachers made decisions about teaching grammar.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is a systematic process that leads researchers to be able to describe the phenomenon participants experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To stay organized during the data collection process, I created a password-protected folder on my computer, and within that folder, I created 10 sub-folders. The folders were labeled P1, P2, etc., with P representing participant; I later replaced these with the pseudonyms assigned to each participant. Within each folder, I had a checklist of the items that needed to go in the folder: consent form, interview transcript, observation protocol, reflections, and data analysis. As I gathered these documents, I placed them in the folders and removed the items from the checklists. I finished gathering all data at the end of May and began data analysis.

In phenomenological research, data analysis should be preceded by bracketing, which as described earlier, is when a researcher identifies his or her own experiences with the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers write a full account of their own experiences with the phenomenon using the same methodology they will use to analyze data from participants. I started the data analysis process by writing about my own experience with the phenomenon, and I completed Moustakas’ (1994) structured approach to phenomenal analysis with my own transcript.
Data Analysis for Individual Participants

Moustakas (1994) recommended creating a transcription of the data from all sources for each participant; this step can be viewed as completing a profile for each participant using all the data available. I created a Word document for each participant with a complete transcript of his or her data from all the data collection sources; data from the observations included the descriptive and reflective notes.

Creswell and Poth (2018) described horizontalization as a process of going “through the data and highlight[ing] ‘significant statements,’ sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (p. 79). When I started the horizontalization process, I was cognizant of the fact that the beliefs and experience of teaching grammar were complex: As I had discovered through my research in chapter two, teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices are built on many layers. Statements about childhood education, for example, might not appear directly relevant to teaching grammar, but childhood education influences teachers’ beliefs (Alsuhaibani, 2019; Dos Santos, 2019; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Because of this, the horizontalized statements were not always explicitly about grammar beliefs and teaching grammar, rather, the highlighted statements reflected the complexity behind beliefs and practices. The entire transcript for each participant, which included the interview, observation, and reflection logs, went through the horizontalization process. An example of Lily’s horizontalized transcript can be found in Appendix I. After horizontalization, Moustakas (1994) explained that themes are developed from the horizontalized statements. Clear themes began to emerge from the statements in the transcripts, and horizontalized statements were sorted into the themes. There is a complete example of the themes and sorted statements from David’s data in Appendix K.
Moustakas (1994) aptly termed this data analysis process phenomenological reduction because the goal is to reduce the data further and further until capturing the essence of the experience. Once I had sorted all the statements into general themes, I began to further reduce the statements and themes to write the textural and structural descriptions for each participant. Textural descriptions are a description of the experience, and structural descriptions are the context for the experience (Moustakas, 1994). I listed the textural statements explicitly tied to the experience of teaching grammar, and then I listed the themes and corresponding structural statements that provided context for those textural statements. Appendix L has an example of this for Amy’s textural and structural descriptions. After writing the structural and textural descriptions for each participant, I sent the descriptions to the respective participants for member checks. All the participants felt comfortable with the descriptions as written, so I proceeded with the first step in synthesizing data from the participants, which was writing the composite descriptions.

**Composite Descriptions and Essence of the Experience**

To write the composite textural description, I created a Word file and placed all participants’ individual textural descriptions in a single graphic organizer. I bolded the key words and phrases in the participants’ descriptions that were central to their experiences (see Appendix M). I then listed all the key words and phrases and sorted them into categories; I reduced and reorganized the list, and I noted the frequency of any repeated ideas from the textural descriptions (see Appendix N). This finalized list was used to write the composite textural description.

The structural descriptions of a phenomenon are based on overarching qualities that are identified and clustered into themes, and the composite structural description is a combination of
all the participants’ descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). I took the same approach with the composite structural description as I did with writing the composite textural description. In Word, I bolded the key words in each participant’s individual structural description that pinpointed the context for their experience (see Appendix O). I then grouped and reduced common ideas; if common ideas were repeated, I noted the frequency of their appearance in the structural descriptions (See Appendix P). This was used to write the composite structural description.

The end goal in phenomenological research is to produce a description with the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The synthesis of participants’ composite descriptions becomes the essence of the phenomenon (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). After writing the composite textural and structural descriptions, I synthesized them to write the essence of teachers’ beliefs and experience with teaching grammar.

**Trustworthiness**

In quantitative research, the validity and reliability of a study are expressed through statistical measurements. Although qualitative research does not use statistical measurements to address validity and reliability, there are numerous ways to demonstrate the trustworthiness of findings (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Trustworthiness is established through credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Credibility**

Credibility is similar to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research; in qualitative research, credibility can be validated through triangulation and accuracy of data (Creswell, 2015). In order to achieve triangulation, a study must have a minimum of three data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used three methods of data collection: interviews,
observations, and participant reflections. I determined the accuracy of the data by seeking feedback from participants; after analyzing the transcription and forming the textural and structural descriptions, I shared the statements with each participant to ensure accuracy in the statements. Creswell (2015) also noted that credibility can be addressed through reflexivity; as noted earlier, I addressed my own assumptions and biases before data collection and again before data analysis through the process of bracketing.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability has to do with the ability for a study to be repeated (Creswell, 2015). I addressed dependability by keeping detailed notes as I went through each step of the research process. I used the notes to detail the procedures from the IRB process through data analysis. I also had a peer review of the data and research process to address confirmability. My district’s literacy resource teacher reviewed my data and research process. I selected her to conduct the peer review since she has gone through the research process in her own doctoral work, and she is knowledgeable about the content.

**Transferability**

Transferability is the ability for a study to be replicated in another setting (Creswell, 2015). Transferability can be achieved by “establishing the context of the study and giving detailed descriptions of the procedures” (Creswell, 2015, p. 258). The first step I took to ensure transferability was to properly document all the details of the setting and participants so that other researchers have a clear idea of the context in which the research took place. Elements, such as student and teacher demographics, are important considerations for other researchers wishing to replicate a study. I also addressed transferability by thoroughly documenting and
Ethical Considerations

Ethics are an important consideration for any research. Ethical research should demonstrate respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). One of the most important ethical considerations is what Creswell and Poth (2018) categorized as access and rapport. Access refers to gaining all necessary approvals to conduct research; I applied for research approval through Liberty University’s IRB, and I did not collect any data before receiving IRB approval, as well as district and principal permissions. Rapport in this case is referring to the researcher’s role in relation to the participants. Researchers must ensure that participants thoroughly understand the nature of the study and that even after receiving consent, participants are free to leave the study if they would like (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

There were a few ethical considerations I had to bear in mind with my data collection. During the observations, there were possibilities of encountering situations where the participants’ actions made me uncomfortable, especially in my professional role as a fellow teacher. This is one of the reasons that bracketing is such an important step before data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, by law I am a mandatory reporter, so had I witnessed any abuse during an observation, I would have been required to report it. This also applied to information shared during one-on-one interviews with the participants. The interviews were recorded, but the recording of conversations can be intrusive for some people; I included a clause in the participant consent form (see Appendix E) for permission to record interviews.
Data storage, especially in the age of digital filing, must be carefully approached. I secured data on a personal computer that only I use. The computer has password protection to log in, and it has anti-virus and anti-hacking protection software. All files with data were secured in password-protected folders, and the participants’ real names were not digitally recorded. All participants received pseudonyms, and the document linking their real names and pseudonyms was placed in a locked file cabinet in my home.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the phenomenological research design and the transcendental approach; I provided a rationale for selecting the design and approach. I detailed the steps I took in the research process, including sampling, data collection, and data analysis, all of which aligned with the tenets of transcendental phenomenology. Throughout the chapter, I addressed the concern of researcher bias, and I explained the steps I took to remain as objective as possible during data collection and data analysis. I explained how the various actions I took during the research process ensured trustworthiness of my research. Finally, I ended by acknowledging the importance of ethical research and identified ethical considerations that arose during research.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine how 10 English teachers’ beliefs about grammar affected their grammar instruction. Data was collected through included interviews, teaching observations, and participant reflection logs. This chapter will include a brief introduction of each participant. The results will be presented by the development of the following themes: literacy and grammar education in the formative years, self-confidence related to grammar, the impact of factors in the educational context, how “grammar” is taught, and the voiced need and perceived benefits of grammar instruction. There will be an explanation on how the themes were developed through data analysis and then finalized for the purpose of this chapter. The research questions will then be answered; the sub-questions will be addressed first as these collectively help answer the central research question. The essence of the experience will be presented as the answer to the central research question. The chapter will end with a summary of the contents.

Participants

Participants in the research were all certified high school English teachers in central Florida with at least one year of teaching experience. They all taught in the same district and were spread between two high schools. Initial recruitment emails were sent to 85 English teachers in the district spread at seven schools, and 15 potential participants demonstrated some interest in the study. Because five of the initial 15 were unwilling or unable to move forward with the study, the remaining 10 became the participants. Pseudonyms were given to all participants.
Amy

Amy was a high school English teacher with seven years of teaching experience. She always loved English, and she excelled in the subject from grade school. She enjoyed reading and writing, but she especially liked having creative freedom to apply her English skills. Amy had a bachelor’s and master’s degree in education.

Beverly

Beverly was a high school English and reading teacher with six years of teaching experience. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico, and she moved to Florida when she started high school. Her bachelor’s degree was in elementary education, and she taught elementary school for a few years before switching to teach high school.

Caroline

Caroline was a high school English teacher with ten years of teaching experience. She is originally from Virginia. Caroline taught elementary students for many years. She then moved into teaching English at the middle and high school level. She also homeschooled her own children.

Crystal

Crystal was a high school English teacher with 16 years of teaching experience. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico. Her teaching career began as an English teacher in Puerto Rico. When she moved to the US, she started off as a reading teacher, and she eventually moved into teaching AP English Language. Her master’s degree was in curriculum and instruction.

David

David was a high school English teacher with eight years of teaching experience. David was born and raised in Puerto Rico. He had a great childhood education in Puerto Rico because
of the small school and class sizes and close relationships with teachers. Partway through his teaching career, David took a break to pursue military service, but he returned to teaching. David had a bachelor’s degree in education.

**Grace**

Grace was a high school English teacher with 10 years of teaching experience. Grace grew up in Florida and had what she described as a traditional education. She attended private school in her primary years, and then she went to public school. Grace studied journalism in her undergraduate education, and she studied education through the doctoral level. She had prior experience as a reading coach, and she also worked as a college professor.

**Lily**

Lily was a high school English teacher with five years of teaching experience. She was born to immigrant parents in Rhode Island. Lily had been in Florida since middle school. Lily studied English literature in college and was an extremely avid reader. She also taught debate.

**Link**

Link was an English teacher with three years of teaching experience. He was raised in various cities throughout Florida. Link studied creative writing in college, and he taught both English and creative writing at the high school level. He also worked with his school’s theater department.

**Madison**

Madison was a high school AP English Literature teacher with 14 years of teaching experience. She was born and raised in Florida. Madison’s senior English teacher inspired her to pursue a career as a teacher. She received a bachelor’s degree in English education and began teaching after college.
Sara

Sara was a high school English teacher with 21 years of teaching experience. She was born and raised in New Jersey. She moved to Florida when she was in high school. Sara had graduate degrees in reading and in creative writing.

Results

In phenomenology, data analysis ends with a description of the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Reaching that end through the process detailed in the previous chapter was essentially a process of repeated narrowing and regrouping of the themes. Data were collected from each participant through an interview, an observation, and four reflection logs. During the interviews, participants shared and reflected on their own grammar education and experiences teaching grammar. The observations provided insight into participants’ actual teaching practices and confidence when teaching grammar. The reflection logs on planning and teaching, which participants completed over the course of four weeks, gave an extended snapshot of participants’ decisions related to grammar instruction. Each participant’s interview, observation, and reflection log data were combined into a transcript; the transcripts were then horizontalized, clustered into themes, and written into textural and structural descriptions. To write the composite textural description, key words from all the participants’ textural descriptions were bolded, listed, and sorted into themes (see Appendix M for Key Words in Textural Descriptions). Repeated and similar ideas were grouped with their frequency noted in parenthesis, and themes were combined (see Appendix N for Themes in Textural Descriptions). The same process was completed with the structural descriptions to write the composite structural description (see Appendix O for Key Words in Structural Descriptions and Appendix P for Themes in Structural
Descriptions). The essence was written from the two composite descriptions, but that process of writing the essence was much more organic than the previous steps in the data analysis process.

**Theme Development**

The themes laid out in this chapter were rooted in the beliefs and experiences of the individual participants, but as the data was synthesized, five overarching themes framed the final essence of the experience of teaching grammar: literacy and grammar education in the formative years, self-confidence related to grammar, the impact of factors in the educational context, how “grammar” is taught, and the voiced need and perceived benefits of grammar instruction.

Because the final essence of the experience was written very organically, it was necessary to establish a logical way to organize and present the theme development for this chapter. The organization of the subthemes came from combining the themes and subthemes in the structural and composite descriptions (see Appendices N and P). The finalized subthemes in Table 2 indicate the original source for the subtheme, and number in parenthesis indicate the idea was repeated in the participants’ textural and/or structural descriptions. As I wrote this chapter, other subthemes or data that had been eliminated through phenomenological reduction early in the data analysis process were revisited and reintegrated as appropriate throughout.

**Table 2**

*Synthesized Themes and Subthemes from Textural and Structural Descriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finalized Themes</th>
<th>Finalized Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and Grammar Education in Formative Years</td>
<td>Positive K-12 grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textural: Likes grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structural: Own grammar experiences in K-12 education (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative K-12 grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structural: Own grammar experiences in K-12 education (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalized Themes</td>
<td>Finalized Subthemes</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy and Grammar Education in Formative Years (continued)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shifted Feelings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Shift from negative childhood feelings (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ELL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Structural:</strong> ELLs (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Confidence Related to Grammar</strong></td>
<td><strong>Confidence in knowledge &amp; ability to teach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Confident (3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Moderate or basic understanding (3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lack of confidence (3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Confident (4)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Having to study before teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Lack of confidence or needing to do research before teaching (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Influence of Factors in the Educational Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Frustrating; Unreceptive; Incapable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Structural:</strong> Unreceptive (2); Not applying concepts; Lack foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Normative beliefs:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Structural:</strong> Administrative (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Curriculum and standards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Structural:</strong> Standards; Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How “Grammar” is Taught</strong></td>
<td><strong>Integration into Writing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Writing (4)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Test Preparation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Test prep (3)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Bell Work/Quick</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Bell work/fast (5)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Outsourcing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voiced Need and Perceived Benefits of Grammar Instruction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communication and literacy skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Textural:</strong> Important for writing and communication (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Structural:</strong> Better communication skills; Improves writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Special populations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Structural:</strong> ELLs need it; Helps struggling readers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finalized Themes</th>
<th>Finalized Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voiced Need and Perceived Benefits of Grammar Instruction (continued)</td>
<td>Outliers: Structural: Unnecessary for STEM-oriented students (Overlap for same participant in textual); Other priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Literacy and Grammar Education in Teachers’ Formative Years**

Teachers’ formative years, specifically their kindergarten to 12th grade (K-12) educational experiences, were necessary to explore to begin understanding teachers’ beliefs and practices related to grammar. The time periods and locations in which participants grew up provided context for many of their educational experiences, which in turn were paramount in understanding participants’ beliefs about grammar. Whether or not teachers grew up before whole-language dominated English instruction would impact what extent of grammar they were exposed to in their childhood education. Because of this, many of the questions early in the interview protocol inquired into the participants’ childhood education, especially in relation to literacy and grammar instruction.

During the interviews, it quickly became apparent that some participants had strong emotions tied to their childhood education. Without being prompted to describe their feelings about their childhood education, five participants expressed some type of positive emotion or experience with their literacy education. The positive experiences in the formative years were important because as the research process progressed, it was clear that teachers emulated some of the practices of the teachers they had praised or of approaches they had found valuable. For example, during Amy’s observation, her classroom had a very relaxed atmosphere: Students were enjoying themselves, working at their own pace, and socializing while they were working
on their essay drafts. When reflecting on her childhood English classes during the interview, Amy commented, “I wasn't really a big fan of doing like the multiple-choice quizzes, but I liked writing and I liked reading. So, I got to do a lot of that, but then apply it the way that I wanted to. So, that was a lot of fun.” For Amy, one of the ideal memories from her English education—English class being fun—was reflected in her classroom environment. This connection for Amy between learning and fun would also be key to later understanding her negative views on grammar instruction.

Positive K-12 Grammar Experiences. Only two participants had untainted experiences related to grammar in their K-12 education. For many of the younger participants, the amount of grammar instruction they received was very limited, so there was not much on which they could reflect either positively or negatively. Although Lily was in the age range of participants who would have learned less grammar, she attended a private school that she believed heavily emphasized grammar. Lily shared her positive experience:

For me, I enjoyed it because I was an avid reader, so I wanted to be corrected if I was wrong. And I think it made me a much stronger writer as a high school student, especially because there was that change from a Catholic, a private school education to a public school education halfway through my schooling. And I really got to see when I went to public school, the impact that that had on my writing and my reading comprehension even. Because I was light-years ahead of my peers in terms of writing, because of that. Not only did Lily enjoy grammar as she was growing up, but she also felt that what she learned had positively impacted her writing ability. In her first year of teaching, Lily dedicated time to intensely correcting all her students’ grammatical errors, just as it had been done in her childhood education. She later revealed, however, that the grammar she learned was not
technical in nature: She never actually learned specific concepts or terms. Lily’s situation made it clear that the idea of having learned grammar was subjective. The subjective nature of what constituted learning grammar was pivotal in later understanding why it was hard to determine whether many of the participants had taught grammar or not.

Madison reminisced on the grammar-related bell work her favorite English teacher in high school assigned every day:

I always liked it. I always thought it was interesting to understand... Because okay. I do remember in general, when we were taught grammar, it was just like this is the rule. And you didn't question it. It was just like, okay, that's the rule... But I liked it because it was a learning thing. Oh, now I know what to do, writing that way. And so I always enjoyed them. I do remember a lot of grumbles though when we had to do that in senior year, but I liked them.

Unlike Lily, Madison did learn some of the rules of grammar, but as she would later explain, just knowing the rules did not mean that she had any real understanding of the concepts. Aside from the bell work in her senior year, the only other grammar-related activities she recalled doing was editing papers.

**Negative Experiences with Shifted Sentiments.** Much in the same way that Madison was simply taught rules with little explanation, Link was also drilled with rules as a child. While he was able to remember them, it did not mean that he understood what the rules meant or did. Link explained,

It always kind of stuck in my head when it was just like drilling it though, and there wasn't a lot of thought or explanation as to like why the rules are the way they are. It didn't quite click for me, especially being dyslexic. That kind of was an extra monkey
wrench in there. When I got to high school and we were reviewing grammar stuff, there was a lot more time spent on why things are the way they are and what different things mean, rather than just explaining this is something you need to memorize. And when that was done, I enjoyed that process a little bit more. I found it interesting.

Although Link did not explicitly make negative associations with his earlier experiences, the comment that he “enjoyed the process a little bit more” showed a change in his attitude. The shift came in high school when he finally received explanations behind the rules he had been made to memorize. The impact this shift had on his teaching style was obvious: During his observation, he took time to explain all the concepts and reasons for answers. This shift in Link’s educational experience was also likely tied to his age; he was the youngest participant in the group. Other participants had been teaching at the time Link had been in high school. At one point in her interview, Madison had commented,

I remember even my first few years teaching and doing different grammar things and students saying to me like, well, why? And I'm like, I don't know. That's just the rule. Because that's just literally how I was taught. That's just the rule. Period. And you accepted it.

Link was part of the generation of students that, as Madison explained, needed to know why and how things worked, so this was a very natural teaching approach for him. For Madison, it felt foreign when she first began teaching because it was not the way she was taught.

Although they were children around the time grammar was starting to fade from the English curriculum, the two eldest participants, Caroline and Sara, both received extensive grammar instruction as children. This could have been due, in part, because they both attended private school through their elementary education. Sara reported neutral feelings about her
experiences with grammar as a child, but she did credit the comprehensive literacy instruction she received, which included grammar, for her well-developed reading skills as a child. Caroline had negative memories from fifth grade. Caroline recalled, “It was such a struggle for me at the time, diagramming sentences, because that was, I think just about everybody in my class struggled with it.” Although she struggled with grammar as a child, Caroline reflected on the experience from an adult perspective: “I knew it was important. I felt like my school really did a great job when I reflect back now. I think that they did a really good job of that.”

Caroline was not the only participant who voiced a shift in feelings toward grammar from childhood to adulthood. When asked how she felt about grammar as a child, Grace remarked, “I didn't really like grammar…I didn't feel like it was important growing up,” but she continued, “Now, of course, I understand the importance of grammar.” When asked about how her teachers approached grammar instruction as a child, Grace replied simply, “Worksheets.” Aside from Link, who learned some songs related to the parts of speech, none of the participants remembered any engaging or meaningful instructional methods when it came to grammar, and in Link’s case, the engaging method for learning some rules was often decontextualized from its application.

**Negative K-12 Grammar Experiences.** One of the strongest negative K-12 experiences with grammar instruction shared during the interviews was from Amy. Early in the interview, Amy shared her love of English classes as a child and teachers who allowed her to learn freely and creatively. Her experience with grammar instruction specifically, however, was different. This was Amy’s description of her grammar experience in her K-12 education:

> The biggest thing I remembered again, is the sentence diagramming. I felt like it made English into math, like it turned English into a math class. And that made me not like
English as much because I couldn't wrap my head around it. All of my science and math aligned friends, they got the hang of it pretty fast, but my brain was like, this makes no sense... I personally loved grammar. I just did not like the instruction of the sentence diagramming. That's the part I didn't like. But my friends would run their papers by me before they turned them in. Even if they were in my class or not just to check for grammar because it was something that I love to do because I like to make sure that sentences sound the way that they do.

As shared earlier, Amy loved her English classes when they were unbound by rules, unlike the grammar instruction she received. She enjoyed editing and making sure sentences sounded right, which she corresponded to a love for grammar. The idea of what grammar meant in this later context, however, was once again part of that issue of subjectivity seen with other participants. Amy was not the only participant who mentioned that she enjoyed editing papers and could just read things to see if they sounded correct: Madison and Lily made nearly the same comments during their interviews. Madison’s first encounter with sentence diagramming was not until college, and she found it extremely challenging at that point in her life; the impact of having that during pre-college education could have been much different and significant like Amy’s. Amy’s feelings about grammar and her preference editing connected closely to what she termed her “holistic” style of teaching and integrating what she viewed as grammar instruction, which in the observation was just casual editing woven into essay drafting, much like what she enjoyed doing with her friends. At one point in the interview, she commented that students did not find grammar fun and she did not find it fun to teach. The positive associations with English classes that allowed her to do what she wanted, and the negative associations with English classes that
constricted language to rules, shaped the espoused beliefs and instructional practices observed in her class.

**English Language Learners.** A subtheme that emerged during three of the interviews was that three of the participants were ELLs. Beverly, David, and Crystal were born and raised in Puerto Rico. Although they all spoke English fluently at the time of the study, they grew up speaking Spanish. The education in their formative years was in Spanish, and all three participants discussed the heavy emphasis of grammar in Spanish education. They all studied English as a foreign language, which would be like students here in the US taking Spanish. The fact that English was not the primary language for these participants was clearly an issue or had some significant impact on the participants’ feelings toward grammar instruction in English.

Crystal explained what she remembered about grammar instruction as a child in Puerto Rico:

For some reason since elementary school, middle school, it was a lot of grammar for both Spanish and English. They hit hard on adverbs, adjectives, verbs, subjects, all of this. It was like every year it was hit hard, but again same problem. That's our second language. So when they just hit you with grammar in isolation, it doesn't really click. You're just learning rules, but you don't know the words, so it doesn't make a lot of sense.

I mean, I had a good memory. I could remember, recall a lot of things. It was easy to pass the test without really knowing the content, without really grasping the skill. So there are possible problems in that.

Like Link, the concepts and rules did not click for Crystal when they were simply drilled.

Crystal revealed the consequences this had for her when she graduated from high school: “When I graduated from high school, I failed our College Board version of the English version of the
board. The SAT basically. That's what it is. I failed the SAT, the English part.” This was a major admission for Crystal to make about her past, but that failure and the impact it had on her self-confidence as an English teacher would have lasting effects.

During David’s interview, he described how English grammar was stressful for him, so I follow-up with a non-scripted question to determine whether or not his feelings were about grammar in general or specifically about English grammar:

Researcher: How do you remember feeling about grammar when you were in your K to 12 education?

David: A bit stressed out. Again, first language was Spanish. You'd really try to learn it as a second language and being that it was so different from Spanish in terms of pronunciation, some of the rules to me was a bit stressful.

Researcher: How about Spanish grammar, did you have a different feeling with that when you were learning it?

David: It was easier.

David regarded his experience with English has a struggle because it was his second language, whereas Spanish grammar was easier for him. This is important because it is not the subject of grammar itself that was the challenge for him, it was specifically that it was not in his first language. Beverly also expressed more ease with Spanish grammar than with English grammar:

Beverly: I grew up in Puerto Rico, so all of my elementary and middle school was in Puerto Rico, Spanish. Lots of grammar in Spanish, for sure. And I still remember a lot of it, but it's been a while.

Researcher: What about your confidence in your understanding of English grammar and why you feel that way?
Beverly: I'm not very confident. When I do teach some of the grammar is because either I've heard it from another teacher, this is the way that that person taught it. So I want to teach it that way and because that's what worked for them. And I sometimes do watch a lot of videos now on YouTube to see what other people are doing. And I try to incorporate that into what I do, but I mean, am I super confident about it? Not a hundred percent.

Researcher Okay. So that's for your English grammar. What about your Spanish grammar? Do you feel more comfortable with that?

Beverly: Yeah.

Researcher Okay.

Beverly: Yeah, for sure. I would have to practice a little more because it's been a while, but I do feel like if I see something, I can definitely pick out the things that are wrong about it.

Of all the participants in the study, Beverly voiced the most disinterested attitude toward grammar. Although self-confidence will be explored much deeper in the next section, Beverly’s low confidence with English grammar was not the same with Spanish grammar because Spanish was the language she had learned as a child.

Formative years are termed formative for a reason: They form a person. Teachers’ educational experience during their formative years had lasting impacts. The instructional practices for seven of the 10 participants were influenced in some way by the experiences in their K-12 education. Although Caroline’s teaching practices with her students at the time of the study were not as clearly connected to her formative years, when she homeschooled her children, she taught them grammar and how to diagram sentences because she felt it was valuable instruction
from her childhood. That meant eight of the 10 participants’ teaching practices, at some point in their teaching careers, had been influenced by their K-12 experiences.

**Theme 2: Self-Confidence with Knowledge of Grammar and Teaching It**

Participants’ self-confidence in knowledge of grammar and ability to teach it ranged greatly from low to high. While those with high confidence in knowledge generally had high confidence in teaching, and those with low confidence in knowledge had low confidence in teaching, there were anomalies. For example, one participant had low confidence in knowledge but felt comfortable teaching the language standards. Participants voiced their self-confidence, or lack of it, during the interviews; during the observations, participants’ self-confidence was gauged through body language, voice, movement, attitude, ease in explaining concepts, and ease in answering questions. There were several instances in the interviews where participants voiced low confidence in their knowledge or ability to teach, but in the observations, demonstrated the opposite.

The participants with the highest self-confidence in their knowledge of grammar were the two eldest participants who received thorough grammar instruction as children. When asked about her knowledge of grammar, Caroline replied, “I’ve got confidence.” When asked about her confidence to teach it, she said, “I'm fairly confident. I mean, like I said earlier, I don't think I'm top notch, but I also don't think I'm bottom of the barrel either.” Caroline’s confidence was not unfounded. Caroline’s observation, which was conducted in person, was one of the few observations with a direct lesson on grammar; furthermore, her lesson was based on grammatical concepts and terms rarely taught in the classroom anymore: simple and complete predicates. The few grammatical terms used in the other lessons I observed were strictly ones delineated in the language standards, such as subject-verb agreement, parallel structure, and fragment.
Caroline’s observation, it was clear that she had no problems explaining the concepts, and her class of remedial English II students were actively and correctly identifying the predicates.

Sara regarded her knowledge of grammar as “extremely high because [she] read voraciously.” She also felt like her “confidence would be fairly, fairly high” in being able to teach it. Sara was the teacher with the most years of teaching experience in the group, so that could have been a factor in her high level of teaching confidence. While her confidence in knowledge and ability to teach grammar were high, the actual lesson I observed, which was in person, did not really provide any opportunities for me to see her actual confidence in teaching it. Her English II students corrected a paragraph with 10 grammatical errors for bell work, but she did not actually teach any of the concepts related to the task.

Grace expressed general confidence in both her understanding and ability to teach what she termed basic mechanics:

I would say I don't feel like I'm a grammar expert. I do feel like I do understand the basic mechanics of grammar, of course, because in English there's certain things you have to look for because I'm teaching it, like run-on sentences, subject verb agreement, punctuation, capitalization, which shouldn't be an issue at the high school level, but it is sometimes, but I would mostly say, I mean, I feel confident enough to teach it.

Grace held the highest level of education in the group, but she was among the participants with limited grammar education in her formative years. Grace’s observation of her English II class was conducted in person, and while she was very confident as a teacher in general, it was not possible to gauge her confidence in teaching grammar due to the structure of the lesson. Students worked through a self-paced writing review, and the last part of the writing review had a
grammar-related activity. Just like in Sara’s lesson, Grace’s students were working, but Grace did not teach any of the concepts in the task.

Lily was an example of a participant who expressed low confidence in her knowledge but felt comfortable with her ability to teach the current language standards. Lily acknowledged,

So my confidence, I would say is relatively low. I can look at a sentence or something and identify what's wrong with it. But when it comes to the specifics like the technical terms, terrible at them because I was never taught the actual technical terms.

When asked how she felt about teaching the language standards, however, Lily expressed feeling comfortable because she had taught them for a while. This disconnect between saying that she had low confidence with grammar but felt fine with the standards at the time could have been due to the limited, delineated range of concepts within the language standards, especially when compared with the more complex, technical side of grammar that exists. As an English teacher in general, Lily expressed a high level of confidence in both knowledge and ability to teach, but she viewed herself more as a literature teacher than anything else. Lily’s observation of her English III honors class was conducted digitally; only her screen was visible during the lesson, so the only ways to determine her confidence with the topic were through her voice, ease in explaining the concepts, and ease in answering students’ questions. Lily reviewed basic grammatical concepts, like subject-verb agreement, with her students in preparation for the SAT. Lily was very direct, and while her voice did sound confident, she was reading directly from the information written on her screen; it was hard to tell how well she truly knew the information and how confident she felt delivering that information without it being prompted before her.

During her interview, Beverly expressed low confidence in knowledge and ability to teach English grammar. Beverly was one of the three participants who grew up speaking
Spanish, and she felt that she was more knowledgeable about Spanish grammar. Something that Beverly noted during her interview was that she had to do research on concepts before being able to teach them. She was not alone in this. Beverly, Crystal, David, Link, and Madison all admitted to researching grammatical concepts before teaching them. While all three ELL participants did this, Link and Madison were native English speakers, so this lack of confidence and practice of researching before teaching was not uniquely tied to being an ELL. Not only did Beverly do research for anything grammar related, but she also integrated videos she found useful into her lessons. Beverly felt that the people in the videos could better explain the concepts anyways, and if students had questions, she would just “try to restate what the person has said in the video.” During Beverly’s observation of her digital English III class, she did just that. During Beverly’s observation, I wrote reflective notes that she did not sound as clueless as she had made herself out to be about grammar during the interview. Although it was very possible that she was not clueless, when I went back over the interview transcripts and saw her comment about repeating what was in the videos, it became apparent that she may have simply repeated the information from the videos she found.

Crystal discussed the impact of being from another country on her confidence in English grammar:

Well, now it has gotten better with the years just because I had that chip on my shoulder as the Hispanic teacher teaching AP. So I have made it my thing, you got to know this well. Teaching myself. And in AP, when you hit the grammar portion here and there, you got to know, I'm teaching it to somebody. I have to master it myself, so at times it feels like, "Oh my God, she didn't know this." But I looked back and I said, "There was no way." And I could see all the cracks along the way, so I've been trying to fix them myself.
Despite her efforts, when asked about her confidence in teaching grammar, she replied, “I guess, a little hesitant. Just because again, it's the one thing like, ‘Oh my God, I got to refresh them, right. I got to do this.”’ Crystal admitted not including much grammar in her instruction, so on her part, there was a lack of practice with the subject and teaching it. Crystal was observed digitally for a short grammar-related lesson she taught her AP English Language students in preparation for the SAT; this class was a hybrid class, which meant that Crystal had students both in person and online at the same time. The lesson was on the use of semicolons, and she also went over independent clauses since it was necessary for students to recognize independent clauses to properly use semicolons. Crystal appeared extremely confident during the lesson. Unlike several of the digital observations, her camera was turned on and facing her throughout the lesson. She quickly answered students’ questions, bounced off their ideas, and moved through the lesson with ease.

Link expressed moderate confidence in his knowledge of grammar: “I think I'd probably grade myself as like a C plus or B minus still. There are still things that I don't even catch, and I have an English degree.” As noted in an earlier quote from Link, he had dyslexia, and this might have been a factor in his poorer self-confidence in relation to more technical aspects of English. In terms of teaching grammar, Link reflected, “I feel okay in it. I've definitely gotten a little more confident over the past two years compared to where I was when I first started teaching.” Link commented that when he did integrate any type of grammar, he had more work to do: “I'm going to end up going back and doing more research, just double-check because I'm not confident in my ability with grammar. And I want to make sure I teach it correctly.” Link did not seem particularly confident nor insecure during his observation. His English II class was observed virtually. His camera was off, and like many of the other digital observations where the camera
was off, it was harder to assess confidence. He was very straightforward with his explanations on basic concepts, like fragments, and sounded rather neutral. Link’s background was in creative writing, and he viewed and appreciated his knowledge of grammar more in a creative context and use than in the context of what he taught in English class.

As mentioned earlier in an excerpt from Madison’s interview, she grew up during a time when students learned rules and were expected not to ask questions about them. Her true lack of understanding behind many grammatical rules affected her confidence, which seemed to wane as the interview progressed:

Overall, I'm pretty confident in grammar… I'm pretty decently competent… I would feel decently comfortable in teaching them. Again, I know I do struggle still to this day if a kid is like, well, why is that the rule?... But if the kids really wanted to break down why that is the rule, I would probably need to do a little research before we did that just to refresh myself as to why that actually is the rule.

She went from “pretty confident,” to “decently confident,” to “struggle still,” to “need to do a little research.” Several participants repeated this lack of confidence in grammar when it came to understanding rules. For example, Amy commented on rules: “I feel confident in recognizing how to fix it. But I don't feel as comfortable teaching it only because there's so many specific rules.” Madison also mentioned her aptitude and preference for fixing papers but not understanding the reason behind many grammatical rules.

David was another example of a teacher who expressed low confidence in knowledge and ability to teach grammar, but he projected confidence during his observation with evidence to support the confidence. When asked about his confidence in teaching grammar, David commented, “Like I said, I need to practice some more. I'm doing a lot of research on my own.
I’m trying to master it before I teach it.” David was one of the three teachers from a Spanish-speaking background, and that may have impacted his confidence in English. David’s English II class was observed digitally, but unlike most of the digital observations, David had his camera on and pointed toward his board. His Smartboard was connected to his computer and linked as a screen on Teams. Although David expressed a lack of confidence in his ability to teach grammar, his observation showed otherwise. His voice and his body language all showed that he was enthusiastic about the topic, and he had no issue explaining the main concept, which was dependent clauses. Unlike some of the other observations where participants may have simply memorized information to teach or read from a screen, it was clear that David understood what he was teaching because he had students sharing examples and was actively providing feedback.

**Theme 3: The Impact of Factors in the Educational Context**

The first two themes were primarily about the participants themselves: their experiences as children and their self-confidence. The experiences of teaching added more layers to the beliefs teachers developed about grammar. The educational system has many stakeholders, and there are many facets and constraints with which teachers must contend. There were four factors specific to the educational context that impacted participants’ beliefs and actions when it came to grammar instruction: students, coworkers and supervisors, curriculum and standards, and time limitations.

**Perceptions on Students’ Receptiveness and Ability.** Overall, there were very negative opinions voiced on students’ receptiveness to learning grammar and their ability to learn it. Amy’s personal aversion to grammar instruction was made clear early in her interview, but she explained, in part, why she did not integrate grammar instruction: “And I know from the student
perspective, it's not fun to learn, so it's not fun to teach if it's not fun to learn.” When probed to explain why she thought students did not find it fun, she explained,

I feel like it's just the reactions of the kids. I'm not going to say that they're apathetic, but especially at the school I'm at now, a lot of them are science and engineering minded and not that grammar is the most important thing to them, but they're part of a generation that will use Grammarly and all those other websites to edit their writing for them.

After reviewing Amy’s transcripts numerous times, this idea of students not finding it fun was a projection of her preference for English class to be less restrictive and be more fun. It also sparked the question: If the teacher does not like the topic in the first place, how does the teacher motivate the students to like it? Still, for Amy, her choice to not teach grammar was partially attributed to students’ lack of receptiveness.

Madison explained that she used to teach more grammar in her early years of teaching, but she stopped teaching it because the students were not interested and never applied what she taught. She reflected,

I would enjoy it if the kids were into it or at least were receptive to hearing the things. But I used to do it as a teacher years ago and I kind of stopped because again, same reason it was just, this is boring. Why are you wasting my time? And then of course it didn't ever make a difference, even when I tried to make it like, okay, well we're doing these things. So let's do grammar that is related to that. It just never seemed to click. So I admit I'm also one that's guilty of saying, okay, well then let's just move on.

Madison described her students not understanding the same way that Link and Crystal described their experience with grammar in their own education: It did not click. Link expressed similar sentiments about students being unreceptive: “Students are not very receptive to grammar-related
lessons, and unless it is drilled and constantly gone back to, it doesn't get retained.” The comment about the concepts needing to be drilled, however, was contradictory to his comment elsewhere in his interview that the drilling when he was younger was ineffective. Either way, for Madison and Link students’ lack of receptiveness coupled with the fact that students did not appear to retain what they learned was viewed as problematic. Link connected students’ unreceptiveness to online culture: “I think with online culture, unfortunately, some students just won't see the importance of it because grammar is not important to most people in their everyday life when they are writing or reading.”

Sara, the participant with the longest teaching career, expressed the highest confidence to teach grammar; however, she conceded,

My confidence in the kids being receptive to it is zero, because I don't think they've ever had it. And to them it would be... Well, first of all, there's Word, which automatically corrects things for them. It, it would be so alien to them at this point. You know, my confidence in teaching it is okay. But like I said, teaching it to them. There's, I think…they would... It wouldn't stick.

I observed Sara’s English II class in person. She projected a paragraph about the history of rollercoasters on the Smartboard that had 10 grammatical errors. She allowed students to go to the board and fix the errors; some students stayed in their seats but offered help to the students at the board. She had what she termed a difficult, low-level class, and approximately a third of the class engaged in the activity in some way. While this was not a grammar lesson as much as it was practice, there was some receptiveness on the part of students. In Sara’s reflection logs, she wrote that she repeated this activity for bell work with different paragraphs for several days. She
said students were proud of themselves the first few days for finding most of the errors, but they quickly tired of the activity.

Link, Madison, and Sara all felt that their students were unreceptive and unable to fully understand or retain what they learned. Caroline echoed the sentiments: “They whine about it. They don’t like doing it. And to be quite frank with you, I would probably dare say eight out of 10 just don't get it.” In one of Caroline’s reflection logs, she wrote that she was reviewing verbs that particular week, and when prompted to explain why, she wrote, “Students are disconnected from grammar. I’ve noticed students do not understand what a verb is.” During Caroline’s observation, I noted a lot of sarcasm, both through her tone of voice and comments. Some examples of comments she made were “I know how much you love grammar,” and “You have been waiting all of your life for this!” In my reflective notes, I wrote that the comments sounded condescending, as though students should have already known the basic concepts that she was teaching. Students should know basics, like the parts of speech, by the time they get to high school, but the reality is obviously quite different. For someone like Caroline who remembered identifying verbs in 3rd grade and then taught grammar to her own children who scored well on state assessments, teaching high school students who could not identify a verb would reasonably cause a low perception of students’ ability level.

Amy studied education in college, and she remembered being told that students should know the parts of speech, but with teaching high school students, she felt as though “your brain defaults to yeah, of course they do” know those things. Throughout her interview, Sara was adamant that weak foundational knowledge was the root of the problem. Sara felt the issue of students’ missing foundational knowledge in grammar at the elementary level was too severe by the time students got to high school for it to be corrected:
I think they've moved away from grammar a lot, a lot. And it’s... And it reflects in their writing, but... They have to learn to write before they can fix the grammar. So, I think by this time it's almost too late to try to introduce too much of it. In the school years, because there's no, it's like trying to add the lettuce and tomatoes and ketchup. Just no hamburger.

Sara occasionally did error correction activities like the one I observed, but she felt that there was no point in doing more thorough grammar lessons because they would have no benefit.

While many of the participants generally held negative views about students’ receptiveness and ability to understand grammar, David was an outlier in certain aspects. David agreed that students were far below the level at which they should be, but he was more optimistic in remediating students: “We have to go back to some of the basics because some of the students are not demonstrating mastery of those skills. So revisiting those things will work.” When asked if he felt that students were receptive to grammar, he said, “Yeah. However, it all depends on those that already mastered that skill and those that have no clue how to do it. It's usually on zero to a hundred.” It is not uncommon for challenges to cause students to shut down and be less receptive to learning. What was very different about David compared to many of the participants was that he had a very positive energy during his observation. I observed David digitally, and David was only two of the six online observations where he was standing with his camera pointing toward the board and actively working through the lesson. The level of engagement and attitude on his side may have been why he had experienced some better engagement from students, and his belief that students could learn was undoubtedly impactful too.

Normative Beliefs. The negative experiences some teachers had with trying to teach grammar were not the only factors shaping teachers’ beliefs and ultimately influencing their
teaching practices. Normative beliefs, the perceived behaviors or expectations of others, came up in various ways.

A common idea that the youngest teachers in the group, Link and Amy, both expressed was that older teachers were more likely to teach grammar. Amy commented,

They like to make it a lot of like worksheets and practices and things like that. They tend to be more excited about it because it's something that they've loved to do growing up and they love to teach it. And they've gotten it down to where it's like a science to them. So, they know exactly what they need to teach and how they need to teach it, the ways that students learn it. But I feel like I see that more with older teachers.

Similarly, Link believed that older teachers tended to focus more on grammar and older styles of teaching, but offered thoughts on younger teachers, as well:

I think teachers around my age, or a little bit older, most of us didn't get really get grammar teaching while we were in school. And so a lot of us aren't sure how to teach grammar. And so I think a lot of us just don't.

When Caroline, the oldest teacher in the group was asked about other teachers’ grammar instruction, she replied, “I don't know of any teachers that really teach grammar, if you want to know the truth of it. Even in my team last year, I don't recall anyone teaching grammar.” At one point in Sara’s interview, she had indicated that she did not feel like the current standards even required teachers to teach any grammar. Younger teachers believed that older teachers teach it, and older teachers believed that no one really teaches it. Lily also noted,

I don't think I've heard much about grammar being taught. I think maybe more so with colleagues of mine who have been ELL, ESL teachers, or had those, what are they called, the contained ESL classes. They push that more often.
In mainstream English, the younger teachers seemed to believe that the older teachers touched on grammar and the older ones thought no one did.

Part of the different perceptions on this were possibly due to different ideas of what grammar instruction even entailed. It was clear that there was not even a consistent idea of what it meant to have learned grammar. Teachers said they liked grammar, which is a set of rules, yes many admittedly did not know the rules. For the older participants, grammar instruction was very comprehensive in their childhood, so even if they or their peers had addressed some grammar occasionally, they may not have viewed this as teaching grammar. For the younger participants, however, anything related to the mechanics of language could have been considered grammar instruction to them.

Although this study was limited to 10 participants, some of the answers in the interviews gave insight into experiences and beliefs of English teachers outside the study. When asked about what other teachers had espoused on the subject, Madison divulged,

I know most just don't want to deal with it because especially in high school, the kids are so stuck in their ways and it's so difficult to get them to adjust anything that they do that it's like grammar, I'm not going to bother with that. Because you try it and they don't make the adjustments. Then you're like, okay, let's talk about this again. And they still don't do it so it's like never mind, just forget it.

This tied back again to the frustrations with students’ unreceptiveness and inability to retain the lessons, and it demonstrated that this frustration existed with more than just the participants in this study. Many of the participants believed that no one else really taught grammar, that very few did so, or that others also quit: If no one felt as though their peers were teaching grammar, then there was no pressure to do so. Even among teachers of more rigorous subjects, like AP
English Language, which Crystal taught, she revealed, “I don't think, we've actually talked a lot about grammar… We don't talk about it…We talk about multiple choice…essays, thesis. But we don't talk about grammar like that.”

While personal struggles with teaching grammar or viewing others struggle had obvious negative effects, there was an example of a participant seeing another teacher successfully teach grammar. Amy shared her experience from her student teaching:

But it just, I don't know, sometimes it feels weird to me to do like nouns and verbs and parts of speech as 10th graders. But the teacher I interned for did that and it worked well with the kids because they finally got it after what, 10 years in education, which blew my mind. Yeah. Like their sophomores and now they're finally getting what like nouns and verbs are. And that just blew my mind. But we have to know that kids come from different places. And I think that older teachers get that better than younger teachers. She had seen successful implementation, but still, she felt it was “weird.” The positive influence of her mentor teacher was not enough to influence Amy’s teaching practices, especially once Amy was able to work in a school that allowed teachers to “freedom to teach what you want, the way you want to do it.” Amy would later rationalize her decision to not prioritize grammar on her students’ needs, but Grace, who worked at the same school felt that language instruction was needed for the students at the school. It seemed that many teachers used the norms that confirmed the preferences for their own behaviors to further support their decisions rather than looking to peers to inspire different behaviors.

While most of the normative beliefs expressed during the interviews related to other teachers, there were also some views related to authoritative figures. Lily shared the following memory from her first year of teaching:
So something that sticks out in my mind specifically is my first year of teaching, I tried to correct students on their grammar. And my first year teaching, I had strictly ESE English classes. So I had a support teacher with me every single period. And my administrator at the time kind of dissuaded me from doing that. Because of their lack of skills, they weren't getting good grades on certain things. And so my administrator actually approached me and he was like, "As long as they're meeting the standard, it doesn't matter."

As shared earlier, Lily felt that her childhood experience of having her grammar corrected helped her become a better writer. She went into teaching emphasizing correct grammar, just as it had been in her education, because she saw value in it. The expectation of her supervisor, however, was that she would discontinue doing that, so she did. Grace worked as a reading coach, and although the position is not one of executive authority like a principal, a coaching role is often viewed as one of authority. During her time as a reading coach, she supported the greater focus on grammar for struggling students because it was helpful for lower-level students. The administrative influence in the context of grammar was not always necessarily a negative one. Grace had reading and English-specific knowledge that may have influenced her thinking, so it did call into question how much Lily’s administrator knew about supporting low-level students and what the administrator’s beliefs and priorities were that guided him to dissuade Lily in the first place.

**Limitations in the Curriculum and Standards.** One of the issues that came up during the interviews, especially when asking participants how they approach grammar or any of the current language standards, was the limitations they encountered in the curriculum or in the standards themselves. For example, Caroline felt, “There's not much there. I mean, I'm trying to
think about, we teach them how to write, but there's more to it than that.” There was a similar response from Amy:

I know that they're not really in there. It's just kind of hidden in the make revisions and edits and sight of papers and things like that. So, it's like that broad standard about editing. And that's why I kind of focus just on like the holistic style of teaching it where like these are issues I see in your papers, this is something I have fixed and how I fix it.

In a sense, they were both correct in the fact that the grammar-related standards were limited, but the CCSS does have a separate set of language standards with some grammar concepts explicitly listed. Amy and Caroline both appeared to think of grammar in the context of the writing standards about editing instead of the separate thread of language standards.

Link recognized that the standards existed, but he felt that his hands were tied more because of curriculum limitations: “It's not explicitly in our curriculum maps or it's always a secondary standard than a primary one….I don't think there's really time allotted for it in the curriculum.” Lily felt that if she were expected to teach grammar that she would have been told to do so: “I guess just regarding the fact that we really haven't had to teach grammar. It wasn't something that was explicitly told to us that we have to teach.” In a similar sentiment, Crystal argued, “We don't teach grammar, because that’s literally what we’ve been paid to do, not to teach it. That makes sense. You know what I’m saying? We’ve got to follow this set of standards,” which do not really focus on grammar. Crystal especially felt that with new teachers, they were particularly worried about sticking to the curriculum unit plans (CUPs): “I see the new teachers coming in. They look at the standards. And, okay. So you have to follow the CUPs, for example, to a T or whatever, and your hands are tied.” Beverly was more frank with her response: “The current ones. I mean, I don't even look at them.”
The fact that the curriculum and standards did not prioritize grammar had a definite impact on teachers’ grammar instruction. During the scheduling of observations, some of the participants admitted that the only reason they had a grammar-related lesson for me to observe was because of testing preparations during the month of April. Beverly commented during her interview that ACT and SAT preparation was really the only time she taught anything related to grammar. The limitations in the standards also had an impact in the range of topics observed, which will be discussed at further length in the next theme.

**Time Constraints.** Although it was a smaller subtheme, limited time was brought up repeatedly by a few participants. In Lily’s reflection logs, she indicated that she did SAT grammar review over the course of two weeks with her students. In two separate logs, she indicated that the lessons did not go as well as she had hoped because “We were pressed for time, and I couldn’t include everything I wanted to.” During his interview, Link mentioned the issue of time constraints twice. First, he noted that “if [grammar] is something that I’m going to go over, I’m going to have to carve out specific time for that.” Second, he felt the issue was compounded by the fact that “there's not really a lot of time to spend on it in our classes either.” As a consequence, grammar was, Link believed, “kind of forgotten about.”

In many ways throughout the data collection process and analysis, David was an outlier. David felt very strongly about needing more time to properly plan and prepare for meaningful grammar instruction. He contended, “We need more time to cover ground.” He also desired a collaborative planning effort with other teachers. David also expressed frustration with time when it came to teaching. He found that he could not complete lessons in short timeframes:

I was trying to do it for bell work, but then... I was spending a lot of time covering some of the rules during bell work. It didn't become... It wasn't bell work anymore. It was the
whole lesson. I feel that I need more time to teach those grammar rules and going back to
covering those because I won't be able to do it just for bell work.

In the next theme, it will become even clearer how David was an outlier in this desire to have
more time to cover grammatical rules. For most of the participants, the factors in the educational
context led them to largely give up on grammar, or at least, to relegate it to the backburner.

Theme 4: How “Grammar” is Taught

Through the interviews, participants’ beliefs about grammar and the contexts for those
beliefs really came to the forefront. Participants were also asked to share some of their teaching
practices during the interviews. The observation lessons were selected by the participants: They
were asked to select a lesson in which they taught a grammar-related concept or one of the
language standards. The reflection logs were completed weekly over the course of four weeks;
participants logged information on the standards they selected, explained why the standards were
selected, noted the strategies used for the lessons, and reflected on how the lessons went. The
interviews, observations, and reflections gave an overall idea of what grammar instruction
looked like for the 10 participants. As it has already been mentioned, it was clear that the
participants had varying ideas of what it meant to learn grammar and teach it. If going strictly by
the definition of grammar being a set of rules, then very little grammar instruction occurred
during the observations; however, the participants selected their lessons, and these lessons
reflected what they believed constituted grammar instruction. Despite the confusion on what
grammar learning even meant, there was little diversity in the focus, context, and timeframe of
grammar-related lessons delivered or discussed by the participants.

The context of instruction was either during writing, test preparation, or bell work. The
timeframe was quick, and the activity was typically some type of error correction or
identification. Error correction or identification activities presented students with grammatically incorrect examples (sentences or paragraphs), and the mistakes were corrected either by teacher modeling, student effort, or a combination of both. There were overlaps between some of the lesson elements. For example, Sara’s students did a quick bell work activity looking for errors in a paragraph. Error correction or identification was very common: Beverly, Crystal, Grace, Link, Madison, and Sara all had error correction/identification as the basis of or as a portion of their observed lessons.

**Grammar Integrated into Writing.** Five of the participants worked on writing at some point during the timeframe I collected data from them. In one reflection, Crystal mentioned her students were writing research papers, but she did not integrate any grammar instruction into writing that week. Sara’s students were reviewing informative writing, so she had them proofreading their own essays, which she noted in her reflections was not actually grammar instruction. Sara did not feel that integrating grammar lessons into writing units would be beneficial:

I introduce lessons once in a while, but they're very, very basic and they might help a little, but... Which is better than nothing, but... It's not, like I said, if the basis isn't there early on, along with the phonics and understanding the roots, the root words, that grammar is almost impossible to apply to, to writing.

Madison’s students were at the tail-end of writing research papers, so she reviewed details about MLA formatting and punctuation. During Madison’s interview she was very upfront about her previous frustrations with trying to teach grammar and consequently putting it aside, but when she does touch on grammar, she said it was usually in the context of writing: “Usually it's okay if we're working on something. Okay, what are we writing about? And so therefore, how is this
going to incorporate into that?” During the observation of her digital AP English Literature class, she showed a premade exemplar of a research paper that included some purposely made mistakes. She noted during the lesson that those were some common mistakes she had seen in previous papers. She modeled how to fix some of the errors, and then she suggested students use Grammarly and Purdue OWL for further help with their grammar and MLA formatting. Although not observed during a writing lesson, Lily mentioned during her interview that during writing units she did something similar: “I guess I provide examples of what their writing samples should look like, so they have an understanding and expectation, I guess, that they have to meet.” Madison modeled how to correct the mistakes, but she did not explain why the mistakes were errors in the first place. Even though Madison recognized that her students desired to know the reasons behind the rules of mechanics, she still reverted to the teaching approaches she experienced in her own K-12 education.

Amy’s students were drafting essays during her observation. The limited grammar instruction to which she was willing to concede was within the context of writing. She noted, I know there are ways to make it engaging, but it's not something I felt strongly about integrating. I like doing the smaller lessons, like I did when you were in here, about recognizing the grammar mistakes they’re making when they make them and addressing them…it's the same way that I liked to help my friends in high school was just by looking at the whole paper, noticing those small things and addressing them as we went on.

During the in-person observation of her English I class, Amy walked around the class helping students with their essays. She discussed their topics, helped them find evidence, and generally kept them on task. In the 90-minute class period, there were only five observable instances where anything related to mechanics of language were addressed, and they were only done when
students stopped her to ask for help or feedback. At one point, she pointed out a tense issue in a student’s essay, but it was not referred to as a tense error; Amy simply noted that it was wrong and offered up the correction. I was sitting directly behind the student and could see the computer screen: There were some other glaring grammatical errors, but Amy made no comments about those errors. With another student, she pointed out that a sentence did not make sense, so she offered a suggestion to adjust the sentence. She read a sentence aloud that had a pronoun antecedent issue, but she did not refer to it directly as so, and again, offered the correction. There was one correction in a student’s essay where she said, “When you have a plural, you need a singular verb.” This was the extent of grammatical terms or explanations offered during the length of the observation. In her reflection on the lesson, Amy wrote, “Students remarked that they were better to understand the grammatical concepts when done on a one-to-one basis in regards to their own essays. They were able to process and apply the feedback in an impactful way rather than learn a lesson that could easily be forgotten.” There was a disconnect between what was observed and what was reflected by the participant. It was possible for students to see the application of the concepts in an indirect way, but no grammatical concepts were taught since they were simply given answers without ever really knowing the problem. Amy made the comment in her interview about disliking math, and this was akin to giving students the answer to a math problem without ever giving the math problem in the first place.

Amy was not the only one whose observation did not really include an observable grammar lesson. During her interview, Grace explained, “So, when I'm approaching the language standards, it's mostly intertwined with one of the writing standards.” Grace’s English students were reviewing for the FSA writing test for her in-person observation. Students were doing an
escape room activity, and the final “room” was related to the language standards. The activity was completed in pairs, and it was self-paced. I sat behind two tenth grade students and could see the activity quite clearly on their computer screen. In the activity related to grammar, students had to correct sentences with grammatical errors. There were links to videos from sources, like Khan Academy, explaining the concepts that were being assessed in the activity. The students watched the videos, but it quickly became clear that they did not understand the concepts in the videos; furthermore, they did not understand how to apply the concepts to the sentences they were supposed to correct. For example, one of the first videos talked about fragments, so the students automatically assumed that the first sentence in the paragraph was a fragment. It was not a fragment; it was a simple sentence. The students did not know how to identify a complete sentence. They commented how short the sentence was, so they assumed it must be a fragment.

Grace was actively working with students on the other side of the classroom on topic sentences and elaboration for the entire period, so I did not observe Grace actively teaching or assisting students with the grammar activity. In her reflection, she wrote, “The lesson went well…It also forced students to analyze sentence formation, subject-verb agreement, and sentences with punctuation errors.” The activity was continued the day after the observation, so it is possible that the language activity was addressed when I was not present; however, based on the self-paced nature of the activity and the reflection noting that it “forced students to analyze,” it appeared that the premise of the activity was for students to figure out the grammar themselves.

During the interview, Grace described another activity with some overlapping features to the one in her observation. Again, the instructional portion came from students watching videos:

So like I did an activity after the [district writing assessment] I created, I want to say like eight or 10 stations where they scan a QR code because of course I have my online kids,
so they can just scan the QR code at home. And within the QR code, I had a video. So the video was focused on some part of a writing aspect. And then I had one specific station that focused specifically on correcting. I pulled mistakes within sentences and then I told the kids, "Okay, now identify the problem. Is it a fragment issue? Is it a run-on sentence issue? Is it subject verb agreement issues?" So they had to tell me what the problem was and then they had to rewrite the sentence after the correction.

This activity did have students identify the terms of the grammatical errors, but this activity largely just a version of error correction using sentences from students’ essays in the district assessment. The instructional piece, again, came from videos.

Four participants stated during their interviews that they integrated grammar instruction into writing instruction, and three participants’ observations were during writing lessons. All the lessons not only minimally addressed language or grammar, but in two of the three observations, the instructional portion of the grammar was passive or barely visible, and that sparked another question: Is it grammar “instruction” if there is no instruction? Madison’s lesson was the only one that demonstrated some integrated instruction, but the editing portion her lesson only lasted approximately 10 minutes. Through the reflections, it was clear that the participants felt their grammar-related lessons went well. When English teachers say that they integrate grammar into writing instruction, it is largely through editing.

**Test Preparation.** Half the observations were in the context of text preparation, which was partially because of the time of year in which the observations were conducted. Beverly admitted, however, that on the rare occasions she did teach grammar, it is mostly because the ACT is coming up or the SAT is coming out, but we have to go over and gloss over it right away. But it doesn't come up while we're planning per se, at
all. I go over it...and then there you go and take your ACT, take your SAT. And that's pretty much the extent of what I've been doing at least.

Beverly did some grammar lessons with her students over the course of two weeks in preparation for the SAT; her reflections stated that she was doing the lessons the same way each time. True to the statements in her interview, Beverly showed videos about the concepts, reiterated the concepts, and then had students practice through an interactive quiz. During her observation, she went over subject-verb agreement because it is something that commonly gets tested on the SAT. She sounded disinterested throughout the lesson, and from her short, dry comments, it was clear that she was only going over the information because it was going to be on the SAT: “I know, weird,” and “It’s tested.” Lily also did SAT preparation for her observation and also covered subject-verb agreement during the lesson. In one of her reflections, Lily noted that she also covered other grammatical concepts in preparation for the SAT:

I covered SAT grammar, specifically verbs and adverbs and went over questions they may see on the SAT. I chose these because the students are testing the next day and I believed that those questions were some they may be unfamiliar with.

Unlike Beverly, Lily was less apathetic toward the topic. In general, Lily expressed greater interest in grammar, which may have influenced her livelier attitude during the lesson. Crystal’s observation was also for SAT preparation. She went over how to use semicolons since it is commonly tested on the SAT. She projected an example multiple choice question from the SAT writing section that required students to select the correctly punctuated sentence. The correct option used a semi colon. She had to touch on independent clauses for this lesson so that students could understand how to identify the correct use of the semicolon. She told her students that if the two clauses could be separated by a period, then a semicolon could be used too. Her class
went through process of elimination with the example questions, and then they did another example question to check that they understood.

During the timeframe of the study, Sara and Link were preparing their English II students for the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). In her reflections, Sara mentioned that she did bell work reviewing conventions of standard English since it was tested in the reading section of the FSA; this was the error correction practice she had students complete during the observation. Link also did FSA review during his observation. He reviewed a mix of reading and language concepts together. The observation was done virtually since all his classes were digital this year. The review was done through a game of Kahoot. Most of the grammar-related questions required students to select an incorrect example of the concept in the question or select the example that best exemplified a specific concept. After students submitted their answers, Link took the time to explain what the right answer was and why. For example, one of the questions asked students to identify the option that was a fragment. He went through each wrong answer and explained how each had a subject, verb, and a complete idea, and the correct answer, the fragment, was missing the complete idea. This practice of thoroughly explaining the answering connected back to his preference for teachers to do the same for him.

**Quick Lessons During Bell Work.** During the interviews, and confirmed during several observations, many of the participants noted that on the rare occasion they did teach any grammar, it was very quick and usually during bell work. During her interview, Caroline stated, “It's more bell work more than anything because you can give them quick feedback and then move on to whatever it is we need to go into next.” Her actual observation was a little longer than what she had made it seem in her interview, but she may have extended the lesson because she was being observed. The lesson was a bit more formalized in terms of grammatical concepts
and teaching practices, but from her reflections, it appeared that what I observed was her typical approach to grammar instruction. The term “quick” is subjective, and for Caroline, grammar in her childhood was far more comprehensive, so the lessons she gave may have felt very abbreviated to her. Caroline had sentenced projected on the Smartboard for her English II students. The class was a remedial group, and there was a support teacher present for students with learning disabilities. Caroline first reviewed finding subjects in the projected sentences. The sentences started simply, and then they gradually became harder. After students were able to identify the subjects, she asked them to identify the verbs in the sentences. Students actively called out the verbs in the sentences; she had reviewed verbs with students the previous week. From there, she introduced simple predicates. She modeled finding simple predicates in simple sentences and gradually moved into more complex sentences. Once students were able to identify simple predicates, she repeated the process with complete predicates. Students completed the lesson by writing their own sentences and identifying the predicates.

Crystal also stated during her interview that she dedicated very little time to teaching grammar when she did do it:

Very quick to me. Let me get this out of the way type of thing, because it's definitely a loss of feel that, that's not the most important thing, right? So it's the standards that kind of, oh yeah. We have to touch them here and there at one point, but it's not I feel, and I think a lot of people feel that way, it's not our core. It's just little extras that we could add here. It's just like, "Oh, I got to teach this. How do I get it out of the way as quickly as possible?"
Unlike Caroline’s lesson, Crystal was very true to the comments in her interview: The observation lesson on semicolons last approximately 10 minutes. Sara’s error-correction activity was also a bell work activity that lasted no more than 15 minutes.

The only participant willing to dedicate more time to grammar instruction, as explained earlier, was David. Teachers’ unwillingness to carve out time, like Link had described it, could explain the phenomenon behind many of the participants outsourcing, referring students to resources, or simply rationalizing that there was some type of “fix” to students’ grammatical issues, which made the instruction less of a priority. Madison’s referred her students to Grammarly and Purdue’s OWL, Amy mentioned that her students could just use Grammarly, Grace and Beverly linked Khan Academy Videos to their lessons, and Sara mentioned Word automatically correcting grammar. In a sense, it was a way of acknowledging that the students needed the help, but it was a way of feeling as thought it had been addressed even if they did not have the time or desire to teach it.

**Theme 5: Voicing the Need for Grammar Instruction**

The beliefs and resulting practices presented thus far seemed straight forward: Teachers had negative views, so they gave minimal attention to grammar. Intentionally or not, it was true that grammar was not prioritized by the participants, but there was a general consensus that knowledge of grammar, at least to some degree or in some contexts, was necessary or beneficial. Some participants contended that years of ignoring grammar instruction has had visible consequences, and many of the discussions were framed around those perceived consequences.

Sara argued that the problem starts in the primary years:

The foundations, the primary years. They are not getting... They're not getting the proper instruction. They're pushing them too hard with...I have a third grader and when they're
asked, and this is going back, even to second grade, first grade, when they're asking questions about the theme. They're in second grade. What is the theme of is not a second grade idea. There's absolutely no, that I can see, very little grammar being taught. All of it is passages. What is the answer? Support it with the text evidence. What helped you find that answer? In the very, very, very beginning there might've been a couple of lessons on basic grammar. Capitalization, does this get a question mark or a period, but again, the verbs and all of that…

Researcher: The parts of speech?
Sara: Oh, please.

Researcher: Would you say that your third grader knows the parts of speech or not?
Sara: No. Yeah, no, they do not. That was out the window. All they wanted, all they want is passages. How did you get to the answer? And that is causing major reading problem. Huge reading problem.

Sara felt that the damage was too deep to remediate at the high school level, and she saw no reason to spend time teaching concepts that students would not be able to apply. Crystal believed grammar was necessary: “I think we have dropped the ball for so many years, moving away from teaching grammar, thinking that it's not necessary. And then after all these years we realize the people sitting at a high school that they don't know how to write.” Grace offered a unique perspective as both a high school teacher and college professor. She saw the effect on college students:

I see the need for it at the college level. I give extra credit at the college level for students who get writing consultations at the writing center because they're struggling a lot with some of the basic things that I know they didn't receive at the high school level because I
teach the first class when they come to college. I teach the first English course, which is freshman composition one. So I see how they struggle. And I know because there wasn't an emphasis at the high school level, they lack at the college level.

While the participants recognized these issues, two of the three admittedly failed to prioritize grammar. The perceived consequences of not doing the behavior were not enough to change their behaviors. Link also admitted having a slightly changed perception on grammar because of his experiences with grading poor writing:

And then when you have to grade writing, you definitely look at grammar in a different way than when you're the one doing the writing. And you notice a lot more things than when you're writing. I think I've gotten better with grammar because I'm seeing more examples of poor grammar on a daily basis.

Another common concern voiced by participants was the perceived decline in communication and belief that learning grammar could improve one’s ability to communicate more effectively. The term communication, as it was used by the participants, included both communicating verbally and through writing. Many of the communication concerns were related to writing. An example of this was noted in comment from Grace’s interview:

I understand there is a need to make sure that you are communicating effectively. And sometimes you can't communicate effectively when you have run-on sentences. When things are not capitalized, when the subject verbs don't agree. Your messages aren’t coming across clearly. So I definitely feel like I was impacted by prior experiences with writing and grammar and just to want to be better because I love to write, but that grammar is the second component to becoming a stronger writer.
David echoed similar sentiments during his interview. His concern was not only about helping students become more effective writers and communicators, but he also thought about the impact on students’ futures:

One thing is being able to write well and express yourself in a way that you follow the grammar rules in order to send a clear message... I believe when you read an email that has spellings and some grammatical mistakes, all of a sudden you kind of label that person, you didn't give them a chance. I think we need to go back to the basics and make sure we have students that can write well, express themselves well. Those students are the ones that will express their ideas so well that they'll convince anyone to buy anything, to do anything.

His sentiments about students’ futures were not viewed in the same way by all the participants. Amy felt that she did not need to focus on grammar because of her students’ future career orientations. Since her students were oriented more toward STEM careers, she felt that it was more important to address content related to lab and engineering reports than it was to address the mechanics of language: “My big influence on what's important about grammar versus what's not... it's just based off of who they're going to be when they're older and what they need to know in order to succeed at that job.”

In the modern world, people communicate extensively through writing online. Madison connected the modern phenomenon she termed “text speak” to the lack of language instruction:

When I think of grammar specifically or language specifically, it's so necessary because otherwise, how are you going to convey anything? But sadly in our society it's kind of dropped off. I mean, when we think of a text speak, we can't actually spell out words. We have to abbreviate even simple words, they seem to want to abbreviate now. So it's really
frustrating. I definitely do feel it's a battle as an English teacher…It is frustrating at times, and I wish that we would shift otherwise.

Madison expressed the need for language instruction, but she compared trying to address the decline the language to a battle. Crystal used similar language in discussing the need to reintegrate grammar: “So I think it would be a good shift. It will be a little challenging for us as teachers, more than the kids, but necessary nonetheless.” They both recognized the issues and desired changes, but the follow-through had not happened for either of them. While some teachers felt strongly about the need for change, Beverly was upfront about being part of that language decline. Beverly admitted, “We have texting, all I do when I text is just abbreviate things, or if I have to write a paper, thesaurus and Google. So, it's a little bit disappointing in that way, but, reality.”

Two participants framed the need for grammar instruction based on the needs of specific populations. For example, Grace previously worked as a reading coach and noticed a heavier emphasis on grammar with low-level readers. Grace observed, “When you're dealing with struggling readers, they need to understand, ‘Okay, why is this the verb? What's the action that is being illustrated within the sentence?’” While Caroline voiced a low perception of her current students’ ability level, she still felt that it was necessary to teach grammar because of the students’ demographics:

With a lot of the kids that we have that are Spanish speakers, they don't understand a lot of the rules in grammar. Of course, neither do the regular kids that actually speak English, but they know for some reason it's either right or wrong. They just can't explain it to you.
Caroline’s comment was linked the implicit grammar learned through first language acquisition, which as she noted, allowed native English speakers to just “know” that something sounded right or wrong. She believed that ELLs would benefit from grammar instruction because English was not their first language.

Many teachers believed grammar was beneficial in some way, but those beliefs had little impact on teachers’ actual instruction. The beliefs built in the formative years, and beliefs based on the educational context – normative and control beliefs—ultimately influenced the teaching practices of most teachers.

While many teachers felt that within the current educational context and constraints that grammar could not be a priority, but they felt that it should be. Two participants did not echo the same sentiments as the rest of the participants. Beverly did not say that she thought grammar was unnecessary or necessary, rather, she was just uninterested in it: “Grammar is just so eh, you know?” Amy felt that grammar was a priority for students headed to elite schools, and she did not feel that grammar and the ability to communicate were necessarily interwoven:

I feel like it's important to know that before I came to this school, I was more interested in doing grammar type things. So, like addressing the parts of speech and like correct writing for grammar and all the rules and things that are necessary to learn because the kids that I was teaching then were aimed for Ivy League schools, and which like that, that would be important for them to know. And I feel like it's changed since I've been from the school I started at to the school I'm at now because the kids now again are more aligned to like science and STEM careers. And for those, not saying that they don't need grammar, but they will have those supporting tools in place to where it's what their brain can think of content-wise that matters more than how it's given. Because they can do that
verbally, or in a presentation, or written, so they have ways to introduce their thoughts.

So, grammar is kind of like fallen to the wayside because of that. While other teachers believed that knowledge of grammar worked hand-in-hand with being able to voice ideas verbally or written. Amy believed that this was disconnected from students’ ability to express their ideas. For this reason, she did not share that same view as many others in the need for grammar instruction. Her perception on her students’ needs because they were STEM-oriented stood in stark contrast to Grace’s perception on the students from the same school. Grace saw the “need” for language instruction at her school: “They still lack basic grammar skills… because that's not their focus here.” Even though they had the same types of students, these participants showed how the formation of beliefs and the experiences of teachers made them filter the perceived needs of students so differently.

For the outliers, at least, the sentiments matched their practices. They did not believe grammar was important, so they gave it no priority. The majority of participants recognized some type of importance or perceived benefit with grammar, but there was little action in their classrooms that matched the level of import they claimed it had. Then on the opposite end of the spectrum, there was David, who insisted, “We need more. We need more.”

Research Question Responses

Sub-Question 1: What Are English Teachers’ Behavioral Beliefs about Grammar?

Behavioral beliefs are the attitudes people have toward the intended behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In this research, the intended behavior was learning and teaching grammar. Most teachers recognized that there are benefits to learning grammar or consequences to not, but the teachers’ attitudes toward teaching grammar were generally negative. The perceptions of potential benefits and consequences were not significant enough to change most participants’
attitudes. The attitudes toward teaching grammar were also not connected to the participants’ personal feelings about grammar. For example, Madison expressed a personal interest in grammar, but she voiced frustration trying to teach it:

Attempting to teach it, running into errors, trying them again, like hey, we talked about this. Giving them a chance to revise. But then I usually do if best, one revision and then it's like, okay, let's move on. And then again, maybe we'll try it with the next assignment, but I'm not going to beat a dead horse and keep trying to make them redo one assignment.

During her interview, Crystal said, “I think we have dropped the ball for so many years, moving away from teaching grammar,” but her attitude was more apparent in her actual teaching behaviors:

Very quick to me. Let me get this out of the way type of thing, because it's definitely a loss of feel that, that's not the most important thing, right? So it's the standards that kind of, oh yeah. We have to touch them here and there at one point, but it's not I feel, and I think a lot of people feel that way, it's not our core. It's still just extras that we could add here. It's just like, "Oh, I got to teach this. How do I get it out of the way as quickly as possible?"

Few participants had positive attitudes toward teaching grammar. The positive attitudes were espoused in the context of need: Students need to learn grammar. Grace commented,

I do see the need for language. In fact, I've had conversations with [my supervisor] about it because it's not at the forefront the way writing is, but if we're going to teach writing, you have to be able to teach language as well. They go hand-in-hand together.

David felt strongly that students needed to be better equipped with skills to become effective communicators, and for that reason, he held positive attitudes toward the behavior he felt would
achieve that goal: “I haven't had the opportunity to target grammar like I wish…. I would like to include grammar lessons as part of every single unit.”

**Sub-Question 2: What Are English Teachers’ Normative Beliefs about Grammar?**

Normative beliefs are what people perceive is the norm for the behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). In this study, normative beliefs were the perceived norms for teaching grammar. The perception was that not many English teachers taught grammar, nor were they expected to teach it. The two youngest participants, Amy and Link, believed that only older teachers taught grammar, and the two eldest participants in the group believed that no one really taught grammar anymore. Caroline, the oldest participant, commented, “I don't know of any teachers that really teach grammar, if you want to know the truth of it. Even in my team last year, I don't recall anyone teaching grammar.” Link assumed that many younger teachers simply do not teach grammar because they never learned it themselves:

I definitely think age really overall impacts the way that grammar is approached... I think teachers around my age, or a little bit older, most of us didn't get really a great grammar teaching while we were in school. And so a lot of us aren't sure how to teach grammar.

And so I think a lot of us just don't.

Almost all the participants commented that teachers did not discuss grammar together. Madison stated that most teachers “just don't want to deal with it.” Not only teachers set some of the norms. Lily had an administrator tell her not to focus on grammar with students: "As long as they're meeting the standard, [grammar] doesn't matter."

**Sub-Question 3: What Are English Teachers’ Control Beliefs about Grammar?**

Control beliefs are what people think they have control over in relation to the behavior, such as ability level or environmental factors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Ability level in this
study was knowledge of grammar and confidence in the ability to teach it. Environmental factors were the students, curriculum, standards, and time constraints. In general, the teachers had poor perceptions of their technical knowledge and ability to teach grammar. Most teachers believed factors in the educational context were uncontrollable, and these factors influenced their decisions regarding grammar instruction.

Only two teachers had solid confidence in their technical knowledge of English grammar; they were the eldest teachers who had received grammar instruction as children. The younger teachers tended to feel less confident or admitted to only having knowledge of basic grammatical concepts. Lily felt comfortable recognizing errors during editing, but she voiced low confidence in her knowledge because she never learned grammatical terms:

So my confidence, I would say is relatively low. I can look at a sentence or something and identify what's wrong with it. But when it comes to the specifics like the technical terms, terrible at them because I was never taught the actual technical terms.

In a similar sense, Madison’s confidence faded when it came explaining grammatical concepts:

Again, I know I do struggle still to this day if a kid is like, well, why is that the rule?...

But if the kids really wanted to break down why that is the rule, I would probably need to do a little research before we did that just to refresh myself as to why that actually is the rule.

Many teachers admitted having to do research on grammatical rules before being able to teach students about them, and some teachers simply gave students outside resources to learn from instead.
Several teachers believed that students were unreceptive and unable to learn grammar. The control belief related to students had a big impact on the teachers’ behaviors. An example of this was in Madison’s experience:

I would enjoy it if the kids were into it or at least were receptive to hearing the things. But I used to do it as a teacher years ago and I kind of stopped because again, same reason it was just, this is boring. Why are you wasting my time? And then of course it didn't ever make a difference, even when I tried to make it like, okay, well we're doing these things. So let's do grammar that is related to that. It just never seemed to click. So I admit I'm also one that's guilty of saying, okay, well then let's just move on.

On top of students not being receptive to grammar, teachers did not feel like it was something that meant to include in their teaching because as Link noted, “It's not explicitly in our curriculum maps or it's always a secondary standard than a primary one.” Crystal was even more explicit: “We don't teach grammar because that’s literally what we’ve been paid to do, not to teach it. That makes sense. You know what I'm saying? We've got to follow this set of standards.” If teachers wanted to incorporate any type of grammar into their teaching, Link mentioned that they needed to make time that they did not have to make. Even for the teachers like David, who want to teach more grammar, time was a major issue:

I was trying to do it for bell work, but then... I was spending a lot of time covering some of the rules during bell work. It didn't become... It wasn't bell work anymore. It was the whole lesson. I feel that I need more time to teach those grammar rules and going back to covering those because I won't be able to do it just for bell work.
Because teachers viewed these contextual factors as being out of their locus of control, the environmental factors ultimately guided the decisions teachers made regarding grammar instruction.

**Central Question: How Do English Teachers’ Beliefs Affect Their Teaching of Grammar?**

The view most English teachers express about grammar is one of value: Grammar is essential for effective communication and literacy. The reality, however, is that English teachers have relegated grammar to the backburner. Teachers’ educational experiences in their formative years largely shape their beliefs and greatly influence their existent approaches to teaching grammar, but the extent of time, priority, and variety given to grammar instruction are minimal. The experience of teaching even basic grammar, which many teachers themselves admittedly do not know well, has been fraught with so much frustration that the beliefs and desires of teachers have become overwhelmed by the influence of contextual factors. Perceptions on students’ abilities, needs, and receptiveness after attempting to integrate grammar instruction have left many teachers disillusioned, and when this is compounded with other contextual factors, such as curriculum that rarely addresses grammar, peers who never teach grammar, and time constraints, teachers’ core beliefs are overridden, and they fail to address grammar in any meaningful way, further perpetuating the very communication and literacy declines they think grammar may help improve.

Many teachers argued that knowledge of grammar was necessary for proper communication. David commented, “I think we need to go back to the basics and make sure we have students that can write well, express themselves well.” Other teachers tried teaching grammar to their students at some point in their careers because they too agreed with David, but in their experiences, students were not receptive and did not apply the concepts they learned.
Madison used the expression that teaching grammar was like beating a dead horse: It was useless. Sara felt the same way; she believed the students’ lack of foundational skills from the elementary level could not be remediated with grammar instruction at the high school level. Still, teachers occasionally integrated grammatical concepts into their instruction. Many of the instructional practices teachers used mimicked the instruction they preferred in their own K-12 education. Link explained: “I try to approach it the way that I liked it being taught when I was in school. And I try to focus on the why. So why do we have different words for different things?” Aside from students, the most common excuses for not teaching grammar were related to limitations with the curriculum and standards. Lily felt that if teachers were expected to teach it, they would have been told to do so. Crystal offered one of the more provocative comments from the interviews: “We don't teach grammar because that’s literally what we’ve been paid to do, not to teach it. That makes sense. You know what I'm saying? We’ve got to follow this set of standards.” Her argument was not that teachers were not willing to do more work outside their pay. Her argument was that teachers were in a position where their teaching practices had to strictly adhere to standards even if they felt students needed to learn something else outside the standards. Essentially, she meant that teachers’ beliefs did not matter when it came to what they had to teach.

**Summary**

This chapter started with a brief overview of the 10 participants in the study. Then I briefly explained how the data analysis outlined in the previous chapter led to the five overarching themes: literacy and grammar education in the formative years, self-confidence related to grammar, the impact of factors in the educational context, how “grammar” is taught, and the voiced need and perceived benefits of grammar instruction. Data from all participants
and data collection methods were used to support the results. The sub-research questions were answered first, followed by the central research question. Quotations from participants’ interview were used for support in answering the research questions. The essence of the experience was presented in the response to the central research question.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how the beliefs of 10 English teachers affected their grammar instruction. Although participants believed that knowledge of grammar was an important aspect of literacy and communication, contextual factors led participants to rarely address grammar in their classrooms, and when they did, it was often done quickly or indirectly. This chapter will include a discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework in chapter two, which included Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) revised TRA, Bandura’s (1994) concept of self-efficacy, and Borg’s (2003a) theory on teacher cognition. There will also be a discussion of the findings in relation to relevant empirical research. The theoretical, empirical, and practical implications will be discussed, and the practical implications will include recommendations to stakeholders. The chapter will include an explanation of the delimitations, like why a phenomenology was the best design and why participants had to meet certain criteria. Limitations of the study will be discussed, and that will include a discussion of the impacts the Covid-19 pandemic had on the observations and data collected. The chapter will include recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Sub-Question 1: What are English teachers’ behavioral beliefs about grammar?

English teachers recognized that knowledge of grammar was important for literacy and proper communication, but teachers had negative attitudes toward teaching grammar because of the frustrating experiences they had related to its instruction.
**Sub-Question 2: What are English teachers’ normative beliefs about grammar?**

English teachers did not believe that most of their peers taught grammar, nor did teachers believe that they were expected to teach grammar because the expectation was never explicitly voiced to them.

**Sub-Question 3: What are English teachers’ control beliefs about grammar?**

English teachers had limited control beliefs about grammar. Young English teachers had little technical knowledge of grammar because they did not learn it in their own education, and because of that, they lacked confidence in teaching it. Teachers also believed that they had little control over what they could teach because of limitations in the curriculum and standards; additionally, teachers believed students were un receptive and unable to learn basic grammar.

**Central Question: How do English teachers’ beliefs affect their teaching of grammar?**

Teachers’ educational experiences in their formative years largely shaped their beliefs and greatly influenced their existent approaches to teaching, but the extent to which teachers taught grammar and the priority they gave it was impacted primarily by environmental factors, which they believed were factors out of their control, like students, curriculum, and time constraints.

**Discussion**

**Connections to Theoretical Literature**

Fishbein and Ajzen’s (2010) TRA was the basis for this study’s theoretical framework. The premise of the TRA is that behavioral, normative, and control beliefs create the intention for a behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Those varying beliefs are built on a person’s background factors, like their values and education. The TRA model did not fully address the complexity of teacher self-efficacy and the context of language instruction, so two additional theories were
interwoven to further strengthen the framework: Bandura’s (1994) concept of self-efficacy and Borg’s (2003a) theory of teacher cognition.

In applying the results of this study to the TRA model, the overall intention of the behavior linked closely to the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. The overall intention of the behavior was to not teach grammar. The intended behavior clearly tied to the negative attitudes toward grammar instruction, the perception that no one really taught it or expected teachers to teach it, and the perception that teachers had no control over factors in the educational context. In the model, the step after intention of completing the behavior is the actual control someone has in relation to the behavior. The TRA lists skills/ability and environmental factors as the components of the actual control (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Most of the teachers had little knowledge of grammar, so not only was their intention of teaching grammar already low, but adding in the fact that they had little knowledge largely solidified it for many of them. The second element to that actual control is important for the educational context. When it came to environmental factors, for many of the teachers, the perceived control and the actual control were not always distinguishable. There was little sense of teacher autonomy, which to a certain extent was only a perception on the part of teachers. It would be easy to argue that within the confines of the classroom that the teacher ultimately had control over what did and did not happen, but when Crystal tied in the reality of pay, then the issue became an actual control factor because someone else controls teachers’ pay.

This study demonstrated that there was a weakness in applying the TRA model to the educational context. This perception of control in the educational context was a reason that Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy was an important addition the theoretical framework. As explained in chapter two, teacher self-efficacy “refers to a teacher’s belief in his/her ability to
successfully cope with tasks, obligations and challenges related to his/her professional role” (Barni et al., 2019, p. 2), and it is largely shaped by teachers’ own and others’ experiences (Bandura, 1994; Erdem & Demirel, 2007). The teachers did not share positive experiences related to the teaching of grammar, and they were clearly overwhelmed by the challenges that came with it: lack of time, students not being receptive, students not retaining it, students lacking foundational knowledge. The self-efficacy of most of the teachers was extremely low. The reality was that they were not able to deal with the challenges, and because of that, they gave up. This aligned with self-efficacy theory because teachers were unlikely to cope with difficult tasks when they felt they had little control over a situation (Chambers & Hausman, 2014). Chambers and Hausman (2014) also pointed out that self-efficacy was closely linked to overall school performance. The teachers at School One, which was a low-performing school, had low self-efficacy, and this could account for why teachers with high knowledge and high confidence in teacher grammar still felt that their students were a hindrance to effectively implementing grammar instruction. The teachers at School Two, which was a high-performing school, both had a higher sense of self efficacy; however, the negative views Amy held toward grammar, which greatly influenced her teaching, were better explained by Borg’s concept of teacher cognition.

The theoretical framework included a third component to specifically address theory related to language instruction. Borg (2003b) defined teacher cognition as “what teachers know, believe, and think” and believed that it was comprised of teachers’ schooling, professional education, teaching experience, and contextual factors (p. 81). Teacher cognition provided a clearer perimeter with which to understand control beliefs in the context of language instruction. Language instruction specifically is influenced by teachers’ own language experiences, beliefs about grammar, and students’ knowledge (Borg, 2003a). This idea of teacher cognition was key
in the framework because many of the teachers did not know grammar, did not believe they could teach it, and did not think it was a priority. Half of the participants learned minimal grammar, and three participants learned it primarily in another language. Two of the teachers studied English education in college, and they were not taught grammar pedagogy. None of the teachers had particularly great experiences teaching grammar, and the contextual factors were, for many of them, insurmountable. Amy may have been at a high-performing school, but when it came to language instruction, she had limited knowledge and negative experiences, which ultimately influenced her teaching more than other factors.

**Connections to Empirical Literature**

While conducting the interviews and observations, it quickly became apparent that the participants did not have the same idea of what it meant to have learned grammar and what it meant to teach grammar. From the review of the literature, I already knew this was an issue: “Of course, the very term ‘grammar’ itself means different things to different people” (Myhill, 2018, p. 2). In the first chapter, grammar was defined as the set of rules that clarify how a language works (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016). When I conducted research, I did not define grammar for the participants so that the participants could give insight into what they considered to be grammar. This was particularly important to understand from those who had not received a formalized grammar education in their childhood. It was on this front, however, that there was some initial confusion as I collected and analyzed the data. For example, had these teachers learned grammar if they had never learned what the rules were? Did they actually teach grammar if their lesson plan addressed it but they, as a teacher, never addressed it? Does practicing the skill of editing—without the combined instruction of why the errors are in fact errors—still count a grammar instruction? Although there were no definitive answers to many of those questions, previous
research gave some insight into the beliefs and practices of the participants in the research. This study also contributed new information to areas with minimal research in the field, especially in the context of teaching practices related to grammar.

**Formation of Beliefs in K-12 Education**

Teachers’ beliefs about education are developed during their formative years and childhood education (Alsuhaibani, 2019), and those beliefs are difficult to change (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Beliefs on grammar appear to be most influenced by previous learning experiences (Alghannmi & Shukri, 2016; Liviero, 2017; Nurusus et al., 2015). There were many negative beliefs voiced on the learning experiences and the teaching experiences related to grammar, but not all the beliefs about grammar as a topic itself were necessarily negative.

Beverly, Crystal, and David struggled with English grammar as children because it was not their first language. Caroline, Grace, and Link all reported some negative association with grammar as children. Although they all had negative experiences learning grammar as children, many of them found value in it for communication or writing. The influence of previous learning experiences was most pronounced with Amy. She loved her entire English experience as a child, except for the grammar instruction, which she said made her like English less, and that shaped her belief that grammar instruction was unnecessary.

Beliefs about grammar are also shaped by formal knowledge of grammar (Alghannmi & Shukri, 2016). Only two participants whose first language was English studied English grammar extensively as children. Both Caroline and Sara believed that grammar was important, although that did not necessarily mean that it was deemed a priority in their teaching practices. Five of the participants who grew up in the US did not receive a formal grammar education, so they admittedly had limited knowledge of grammatical concepts. While Amy, Madison, and Lily all
said that they “liked grammar,” what they really enjoyed was editing; whether or not their implicit knowledge of grammar or learning it vicariously through activities like editing was in fact “learning grammar” is, of course, as explained earlier, questionable. Everyone learns some grammar implicitly through language acquisition, but they had little direct exposure to grammatical concepts. When they were confronted with those concepts, like Amy with sentence diagramming in school and Madison seeing it in college, they did not understand it. The Australian teachers surveyed in Macken-Horarik et al.’s (2018) study also admitted that anything above parts of speech and punctuation was particularly challenging because they had never learned much grammar, and they did not have much knowledge of grammatical terms. Three participants in this study learned grammar in Spanish, but the impact of grammar knowledge in a foreign language on the understanding of English grammar is unclear. On a theoretical level, Chomsky’s concept of Universal Grammar, the idea that there are certain universal characteristics of grammar shared between languages, would seem to apply, but there is little evidence of cross-linguistic application (Dabrowska, 2015).

**The Effects of Reported Self-Confidence**

The limited grammar instruction many of the participants received in their formative years had serious implications: Many of the negative views teachers have on grammar stem from their limited knowledge of grammar (Bell, 2016; Cushing, 2019; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Watson, 2015). Boivin et al. (2018) argued that teachers’ limited knowledge should be the primary concern if any meaningful instruction is to be implemented during this renewed interest in grammar. The limited knowledge of the participants in this study were clearly linked to many of the negative beliefs they held, and it was possible that limited knowledge contributed to the trivial grammar instruction observed during some of the lessons.
Most teachers report feeling nervous about teaching grammar (Bell, 2016; Myhill & Watson, 2014), and not surprisingly, they have little confidence in teaching it (Cushing, 2019; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015). Caroline and Sara reported confidence in their ability to teach grammar, but they also reported having the most technical knowledge of grammar. Grace reported confidence in her ability to teach the basic mechanics of language; while grammar is arguably much more complicated than just basic mechanics, her own confidence was enough for her to verbalize a need for grammar instruction and to try to integrate it into her teaching. Grace’s high level of education and experience as a college professor were also likely contributors to her confidence with the more technical side of language.

Aside from lack of knowledge, many teachers simply expressed low confidence in their ability to teach grammar. Teachers who have low self-efficacy for teaching grammar are “more likely to hold prescriptivist, rule-bound views of grammar” (Myhill & Watson, 2014, p. 50). This was true of Amy, Link, and Madison who all highlighted the idea of rules in their discussion of grammar. Rules are, of course, central to the definition of grammar, but the instruction and application of grammar does not have necessarily have to be prescriptive and decontextualized simply because of the rules. At one point in her interview, Amy rationalized not teaching grammar directly by stating, “So, I feel like they understand what you’re saying better than just doing a worksheet where it's like, here are the grammar rules, go from there.” Her only thought on how to approach grammar directly was through worksheets. During the interviews, none of the teachers remembered any meaningful or engaging strategies of grammar instruction during their childhood. It was also clear that many of them believed that direct instruction of grammar meant boring, decontextualized worksheets drilling rules. Onalan (2018) claimed that teachers with low efficacy in teaching grammar simply avoid teaching it, and that was the reality for
many of the teachers. Many English teachers find grammar instruction challenging (Bell, 2016; Watson, 2015), so it made sense that teachers with little confidence and limited control beliefs would not continue to try teaching it or would give it little priority.

Low confidence in a general sense was not always an impediment. For example, David had low self-efficacy as he felt overwhelmed by the lack of time and meaningful integration of grammar into the curriculum, but he did not avoid teaching it. It is also important to point out that the teachers did not necessarily lack confidence as English teachers. The teachers at School One, which was a low-performing school, expressed their frustrations in the context of grammar specifically, but some teachers, like Lily, felt confident as teachers of literature. A reason many English teachers do not know much grammar is because they have degrees in literature (Myhill & Watson, 2014; Watson, 2015). In fact, Cushing (2019) reported that English teachers in the UK usually identify as “‘literature specialists’” and not teachers of linguistics (p. 171). It was odd, however, when Lily expressed low confidence in her knowledge of grammar but felt comfortable with her ability to teach the language standards, or Madison who admittedly could not explain grammatical concepts but first expressed confidence in teaching grammar. Madison’s confidence waned as the interview progressed, but her initial reaction was one of confidence. This discrepancy between confidence in knowledge and teaching was also noted by Macken-Horarik et al. (2018): “A disjunction is evident here, as teachers would normally be less confident about something they found difficult” (p. 306). Generally, however, the teachers in this study were upfront about their limited knowledge and low confidence in teaching grammar.

Factors in the Educational Context

The reported beliefs and confidence of the teachers did not always align with the practices they followed. The literature stated that limited experience and knowledge were a
common reason for inconsistency between teachers’ reported beliefs and actual instructional practices (Hussain et al., 2019; Karimi & Dehghani, 2016; Shi et al., 2018). However, this did not really explain the inconsistency between the reported beliefs and actions that came from the more experienced teachers. The younger teachers with less teaching experience and interest in grammar were more consistent in their reported beliefs and teaching practices. Sara was an example of a teacher with high confidence but a lower sense of self-efficacy due to the educational context. Factors in the educational context were one of the most obvious driving forces behind the limited grammar instruction—both in content and time given to it—seen in the English teachers’ practices. This was one of the reasons it was so important for research to be done on this topic within the US educational system. Teachers’ beliefs are often “context bound and situational” (Alsuhaibani, 2019, p. 723), and while teachers want to align their teaching to their beliefs, contextual factors and reality get in the way of them doing so (Altnsoy & Okan, 2017; Knotts, 2016). It was clear that teachers’ actions were often context-bound.

Students were a common factor teachers in this study cited as reasons for not teaching grammar. Other research on beliefs and practices also noted that students were a common reason beliefs and teaching practices did not align (Chang, 2020; Phan, 2018; Shi et al., 2018). Previous experiences with trying to teach grammar had left teachers frustrated, so the teachers had largely given up trying to do it. Cansoy and Parlar (2018) pointed out that experience affects teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs since firsthand achievements or failures impact people’s attitudes. Many of the teachers believed that grammar was important for proper communication, yet they failed to address grammar because students were unreceptive to it. This issue is not uncommon: Teachers in Chang’s (2020) study blamed students’ low motivation as a reason for aligning their beliefs and teaching practices.
The teachers in this study also voiced a concern at students’ lack of foundational knowledge from the primary years. Sara felt that the lack of foundation in the primary years meant that students would be unable to understand the concepts at the secondary level. Participants like Amy assumed that students would already know basic concepts when they arrived to the secondary level. This was reflected in Macken-Horarik et al.’s (2018) research that found teachers viewed grammar instruction as more of a primary thing, “whereas for more experienced and secondary teachers, it is likely to be assumed as already ‘in place’” (p. 301). Still, many others in this study simply felt that students just did not understand grammar. An Australian teacher in Macken-Horarik et al.’s (2018) study revealed that students’ poor knowledge and disinterest in grammar in not a purely American phenomenon:

The teaching of sentence types to create patterns across texts is an area that I find difficult to make relevant to students. ‘Parts of speech’ is a challenge in that students have such poor knowledge of grammar that immediate relevance can be lost. (p. 306)

The impact of normative beliefs on teachers’ instructional practices has been well-studied, although not bound specifically to the context of grammar instruction. Most of the normative beliefs examined by researchers has revolved around leadership and policy. Principals, for example, can influence and affect teachers’ decisions (Basikin, 2019; Supovitz et al., 2010), and school leaders greatly influence teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Hallinger et al., 2017; Kin et al., 2018; Ninković & Florić, 2018; Thornton et al., 2020). Teachers’ beliefs can be overwhelmed by their effort to meet expectations of their school leaders (Thornton et al., 2020). During this study, there was only one story of an experience directly tied to an administrator, and that was the story of Lily’s first year of teaching. She had the experience of her administrator dissuading her from emphasizing grammar with her students because it did
not matter as long as they were meeting the other standards. Aside from that one experience, there were no other stories of administrators directly influencing teachers’ normative beliefs. Policy is another heavily studied area often connected to normative beliefs, especially since administrators implement and enforce policy, but for this study, policy was considered in greater depth under the context of curriculum and standards.

According to the literature, normative beliefs were also a factor in teachers’ practices as they looked to colleagues for direction on their own practices (Broemmel et al., 2020), and there are indications that peer teachers influence beliefs and practices (Huang, 2017; Supovitz et al., 2010). Beverly felt little confidence in her ability to teach grammar, so she looked to her colleagues for lessons on the rare occasion she did have to teach anything related to grammar. On a greater scale, most teachers agreed that no one really taught grammar. In that sense, if teachers were looking to their colleagues for guidance on their practices, the absence of the practice was just as influential. This was not the case for everyone, however. While the literature indicated that teachers looked to their peers for guidance, teachers like Amy had a positive role model for grammar instruction, yet having the model was not enough to change deep-seated beliefs. Teachers seemed to look to their peers for confirmation of teaching practices, or absence of practices, that aligned with their own preferences.

The limitations of the curriculum and the standards came up frequently during the interviews, and implications of these limitations were evident during the observations. Some of the teachers felt that grammar was not even addressed in the standards. Others believed that it was not really in the curriculum, and if it was, it was a secondary concern. Link and David were quick to point out time constraints because grammar was not addressed in the curriculum. Time constraints were a commonly cited barrier to instruction in the literature (see Alsuhaibani, 2019;
Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Nghia, 2017), and curriculum in itself was another common barrier (see Alsuhaibani, 2019; Altinsoy & Okan, 2017). The limitations were made abundantly clear with Crystal’s comments about being paid to follow the standards and Lily’s comments that if teachers were supposed to teach grammar, they would have been told to do so. Policies make teachers more “compliant” in their teaching practices (Altinsoy & Okan, 2017; Basikin, 2019; Polesel et al., 2014), and teaching in an era of standardization and accountability has left English teachers with little autonomy in their teaching practices, which are driven largely by policy (Moni et al., 2014). The impact of the age of accountability in American education is evident in many ways not studied in this research, but the focus of this research, grammar instruction, really brought to light how the limitations within the curriculum and standards affected educators’ practices, especially in the content of the grammar-related lessons and the admission that the only time of year the lessons occurred were around testing season.

Practices and Content

One of the most important points in the literature that I could not fully appreciate until conducting observations was the following point: There is quite a bit of confusion among English teachers as to what grammar instruction even entails (Myhill & Watson, 2014). There were numerous times throughout the observations where I had to stop and ask myself: Did they actually teach any grammar? Does including it in the lesson plan and creating an activity that practices editing count as grammar instruction? There was no consistency or consensus on what learning or teaching grammar really was. Lily felt that grammar was a major part of her childhood education, but then it turned out that she had never had explicit grammar instruction. It is hard to clearly define what it means to have “learned” grammar. Did she learn grammar even though she was never taught any of the terms or concepts? Lily, Madison, and Amy all felt
comfortable editing, but none of them could explain the reasons for many of the edits they made in writing. Whether or not any grammar was actually taught during the observation lessons might be subjective, but it was still quite illuminating to see what each teacher believed to be grammar instruction.

Nearly all the content of the lessons were related to testing. Seven of the 10 observations were framed in the context of testing. The observations and reflections were done in the spring during testing season, so the results of this research would seem to skew that way; however, when this was set against the commentary of the teachers and the context of the educational system, it was clear that the content would have been similar regardless the time of year. In fact, at other points in the year, it may have been more difficult to find lessons to observe, or the lessons would have been more focused on editing during writing. The tests in the spring assess the set of standards that have been used all year, and the phrase “teaching to the test” exists for a reason. It was clear that the extent of grammatical concepts covered by the teachers were the ones delineated in the standards. Semicolons, subject-verb agreement, and parallel structure were brought up by most of the participants, except for Caroline. The curriculum and standard limitations were very evident in the actual content taught.

There is limited literature on how teachers actually approach grammar when they do teach it. In Watson’s (2015) case study, she explored the teaching practices and activities of one English teacher in the UK. In Cushing’s (2019) study, he interviewed 24 secondary teachers in the UK to determine how the 2014 changes to the national curriculum, which had brought back grammar, affected pedagogy at the secondary level. There had been little insight into what grammar instruction looked like in high school classrooms in the US. The literature said that teachers who view grammar as rule-driven tend to have prescriptivist views (Myhill & Watson,
Many of the teachers felt that grammar was rule-driven, and they admittedly did not know the rules. The effect of this was seen in some cases. For example, in the more direct-instruction lessons, Beverly and Lily appeared to read or repeat the information on subject-verb agreement straight from the screen.

Students’ writing skills improve when direct grammar instruction is integrated into the writing curriculum (Collins & Norris, 2017; Hochman & Wexler, 2017; McCormack-Colbert et al., 2018; Safford, 2016), so many of the teachers had the right idea by wanting to integrate grammar into writing; however, there was no meaningful or purposeful integration, especially since the integration of grammar by the teachers in this study was indirect. Hochman and Wexler (2017) argued that one of the major reasons literacy continues to be an issue is because of the idea that certain skills are learned through other learning processes, like learning to write by reading. Reading and writing, however, are complex processes that require systematic, direct instruction (Hochman & Wexler, 2017). A study found students who received reading interventions with constructivist and implicit learning practices had regressed reading scores, so the authors suggested explicit teaching methods for literacy interventions (Burlison & Chave, 2014). The more passive activities, like the Escape Room in Grace’s observation, were a form of indirect instruction where the students were left to figure things out. Language standards were addressed in the lesson plans and “integrated,” but simply being part of an activity does not make it systematic; furthermore, leaving the instruction to videos or giving students corrections to sentences without explaining the issues are not a form of direct instruction. The disconnect between what the teachers reported about the lessons and what I observed were further indicative of the confusion on the teaching of grammar. There is still the pervasive belief that people learn
grammar implicitly through language acquisition, so direct grammar instruction is unnecessary (Tammenga-Helmantel et al., 2014; Watson, 2015).

**Beliefs on the Importance and Benefits of Grammar Instruction**

Macken-Horarik et al.’s (2018) survey of Australian teachers found “the vast majority of respondents (83.1%) attached high value to grammar” (p. 298). Most of the teachers in this study expressed that grammar was important in some way, at least by recognizing that it had a benefit or by recognizing that a lack of knowing it had consequences. For example, Crystal, David, Link, Grace, and Lily all recognized the importance of grammar to writing ability. Myhill and Watson (2014) found that English teachers with positive beliefs about grammar usually felt that it helped improve students’ writing. Research confirms that knowledge of grammar helps students with their writing (Hos & Kekec, 2015; Schenck, 2017). Grace also expressed her belief that knowledge of grammar was important for struggling readers. This is supported extensively in the literature: Grammar is a key component of literacy education (Jean & Simard, 2013; Macken-Horarik et al., 2018; Myhill & Watson, 2014; Schenck, 2017; Watson, 2015). David was concerned with students’ ability to write and communicate effectively so that they could be successful in their futures. His concern was supported since there is a link between knowledge of standard English and economic success (Gartland & Smolkin, 2016).

Although Caroline was not convinced of her students’ ability to learn grammar, she did believe it was necessary because of the demographics at her school. Caroline was not trying to make an argument against teaching native speakers grammar, but she placed emphasis on the need for ELLs in mainstream English classes to get instruction on it because they do not know the language, whereas native speakers were able to just “tell” if something sounded wrong. Schenck (2017) also contended that grammar instruction was necessary in the US curriculum
because of the large number of students in the US whose first language is not English. Caroline’s comment on the native speakers knowing if something sounded wrong had to do with the implicit grammar people learn during L1 acquisition. This knowledge is the basis for arguments against the need for grammar instruction in the L1 context (Schenck, 2017). While people learn grammar implicitly, “explicit knowledge of grammar gives writers more conscious control and choice” (Myhill, 2018, p. 5).

Not all the teachers felt strongly about grammar and its benefits. In some cases, they recognized the importance of it, but they did not feel it could be a priority. There were often comments that teaching grammar did not really work. Although it was not mentioned by any of the participants, researchers believe that the skepticism about the efficacy of grammar teaching is pervasive (Boivin et al., 2018; Schenck, 2017). When considering the efficacy of teaching, however, it is often a question of the teaching methods and not the content itself. When the teachers claimed that grammar instruction was ineffective, was the right pedagogy used for grammar? The question, of course, is rhetorical since none of the teachers ever received support or training in how to teach grammar, even the ones with education degrees. Amy tried to rationalize not including grammar instruction by framing it in the context of her STEM-oriented students: They would not be interested in it, and it was unnecessary for them. The irony in her rationalization was that her distaste for grammar stemmed from her comparison of diagramming sentences to being like math, and all her math and science friends understanding it better than her. Amy’s sentiments echoed the participant in Watson’s (2015) case study:

Significantly, this case study shows a close match between espoused beliefs and pedagogical practices. Clare’s profoundly negative response to the notion of grammar,
identified as boring, unimportant and opposed to creativity, is allied to a pedagogy which positions grammar as a secondary concern in writing. (p. 342).

The teacher in Watson’s (2015) study also argued that grammar was “‘secondary to the initial task,’” (p. 340), which was much like Sara’s argument that students have to learn to write and get their ideas down first before any type of attention can be given to grammar. Sara believed that grammar could not be a priority because it could not be applied to writing if the writing was not there in the first place. Other teachers felt that students could not produce writing because they did not have solid knowledge of grammar. Teachers’ belief in the necessity of grammar instruction boils down, essentially, to the chicken or egg argument: Does the ability to write precede knowledge of grammar or does knowledge of grammar enable the ability to write?

**Implications**

**Theoretical Implications**

This research has theoretical implications. The findings from this study showed a shortcoming in the application of the TRA model to teachers, especially as a collective group: Teachers’ perceived control and actual control of the environmental factors were not entirely distinguishable. Teachers’ perception that they could not control the curriculum, along with the fact that their livelihood was directly tied to them being compliant to following the curriculum, made it unclear whether some teachers would change their behavior if that distinction were clearer. Since the TRA model was generally accurate in determining the intention of performing the behavior, the TRA could be used as a framework for future educational research if the purpose were to determine teachers’ intentions. The TRA is not recommended for educational research that examines teachers’ actual behaviors when the environmental factors are closely tied to teachers’ pay.
The findings from this research further confirmed the applicability of using self-efficacy theory to examine teachers’ behaviors. The limited research on grammar instruction also meant that there was limited application of theoretical frameworks to the topic. This research demonstrated that self-efficacy theory can be used to examine teachers’ beliefs on grammar instruction, and this research also confirmed that many teachers with low self-efficacy are unlikely to persist through factors they viewed as impediments. Not all the teachers, however, who decided to limit grammar instruction had low self-efficacy. The theory of teacher cognition was useful in better understanding the behaviors of teachers with high self-efficacy for teaching English but not necessarily for teaching grammar. To account for the outliers, it is recommended that future research related to teachers’ behaviors with language and grammar include Borg’s theory on teacher cognition.

**Empirical Implications**

The findings from this research have empirical implications. Since the previous research on teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices about grammar was done in the UK and Australia, this study’s findings added insight into the beliefs of English teachers in the US. This insight was necessary since there are cultural, educational, and curricular differences between the countries. This study also contributed to the field by adding an in-depth qualitative look into English teachers’ beliefs and practices related to grammar; previous studies used mixed-method designs or relied largely on interviews. Watson’s (2015) research had observations, but the observations were only of one participant. This study also had implications on the impact of standardized testing on English teachers’ practices, specifically how it related to grammar and the language standards. Because there were three teachers from Puerto Rico teaching English in Florida, this study also added to an understanding on ELL teachers’ confidence in teaching English in an
Anglophone nation. It is recommended that future research on grammar instruction include observations of multiple teachers since this study confirmed the discrepancy in teachers’ definitions of grammar, and this research also revealed the confusion on what effective implementation and integration of grammar looks like in practice. It is also recommended that future research related to English teachers and grammar instruction include participants from varying backgrounds since factors like age and primary language greatly influence teachers’ exposure to and confidence with grammar.

**Practical Implications**

The practical implications of this study are the most significant and pressing. This study confirmed that there is a need to be concerned with English teachers’ knowledge of grammar. The younger English teachers in this study had very limited knowledge of grammar, and they had almost no knowledge of pedagogy for grammar instruction. As grammar is coming back into English curriculum and being recognized as a beneficial component of literacy instruction, it is recommended that teacher-preparation programs and alternative-certification programs for English teachers require grammar courses to fill in teachers’ knowledge gap; furthermore, these programs should require a course for language pedagogy and adjust courses on writing instruction to show effective integration of grammar.

Many of the teachers in this study felt like they were bound to teaching only what was outlined in the curriculum or standards even if they felt like their students would benefit from learning grammar. The teachers who tried to include some grammar instruction despite it not being outlined in the curriculum were frustrated with students and other contextual factors, which led them to give up trying to teach it or simply assuming grammar instruction was ineffective. Furthermore, this research revealed the low self-confidence teachers who are ELL
themselves have in their knowledge of English and their ability to teach the technical side of it. In places where grammar standards have been reintegrated, it is recommended that curriculum maps explicitly integrate and outline grammar instruction for teachers. As it was recommended for pre-service teacher programs, grammar courses and language-pedagogy courses need to be implemented for current English teachers so that they feel comfortable executing the grammar outlined in the current curriculum and standards.

This study’s findings that many Florida English teachers held negative attitudes toward grammar instruction has practical implications with Florida’s new standards being fully implemented by the 2022-2023 school year. Next year, Florida teachers will be expected to teach grammatical concepts with which they are unfamiliar, and as it was discussed, teachers who are insecure in their knowledge and ability to teach grammar will turn to ineffective teaching methods. It is recommended that the Florida Department of Education and district leadership teams in the state begin planning effective PDs for all teachers addressing the grammar standards, including those at the elementary level. Teachers will need PD to learn the grammar outlined in the new standards and effective teaching methods. It is recommended that the PDs to fill in teachers’ knowledge gaps in grammar model the use of effective teaching methods that teachers can easily mimic in their own classrooms. The PDs should be given during the 2021-2022 school year in preparation for the 2022-2023 school year. It is also recommended that districts provide their teachers with PD during preplanning for the 2022-2023 that explores the integration of grammar within district-created curriculum maps.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

Certain delimitations were necessary for this study. First, it was clear that this study needed to be qualitative. Quantitative research would not have allowed me to get a nuanced
understanding of my participants and make connections between their experiences, beliefs, and actions. A phenomenological design was best suited for the purpose of the study. Other qualitative designs did not make sense for different reasons. For example, ethnography looks at culture, so that was irrelevant. Case studies are context-bound, and the experience of 10 participants with a topic as contentious as grammar cannot be bound to one specific context. The participants had to be certified English teachers because it was necessary to make sure that they were qualified within their field. Sometimes temporary exceptions are made for people with college degrees to fill vacancies, so a teacher in an English position is not always necessarily qualified to teach; teachers with an English certification had to demonstrate proficiency with English-related and teaching-related skills to receive their certifications. Although the participants reported varying levels of knowledge and confidence, their proficiency for certification ensured that they had all met a general standard in the field. It was also important for the teachers to have had at least one year of teaching experience because the phenomenon focused on how beliefs affected teaching practices, so it was necessary for them to have had time to experience the phenomenon.

The study had various limitations. The study had to be done in central Florida because that was where I lived; I had to be able to travel within a reasonable distance to conduct observations and interviews. Another limitation was the initial pool of schools. I made the error of not including one school on the list, and two other schools never gave permission for recruitment. These schools were among the largest and highest-ranking high schools in the district, so this reduced the number of participants in the initial pool. Since the schools were higher-performing schools, the teachers may have had differing levels of self-efficacy and produced different results.
Another limitation was that data collection occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2020-2021 school year was altered because of the pandemic. Many teachers had to teach digital courses, hybrid courses – where students were in person and online at the same time, and face-to-face classes. The difficulties of the year had an overall demoralizing effect for many teachers. This may have affected the attitudes that were observed by some participants during the observations. Because many of the participants had digital classes, their observations had to be done digitally. This was also a limitation since online teaching impacted many teachers’ teaching strategies; furthermore, the digital platform affected my ability to fully observe teachers. For example, many teachers had their cameras off during lessons, so assessing things like body language was not possible. Even in the face-to-face observations, teachers had to wear masks, and that may have impeded my ability to fully assess their attitudes.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several areas in which future research would extend understanding into this topic. Research should be conducted at a few points in time with secondary English teachers in Florida. A case study with a small group of English teachers going through PDs during the preparation for and implementation of the new Florida standards would provide insight into teachers’ feelings about the PDs; furthermore, that research should continue into the early implementation phase to determine how the PD information is applied in the classroom. This would determine how effective those PDs were and inform any necessary adjustments in the early stages of the adoption. A large-scale quantitative study surveying English teachers several years after implementation of the new standards would give general insight into the beliefs on the changes in the standards and grammar instruction. At that time, it would also be wise to conduct a phenomenological study on teachers whose grammar instruction has been effective.
This insight could be used by districts to help develop and refine future PD related to grammar and literacy.

A longitudinal study of students’ literacy would be prudent to begin at the implementation of the new standards. Students’ reading comprehension and writing assessments from kindergarten through 12th grade should be tracked and compared both to previous Florida assessment results and national results.

Summary

In selecting a transcendental approach to phenomenology, I had forced myself to remain largely objective through the data collection and data analysis process. As I wrote the results of the research, I could not help but feel, at times, that I was writing a scathing report of English teachers. The reality is that I see myself reflected in much of what I wrote. Every time a student makes a comment like, “Oh, I thought ‘I’ was a fancy way of saying ‘me,’” or “Ms. Jackson, does this need one of those floating commas with the ‘s’?” I promise myself I am going to dedicate more time to language instruction, but the realities of the educational context get in the way. I believe knowledge of grammar is vital to having a nuanced understanding of language and how to use it, but, like Lily, I was told by a supervisor to “Just do it for bell work sometimes.” Like Link, I have to carve out time that just is not there to carve out. Like so many of the participants, I was a product of whole language, and I did not learn a lot of grammar formally until I was an adult.

At the end of the 2020-2021 school year, I attended a training for high school English and reading teachers with an official introduction to the new Florida BEST standards. By this point, I had already completed data collection for my study, and I was in the early steps of data analysis. Teachers received a large manual with details on the new standards. A teacher sitting near me,
perhaps in her late 50s to early 60s, was sitting with the two pages of grammar standards open. The presenter of the training asked the teachers if they wanted to share any initial thoughts, and this teacher near me replied, “It’s nice to see that they’re finally bringing back some grammar.” There were a few affirming sounds in the room, but not many. A little later in the training, the presenter asked us to analyze some examples of students’ writing to determine the weaknesses and to discuss how to address them with the student. One example started with “Me and my dad went…” A teacher raised her hand and said, “It’s wrong that ‘me’ is first. I’d explain that he needs to put ‘My dad and me went…’ because it’s polite to put the other person first.” I jumped in with a correction: “Well, it should actually be ‘My dad and I went…’ since there needs to be a subject pronoun there.” I saw some nodding heads and one teacher said, “That’s right.” The teacher who gave the initial correction was confused and asked me to repeat what I had said. I repeated what I said and began to explain, but I could hear someone near me contemptuously say, “It really doesn’t matter.”

In the introduction to a dissertation on grammar written in 1921, it stated, “No other study in the curriculum has had a more spectacular rise and a more dramatic fall. Moreover, concerning no other study to-day are educators more in doubt” (Lyman, 1921, p. 5). Exactly 100 years have passed since that dissertation was written, yet it was just as fitting for the introduction then as it is for the conclusion of mine today.
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https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2019.1699782


APPENDIX A IRB Approval Letter

February 2, 2021

Athena Jackson
Jessica Talada

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-322 A Phenomenological Study of How English Teachers' Beliefs Affect Their Grammar Instruction

Dear Athena Jackson, Jessica Talada:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research Research Ethics Office
APPENDIX B District Approval Letter

December 14, 2020

Dear Ms. Jackson:

This letter is to inform you that we have received your request to conduct research in our School District. Based on the description of the research you intend to conduct, I am pleased to inform you that you may proceed with your work as you have outlined. Please be advised that this approval is based on the understanding that a school's participation is completely voluntary and left to the discretion of each building administrator. Please also be advised that the district office will not be able to assist you with any aspect of your research (e.g. sending emails, obtaining data, locating students, providing addresses, etc.).

Finally, be reminded that all information obtained for the purpose of your research must be dealt with in the strictest of confidentiality. At no time is it acceptable to release any student or staff identifiable information. Upon completion of your research, please provide our office with a copy of your results.

I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors. If I can be further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Leah Torres, Director
Research, Evaluation & Accountability

Student Achievement—Our Number One Priority
Districtwide Accreditation by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission

APPENDIX C Permission Request Letter
November 1, 2020

Research and Evaluation Specialist

Dear [Name]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The title of my research project is “A Phenomenological Study of How English Teachers’ Beliefs Affect Their Grammar Instruction.” The purpose of my research is to gain an understanding of secondary English teachers’ beliefs about teaching grammar.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in your district.

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview, allow me to observe a lesson, and complete four reflections on lesson planning and instructional choices. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

For education research, district permission should be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature. Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Athena Jackson
APPENDIX D Recruitment Email

Dear Potential Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to gain an understanding of secondary English teachers’ beliefs about teaching grammar and how those beliefs affect teaching decisions. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be certified to teach secondary English and have at least one year of experience teaching English. Participants, if willing, will be asked to allow me to observe a lesson in which they teach a language standard (45 minutes), allow me to interview them (45 minutes), complete four reflections on their lesson planning and instructional choices (20 minutes each, 80 minutes total), and review accuracy of findings (5-10 minutes). Interviews will be audio recorded. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please reply this email.

A consent document will be e-mailed to you after agreeing to participate in the study. Forms will be signed electronically and e-mailed back to me. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

Participants will receive a $20 gift card for participating in the study.

Sincerely,

Athena Jackson
APPENDIX E  Participant Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of How English Teachers’ Beliefs Affect Their Grammar Instruction
Principal Investigator: Athena Jackson, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a high school English teacher with at least one year of experience teaching English, and they must have a valid certification to teach secondary English in the state of Florida. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.
Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of secondary English teachers’ beliefs on grammar and how those beliefs influence teaching practices.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Allow me to observe a lesson in which you teach a language standard (45 minutes).
2. Allow me to interview you (45 minutes). The interview will be audio recorded. If an interview cannot be conducted in person due to Covid-19 restrictions or concerns, you may choose to have the interview done through Microsoft Teams.
3. Complete four guided reflections on your lesson planning and instructional choices (20 minutes each, 80 minutes total).
4. Review accuracy of findings (5-10 minutes).

How could you or others benefit from this study?
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. A benefit to society includes a better understanding of teachers’ beliefs on grammar, which can help create more effective professional development and trainings that address grammar instruction.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. Please note that since I am a teacher, I am a mandatory reporter for child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others.

How will personal information be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer to which only the researcher has access. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- As a mandatory reporter, I am required to report any suspected child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others.

### How will you be compensated for being part of the study?
Participants will receive a $20 gift card as compensation for participating in this study.

### Is study participation voluntary?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or [District Name Confidential]. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?
The researcher conducting this study is Athena Jackson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at

You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Jessica Talada, at

### Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

### Your Consent
By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

□ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____________________  ____________________
Printed Subject Name  

____________________  ____________________
Signature & Date
## APPENDIX F Interview Protocol

### A Phenomenological Study of How English Teachers’ Beliefs Affect Their Grammar Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
<td>Athena Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief description of the project:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Please introduce yourself to me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What was your childhood education like?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Please describe what you remember about the literacy instruction you received in your K-12 education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Please describe what you remember learning about grammar in your K-12 education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. How do you remember feeling about grammar and the way it was taught during your K-12 education?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Please describe your confidence in your own understanding of English grammar and why you feel that way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. What types of ideas have teachers you work with espoused on teaching grammar?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. What type of support or training have you received through your school or district on teaching language standards?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. How do you feel about having to teach the current grammar-related standards?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. How would you describe your experience and confidence in teaching grammar?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How do you typically approach teaching the language standards to your students?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. What contexts or situations would you say have most influenced or affected your beliefs and actions on teaching grammar?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. What else do you think would be relevant for me to understand your perceptions on what we have discussed today?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Protocol chart adapted from page 167 of Creswell and Poth (2018)
## APPENDIX G Observation Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description (Raw Data)</th>
<th>Interpretation (Patterns/Trends)</th>
<th>Reflection (Feelings/Opinions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Participant’s process in introducing the topic:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Eye contact with class:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voice:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body language:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude toward the topic:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence in lesson delivery:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ease in explaining concept:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ease in answer students’ questions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional strategies used:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram of the Physical Setting

(Include position of the teacher for most of the lesson, position of researcher, and position of students)
## Lesson Planning and Instructional Reflection

**Week of:**

**Overall focus for the week:**

Please write a reflection on your lesson planning and instruction this week. Please respond to the questions and prompts below, but please do not feel like you must limit your response only to these. You may add any other reflection as you see fit.

1. What essential standards did you select for the week? Why did you select those standards?
2. What grammar concepts or language standards did you include this week? Why did you select those?
3. How did you plan to teach or include grammatical concepts in your lessons this week? What instructional strategies did you include in your lesson plans to for those concepts?
4. What were your thoughts on how the lessons for the week actually went? Please focus more specifically on lesson that involved grammatical concepts.
APPENDIX I Example Horizontali zation

Horizontali zation of Lily’s Complete Data Transcript

1. There was a lot of, the teacher would read to us and we were encouraged to read on our own, we were encouraged to go to what was at the time the library, pick out our books and read in class. (Interview)
2. I want to say the majority of the instruction I received was at home. Because I was encouraged to read a lot at home. (Interview)
3. A lot actually. Because Italian Catholic nuns are very strict. I went to Italian Catholic school, so the grammar was something they pushed a lot I remember in elementary school specifically. (Interview)
4. And how to speak properly. (Interview)
5. Our teachers would correct us frequently on our grammar and our speech. And I remember that even as a little kid, even in elementary school, any papers that we submitted were always corrected for grammar and spelling, all that. (Interview)
6. For me, I enjoyed it because I was an avid reader, so I wanted to be corrected if I was wrong…And I really got to see when I went to public school, the impact that, that had on my writing and my reading comprehension even. Because I was light-years ahead of my peers in terms of writing, because of that. (Interview)
7. So my confidence, I would say is relatively low. (Interview)
8. I can look at a sentence or something and identify what's wrong with it. But when it comes to the specifics like the technical terms, terrible at them. Because I was never taught the actual technical terms as an English language learner, for example, is taught. (Interview)
9. And because I haven't taught any other grade levels, but 11th and 12th in terms of English, those weren't things I ever had to teach. And I didn't go to school for education, I went to school for literature. (Interview)
10. So I wasn't learning about cognates and stuff like that and how to teach them, I was learning about how to analyze a piece of text. (Interview)
11. I don't think I've heard much about grammar being taught. I think maybe more so with colleagues of mine who have been ELL, ESL teachers, or had those, what are they called, the contained ESL classes. (Interview)
12. Oh. Fairly comfortable, I think. Because I've been doing them for so long. Yeah. (Interview)
13. I guess I provide examples of what their writing samples should look like, so they have an understanding and expectation, I guess, that they have to meet. (Interview)
14. my first year of teaching, I tried to correct students on their grammar….And my administrator at the time kind of dissuaded me from doing that. Because of their lack of skills…my administrator actually approached me and he was like, "As long as they're meeting the standard, it doesn't matter." (Interview)
15. It wasn't something that was explicitly told to us that we have to teach. And so that's shaped me as a teacher because my entire teaching career I haven't had to focus on that too much. (Interview)
16. English III Review for the SAT (writing portion): Nouns and pronouns; subject-verb agreement (Observation)
17. Researcher Reflection: She sounded very confident and straightforward in the lesson; it didn’t seem like it was the first time she had touched on this information with her students. (Observation)
18. I covered SAT grammar, specifically verbs and adverbs and went over questions they may see on the SAT. I chose these because the students are testing the next day and I believed that those questions were some they may be unfamiliar with.(Reflection Log)
19. What were your thoughts on how the lessons for the week actually went? Not the best. We were pressed for time and I couldn’t include everything I wanted to. (Reflection Log)
## APPENDIX K Example Themes with Horizontalized Statements

**Themes and Sorted Statements David’s from Horizontalized Transcript**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Learning grammar/two languages as a child                             | She went over the grammar rules in Spanish. (Interview)  
They're really, really focused on that, Spanish not in English. English is more reading stories and pronunciation. Yes, we did that and a lot of vocabulary. (Interview)  
A bit stressed out. Again, first language was Spanish. You'd really try to learn it as a second language and being that it was so different from Spanish in terms of pronunciation, some of the rules to me was a bit stressful. (Interview)  
(Spanish Grammar) It was easier. (Interview)                                                                                             |
| Confidence/lack of confidence in knowledge and teaching grammar       | I still have a lot to learn and I think I'm not as confident because I don't practice that much, breaking it down to the rules and doing that constant research, in order to answer those questions. (Interview)  
Like I said, need to practice some more. I'm doing a lot of research on my own. I'm trying to master it before I teach it. (Interview)  
Researcher Reflection: He definitely appeared to be interested in the topic, and it didn’t come off as disingenuous. His confident attitude was backed up by his clear explanations throughout the lesson. (Observation)  |
| What the needs are and why                                            | I wish we did more …One thing is being able to write well and express yourself in a way that you follow the grammar rules in order to send a clear message. (Interview)  
We have to go back to some of the basics because some of the students are not demonstrating mastery of those skills. (Interview)  
I feel that I need more time to teach those grammar rules and going back to covering those because I won't be able to do it just for bell work. (Interview)  
No, we need more. We need more. (Interview)  
I think we need to go back to the basics and make sure we have students that can write well, express themselves well. (Interview)  
Those students are the ones that will express their ideas so well that they'll convince anyone to buy anything, to do anything. (Interview)  
We need more time to cover ground. We need to go back to the basics, starting with the teacher, making sure that the teacher has planned for it…(Interview)  
I selected this standard because there was a need for students to understand the importance of adding variety to their writing and practice how to use parallel structure when providing an answer to show ideas or concepts share the same level of importance. (Reflection Log) |
| Current approach to teaching grammar isn’t where/what he wants it to be | I was trying to do it for bell work, but then... I was spending a lot of time covering some of the rules during bell work. It didn't become... It wasn't bell work anymore. It was the whole lesson. (Interview)  
Bell work lesson: Unpacking standard, review, model on Smarboard, practice and student-produced examples. (Observation)  
Researcher Reflection: He had mentioned bell work taking longer than he would like, and this would an example of a lesson better suited for a longer amount of time. (Observation)  |
APPENDIX L Example Themes and Statements for Individual Descriptions

Reduced Statements and Themes for Amy’s Textural and Structural Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements Related to Experience and Beliefs About Teaching Grammar</th>
<th>Statements and Themes Giving Context for Feelings About the Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“But I don't feel as comfortable teaching it only because there's so many specific rules.”</td>
<td>Negative K-12 Educational Experiences Related to Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I like doing the smaller lessons, like I did when you were in here, about recognizing the grammar mistakes their making when they make them and addressing them.”</td>
<td>“The biggest thing I remembered again, is the sentence diagramming. I felt like it made English in math, like it turned English into a math class. And that made me not like English as much because I couldn't wrap my head around it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And that's why I kind of focus just on like the holistic style of teaching it where like these are issues I see in your papers, this is something I have fixed and how I fix it. Because I feel like that's the way that the standard kind of sets it up.”</td>
<td>“I personally loved grammar. I just did not like the instruction of the sentence diagramming.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It's just more of like the holistic idea of how does it look over all in an essay and how do you fix it?”</td>
<td>Thoughts on Students’ Perceptions and Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“All grammatical concepts were taught and included via impromptu check-ins and mandatory check-ins with students. In reviewing their progress on the spot.”</td>
<td>“…they're part of a generation that will use Grammarly and all those other websites to edit their writing for them. So, I've kind of realized, at least for their needs, it's not the most important thing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…it's not something I felt strongly about integrating.”</td>
<td>“…the kids now again are more aligned to like science and STEM careers…So, grammar is kind of like fallen to the wayside because of that.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textural Description</th>
<th>Structural Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy feels confident in teaching English and generally likes grammar, but she does not feel as comfortable teaching grammatical rules. She also does not believe that it is necessary to teach grammar through whole-class lessons. Her holistic approach to addressing students’ grammatical issues during writing assignments aligns more with her personal interest in writing, and she feels that her approach has been well-received by students.</td>
<td>Amy’s decision to not prioritize grammar instruction has been shaped, in part, by her distaste for formalized, rule-driven grammar instruction she experienced in her own education, which she negatively compared to math; furthermore, she believes that grammar instruction is unnecessary for her STEM-oriented students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX M Key Words in Textural Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Individual Textural Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Amy feels confident in teaching English and likes grammar, but she does not believe that it is necessary to teach grammar through whole-class lessons. Her holistic approach to addressing students' grammatical issues during writing assignments aligns more with her personal interest in writing, and she feels that her approach has been well-received by students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>Beverly is disinterested in English grammar. She expresses a lack of confidence in her knowledge and ability to teach grammar. Beverly will occasionally teach some grammar-related concepts, like punctuation and subject-verb agreement, because they are commonly tested on standardized assessments. When preparing for these lessons, she does take a proactive approach by watching videos and seeking advice from other teachers on how to teach the lessons. She typically mimics what other teachers have found to be successful approaches with the concepts. Beverly also shows students YouTube videos of the concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Caroline received a more formalized grammar education from a young age, but as a child, Caroline disliked grammar because struggled understanding it. As an adult, however, she saw the value in what she had learned. Caroline partially credits her own children’s high scores on English assessments to having taught them grammar and sentence diagramming. Caroline feels fairly confident in her own knowledge of grammar, and she is comfortable teaching it; however, she only allots short bell work for teaching grammar as she does not believe that her current students are actually capable of understanding the concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>Crystal feels that she has a strong understanding of English grammar. She believes that grammar is a necessary part of education that has fallen to the wayside for too long with unfortunate consequences on students’ ability to write and communicate; she believes that properly reintegrating grammar will be extremely challenging. For now, Crystal integrates grammar lessons minimally and quickly when needed, especially for bell work and for standardized-test preparation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>David expresses a lack of confidence in his knowledge of English grammar, but he actively spends time trying to master it himself because of his desire to include more grammar in his teaching. David believes in teaching his students the basics of grammar first, and he has tried to do this through bell work. He has struggled integrating grammar lessons into his instruction because the bell work has often taken up entire class periods. Finding a balance has been difficult. David believes there should be significantly more grammar instruction, but it must be more purposefully planned and managed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grace did not enjoy grammar as a young student, but she experienced a shift in her attitude as an adult when she began to understand the importance of grammar for communicating effectively. Grace has confidence in her basic understanding of grammar, and she feels comfortable teaching it by intertwining it in writing instruction.

Although Lily is an avid reader who received grammar instruction in her childhood, she expresses relatively low confidence in her technical knowledge of grammar. She is, however, comfortable with her ability to identify issues in written pieces and teach the current language standards. Early in her teaching career, Lily dedicated time to correcting students’ grammar, but now, she addresses it as needed during writing instruction and standardized-test preparation.

Link feels moderately confident in his knowledge of grammar, and while his confidence in teaching it has grown, being relatively new in his teaching career leads him to question and double-check grammatical concepts he wants to teach. Link does not prioritize grammar and finds it is usually relegated to an afterthought in the curriculum, but when does teach grammar, he brings in humorous examples and tries to explain why the rules exist or how they work.

Even as a child, Madison liked grammar, and although she expresses confidence in her ability to edit her own writing, she admits that she cannot fully explain many advanced grammatical concepts without first doing some research. She taught some grammar early in her career but found it frustrating, so she just touches on basic concepts when students write. She acknowledges that lack of grammar instruction has caused a decline in communication and ability to properly convey meaning, but the issue has become a battle she is unwilling to continue fighting.

Sara received a strong, varied literacy education that included grammar, so she is very secure in her knowledge of grammar. She is also confident in her ability to teach it; however, she voices little confidence in her students being receptive to her teaching grammar. She does not feel like the standards truly address any grammar, but when she does address it, she typically limits lessons to very basic concepts that can be covered during bell work.
### APPENDIX N Themes in Textural Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings Toward Grammar and Its Instruction</td>
<td>Positive: Important for writing and communication (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likes grammar (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shift from negative childhood feelings (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need more</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disinterested</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unnecessary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not a priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frustrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence in Knowledge and Ability to</td>
<td>Knowledge: Confident (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach It</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate or basic understanding (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of confidence (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confident (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of confidence or needing to do research before teaching (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When it is taught</td>
<td>Bell Work/Fast (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test Prep (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basics (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts on Students</td>
<td>Unreceptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incapable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX O Key Words in Structural Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Individual Structural Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Amy’s decision to not prioritize grammar instruction has been shaped, in part, by her distaste for formalized, rule-driven grammar instruction she experienced in her own education, which she negatively compared to math; furthermore, she believes that grammar instruction is unnecessary for her STEM-oriented students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td>Beverly only teaches grammar when absolutely necessary because she does not feel comfortable with it in English; she did not learn grammar in English. Although this is true of many people in English-speaking countries, Beverly grew up in a Spanish-speaking nation, so she feels more comfortable with the Spanish grammar she learned and not with English, which is her second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Caroline’s decision to still include grammar, albeit in short bell work lessons, even though she does not believe many students understand it is because she recognizes her students’ need for it. Caroline teaches in a district with a predominantly Hispanic population, which means that many students come from Spanish-speaking households. Caroline noted that people who speak English as their first language can recognize when sentences simply do not sound right, but English-language learners must be taught those things explicitly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>Crystal’s confidence stems from her self-determination to learn as much grammar as possible because she used to feel the need prove herself as a Hispanic, English-language learner teaching English. While she occasionally teaches grammar, her decision to not prioritize it is because she is not expected to do so: Grammar is not prioritized in the standards either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>David’s lack of confidence in his knowledge but persistence in the necessity of grammar is due, in part, to his childhood education having been in a Spanish-speaking nation: English is his second language. Unlike many teachers growing up in English-speaking nations, David received a thorough grammar education, just that it was in Spanish. Furthermore, David also feels strongly that knowledge of grammar equips students with better communication skills to help them be more successful in their post-secondary ventures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Grace’s choice to integrate some grammar instruction is due, in part, to her experience as a reading coach, where she learned that teaching grammar was beneficial for struggling readers; furthermore, her current role as a college professor has also given her insight into how the lack of grammar instruction in high school harms students in their post-secondary education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lily experienced a shift from wanting to heavily correct grammar to minimally integrating it. During Lily’s childhood education, she enjoyed being corrected on her grammar as she felt that this made her a better writer, so she naturally implemented this when grading her own students’ work early in her teaching career; Lily quickly ended this practice because she was dissuaded by an administrator to do so. Lily’s perception of her role as an English teacher has also affected her decision: She views herself more as a literature teacher, and if she were expected to teach grammar, it would be explicitly stated and integrated into the curriculum.

Link’s mediocre confidence in grammar—even with an English degree—can be traced back to the decontextualized concepts he learned as a child, as well as his dyslexia. His choice to bring in humor is his attempt at engaging unreceptive students who do not see the importance of learning it; furthermore, his style of explaining the why behind concepts stems from the shift he experienced in understanding and enjoying grammar when his teachers explained the why to him.

Madison’s practice of addressing minor grammatical issues through modeling and mini lessons in writing tasks reflects her perceptions of her students’ attitudes. Madison’s students rarely show interest in grammar, and if they do, they want to understand the why of the rules; however, Madison herself was not taught the reasons behind grammatical rules, which makes it harder to teach and explain. Through the years, her students were not receptive to lessons, and they were not applying concepts Madison taught, so she no longer saw the need to waste time teaching grammar.

Sara’s decision to limit grammar instruction and only teach basic concepts is due to the fact that her students have little foundational education from primary years needed to properly understand and utilize grammar at the high school level. She believes that learning to write and formulate ideas has to take priority over the minute details of grammar, especially when programs like Word can fix students’ usage errors.
### APPENDIX P Themes in Structural Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Formative</td>
<td>Own grammar experiences in K-12 education (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>ELLs (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception on Students’</td>
<td>Unnecessary for STEM-oriented students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>ELLs need it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Benefits of</td>
<td>Better communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Helps struggling readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improves writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors in the</td>
<td>Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Context</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrators (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions on</td>
<td>Unreceptive (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Not applying concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack foundation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>