English Preparatory Learners' Beliefs Regarding Grammar Instruction and Corrective Feedback: Convergences and Divergences

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ABSTRACT

This study aspires to unravel language learners' beliefs about grammar instruction and oral corrective feedback (CF). One hundred and ninety-one learners from three proficiency levels at an English preparatory school in Istanbul participated in the study. The data were collected through a Likert scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Findings showed that learners generally appreciated the importance of grammar and CF in language acquisition. They also generally preferred 1) deductive to inductive instruction, 2) self-correction to teacher-correction, 3) delayed correction to immediate correction, and 4) focused correction of specific errors to comprehensive correction of all errors. Despite the existing general tendency, conflicting expectations of learners on several related issues underscored the need for more versatile teaching instruction, surgical treatment of learners' errors and regular classroom discussion between learners and teachers to exchange information on their expectations.

Arguing against universally accepted teaching methods that are applicable to all learning contexts, Kumaravadivelu (2006) suggested that successful teaching programs need to produce a type of education that is contextually sensitive and responsive to the expectations and needs of learners in different contexts. The new post-method theory acknowledged the uniqueness of learning settings and the importance of teachers' awareness of local conditions to enhance their learning outcomes. Undoubtedly, learners are major figures in each learning context, and their beliefs of what works or does not work for them may determine

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their responses to teachers' instructions and their ultimate success in learning a second language. Teachers' awareness of learners' beliefs can, therefore, play a key role in producing effective teaching programs. It allows them to fine-tune their instructions to their students' expectations or assist students to reflect on those expectations and change them when they find them harmful to the learning process (Graus & Coppen, 2016).

Grammar and CF as an indispensable part of language use are no exceptions. Several studies show that learners' beliefs about grammar instruction and CF may mediate their effectiveness. Havranek and Cesnik (2001), for example, found that learners benefited more from teacher CF when they considered it important. Similarly, Akiyama (2017) reported that learners displayed more instances of successful uptake when the feedback provided matched their preferences (see also Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). If learners' beliefs interact with the efficiency of teachers' instructions, then descriptive studies that aim to unravel learners' beliefs gain paramount importance. The findings of such studies could predict teachers' success in teaching grammar and correcting learners' errors. They also underline the areas that teachers and students need to negotiate to expedite the learning process. The present study aims to achieve these objectives by exploring the beliefs of EFL learners in Turkey on grammar instruction and oral CF.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Learners' beliefs on grammar and CF

Learners' beliefs are defined as learners' ideas, thoughts, and knowledge of what 'should be done' and 'is preferable' in classes (Basturkmen, et al., 2004, p. 244). Sato (2013), drawing on Borg (2003) and Grotjahn (1991), maintains that learners' beliefs are important because they explain their behavior including their motivation and emotional reaction to different activities in the classroom. Horwitz (1988) concurs that learners' beliefs have a direct relation with their "expectation of, commitment to, success in, and satisfaction with their language classes" (p. 283). Learners' beliefs are also important because the (in)congruity between them and those of their teachers may affect students' trust in their teachers and the learning outcomes (Horwitz, 1990; Sato, 2013). Encouraging learners to reflect on and explore their own beliefs can also empower their learning autonomy. Kartchava (2016), for example, argues that learners who are aware of their CF beliefs may have a better understanding of its benefits and become more responsive to the feedback they receive from their teachers.

Research about teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes toward grammar and CF falls into three main sub-categories: those that examine teachers' beliefs, those that examine learners' beliefs, and those that compare teachers' and learners' beliefs to find out the (dis)similarity between the two. As the focus of the present study is on learners' beliefs, the related studies are explained in more detail below. Several studies show that language learners consider grammar instruction as a necessary part of their lessons that helps them with their language learning process (e.g., Daloğlu, 2020; Loewen, et al., 2009; Jean & Simard, 2011; Sari et al., 2017; Schulz, 2001). In terms of emotional reaction to grammar instruction, while some studies show that students generally have positive feelings toward grammar instruction (e.g., Sari, et al., 2017; Schulz, 2001), other studies show that students' feelings are rather mixed. In their study with students learning different target languages, Loewen et al. (2009), for example, found that university students who were studying Chinese or Arabic had more positive attitudes toward grammar instruction than students who were studying other languages such as English, German, and Spanish.

Regarding learners' preference for deductive vs. inductive teaching of grammar, the number of studies is limited, but their overall findings show a trend for deductive instruction. Studies by Daloğlu (2020) in Turkey, Jean and Simard (2013) in Canada, Shirav and Nagai (2022) in Japan, and Vogel et al. (2011) in France, for example, showed that there was an overall preference for deductive instruction. Graus and

Coppen (2016), however, found that Dutch students preferred deductive instruction for difficult language structures and inductive instruction for easy language structures.

Learner beliefs about oral CF fall into different categories. Those related to the present study include the overall attitudes toward CF, the preferred timing of CF (immediate vs. delayed), the error types to be corrected (specific vs. comprehensive), the CF strategy types, and peer correction. They are discussed in turn below. As for learners' general reaction to CF, many belief studies show that students exhibit positive attitudes toward CF and acknowledge its contribution to their learning process (e.g., Akiyama, 2017; Ha, et al., 2021; Jean & Simard, 2011; Kartchava, 2016; Katayma, 2007; Lee, 2013; Nhac, 2022; Schulz, 1996; Zhang & Rahimi, 2014; Zu and Wang, 2019).

In terms of timing, the findings are inconclusive. For example, while Ha, et al. (2021), Lee (2013), Zhang and Rahimi (2014), and Zhu and Wang (2019) found that most learners favored immediate correction, Alhaysony (2016), Nhac, (2022), and Ölmezer-Öztürk and Öztürk (2016) found that learners generally preferred delayed correction. Regarding the type of errors that students prefer to be corrected, the results are mixed again. Lee (2013), Jean and Simard (2011), and Katayama (2007), for example, reported that most students expected all their errors to be corrected. Other studies, however, showed that learners preferred the treatment of only specific errors. In Zhang and Rahimi's (2014) and Kartchava's (2016) studies, for example, students stated that the focus of CF should be on the errors that impede communication flow. Oladejo (1993), on the other hand, found that most Singaporean learners believed that teachers should not ignore grammatical errors in favor of focusing only on communication errors.

Several studies have also examined the type of CF strategies that students prefer. Here, the oral CF types can be divided into two major categories: input-providing strategies and out-put pushing strategies. The former entails teachers directly applying CF and the latter involves teachers' prompting learners to conduct self-correction (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). The findings of the studies that have compared input-providing strategies with output-pushing strategies are inconclusive again. Yoshida (2008), for example, reported that students who were learning Japanese preferred output-pushing strategies, such as clarification requests and elicitation moves, to input-providing strategies such as recasts. Similarly, Zu and Wang (2019) found that Chinese learners showed a slight preference for output-pushing than input-providing CF types. Kaivanpanah et al. (2015) found that Iranian students' preferences varied depending on their proficiency level, with less proficient students preferring to receive explicit metalinguistic information on their errors and more proficient students preferring more self-correcting strategies such as elicitation moves and repetition.

As for the students' attitudes toward peer correction, the findings are not similar again. Kaivanpanah et al. (2015) and Katayama (2007) found that learners displayed positive feelings toward being corrected by their peers. Tulung (2008) also reported that learners felt less anxious, more motivated, and not afraid of making mistakes during peer interaction. Other studies, however, showed that students' attitudes toward peer correction were conditional. In Sato (2013), for example, learners stated that their attitudes toward peer feedback depend on their relationship with their peers. Yoshida (2008) also found that students may discard corrections that come from their peers whose language proficiency they cannot trust.

As the review of the studies on learners' beliefs above shows, learners generally exhibit positive opinions regarding the usefulness of grammar instruction and CF; however, the consensus does not include all aspects of grammar instruction and CF application. While there are some core common beliefs that are constant across different learning contexts and cultures, there are other aspects that vary considerably. As for the Turkish context, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the number of studies that have examined language learners' beliefs on both English language grammar instruction and oral CF is limited. And those that have investigated grammar instruction or oral CF mainly used quantitative data collection tools, with only a few open-ended questions (for example, Daloğlu, 2020). By employing a mixed method design, the

present study aims to provide a more comprehensive and detailed picture of EFL language learners' perceptions toward both grammar instruction and oral CF. In light of the discussion above, the following research questions are formulated:
1. What are the English preparatory school learners' beliefs about grammar instruction?
2. What are the English preparatory school learners' beliefs about oral CF?

3. Method

3.1 Research design

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a mixed method research design. The quantitative data were collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The qualitative data were collected through open-ended questions at the end of the Likert scale questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 16 learners from different proficiency levels.

3.2. Participants and setting

The participants of the study were 191 volunteer language learners (72 males, 119 females) studying in the English preparatory program of a foundation university in Istanbul. The medium of instruction at the university was English, and learners were required to achieve the B2 level, according to the CEFR, in order to enroll in their undergraduate programs. Of the 191 learners, 91 learners were at the B1 level, 82 learners were at the B1+ level and 18 learners were at the B2 level. The learners were selected from five B1 classes, four B1+ classes, and two B2 classes using the convenience sampling method. The participants' ages varied between 18 and 24, with an average age of 19.21. The majority of the learners were from Turkey; however, there were also learners from other countries, including Algeria (N = 1), Albania (N = 1), Chechenia (N = 1), East Turkistan (N = 1), Egypt (N = 1), Georgia (N = 1), Indonesia (N = 9), Jordan (N = 1), Lebanon (N = 2), Palestine (N = 4), Russia (N = 1), Somalia (N = 1), Sudan (N = 1), Syria (N = 6), Thailand (N = 4), Uzbekistan (N = 1), and Yemen (N = 5). Learners received 18 hours of instruction to improve their general English, four hours of instruction to reinforce their speaking and listening skills, and six hours of instruction to reinforce their reading and writing skills. Three textbooks were employed at each level: New Interchange for teaching general English, Q Skill for Success for teaching listening and speaking skills, and Skillful Reading and Writing for teaching reading and writing skills. There was no separate course for grammar. It was presented throughout New Interchange, as a subskill that mostly served to introduce language functions, and sporadically in the writing part of Skillful Reading and Writing.

3.3. Research instruments

The quantitative data were collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. It was adopted from Loewen et al. (2009) and had three parts. The first part asked for the demographic information of learners. The second part included 24 items that asked about the perception of learners on the importance of grammar, grammar instruction, and CF in learning a second language. Learners were required to respond to each item by choosing a number between 1-5 (1 corresponding to strongly disagree and 5 corresponding to strongly agree). The third part consisted of open-ended questions. Originally, this part had four questions that asked why learners liked and disliked learning grammar, as well as how they liked and disliked grammar to be taught to them. However, to get a more in-depth understanding of learners' perceptions toward CF, three more open-ended questions were added: the reason why learners liked and disliked their errors to be corrected and how they felt when their errors were corrected. It is worth mentioning that the

original questionnaire contained 13 distractors in the Likert part; however, since the open-ended questions revealed the objective of the questionnaire, the decision was made to remove the distractors.

Apart from the open-ended questions, qualitative data were also collected through semi-structured interviews that were held with 16 volunteer learners from the three proficiency levels (six volunteers from the B1, five volunteers from the B1+, and five volunteers from the B2 levels). The interview contained a wide range of questions, including (a) whether they believed learning grammar was important, (b) whether or not they liked learning grammar, (c) whether they were willing to take a free extra grammar course at the university, (d) whether they preferred deductive or inductive grammar instruction, (e) how they felt about CF, (f) whether they preferred their errors to be corrected directly by teachers or by self-correction, (g) what type of errors should be corrected, (h) when they should be corrected, (i) how they felt about peer correction.

3. 4. Data collection and data analysis

The data collection procedure took two days to complete. On the first day, learners completed the Likert questionnaire. Before the data collection, the researcher explained the purpose of the study. Learners were then allowed to complete the questionnaire at their own pace. Upon the completion of the questionnaire, 16 volunteer learners were selected for the follow-up interviews. The interview was conducted in a private office, where learner responses were recorded on a personal computer for subsequent analysis. Because of the limited number of participants at the B2 level and the proximity of the proficiency level of learners at the B1 and B1+ levels, the decision was made to aggregate the data of all participants. Each interview took approximately 10-14 minutes to complete. Learners were given the choice to answer the questions in either English or Turkish.

The results of the explanatory factor analysis on the original questionnaire by Loewen et al. (2009) revealed that the items on the questionnaire were loaded on five factors, including (a) efficacy of grammar, (b) importance of grammar, (c) importance of grammatical accuracy, (d) priority of communication, (e) negative attitudes to grammar instruction, and (f) negative attitudes to error correction. Because of the similarity of the items loaded on different factors, the decision was made to present and interpret learner responses to the items in an aggregated manner and not factor by factor.

As for the quantitative part, the data were processed using frequency analysis as a component of descriptive statistics. The data were analyzed according to the percentages of the responses that learners provided to the options for each item and their weighted mean on the five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1.0-1.80), disagree (1.81-2.60), not sure (2.61-3.40), agree (3.41-4.20), and strongly agree (4.21-5.0). Reliability was calculated for the 24 items, and it was .789. For the qualitative data, learner responses to the interview questions were first transcribed. The responses that were relevant to the questions were then divided into segments and coded. Then, similar segments were combined into categories and their recurring themes were drawn (see Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Merriam, 2009). These categories were further compared to examine the possibility of arriving at a smaller number of common themes. The same process was applied to learner responses to the open-ended questions. The whole process was examined by two experts from the field to ensure content validity.

4. Findings

4.1. Quantitative data

Table 1 below shows learner responses to the 24 items on the questionnaire. For the matter of convenience, the responses of the learners to the items related to grammar were presented first and to error correction later.

		Learner responses in percentage						
Questionnaire items		1	2	3	4	5	M	St
1.	Studying grammar formally is essential for mastering a second language.	5	6.3	36.6	33.0	23.6	3.72	0.91
2.	I usually keep grammar rules in mind when I write in a second language.	3.1	10.5	26.2	33.5	26.7	3.70	1.07
3.	Knowing a lot about grammar helps my reading.	2.1	7.3	25.7	34.0	30.9	3.84	1.01
4.	My second language improves most quickly if I study the grammar of the language.	4.2	16.2	35.6	29.8	14.1	3.33	1.04
5.	I like studying grammar.	10.5	17.8	33.5	23.0	15.2	3.14	1.19
6.	The study of grammar helps in learning a second language.	2.1	9.4	30.4	39.3	18.8	3.63	.96
7.	Knowledge about grammar rules helps in understanding other people's speech.	3.7	11.0	25.7	39.3	20.4	3.61	1.04
8.	When I read a sentence in a second language, I try to figure out the grammar.	7.9	10.5	22.5	36.1	23.0	3.56	1.18
9.	One way to improve my reading ability is to increase my knowledge of grammar.	3.1	13.6	31.4	36.1	15.7	3.47	1.01
10.	I can communicate in a second language without knowing the grammar rules.	5.8	21.5	31.9	24.1	16.3	3.24	1.14
11.	It is more important to practice a second language in real-life situations than to practice grammar rules.	1.6	6.8	32.5	33.0	26.2	3.75	0.97
12.	Good learners of a second language usually know a lot of grammar rules.	4.7	20.9	35.1	33.5	5.8	3.14	.97
13.	Knowing grammar rules helps communication in a second language.	2.1	9.4	31.9	30.9	25.7	3.68	1.02
14.	People will respect me if I use correct grammar when speaking a second language.	4.7	9.4	38.7	29.8	17.3	3.45	1.03
15.	Second language writing is not good if it has a lot of grammar mistakes.	5.8	13.1	25.1	39.8	16.2	3.47	1.08
16.	I like it when my teacher explains grammar rules.	0	5.8	22.0	33.0	39.3	4.05	0.91
17.	When I have a problem during conversation activities, it helps me to have my teacher explain grammar rules.	2.6	10.5	28.3	30.4	28.3	3.71	1.06
18.	There should be more formal study of grammar in my second language class.	10.5	27.7	37.7	18.8	5.2	2.80	1.03
19.	I feel cheated if a teacher does not correct the written work I hand in.	9.4	15.7	36.6	20.9	17.3	3.20	1.18
20.	When I make errors in speaking a second language, I like my teacher to correct them.	1.6	7.9	20.9	29.3	40.3	3.98	1.03
21.	Teachers should not correct students when they make errors in class.	52.9	27.2	12.6	3.7	3.7	1.78	1.04
22.	I like to be corrected by my classmates in small group work.	11.0	15.2	28.3	28.8	16.8	3.25	1.22
23.	I dislike it when I am corrected in class.	27.2	31.4	33.0	4.7	3.7	2.26	1.02
24.	When I make grammar errors in writing in a second language, I like my teacher to correct them.	2.1	3.7	11.0	26.7	56.5	4.31	0.95

Note N= 191, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

Learner responses show that, overall, they considered grammar knowledge important for learning English (items 1, and 6). More than half of the learners, for example, appreciated the importance of formal grammar instruction in second language learning (agree + strongly agree = 56.6%, item 1). They also

believed that grammar knowledge can help them learn other language skills. More than half of learners supported the idea that grammar knowledge is helpful in developing their listening (agree + strongly agree = 59.7%, item 7), speaking (agree + strongly agree = 58.7%, item 17), reading (agree + strongly agree = 64.9%, item 3) and writing skills (agree + strongly agree = 60%, item 2). A similar number of learners believed that grammar knowledge assists them with their communication skills (agree + strongly agree = 56.6%, item 13). Learner responses also revealed positive feelings toward grammar instruction. A respectable number of learners indicated that they liked it when teachers explained grammar rules (agree + strongly agree = 72.3%, item 16).

Learner responses, however, revealed that they had some reservations about the amount of grammar instruction they perceived was necessary. Their responses to item 18, for example, showed that they were either undecided (37.7%) or against the idea that more formal grammar instruction was necessary (disagree + strongly disagree = 38.2%). The majority of learners also supported the idea that practicing the second language through communicative activities is more important than grammar instruction (agree + strongly agree = 59.2%, item 11). Similarly, learner responses to item 10 showed that a considerable number of them either supported the idea that communication without knowing grammar rules is possible (agree + strongly agree = 40.4%) or they were undecided about it (31.9%).

As for error correction, a large number of learners supported teachers' CF in general (agree + strongly agree = 80.1%, item 21) and expressed positive attitudes toward CF directed at their speaking errors (agree + strongly agree = 69.6%, item 20) and more noticeably at their written errors (agree + strongly agree = 83.2%, item 24). Regarding learners' attitudes toward peer correction, their responses were dispersed on the agreement and disagreement continuum (item 22). While a considerable number of learners supported peer correction (agree + strongly agree = 45.6%), the remaining learners were almost equally divided between opposing the idea (disagree + strongly disagree = 26.2%) and being neutral about it (28.3%).

4.2. Qualitative data

This section explains the findings of the qualitative data. Several major issues related to grammar and CF were explored by the open-ended and the interview questions. These issues are discussed in turn below. The first issue was the importance of grammar, and learner responses showed that they had different opinions on this matter. Out of the 16 learners, seven of them underscored the importance of grammar and the need to maintain it as the primary focus of language classes. These learners mainly drew on the function that grammar fulfills in the acquisition process and language use. Seven learners, however, stated that while grammar is necessary, too much attention is paid to it. They held that further instruction is counterproductive and may have negative impacts on learners' communicative ability as well as their emotions. There were two other learners who stated that the importance of grammar may be mediated by contextual and individual factors, such as students' needs and their future objectives: "Grammar for me is necessary, but it may not be so important for the students who are majoring in other programs. They are not going to use it to communicate with other people as much."

Learners were also asked whether they would take additional courses in grammar if the school offered them for free. Interestingly, out of the 16 learners only three learners expressed their willingness to take extra courses. The others dismissed the idea and stated that the grammar instruction that they had received was enough for them. One of the learners mentioned that what they needed was not additional grammar lessons but the opportunity to use the grammar they had learned. Another learner stated that they would not take extra grammar lessons unless they were offered in novel ways, for example, through games or high-tech programs.

Another issue investigated was learners' attitudes toward learning grammar. Here, learner responses varied again. Seven of the 16 learners stated that they liked learning grammar, four learners

reported that they disliked it, and five learners reported that they did not have any feelings toward learning it. Learners gave several reasons why they had positive or negative attitudes toward learning grammar. As for the positive attitudes, the following themes were extracted (a) grammar helps them with learning English in general, (b) it helps them improve their knowledge in other language skills, specially speaking and writing, (c) it boosts their confidence and gives them the feeling that they know the language, (d) it helps them pass their exams, (e) it is easier to learn grammar than other language skills such as vocabulary, and (f) they love learning rules per se. Learners also gave various reasons to explain why they did not like grammar. The themes that emerged in this regard included (a) the content is repetitive, (b) some grammar rules are cognitively demanding and have so many exceptions and details, (c) learning grammar is boring, (d) most grammar rules do not have an immediate applicability in real-life communication, (e) grammar plays a relatively smaller role in language learning compared to other language skills such as vocabulary.

The next issue was learners' instructional preferences for teaching and learning grammar. Learner responses showed that they preferred grammar instruction that (a) provides a large number of examples, (b) encourages learners to use the new grammar points in their own sentences, (c) is accompanied by follow-up speaking activities, (d) is reinforced by other language skills such as writing and reading, (e) is introduced in entertaining ways, (f) is explained through L1 when the grammar point is too complicated, (g) is contextualized using videos and movies to show how new grammar points are used in real-life situations, and (h) is accompanied by teacher CF. The themes that emerged from learners' responses also showed that they do not like grammar instruction (a) when teachers only read the rules from books and do not provide additional examples, (b) when grammar instruction is not followed by communicative activities, (c) when they are asked to memorize the rules without knowing the reasons behind them, (d) when teachers' explanations are too lengthy or too short, and (e) when teachers adamantly avoid using students' native language to explain confusing grammatical points.

When learners were asked if they preferred inductive or deductive grammar instruction, out of the 16 learners, 10 learners stated their preference for deductive instruction and three learners for inductive instruction. The remaining three learners expressed no preference for either teaching technique, making the point that each may have their own advantages. One of those learners made the following comment: "If teachers give the rules first, you understand the sentences that follow them, and if they give examples first, it makes you curious, and you start wondering about the rules, so both techniques are fine with me."

Turning to oral CF, one of the issues explored by the interview questions was the emotional reaction to teacher CF. Eleven of the 16 learners stated that they either liked or were ok with teachers correcting their errors. One learner stated that she did not like to be corrected. And the remaining four learners stated that the way they feel depends on how teachers correct them. Learners who expressed positive feelings toward teacher CF mainly pointed to the facilitating role that error correction plays in the language learning process. They also consider CF as a part of teachers' responsibilities, which shows how much they care about their students. On the other hand, learners who expressed their concerns about error correction highlighted the adverse psychological effects that it may bring about. They maintained that CF could make them feel ashamed, embarrassed, and insecure when it is carried out in front of other learners and when teachers' language is too harsh, offensive, or derisive. Some learners also indicated that they do not want to be interrupted or corrected while speaking. Finally, learners who took the middle ground suggested that their feelings toward the teacher's CF may depend on their relationship with their teacher. One learner, for example, commented, "If I like the teacher, I don't mind when he corrects my errors, but if my relationship is not good, then I may feel embarrassed."

Another issue was the timing of teachers' oral CF. Learners were asked whether they prefer teachers to correct them as soon as they make an error, or if they would rather teachers wait until they finish their sentences. Out of the 16 learners, 10 learners stated that they preferred delayed CF, three learners expressed their preference for immediate CF and three learners stated that they did not mind about the timing of CF.

One of the learners who favored delayed correction, for example, commented, "I don't like it when I am interrupted by teachers. I lose my train of thought." On the other hand, one of the learners who favored immediate CF asserted, "I think teachers should correct me right away, otherwise, I may forget my errors."

Another issue was learners' oral CF preference. Learners were asked if they preferred their errors to be corrected directly by teachers, or if they preferred teachers to encourage them to conduct self-correction. Out of the 16 learners, nine of them stated that they would rather be prompted to do self-correction, four learners preferred teachers to provide direct correction, two learners preferred a mixture of both, and one learner expressed no preference. Those who favored self-correction made the point that these types of correction are more encouraging and help them remember their mistakes better. One of the learners pointed to the importance of teachers' scaffolding in the error correction process. She commented, "Self-correction is better, but it should be done through small steps. Teachers shouldn't, for example, say this is not correct and ask me to find the right answer." On the other hand, learners who stated that they preferred direct correction by teachers mainly pointed to the psychological factors involved in error correction. One of the learners stated, "I would rather have direct correction by teachers because if you ask me to think and find my own mistakes in the middle of a class, I feel totally embarrassed. Imagine that 20 people are waiting for you to finish your sentence, but you are trying to find your own mistake and you cannot." Learners who favored mixed CF, however, highlighted specific conditions under which teachers should choose different types of CF. One of them suggested that the type of CF should be determined by the learners' proficiency level, that learners at lower levels should receive more direct correction by teachers, and that learners at higher levels should be encouraged to apply self-correction. The other learner indicated that teachers should start by prompting learners to conduct self-correction and resort to direct correction only when the former fails to produce the expected responses.

The next issues were the scale and type of errors for which learners preferred to receive teachers' corrections. Six of the 16 learners stated that teachers should correct all types of errors, and the remaining ten learners stated that CF should be provided for certain errors only. Of those ten learners, three, for example, stated that teachers should refrain from correcting their pronunciation errors because it makes them feel embarrassed. Interestingly, three other learners stated that pronunciation errors are among the most important errors, and that teachers should correct them. Learners came up with different reasons to explain their choices of error types, including (a) whether they create problems in communication, (b) whether they are made when learners' focus is on grammar (c) whether they are made by learners who are emotionally sensitive to CF (d) whether they are already used correctly by learners. Regarding the last point, one of the learners stated, "It also depends on the teachers' understanding of what students already know. If a student makes a mistake using a grammar point that he has already correctly used several times, then teachers don't have to correct them."

The final issue explored by the interview questions was learners' attitudes toward peer correction. Seven of the 16 learners asserted that it is ok if their errors are corrected by their peers, two learners stated that they do not like peer's CF, and seven learners accepted it only under certain conditions. These conditions included (a) peers' use of appropriate and respectful language (b) peers having the appropriate level of language proficiency (c) their focusing on global errors as opposed to local errors.

5. Discussion

The first research question asked about the beliefs of the prep school learners about grammar instruction. Learners' responses to the questionnaire items and interview questions showed that they generally accepted that grammar instruction is necessary for the acquisition of a second language, and it helps them improve their communication and other language skills. Most learners favored integrating grammar instruction with more communicative activities. They also had positive feelings toward receiving grammar instruction.

Disagreement, however, occurred on the amount of grammar instruction that they believed was necessary. Most learners preferred not to take extra grammar lessons, and a considerable number of them believed that they could establish successful communication without having profound knowledge of grammar.

These findings echoed those of Sari et al. (2017), who also found that most Turkish learners held the opinion that grammar is beneficial in improving learners' general English, yet they did not support the idea of having more formal grammar instruction. Apparently, despite receiving substantial amount of grammar instruction during their earlier education, these learners faced serious difficulties in effective communication making them believe that they needed to direct their attention to areas other than grammar. One learner, for example, commented: "Grammar is just like math rules. We have seen these rules so many times, yet we cannot put them into use." It is also interesting to note that learners' proposition for subordinating accuracy to communicative effectiveness is in line with the ELF-aware perspective that underscores the importance of successful message transmission for which grammatical accuracy is of less significant value, especially when the language is being used in an informal context for casual communication (Seidlhofer, et al., 2006).

The findings also showed that most learners preferred deductive to inductive teaching. These results are consistent with earlier research that revealed a general tendency among learners for deductive teaching (e.g., Daloğlu, 2020; Jean & Simard, 2013; Shirva & Nagai, 2022; Vogel et al., 2011). This could be because deductive teaching, with its explicit introduction of rules, provides a safe framework for learners to lean back on once they encounter difficulties with the use of language (Fleming, 2018). The preference for deductive grammar instruction may also reflect the type of grammar instruction that learners received during their education at secondary schools and the prep school (see Jean & Simard, 2013). Future research could examine whether learners' preference for deductive instruction changes if they are given the chance to be exposed to other types of grammar teaching. Han (2017), for example, reported that learners who initially expressed a preference for direct written CF became more open to indirect written CF as they gained experience with the latter feedback type.

The second research question asked about the beliefs of learners toward oral CF. Learner responses showed that they generally had positive attitudes toward teacher CF, and supported the idea that CF could help them with their productive skills. These findings are in line with earlier research that shows learners generally embrace teacher CF and believe in its positive impact on their language learning process (e.g., Akiyama, 2017; Jean & Simard, 2011; Lee, 2013; Kartchava, 2016; Katayama, 2007; Schulz, 1996; Zhang & Rahimi, 2014; Zhu & Wang, 2019). However, learner responses to the interview questions also revealed that there were some sensitive learners whose beliefs about the effectiveness of CF were conditioned by psychological variables such as the way teachers present feedback, and the relationship between teachers and learners. Similar findings were also reported by other studies. Han (2017), for example, reported that learners who interpreted teachers' written CF as motivating had more positive attitudes toward CF.

Regarding the timing of CF, most learners in the interview (10 out of the 16) expressed their preference for delayed CF as opposed to immediate CF (see Alhaysony, 2016; Nhac, 2022, Ölmezer-Öztürk and Öztürk, 2016 for similar findings). Learners referred to psychological factors to justify their choices, and they argued that interruption as an inherent feature of immediate CF would lead to embarrassment. It is also interesting to note that not all learners took a similar position. The other six learners either preferred immediate CF or had no objection against it. However, the fact that immediate CF stood a higher chance of negatively affecting learners' attitudes to the learning process suggests that teachers need to become more careful with these types of CF. They may err on the side of caution and choose to implement delayed as opposed to immediate CF or apply the correction in an implicit manner if they are not aware of their students' reaction to CF.

As for the type of oral CF, more learners (9 out of 16) supported self-correction as opposed to teacher-correction. Apparently, these learners were open to the challenges that self-monitoring error

correction would pose. However, the picture became more complicated as the rest of the learners preferred either teacher-initiated correction (four learners) or a mixture of both correction types (two learners). A similar situation was observed when learners were questioned about the scale of error correction. The majority of the learners who took the interview (10 out of 16) believed that teacher CF should be carried out in a selective manner. They also had diverse opinions on the types of errors and the conditions under which teachers should carry out CF. The rest of the learners, however, believed that teachers should correct all errors. These findings once more underscore the situational nature of CF and the complexity of the factors that teachers need to consider when they decide to apply CF. Teachers need to be sensitive to learners' psychological reaction to CF and their ability to conduct self-correction and switch from one type of CF to another, as the need for such a shift arises in the learning context (Lyster, et al., 2013; Sarandi, 2016).

As for peer correction, learner responses showed that they generally held positive attitudes toward it (see Kaivanpanah et al., 2015; Katayama, 2007, and Sato, 2013 for similar findings). Only two out of the 16 learners expressed their discontent with peer correction. However, the fact that the responses of seven learners were conditional underscores the intricacy of the factors involved in learners' reaction to peer CF. The concerns that some learners expressed regarding the possible drawbacks of peer CF are noteworthy. By addressing these concerns, teachers may increase the likelihood of learners' positive reactions to peer correction. For example, learners may feel less offended when the correction comes from those peers with whom they have established a friendly relationship. Teachers might also monitor the proficiency level of learners to ensure that more capable learners also have a chance to receive feedback from peers who have a similar proficiency level. Teachers can also hold training sessions to establish some guidelines for learners on how to provide CF and on what to do when they doubt the accuracy of the CF they receive.

The present study has its limitations. The data were collected from the prep school of a single university, and the number of learners who took the subsequent interview was limited. A larger number of samples collected from more diverse contexts could produce a more comprehensive picture of learners' perceptions and attitudes toward grammar instruction and oral CF. Also, there is the possibility that the 16 learners who additionally took the interviews were more motivated than others and, therefore, their perceptions may not reflect the entire study population (see Yates, 2003). However, the triangulation and the similarity between the findings of the interviews and questionnaire on several common topics suggest that motivational variations may not have significantly affected the study's results.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the beliefs of English prep school learners about grammar instruction and oral CF. The results showed that learners generally appreciated the importance of grammar and error correction in language acquisition. They held the idea that grammar knowledge could help them develop their knowledge of other major language skills. Learners also offered several suggestions regarding the way they liked/disliked their teachers to present grammar lessons. It is worth highlighting that some of these suggestions, such as integrating grammar instruction with communicative activities, and starting with indirect CF strategies and moving progressively toward more direct feedback align with SLA research (e.g., Spada et al., 2014; Nassaji, 2016). The interview results also showed that learners generally preferred (a) deductive grammar instruction to inductive one, (b) self-correction to teacher-correction, (c) delayed to immediate CF, (d) focused correction on specific errors to unfocused correction of all errors. They also displayed somewhat positive attitudes toward peer correction. An intriguing finding of the study was that a considerable number of learners did not believe that grammar knowledge, though necessary for learning a second language, had an indispensable role in establishing successful communication. Most learners who took the interviews mentioned that they were not willing to enroll in additional grammar lessons.

It is also important to note that while the findings showed a general tendency in learners' beliefs about certain aspects of grammar instruction and oral CF, variations in learners' perceptions and preferences were recorded in almost all aspects under study. The fact that some learners did not go with the flow underscores the highly situational nature of CF and puts an extra onus on the shoulders of teachers to discover and address the opposing expectations of learners. Teachers can take different approaches to address the existing discrepancy in the learners' beliefs. They may choose to have a more surgical approach to learners' errors and adjust CF to the expectations and characteristics of their learners. For example, teachers can employ implicit types of CF with sensitive learners and explicit types of CF with those who are more open to CF (Roothooft, 2014; Sarandi, 2016).

Another way to address learners with diverse viewpoints is to modify their beliefs. Learners' beliefs are amenable to change, and one way to bring this change is through interactions with teachers (Navarro & Thornton, 2011). Teachers can arrange regular meetings with learners to explore and discuss their beliefs, detect those they find counter to their own, and explore the possibility of arriving at a mutual ground. The changes, however, need not necessarily be on the side of students. Teachers' awareness of their students' beliefs may help them reshape their own beliefs and make them more compatible with those of their students (Ha, 2022). The crucial point, however, is to narrow the gap between teachers' practice and learners' expectations. After all, instruction can be of little value if learners find it contrary to their deeply ingrained beliefs.

Future studies with more diverse participants from various backgrounds and settings could examine the generalizability of the findings of the present study. Researchers can, for example, investigate whether learners' inclination toward deductive instruction is also applied to other universities and whether it is affected by learners' earlier education. Further studies can also investigate the effectiveness of training in reshaping the beliefs of learners as well as teachers. Another area for future research is examining the beliefs and attitudes of learners to computer-assisted feedback and the way they could be utilized to facilitate the language learning process.

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