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An Exploratory Study of the Interplay between  
Teachers' Beliefs, Instructional Practices &  
Professional Development

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# ABSTRACT

Previous research has revealed the influential role of teachers' beliefs in determining their professional behaviour. Teachers' beliefs affect not only their teaching, but also filter new input, suggesting significant implications for the implementation of educational innovations and teacher development.

This study explores the interconnections between teachers' beliefs, their instructional practices and professional development, examining the extent to which the introduction of an innovative teaching approach impacts teachers' beliefs and behaviour. It focuses particularly on grammar instruction in the context of English teaching in secondary schools of the Maldives.

Combining descriptive ethnography with a quasi-experimental design, the study was implemented in two phases. Phase One, based on questionnaire data from 197 teachers from 51 schools, explored teachers' beliefs and their self reported practices. Findings indicated that teachers placed great emphasis on grammar and that they were unfamiliar with inductive approaches to grammar instruction. In Phase Two, inductive grammar teaching methods were introduced to 14 teachers from two schools, in a 12 week professional development programme.

Drawing largely on data from observations and interviews, the results from this phase showed that although teachers were observed to generally follow their pedagogic beliefs, several points of difference between their beliefs and practices existed. While the professional development may have increased their understanding of inductive approaches to grammar instruction at the level of awareness, only limited changes to beliefs and practices were observed. Changing instructional practice appeared to be a difficult task with only two teachers uptaking the innovation. Some subsidiary changes were however observed in the practices of several other teachers. Various impediments constrained change efforts, including teachers' lack of openness to change, their low professional motivation and the lack of a supportive school culture. Contextual factors such as large classes and difficult working conditions also negatively affected the change process. Findings indicate that development activities which provided regular one-on-one support for the teachers were more likely to lead

to uptake than those involving mainly workshops. The individual nature of the uptake process, its lack of uniformity and the challenges faced by the teachers are discussed, as are the implications for the provision of professional development.

*Dedication*

*To my children, Malaa & Abil,  
who fill my life with immeasurable joy  
and inspire me to be a better person.*

*“Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.”*

*- King Whitney Jr.*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EDC	Educational Development Centre
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
GCE	General Certificate of Education
HoD	Head of Department
KAL	Knowledge about Language
L2	Second/Foreign Language
MoE	Ministry of Education
PPP	Presentation Practice Production
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

---

On a dismal rainy afternoon in July 1993, I was in a classroom facing thirty two seventh graders dressed in immaculate white uniforms, my feet wet from having made my way through the puddle-filled school grounds, my heart beating furiously, thrilled yet terrified at the thought of what lay ahead. Just weeks after sitting for the end-of-school examinations I was back in the classroom, in the school that I had previously spent ten years as a student. But this time, I was there as an English teacher.

Being new and untrained, I had sought advice from my more experienced colleagues about what to teach and how to organise a lesson. Most had suggested grammar. According to my colleagues, grammar was the best choice as this was the simplest to teach and showed that the teacher was knowledgeable. I was, however, doubtful that grammar was the best choice for my first lesson, given that it was not my strongest area.

My own experiences of learning English<sup>1</sup> in school had involved innumerable hours of grammar instruction which typically involved the teacher giving long jargon-laden explanations of how a particular structure worked, then dictating this explanation so that, we, the students, could write it down and memorise it in our own time. This was followed by lengthy repetitive exercises, often of the fill-in-the-blanks type. I found it incredibly tedious and failed to see any point in the instruction as I, like many of my peers, never seemed to understand the explanations of the teacher. As a result, even though I enjoyed learning English, and particularly its literature, I detested grammar.

When I first started teaching English I tried to get round the problem of having to explain grammatical structures by giving my students examples of how a particular

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<sup>1</sup> I was born and brought up in the Maldives, and completed my primary and lower secondary education in Maldivian schools. I am a non-native speaker of English, having learned the language first through natural exposure to it at home as a young child, and later through formal education in the school context.

structure works and contrasting it with examples of incorrect use of that structure. By doing this I was aiming to help my students to discover the rules of the language for themselves and making them (and myself!) more aware of how the English language works. Rather than long tedious exercises, short intensive bursts of grammar tasks that gave the students a chance to work with the language provided them, I believe, with reassuring consolidation and built their confidence. Even though I was, at the time, unaware of the theoretical reasoning behind it, I found that this was a very useful method of teaching and while it worked for me and my students, I was curious to know if students taught through such discovery approaches to grammar learnt better than those who were taught in the more traditional way. This was how I developed an interest in the deductive-inductive dimension of grammar instruction, and led me to investigate their relative effectiveness (Mohamed, 2001, 2004). The research presented in this thesis grew out of this interest, and focuses on the use of discovery tasks as one way in which grammar could be effectively taught.

As a teacher and later as a curriculum developer, I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe other teachers in the classroom. Through such observations and discussions with teachers, I was able to gain a better understanding of why teachers did what they did and, in the process, develop my own personal theories of language education. These classroom observations also led me to the realisation of the unchanging nature of English language teaching in Maldivian schools. Although prescribed textbooks and examination syllabuses had largely changed, the methods of teaching and the classroom dynamics had not. In these classrooms the focus was still on the teacher, the content was dominated by matters related to grammar and the model of instruction was clearly one of transmission.

This is reminiscent of Thornbury's (1998) observation that, despite the emergence of numerous second/foreign language (L2) acquisition theories and teaching methods over the years, teachers have not deviated from the more traditional grammar oriented approaches. He claims that while teachers have never abandoned instructional approaches based on grammar, alternative approaches have not made any lasting impression on the current practice of English language teaching. Studies such as Burns (1990), Kumaravadivelu (1993) and Nunan (1987) have also suggested that although teachers may profess commitment to a particular method or approach such

as Communicative Language Teaching, the principles that underlie these approaches are rarely enacted in the classroom. Classroom teaching therefore seems to carry on unaffected by the development on the theoretical and research front.

The realisation about the unchanging nature of the teaching in Maldivian schools hit me as I was sitting at the back of a classroom observing a teacher who had, several years previously, also taught me. I watched as he taught the same lesson from the same textbook in the same way that I remembered him doing when I was a student in his class. Discussing the lesson afterwards with the teacher, he told me how, through using the same lessons repeatedly, teaching had become almost automated for him; how he did not believe in applying 'Western' ideas about education into his teaching because he felt that they would be unworkable in his classroom. While the lesson seemed to satisfy the teacher's objectives and the students had appeared engaged, it caused me to question a teacher's ability and desire to change. Do teachers continue to teach the way they have always done? Do they recycle their trusted repertoire of lessons time and time again? Do they adapt, evolve and grow in the course of their teaching careers? Are they interested in developing their skills and knowledge as a teacher?

I was also concerned about the low levels of student achievement in English examinations nationwide, and believed that to improve student learning, the teaching had to change. But, could teachers be encouraged to adopt new instructional practices? Can teachers change?

These questions were instrumental in driving me to conduct this research.

Focusing on the teaching of grammar, this study first explores teachers' beliefs, as the initial step towards understanding how to affect the process of schooling is to understand the values and beliefs of those who drive those processes (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988). Teachers' beliefs strongly influence not only how they teach (Richards & Lockhart, 1994), but also what and how much students learn (Calderhead, 1996). Research (e.g. Johnson, 1994) suggests that a teacher's past learning experiences greatly contribute to the formation of beliefs about the subject matter, learning and teaching. As beliefs are instilled in new teachers by teachers of a

past generation, and teachers are inclined to teach in the way they themselves were taught (Lortie, 1975), it appears to be a self-perpetuating system. If an educational system is to change and teachers are to adopt new and better practices, it is vital that teachers change their beliefs.

The professional development of teachers seeks to initiate such change, so it is imperative that the nature of teacher change and how it comes about is understood (Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). But do professional development programmes succeed in bringing about change? Do teachers alter their beliefs and practices following involvement in professional development activities? Lange (1990) argues that although teacher development programmes attempt to engage teachers in improving their art and craft, these programmes rarely succeed in establishing continued development. This may be because, as Richardson (1992) reports, tensions exist between teachers' individual perceived needs for self-improvement and the demands made on them from higher authorities, requiring changes in curriculum and teaching approaches. Thus, the extent to which teachers are willing to engage in professional development and adopt change may differ. This lack of change in L2 instructional practice has been evidenced in a number of research studies (e.g. Lamb, 1995).

The second phase of the study deals with this concept of teacher change. It investigates the extent to which teachers change – both their beliefs and practices – as a result of a school-based professional development programme that focuses on improving instruction through the introduction of a new grammar teaching method.

The overall aim of this study therefore is to explore the connections between teachers' beliefs, their classroom practices and professional development. It is specifically concerned with investigating the process of change that teachers are expected to undergo as a result of the introduction of a pedagogic innovation.

In particular, this investigation seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. a) What beliefs do English teachers in Maldivian secondary schools hold about L2 grammar, its acquisition and methods of instruction?  
b) What factors are responsible for shaping these teachers' beliefs?

2. a) How do teachers in Maldivian secondary schools deal with grammar in the English classroom?
  - b) To what extent do teachers' beliefs correspond to their instructional practices?
  - c) What factors constrain these teachers when translating their beliefs into practice?
3. a) To what extent does a school-based professional development programme affect teachers' beliefs about grammar?
  - b) To what extent does a school-based professional development programme affect teachers' instructional practices?

Because this study explores beliefs and experiences, based on evidence from questionnaires, interviews and extensive observations, it is descriptive. This study is also interventionist as it investigates the impact of professional development on teachers' beliefs and the extent to which the uptake of an innovation was evidenced in their practices.

In the L2 education field, inadequate attention has been paid to how teachers teach, how they learn and how professional development influences their belief systems, and consequently, their practice of teaching. Little is also known about whether and how teachers change their pedagogic beliefs. Although various theoretical propositions have been made in this regard, there is a scarcity of empirical research which has investigated the process of cognitive and behavioural change arising out of a professional development programme. This study seeks to address these issues.

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, which provides an overview of the research and its purpose. Chapter Two describes the context of the study. It outlines the educational history of the Maldives and describes the current system of education, with particular reference to the teaching of English as a Second Language in secondary schools. Chapter Three reviews the literature pertaining to the subject of the research study. It deals with literature in the fields of teacher cognition, grammar instruction, professional development and innovation. Gaps in the literature will be identified in the chapter, and the specific research questions that the study focuses on will be specified at the end of the chapter. Chapter

Four describes the methodological issues considered for the study, and specifies the design, instrumentation, sampling and data collection procedures that were adopted. It also describes how the data were coded, analysed and interpreted. The results of the study are presented in Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Five focuses on the results obtained from a questionnaire used to ascertain the espoused beliefs and self reported practices from a large number of English teachers across the country. Chapter Six focuses on the teachers in the two case study schools, Rural School and Urban School. It describes the teachers involved, their beliefs and observed practices and the impact on these of a professional development project that was conducted at the schools. Chapter Seven brings together the results from both the preceding chapters, and discusses the findings with reference to the literature reviewed earlier. Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter, summarises the study as a whole and discusses the implications of the study both at a practical and theoretical level. Suggestions for further research are made and limitations of the study are identified.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Context of the Study

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### *Introduction*

As environmental constraints and opportunities play a significant role in any model of teachers' thoughts and actions (Clark & Peterson, 1986), an understanding of the context is seen to be an essential prerequisite to understanding teachers' beliefs and practices. The present study was based on the teaching of English in Maldivian secondary schools. Thus this chapter sets the study within its historical and educational context. The chapter first provides a brief introduction to the Maldives. It then outlines significant educational changes that have taken place in the country's history and describes the current system of education that is authorised by the Ministry of Education (MoE). It pays particular attention to the teaching of English, describing how much exposure students receive to the language both in school and outside. The chapter also deals with the teachers who teach English, outlining their backgrounds, training and work load. Finally, it explains why there is the need for reform in this context, as far as English language teaching in secondary schools is concerned.

### *The Maldives*

The Republic of Maldives is an archipelago of 1200 islands formed naturally into 26 atolls and situated vertically across the equator in the Indian Ocean, 670km south west of Sri Lanka. The islands are low-lying and small, with an average size of 1 square kilometre, and none exceeding an elevation of 1 metre above sea level. The 1.77sq km island of Malé, the capital island, houses over 80,000 people – more than a quarter of the country's population. In more than 80% of the other islands, the total population is less than 1000. The 285,100 inhabitants of the country are uniquely homogenous, sharing the same language (Dhivehi, of Indo-Aryan descent, is unique to the Maldives), religion (Islam) and culture.

## *Education*

A significant demographic feature in the Maldives is that the population is very young and demand for education is strong and rising. Nevertheless, the inherent constraints imposed by distant and small populations adversely affect the provision of infrastructure facilities and services. In another context, a city with a population of 285,100 could be serviced by a single university, a few secondary schools and a limited number of primary schools. A similar provision in the Maldives with its population scattered over 200 islands, and where transport between the islands is time-consuming and expensive, would not be practical. Furthermore, although the country has a high literacy rate of over 98% (*Statistical Year Book of Maldives*, 2004), there is an acute shortage of people whose educational attainment is above the basic levels of numeracy and literacy. Due to this lack of qualified manpower, Maldives remains dependent on the use of expatriate labour. Over 36% of the teachers employed at Maldivian schools are expatriates (*Statistical Year Book of Maldives*, 2004).

### *A Historical Overview of Education*

Traditionally, education was the responsibility of religious leaders and institutions, with most learning centred on one-on-one tutorials in religious teachings. The first formal schools were opened in 1924 and served as Qur'anic schools. During the 1930s basic primary schools that concentrated on teaching Dhivehi literacy and the rudiments of arithmetic in addition to the Qur'an were introduced on several islands. Many of these schools consisted of one-room structures constructed of coral and lime and roofed with thatch. They were extremely basic in every respect (*Education for All*, 2000).

This was the education received by the average child until the 1950s. The handful of affluent families in Malé sent their children abroad, mainly to neighbouring Sri Lanka or India, and occasionally to Egypt. Sporadic opportunities for further education abroad also arose through international aid agencies and the assistance of foreign governments. However, students who did get these opportunities were ill-prepared for them and were generally unfamiliar with any language apart from the mother tongue (*Education for All*, 2000).

The 1950s saw a remarkable change in the education system. For the first time in the country's history, education came to be regarded as an agent for national development. By the end of the decade, a school of some form was in existence in every inhabited island of the country. As part of a conscious effort to educate individuals, meet the increasing developmental needs of the country, and prepare students for further education, a more Western system of schooling was begun in 1960 in Malé. This was based on the British state school system in terms of organisation, methods of instruction, and curriculum. Formal teaching of English in schools began in 1958 and three years later, in 1961, English medium education was initiated in Malé schools (*Education Masterplan*, 1996), a practice gradually adopted later in other island schools. As a result, today the majority of Maldivians can understand some basic English, while many can speak it fluently. However, speaking in English among the locals is still very rare, with a stigma of snobbery and arrogance attached to it.

### *The Ministry of Education (MoE)*

Maldives has a centralised, national, bureaucratic system with the MoE responsible for all educational matters at primary, and secondary levels. The MoE's responsibilities include policy, curriculum, teacher recruitment, in-service development, preparation of textbooks for primary level, school infrastructure, school and teacher supervision, school governance, public examinations, academic accreditation, etc. The Maldives College of Higher Education, which conducts teacher education and training at its Faculty of Education, also came under the MoE until mid 2005.

### *Education Today*

Today, nearly one-third of the country's population is in school, with over 25,000 students studying at secondary level (*Educational Statistics Yearbook*, 2004). Following an optional two years at pre-school, formal schooling in Maldives begins at six years of age and is structured on a 7-3-2 sequence: seven years of primary school (grades 1 – 7), leading to three years of lower secondary (grades 8 – 10) and two final years at higher secondary level (grades 11 and 12). While primary schooling has recently been universalised, completing secondary school is a privilege enjoyed by a

small proportion of the school-going population (*Education for All*, 2000). Although the government spends a large proportion of the national budget on education, the lack of a fully-developed educational infrastructure for secondary schooling makes it impossible to meet public demand.

Students complete lower secondary school at approximately 16 years of age, by sitting for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary level examinations<sup>2</sup>. At the end of the two year higher secondary school, students sit for the London GCE Advanced level examination. Less than 1% of the country's population has been fortunate enough to receive university education (*Statistical Year Book of Maldives*, 2004).

In primary schools teaching is based on the locally designed National Curriculum, while the content of the secondary curriculum is based on the syllabuses of the GCE examinations. The large majority of primary schools and all secondary schools<sup>3</sup> follow immersion programmes where the medium of instruction for all school subjects (except Dhivehi and Islam) is English.

The MoE prescribes the textbooks to be used for each subject in each grade. Almost all secondary school textbooks are produced and imported from overseas. In many cases, the textbook is the only available resource for teachers (*Education for All*, 2000).

Schooling is provided by government, private and community sectors. While schooling is free in government schools, private and community schools charge a monthly fee and are relegated to a secondary status. There is also a strong sense of disparity between Malé schools and those in the atolls, with Malé schools offering a superior quality of education (*Education for All*, 2000). Until the mid 1990s, secondary schooling was offered only in Malé, which was – and still is – a major cause of internal migration (*Education for All*, 2000). Today, several schools throughout the country offer secondary education.

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<sup>2</sup> London EDEXCEL examinations until 2000; Cambridge International Examinations since 2001

<sup>3</sup> Except one secondary school which practises an Arabic immersion programme

The academic year runs from early January to late November and is divided into three terms. A strong emphasis is put on examinations. At secondary level, students' work during the term counts towards their continuous assessment score and at the end of each term, school examinations (prepared and marked within each school) are held. A proportion of the examination and continuous assessment marks of each term count towards the student's final grade at the end of each year. A student would need to pass in all compulsory subjects and achieve more than 40% on a combined average of all his subjects to be promoted to the next grade. If not, the student would need to repeat the next year in the same grade. The student would need to leave school if they fail to meet the promotion criteria for two consecutive years<sup>4</sup>.

The Maldives College of Higher Education, established in 1998, is the only tertiary institution in the country. The college offers a variety of vocational and diploma-level courses as well as a number of undergraduate degree programmes, including teacher education. Because of the lack of qualified professionals, much of the teaching in the college is arranged through costly franchise agreements with British, Australian and Canadian universities. There exists, for example, an undergraduate degree programme in collaboration with the University of Middlesex, England, where all materials are imported, including the curriculum, scheme of lectures, and lecturers.

### *Teachers and Teaching*

There is an acute shortage of qualified teachers in the Maldives. As a result a large percentage of teachers employed at the schools are untrained and/or temporary. In 2004, for example, more than 20% of the teachers in Malé schools were untrained. In schools outside Malé, almost 40% of the teachers did not have a teaching qualification. Of the teachers who had undergone pre-service teacher training, only a handful had a degree-level qualification. Furthermore, in some island schools, no trained teachers have ever been employed (*Statistical Year Book of Maldives*, 2004).

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<sup>4</sup> This practice was changed at the end of 2005. Students in primary and secondary schools are no longer required to repeat in the same grade even if they fail their examinations. However, the rule still applies to students progressing from primary to secondary school.

While a large number of primary teachers are trained locally, there is a great demand for trained secondary level teachers. Local teacher education courses aimed at training secondary teachers were initiated in 2003, including a three-year undergraduate degree programme in English Language Teaching, taught in collaboration with Macquarie University, Australia. Due to the lack of qualified local teachers, and especially teachers of English, the MoE recruits expatriate teachers, mainly from Sri Lanka and India.

English teachers at secondary level have a typical teaching load of three classes; each class comprising 30 students on average. With 5.25 hours of English lessons per week per class, each teacher would thus have a total of about 15.75 hours of teaching time spent in class every week – just over 50% of the time they spend at school. Outside school, teachers often provide private one-on-one tutoring to students who request additional help, at the expense of the students, in the students' own homes.

### *Professional Development*

Few opportunities for organised professional development are available for teachers. While many of the larger schools require teachers to meet weekly/fortnightly to plan lessons for the next week/fortnight, these are generally short (less than half an hour) and focus on the content to be taught rather than the methods of instruction. In-service development workshops are occasionally run by the MoE. These adopt a top-down approach where the focus of the workshops, the method of delivery, and indeed, the target school/teachers are chosen by the MoE. The workshops typically last between ½ - three days and are delivered in lecture format with a series of “theory sessions” on the topic in focus (*Inservice Teacher Training Programme*, 2003). Generally, no follow up sessions are conducted, and it is not known whether the sessions lead to any uptake on the part of the teachers. In fact, little systematic research has been to date carried out to investigate the teaching of English in the Maldives.

During the early 1990's, a need for strengthening and improving of practices related to teacher supervision was recognised (*Education for All*, 2000). The MoE created external supervision committees to receive feedback and information related to the teaching-learning process and these committees were comprised of educators with

experience in supervision. At the secondary level, a lack of resource materials resulted in teachers becoming largely dependent upon class textbooks for guidance. The geographical nature of the Maldives also results in many secondary school teachers living in isolation with few opportunities to meet other teachers. It is common for the smaller island community schools to have just one English teacher. In such cases, the only contact these teachers would have with other English teachers is usually when they visit other islands or attend workshops in Malé.

The establishment of Subject Teacher Committees in Malé schools by the MoE during the mid 1990s was seen as a means to provide knowledge sharing and professional development (*Inservice Teacher Training Programme*, 2003). The Subject Teacher Committees organise once-a-term meetings for themselves. These meetings focus on areas such as the development of teaching schemes, assessment and evaluation practices.

### *The Teaching of English*

At secondary level, students study four compulsory subjects (including English) and four more subjects of the student's choice. English periods comprise 20% of the total teaching time – a total of around 5.25 hours per week. A typical week of English lessons would include one reading comprehension activity, one piece of writing (usually based on the theme of the reading passage) and a variety of vocabulary and grammar exercises. Throughout the secondary grades, students are involved in activities that emulate the kind of tasks that they will need to complete in the final examination. Grammar is the only exception. Although it has come to be viewed as less crucial in recent years, grammar still remains a core focus of English lessons throughout the 12 years of schooling. Lessons revolve around teacher driven explanations of various grammar structures and isolated grammar exercises that typically consume at least an hour every week<sup>5</sup>. Teaching activities are almost solely

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<sup>5</sup>According to the English Head of Department at one Atoll Education Centre (personal communication, September 2003) teachers are “obsessed” with grammar, and grammar instruction takes up the large majority of the time allocated for teaching English. This dependence on grammar was confirmed by another Head of Department in a different school (personal communication, February 2004).

based on the textbooks which are recommended by the MoE<sup>6</sup> supplemented with additional grammar and vocabulary exercises from additional available resources. Other activity types and skills (including listening and speaking) that are not tested in the final examination do not generally feature in the lower secondary curriculum.

In addition to English lessons, students receive instruction in English for five other subjects (a total of 17 hours per week). Outside the school environment, English language films, books and other media are widely popular, in fact, more so than their Dhivehi counterparts. Despite this exposure to the language, students continue to be unsuccessful at attaining good grades in the Ordinary and Advanced level examinations, with less than 7% of students attaining a pass grade in English<sup>7</sup>.

### *Summary*

Several things become clear from the situation described above. First, teachers in Maldivian secondary schools may not have received any training; their lack of expertise is further hampered by the inadequate professional development activities. Second, teaching is entirely based on the examination. Third, compared with the amount of time dedicated to teaching English in schools, students attain unsatisfactory results in the examination. Thus there appears to be a need for organisational and instructional reform in order to introduce better practices and improve quality. It is believed that instructional improvement can be brought about through effective professional development programmes that will assist teachers to re-evaluate their existing beliefs and practices through reflection, and adopt improved approaches to teaching. The present study focuses on these issues by attempting to introduce new methods of grammar instruction through teachers' professional development, and assessing its impact on teachers' beliefs and practice.

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<sup>6</sup> For the past six years, Etherton, A. (1994) *General Certificate English*, Nelson; Etherton, A. (1995) *Target English*, Nelson; and Glover, R, G. Rodway, P. Shirley & H. Turner (2000) *The Cambridge Revision Guide: GCE O Level English*, CUP; have been the recommended textbooks for lower secondary level while Aspinall, T, A. Capel & K. Gude (1999) *Advanced Masterclass CAE*, OUP; has been used for higher secondary level.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Supervisor for National Assessment, Department of Public Examinations (personal communication, dated 9.1.2005).

# CHAPTER THREE

## Review of the Literature

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### *Introduction*

This study investigates L2 teachers' beliefs about and practice of grammar instruction, and explores the impact of school-based professional development on these beliefs and practices. The study thus brings together three main areas: the explicit instruction of L2 grammar, teachers' beliefs and the professional development of teachers. The review of the literature here will discuss previously published work from these three areas that are germane to the present study, and will draw on the research from mainstream education as well as from the field of L2 education<sup>8</sup>.

### *Teaching and Learning L2 Grammar*

With the evolution of language pedagogy, the role of explicit grammar instruction in the development of learners' interlanguage systems and target language competence has been persistently debated in L2 acquisition research. Several positions have been developed on the question of whether or not – and most importantly, how – grammar should be incorporated into the L2 curriculum. After decades of minimal attention to grammar under the Communicative Language Teaching movement (Richards and Rodgers 2001) when grammar instruction was seen to be ineffective – and sometimes even detrimental – for acquisition (Nassaji and Fotos 2004), recently there has been a resurgence of attention to grammar, with grammar once again being recognised as an “essential, inescapable component” of language learning (Burgess and Etherington 2002, p.433) .

Following Krashen's (1981) distinction between conscious learning and unconscious acquisition of language, it was claimed that language should be acquired through natural exposure, not learned through formal instruction. It was claimed that explicit grammar instruction would develop only a declarative knowledge of grammar, and

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<sup>8</sup> Literature searches were conducted both manually and electronically. The main bibliographic databases used were ERIC, Science Direct and JSTOR.

would not affect the procedural ability to apply grammar rules in language use (see Ellis 2001).

Current theories of L2 learning, however, suggest that an explicit knowledge of grammar is important in a number of respects. Such a knowledge of grammar allows learners to monitor their output, as well as trigger the essential process of noticing new structures in their language input. L2 acquisition theorists (e.g. Schmidt 1990) claim that two types of noticing are required for successful L2 acquisition: learners need to attend to the linguistic features of the language that they are exposed to if that input is to become uptake; and learners need to notice the gap between their own output and the target language system. It is through this process of noticing that implicit knowledge – the intuitive knowledge of grammar which enables the quick application of rules in communication – is acquired (Ellis 1994).

The benefits of explicit grammar instruction have been reported in a number of research studies over the past two decades (e.g. Long 1983; Ellis 1990; Long 1991; Ellis 1994; Ellis 2001; Ellis 2002). More recently, in a meta-analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies of instructed L2 acquisition published between 1980 and 1998, Norris & Ortega (2000) reported robust evidence to suggest that explicit instruction (i.e. when learners' attention is clearly directed to the form of the language) is significantly more effective than implicit instruction (i.e. where no attention is paid to form).

While evidence for the need for formal instruction has been established through such research studies, there is still some controversy regarding how and how much instruction is necessary. Ellis (2003), among others, argues that to achieve the goal of communicative competence, grammar and communication need to be integrated. He recommends that form-focused instruction and meaningful communication be combined through a task based communicative curriculum.

Several theoretical proposals have emerged which attempt to incorporate such instruction into the L2 curriculum. From these, a broad – albeit simplified – distinction is often made between deductive and inductive approaches (Thornbury 1999). Deductive approaches begin with the teacher explicitly stating the grammar

rule or pattern which the learners then apply. Inductive approaches do not start with the explicit presentation of the rule. Instead, learners are prompted in some way to discover the underlying patterns of the targeted structure and may possibly be required to formulate the rules that govern it. Deductive instruction therefore relates to rule driven instruction while inductive instruction relates to rule discovery through consciousness raising (Rutherford 1987). In the rest of this thesis, the terms “rule explanation” and “deductive instruction” will be used interchangeably. Similarly, the terms “inductive instruction”, “rule discovery” and “discovery approach” will be used interchangeably.

Rooted in Gestalt psychology (Orange 2002), a discovery approach allows learners to be intuitive, active thinkers and experience new understandings of the language through hands-on learning. It is potentially more motivating than simply being told a grammar rule (Ellis 2002). Learners appear to enjoy the analytic approach to language (Svalberg 2005) and the autonomy of working out rules without teacher intervention (Mohamed 2004). Because learners gain an understanding that is self discovered and meaningful, Bourke (1996) claims that this process would encourage effective retention of the new knowledge, and would foster deep rather than surface learning. A discovery approach to grammar instruction trains learners in the skills of noticing (Fotos 1993) and encourages hypothesis-testing (Bourke 1996) – two fundamental steps in the process of L2 acquisition. Furthermore, Ellis (2002) points out that a process of discovery can lead to powerful insights about the grammar of the language that may perhaps not be available in any linguistic description. Such insights, Ellis argues, may help learners to realise the conventional, as opposed to the logical, nature of grammar. Ellis (1997) identifies two further advantages a discovery approach has over a deductive one: it constitutes learner-training, helping learners to investigate language autonomously; and when designed as an interactive task, learners have the added benefit of communicating meaningfully in the target language while still attending to form.

Empirical research investigating the relative effectiveness of deductive and inductive methods of explicit grammar instruction has shown mixed results. Some studies showed that inductive instruction led to higher gains in learning (e.g. Shaffer 1989; Mohamed 2001) or increased levels of noticing (Fotos 1993) than did deductive

instruction. Others (e.g. Fotos and Ellis 1991; Sheen 1992; Robinson 1996) indicated that deductive instruction was more effective. Still others (e.g. Fotos 1994; Rosa and O'Neill 1999) found no significant differences between the effectiveness of these two types of instruction. Nevertheless, all studies reported that both forms of instruction led to significant gains in knowledge.

The present study is not directly concerned with investigating the relative effectiveness of these two types of instruction. Nevertheless, this distinction between deductive and inductive approaches is pertinent here, as the study attempted to promote inductive instruction among the teachers involved. These teachers were informed about the effectiveness of inductive instruction and were encouraged to adopt discovery tasks as one way in which grammar could be successfully taught.

## *Teachers' Beliefs*

### *The Nature of Beliefs*

Although described as the most valuable psychological construct to teacher education (Pintrich 1990), beliefs have been acknowledged as being notoriously difficult to define, with Pajares (1992, p.2) labelling them a “messy construct [that] travels in disguise and often under alias.” These aliases include “explicit propositions” (Nisbett and Ross 1980), “teachers’ subjectively reasonable beliefs” (Harootunian and Yarger 1981), “implicit theories” (Clark and Peterson 1986), “conceptions” (Ekeblad and Bond 1994), “personal theories” (Borg 1999), “personal pedagogical systems” (Borg 1998), “judgements” (Yero 2002) “untested assumptions” (Calderhead 1996), “perceptions” (Schulz 2001), “pedagogical principles” (Breen, Hird et al. 2001), “theories for practice” (Burns 1996), “images” (Golombek 1988) and “maxims” (Richards 1996).

As Clandinin & Connelly (1986) point out, this conceptual confusion has arisen as a result of defining identical terms in different ways and using different terms to describe similar concepts. Pajares (1992) explains that the main confusion with the concept revolves around the distinction between knowledge and belief. While knowledge can be equated with facts that are given and shared, beliefs may be contestable. Nespor (1987) maintains that while the two constructs are different in

many ways, and often conflict with each other, beliefs can be considered to be a form of knowledge. Comparing beliefs with knowledge, Nespor claims that while knowledge is conscious and often changes, beliefs may be unconsciously held, are often tacit and resistant to change. When they do change, “it is not argument or reason that alters them, but rather a conversion or gestalt shift” (Pajares, 1992, p.311).

Clark & Peterson (1986) agree that teachers’ theories and beliefs represent a rich store of knowledge, and argue that teachers make sense of their world and respond to it by forming a complex system of personal and professional knowledge. In referring to beliefs as personal knowledge, Kagan (1992) argues that much of a teacher’s professional knowledge can be more accurately regarded as belief. Kagan believes that as a teacher’s experience in the profession increases, this knowledge grows richer and more coherent and forms a highly personalised pedagogy or belief system that constrains the teacher’s perception, judgement and behaviour. Richards & Lockhart (1994) too maintain that beliefs are built up gradually over time. They argue that beliefs consist of both subjective and objective dimensions, and serve as the background to much of the teachers’ decision making and classroom actions. This argument is echoed by Pajares (1992, p. 311) who maintains that beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in “determining how individuals organise and define problems and are stronger predictors of behaviour.”

Whether a belief is held consciously or unconsciously, it is always accepted as true by the individual, and is “imbued with emotive commitment” (Borg 2001, p.186), serving further as a guide to thought and behaviour. Beliefs are formed early in life as a result of a person’s education and experience (Johnson 1994), and strong beliefs about learning and teaching are well established by the time a student completes schooling. This pervasive influence of the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie 1975) was evidenced in studies such as Powell (2002) and Calderhead & Robson (1991).

Past experience (either in learning or teaching) is not the only source from which beliefs may be derived. Other sources may include established practice, teachers’ personality factors, educational principles, research-based evidence, and principles derived from an approach or method (Richards and Lockhart 1994).

Studies of teacher beliefs reveal that teachers have beliefs about all aspects of their work. Calderhead (1996) argues that there are five main areas in which teachers have been found to hold significant beliefs – beliefs about learners and learning, teaching, subjects or curriculum, learning to teach, and about the self and the nature of teaching – and he notes that these five areas are closely related and may well be interconnected.

This argument is reflected in Richards' (1996) work on teachers' maxims, which he maintains are a set of rational principles that function as "rules for best behaviour" (p. 286) that develop as teachers' belief systems evolve. These maxims relate to all aspects of their teaching, including planning, maintaining order and discipline in the classroom, involving, encouraging and motivating learners, empowering learners, as well as maxims related to accuracy, efficiency and conformity. Richards maintains that maxims are the outcomes of teachers' evolving theories of teaching which "reflect teachers' individual philosophies of teaching, developed from their experience of teaching and learning, their teacher education experiences, and from their own personal beliefs and value systems" (p. 293).

The structure of teachers' beliefs is by no means uniform or simple. Beliefs appear to be interconnected and multi-faceted. Beliefs strongly influence both perception and behaviour, with Pajares (1992, p. 324) claiming that their filtering effect "ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing." Beliefs exist in connection to other beliefs and may in fact contradict one another (Breen, Hird et al. 2001), reflecting the complexity of belief systems. Green (1971, cited in Richardson 1996) suggests that people hold beliefs in clusters, with several belief clusters existing within a belief system of a person. He argues that there is little cross-fertilisation between clusters, with incompatible beliefs remaining side by side, unless these are examined for consistency. Clark & Peterson (1986) agree that they are complex and eclectic, and suggest that there are wide variations in teachers' belief systems even among those who are committed to the same educational practices. Abelson (1979, cited in Woods, 1996) describes a number of further characteristics of beliefs:

- they are non-consensual: everybody does not necessarily agree on the belief, and alternative beliefs around the same issue are accepted;

- they often involve the existence of abstract entities;
- they are evaluative: states are considered as being “good” or “bad”;
- they often include a high degree of episodic/anecdotal material;
- they have different degrees of strength: beliefs may range from strong to weak
- they have unclear boundaries and a high degree of overlap.

Based on these characteristics of beliefs in existing literature, a definition of teachers’ beliefs for this study can be established:

A teacher’s beliefs represent a complex, inter-related system of often tacitly held theories, values and assumptions that the teacher deems to be true, and which serve as cognitive filters that interpret new experiences and guide the teacher’s thoughts and behaviour.

### *Beliefs about Teaching and Learning*

Two main approaches prevail among teachers. One is based on behaviourist principles which claim that learning occurs as a result of stimulus in the environment through the passive transmission of information from one individual to another. The other is based on constructivist principles which argue that learning occurs when a learner actively constructs meaning from elements in the environment. This central idea behind constructivism, that human learning is constructed, that learners build new knowledge upon the foundations of previous learning, conflicts with the key tenet of behaviourism – that reception, rather than construction leads to learning (Hoover 1996).

In his study of 259 pre-service teachers, Klein (1996) found that behaviourism and constructivism are not represented as a dichotomy for teachers and that both paradigms are visible to some extent in many teachers. Similarly, in a study of in-service teachers involved in a staff development programme, Collinson (1996) found that though teachers may adopt various principles of behaviourism and constructivism, one of these paradigms was always more dominant. Thus while some teachers were concerned about the need to “cover the curriculum”, others were more interested in “integrating the curriculum” and “finding the kid’s level” (p. 11).

Such views about teaching and learning are in part related to the shared values and beliefs of the culture that the teachers belong to (Kennedy and Kennedy 1998). Following the work of Hofstede (1991), Kennedy & Kennedy (1998) describe how national cultures and behaviours can affect pedagogic beliefs and classroom cultures. For example, a distinction is made between countries with large power distance measures (where power is concentrated in the hands of a few) and small power distance measures (where power is less hierarchical and more decentralised). They argue that in cultures with large power distance, a transmission view of education (Barnes 1976) is most likely to be upheld with beliefs that the teacher should be in authority, in control of the classroom dynamics, and in control of the knowledge. In contrast, in cultures at the other end of the continuum, the power distribution in the classroom would be different, with the teacher playing a facilitative rather the authoritative role.

### *Challenging Beliefs*

The theme of challenging existing beliefs is a recurrent one in the teacher cognition literature. Pajares (1992) argues that unless beliefs are deliberately challenged, they may endure unaltered. He explains that beliefs are unlikely to be replaced unless they prove unsatisfactory, and that they are unlikely to be proven unsatisfactory unless they are challenged. Even when challenged, changing belief systems remains difficult due to their static nature. Pajares explains why beliefs are so resistant to change:

[Beliefs] help individuals to identify with one another and form groups and social systems. On a social and cultural level, they provide elements of structure, order, direction and shared values. From both a personal and socio/cultural perspective, belief systems reduce dissonance and confusion, even when dissonance is logically justified by the inconsistent beliefs one holds. This is one reason why they acquire emotional dimensions and resist change. People grow comfortable with their beliefs, and these beliefs become their “self” so that individuals come to be identified and understood by the very nature of the beliefs, the habits they own (p. 317).

Yero (2002) compares changing an old established belief to trying to open a window that has been painted shut. It requires a great deal of prying, poking and prodding

before it will loosen and break free from the frame. This is because of the comfort of established habit that provides consistency and stability in people's lives. Thus they are unwilling to part with that sense of identity, as changing beliefs is tantamount to changing who they are as individuals. This resistance to change has been shown by a number of studies (e.g. Kagan 1992).

Nisbett & Ross (1980) propose that some beliefs may be more resistant to change than others. They suggest that the earlier a belief is incorporated into a person's belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter, since such beliefs affect perception and strongly influence the processing of new information. Thus with time, early beliefs become more and more robust, resulting in what they call "the perseverance phenomena of theory maintenance." Woods (1996) suggests that the more central the belief and the more tightly interconnected it is with other beliefs, the more difficult it will be to change it. Due to this interconnected network of beliefs, it will be almost impossible for a teacher to change one belief without affecting others. For teachers to shift their beliefs to accommodate new ones would require them to develop new practices and to abandon well-established and seemingly successful practices. Because of the personal nature of belief systems, Woods states that the process of changing beliefs can lead to disorientation and frustration, and therefore change should only be encouraged, not mandated.

Before teachers can be expected to change their beliefs, they need to first be made aware of them (Crandall 2000), as beliefs may be held unconsciously. Williams and Burden (1997) affirm that teacher beliefs play an important role in the teaching-learning process and that, for this reason, teachers must understand their own beliefs, theories or philosophy. They argue that teachers must maintain a continuous process of personal reflection and that it is by becoming aware of their beliefs that they come to understand their own implicit theories and the ways these theories influence their professional practice. They explain:

Teachers' beliefs about what learning is will affect everything they do in the classroom, whether these beliefs are implicit or explicit. Even if a teacher acts spontaneously, or from habit without thinking about the action, such actions are nevertheless prompted by a deep-rooted belief that may never have been articulated or made explicit. If the teacher-as-educator is one who is constantly

re-evaluating in the light of new knowledge his or her beliefs about language, or about how language is learned, or about education as a whole, then it is crucial that teachers first understand and articulate their own theoretical perspectives (p. 56).

Richards (1996) calls for teacher education programmes to help teachers articulate their beliefs and use them to reflect on their teaching. It is only when teachers become aware of their own tacitly held beliefs and their routinised practice that connections can be made between them. Then, when confronted with change, teachers can re-evaluate their beliefs and adopt new practices. Dwyer, Ringstaff, & Sandholtz (1991) maintain that it is only by changing existing beliefs that instructional change can take place. Instructional change, Nespor (1987) argues, is not a matter of simply abandoning existing beliefs, but of gradually replacing them with more relevant beliefs.

### *Teachers' Knowledge*

Like any other professional domain, teaching is based on a wide base of specialised knowledge. An expert understanding of the subject alone is insufficient to be able to teach successfully. In fact, the link between subject knowledge and effective teaching may be less direct where L2 instruction is concerned (Borg 2006). To foster understanding in their students, teachers need to know, among other things, ways of representing the knowledge so that the students are more likely to grasp it.

Subject matter knowledge is only one of the several components of knowledge that Shulman (1986) and Wilson, Shulman, & Richert (1987) identify as being necessary for effective teaching. These components include:

- Subject matter knowledge – knowledge of the subject being taught. In the case of L2 teachers, this includes the teacher's proficiency in the target language, the degree of knowledge the teacher has about the formal properties of the language such as its grammar, the culture of the L2 community as well as an understanding of applied linguistics and curriculum development.

- General pedagogical knowledge – knowledge of pedagogical principles and skills in using techniques and strategies that are not subject-specific, including aspects of classroom management and discipline.
- Pedagogical content knowledge – specific knowledge of how to teach a particular topic or content area in a particular subject domain. In other words, the methodological options available to the teacher. It is this area of teachers' knowledge that this study mainly aims to affect by broadening teachers' awareness of instructional strategies that could be applied to the teaching of grammar by considering current theories of how languages are learnt.
- Curriculum knowledge – knowledge about the particular materials used by the teacher. Often changes in curricula, such as new textbooks, call for the reorientation of teachers' thinking.
- Knowledge of educational aims, goals and purposes.
- Knowledge of learners – awareness about and familiarity with one's own students, their learning strategies, problems and needs in learning in order to know how to cater for all learners' individual differences. If the goal of teaching is to promote learning, teachers need to be aware of the centrality of learners and how teacher behaviour will affect individual learners (Randall and Thornton 2001).
- Knowledge of learning – theoretical knowledge of learning, including an understanding of the physical, social, psychological and cognitive development of students. Freeman (2001) identifies that this is an area that has been often neglected in L2 teacher education where the knowledge of the subject matter appears to have been central. This study attempts to increase teachers' understanding of how students learn grammar, raising awareness about how learning occurs as students progress through various stages of noticing, hypothesis testing and interlanguage development.

Examining the knowledge base of L2 teachers, Richards (1996) identifies two different domains of knowledge that influence teachers' understanding and practice of teaching. One domain of knowledge relates to subject matter and curricular issues and how the content of the lesson can be presented in an effective and coherent way; while the other relates to the teacher's philosophy of teaching and the teacher's understanding of what constitutes good teaching. It is this personal perspective which guides, monitors and changes teachers' practical actions in the classroom.

Classrooms are busy places where teachers may face simultaneous, often unpredictable, competing situations. In such classroom settings, Calderhead (1987) argues, there is little opportunity to reflect and analyse the situation in the light of the teachers' knowledge as responses are often required immediately and intuitively. He points out that such intuitive skills are gained through repeated cycles of practice and reflection upon practice, but that teachers may not always be able to verbalise this knowledge.

Eraut (1994) too recognises that due to the quick nature in which teachers make professional judgements, they acquire tacit knowledge of how to teach, knowledge which cannot be easily explained to either others or to oneself. He refers to what teachers ultimately learn through experience as "skilled behaviour," describing it as a "complex series of actions which has become so routinised through practice and experience that it is performed almost automatically" (p.111). Prabhu (1990), too, refers to the dangers of routinisation or mechanical teaching; teaching without being aware of the implications of instructional behaviour.

One explanation for why teachers become unaware of their instructional behaviour is the difference between teachers' espoused theories and theories in use. Argyris and Schon (1974, p. 6-7) describe how teachers' espoused theories and theories in use exist side by side:

When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories.

### *Research on Beliefs of L2 Teachers*

While much can be gained from research on teacher beliefs in mainstream education, it is necessary to establish a similar research base that is unique to L2 education. Such explorations are necessary not only to understand how L2 teachers' thinking,

decisions and planning affect their classroom practices, but are also essential, as Johnson (1994) notes, if L2 teacher education programmes are to integrate information about the cognitive dimension of L2 teaching into the content of teacher education programmes.

It has been only relatively recently that L2 education researchers began to recognise the importance of exploring the cognitive dimensions of teachers' thoughts, attitudes and decisions, and how they may affect the nature of instruction (e.g. Freeman 1989; Johnson 1990). Research on L2 teacher cognition started to appear in the 1990s, the number of studies increasing towards the end of the decade, and continuing to do so in the new millennium. In his review of research on language teacher cognition, Borg (2003) notes that between 1976 and 2002, 64 studies have been published in this field. Most of the research does not examine teacher cognition in relation to a specific curricular area, but focuses on more general processes such as knowledge growth and change or planning and decision making.

In terms of research design, data collection methods and the number of teachers involved, the studies are diverse. Many (e.g. Johnson 1996; Borg 1998) provide detailed case studies of individual teachers while others (e.g. Richards, Tung et al. 1992; Peacock 2001) report on large scale surveys of teachers' beliefs. Methods of data collection utilised in these studies include questionnaires (e.g. MacDonald, Badger et al. 2001), teachers' retrospective commentaries on their instructional decisions (e.g. Farrell 1999), repertory grid data (e.g. Sendan and Roberts 1998), video based stimulated recall (e.g. Woods, 1996), interviews (e.g. Borg 2001) and classroom observations of teacher's practices (e.g. Borg 1999).

Several themes can be identified in this body of research. Three of these, which relate to the present study, will be dealt with in this review: (a) beliefs in relation to classroom practice; (b) beliefs in relation to teacher education; and (c) beliefs in relation to the teaching and learning of grammar.

Teachers' beliefs in relation to classroom practice is by far the most researched theme in L2 teacher cognition research. A particular focus of this theme has been on teachers' decision making. Gatbonton's (1999) study, relating to the patterns of

pedagogical knowledge of seven experienced ESL teachers in the USA, revealed that teachers' thoughts and decisions related largely to language concerns (such as explaining new vocabulary and creating contexts for meaningful language use). In contrast, Nunan's (1992) study of the interactive decisions of nine ESL teachers in Australia found that teachers' decisions related little to language concerns. Issues of classroom management such as the pacing and timing of lessons, the amount of teacher talk and the quality of their instructions and explanations to the students appeared to be more of a concern for the teachers in this study. The difference between the results of the two studies – perhaps explained by the difference in teaching context – draws attention to the varied nature of teachers' instructional decisions and the extent to which teachers can differ in making such decisions.

Several studies have highlighted the impact of social, psychological and environmental factors such as school requirements, society's expectations, state policies, mandated curriculum, the practice of peers, workload and the availability of resources that have affected teachers' practice in the classroom. Such external factors were seen to play a key role in teachers' decisions, planning and instructional content for the six ESL teachers of beginning adult migrants in Burns' (1996) study. Focusing on the relationships between the classroom practice of three novice ESL teachers in Canada and the pedagogical knowledge they obtained during teacher education, Spada & Massey (1992) found that such contextual factors may have been responsible for the differences between teachers' principles and practices. Crookes & Arakaki (1999) discovered that difficult conditions and heavy workloads had a powerful impact on the pedagogical decisions that teachers made. Teachers in their study who worked approximately 50 hours a week were seen to opt for instructional practices that were suitable for the context, even if this was at the expense of conflicting with the teachers' beliefs. Johnson (1996) also reports on a preservice teacher on a practicum who struggled with contextual demands that were incompatible with her own beliefs about teaching. Richards and Pennington (1998) describe how a group of first year teachers in Hong Kong attempted – without success – to implement communicative principles by fighting against peer pressure to conform, large classes, unmotivated students, examination pressures and resistance to new ways of learning.

The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices has been highlighted in several studies. Woods (1996), identified 'hotspots' in the data from the eight case studies of teachers in Canada, which eventually came to be resolved through experience and expertise, indicating the evolving nature of teachers' beliefs assumptions and knowledge (BAK) over time. Woods claims that

each teacher has an individual system of interwoven beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, a system which has evolved in an individual and organic fashion when aspects of that teacher's BAK have interacted with experience, especially experiences that resulted in a conflict with the BAK's current state (p. 248).

A study by Breen et al (2001) also illuminates the complex relationship between beliefs and practice. This study involved observations and elicitation procedures, at both an individual and group level, between the practices and principles of eighteen teachers in Australia. They found that although at an individual level teachers have unique configurations of practices and principles, at a group level, several pedagogical principles were identified as common to all teachers. For example, while all teachers believed in the need to cater to individual differences in students, the way in which the teachers applied this principle was different, with some teachers providing different levels of worksheets while others provided both oral and visual input and still assessed students individually when they were ready.

In a more recent study, Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis (2004) found evidence of incongruence between L2 teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices related to form-focused instruction. These inconsistencies related mainly to when it was appropriate to focus on form during a meaning-focused lesson, and the type of error correction techniques to be employed. Basturkmen et al indicate that it may be better to view the stated beliefs of teachers to be "potentially conflictual rather than inherently inconsistent" (p. 268), suggesting that the differences between beliefs and practices are challenges that teachers need to resolve. This follows from several reports of incongruence between teachers' stated beliefs and observed (or reported) practices in mainstream education (see Fang 1996). As Fang notes, such inconsistencies are not unexpected due to the demands and complexities of classroom

life which constrain teachers' abilities to provide instruction that aligns perfectly with their beliefs.

As shown by research in mainstream education, student teachers have strong, though naïve, beliefs about learning and teaching even before they begin formal teacher education. This finding is confirmed in L2 research in studies such as Brown and McGannon (1998, cited in Borg, 2003). The questionnaire responses of the 35 trainee teachers in an Australian university involved in the study revealed their beliefs that language learning occurred mainly through imitation and that errors were mainly due to interference from the first language. Freeman (2001) recognises that because such knowledge is internal, it is difficult to describe it and the forms it may take, and even more challenging to influence or reshape it. One way of influencing this prior knowledge, he points out, is to integrate trainees' autobiographies into coursework so that their prior learning and the influences on it can become articulated and understood.

Despite Kagan's (1992) much quoted finding that teacher education has no significant impact on teachers' beliefs, several studies in the L2 field report that teacher education does impact teacher cognition. Richards, Ho, & Giblin (1996) who studied five trainees on a certificate level course in Hong Kong found five types of changes: (1) teachers' perceptions of their roles in the classroom, (2) their knowledge of professional discourse, (3) their attention to achieving continuity between lessons, (4) common dimensions of the teaching they found problematic and (5) the way in which they assessed their own teaching. Richards et al. note that such changes, however, are not homogenous. Variations exist among student teachers in the extent to which they accept and/or practise the principles of the teacher education programmes.

Almarza (1996) too found variability in the way a teacher education programme at a British university impacted on four trainee's beliefs. Freeman's (1993) longitudinal study of four high school French and Spanish teachers in the USA reported how a master's degree impacted on in-service teachers' beliefs with some evidence of behavioural change.

Sendan & Roberts (1998) and Cabaroglu & Roberts (2000) provide further evidence of the positive effects of teacher education on trainees' beliefs. Sendan & Roberts (1998) report on how over the course of 15 months a trainee's personal theories of effective teaching had altered, by the addition of constructs to his existing belief system and the reorganisation of existing constructs. Cabaroglu & Roberts (2000) used a sequence of three in-depth interviews to analyse the processes of belief development in 20 PGCE Modern Languages students in Britain. They found that only one trainee's beliefs remained unchanged during the programme, and attribute the success of belief change to getting the trainees to confront their pre-existing beliefs early on in the programme.

MacDonald, Badger & White (2001) used questionnaires to investigate if belief changes had occurred in 55 undergraduate and postgraduate students following a course in L2 acquisition research and theory that was part of the TESOL programme they were following. They concluded that some change had occurred, with the students' beliefs seen to move from a behaviourist model of learning to one that was "either Krashenite ... or broadly cognitive" in orientation (p. 958). However they recognised that the students were either unaware of the changes that were taking place, or undervalued their significance. Additionally, it can also be argued that the participants' altered responses to the second questionnaire may not necessarily indicate a genuine change in beliefs. It is possible that they were trying to show their understanding of the TESOL course by responding in the way they felt was expected of them, so as to indicate a gain in knowledge about L2 acquisition.

In contrast to the above studies, Peacock's (2001) longitudinal study found evidence of the stability of beliefs over time, with key beliefs remaining unchanged even after training. The study found that after three years' of preservice training, the beliefs of the 146 trainees involved had changed 'very little', with 'far too many' of them still believing that learning an L2 meant 'learning a lot of vocabulary and grammar rules' (p. 186). This finding led Peacock to theorise that detrimental beliefs are more likely to resist change.

Several studies have examined teacher's beliefs about teaching grammar. While some studies have involved written data from reflective writing tasks (e.g. Farrell 1999), the

main method of study in this area has been through questionnaire surveys (e.g. Schulz 2001). Fewer studies have investigated the relationship between beliefs and actual practice by observing classroom teaching followed by discussions with the teachers afterwards (e.g. Borg 1999).

Culture and context appear to influence teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar, as evidenced in Eisenstein, Ebsworth & Schweers' (1997) study of 60 university teachers of ESL in the USA and Puerto Rico. They found that although the majority of teachers felt that grammar instruction did have a role to play in the L2 classroom, Puerto Rican teachers appeared to be more in favour of conscious instruction than their counterparts in the USA. While student expectations, tradition and syllabus requirements all shaped their beliefs and practices, prior learning and professional experiences were by far the strongest influence. Burgess & Etherington (2002) also report that university teachers of English for Academic Purposes displayed positive attitudes towards explicit teaching of grammar to their students. The teachers felt that their students expected and welcomed this approach. This is in contrast to Schulz's (2001) findings based on the questionnaire responses of 607 Columbian foreign language students and their 122 teachers as well as the 824 US foreign language students and 92 teachers. Schultz's study indicated that while a large number of students liked grammar and believed it necessary for eventual mastery of the language, a relatively small number of teachers agreed with these views.

Johnston & Goettsch's (2000) study of ESL teachers showed that teachers' beliefs about how learners learn affect the instructional decisions they take. Grammatical rules did not feature prominently in the instructional practices of any of the teachers in this study because rule explanation was not seen to be particularly effective for learning to occur; rather, the teachers placed much more emphasis on using examples that illustrated the grammar point being discussed. Furthermore, the teachers encouraged student-initiated discussions and language analysis, due to the strong belief that the teachers had regarding the need for students to be actively involved in the learning process.

Borg's (Borg 1998; Borg 1998; Borg 1999; Borg 1999; Borg 1999; Borg 2001) in-depth case studies of EFL teachers in private language schools in Malta provide key

insights into how teachers' beliefs about grammar affect their practices. Differences were highlighted between teachers' beliefs and practices. For example, teachers were seen to provide explicit grammar instruction even when they did not believe that it would be successful or effective in promoting learning (Borg 1998). Teachers were seen to be eclectic in their choice of teaching approach, and an individual teacher may adopt principles of contradictory approaches in her teaching (Borg 1999). This reflects the findings from mainstream educational research where teachers were found to use both behaviourist and constructivist teaching approaches. Borg (1999) also explored the role of teachers' knowledge of grammatical terminology or metalanguage in shaping their instructional decisions. Teachers' confidence of their own knowledge appeared to be a key factor. He describes how a teacher who was confident of his own knowledge of metalanguage was willing to do unplanned impromptu grammar lessons, based on students' questions for clarification. A less confident teacher was seen to rarely conduct grammar work, and in fact never did so, unless he was fully prepared.

This review of the research has highlighted the complex cognitive dimension of teachers' beliefs and has shed light on the intricate relationship between beliefs and practice. Such an understanding helps us to see teachers not as simply implementers of a curriculum, but as practitioners whose knowledge, thoughts, beliefs and behaviour interact in complex ways.

The existing research on L2 teacher beliefs has been limited in several ways. In terms of context, much of the research has been conducted in Western or developed countries with mainly native speaking teachers of the target language teaching small groups of motivated adult learners in either private language schools or at university level. As English is taught by far more non-native speakers than their native speaking counterparts (Lin 1999), and as there are more EFL learners than ESL learners (Graddol 1997), the existing research is not fully representative of the large majority of language teaching settings across the world. Due to such contextual gaps in the literature, Borg (2003) asserts there is an imperative need for research into the beliefs of teachers in other less developed, non-Western contexts, who are non-native speakers of the target language. He also notes that little has been researched about the beliefs of teachers who teach a prescribed curriculum to students in state school

settings in large classes of mixed ability learners who are not necessarily learning the language out of choice.

The studies that examined teacher change as a result of training focused mainly on pre-service teachers enrolled in initial teacher training courses such as the British Post Graduate Certificate of Education (e.g. Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000). A few studies involved in-service teacher education, but these were limited to practising teachers following a university master's degree course (e.g. Freeman 1993). Another form of in-service teacher development is school-based in-house professional development, which is especially common in less developed, non-Western contexts. A search of the literature revealed that no studies in the L2 education field have investigated the cognitive and behavioural changes that arise as a result of such less formal professional development activities.

Furthermore, much of the research on beliefs has focused only on self reported beliefs through questionnaires and interviews, with only a few studies investigating whether these beliefs are put into practice in the classroom. Similarly, analyses of belief change have focused on mainly cognitive change, measured through questionnaires and interviews. Self report instruments on their own cannot always be expected to provide a realistic picture of what teachers really believe and how they truly behave in their teaching situations. If change is to be adequately measured, it is essential, as Borg (2003) notes, that behavioural as well as cognitive change is investigated as one kind of change does not guarantee changes in the other.

It also needs to be noted that while teacher cognition research describes the cognitive aspects of teachers, the implications of its findings for teacher training and development have been often neglected (Borg, 2003). Consideration needs to be given to how the findings of such studies can be utilised in teacher education programmes, so as to make the best use of the research.

### *The Professional Development of Teachers*

As this study is concerned with the professional development of practising L2 teachers, the literature on teacher education reviewed here will focus on the

professional development of in-service teachers, and particularly that of L2 teachers. It discusses the issue of teacher learning; explores the concept of teacher change, drawing to some extent on the literature on innovation; and addresses the question of what makes a teacher development programme successful in creating learning conditions and bringing about desirable change. Since this study is concerned with assessing the effects of a teacher development project, this section will conclude by briefly examining ways in which professional development programmes can be evaluated.

In the teacher education literature, a differentiation is often made between teacher training and teacher development (see for example Freeman 2001; Richards and Farrell 2005). The definition of teacher development that will be adopted here is borrowed from Lange (1990, p. 250) who describes it as a “process of continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers” which is vital for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teachers and learning experiences. In the rest of this thesis, the terms teacher development and professional development will be used interchangeably to refer to this process of learning and growth that practising teachers continually engage in.

### *Teacher Learning*

Crookes (1997) asserts that in most countries, school cultures are not conducive to the concept of teacher learning schools:

Schools are *not* seen as sites of knowledge creation, they are *not* learning organisations, and teachers are *not* supported in professional development activities that will truly result in professional development (p. 71).

He argues that most school systems see teachers as all-knowing, with a strong hierarchical relationship between student and teacher and a conception of knowledge as “out there” independent of social conditions and arising apparently independent of the power relations within society. Teachers are

constructed into this model of teaching and knowing. They are unlikely to move out of it by themselves. ... In the absence of a sufficient mass of like minded individuals schools are not usually sites where the values of

experienced teachers could diverge from the status quo and as for new teachers, there is evidence that the school resocialises them to fit the school's own, usually more conservative views (p. 74).

In contexts like these, the notion of teacher as learner is likely to be a challenging one as many would regard it as a threat to the teacher's expertise.

The concept of teacher learning is a new one in the field of L2 teacher education (Freeman and Johnson 1998), but one that deserves more attention and exploration (Freeman 2001). Richards & Farrell (2005) describe four different conceptualisations of teacher learning: teacher learning as skill learning; as a cognitive process, as personal construction and as reflective practice. The first of these conceptualisations views teacher learning as the "development of a range of different skills or competencies, mastery of which underlies successful teaching" (p. 6). This suggests that one can learn to teach by mastering one discrete skill (e.g. presenting new grammar structures) at a time.

The second conceptualisation of teacher learning as a cognitive process takes into account teachers' thinking and beliefs and how they influence teaching and learning. Teacher development programmes that uphold this view would engage teachers in exploring their cognitions with reference to classroom practice.

The view of teacher learning as personal construction is based on the constructivist educational philosophy which regards learning as the reorganisation and relearning of one's prior representations of knowledge (Roberts 1998). New learning is incorporated into the existing mental schema "not as a model or as a 'bolt-on' additional bit of content, but as an experience which we select from and then construe in our own way" (p. 24). Such a view of teacher learning highlights the personality and individuality of each teacher, with developmental activities focusing on self awareness and personal interpretation.

Teacher learning as reflective practice projects the view that teachers learn through focused reflection on teaching experiences. The concept of reflective teaching has received much attention in the teacher development literature (see for example Schon

1991; Wallace 1991; Richards and Lockhart 1994) and has popularised the need for critical self reflection through such procedures as journal writing and action research. Lange (1990) draws attention to the intimate relationship between teacher development and teacher reflection in claiming that:

The reflective process allows developing teachers latitude to experiment within a framework of growing knowledge and experience. It gives them the opportunity to examine their relations with students, their values, their abilities, and their success and failures in a realistic context. It begins the developing teacher's path toward becoming an expert teacher (p. 249 – 250).

Richards & Farrell (2005, p. 7) define reflection as “the process of critical examination of experiences, a process that can lead to a better understanding of one's practices and routines.” Pennington (1992) too stresses the need for reflection in teaching, claiming that it impacts not only on teachers' knowledge and skills, but also teacher attitude, as well as learners and their attitude to learning.

Teachers can engage in learning in a number of formal and informal ways (Bransford, Brown et al. 1999; Richards and Farrell 2005). First, they gain new knowledge and understanding of their students, schools, curriculum, and instructional methods through their own practice. This may include conscious, planned learning strategies such as self-monitoring, action research, and reflective journals; or learning may arise unconsciously as a result of everyday experiences. Learning also occurs through interactions between teachers. This may include formal mentoring schemes, informal conversations in the staffroom, peer collaborations such as peer coaching, action research and team teaching. Teachers also learn through formal teacher development programmes including teacher support/study groups, working with a teacher education consultant, and workshops organised by the teaching institution. Many practising teachers also engage in learning through graduate programmes at universities. Finally, Bransford et al. (1999) note that teachers also learn about teaching in ways divorced from the professional environment, for instance through their roles as parents or coaches and involvement in youth-related community activities.

The table below, reproduced from Richards & Farrell (2005, p. 14), illustrates some of the different options available for teachers. The present study will utilise several of these choices including workshops and peer coaching.

**Table 1.** *Activities for Teacher Learning.*

Individual	One-to-one	Group-based	Institutional
Self-monitoring	Peer coaching	Case studies	Workshops
Journal writing	Peer observation	Action research	Action research
Critical incidents	Critical friendships	Journal writing	Teacher support
Teaching portfolios	Action research	Teacher support	groups
Action research	Critical incidents	groups	
	Team teaching		

*Note.* From *The Professional Development of Language Teachers* (p.14), by Richards & Farrell, 2005.

### *Workshops.*

Workshops, which are one of the most common and useful forms of professional development activities for teachers (Richards, Gallo et al. 2001), are intensive short-term learning opportunities that are designed to allow teachers to attain specific knowledge and skills which they can later apply in their classrooms (Richards and Farrell 2005). Workshops can be beneficial in a number of ways: they can provide input from experts, provide teachers with the opportunity for hands-on experience with the topic, raise motivation, offer practical classroom applications, develop collegiality, support innovations and are flexible in organisation. Richards and Farrell recognise that workshops are ideal formats for introducing an educational innovation and preparing teachers for the change.

### *Peer coaching.*

Robbins (1991, cited in Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 143) defines peer coaching as:

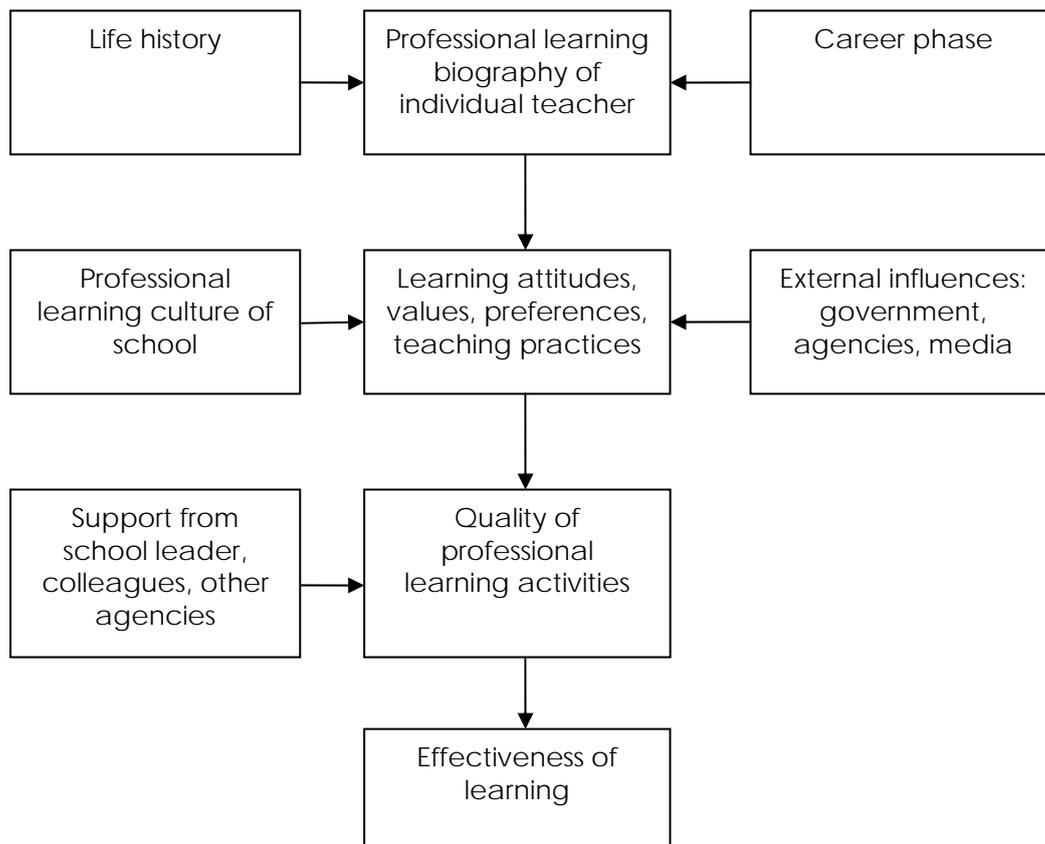
A confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices, expand, refine, and build new skills, share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace.

It is thus a learning situation that arises through the collaboration between two colleagues, with one adopting the role of coach as they explore a particular aspect of instructional practice. The coach would provide feedback and suggestions to the other teacher, depending on the goals established between them from the outset.



Teachers who engage in learning do so for different reasons, and the resulting experiences are likely to be independently defined. Constructivist learning theory suggests that learning is an individual process of knowledge construction and building, with each individual learning different things in different ways even when provided with similar learning experiences (Williams and Burden 1997). Day (1999) identifies several interconnected factors that contribute to the quality of learning that teachers are likely to experience (see Fig. 1 below) including their own life histories, previous learning experiences, career phase and the learning culture of the school. It should therefore not be expected that professional development opportunities will create the same or similar outcomes for all teachers involved.

**Figure 1.** Factors Contributing to Quality of Learning.



Note. From *Developing Teachers: The Challenges of Lifelong Learning*, (p.4) by Day, 1999.

### *Professional Development as a Continuing Process*

Freeman (2001) describes how teacher education in the past was premised on the notion that it involved the transference of knowledge about teaching, with little attention devoted to how teachers build their own understandings of teaching through the integration of theory, research, opinion, experience and cognition. Teacher learning is now regarded as an essential process that should be on-going and lifelong. As Underhill (1999, p. 17) put it, “it is the process of becoming the best teacher one is able to be; a process that can be started but never finished.”

Pennington (1992, p.50) explains that teacher development implies “evolution from one state into a more advanced state” connoting “growth, a target to aim for, and progress in achieving aims.” This notion of lifelong learning for teachers has been emphasised by several authors (see for example Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991; Schon 1991). The reasoning behind this on-going learning is not because teachers need to

“repair a personal inadequacy” (Jackson 1974, cited in Clarke and Hollingsworth 2002, p.948), but as a quest for “greater fulfilment as a practitioner of the art” (p. 948). Pennington (1990) recognises that career growth is an important ongoing goal of teaching professionals. But if such a goal is to be achieved, she argues that teacher education programmes must not only transmit knowledge, but also engender favourable attitudes to growth and change among teachers.

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002, p. 948) identify six perspectives on teacher change:

- Change as training – change is something that is done to teachers; that is, teachers are “changed”.
- Change as adaptation – teachers “change” in response to something; they adapt their practices to changed conditions.
- Change as personal development – teachers “seek to change” in an attempt to improve their performance or develop additional skills or strategies.
- Change for local reform – teachers “change something” for reasons of personal growth.
- Change as systematic restructuring – teachers enact the “change policies” of the system.
- Change as growth or learning – “teachers change inevitably through professional activity”; teachers are themselves learners who work in a learning community.

While these six perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and are in fact closely related, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) recognise that current theoretical approaches to professional development of teachers align most closely with the “change as growth or learning” perspective.

Freeman (1989) identifies four features of teacher change. First, he notes that change does not exclusively imply that something is done differently, but may in fact refer simply to a change in awareness. Second, change may not occur immediately, or completely. In fact, change often occurs gradually, and over time. Third, change may or may not be directly observable or quantifiable. If, for example, a teacher has adopted a range of different techniques of error correction, these different techniques can be observed and quantified. However, it will be less possible to directly observe whether this behavioural change corresponds to an internal shift in the teacher’s

attitude to error correction. Finally, Freeman points out that while some types of change may lead to closure, other types are open ended and lead to increasing experimentation, and thereby encourage further change.

Like others cited above, Bailey (1992) too believes that change is central to teacher development. She argues however, that change alone is not enough. What is more important, Bailey points out, is the kind of change that takes place. Rather than mere change, she argues that it is important to bring about innovation.

### *Change vs. Innovation*

Nicholls (1983, p.4) defines innovation as “an idea, object or practice perceived as new by an individual or individuals, which is intended to bring about improvement in relation to desired objectives, which is fundamental in nature, and which is planned and deliberate.” Thus, he identifies three aspects which distinguish innovation from change: where change may involve a reordering of existing patterns, innovation implies newness; where change may be positive or negative, innovation refers to a fundamental positive improvement, and where change may be planned or unplanned, innovation is essentially the result of deliberate planning.

Innovation however is not synonymous with excellence. As Hamilton (1996) recognises, a teacher may be an excellent teacher, without being an innovative one. One might thus ask why there is the need for innovation if it does not create excellence. The difference between the innovative teacher and the excellent teacher becomes more apparent in the long run. In the long run, Hamilton claims that the innovative teacher outvalues the excellent teacher because “innovation is a driving force which enhances a career and makes it constantly self-renewing and worthwhile. Excellence per se may be a dead-end” (p. 8).

Karavas-Doukas (1998, p.28) notes that innovations involve changes at three levels:

1. change or revision of teaching materials, syllabi or curricula
2. changes in teacher behaviour, e.g. new techniques, approaches or activities
3. changes in beliefs and principles underlying the new materials or approaches.

If the innovation is to have an effect in the classroom and ultimately on students' learning, changes must occur at all three levels.

For innovations to occur, be adopted permanently and become the status quo, several conditions are necessary. Following Kelly (1980), Rogers (1983) and Stoller (1994), Ellis (1997) identifies ten principal ones. These are listed and defined in the following table, reproduced from Ellis (p. 29).

**Table 2. Attributes of Innovation**

Attribute	Definition
Initial dissatisfaction	The level of dissatisfaction that teachers experience with some aspect of their existing teaching.
Feasibility	The extent to which the innovation is seen as implementable given the conditions in which teachers work.
Acceptability	The extent to which the innovation is seen as compatible with teachers' existing style and ideology.
Relevance	The extent to which the innovation is viewed as matching the needs of the teachers' students.
Complexity	The extent to which the innovation is difficult or easy to grasp.
Explicitness	The extent to which the rationale for the innovation is clear and convincing.
Triability	The extent to which the innovation can be easily tried out in stages.
Observability	The extent to which the results of the innovation are visible to others.
Originality	The extent to which the teachers are required to demonstrate a high level of originality in order to implement the innovation (e.g. by preparing special materials).
Ownership	The extent to which teachers come to feel that they "possess" the innovation.

*Note.* From *SLA Research and Language Teaching* (p.29) by Ellis, 1997.

First, there needs to be an initial dissatisfaction with the existing situation and the participants involved in the process must recognise a need for change. This need must be recognised at all levels of the system: by the adopters, who are responsible for the allocation of resources; the implementers, who carry out the policies set by the

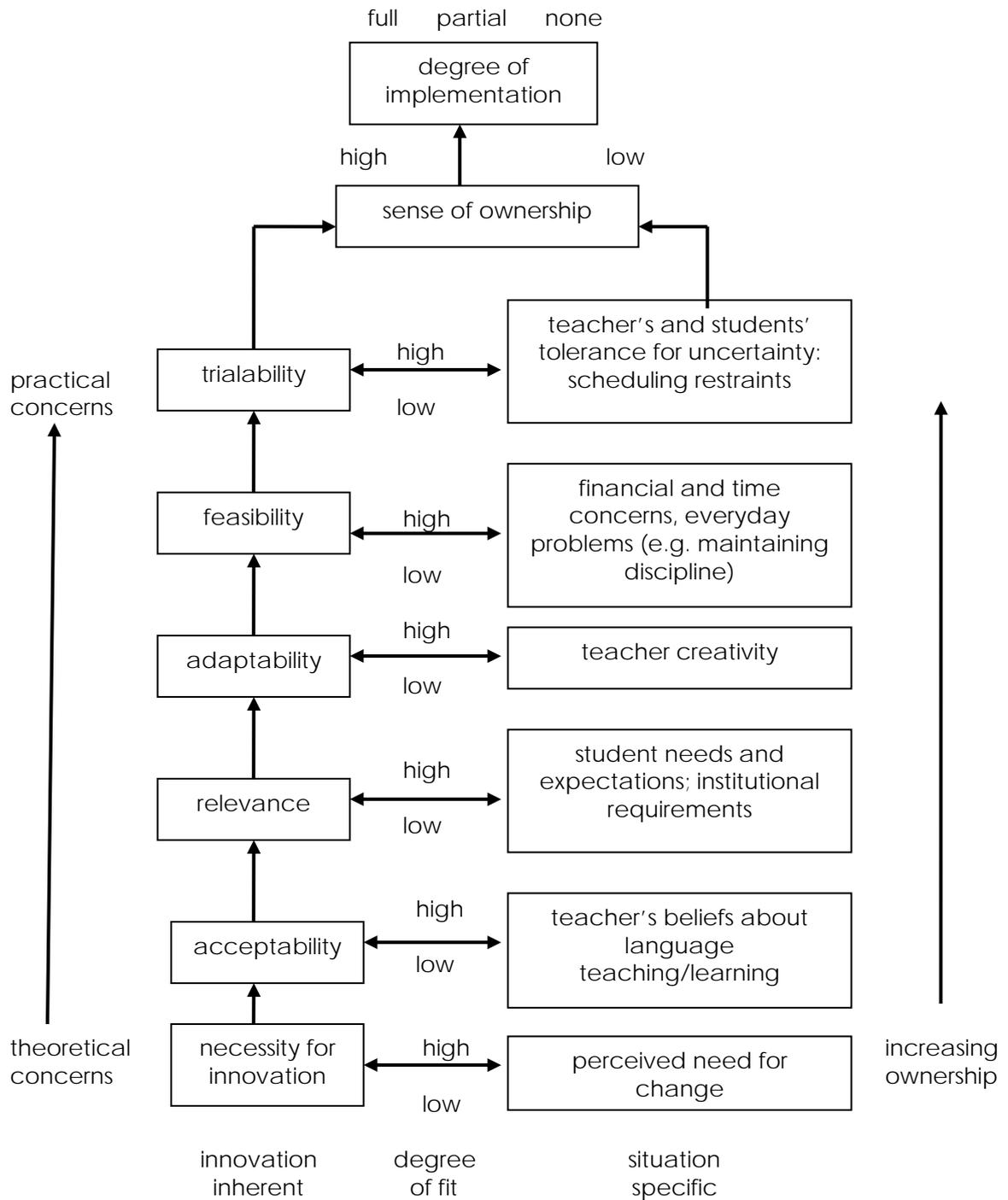
adopters; the suppliers, who provide the necessary resources, and the entrepreneur, who acts as the link between the participants and serves as a catalyst for change. Having recognised a need for the innovation, these participants must agree on the nature of the problem. If differences in opinion exist on these two points, there can be no ideal solution. Kennedy (1988) argues that from the outset, teachers need to regard the innovation as being feasible (i.e. is it possible to implement the innovation in the context of the teachers?) and acceptable at a theoretical level.

As teachers are the instruments of change, Karavas-Doukas (1998) notes that an innovation is most likely to be introduced to teachers through a process of training and preparation for the imminent change. For this reason, she argues that the training process needs to be effective. If long lasting, fundamental changes are to occur and the innovation is to proceed beyond the confirmatory stage, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the innovation need to change. For that to happen, the innovation proposal has to clearly articulate its goals, specify the means of implementation and be able to convince the teachers that it is a feasible and applicable innovation.

Guskey (1998) rejects the view that significant changes in beliefs are likely to result before teachers have trialled and tested the innovation. Teachers need to experience first hand that the changes do result in increased student outcomes. During the process of training and trialling, teachers need to be provided with constant and ongoing support, as well as opportunities for critical reflection (Pennington 1995) and a re-evaluation of their existing beliefs.

While acknowledging the importance of these factors in the successful diffusion of innovations, Wolter (2000) argues that these alone do not determine the extent of change. Considering only these factors "gives the misleading impression that successful change, and therefore successful implementation, is entirely dependent on the innovation itself, and how well it can be packaged and presented to a group of potential implementers" (p. 313).

**Figure 2.** Degree of Fit Model of Innovation Dynamics



*Note.* From A participant-centred approach to INSET course design (p.313), by Wolter, 2000.

Wolter therefore presents an expanded model of innovation dynamics (see Fig. 2) which includes situation specific aspects as well, to shed some light on why theoretically sound innovations can still fail to produce their desired effect. The practical concerns of running a classroom, he argues, always take precedence over theoretical issues, and unless a high degree of fit is achieved at a practical level, an innovation is unlikely to receive an acceptable degree of implementation.

Stoller (1994) observes that adoption rate of an innovation depends on a perceived middle range, or a zone of innovation (p.314). She argues that when sufficient elements of the essential attributes are perceived to be present in the innovation, adoption rates are likely to increase. Stoller also found that the perceived absence or excess of an attribute can negatively affect innovation adoption.

Lamie's (2001; 2002; 2004; 2005) work with training Japanese teachers of English in communicative methodology led her to identify six 'impact areas' that affect the change process: personal attributes (e.g. confidence and attitudes), practical constraints (e.g. teaching materials and examinations), external influences (e.g. national and school culture), awareness, training and feedback. Due to the interconnectedness of these impact areas and the myriad ways they affect the process of change, Lamie states that the "variety of interpersonal relationships and cultural ramifications, combined with the intricacies of curriculum developments, clearly present the change process as a journey that is far from straightforward" (p. 135).

From the several factors that affect the success of an innovation, a particularly important one is the idea of ownership. Establishing a sense of ownership is necessary for change to take effect (Kennedy 1987; Bailey 1992) and have lasting and far-reaching results. White (1987) maintains that it is essential that all participants experience this sense of ownership, feel that they have contributed towards the formulation of the innovation, and consider themselves to be a part of it, as much as it is a part of them. A lack of such a sense of ownership will lead to a lack of responsibility towards the innovation and its implementation.

This relates to the tension between top-down or bottom-up initiatives, which have been discussed extensively (see for example Fullan 1993; Stephenson 1994; Patek

1996). Although top-down initiatives are often regarded as being intrinsically defective, such approaches to change can succeed in collectivist, power-oriented societies, as opposed to individualist, decentralised societies (Hofstede 1991). Furthermore, bottom-up approaches do not map out a clear path to successful change either. Fullan (1993) points out that top-down as well as bottom-up strategies are both necessary and can be successful in the introduction of innovations, if there is support for the change. Stephenson (1994, p. 225) claims that “institutional support for bottom-up innovation is as important as participant support for top-down approaches.” The key is to make it a collaborative effort so that all parties involved associate some sense of ownership with the innovation.

To foster such a sense of ownership, there needs to be a relatively equal balance of power between the participants involved. However, according to Sandholtz (2002), in the majority of teacher development programmes this is not the case. She reports that “in-service education typically implies a deficit approach that assumes teachers need information from people in authority” (p. 815). Teachers are neither seen as active participants in the process of their own professional growth, nor are they treated as sources of knowledge themselves. Teachers are often left in a powerless position when such uni-directional, transmission models of education are applied.

The clear ineffectiveness of implementing innovation and creating long term change based on this teacher development approach led to a surge of research related to the process of teacher change and development. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) maintain that as a result of this research, there has been a shift in the focus of change. While previously change was regarded as something that is done to teachers who remain passive participants in the process, it is now recognised that change is a complex process that involves learning, with teachers playing an active role in shaping their professional growth through reflective participation.

Bailey (1992) describes several stages of innovation: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, confirmation and adoption or discontinuance. Karavas-Doukas (1998) differentiates between adoption and implementation. She equates adoption with teachers’ acceptance of an innovation or their decision to use it, while implementation refers to positive changes at all three levels: curricula, behaviour and beliefs. She

argues that a teacher's decision to purely adopt an innovation will not lead to long-term implementation and may soon be discontinued or rejected. Reasons for rejection or discontinuance may include guilt, ignorance, fear, satisfaction with the current situation, unwillingness to take risks, etc. Teachers may consciously or unconsciously feel that to accept the new would be to deny the validity of their past beliefs and actions. Prabhu (1987, p.105) explains that:

the threat to existing routines may make teachers reject innovation out of hand, as an act of self protection. Alternatively, a strong sense of plausibility about some existing perception may make some teachers see the innovation as counter-intuitive and look on its implementation as pedagogically harmful.

In the history of educational reform, Karavas-Doukas (1998) notes that the rate of rejection of innovations that attempt to change teachers' practices and beliefs is very high. She points out that often teachers "reject innovations outright or profess commitment to the innovation but in reality carry on as before" (p. 25). In recognising that "change and innovation have become words that policy makers seem to love and teachers seem to dread" (p. 26), she suggests that innovations are usually thrust upon teachers whose role it appears is to simply implement the new ideas, and have no say in whether an innovation is feasible, acceptable or relevant to the situation. Such an approach contradicts adult learning theories, most of which reflect constructivist views of learning where learners acquire new knowledge by constructing it for themselves (Smylie 1995). Lindeman (1926), one of the pioneers of research on adult education, contends that adults would rather be guided than told or directed. Similarly, Knowles (1980) in his work on adult learning, stresses the role of the learner as an individual as being paramount in both directing what is learned and how and why it is learned. He argues that learners need to be intrinsically motivated and in control of their learning to make full use of new learning experiences.

It is perhaps partly due to this failure to incorporate theories of adult learning into the process of training teachers that innovations are seldom implemented as intended. Markee (2001) reports that almost three quarters of educational innovations are likely to fail over time, without ever reaching the adoption stage. This low rate of success stems largely from the fact that policy makers are too often concerned with the "what" of innovation rather than the "how" (Karavas-Doukas, 1998). More attention therefore

needs to be paid to the process of implementing innovation, and to the salient factors that affect its success.

It is clear that innovation is hard work and advances quite slowly. It is not a linear process. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) suggest that change occurs through the interplay of four distinct but interconnected domains of the teacher's world: the personal domain (knowledge, beliefs and attitudes), the domain of practice (professional experimentation), the domain of consequence (salient outcomes) and the external domain (sources of information, stimulus or support). Change therefore takes time and teachers move through various cycles of trialling and reflection before input can become intake and ultimately uptake (Pennington 1995) when it finally becomes embedded in the teacher's values and belief system.

### *Effective Professional Development*

Historically, teacher development consisted of "one-shot" workshops "aimed at teacher mastery of prescribed skills and knowledge" (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 948). Criticisms of this deficit approach abound in the literature (e.g. Wood and Thompson 1980; Guskey 1985; Guskey 1986; Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991; Miller 1998; Robb 2000). Teachers find these one-shot workshops boring and irrelevant, and claim to forget more than ninety per cent of what they learn (Miller 1998). Robb (2000, p. 5) describes a typical one-shot workshop where after the first fifteen minutes, she "noticed some teachers doodling. Others closed their eyes. Many repeatedly looked at their watches." Despite the unpopularity of the approach with teachers, despite the research evidence that suggests its ineffectiveness and failure to address theories of adult learning, Sandholtz (2002) reports that it is precisely this type of approach that the majority of teacher development programmes still adopt.

In her survey of 199 middle and high school teachers, Sandholtz (2002) found that out of the 22 activities of professional development included in the survey, teachers regarded activities associated with university/school partnerships (such as summer projects and conferences) to be the most valuable to them, while school-based

activities (such as school and district in-services) were considered to be the least valuable<sup>9</sup>.

Provided that the main form of professional development occurs at the school level, the issue that arises is how such a programme can successfully introduce innovation, and work together with teachers to implement it in their classrooms. Several features of effective teacher development can be identified from the literature. These features are described and discussed below.

### *Limited objectives.*

Change is a slow process, and needs to be advanced a little at a time. Aiming to achieve too much in one go is likely to backfire. Tomlinson (1988) recommends that the objectives of a teacher development programme should be specific and limited in order to maximise the benefits. The need for initial change proposals to be small is reiterated by Senge, Kleiner, Cambron-McCabe, Smith, & Lucas (2000) who argue that if started on a small scale, it will “grow organically” (p. 273).

### *Consideration of context.*

Teacher development programmes are not of a one-size-fits-all nature, and thus the design and content of the programme must take into account the context in which the programme is to take place. Several teacher educators (e.g. Breen, Candlin et al. 1989; Dubin and Wong 1990) recognise the need to carefully consider the cultural and educational traditions of the particular context. Learning must be related to the individual needs of the schools and teachers involved.

### *School-based.*

Although Sandholtz’s (2002) study showed that school-based programmes were considered by teachers to be the least effective, this does not diminish the value of running school-based programmes. Sandholtz notes that the reason why teachers in her study generally disliked the school-based programmes had probably little to do

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<sup>9</sup> She however noted that because the activities associated with school/university partnerships were voluntary and the school-based programmes were compulsory, far fewer teachers actually took part in these voluntary activities.

with them being school-based per se, but more to do with the way in which these school-based programmes were run. Wilson (2000) discusses the merits of conducting teacher development in the context in which they themselves teach, pointing out that there then exists the opportunity to apply and test the new ideas in their own classrooms. She points out that when inservice programmes are divorced from the work context and take place either outside school or even overseas (as is the case in many ESL/EFL in-service programmes), teachers would find it difficult to apply what they learn when they return to their classrooms.

### *Teacher-oriented.*

Richards (1991) argues that teacher education must adopt a bottom-up approach where the starting point is an internal (arises from the teachers themselves) view of teaching rather than an external one (imposed on them by an outsider). A top-down approach would leave the teachers feeling that they have no real personal investment in the programme and may therefore be less committed to it. Involving the teachers in the planning and delivery of the programme is fundamental to its success. In doing so, teachers' own needs and wants can be identified and catered to. Teachers must be given opportunities to participate in decisions about what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they will use what they learn. This can be done through surveys, interviews and group discussions involving teachers.

Wolter (2000) suggests that since the teachers have a rich knowledge of their own learning-teaching situation, they are better equipped than the programme instructors to determine how the innovation can function within their context. This role of expert authority, Wolter argues, should be explicitly stated to the teachers, so that they feel that the programme is less of a one-way transfer of information and more of a two-way exchange of ideas. Involving the teachers in the programme in this way addresses the concepts of adaptability and ownership referred to earlier.

Cheung (1999) notes that teachers differ in their adoption and implementation of an innovation. Even if a programme provides a structured framework, individual teachers may follow their own unique paths at their own pace during this process. Respecting these variations, and not expecting teachers to be "depersonalised implementers of top

down innovation” (p. 74) is necessary for empowering teachers. Cheung argues that it is empowerment, not training, that is the key to successful innovation.

*Related to teachers’ existing knowledge and experience.*

An effective professional development programme should exploit fully the knowledge that teachers bring with them (James 2001). Presentation of new ideas and information must take into account teachers’ existing frames of knowledge and experience. As Richards (1991) asserts, teachers must not be viewed as entering the programme with deficiencies. While new knowledge can obviously be presented to them, on the basis of their wants and needs, the emphasis should be on what teachers know and do, and how they can more fully explore their beliefs and practices.

In respecting their existing knowledge and practices, Richards (1991) argues that a programme must not revolve around the notion of discarding current practices. Innovations introduced during such programmes should be seen to work alongside current practice, with the focus on “expanding and deepening awareness” (p. 7). Freeman & Richards (1996) argue that one function of professional development is to enable teachers to become “bilingual,” that is, to rename their current understandings in light of their new learning, and by so doing, to function bilingually, adding professional language to the local language they use in their schools.

Communicating using simple, non-technical terms is also important in creating meaning to teachers. Vespoor’s (1989) review of 21 educational reform projects revealed that adjusting the content of training programmes to the level of the teachers’ knowledge and experience was a key element for the success of the programme.

*Reflective approach.*

Richards (1996) views critical reflection as a vital first step to identifying teachers’ personal beliefs and theories. Hativa & Goodyear (2002) too recognise the importance of addressing teachers’ current theories and belief systems, and suggests that teachers need to reflect on their own theories, articulate them explicitly, and compare them with those of their colleagues. Freeman (2002) emphasises that reflection “must become a central pillar” (p.11) in teacher development. To do this, he states that it is

important to “teach the skills of reflectivity” and “provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience” (p.11). In order to develop understanding through reflection, Freeman points out that:

One needs the words to talk about what one does, and in using those words one can see it more clearly. Articulation is not about words alone, however. Skills and activity likewise provide ways through which new teachers can articulate and enact their images of teaching (p.11).

Reflection alone is therefore insufficient, but is an integral part of an ongoing, cyclical process. As Wallace (1991) argues, it is through repeated cycles of professional development, practice and reflection that professional competence arises.

#### *Hands-on activities.*

Sandholtz’s (2002) study revealed that teachers regarded hands-on activities that were directly relevant to their teaching situation and which they could utilise in their classrooms as being essential to a teacher development programme. They saw little value in learning about techniques and strategies that were impossible to implement. It is therefore necessary for teachers to do something important, and not simply hear about it. Integrating the creation of lesson plans and teaching materials that can be used in their own classrooms as a key part of the in-service is therefore crucial. Hayes (1995) suggests that teacher development sessions should make it possible for teachers to practice new ideas in a non-threatening environment, such as through micro teaching, before expecting them to apply the ideas in their own classrooms.

#### *Opportunities for collaboration.*

As Vygotsky (1978) suggests, learning is more effective when there exists the opportunity to interact with others and with their environment. A collaborative teacher learning environment promotes the idea that learning should be active; that new understandings are discovered through problem solving and interaction. Teachers value opportunities to talk and reflect with other teachers in their discipline about their strategies (Sandholtz, 2002). Activities that involve collaboration acknowledge the knowledge and expertise of teachers as each individual is seen not only as a learner, but more importantly, as a resource person. Furthermore, collaboration

diminishes the perceived role of the programme facilitator as the expert and increases the feeling of it being a joint venture. In a collaborative learning atmosphere, expertise would emerge as a feature of the group rather than be associated with a single individual. Such a sense of “we” feeling is crucial to creating an effective learning climate (Jones and Lowe 1989).

### *Adequate time.*

One of the strongest criticisms of school-based teacher development is that it is generally comprised of one-shot workshops scattered across the academic year. If teachers are to fully participate in the learning experience, adequate time must be allocated to the training. Teachers need time to come to grips with new ideas, familiarise themselves with key concepts and reflect and experiment.

### *On-going support.*

Gaies & Bowers (1990) note that professional development which is limited to workshops and seminars does not attend to the individual needs of individual teachers. Based on this limitation of the more conventional in-service programmes, they argue for the need to include clinical supervision as part of the programme. This would involve a series of three stage cycles: preobservation consultation between the teacher and the supervisor, the observation itself and postobservation analysis and discussion.

Such forms of on-going support are essential elements of success, as noted by several authors. Training must not only occur before implementation, but continue during the implementation stages. As Karavas-Doukas (1998, p. 36) notes, “it is when theory is put into practice that people have the most specific problems and concerns.” Extensive opportunities to experiment and practice must be followed by feedback and support. It is only through clarifying concerns and experimentation that teachers will come to a true understanding of the innovation and become committed to it. For a sense of ownership to develop, teachers need to become confident and skilled in using the new ideas. Huberman & Miles (1984) note that in order to foster confidence it is necessary for teachers to be able to practice new techniques in a safe, non threatening

environment (such as among peers during professional development sessions) before they venture to the classroom.

*Target cognitive as well as behavioural change.*

Fullan (1998, p. 255) asserts that “It is only when individuals find themselves experiencing a process of redoing (behaviour) and rethinking (beliefs) that we can expect quality innovations to have the desired impact.” Changing one’s beliefs is a long and difficult process, yet one that is necessary if real, long term change is to occur. According to Breen et al. (1989), teacher development programmes must primarily aim to uncover the knowledge and beliefs that teachers hold and make teachers aware of these. This needs to be followed by encouraging teachers to accommodate new elements into their existing mental framework. Once teachers are aware of their own beliefs and attitudes and how the new concepts fit into their mental framework, they become more receptive to new ideas and become more willing to experiment with them.

*Appropriate and sufficient incentives and rewards.*

Jones & Lowe (1989) argue that it is important to create incentives for participation in the programme. The best incentive, they argue, is the potential to improve student learning. They also maintain that other incentives such as release time from normal classroom duties and recognition to acknowledge participation will also increase teachers’ morale during the programme.

*Model good teaching.*

The programme must serve as an excellent model of good teaching, incorporating practices of constructivist learning and instructional strategies such as problem solving and cooperative learning. It is also necessary that the approach to teacher learning incorporates theories of how adults learn.

*Be informed by theory and research.*

Innovations must be backed by research and theory. It is important for teachers to be given evidence from research of the effectiveness of the new idea. But it is equally

important to limit such talk of research and theory to the bare minimum (Jones and Lowe 1989) as teachers are mainly concerned with what affects them and their classroom.

### *Voluntary participation.*

Voluntary participation based on each teacher's individual needs and interests is seen to be a key feature that affects the success of a programme (Sandholtz, 2002). This relates to respecting teachers' individuality and different levels of knowledge and expertise. Robb (2000) maintains that "choice is necessary... choice is at the heart of making a commitment... it allows teachers who are sceptical about change to be observers and listeners and to talk to colleagues who are actively involved in professional learning before making a personal commitment" (p.3).

### *Encourage further change.*

Karavas-Doukas (1998) notes that effective teacher development programmes must inculcate in teachers the need to inquire and question existing practice. In other words, it should not be limited to the focus of the programme, but encourage teachers to become reflective, evolve and seek new understandings throughout their career. This, as Fullan & Steigelbauer (1991) explain, is the key to bringing about meaningful, effective, long term educational reform.

### *No Certainty of Success*

Having listed all these elements for effective teacher development programmes from the existing literature, it seems pertinent here to bear in mind Fullan's (1998) contention that there is no panacea or model of change, because as individuals and contexts differ, there can be no certainty of success. Despite the best efforts at planning, there is often a significant difference between what is proposed in a teacher development programme and what is subsequently evidenced in the classroom (Breen, Candlin et al. 1989; Palmer 1993; Lamb 1995; Pacek 1996; Markee 1997). This is often due to the various practical constraints that stand in the way of innovation (Lamie 2004). These include environment and school culture, the availability of time and resources, peer pressure to conform, etc. Following Huberman

& Miles (1984), Lamie (2004, p.130) commented on how school culture and teacher relationships can affect the process:

when considering teachers as a group in the school culture senior teachers were not only more resistant to change, they were also less likely to believe that it would work. Junior teachers who have attended training courses may also feel it is inappropriate to relate their experiences to senior teachers.

Apart from the practical constraints that thwart change efforts, teachers themselves are often regarded as being impediments to change. As Lamie (2002; 2004) found, it is not a question of teachers' inability to change, but a lack of self confidence and self worth that impede some teachers in facing change. A lack of adequate information available to teachers regarding the innovation can also hinder change efforts, as can negative attitudes towards issues involved in the innovation. Kennedy (1999) describes how a teacher's negative attitude towards pairwork was responsible for the lack of implementation. The teacher did not believe that pairwork would improve the communicative abilities of his students, and this negative attitude to a key issue of the innovation, created a resistance to change. Lamie's (2004) study however did not find any clear connections between attitudes and behaviour and commented that:

a positive attitude towards an act did not necessarily result in that act being implemented, and correspondingly a negative attitude did not always result in an act not taking place. This suggests that other issues may have greater influence, or impact. (p. 126)

Alluding to the frequent resistance to change observed in teachers, Macdonald (1991, cited in Lamie, 2002, p. 150) states that "[t]eachers are, on the whole, poor implementers of other people's ideas." This suggests that it is not necessarily that they dislike the particular innovation being suggested; teachers simply dislike changing the status quo.

Roberts (1998) views the lack of change in teachers not as resistance to change, but as the filtering out of the innovation. He argues that a constructivist view of learning suggests that teachers – and especially experienced teachers – make sense of professional learning by interpreting input in such a way that it fits into their existing framework of theories about teaching and learning that have been established through

prior experience. This is not the same as “misinterpreting input”, says Roberts. Rather, it is an assimilation of new input to conform to the patterns of existing knowledge and beliefs that have become established and are central to their understanding of themselves. Roberts illustrates this process of assimilation by explaining how after watching a demonstration of a communication game where only one child can see a picture and the others ask questions about it, an experienced teacher may go back to his classroom and lead the game himself using the picture as a cue card in a question-and-answer exercise:

He had assimilated the demonstration into a view of classroom discourse where the teacher mediates all talk. He could not see the changes he made to the activity as significant for the way learners processed language. (p. 26).

Lamb (1995) describes how teachers seemed to label their long-existing practices with terms from new ideas:

one teacher described her standard procedure of teaching reading as follows: ‘[I] let them read silently, and after finishing [the] reading materials I ask them what does the writer in the first paragraph tell us. It's just what you call skimming . . . getting the main point of each paragraph.’ The two terms picked up on the course (‘skimming’ and ‘getting the main idea’) are used synonymously to describe a text-summarizing activity common in Indonesian classrooms. (p. 75).

Lamb recounts that teachers also appropriated an idea from the teacher development programme in order to justify a change in their teaching – a change which was not expected or required:

At one point during the course, for instance, it was suggested that it was quite valid to use the mother tongue at times, such as when explaining the instructions to a complicated learning task. One teacher explained in her interview that one of the major changes in her teaching since the course was that she ‘didn't ask them in English any more but . . . in Bahasa Indonesia, and I allow them to answer in Bahasa Indonesia’ (p. 75-6).

Thus, teachers fail to see that they are still following their previous methods of teaching because they believe that they are adopting a new instructional method.

Roberts suggests that uncovering teachers' implicit theories and relating them to the new learning can help minimise such processes of assimilation.

Fullan (1993) argues that innovations fail to be successfully diffused not necessarily because of the suitability of the innovation itself or the method of implementation that was used, but more often because of the attitude of the teachers involved. For successful change to take place, it is the attitude towards change that should first change.

### *Evaluating Professional Development*

As Williams and Burden (1994) note, remarkably little has been written about the evaluation of L2 education projects, and particularly about the process of evaluation. Alderson (1992) suggests that planning a programme evaluation involves working out answers to a number of questions concerning the purpose of the evaluation, audience, evaluator, content, method, and timing. He is quick to note however that there is no "One Best Way" (p. 274) of conducting an evaluation. The way in which an evaluation is conducted, he argues, depends largely on the purposes of the evaluation, the nature of the programme and the individuals, time scale and resources involved.

Evaluations can be summative, formative or illuminative (Williams and Burden 1994). Summative evaluation is carried out to judge the overall effectiveness of the programme, and occurs at the end. Formative evaluations are used to modify or improve a programme, conducted during the course of the programme, at perhaps regular intervals, so as to cater to the needs of the participants. It is thus ongoing in nature, and seeks to form, improve, and direct the project, rather than simply assess its impact. In illuminative evaluation, the evaluator is involved in the day to day working of the project, and data is used to assist decision making and guide implementation. Using a variety of sources, rich data is gathered and interpreted, acknowledging multiple perspectives and taking into account the background and culture of the context.

Kennedy (1988) explains that in evaluating a project, the concern should be not only to evaluate the outcome, but also to consider the process of innovation itself,

following the implementation stages from identification of a problem to the eventual diffusion of the innovation. Echoing this, Tribble (2000) notes that evaluation should attempt to interpret the impact and understand the reasons for failure or success of a project. This study takes the illuminative approach to evaluation, as it is concerned not only with the end result, but with the whole process, with the results of each step feeding into the next. It describes how as a result of the professional development programme, teachers' beliefs and practices of teaching grammar had been affected.

According to Guskey (2000), the effectiveness of a professional development programme needs to be evaluated at five different levels: participants' reactions, participants' learning, organisational support and change, participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and student achievement. Table 3 below summarises the questions that need to be asked and the data that is required to evaluate the programme at each of the five levels. This study will focus mainly on levels 1, 2 and 4.

**Table 3. Professional Development Evaluation**

Evaluation Level	Questions to be Answered	Measure	What is Measured?
1 Participant's Reactions	Did they like it? Was their time well spent? Did the material make sense? Was the leader knowledgeable and helpful? Was the room the right temperature & the refreshments tasty?	Questionnaires or surveys administered at end of session	Initial satisfaction with the experience
2 Participants' Learning	Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills?	Simulations. Demonstrations. Participant reflections. Participant portfolios.	New knowledge & skills of participants
3 Organisational Support and Change	Were sufficient resources made available? Were problems addressed quickly and efficiently? Was implementation advocated, facilitated & supported? Were successes recognized and shared? Was the support public and overt? What was the impact on the organization? Did it affect organizational climate and procedures?	Minutes from follow-up meetings. Questionnaires. Structured interviews with participants & district or school administrators. District and school records. Participant portfolios.	To document & improve organizational support. To inform future change efforts.
4 Participants' Use of New Knowledge & Skills	Did participants apply the new knowledge and skills?	Questionnaires. Structured interviews Participant reflections . Participant portfolios. Direct observations/video/audiotapes	Degree and quality of implementation
5 Student Learning Outcomes	Did it affect student performance or achievement? Did it influence student's well-being? Are students more confident as learners? Is Student Attendance improving? Are dropouts decreasing?	Student/school records Questionnaires. Interviews with students, parents, teachers, and/or administrators. Participant portfolios.	Student learning Cognitive. Affective Psychomotor.

*Note.* Adapted from *Evaluation of Professional Development* by Guskey, 2000

## *Research Focus*

The present study explores the interplay between teachers' beliefs, instructional practices and professional development. More specifically, it focuses on the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices and on the uptake of an innovative approach to grammar instruction introduced through a teacher development programme.

The study is designed with the following limits and boundaries:

1. The curriculum area will be limited to English, and in particular the teaching of grammar
2. Research samples will be limited to secondary school students and English teachers that teach in the secondary grades in Maldives
3. The teacher development programme will focus on learner-centred teaching in general and a discovery approach to teaching grammar in particular

## *Research Questions*

The research questions that guided the study were as follows:

1. (a) What beliefs do English teachers in Maldivian secondary schools hold about L2 grammar, its acquisition and methods of instruction?  
(b) What factors are responsible for shaping these teachers' beliefs?
2. (a) How do teachers in Maldivian secondary schools deal with grammar in the English classroom?  
(b) To what extent do teachers' beliefs correspond to their instructional practices?  
(c) What factors constrain these teachers when translating their beliefs into practice?
3. (a) To what extent does a school-based professional development programme affect teachers' beliefs about grammar?  
(b) To what extent does a school-based professional development programme affect teachers' instructional practices?

The methodology and procedures that were employed in conducting this study and seeking answers to these questions will be described in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Methodology

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### *Introduction*

This chapter first presents key debates regarding the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions of qualitative and quantitative methods of educational research, defending the value and use of each type within the context of this study. It then proceeds to describe the methodology that was adopted in this study, detailing the overall design, the instrumentation that was used, and the processes of sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation.

### *Research Design*

Classroom based educational research employs qualitative and quantitative designs, or a combination of both. The difference between the two, as Best & Kahn (1998) describe, lie in numbers. Qualitative research involves watching and asking, and aims to describe events and persons in detail without the use of any numerical data. On the other hand, numerical data is of utmost importance in quantitative research which is concerned with measuring and controlling numerically analysable information. The strength of quantitative research lies in its ability to quantify generalisable variables and measure factors in terms of amount, intensity or frequency. In contrast, qualitative research attempts to achieve a deeper, holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied from an emic perspective.

Seliger & Shohamy (1989) further divide qualitative research into ethnographic and descriptive research. Ethnographic research takes a holistic approach and typically begins with few preconceived ideas or assumptions about the data. In contrast, descriptive research begins with predetermined hypotheses and a narrower scale of enquiry. Both ethnographic and descriptive research designs are concerned with discovering and describing a phenomenon in naturally occurring contexts, without experimental manipulation. Descriptive research may be carried out by means of case

studies or group studies, while surveys, interviews and observations constitute some of the characteristic methods of data collection.

The present study combines qualitative and quantitative methods of research. It fits partly into the descriptive paradigm as it aims to observe and describe systematically, factually and accurately, the qualities of a pre-conceived phenomenon (i.e. teachers' beliefs and instructional practices) in a naturally occurring context (i.e. English language classrooms in Maldivian secondary schools) through questionnaire-based survey data and case studies of schools and individual teachers.

The study is also partly quasi-experimental. Brown (1988) characterises a quasi-experimental design as one that involves the administration of a pre-test, treatment and post-test on naturally occurring groups. In this respect, the professional development programme that was carried out in the two selected schools in this study can be regarded as the treatment and exploration of teachers' beliefs, and instructional practices before and after the treatment can be regarded as the pre and post-tests.

The study combines survey and case study methods for several reasons. A questionnaire-based survey is used to easily obtain information from a large number of participants in order to understand the beliefs of teachers in the context being studied. This is followed by detailed case studies of two schools within this context, exploring teaching through observation and dialogue, as a means of understanding the beliefs that underlie teachers' practice. Case studies were seen to be a particularly suitable research approach as they "reveal the multiplicity of factors [which] have interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that is the subject of study" through description, explanation, evaluation and prediction (Yin, 1989, p. 82).

### *Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness*

It is essential to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, and thus its findings, by addressing the issues of validity and reliability. Reliability is the degree of consistency that an instrument or data collection procedure demonstrates, while validity is the quality of data collection procedure that enables it to measure what it is intended to measure (Best & Kahn, 1998). The issues of validity and reliability in qualitative

research correspond to the criteria of truthfulness – credibility to internal validity, transferability to external validity, dependability to reliability, and confirmability to objectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I will now discuss how each of these relates to the present study.

### *Credibility.*

The criterion of credibility explains what happened, accurately, and without contamination through other factors. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), a credible study needs to show evidence of lengthy engagement in the field. Data for this study was collected over a period of fifteen months. The survey questionnaires were mailed out in August 2003, followed by on-site data collection from April 2004 – October 2004. In between the mailing of the questionnaires and the on-site research, I was in touch with various schools in order to locate suitable research sites. In addition, I contacted many teachers in the Maldives during the process of designing and piloting the research instruments.

The principle of triangulation, consistently cited as a significant means of validating aspects of a qualitative study, helps to compensate for the limitations of the individual data collection methods and reduces the effects of possible researcher bias in analysing and interpreting qualitative data. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) suggest three main kinds of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation and methodological triangulation. In other words, if different sources of data, different investigators and different methods all produce relatively similar results, there are grounds for a greater degree of credibility.

Triangulation was achieved in several ways. The data for the study comes from a large number of participants (data triangulation), collected using a variety of methods such as questionnaires, observation and interviews (method triangulation), and over a period of fifteen months (time triangulation).

The technique of peer debriefing, which involves a person unrelated to the study analysing some of the raw data in order to assess whether the findings are plausible as well as member checking, were also utilised in this study as further means of

justifying its credibility. Member checking was dealt with by sharing with the case-study participants the profiles that I had created about them (see Appendix A for sample profile). These profiles included background information about the participant and a summary of what I had understood about their beliefs and practices from my observations and conversations with them. I wanted to make sure that their story was their own, and therefore invited them to make any changes to their profiles where there were discrepancies between my understanding and theirs. I also offered to provide a written transcript of all recorded interviews with the teachers, but all of them declined the offer.

### *Transferability.*

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings from a study can be applied to other settings and contexts. This is realised by providing rich, thick description, to allow readers to determine how closely their situations match and whether or not the findings of this study can be transferred to their setting or context. Furthermore, diversity, and thereby generalisability, is created by utilising a multi-site design and maximising variation in the purposely selected samples.

### *Dependability.*

Dependability refers to the extent to which the data and interpretation are reliable and consistent. It pertains to the importance of being open through reflexivity and accounting to the changes to the study that arose during the research process. These are documented in the text, the primary change being the nature of the professional development programme that was designed for the two case study schools, as will be described later in this chapter. Changes were also made in terms of sample sizes. At the beginning of the data collection at the case study sites, data was collected from all teachers at both the schools. However, as this created far more data than was feasible for a study of this proportion, it was necessary to cut down on the number of teachers involved. Another change related to the discarding of what was seen to be an essential source of data at the outset. This was a teacher's journal, maintained over a period of 12 weeks, documenting information relating to the lessons taught and the application of the ideas presented at the professional development workshops. As a research tool, a teaching diary would potentially have allowed the exploration of a teacher's beliefs

and practices, recorded over a period of time. It would provide a means of observing change and the processes of change. As one purpose of the present study was to understand the changes teachers may undergo as a result of training, diaries appeared to be one useful method of data collection. One teacher at Rural School was approached regarding maintaining a teaching diary, and was given instructions in writing as well as verbally. However, the teacher failed to maintain a diary, but instead simply copied out her lesson plans – both actual and ideal.

### *Confirmability.*

Confirmability refers to the degree to which research results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. This issue is dealt with by providing a clear audit trail which would describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were arrived at throughout the inquiry. Examples of data analysis and coding are presented in the text and interpretations are backed up with extensive quotations from the data. Furthermore, sample copies of observation notes and interview transcripts are given in the Appendices (see Appendix B for sample observation notes and Appendix C for sample interview transcript).

## *Population and Sampling*

### *Survey Study*

The sample for the teacher beliefs questionnaire survey consisted of the entire population of English teachers (estimated to be 280 teachers) in all Maldivian schools that catered to secondary level<sup>29</sup> (i.e. 100 schools) at the time of data collection. The rationale for targeting the entire population in the survey was to ensure that the results obtained were as generalisable as possible. Completed questionnaires were received from 197 teachers from 51 schools, a response rate of 70.1%. The table overleaf shows demographic information about the 197 teachers who were the participants of the survey study.

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<sup>29</sup> Many of these schools are just beginning secondary education and thus have just one or two secondary grades. If a school had even one class at secondary level with just a handful of students, the school was contacted regarding the study.

**Table 4. Teacher Demographics, Survey Study**

Category	Details	Average%
Nationality	Maldivian	2%
	Indian	78.2%
	Sri Lankan	18.8%
	French	.5%
	Pakistani	.5%
Gender	Male	54.3%
	Female	45.2%
Highest qualification	Masters degree	54.3%
	Bachelors degree	25.4%
	Diploma	9.6%
	Certificate	10.7%
Teaching qualification	Yes	44.7%
	No	55.3%
ELT qualification	Yes	8.6%
	No	91.4%
Years of experience	In Maldives	3.6 years
	Elsewhere	9.3 years
English is	Mother tongue	1%
	Second/subsequent language	99%
Age at which started to learn English		6 years

*Note.* Teaching qualification = either a Bachelor's Degree in Education, a Diploma in Education/Teaching, or a Certificate in Education/Teaching; ELT qualification = major subject studied is either ELT, TESOL, Applied Linguistics or Language Teaching.

As can be seen in the table, the majority of English teachers were male (54.3 %) expatriate workers from India (78.2%) and Sri Lanka (18.8%). Only 2% of teachers who participated in the study were Maldivian nationals. While many teachers stated that their highest educational qualification was a Masters (54.3%) or Bachelors (25.4%) degree, often they had received no formal teacher training. The most common subject that teachers had majored in at university was English literature<sup>30</sup>,

<sup>30</sup> There were also a large number of teachers who had majored in non-related subjects such as History, Zoology, Law, Accounting, Business Administration, Computing, Economics and Politics.

and most (91.4%) did not appear to have obtained any further training in language teaching. On the whole, these teachers had completed an average of 3.6 years of teaching in Maldives and 9.3 years elsewhere. The total length of teaching experience ranged from zero to 40 years. Except for a small minority of teachers (1%), all reported that English was a second or subsequent language which they had either learnt from childhood at home and/or studied at school from the average age of six.

### *Case Studies*

For the case studies, purposive sampling was used to identify two schools within the population that met specific criteria. The criteria for selection included:

1. Schools which had responded to the questionnaire
2. Schools with at least eight – ten English teachers
3. Schools that were willing to participate in the study
4. Schools that were different from each other in terms of geographical location (i.e. rural or urban), type of school (i.e. government, community or private), size of student population and the students' socio-economic backgrounds. The decision to include schools that were different from each other in this way was applied to make the data more varied, and therefore the results more generalisable, ensuring transferability of the results to other contexts or settings.

Rural School and Urban School, described below, were chosen for the two case study schools.

#### *Rural School.*

Rural School was located on an island that was home to around 7500 inhabitants. The island was large by Maldivian standards; with a population density of around 44 people per hectare. English was not spoken among the island community, and its use was limited to educational institutions and the healthcare services where expatriate professionals were employed. The majority of adult residents on the island had not received secondary education.

Rural School was a secondary school with a student population of 750 at the time of data collection. It was owned and funded by the government and catered to students

from grades P8<sup>31</sup> – 12. The school had three two-storey buildings within a large, pleasant tree-filled compound. The school hall and all the classrooms from P8 – 10 were located in one building. Facing this, on the other side of the compound was the administrative building which housed the school offices, staff room, library, audiovisual facilities and laboratories. An art room and classrooms for grades 11 – 12 were located in the third building towards the back of the school.

The majority of the students were residents of the island, but about one-third were from other islands within the atoll. Classes in grades 8 – 10 were divided according to the three streams: Arts, Science and Commerce. The average class size up to grade 10 was 30, although the Arts classes were considerably smaller, with around 5 – 15 students in these classes. The school had only very recently started offering higher secondary education and students could choose to study either science or commerce subjects at this level. For these students, English was no longer a compulsory subject. However, many students opted to study English in grade 11, but dropped it once they went on to 12.

During the year of data collection, the school did not have a principal, but was run by a four member team of senior management staff, led by the senior assistant principal. The senior assistant principal was a local resident of the island, and a much liked and respected member in the community and school.

School was in two sessions. Grades 9 – 12 attended morning session, which began at 6:45am and ended at 12:50pm. Students in grades 8 and P8 attended school in the afternoon session, which began at 1:00pm and continued till 7:05pm. Lessons were divided into 35 minute periods, with a bell signalling the end of each period. Teachers were very punctual, often arriving at the class a few minutes before the bell. P8 classes had eight English periods a week while classes in grades 8, 9 and 10 had nine English periods a week. Students in grades 11 and 12 studied English for ten periods a week. One English period in each grade was reserved as a library period when students go to the school library and read. The choice of reading matter was generally

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<sup>31</sup> P8 (Pre-8) is an optional grade at a few secondary schools which acts as a preparatory level for students who have completed primary school with very weak examination results. Students in P8 study only four subjects: English, Maths, Social Studies and General Science.

left to the students. Although the school library was well-stocked with a wide range of up to date reading material (almost all of which was in English), students often tended to flick through a comic book and chat to each other. Although it was not intended to be the case, the library period was often regarded by both the students and the teachers as a “free” period when they could take a break and unwind before the next period.

English was the medium of instruction of all school subjects (except Dhivehi and Islam) and students were encouraged to speak English in and out of class. However, Dhivehi was used by the students in conversing with each other and when speaking to the Maldivian teachers and managerial staff.

Despite the schools’ attention to improving English, students continued to perform poorly in English at the O/level exams<sup>32</sup>. Because it was concerned about the poor performance in examinations, the school ran a series of enrichment classes to improve students’ English skills and abilities. These special classes were intended only for the best 30 students in each grade. Classes were run by the regular teachers of the grades, but were held outside the regular school hours, often at weekends.

What struck me most about this school was its quietness. My previous experiences of Maldivian schools were limited mainly to schools in Malé, where noise and discipline were major issues. In contrast, students at Rural School were so quiet that whenever I entered the school, I often double checked to see if school was in session as there was often near-complete silence in the classrooms. As I noted in my research journal during my time at the school:

These students are just unbelievably passive! Students (and especially girls) are extremely polite and DO NOT speak in class unless spoken to. And even when asked a question, some students just lower their heads and seem to simply ignore the fact that the teacher is asking a question. This must be a serious problem for teachers who want their students to speak up, ask questions and hold discussions. [RJ.2/5]

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<sup>32</sup> Out of the 202 students who sat for the exam in 2003, none passed; in the two previous years, a similar number sat for the exam, and less than 2% received a pass grade. A slight improvement was achieved in the 2004 exams with 8 out of 253 students receiving a pass grade (source: the school’s senior assistant principal, by email: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2004)

Almost all students attended private “tuition classes” or had a “tuition teacher”<sup>33</sup> (i.e. private tutor) visit them at home, outside school hours. The purpose of this additional tutoring was to help students cope with school work, and prepare them for the examinations. What frequently happened though was that the tuition teacher did all the homework for the student and discussed the answers to exercises to be done in class in the future. As a result, the students became entirely dependent on the tuition teacher and were unable to do any work on their own. Although the school management discouraged teachers from giving tuition, all expatriate teachers at the school gave private tuition in their free time.

As is typical in most government schools, English teachers at Rural School had a teaching load of three classes each<sup>34</sup>. In addition to this, they were involved in the enrichment classes, and various other extra curricular activities such as drama, a regular essay writing competition, and spelling bee.

At the time of data collection, the school employed 11 English teachers and all 11 teachers agreed to take part in the study. Data was collected from all 11 of them. However, in order to keep within the limitations of this thesis, it was decided that only data from the seven teachers who provided the most data would be included in the reporting of the study. Due to various reasons, some teachers were not observed every week, and some teachers were absent for one or two workshop sessions. The seven teachers included in the study were observed regularly at least once a week, were interviewed twice and attended all the teacher development workshops. The table below shows demographic data of these seven teachers. It shows each teacher’s highest educational qualification, whether they held a teaching qualification (Teach Q), whether they were specifically trained as a language teacher (ELT Q), the number of years they had been teaching (Yrs of Exp), the age at which they started learning English (Age) and the number of classes they taught in the school at the time (No of Classes). All names have been changed in order to maintain anonymity.

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<sup>33</sup> The tuition teacher is often another teacher from the school or from one of the two primary schools on the island. However, many students in grades 10 – 12 as well as those who have completed their schooling also work as “tuition teachers” teaching students in lower grades.

<sup>34</sup> Some teachers teach two subjects, such as English and History; in such cases, teachers are allocated two classes for English, and maybe 1 or 2 classes for the second subject.

**Table 5.** Teacher Demographics, Rural School

Name	Gender	Highest Qualification	Teach Q	ELT Q	Yrs of Exp	Age	No. of classes
Adila	Female	BA in Education	Yes	No	22	3	3
Bakur	Male	BA in Literature	No	No	15	5	3
Cala	Female	MA in English	Yes	No	13	3	4
Dalal	Male	LLB in Law	Yes	Yes	4	5	3
Elma	Female	BA in History	No	No	3	4	2
Fazla	Female	MA in English	Yes	No	4	3	3
Gul	Female	MA in Literature	Yes	No	22	3	3

### *Urban School.*

Urban school is a secondary school in Malé, the capital island of the country, with a student population of around 1900 at the time of data collection. The school was privately owned and mainly funded through student fees, but received some government funding as well. In contrast to the large open places of Rural School which gave it a sense of calmness and tranquillity, Urban School was cramped and noisy. The only open space in the school was a small rectangular area of about 40 x 20 feet. Encircling this area was the grey, concrete six-storey structure that housed the classrooms, offices and laboratories of the school. The classrooms themselves were cramped with rows of graffiti-covered wooden desks and plastic chairs all facing the teacher's desk and blackboard at the front of the class. On one side of the classrooms, a row of windows overlooked the tranquil scene of waves crashing on to the sea wall along the coastline. On the other side was a partial wall of about three feet high which made it possible for the students to see (and be distracted by) what was happening outside the classroom. According to the supervisors, although the partial wall made the noise issue worse, it was easier for the management to monitor what was happening in the classes. I noted in my research journal:

At one point today I noticed that there were three different supervisors at alternate floors, observing the classrooms from the balconies on the other side of the building. As soon as students noticed that their class was being observed in this way, it was amazing how they calmed down and at least pretended to pay attention to the teacher.[RJ.12/8]

The school was managed by a Principal, an assistant principal, and a number of supervisors. From this team of school leaders, only one has received post-secondary education. After a conversation with this supervisor, I noted in my journal:

The school management according to [name of managerial staff] is not the least bit academically inclined. He tells me that this is purely a business venture for them and all they are concerned about is maintaining order and discipline in the school. The school is notorious for its punishments. This morning too, like every other morning, there were about twenty boys lined up in the sun, kneeling down in the sand – for being late to school. Apparently, they will remain there for the duration of the school session, not attending any of the classes all day. [RJ.9/8]

The large majority of the students were from low-income groups, originally from islands outside Malé but had moved to Malé in order to obtain better educational facilities. Often, these students worked for the families with whom they boarded in Malé in order to earn their keep. Many of the students were over-age, and uninterested in studying, attending school purely because their parents sent them. Teachers struggled hard to try and control them – usually without much success.

Students in grades 8 – 10 study science and commerce subjects. Class sizes range from 30 – 48, with an average of 42, which make classrooms extremely cramped and difficult for anyone to move about in.

School was in two sessions. Boys attended the morning session, which began at 6:45am and ended at 12:30pm. Girls attended school in the afternoon session, which began at 12:55pm and continued till 6:25pm. Lessons were divided into 35 minute periods. A bell signalled the end of each period. Teachers rarely attended class on time, with some teachers regularly arriving 10 – 15 minutes late to class. All classes had nine English periods a week, including the library period.

As in Rural School, English was the medium of instruction of all school subjects and students were encouraged to speak in English in and out of class. However, Dhivehi was used by the students in conversing with each other and when speaking with the

managerial staff. Another similarity with Rural School was the high number of students who depended on outside tuition to help them with their schoolwork.

English teachers at Urban School had a teaching load of four classes. Teachers who taught grade 10 were expected to hold an additional two hour lesson for their classes every weekend, focusing exclusively on grammar and vocabulary. The teachers' main concern in this school was that the teaching load was too much for them. Teaching four classes meant 36 teaching periods a week, and only 1-2 "free" periods a day. This "free" time was when the teachers were expected to mark students' work and it was by far inadequate as they each had around 170 students. Another major concern of the teachers was the lack of basic facilities in the school such as photocopying, computing and printing, which meant that their resources were extremely limited.

At the time of data collection, there were 11 English teachers at the school, all of whom were expatriate teachers from India and Sri Lanka. All of these teachers were employed part time at other schools in Malé, and all of them provided private tuition during their free time. Although all 11 teachers agreed to be a part of the research, as in Rural School, only the seven teachers from whom I obtained the most substantial amount of data were included in the reporting of the study. The table below shows the demographic data of the seven teachers at this school.

**Table 6.** Teacher Demographics, Urban School

Name	Gender	Highest Qualification	Teach Q	ELT Q	Yrs of Exp	Age	No. of classes
Hamd	Male	BA in Education	Yes	No	32	10	6
Idris	Male	Certificate in Teaching	Yes	No	44	7	5
Jana	Female	Dip. in Business Admin.	No	No	23	3	4
Komal	Female	Dip. in English	Yes	Yes	37	3	4
Liban	Male	Dip. in English	Yes	Yes	14	8	4
Mika	Male	Certificate in ELT	Yes	Yes	13	4	4
Nur	Male	BA in Literature	Yes	No	25	8	6

It shows each teacher's highest educational qualification, whether they held a teaching qualification (Teach Q), whether they were specifically trained as a language teacher (ELT Q), the number of years they had been teaching (Yrs of Exp), the age at which

they started learning English (Age) and the number of classes they taught in the school at the time (No. of Classes). All names have been changed in order to maintain anonymity.

### *Initiating Contact*

Obtaining and securing access to research sites and participants proved to be an arduous and challenging task. I first attempted to formally obtain a list of all secondary schools in the Maldives, together with the number of teachers who taught English in these schools, through repeated emails to the Ministry of Education (MoE). As this approach was not successful, I sought out personal contacts within the educational sector to help me locate schools, teachers and other documents for the study.

Two such contacts were the then Director General and the Curriculum Co-ordinator at the Educational Development Centre (EDC) in Maldives. Having worked as a Curriculum Developer at the EDC prior to commencing my doctoral studies, I knew them professionally. I requested their help in disseminating the beliefs questionnaire to the teachers in all secondary schools and they accepted willingly, offering to send with the questionnaires an official cover letter to the school heads from the EDC to introduce me and my research.

Another contact, and the main resource I relied upon, was a deputy principal in a rural secondary school. He had served as headmaster and deputy principal in several schools round the country and had been involved in school management for more than twenty five years and therefore had influential contacts throughout the educational sector. He provided me with a list of schools that catered to secondary education, together with an estimated number of English teachers in each of these schools, based on the number of students enrolled at the schools<sup>35</sup>. I received further assistance from this contact in locating schools and teachers to pilot my research instruments, and in

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<sup>35</sup> As a general rule, English teachers take 3-4 classes. Classes usually average 30 students. As the number of students in each grade in each school was available from the *Educational Statistics Handbook 2003*, MoE, estimates of how many English teachers were employed at each school were calculated using these figures.

administering the pilot programmes. Later, he also put me in touch with the heads of the potential schools that I wanted to do my field work in.

As noted previously in the chapter, I employed several criteria in selecting schools for the case studies. Initially I selected five potential schools based on these criteria. I emailed the heads of these schools, introducing myself and explaining the purposes of my research, inviting them to take part in it. I also provided them with a tentative outline of the procedures involved and an estimate of the time that the research would take up from any participating teachers. I received positive feedback from all five schools. Three of these schools were in Malé and two were in outer atolls. I decided to make one of the atoll schools (Rural School) my site for one case study due to the immense amount of support I received from the school management, ensuring me that the teachers were willing to participate in my study.

Originally I had intended to do case studies of three schools: i.e. a government school, a private school and a community school. However, this was not possible, due to the difficulties faced in securing research sites. In one school I was unable to meet with any senior managers, despite several pre-arranged visits to the school. In another school although I was able to meet with the principal and the English Head of Department, they were unsure about my suitability to conduct research, and had concerns over whether I had legitimate approval from the government authorities to conduct my proposed research. In a third school, the principal insisted that teachers did not require professional development workshops, but that I could carry out my study in the school if I changed my research to focus on the students rather than the teachers, and conducted additional classes for the weaker students of the school. In the end, due to such difficulties in obtaining suitable research sites, I decided to concentrate on doing two case studies.

Due to the rejections from these schools, I approached the final school on my list with trepidation. Contrary to my prior experiences, I was warmly welcomed by the principal and senior management of the school. They informed me that like most Maldivian schools, English was the weakest subject in the school and they would be happy to have me work with the English teachers and provide regular feedback to the teachers regarding their observed lessons. However, they stated that due to the lack of

adequate space and time, it may be difficult to organise regular teacher development workshops as I had originally planned. Nevertheless, if I needed the opportunity to speak with all teachers together, they invited me to make use of the fortnightly co-ordination meetings where I was told I could speak with them for about one hour. Furthermore, they requested that I assist them in all matters to do with English during my association with the school, and to downplay my role as a research student because they felt that this may have a negative effect on the teachers who may feel that they were being judged and evaluated. Instead, they offered to introduce me to the teachers as a 'visiting resource person' to work with the English teachers in developing and strengthening the teaching of English in the school, and to mention that I would be using some of the information obtained from the school for my own research purposes. I accepted their conditions and decided to make this the site of my second case study.

During this initial period of securing access to research sites and getting consent from participants, I realised that schools and teachers were very hesitant about being involved in a study of this kind as it was (1) time-consuming, (2) intrusive – i.e. I would be present in class while the teacher was teaching and (3) of little value to the teachers themselves. Despite assuring them that my interests lay not in evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching, this was precisely what most, if not all, the teachers seemed to feel. Many teachers felt that they would need to do something special for the times when I would observe them, and that I would need to give them plenty of advance notice so that they can adequately prepare for being observed. However, once I got to know the teachers in my case study sites better, most teachers approached me to request feedback on their teaching and asked me to suggest different methods or techniques that could be employed to make their teaching better and less monotonous.

I also realised that I needed to broaden my scope for the teacher development project (rather than focus exclusively on teaching grammar through discovery tasks, as I had originally intended) if I wanted teachers to be interested and willing to take part. During the period of initiating contact and planning for the case studies I came to understand that many teachers were unhappy with the level of student participation during their lessons and wanted to move towards a more learner-centred approach to teaching, but were often unsure about how to adapt their teaching in that way. This

was also a concern that a number of teachers had identified in the questionnaire. I therefore decided to focus the professional development programme on the general theme of moving from a transmission-oriented approach towards one that was more constructivist in orientation, paying particular emphasis to the teaching of grammar.

## *Sources of Data*

This study utilised the following sources of data:

1. Questionnaire
2. Structured open-ended interviews
3. Classroom observation
4. Document data (i.e. syllabuses, schemes of work, lesson plans and worksheets)
5. Research journal
6. Tasks/worksheets/evaluation questionnaire completed by teachers at the workshops

## *Questionnaires*

A questionnaire is a self report instrument useful for economically and speedily obtaining data from a large number of respondents (Brown, 2001). In the study of teachers' beliefs and practices, questionnaires have made regular appearances (e.g. MacDonald, Badger, & White, 2001). Questionnaires can be used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. The questionnaire used for this study targeted both, as it contained close-ended sections that required teachers to respond to statements on a five point Likert scale, as well as open-ended questions that invited teachers to describe or comment on an issue in detail.

The beliefs questionnaire used for the study was designed to satisfy two main objectives. Firstly, it attempted to identify the beliefs teachers had regarding grammar and its role in language learning and teaching. Secondly, the questionnaire aimed to obtain information about teachers' reported classroom practices regarding the teaching of grammar. In particular, the instrument was intended to obtain answers to the following questions:

1. How do teachers conceptualise grammar?

2. What role do teachers see grammar playing in the process of language acquisition?
3. What role do teachers think grammar should play in language teaching?
4. How do teachers report they deal with grammar in their own classrooms, particularly with regard to the following:
  - their use of metalanguage
  - their teaching approach and choice of activities
  - error correction
  - amount of time devoted to grammar

Content validity for this survey instrument was established through a review by a panel of experts and a pilot test. The panel of experts consisted of six doctorate students (who were also teaching staff at the University of Auckland) who were asked to examine the clarity, suitability and validity of the instrument. Based on their recommendations, the questionnaire was slightly modified. Some of these modifications included the question wording (e.g. changing the statement ‘The effects of grammar instruction are not durable’ to ‘The effects of grammar instruction are not long lasting’). Some related to the organisation of the questionnaire (e.g. there were several suggestions regarding the order in which the sections should be presented). Some new questions were also added as a result of the feedback received (e.g. ‘Grammar is best learnt incidentally’ was a statement added to Part D of the questionnaire following one reviewer’s recommendation).

The revised questionnaire was piloted in two Maldivian schools, with a total of 19 teachers. In addition to completing the questionnaire, these teachers were also asked to comment on the thoroughness, appropriateness and ease of use of the instrument. Further revisions were made to the questionnaire based on the teachers’ feedback. For example, it was clear from the teachers’ responses that ‘first language’ was an ambiguous term to them, which most teachers took to mean the language that they most often used. Thus the term ‘mother tongue’ was substituted for it. Also, it appeared that teachers had difficulty in following some of the instructions. In such cases, the wording was simplified. Additionally, more space was provided for teachers to respond, as teachers had identified that this had been inadequate.

The following is a description of the final instrument used in the study.

The seven page questionnaire (see Appendix D for complete questionnaire) consisted of a mix of close- and open-ended questions. It was divided into four separate parts. Part A, which sought personal information about the respondents, was included in order to analyse if there were any relationships between teachers' beliefs and educational background, length of teaching experience and/or their own language learning experiences. Part B was designed to elicit responses that would reveal underlying beliefs and shed light on what factors contributed to the development of such beliefs. It asked teachers to provide a definition of what grammar meant to them, requested responses about the role of grammar in learning, and the advantages and disadvantages of grammar instruction. Teachers were also asked to explain how their teaching habits had changed with experience and what factors played the most important role in bringing about this change.

Part C of the questionnaire aimed to obtain teachers' views about what activities they considered to be the most effective in teaching grammar, and to find out how often they utilised these activities in their own teaching. It listed seven typical grammar activities and required the respondents to rate them in two ways: according to their effectiveness and according to how often they personally used the activities in their teaching. The activities listed included the more traditional activities such as written grammar exercises, oral pattern practice drills and explanation of grammar rules, as well as more learner-centred, communicative tasks. To make the terms clearer, a very brief explanation or example was provided for each activity. The activities listed were chosen based on the literature, the kinds of activities that contemporary language teaching coursebooks include, and the type of activities that were believed to be most commonly practised in the schools that were representative of the population. The teachers were also invited to provide a list of any other types of activities that they used and believed to be effective. Question 4 in Part C was designed to find out what factors influenced teachers' choice of approach and the methods of instruction that they chose. Here, the respondents were asked to rank how important each of the given ten factors were to them, in making that decision.

Part D, made up of 35 statements about the teaching and learning of grammar, required the respondents to rate each statement on a given five point scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The 35 statements which reflect some of the key issues in the field, obtained from reviewing the literature, were categorised according to the following:

- The importance of teaching grammar
- Approaches to teaching grammar
- Feedback and error-correction
- Readiness to learn grammar
- Arguments against teaching grammar

Part E, at the end of the questionnaire, invited teachers to add any further comments or suggestions they had regarding the teaching and learning of grammar.

Since the questionnaire targeted all English teachers in Maldivian secondary schools, the data obtained from it was expected to provide an understanding of teachers' views about grammar in this context. It was also expected to help ascertain common approaches to grammar instruction and thereby identify how familiar teachers in general were with inductive approaches to teaching grammar, as this was the innovation that was going to be focused on in the professional development programmes at the case study schools.

### *Interview Data*

Interviewing is one of the most powerful tools used in attempting to understand people's points of view, beliefs and attitudes. Because of its interactive nature, interviewing has many advantages over other types of data collection strategies (Best & Kahn, 1998).

Two types of questions are used in structured open-ended interviews (Best & Kahn, 1998): basic questions and clarification questions. The exact wording of basic questions is predetermined and all interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order. Clarification questions are used when it is necessary to probe the responses to the basic questions.

One-to-one interviewing was chosen as one of the primary methods of data collection in this study for two reasons. Firstly, it provided an ideal means of exploring the beliefs teachers had about grammar in language learning and teaching. By asking questions about teaching approaches, sources of influence and views of teaching, it was anticipated that the underlying beliefs would be articulated. These were then compared with the beliefs that had been stated in the questionnaire. By conducting two separate interviews with each teacher – one at week one and one at week twelve – comparisons were made between the responses in the two interviews, as a form of response triangulation.

Secondly, interviewing helped to establish a rapport with the teachers which greatly assisted in maintaining a healthy amicable relationship during the whole project. Such a rapport helped to bring out detailed information about the teachers' personal beliefs and theories of language learning and teaching; details that might not have been possible to access simply through questionnaires and observations.

Two interviews were conducted with each teacher – the initial interview was conducted prior to the teacher development workshops and the second interview was conducted at the end of the programme. The interviews had five main foci: (1) the teacher's own background of language learning and teaching, (2) the teacher's beliefs about language learning in general, (3) the teacher's approach to grammar, (4) the teacher's beliefs about the role of grammar and (5) the teacher's attitude to change and teacher development. The initial interview covered these aspects in general while questions in the final interview attempted to address these issues through a discussion about the teachers' approach and methods observed during the entire programme (see Appendix E for the complete interview schedules).

In addition to questions that explicitly asked teachers about their beliefs (e.g. "How important do you think grammar is in language learning and teaching?"), attempts were made to ask questions that would elicit stories or narratives from teachers about their experiences (e.g. "Tell me about a good language teacher that you know") or about their theoretical reasoning behind the use of certain approaches and methods (e.g. "Can you explain to me why you began the lesson by [doing x]?"). This approach was adopted because beliefs may not be consciously held, and even if they

were, it may not be possible to verbalise them. As Woods (1996) notes, when a belief is articulated in the abstract as a response to an abstract question, there is a greater chance that it will tend more towards what is expected by the interviewer than what is actually true. In contrast, a belief that is either implicitly or explicitly articulated in the context of an anecdote of a real situation is more likely to be grounded in true behaviour.

The interview schedules used for the study were piloted by administering it to two practising teachers not otherwise involved in the study. Limited changes in wording were made as a result of this piloting, and the new version was further trialled with a third teacher. No difficulties in understanding or interpretation were encountered.

In addition to these two formal interviews with the teachers, regular informal conversations were held, often prior to or following observations. These proved to be valuable opportunities to informally discuss the teaching and learning that occurred in the school, as well as to get to know the teachers better at a more personal level. Teachers would often talk about their teaching without any prompting on my part, and discuss the difficulties they faced as well as shed light on other matters of their professional lives.

### *Classroom Observation Data*

Gebhard (1999) defines classroom observation as “non judgemental description of classroom events that can be analysed and given interpretation” (p. 35). The purpose of observation in the context of the present study was not to evaluate the teaching. Rather, observing the teachers in action allowed a means of assessing the extent to which the teachers’ beliefs and reported practices corresponded to what actually happened in the classroom. It was also a form of data triangulation, particularly because key observations made were discussed with the teachers in follow up discussions as a further attempt at validating the observations. Furthermore, regular lesson observations were a means of assessing the extent to which teachers utilised the suggestions proposed at the teacher development workshops, and of determining the effectiveness of these applications. A minimum of ten hours of lesson observations

were made for each teacher, with a total of over 180 hours of observational data collected for the study.

### *Document Data*

Merriam (1988) defines documents as any form of data not gathered through interviews or observations. Document based data inform research by enhancing the credibility of the research findings and interpretations. Such data can be used to describe, understand and explain how things function at the sample sites. Various forms of document data were collected from the two case-study schools to provide further information regarding the actual practice of teaching English. These included the syllabus being followed, the scheme of work planned for each school term, a random selection of teachers' lesson plans, worksheets and tests as well as photocopies of some of the students' work that had been marked by the teachers.

### *Research Journal*

I recorded all decisions and activities related to the research in a journal, beginning from the time I started contacting schools to find research sites, till I completed my data analysis. During the on-site data collection period, I noted down in my journal everything that happened every day including conversations I had with teachers, my perception of teachers' attitudes at interviews, comments made by students, observations about the school, possible ideas for further investigation, a list of questions to ask teachers, ideas for the workshops, my evaluations of how things went at each workshop, comments/feedback for each teacher and so on. During the data analysis stage, the journal was used to record decisions made regarding coding and the emergence of themes from the codes as well as initial interpretations arising from the analysis.

### *Tasks/Worksheets Completed By Teachers at the Workshops*

Teacher development workshops were conducted at Rural and Urban Schools as this was arguably one of the most effective forms of learning opportunities for teachers (Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). Seven workshops were held at Rural School. I met with the teachers as a group a total of three times at Urban School. Teachers completed various tasks and worksheets during the workshops, including some

reflective writing of their own. These completed tasks were collected at the end of each workshop, and were used during the analysis as they provided valuable information regarding teachers' beliefs and practices. At the end of the final workshop teachers in both schools completed a programme evaluation questionnaire to assess the usefulness of the 12 week project as a whole (see Appendix F for copy of evaluation questionnaire).

### *Role of the Researcher*

At the heart of the qualitative inquiry is the “gendered, multiculturally situated researcher” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 23) whose “gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity” (p. 25). Qualitative research depends on the interpretations offered by the researcher and on the intimate relationships that develop between the researcher and the data. Such investigations demands that the researcher make explicit why the research focus was chosen, what the researcher's views are regarding the focus of the study and what relationships exist between the participants of the study and the researcher (Schram, 2003). Describing the researcher's perspective in this way, it is hoped, will help to achieve auditability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and highlight any possible biases the researcher may have during the investigation, and in reaching the conclusions of the study.

My own perspectives on language learning and my beliefs about effective approaches to its instruction – particularly in the case of teaching grammar – were instrumental in selecting the focus of this study, as pointed out in the Introduction Chapter. In a small scale study with adult ESL learners in New Zealand (Mohamed, 2001), I was able to establish that rule discovery tasks were just as successful as those that begin with an explanation of the rule. Having previously used rule discovery tasks in my own teaching in the Maldives, I was confident that this was a viable approach for the Maldivian context. I acknowledge that my partiality to grammar discovery tasks may influence to some extent my interpretations of teachers' beliefs and practices. However, any qualitative study is subject to researcher bias to some extent, and I have ensured that the results and interpretations are as trustworthy as possible.

My role in the study was partly that of a non-participant observer (when observing teachers during teaching), and partly that of a teacher educator (in terms of the professional development programme). I believe that as I was familiar with the educational context I was in a good position to create a professional development programme that was suitable to the context. However, as I was a language teacher myself and as I played a facilitative rather than an authoritative role, I hoped that I was viewed by the participating teachers as a colleague rather than an “expert”. The fact that I conducted the study for the purposes of my research as a doctoral student, and not as a figure of any authority in the Maldivian educational system did on the one hand help to maintain such a collegial relationship with the teachers. On the other hand, my lack of authority and novice teacher educator role in the project is likely to have negatively impacted the uptake process.

The following assumptions underlie the present study:

1. Instruction in Maldivian schools is highly textbook driven and exam oriented; following a transmission approach to teaching.
2. Grammar constitutes a considerable part of the English lessons.
3. The teachers involved in this study had not followed a discovery approach to teaching, and could therefore benefit from professional development that raises awareness about such an approach and guides them in adapting to such an approach.
4. The teachers would be able to develop and implement inductive instruction as a result of professional development.
5. Inductive instruction is a relevant, appropriate and viable approach to use in the context.
6. Participants openly shared their stories in responding to interviews and questionnaires.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

Approval to undertake the research was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Subject Ethics Committee (Ref 2003/173 & Ref 2004/050). Copies of participant information sheets and consent forms are contained in Appendix G. Information about the research was given to the teachers and their consent was

obtained, assuring them about their anonymity, to ensure that they were not compromised in any way.

### *Questionnaire Survey*

As the EDC had offered to distribute the survey questionnaires to the schools, 100 questionnaire packs were forwarded to the EDC in August 2003. Each pack, addressed to an individual school contained the following:

1. a cover letter to the school head from the EDC.
2. a participant information sheet to the school head from myself, explaining the purposes of the survey study as well as the procedure involved, and inviting the school to take part in the research.
3. consent forms for the school heads to sign and return with the completed questionnaires
4. participant information sheets for each individual teacher, outlining the purposes of the survey study and inviting the teacher to take part in the research.
5. consent forms for the teachers to sign and return with their completed questionnaires.
6. a questionnaire for every English teacher in the school.
7. an envelope for each teacher in which to seal their completed questionnaire.

Schools were instructed to return the completed questionnaires back to the EDC by post before the end of December 2003. These were then posted to me in New Zealand by air mail. Completed questionnaires were received from 197 teachers in 51 schools.

### *Case Study 1*

Rural School was the site for the first case study. The data collection period constituted the second school term of the 2004 academic year. This section describes the data collection procedures and provides details about the professional development workshops that were run in the school.

At the initial meeting with all 11 English teachers and two senior management staff, I provided an overview of the research study, explaining that I would like to organise a

12 week professional development programme in the school which would involve regular observations, interviews and workshops. The programme would be aimed at reflecting on current practice and focus on ways to make it better. All teachers consented to participate in the study. I emphasised that I would like the professional development programme to be beneficial to the teachers, and encouraged them to approach me with topics and/or ideas they would like to see addressed at the workshops. The teachers did not want any prior notice about lessons that would be observed, but I did ask teachers to inform me in advance if they planned to teach grammar in a particular class, so that I could attend that lesson.

After this initial meeting, I was given copies of all teachers' timetables and copies of the schemes of work by the senior assistant principal. While I was at his office, Gul – one of the teachers at the school – arrived, asking if she could speak with me in private. Outside the office, she told me that she was a very experienced teacher who had worked in only the best schools in her native country and had attended many workshops in her time. She emphasised that she was willing to be a part of the study, but that she felt that I should know that she did not teach grammar at all. I explained to her that all I was interested in doing was to see what teachers actually did, so it did not matter whether someone taught grammar or not. She inquired about my age and qualifications, and confessed that even though she – and many of her colleagues – had agreed to be a part of the study out of courtesy, they were unconvinced about whether someone half her age and with limited experience could really introduce something new and better; whether I would have anything to say about teaching that they had not previously heard. I offered her the choice to opt out of the study, but she maintained that she wished to participate, but wanted me to know how she felt, anyway.

I conducted weekly observations of each teacher from the first week till the end of the term. I visited the school every day, usually arriving during the second or third period (unless a teacher had requested me to observe before that) and staying on till late in the afternoon. Normally I observed 3 – 4 classes a day (double-period lessons, if possible), but spent a lot of time in between in the school library because this gave me the opportunity to meet and speak with the teachers informally, which helped me immensely in understanding them and their teaching approaches. While I was at the library, several students also approached me, either with a request to help them with

some language related work, or to voluntarily offer information about their teachers and views about language learning.

I was present in the classes as a non-participant observer, which involved observing classroom interaction and taking notes but not contributing to the interaction itself (Van Lier, 1997). I would enter the classroom with the teacher and then sit at the back of the class and take field notes. My notes, made on lined A4 sized paper, included observations of every event that occurred during the lesson, as well as specific quotes from the teacher when I felt that this was important. I also included notes relating to my feelings/comments about the events that occurred. For example, I noted down that a teacher corrected a student's oral grammar error, together with my own comment: *why not let someone else correct the error?* I also copied down material from the blackboard when I felt it was necessary and would be useful for later analysis. I did not interfere with the lesson or speak, unless the teacher or a student directed a question at me. At times when the students were involved in their own work and the teacher was moving round the class/was seated at the front of the class, I would walk round and observe the students' work, although I did not comment at any stage. If any handouts were given, I was usually provided with a copy too. Occasionally at the end of the lesson I collected students' notebooks at random and studied these, making photocopies when necessary. In studying student work, I was particularly interested in the kind of activities that were done, and the teacher's feedback (e.g. underlining, corrections and comments). Occasionally, audio-recordings of lessons were also made, with the teacher's verbal consent. Each teacher was observed weekly for 12 weeks.

At the end of the first week, I attended the weekly meeting of English teachers, held to decide and plan work for the upcoming week, and to discuss any other important issues. The meeting was usually attended by a senior management staff, but was run by the HoD.

Everyone seemed to think it was a bit strange that I was there tonight, they kept telling me that this was "just a meeting to plan next week's work" and asking me why I wanted to "observe a meeting." [The assistant principal] even went so far as telling me to say: "We can let Naashia say what she wants first, and then she can leave." (!) I explained that I didn't have anything particular to

say, but that I was merely there to see what was being planned for the next week. ... As it turned out, the “planning” involved the HoD stating that they would continue with imaginative writing for the next week, and that was that. No other discussion took place regarding teaching/lesson plans. For the next 40 minutes, they talked about the upcoming competitions in the school and who would be responsible for what. [RJ.6/5]

While at the meeting, I also made appointments with all teachers for the coming week’s interviews. The time of the interview was decided by the individual teachers.

Initial teacher interviews were conducted by myself during the second week. The interviews took place in the audio-visual room of the school (which needed to be pre-booked) as it was sound-proof and had air conditioning<sup>36</sup>. At the beginning of each interview, teachers’ consent was obtained (verbally) to audio record the interview. Teachers were also reminded that they could discontinue the recording at any point if they wished. Occasionally a teacher would request to discontinue the recording, or would add to the discussion after the formal aspects of the interview were completed and the tape recorder was switched off. In such cases, I requested the teacher’s permission to note down their responses. The interviews took between 30 – 60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English, audio taped and transcribed.

Both the teachers and the school management suggested that the weekend would be the ideal time to conduct the workshops. I had initially planned to begin the workshops at the end of the third week, but at (literally) the last hour, I was informed that the teachers were too busy to attend the workshop that weekend and was asked to postpone it to the next week, which I did. In the meantime, I had inquired from teachers about what they would like to see happening in these workshops, as I emphasised that this needed to be a joint effort, and not a place for the teachers to come and listen to me give a three hour lecture on a topic that was of no interest to them. I received a lot of feedback (with much prodding, though!) regarding the content to be covered. Perhaps it was because the teachers were aware of my interest in grammar, but several teachers mentioned that they always taught grammar

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<sup>36</sup> All other rooms in the school had ceiling fans, the noise from which interfered with the sound quality of the audio recordings.

separately and did not incorporate grammar into other aspects of teaching (e.g. in a reading or writing lesson). They requested that I discuss different ways of dealing with grammar and ways in which grammar can be focused on in skills-based lessons. Another popular request was how to make their teaching more learner-centred, and how to make students respond in class (as I mentioned before, the students were extremely passive in this school, and often do not respond to teachers' questions). Other requests included assessing written work, increasing student motivation and dealing with disciplinary issues.

The workshops were held in the audio-visual room of the school and I used a combination of PowerPoint presentations, handouts, worksheets, pair and whole group discussions as well as other activities adapted from teacher development resource books such as James (2001), Tanner & Green (1998) and Head & Taylor (1997). Appendix H contains some sample activities used for the workshops. Each workshop lasted about three hours, with a 15 minute break in between. Refreshments were provided by the school for the break. I conducted seven workshops in total, each focusing on a different language skill/area, but with the recurrent theme of adapting to a constructivist approach to teaching.

I adopted a problem solving approach in the design and delivery of the workshops so as to involve the teachers as much as possible in the process. As Palmer (1993, p. 168) notes, such an approach involves teachers in "relaying personal teaching problems, recounting personal experience, and accessing previously acquired knowledge" while the teacher developer suggests possible solutions and collectively they negotiate a context-based, teacher-specific programme that is relevant to their needs. It was hoped that since such an approach necessitates the teachers to be actively involved and make an investment in the development of the programme, they would be more committed to implementing the proposed change.

Each workshop followed a similar pattern, so as to build a sense of continuity and predictability that the teachers can find comforting (Peery, 2004). They always started with a reflective writing session, moving on to the main segment of the workshop, and usually ended with a group discussion. The main segment of the workshop included a number of different awareness-raising activities (Ellis, 1986) and utilised a variety of

data types such as lesson transcripts, coursebook extracts, samples of student work, lessons plans and readings from the literature. The workshops are described in detail below.

### *Workshop One.*

#### (1) Reflecting on Ourselves as Teachers

I began the series of workshops with this topic, for several reasons. I felt it essential that teachers (a) were aware of why they taught English – i.e. what their main objectives were; (b) and what they already did well; (c) were able to reflect on what they would like to do better, and (d) consider ways in which this could be achieved. I had designed a series of tasks to be completed by the teachers (either individually or in groups) that reflected these aims of the workshop. I felt that the teachers were very subdued and not as responsive as I would have liked them to be. But I put this down to being the first session with me, and the fact that the assistant principal had also decided to stay on for the session.

I also made some general comments on my classroom observations so far, highlighting why I felt that change was necessary.

#### (2) Moving from Transmission to Constructivism

After a brief break, I moved on to my second focus, which reflected the change that I felt was necessary to make: moving from a transmission model of teaching to one that was more constructivist and discovery oriented. Five minutes into my presentation, however, I was interrupted by the school's assistant principal, who commented that my ideas and suggestions for change would not be applicable to the school<sup>37</sup>. He went on to explain that the reason why teachers in Rural School did not practice these teaching models and approaches was not because they were unaware of them, but because these were not approaches that could be adopted by a Maldivian school. His argument was backed up by all the teachers, who agreed with him that it would be impossible to create a student-centred learning environment in that particular school

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<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that prior to the workshops, I had discussed the programme with the school's senior assistant principal, who had approved of the workshop activities and proposed changes.

because the students were so passive and would find such approaches new and bewildering.

Even though we had moved away from the schedule I had planned for the session, the discussion that ensued was very interesting as I could see how unconvinced these teachers were of the value of a different approach in their school.

At this point, we were near the end of the set time for the session, and I explained to the teachers that I obviously did not want to impose on them something that they felt was unworkable in their situation but would rather concentrate on something that they felt would be beneficial to them. I explained that many teachers had previously requested that I address the issue of how to make their teaching more learner-centred and that this was one of the reasons why I was suggesting such a change.

The assistant principal explained that their main focus was to get as many passes in the O/level examination as possible, and that this was perhaps a better topic for discussion at the workshops. He suggested that with that target in mind, I could come up with a series of activities to be done in class, and focus the workshops on how to get students to succeed in the examinations. He further explained that teachers were finding it difficult to find interesting activities to do with the enrichment classes – activities which were both fun and useful – and could I also come up with activities for these enrichment classes?

I explained that this was not my intended focus, and reminded him of what was involved when the school had agreed to take part in my study. The HoD commented that my study was to do with grammar, and that in Rural School, they did not deal with grammar. She suggested that it would be more useful if I dealt with reading and writing skills and how to teach these skills. Realising that I needed to arrive at a compromise, I suggested the following:

- (a) that I continue with weekly workshops, focusing on a different topic every week, including grammar and the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking;
- (b) that in each workshop, the main focus would be on how to make learning more student-centred and discovery-oriented in relation to the topic being discussed;

- (c) that I would work with the teachers at the workshops to design suitable teaching activities to be used in their classrooms;
- (d) that I would, in my own time, and through discussions with teachers, make a list of suggestions for the school's language enrichment programme.

This appeared to be a suitable proposition to both the assistant principal and the teachers, and we agreed to go ahead. Before ending the session, I asked the teachers to choose a topic for the next workshop. They suggested grammar.

*Workshop two: teaching grammar through discovery – theory and research*

I began this workshop session with a task. I invited teachers to describe (first in writing, then through group sharing) their best grammar lesson in the past, explaining why they considered it to be their best. The results of this task further enhanced my understanding of their beliefs about language teaching and learning. Following this task, I moved on to introducing the theory and research behind discovery tasks, making clear what I meant by a discovery task. My aims at this workshop session were: (a) to summarise the main theoretical reasons for including a focus on grammar in language teaching; and (b) to present relevant research which studied the effectiveness of discovery grammar tasks, paying special attention to the work I did with students in their own school<sup>38</sup>. Sharing this research evidence was very important to me as it helped to strengthen my case for the effectiveness of inductive grammar instruction. I hoped that by being given evidence of their effectiveness in the teacher's own school context would help to reassure the teachers of its feasibility. As Guskey (2000) argues, teachers need evidence that an innovation works and that it

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<sup>38</sup> I felt that it was essential to demonstrate to the teachers that discovery learning works, and that it works for the students in their own school too. If this was not demonstrated with their own students, it would have been far too easy for the teachers to simply dismiss this approach to teaching grammar as unworkable in their school context. Therefore I did a small experimental study using three groups of students in Rural School, comparing the relative effectiveness of teaching grammar through rule discovery tasks and through rule explanation. Students were tested before instruction and one week after instruction. Discovery tasks were seen to lead to significantly higher scores in the post test. The students also completed a brief questionnaire at the end of the instruction, instructing them to rate the treatment in terms of their relative difficulty, interest and usefulness for learning. Discovery tasks were rated by the students as being more interesting although slightly more difficult than rule explanation. Both treatments were judged to be useful by the students. Further details of the experimental study are included in Appendix J.

positively affects student learning before they are ready to adopt it. This was the evidence that I intended to provide by sharing the research findings in this workshop.

### *Workshop Three: Teaching Grammar through Discovery – applications*

Having discussed the theoretical reasoning for a discovery approach the previous week, in this second workshop on grammar, I focused on the application of teaching grammar. I wanted teachers to be fully aware of what kinds of activities involve grammar discovery. Therefore I took copies of various grammar activities from coursebooks and got teachers to discuss these various methods of teaching grammar, considering the advantages and disadvantages of each. I proceeded to then show examples of what I considered to be good grammar discovery tasks (see Appendix I), explaining how I would utilise them in the classroom. I then invited teachers to choose a grammar structure that they would be teaching in the near future, and to design a discovery task that they could use with their students to teach this structure. Getting teachers to design a task in this way was important to try and get teachers to gain a sense of ownership for the innovation, by being involved in adapting an idea to suit their own unique teaching situation.

### *Workshop Four: Teaching Reading Skills*

The main aims of this workshop session were as follows: (a) to discuss ways in which the teaching of reading could be made more effective and learner-centred; (b) to discuss ways in which the scope of such lessons could be broadened; and (c) to design a series of reading tasks. The practical tasks that the teachers carried out at this session included designing reading lessons (including pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities) based on the material that was provided to them.

### *Workshop Five: Teaching Writing Skills*

The main aims of this workshop session were as follows: (a) to discuss ways in which the teaching of writing could be made more learner-centred; (b) to consider the different stages of a writing lesson, and (c) to discuss how to evaluate students' writing and offer constructive feedback. Prior to the workshop I had collected various

written work from various students' notebooks in the school. These were the basis of the group discussion, with teachers assessing these pieces of writing, and discussing the best methods of evaluation. The discussion that ensued focused to a large extent on the grammatical errors in the writing and how such errors should be dealt with when giving feedback to the student.

### *Workshop Six: Teaching Listening and Speaking Skills*

I began the workshop by asking teachers to recount the last listening/speaking activity they had done with their students. Listening and speaking activities are almost never done in Rural School, and many teachers had difficulty in trying to remember the last time they had set up a listening or speaking activity themselves. One of the teachers – Adila – questioned the need to have separate listening activities “when they get enough listening practice by listening to the teacher talk.” The reasons they give for not focusing on these skills include: (a) that these are not tested at the examination; (b) the students are too passive to speak in class, and (c) the school does not have adequate resources such as listening tapes, etc. This workshop session therefore, focused on: (a) why it was necessary to include these skills in the schemes of work; (b) how to set up and conduct a listening/speaking activity, and (c) a range of possible activities that practiced these skills, but required minimal preparation or external resources.

### *Workshop Seven: Putting it All Together*

In this final workshop, I wanted to bring together all the important elements discussed in the five previous sessions, and I also wanted to discuss how much (if at all) teachers had changed their teaching during the programme. Part of the workshop focused on developing a scheme of work that would incorporate the ideas discussed in the previous six weeks. As this was the final workshop of the programme, the reflective writing focused on changes. For this activity I asked teachers to write about changes that they have made in their teaching. I asked them to focus on two types of changes: (1) a change that they had made in the past, and one that had remained with them to the present, explaining why and how they adapted to it, and (2) a change, however small, that they may have made in the course of the current school term, explaining why they made the change, and how they had been adapting to it. The

teachers then shared these reflections with the group. At the end of the session, the teachers completed a programme evaluation questionnaire (see Appendix F).

In addition to the group feedback on their teaching that was discussed at the workshops, during week three of the project, I met with each of the teachers individually to provide personalised feedback regarding the lessons that I had observed, commenting especially on how teachers could move away from a transmission model of teaching and adapt their current methods to make them more student-friendly and discovery-oriented. In addition to this I often met with teachers informally and talked to them about their teaching, providing feedback on observations if they so requested.

During the period I spent at the school, as there was a serious shortage of English teachers, I also taught a P8 class at the school for five weeks as well as an enrichment class for the grade 10 students (at the request of the HoD), which was observed by all the morning session teachers at the school. I taught a grammar lesson using a rule discovery task for the grade 10 class.

At the end of the 12 week programme, I conducted final interviews with the teachers, and provided each with a written feedback sheet. The final interviews were conducted in the same way as the initial interviews, but focused more on the lessons that I had observed for each teacher.

The table below summarises the data collection schedule followed at Rural School.

**Table 7. Data Collection Schedule, Rural School**

When	What	Why
Week 1	First meeting with teachers	To outline purposes and procedures of research; to obtain informed consent.
Week 1 - 12	Weekly lesson observations	To understand how teachers deal with grammar in the classroom.
Week 2	Initial interviews	To inquire about teachers' beliefs about grammar.
Week 3 - 8	Conducted experimental study designed	To demonstrate the effectiveness of grammar discovery tasks.
Week 3	Individual feedback sessions	To provide feedback on their teaching, with particular emphasis on making their teaching more learner-centred.
Week 4 - 10	Weekly teacher development workshops	To reflect on what teachers already do well, and what can be done better. To introduce the concepts of constructivism and discovery learning; and to discuss ways in which their teaching can be adapted to these methods. To discuss different ways in which grammar can be taught; to emphasise the effectiveness of grammar discovery tasks; to allow teachers the opportunity to design discovery tasks of their own
Week 12	Final interviews	To inquire about teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar and their attitudes towards the teacher development programme; to provide feedback to all teachers, based on observations made.

### *Case Study 2*

Urban School was the site of the second case study. The data collection period constituted the third term of the academic year 2004. The initial meeting with the teachers during the first week was to provide an overview of the professional development programme, which included weekly observations followed by regular

one-on-one discussions with the teachers. I was very warmly welcomed by the teachers at this initial meeting, and many teachers stayed on to speak with me individually, to voice their concerns and difficulties. They appeared to be eager to “learn new things” and to have the opportunity to get regular feedback on their teaching.

Almost all the teachers appear to be very positive towards me being here – which makes a nice change from [Rural School]! They are eager to discuss a lesson after I have observed them and ask about ways in which they can make it better for the next class. Of course as soon as I suggest something, they almost always find an excuse not to do it that way, but at least they are willing to listen to what I have to say! The students too are very curious about who I am and what I am doing here, and keep asking me to come to their class to observe their teacher, often adding that the teacher “can’t teach properly” or “is useless”!! [RJ.10/8]

Weekly classroom observations were started on the first week and continued for 12 weeks. Like in Rural School, I visited the school every day, often arriving during the second or third period, and staying on till the late afternoon. The school had invited me to use a spare room, which served as a waiting area between the principal’s office and the staffroom, as an “office” and this was where I spent most of my time when I was not observing lessons. Often teachers would drop in for a chat while I was there, and I was able to speak with them informally and get to know them better.

Initial teacher interviews were conducted during the second week. These were conducted in the room described above, as there appeared to be no other space available in the school. There was however no door to this room and the noise from the classrooms drifted in, in accompaniment to an equally noisy ceiling fan and the chatter of the teachers from the staffroom next door. The sound quality of the audio-recordings of the interviews was therefore very poor.

I met all teachers for a second time in week three, for 90 minutes after their fortnightly co-ordination meeting where they discussed the work to be done in the coming fortnight. At this meeting, I made some general comments about the teaching I had observed in the few weeks I was there, and put forward my suggestions for

improving teaching, and thereby learning. I discussed the concepts of constructivism and discovery learning, and talked about ways in which teachers could adapt their teaching to incorporate these approaches. I also highlighted the importance of teaching grammar, and discussed various ways in which grammar could be focused on, emphasising the effectiveness of discovery tasks, discussing the results of the experimental study that was conducted at Rural School. As I had only a very limited amount of time at this meeting, I explained that I would be going into more detail in subsequent meetings and in follow up one-on-one sessions.

The third meeting, which also lasted 90 minutes, took place in week five, following the coordination meeting. At this meeting, I presented teachers with copies of various grammar activities from coursebooks and got teachers to discuss these various methods of teaching grammar, considering the advantages and disadvantages of each. I proceeded to then show examples of what I considered to be good grammar discovery tasks, explaining how I would utilise them in the classroom. I then invited teachers to think about a grammar structure that they would be teaching in the near future, and to design a discovery task that they could use with their students to teach this structure, adding that I would be happy to discuss this with them in our one-on-one meetings.

I arranged regular individual sessions with the teachers where I discussed with them different ways in which they could approach discovery teaching of grammar, based on their students and the topics to be taught. After two one-on-one sessions with each teacher, I did not make further arrangements to meet with the teachers, because I wanted to leave it up to them. I did however make it clear to them that they were welcome to approach me if they wished. Several teachers did continue to regularly meet me individually and with these teachers I continued to offer feedback and assistance. On average, five one-on-one sessions were held with each teacher.

A final group meeting with the teachers was held at the end of week nine to comment on the programme as a whole and to highlight the progress made during that time. Final observations and interviews were carried out in week ten, which concluded the data collection period at the school. The table below summarises the data collection schedule followed at Urban School.

**Table 8. Data Collection Schedule, Urban School**

When	What	Why
Week 1	First meeting with teachers	To outline purposes and procedures of research; to obtain informed consent.
Week 1 - 12	Lesson observations	To understand how teachers deal with grammar in the classroom.
Week 2	Initial interviews	To inquire about teachers' beliefs about grammar.
Week 3	Second meeting with teachers	To introduce the concepts of constructivism and discovery learning; and to discuss ways in which their teaching can be adapted to these methods. To discuss different ways in which grammar can be taught; to emphasise the effectiveness of grammar discovery tasks.
Week 5	Third meeting with teachers	To discuss different ways in which grammar can be taught. To emphasise the effectiveness of grammar discovery tasks.
Week 4 - 10	Teacher development sessions held individually with teachers	To reflect on what teachers already do well, and what can be done better. To provide feedback on observations made, with particular emphasis on how teachers attempted to adapt to constructivist teaching. To discuss how to adapt discovery teaching to suit their students. To discuss potential problems with using discovery methods, and how to deal with them.
Week 10	Final meeting with teachers	To discuss observations and progress made as well as further suggestions for the future. To obtain feedback from teachers on the programme.

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Week 12	Final interviews	To inquire about teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar and their attitudes towards the teacher development programme; to provide feedback to all teachers, based on observations made.
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## *Data Analysis*

### *Quantitative Data*

The quantitative data for this study included teacher responses to the close-ended questions on the teacher beliefs survey questionnaire and the programme evaluation questionnaire. These responses were entered into a data file and analysed statistically using the computer software program Statistical Package for Social Sciences, v.11 (SPSS). Statistical analyses carried out on the data included a confirmatory factor analysis and the calculation of descriptive statistics.

### *Qualitative Data*

Most of the data collected was qualitative. This included all open-ended responses to the questionnaires, interview transcriptions, field notes, researcher diary, and document data. The procedure for analysing all qualitative data was the same. Each data set (i.e. interview transcripts, field notes, etc) was read several times to gain some sense of the main ideas being expressed. The data was then coded and analysed manually, as described below.

Coding has been defined as the process of assigning low-inference descriptive tags to units of information. The process is carried out as a way of reducing data into easily locatable segments. "Incidents," according to Guba & Lincoln (1994) are the smallest "units of information" in a text that can stand by themselves. Such "incidents" were first identified and then assigned codes. Once they were assigned codes, they were analysed to discover patterns or categories between the codes. This was done in two ways: horizontally (i.e. by analysing the codes of all the participants for a particular question); and vertically (i.e. by comparing the codes of a single participant's data corpus). One teacher's answer to QA11 in the questionnaire will be used as an example to show the process of data analysis. The question was: Please describe your

own language learning experiences. The example given below shows how T4A's response to this question were first broken down into codes (1 – 15), and then compared and reduced to higher level groupings or categories (given in brackets).

*QA11: Codes & Categories for T4A*

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Started learning at an early age                            | (Age at which learning began)    |
| 2. at a missionary school                                      | (Where learning took place)      |
| 3. enthusiastic teacher  | (Influence of teacher)           |
| 4. teacher inculcated an interest in the lang.                 | (Influence of teacher)           |
| 5. there was also a lot of reading                             | (Teaching/learning techniques)   |
| 6. reading done both for personal pleasure                     | (Teaching/learning techniques)   |
| 7. and for academic.   | (Teaching/learning techniques)   |
| 8. The language developed because of the natural perspicacity. | (Reason for language dev't.)     |
| 9. Vocabulary booster lists helped a lot                       | (Teaching/learning techniques)   |
| 10. continuous exposure to the [native speakers]               | (Teaching/learning techniques)   |
| 11. particularly British people                                | (High regard for British people) |
| 12. mass media helped too                                      | (Teaching/learning techniques)   |
| 13. my English teacher chose me                                | (Influence of teacher)           |
| 14. to correct all my classmates' mistakes                     | (Teaching/learning techniques)   |
| 15. I relished this opportunity.                               | (Attitudes towards learning)     |

What became clear after analysing this question was the need to differentiate between techniques employed by the teacher (e.g. 5. there was a lot of reading) and those learning techniques opted for by the learner (e.g. codes 10, 11 and 12). Also, it was necessary to separate techniques that were helpful in the learning process from those that had a negative impact on the learner. In the given example, all the techniques listed are positive. Yet many other participants wrote about both successful and unsuccessful learning/teaching techniques.

Some codes figured in multiple categories. This applied to ambiguous cases which could be applicable to more than one category. For example, code 9. "vocabulary booster lists helped a lot" does not make clear whether it was a technique employed

by the teacher or the learner, thus it was included under teaching techniques as well as learning techniques. Codes 10 and 11 above were also in multiple categories. This was because they applied equally under the category “learning techniques” as well as under “contact with native speakers.”

Once all the data was coded and categorised, they were organised into still higher level groupings, or themes. Thus the categories shown in the example above informed the theme “early learning experiences.” Because there appeared to be much more data than could be addressed within the limitations of the study, I decided to select themes that were most relevant to the research questions of the study, and for which there was substantial data. These were often informed by the questions in the questionnaire or interview. For example, “early learning experiences”, “meaning of grammar”, “role of grammar”, and “teaching approach”, were some of the main issues addressed in the questionnaire and interviews, and were also some of the major themes that arose from the data analysis and reduction.

Peer debriefing was carried out as a means of strengthening the trustworthiness of the analysis and interpretation. A fellow doctoral student, who was otherwise unrelated to the research, carried out coding and data reduction on a small sample from the interview data, using the method described above. The results of her analysis largely matched my original attempts.

### *Summary*

This chapter has presented and evaluated the research design, research instruments, and data collection procedures used in this study which sought to investigate the effects of professional development on teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding grammar instruction. Descriptions of processes of coding and analysis were provided to strengthen trustworthiness and transparency. The results of the data gathered from the survey questionnaire are presented in the next chapter. Chapter 6 will focus on the two case studies, and report on the data from the second phase of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Teachers' Beliefs & Reported Practices

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### *Introduction*

This chapter presents the results of the survey questionnaire that was completed by 197 teachers from 51 schools in the Maldives. The data obtained from the questionnaire will contribute towards answering the following research questions of the study:

1. a) What beliefs do English teachers in Maldivian secondary schools hold about L2 grammar, its acquisition and methods of instruction?  
b) What factors are responsible for shaping teachers' knowledge and beliefs?
2. a) How do Maldivian secondary school teachers deal with grammar in the English classroom?

The results will be presented in two main sections. The first will deal mainly with quantitative data exploring the general beliefs teachers have regarding the learning and teaching of grammar, the type of grammar activities that they use, and the factors that influence their teaching approach. The results in the second section are largely qualitative, supplemented where necessary with descriptive statistics. The results presented in the second section will focus on teachers' own language learning experiences, their beliefs about grammar and its role in instruction, the teaching approach they adopted as well as the difficulties they encountered in teaching grammar.

### *Quantitative Results*

#### *General Beliefs about Learning and Teaching Grammar*

Part D of the questionnaire, made up of 35 statements about the teaching and learning of grammar, required teachers to rate each statement on a given five point scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). These 35 items were

subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis, using the principal components method of extraction.

The confirmatory factor analysis was carried out as a means of validating this section of the questionnaire, to determine if the number of factors and the loadings on them conformed to what was expected on the basis of the pre-established five categories that were used in designing the questionnaire.

Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above, thus indicating the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .720, exceeding the recommended value of .6 and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant at .000, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

The principal components analysis revealed the presence of twelve components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 63.81% of the total variance. During the designing of Part D of the questionnaire, the 35 statements were categorised into five different categories. I therefore decided to retain five components for further investigation and to perform a confirmatory analysis to ascertain if the five components produced by the factor analysis correlated to the five original categories of the questionnaire. Varimax rotation was performed to aid in the interpretation of these components.

The results of the rotated solution (see Table 9 below) show the presence of a number of strong loadings, and all but one variable loading substantially on only one component. The five factor solution explained a total of 39.357% of the variance, with Component 1 contributing the majority at 12.57%. The factor analysis broadly supports the construct validity of this section of the questionnaire. C1 – C4 all match closely with four of the original categories.

**Table 9. Varimax Rotation of Five Factor Solution.**

No	Description	C 1	C 2	C 3	C 4	C 5
15	It is essential that students are familiar with grammatical terminology.	.705				
33	The primary role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point.	.697				
28	Students will learn grammar better if they understand grammatical terminology.	.674				
11	Grammar should be the main component of any teaching syllabus.	.660				
18	It is important to focus on grammar in all lessons.	.601				
29	Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how the structure works.	.565				
5	Grammar can be successfully taught without the use of extensive grammatical terminology.	-.506				
13	It is best to teach grammar intensively rather than extensively.	.505				
20	It is more important to teach grammar to beginners than to advanced learners.	.473				
8	Grammar is best learned naturally through trying to communicate.		.878			
7	Grammar is best acquired unconsciously through meaningful communication.		.864			
1	A learner can acquire a second or foreign language without grammar instruction.		.599			
17	It is important to correct all grammatical errors in students' oral work.			.645		
19	It is important to identify all grammatical errors in students' written work.			.609		
16	It is important for students to be given the right answers after an exercise/test.			.579		
12	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct errors.				.641	
21	Regular practice ensures that grammar is quickly and successfully acquired.				.532	
3	Attention to grammar ensures that students become aware of how the language works				.531	
4	Explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language.				.511	
34	Teaching grammar enables students to produce more complex sentences.				.491	
14	It is better for students to figure out for themselves why their answer was wrong.					.642
22	Students generally do not learn the grammatical structures they are taught.					.638
24	Students rarely become error-free because English grammar is very complex.					.624
25	Students should be given the opportunity to work out rules from examples.			.437		.525

*Note.* Only loadings above .3 are displayed

Component 1, the strongest of the five, deals with different aspects of teaching grammar and can be broadly described as teaching approach. Table 10 below shows the frequency counts for each item included in this component; i.e. the number of teachers who strongly disagreed (SD), disagreed (D), were neutral (N), agreed (A) or strongly agreed (SA) to each statement. N denotes the total number of teachers who responded to each statement.

**Table 10.** Descriptive Statistics for Component 1, Teaching Approach.

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	A	SA
15	It is essential that students are familiar with the correct grammatical terminology.	193	7	39	31	81	35
28	Students will learn grammar better if they understand grammatical terminology.	197	13	53	29	78	24
33	The main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point.	196	13	54	29	83	17
11	Grammar should be the main component of any teaching syllabus.	196	13	52	40	58	33
5	Grammar can be successfully taught without extensive grammatical terminology.	197	16	33	27	98	23
13	It is best to teach grammar intensively rather than extensively.	195	23	76	19	56	21
18	It is important to focus on grammar in all lessons.	197	13	55	35	72	22
29	Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how the structure works.	197	8	41	32	98	18
20	It is more important to teach grammar to beginners than to advanced learners.	197	13	47	21	67	49

*Note.* No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

The majority of teachers agreed/strongly agreed with each of the statements in this component, except in the case of statement 13, It is better to teach grammar intensively rather than extensively. It must be noted that statement 5, Grammar can be successfully taught without extensive grammatical terminology, loaded negatively to this component.

Component 2, which includes two of the highest loading variables, make the anti-grammar case and could therefore be described as arguments against teaching grammar. Observing the frequency counts in Table 11 below, it can be seen that teachers had very strong responses to these statements, particularly statements 8 and 7 with only a very small number choosing neutral. The majority of teachers agreed/strongly agreed with statements 7 and 8 while teachers mainly disagreed/strongly disagreed with statement 1.

**Table 11.** Descriptive Statistics for Component 2, Arguments Against Teaching Grammar

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	A	SA
1	A learner can acquire a second or foreign language without grammar instruction.	196	32	71	14	44	35
7	Grammar is best acquired unconsciously through meaningful communication.	197	4	84	4	52	53
8	Grammar is best learned naturally through trying to communicate.	197	4	91	1	49	52

*Note.* No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

**Table 12.** Descriptive Statistics for Component 3, Feedback and Error Correction.

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	A	SA
16	It is important for students to be given the right answers after an exercise/test.	197	2	2	1	99	93
17	It is important to correct all grammatical errors in students' oral work.	197	10	30	0	92	65
19	It is important to identify all grammatical errors in students' written work	197	8	12	0	102	75
25	Students should be given the opportunity to work out rules from examples.	196	3	13	26	118	36

*Note.* No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

The four variables in component 3, represented in Table 12, all deal with feedback and error correction. What is most noticeable here is that the vast majority of teachers

either agreed/strongly agreed with all four of these statements. Again, it could be said that teachers had very strong views about this issue of error correction, and very few teachers chose the neutral response to these statements.

Component 4 highlights the importance of grammar. Teachers responded positively to these statements with the vast majority of teachers either agreeing or strongly agreeing with each of them.

**Table 13.** Descriptive Statistics for Component 4, Importance of Grammar.

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	A	SA
12	If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct errors.	197	2	22	18	101	54
21	Regular practice ensures that grammar is quickly and successfully acquired.	197	1	7	1	107	81
3	Attention to grammar ensures that students become aware of how the language works	197	2	11	0	97	87
4	Explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language.	196	6	20	9	79	82
34	Teaching grammar enables students to produce more complex sentences	194	6	28	39	94	27

*Note.* No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

Component 5, although readily recognisable as the role of the learner in learning grammar, is somewhat different – though related – to the original category of readiness to learn grammar. One of the variables that loaded on to this factor (22) is in fact one that belongs to the original category of readiness to learn grammar. One reason why readiness to learn grammar did not appear as one of the factors in the factor analysis may be the fact that the concept is unknown to the teachers who responded to the questionnaire.

**Table 14.** Descriptive Statistics for Component 5, Role of the Learner in Learning Grammar.

No.	Description	N	SD	D	Ne	A	SA
14	It is better for students to figure out for themselves why their answer was wrong.	196	4	16	21	111	44
22	Students generally do not learn the grammatical structures they are taught.	197	4	43	40	90	20
24	Students rarely become error-free because English grammar is very complex.	194	6	40	26	94	28
25	Students should be given the opportunity to work out rules from examples.	196	3	13	26	118	36

*Note.* No. refers to the number in the original questionnaire. N = Number of responses. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree; Ne = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

Observing the frequency counts in the table above, it can again be seen that teachers mainly agreed/strongly agreed with these statements.

The factor analysis has therefore largely confirmed the validity of this section of the questionnaire as it has produced five components that are very similar to the five original categories used in designing the questionnaire. The analysis shows that teachers generally place a great deal of importance on grammar, with grammar being given a strong focus in their teaching.

## *Teaching Approach*

### *Change in teaching approach.*

A high percentage of survey respondents (88.3%) declared that their approach to teaching grammar has changed in some way since they first began teaching. To account for why they changed their approach, the teachers were requested to identify the three factors most responsible for this change from a list of 11 factors. As can be seen from the table below, experimenting with new ideas in your own classroom rated the highest, at 19.4%, while feedback from the supervisor rated the lowest at 1.4%.

**Table 15.** Factors Influencing Change in Teaching Approach

Factors Responsible for Change	Percent
Experimenting with new ideas in your own classroom	19.4
Student feedback	17.7
Self discovery	14.6
Trial and error	12.6
Use of new textbooks	11.0
In-service programmes	6.8
Collaboration with colleagues	6.5
Professional teaching journals	4.9
Other	2.9
Published research	2.1
Feedback from supervisor	1.4
Total	100

*Teaching activities.*

Part C of the questionnaire focused on activities for teaching grammar. Teachers were presented with a list of seven common grammar activities and were asked to rate these on a scale of 1 to 4, according to (a) how often they used these activities in their own teaching; and (b) how effective they felt these activities were.

As seen from Table 16 below, discussion of errors appears to be the most frequently used activity with 154 teachers claiming to frequently resort to it, followed closely by explanation of a grammar point and communicative grammar tasks, while comparison with mother tongue grammar rates as the most seldom used activity, with only 17 teachers claiming to use it frequently.

**Table 16. Grammar Activities - Frequency of Use**

Grammar Activities	N	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Discussion Of Errors With Class	194	4	4	32	154
Explanation Of Grammar Point	192	4	12	61	115
Written Grammar Exercises	192	2	11	80	99
Communicative Grammar Tasks	195	5	17	69	104
Comprehension Based Tasks	173	8	30	78	52
Oral Pattern Practice Drills	181	14	37	63	67
Comparison With MT Grammar	185	92	31	42	17

A somewhat different picture emerges when considering teacher's beliefs about the effectiveness of these activities in teaching grammar. Discussion of errors still rates the highest with 110 teachers claiming it to be very effective. However, the next highly rated activity which 71 teachers felt were very effective was communicative grammar tasks. Explanation of a grammar point, written grammar exercises and oral pattern practice drills were seen to be more or less the same in terms of their effectiveness. Comparison with mother tongue grammar is seen to be the least effective by the teachers.

**Table 17. Grammar Activities - Effectiveness**

Grammar Activities	N	Not at all	Fairly	Effective	Very
Discussion Of Errors With Class	183	4	8	61	110
Explanation Of Grammar Point	184	4	31	85	64
Written Grammar Exercises	182	13	32	76	61
Communicative Grammar Tasks	182	7	33	71	71
Comprehension Based Tasks	172	18	35	62	40
Oral Pattern Practice Drills	155	15	31	66	60
Comparison With MT Grammar	155	55	37	29	34

Teachers were also requested to list any activities – apart from the ones mentioned in the questionnaire – that they normally used with their students to focus on grammar. Only 82 out of the 197 teachers responded to this question (41.6%). Out of these responses, several related to non-grammar activities such as vocabulary practice, dictionary work, role-plays, etc. Others were ambiguous in that the actual task required of the students and/or the language focus of the activity was unclear (e.g.

activities downloaded from internet, making pupils write on the board, mingle activity, etc.) Of the answers that clearly did relate to grammar, many teachers simply listed various grammar structures that they commonly taught (e.g. parts of speech; active/passive voice; direct/indirect speech) while a lot of others listed activities that had already been mentioned in the questionnaire (e.g. fill in the blanks; error correction; oral drills, etc). All these were excluded from the analysis.

After excluding the above mentioned responses, only 48 responses remained. These can be categorised into the following groups:

**Table 18.** Grammar Practice Activities

Activity Type	Examples	N	Percent
Games & Puzzles	(no example given)	18	37.5
Written exercises	Cloze passage; substitution tables	7	14.6
Oral exercises	Repeating rules after teacher; flash cards	5	10.4
Memorisation	Memorising rules through rhymes	5	10.4
Analysis	Classifying sentences; analysing rules	4	8.3
Tests	(no example given)	4	8.3
Communicative	Communicative grammar practice	3	6.3
Translation	Translating from Dhivehi to English	1	2.1
Rule discovery	Framing rules with students' help	1	2.1

Games and puzzles were by far the most commonly noted grammar activity, but none of the 18 teachers who mentioned this elaborated further. Thus the nature of these games is not clear. Similarly, four teachers mentioned tests, but did not clarify what this testing involved. The three teachers who mentioned communicative grammar practice also refrained from adding any further detail so it remains unclear what they considered to be communicative grammar practice. Attention to grammar rules appeared to be a common focus of grammar activities, exemplified by activities such as analysing rules underlying sentences, memorising rules through rhymes, repeating rules after teacher and framing rules with students' help.

The teachers were also requested to note how often they used these activities, but very few teachers actually did so. One teacher however mentioned that:

Students are given numerous grammar exercises every day apart from the ones in the textbook. They can do [these] even for homework. They have to do grammar exercises like fill in the blanks everyday in school and also for homework if they want to learn English.

*Factors affecting teachers' decisions.*

In order to determine factors that affect teachers' decisions, the teachers were presented with a list of ten factors and asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, how important each of these factors were to them personally in deciding how to teach and the type of activities to use. Their responses to this question are shown in Table 19 below.

**Table 19.** Factors Influencing Teacher Decisions During Planning

Influential Factors	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. D
The Interests Of My Students	194	2.00	5.00	4.2784	.87264
The Level Of My Students	195	1.00	5.00	4.1077	.94906
Availability Of Materials	195	1.00	5.00	3.8923	.97584
Current Research In The Field	189	1.00	5.00	3.7037	1.04017
Whether I Think It Will Work	194	1.00	5.00	3.7010	1.00944
My School's Goals And Policies	196	1.00	5.00	3.5816	1.15402
My Personal Goals And Beliefs	194	1.00	5.00	3.5515	1.21729
What I Learnt During Training	186	1.00	5.00	3.4785	1.09647
What Feels Right Moment	194	1.00	5.00	3.4072	1.12630
The Way My Peers Operate	195	1.00	5.00	2.8462	1.22134
Valid N (Listwise)	177				

Based on these results, the teachers appear to be strongly influenced by their own students as the students' interests (mean = 4.2) and level (mean = 4.1) seem to be the most influential factors behind the teachers' decisions regarding the type of activities to use in the classroom. The way my peers operate rates as the least important with a mean response of 2.8. It is also interesting to note that current research in the field seemed to influence teachers slightly more than whether they think the activities would work.

## *Qualitative Results*

### *Early Learning Experiences*

As teachers appear to be largely influenced by the way they themselves were taught, one of the questions in the questionnaire aimed to capture what teachers' own language learning experiences were like, and invited teachers to describe these experiences. It was a very open question so as to leave it up to the teachers to highlight what they felt were the most important features. All teachers responded to this question, with almost all of them writing about their experiences of learning English. 15% of the teachers identified that learning began at home, and 6% specifically noted the influence of their fathers in helping them learn English at home.

The introduction to the English language for more than 65% of the teachers, however, occurred at school. For nearly half of these teachers, being educated at Christian missionary schools, English was the medium of instruction. For others though, English was taught simply as a second language, beginning either at primary level, or more commonly, at middle school. 52% of teachers highlighted specific teaching techniques (both good and bad) employed by their teachers and/or learning strategies that they themselves had found useful. Reading was clearly top of the list of effective strategies, followed closely by listening to the BBC. Other useful approaches listed included reading the dictionary, learning words, phrases and idioms, imitating teachers, use of self-study grammar books, speaking in English when any such opportunity arose and talking to own self to improve pronunciation. The following teaching techniques were consistently noted as being ineffective, and the cause for the lack of success in language learning at school level: grammar translation, direct grammar instruction, teacher-centred methods and textbook oriented methods. In contrast, teachers who had immediately corrected all errors, provided opportunities to read aloud, utilised a variety of grammar books, encouraged reading, taught literature as well as language and taught grammar through a functional approach were regarded in a favourable light.

Nearly a third of the teachers acknowledged the influential role their own teachers played in their learning process. 22% of teachers highlighted the benefits of being educated by native speaking teachers (and particularly British teachers). One teacher

noted: Having the opportunity to be taught by real English speakers was a privilege I relish. Another explained:

My teachers were BRITISH teachers, so that was the best experience to learn their language in the best way. The following excerpt from a teacher clearly captures the utmost importance of having British teachers: ... a white English lady came to teach us. I felt that I could be more like her if I learned English, so it helped me aim to achieve my level best.

However, only a few teachers (3%) mentioned exposure to the target language community. Those who did receive such exposure, did not mainly experience it until after they had completed school. Nevertheless, some opportunities for using the language outside the school arose, as 11% explained that they frequently used English in communicating with their friends (particularly at college), at the workplace or in the second language community in general.

What was also notable about teachers' recollections of their past learning experiences was that teachers appeared to concentrate mainly on non-pedagogic aspects. In talking about the teachers that they admired, they recalled these teachers' physical appearances ("she was an old lady with white hair"; "he was cute"), their ethnicity ("a real white British teacher"), their personality traits ("she was very gentle and kind"), as well as the physical appearance of the classrooms ("the seating arrangement was more like a workshop than a classroom").

### *Meaning of Grammar*

All 197 teachers responded to the question "Please describe what the word 'grammar' means to you." These responses fell into six main categories. The most notable of these, is the category of Rules, which equates grammar with rules of a language. 103 (52.3%) teachers described grammar as relating to rules. Examples of responses that fit into this category are shown below.

Grammar means [the] study of rules and structures.

A set of rules governing the syntax of the language.

Grammar is the fixed set of rules that must be adhered to in speaking and writing.

The next most common description of grammar, used by 52 (26.4%) teachers related to the idea of grammar being fundamental to language. Examples of this include:

No grammar, no language. Period.

Grammar means the body and soul of any language; the backbone, or skeleton, the vehicle which gives it basic shape and structure.

It is the constitution of language learning. If language is the fruit, grammar is the seed. Grammar is the root [on the] the tree of language.

The next category, which applied to the responses of 16 (8.1%) teachers, dealt with the idea of grammatical knowledge leading to the use of error-free language use. The following examples illustrate this:

Grammar is a useful mechanism which could help one to write error-free sentences.

By the study of grammar one can [achieve] perfection in the language.

Grammar means perfection of language use.

The concept of grammar giving meaning to language was described by 14 (7.1%) teachers:

Grammar is what gives sense to a string of words put together.

Grammar is the way a language manipulates and combines words in order to form units of meaning.

[Grammar is] a set of signals which express meaning.

12 (6.9%) teachers saw grammar to be a tool that enables effective communication:

It is the knowledge of grammar that enables one to communicate clearly, coherently, efficiently and effectively.

Grammar is necessary to express one's ideas and thoughts very clearly.

Grammar is the arrangement between words that allow us to communicate more clearly and effectively.

## *The Importance of Grammar*

In response to the question Do you think it is necessary to teach grammar? an overwhelming majority of 95.9% teachers replied in the affirmative. Their reasons for thinking so included three main reasons.

Firstly, teachers claimed that teaching grammar is essential if students are to make sense of the language they are learning. It clarifies meaning and helps to avoid ambiguities in communication:

Teaching grammar is essential at all stages of learning. It is the only way of making sure that students understand the language and articulate themselves clearly and coherently, without ambiguity or uncertainty.

Secondly, teachers believed that grammar instruction helps students to produce more accurate language. It is a way of ensuring that students are aware of the rules of language. Teachers suggested that regular attention to grammar brings students closer and closer to attaining an ultimate level of competence that would allow students to produce error-free language.

If we don't teach grammar, how will students know what is right and what is wrong? Of course grammar teaching is necessary. It is a must if we want children to write accurately and without mistakes. Then only they will be able to identify their own errors as well.

Thirdly, grammar instruction was seen to be necessary if students are to succeed in examinations.

Examinations play a large part in school life. In English we penalise students heavily for not writing grammatically. Grammar plays a large part in the marking scheme, so it is essential that we make the same focus in our teaching too. Otherwise, when it comes to examination time, students will fail.

Only eight teachers felt that it was not necessary to teach grammar. They gave four justifications for their response.

### 1. Teaching grammar hinders fluency:

Teaching grammar is an utter waste of time and does nothing except hinder fluency of spoken language.

2. It is unnecessary to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical language:  
Don't waste time teaching the difference between grammatical and ungrammatical language. There are too many exceptions to these so called rules to make their study worthwhile.

3. Grammar can be acquired through adequate exposure:

Children can easily pick up grammar if they read many story books.

4. Grammar is unnecessary for students at this level:

Students are not advanced enough at this level to deal with grammar.

The teachers' responses to the question "What role do you think grammar plays in language learning and teaching?" reflected their descriptions of what grammar meant to them, with the recurrence of the idea that grammar was responsible for meaning-making and error-free language usage. More than 57% of the teachers felt that the role played by grammar was "vital", many teachers describing it as an "indispensable", "pivotal" part of the language classroom.

Grammar plays a very important role because it lays the foundation of the language for the student. It is the key which opens the door of language.

To speak fluently and accurately we need to know grammar, so grammar is essential right from the beginning.

The two other main categories that emerged from the responses to this question were grammar makes meaning and that grammar leads to perfection. These are illustrated with sample responses below.

1. Grammar makes meaning:

Grammar helps the writer convey the idea to the reader.

Grammar is what guides a person to speak or write a language effectively and sensibly, allowing you to explain yourself to others in a clear manner.

2. Grammar leads to perfection:

Grammar's role is to help us to use words correctly, in the proper way.

Grammar plays the role of a corrector, a device that helps one to monitor their language use and create language that is correct, accurate and devoid of errors.

### *Difficulties in Teaching Grammar*

More than half of the teachers (64.5%) admitted that they had experienced difficulties in teaching grammar at some point in their teaching career. Their descriptions of the difficulties fell into six main categories.

#### *Lack of student interest.*

This was noted as the most common difficulty that teachers faced, with 30% of the teachers who responded to this question noting student passivity and lack of receptivity to be major obstacles in teaching. One teacher wrote:

There is always a great deal of resistance from students when you start teaching grammar. There is a deep dislike cultivated over the years towards its study that it requires a great deal of effort from the teacher to penetrate and drive home the necessity. Somehow grammar becomes synonymous with boredom in the classroom context.

They acknowledge that “grammar is very dull and dry” and that inevitably “students get very bored.” Motivating students and keeping them interested appeared to be the key problem that teachers faced. One teacher confessed that “it’s a tough task to keep grammar lessons interesting” because it requires a lot of “planning and creativity on the part of the teacher.” When students are uninterested, they will “simply say they have understood something just so that the teacher will finish the lesson, and they don’t have to do any more grammar. But really they have not understood anything.”

One teacher explained his understanding of why students found grammar uninteresting:

I have taught in five different schools in the Maldives. In each school it is the same. The students hate English because there is too much grammar. Every English lesson is a grammar lesson. So naturally they are bored out of their skulls. And so is the teacher. This is not a teacher problem, but a school and system problem. Teachers are forced to teach [grammar] despite students’ lack

of interest and inability to understand it or cope with it. The teacher who does not obey these rules will be sent back home. No wonder the students never pass any examinations.

*Lack of available resources.*

Forty two teachers explained that there were “no good textbooks or grammar worksheets available” and that in the resources that were available, “no clear grammar rules are given and very few exercises.” A few teachers noted that the schools did not have any resources whatsoever for either the teachers or the students, and that this made it impossible to locate suitable teaching materials.

*Students’ inability to understand/remember rules.*

This was also a common difficulty, faced by nearly a third of the teachers who responded to this question. Teachers noted that despite many repetitive practice exercises, students “never seem to grasp the basic concepts of grammar” and “are not able to understand even the simplest of rules, making errors time and time again in their writing.” Several teachers identified that even though students are able to “correctly perform fill in the blanks exercises, when it comes to application, it is very difficult for them to understand and remember the rules taught.”

Many teachers provided their own reasons why students are unable to understand or follow grammar lessons at secondary level. They theorised that this could be for two reasons. One, because of the differences between English and Dhivehi grammars:

Dhivehi, which is the only language that the students are fluent in, has a very different grammar from English. But they try to apply the same rules to English and so of course it doesn’t work that way.

Two, because grammar is not adequately dealt with at lower grades:

Grammar is not properly taught in lower grades. The teachers who teach in lower grades must not be experts. Therefore when students [begin secondary school] they are utterly bored. Learning grammar becomes a bitter experience as they have to start from the very beginning and so do a lot of grammar as a result.

Another teacher explained that:

children are not given a good grammatical foundation in primary school. Grammar is taught, but not very well. So children suffer in the long run and are not able to understand thoroughly.

*Inability to teach at right level.*

Some teachers (n = 15) explained that their difficulties with teaching grammar stemmed from their own inabilities in teaching at the right level for the students. They described students as being “extremely weak in English in general” and that this made it difficult to:

pitch your lessons at exactly the right level. Too high and the students will be confused. Too low and the students will be bored. It’s difficult trying to make it just right especially when the students don’t understand the terminology.

*Teachers’ own difficulties in grasping grammar.*

A small number (n = 9) of teachers acknowledged that the problems they faced in teaching grammar could be attributed to their own difficulties in understanding grammar. One teacher commented that:

Grammar has always been a difficult subject for me. I am not one of these people who can memorise and recite rules of grammar. Therefore I find it hard to explain grammar to students because I don’t understand it very well either.

*Dealing with students’ questions.*

The most problematic aspect of teaching grammar for some teachers was the issue of dealing with students’ questions. One teacher wrote:

Students ask too many questions. This makes me frustrated and angry because I can’t go on with the lesson because of all the questions.

Another response that illustrates this problem is:

Persistent questions from students. Always why why why. Why should we do that? Why is that like that? Why do we have to do grammar? Such questions are difficult to answer and very irritating. Students in Maldives don’t accept

what teachers tell them. They have to question teachers all the time. It's not a good habit and doesn't show respect.

### *Teaching Approach*

As noted earlier, a high percentage of teachers (88.3%) declared that their approach to teaching grammar has changed in some way since they first began teaching. This was in response to the varying levels of their students, according to most teachers. Others simply stated that they changed with time and the exposure to new ideas. The general theme that ran through the responses to this question was that initially when they first began their teaching careers they were strict, adhering mainly to teacher-centred, explanation driven methods of teaching grammar. But that they later changed their approach in order to make themselves more “learner-centred” and “communicative”.

Says one teacher:

After having many years of experience in teaching grammar through structural method and finding it ineffective, I have changed my method into communicative method. That is using all aspects of grammar in communicative writing, speaking and listening. Because I feel that the latter procedures produce more intended results.

Another teacher explained:

At the beginning my approach [was] mainly based on drilling and explaining the grammar points. Then I tried grammar translation method which was a very successful method. Now everybody follows the communicative approach. So [do] I.

Apart from adopting a “communicative approach” to teaching grammar, a further change that was commonly mentioned was the use of contextualised grammar activities rather than isolated grammar exercises:

In the beginning years of my teaching career, more stress was laid on teaching grammatical points separately as a compartmentalised section. It was found to be not that effective as pupils found it difficult to apply the rules learned in their spoken and written language. Later on with more exposure to grammar

books, and further learning, I gave more importance to contextualised teaching of grammar. This was more effective.

Interestingly, there were two teachers who described that they changed from “communicative” teaching to “a more traditional, rule oriented method of teaching” because “communicative” teaching was not proving to be effective in improving students’ grammar.

Despite many teachers’ assertions that they favoured a more “communicative,” “student-centred” approach to teaching, descriptions of teacher-led approaches were rife. Many teachers described that they first explained the target structure then allow students to practice using the structure through repeated written grammar exercises. The following comment by a teacher exemplifies this view:

Since grammar instruction may not offer immediate results, after explanation, a lot of time must be spent on doing grammar exercises, so that through repeated practice, the rules become ingrained in them.

A number of teachers simply named the approach that they were following before and what they supposedly followed now, without giving any additional details about the changes. For example, it was very common for teachers to say that:

I used to teach in the grammar translation way. But now I teach using communicative method.

Or:

I used to make use of the traditional method of teaching. But now I have learnt about the structural method and situational approach and use these instead.

Here is a further example of this:

In my initial teaching days, I always used the structural grammar. Now I always use the functional grammar together with the pictorial method. As a teacher you have to change with the times.

Some teachers did provide more detail about the kind of changes they had made. For example:

Before I used to only explain a grammar point and then move on. Now I always first show them the rule behind a structure, explain how it is formed, clarify all the necessary terms that go with it, ensure that they remember this through handouts and then give them plenty of exercises to do.

Another teacher explained that he now avoids “unnecessary terminology” in explanations and focused “extensively on error correction.”

Generally teachers appeared to have adopted more relaxed, informal methods of teaching grammar, reverting from “lectures”, “grammar translation”, “repetitive drilling”, “rigid grammar exercises” and “rule memorisation” to “playway methods”, “games, creativity and fun”.

Many teachers appeared to be open to new ideas:

I experience a lot of difficulties because whatever style I use, students are not able to grasp the intricacies of the language. I am constantly looking to improve my techniques and style of teaching grammar.

Others were not so willing to change, despite acknowledging the current approach was not bringing the desired results:

These students have been learning the language – albeit not with a high degree of success – in the grammar oriented way from the beginning. I think it’s important to carry on that way or the students will become confused. Plus that is how we teachers have been teaching. No need to change something we are familiar and very comfortable with.

### *Conditions for Effective Learning*

At the end of the questionnaire, the teachers were invited to add any further comments or suggestions they may have regarding the learning and teaching of grammar. A total of 85 teachers completed this section, with many teachers reiterating the importance of grammar instruction.

Nearly half of these teachers wrote about what they felt to be effective methods of teaching grammar, and called for their inclusion in classrooms across the country. These included the need for more pattern practice such as oral drills, the reduction of grammatical terminology in teachers' explanation, the use of contextualised grammar activities, getting students to self correct their errors, integrating grammar into skills-based lessons and the use of grammar games.

Another strong theme that emerged related to the conditions necessary for effective learning. Teachers provided various conditions which they believed were necessary to make grammar instruction effective. Often one teacher's conditions were contradicted by another's, as seen in the two selected quotes below:

No formal teaching of grammar during first three years. Pattern practice should be continued till language becomes automatic and flawless. Then grammar teaching can begin. It is safe to teach grammar rules only after students can speak, read, listen and write fluently and effectively.

Begin grammar instruction as early as possible. For best results, only grammar should be taught at primary level and only after that should the focus be on writing and reading.

There were also many teachers who called for a grammatical focus in teaching English, but emphasised that the instruction should be suitable to the age and ability level of the students, in order to reap the maximum benefits.

Grammar should be taught at the level of the students. Explanation and activities should reflect the age and level of the students.

Another teacher had this to say about why students do not do well in learning English at school:

I have taught in this country for a long time now. The biggest reason why students don't seem to be doing well in English (and particularly grammar) is because the same approach is applied to all students at all levels. This has to change. In the case of grammar, even the very young ones who are starting their education gets bombarded with a whole lot of different grammar rules. And they continue to be taught these same things in the same way throughout

their school life. No wonder they get fed up and pay no attention to the lessons.

A need was also expressed for non-grammar activities to optimise general language learning. Teachers emphasised the need to get students to read widely; to introduce some new vocabulary to students daily; getting students to make a habit of using English language news media; the inclusion of literature in the language curriculum, and paying attention to improving students' oral language skills.

Several teachers (n = 13) who completed this final open question also commented on the lack of teacher development opportunities available to them at their teaching institutions. One teacher wrote:

I have been the only English teacher on this island for almost five years. There is no library, no books, no resources whatsoever. There are no chances of meeting other teachers or attending any workshops to improve my knowledge. Every week I do the same things over and over again. It is boring not only for me but the students too. There is no excitement anymore.

## *Summary*

Teachers' responses to the questionnaire can be summarised as follows:

- Grammar is equated primarily with rules; grammatical knowledge as “knowing the rules.”
- Teachers spend a considerable amount of time on grammar instruction.
- Teaching grammar poses many difficulties for teachers.
- Teachers are unfamiliar with/do not use inductive approaches to grammar instruction.
- Some teachers note that because of the monotonous approach to teaching English adopted by schools, students appear to be lacking in motivation and are generally uninvolved in activities.

Having identified that inductive grammar instruction was not an established approach in the teaching of English in the context, this was chosen as the innovation that would

be introduced in the teacher development programmes conducted in the case study schools. The results from the case studies are presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX

# A Tale of Two Schools

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### *Introduction*

As described previously, I examined in detail two Maldivian secondary schools, exploring the beliefs and instructional practices of the English teachers, and conducted a 12 week project in each of these schools, aimed at developing teachers' understandings about learner-centred instruction and inductive approaches to teaching grammar. This chapter presents the findings from these two schools. I discuss each of the schools in turn. The first section focuses on Rural School. The second section focuses on Urban School.

I begin each section by describing the teachers, their goals in teaching, their teaching itself and the beliefs they have regarding the role of grammar in language learning and teaching. I also discuss the impact of the professional development on the beliefs and practices of the teachers. The findings for each school are organised according to the main themes that emerged from the data, and are corroborated with evidence from the data in the form of teachers' quotations and extracts from lesson transcripts<sup>39</sup>. Where relevant, I also refer to the teachers' responses to the beliefs questionnaire.

There were several sources of data, as described in the methodology chapter. Each teacher was interviewed twice and observed on 10 – 12 different occasions. This constituted the main data for this chapter. Other data sources included my own research journal, tasks completed by the teachers at the workshops I conducted, the programme evaluation questionnaire which the teachers completed at the end of the 12 weeks, the schemes of work used at the schools, sample lesson plans from teachers, samples of student work collected at the research sites and the completed beliefs questionnaires of the teachers in these two schools.

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<sup>39</sup> See Appendix K for data reference and transcription conventions used.

The results presented here contribute towards answering the following research questions of the study:

1. a) What beliefs do English teachers in Maldivian secondary schools hold about L2 grammar, its acquisition and methods of instruction?  
b) What factors are responsible for shaping these teachers' beliefs?
2. a) How do teachers in Maldivian secondary schools deal with grammar in the English classroom?  
b) To what extent do these teachers' beliefs correspond to their practices?  
c) What factors constrain these teachers when translating their beliefs into practice?
3. a) To what extent does a school-based teacher development programme affect these teachers' beliefs about grammar?  
b) To what extent does a school-based teacher development programme affect these teachers' instructional practices?

I conclude the chapter with a summary of the main findings, comparing the results from the two case study schools.

## *Rural School*

### *The Teachers*

The English department at Rural School was headed by Elma. Elma completed her undergraduate studies in History and joined Rural School in 2001. She began her teaching career as a history teacher, but as there were very few students who took history, and a greater demand for English teachers, the school offered her two English classes in 2003, in addition to her history class. In 2004, she was appointed Head of the English department.

Like most other expatriate teachers in the country, Gul and Adila were lured to teach in Maldives because of the large salary in comparison to what was offered in their home country. In their late 50s, both Gul and Adila had worked for several years in many of the top schools and colleges in their homeland before arriving in Maldives in 2003 and 2000, respectively.

Cala and Fazla joined Rural School in 2003. These 30-something teachers recounted their own learning of English as being extremely positive, and reasoned that this was mainly because they had been taught by teachers who were native speakers of English, and had had ample opportunities to practise using the language in real life communication.

Quiet and reserved, Bakur began his career as a sailor, which he continued for many successful years. He then held an administrative post in England before being persuaded by a friend to take up teaching History in a small European college, where he taught for several years before bidding farewell to teaching and returning to his native country to set up a business. When his wife received a job offer on the island where Rural School was situated, Bakur had already retired. But she persuaded him to return to teaching and take up employment as an English teacher in Rural School. The six week training he had received at the European college before commencing his teaching post there was the only training Bakur had received in teaching. He maintained that he gained his professional knowledge through experience and reading, rather than through any kind of formal training.

Dalal, who started learning English in school, trained as an attorney before turning to teaching. He maintained that it was during the three year teaching diploma course that he fine-tuned his proficiency in the language. He had taught in a very small school located in a remote area for one year before arriving in Rural School in 2002. In his late 20s, Dalal was a popular teacher among the students.

On the surface, there appeared to be a good rapport among the teachers. However, as I spent more time with them, it was clear that things were not as smooth as they first appeared. There was a conspicuous absence of collaboration and team work. Instead, I noticed some degree of conflict between certain teachers due to the differences between their teaching and attitudes to instruction. Some teachers resented the fact that the school had chosen a novice teacher who had studied history – and not English – to be the head of the English department. Several teachers commented on the fact that they were “just expected to follow blindly, whatever [they were] told to do” [G.I.1]; that teachers did not “have much say in any decisions that [were] taken” [C.I.1]; and that they simply had to “follow orders” [C.I.1].

Teachers appeared reluctant to share ideas and materials among them. Elma claimed that she obtained many of her teaching materials from her siblings, who were still at school elsewhere. She did this, she said, because she did not “want to be doing the same things” [E.RJ.9/5] as all the other teachers. Gul expressed similar sentiments when she explained how she had “many grammar books at home” [G.RJ.6/5] which she was reluctant to bring to school in case “some of the other teachers want[ed] to use them [so that all teachers would be] giving the same exercises” that she used with her students [G.RJ.6/5]. Dalal once claimed that Cala had “stolen” his ideas when she had inadvertently given her students the same writing task that he had given his students. Rather than pool their resources, teachers appeared to work individually, using any new ideas or materials surreptitiously.

Teachers also disagreed about their goals of teaching and did not appear to have a shared vision which they could work together to achieve. As will be seen later in this chapter, Elma’s beliefs and goals were somewhat different to the beliefs and goals of the other teachers, and I believe that it was this difference between the views of the HoD and the rest of the teachers that created the tensions within the department.

### *The Goal of Teaching English*

For four out of the seven teachers, the goal of teaching English in their current context was to help their students to pass school examinations, and particularly the Cambridge GCE Ordinary level examination which their students would sit for after completing grade 10. Elma, who described herself as being “goal-oriented” [E.I.12], admitted that for her, getting her students to pass the exam was her “one and only goal” – one to be attained “at any cost” [E.I.12]. She emphasised this at various points throughout her interviews:

I am very goal oriented. ... My lessons are designed only for the best students ... the ones I have some hope who will pass and get me a result. [E.I.12]

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I can’t waste my time on students who I know will not pass. Why should I? It will not give me any benefit. For example, [there are] 30 students in 9B, and among them only 10 students have some chance to pass in the exam. So how can I waste my time on [the other] 20 students? If I design my lessons in such

a way that the majority can do that means the best students [are] not going to improve and they are going to [be] disadvantage[d] and so my lessons are designed in such a way that only the best students benefit. [E.I.12]

Elma explained that she concentrated on developing only those skills which she believed were directly relevant for the exam. While discussing why students in Rural School did not generally speak, she told me that it was not something that “bothered” [E.RJ.12/5] her and that it did not matter whether or not they spoke because “they are not going to talk in the exam. [They] only need to write” [E.RJ.12/5]. In one workshop where we discussed ways of getting students to speak more in English, Elma commented that her goal was to “teach them and get them to pass” their exam; and that she did not “care whether they kn[e]w how to speak in English” [E.RJ.26/6].

For Fazla and Cala the goal of teaching English was to help their students learn the language; a language which was necessary for them in all aspects of school life and one that would be beneficial for them in the future after they left school. They emphasised the need for students to know “about the language” [C.I.2] as well as know “how to use it” [C.I.2]. For Fazla and Cala, passing the examination was only part of that main goal.

Gul believed that it was essential that students are prepared for the examination, but maintained that it was equally important that they are taught “to appreciate the beauty of the language” [G.I.3] and not concentrate solely on the examination. This was why Gul felt it important to incorporate poetry and literature as much as possible into her language lessons.

Bakur’s main goal of teaching English was “to make a difference in students’ lives” [B.RJ.22/5] by making them aware of “the outside world and all the things that go on in it” [B.RJ.22/5]. Through the teaching of English, Bakur aimed to impart “some general knowledge” to his students, on “topics that matter[ed]” [B.I.3].

### *Traits of an Effective Teacher*

The teachers in this school had very similar conceptions of what it was to be an effective teacher. Asked to identify traits of effective teachers, as part of a workshop task, all teachers were unanimous in recognising that effective teachers “use good language” and “explain clearly.” Three other qualities that were identified by most teachers were that an effective teacher “uses interesting teaching methods”, “is knowledgeable” and “maintains discipline.”

### *Use of the Scheme of Work*

The schemes of work that the teachers followed had been prepared three years previously by a former teacher. The schemes were theme-based and organised in the form of a table, with columns entitled: Theme, Topics, Grammar, Activities and References, stipulating what needed to be taught every week. Four themes were listed for each grade for every term (i.e. one theme for every 2 – 3 weeks). These included themes such as pollution, travel and tourism, life in the future and danger. The themes were broken down into narrower topics under the heading “Topics”. For the theme pollution in the Grade 8 scheme, for example, there were two topics: causes of pollution and the need to protect the environment.

The next column, “Grammar”, listed the grammatical structures to be taught. These included mainly the tenses, active and passive voice, direct and indirect speech and the parts of speech. There did not appear to be any particular reasoning behind the order in which the structures were listed and the grammatical structures were almost identical for all grades.

The list of “Activities” was also very similar every week, and included activity types (e.g. reading comprehension, summary writing, directed writing, cloze passage, letter writing, essay writing) rather than specific activities. It did not, for example, specify a particular reading passage to be used or suggest any essay topics that would be suitable for that particular theme. In the final column, titled “References”, five different books/series were listed (again, the same books every week): *Target English*, *Headway* series, *Oxford English Programme* series, *Essential Grammar* and *English*

*Grammar in Use*. It was not specified how these were to be used or which parts were to be followed/were relevant for that week.

The school stipulated that the teachers meet weekly to plan their lessons together for the following week so that there would be uniformity within each grade, with all students in a particular grade being taught the same lessons. However, in practice, there were few similarities between the lessons of the teachers. The only commonality among the work done by the teachers appeared to be the theme that they followed rather than anything that was language-specific. For example, in week two, the theme for grade 9 was “Movies.” Elma focused on getting her students to write a description of a favourite actor. Cala chose to focus on a reading passage that dealt with the issue of actors endorsing certain products through advertising and got her students to answer comprehension questions. Fazla got her students to write a letter to a newspaper editor regarding censorship issues in movies. Bakur took a historical stance on the theme and opted to focus on a text that described the various equipments that had been used to project movies in the past, and got his students to summarise the text. Dalal focused on vocabulary related to film making and talked about “the art and science of movies” [D.RJ.3/5]. So, although all four teachers were working within the broad theme of “Movies”, the language skills that they focused on and the way they chose to deal with the theme were very different.

When asked about her views about the scheme, Fazla explained:

I don't think the topics are very relevant or very interesting for the students. The topics have to be interesting otherwise they will not pay attention. [F.I.4]

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And there should be guidance for each lesson for each day, not just a topic to be followed. Because you can do anything with a topic. The topic is not the most important here, it is what is done is more important. I think there should be more discussion in the meeting about ... how to approach each theme and the kind of activities we need to follow. But there is no such discussion. [F.I.4]

## *Importance of Grammar*

Despite the fact that grammar was a focal part of the scheme, many of the teachers denied (at least, initially) that they taught grammar. Elma made the most vehement of denials, stating – a total of 18 times during the first interview – that she did not teach grammar. She emphatically exclaimed that it need not be focused on in the classroom<sup>40</sup>. However, about 15 minutes into the interview, she admitted that she did focus on grammar:

NM: How would you describe your approach to grammar?

Elma: I don't teach grammar.

NM: You don't teach grammar?

Elma: I don't teach grammar.

NM: Not at all?

Elma: I don't teach grammar.

NM: Why not?

Elma: [long pause; shrugs] I don't teach grammar.

NM: I'm not trying to find fault, I just want to understand why you don't teach grammar.

Elma: I don't teach grammar. I don't teach grammar as a separate grammar class.

NM: So you do teach it?

Elma: [long pause] Yes,... okay but I teach it. Sometimes [I] compare English and Dhivehi grammar. Being a Maldivian I can do that. ... But normally I don't teach grammar separately. Out of context I don't teach it. Never...It is not important that you teach [grammar] ... There are no questions on grammar for the exam. So why waste time teaching it? [E.I.1]

Yet, towards the end of the interview, Elma expressed a somewhat different viewpoint, after claiming that she was “exactly like” Teacher D<sup>41</sup>, and stating repeatedly that “of course grammar is very important” [E.I.7].

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<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that Elma was one of the four teachers out of the 197 teachers who answered the beliefs questionnaire who maintained that it was not important to teach grammar.

<sup>41</sup> Description of Teacher D used in the interview:

Most teachers did agree that teaching grammar was essential, but noted that the school had advised teachers against teaching it:

[W]e are not supposed to do grammar here so I try not to. They have asked us specifically many times actually to not to teach grammar. Although I'm not sure why that is because of course grammar is very important. I think it's essential to teach grammar. [F.I.1]

[The school management] says it's not an in thing to teach grammar these days, and so says not to teach it. But what do they know, no? Are they teachers? [G.RJ.6/6]

It was probably because the school had advised them not to teach grammar that they were reluctant to at first admit that they did in fact focus on grammar in their teaching. This was especially true in Gul's case. As pointed out in the methodology chapter, Gul had spoken to me after my very first meeting with all the teachers, stressing the fact that she did not teach grammar. Yet, when I first observed her, I found that the entire double-period lesson was based on teaching reported speech.

Later, during my first interview with Gul, I asked her if she paid much attention to grammar in her teaching. She confided that she did:

Gul: Not always. They are telling not to teach so how can we? But can I tell you something frankly? You won't tell them no? I always teach grammar. I think we have to if we care about teaching. Then only children will learn something, through grammar only. So I always try and include some grammar.

NM: In every lesson?

Gul: Yes almost every lesson. [G.I.2]

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“Teacher D sees grammar as being fundamental to language, and therefore the teaching of grammar as being essential if students are to develop confidence in their ability to use language in various social and educational settings. He argues that grammar should be treated as an area of discussion and discovery. Thus it is necessary to develop a metalanguage which students can use to talk about grammar consciously and confidently, in the same way that they may use technical language in other areas of learning.”

Gul explained that this was because of her belief that grammar was essential to language learning. She did not agree with the idea that language could be taught purely through focusing on meaning and communication.

Cala too believed that teaching grammar was “essential if you are teaching a language” because:

[students] should know how to use the language and that can only come from learning the grammar.... grammar is essential if you are teaching a language. I think more than anything else, you need to know its grammar before you can do anything with it. I mean you can't teach comprehension and composition without teaching grammar as well [C.I.2].

Fazla believed that if students were weak in English it was more important to focus on grammar than if they were more competent. She added that because students at Rural School were “of a very weak standard” [F.I.1], with “most of them ... unable to construct even a simple sentence on their own” [F.I.1], the teaching should concentrate more on grammar, before moving on to developing their reading and writing skills. She believed that it was because they were “not taught grammar properly at the fundamental stage” that students are weak in English and “unable to cope with the exam when they come to grade 10” [F.I.2].

Bakur strongly believed that grammar was an integral part of language teaching, because:

if you were not proficient in grammar perhaps you may be able to communicate but I don't think one can be very good in writing if one is not very good in grammar... and these students are preparing for a written examination, so of course we must teach grammar. [B.I.3]

### *“No Time for Grammar”*

Even though most teachers felt that grammar was essential for learning a language, it was frequently asserted that they did not have time to teach it. Elma explained why:

Because we are trying to cover the syllabus in the sense that we are trying to teach them ... essay writing, comprehension passages, how to answer

comprehension passages, directed writing ... and if we have to teach all of these grammar lessons we might not be able to finish what is in the syllabus. [E.I.3]

---

We don't do much grammar. Because we are busy doing what is in the syllabus. We don't have time for nonsense like grammar lessons. I don't have time to teach grammar like that. [E.I.3]

Dalal explained that because "there is so little time" [D.I.3] he often avoided teaching grammar, even if he knew that the students were finding it difficult to understand. He claimed that:

It's just not possible to be preoccupied with grammar all the time because we have to teach them the language. That is what we are trying to do. We can't be spending a lot of time on grammar. [D.I.3]

However, it was evident from my observations, that a large proportion of teaching time was spent on grammar, even during skills-based lessons. As noted earlier, each of the seven teachers was observed 10 – 12 times during the course of the data collection period; a total of 75 lessons. Out of these, grammar was the main component of 29 lessons. Furthermore, grammar was focused on to varying degrees in 33 other lessons. This latter group of lessons included ones where a teacher corrected students' grammatical errors, following with a brief explanation and lessons where students completed a number of activities based on a text, including some which concentrated on grammar. Thus, even though some teachers maintained that they did not teach grammar, in more than 82% of the lessons observed teachers had drawn attention to grammar in some way.

### *"My Best Grammar Lesson"*

In the first interview, I asked teachers to describe a grammar lesson which they had taught sometime in the past, and which they considered to be very successful. Two weeks later, in the first workshop, I got the teachers to write down the lesson explaining why they considered it to be "their best lesson", and to share it with the group. My purpose in doing this was to understand (1) what kinds of grammar

activities that teachers perceived to be exemplary and (2) what – according to the teacher – made a grammar lesson/activity successful.

When I asked her the question at the interview, Elma found it difficult to think of a lesson in which she had extensively focused on grammar. Yet, at the workshop session, she recounted a lesson in which she had got her students to practice using descriptive adjectives. Elma explained that she asked her students to first think of various occupations such as fisherman, teacher, etc. She then asked her students to make a list of all the qualities that people in that profession would need such as patience, humour etc. As most of these qualities would be in noun form she then asked her students to change them into adjectives, and then write a description of a person using those adjectives. Elma maintained that this had been a very successful lesson because her students had been engaged in the task throughout, and because it allowed them to practice using adjectives in context.

Cala described a lesson that she had used several years before, in another educational context. Cala had asked her students to write about a childhood memory. She had then selected some of the written narratives and produced a verb transformation activity for a later lesson where students had to change the tense of the given verbs. She considered this to be one of her most successful lessons because the grammar exercise evolved from language that had been produced by the students themselves.

Fazla described a lesson that focused on reported speech. She had put up examples of direct and indirect speech on the board, and had encouraged her students to identify the differences between them, and thereby arrive at a rule for changing direct to indirect and vice versa. For Fazla, this was one of her best lessons because the students were working out how the language worked, without her having to explain it to them.

Gul also chose to describe a lesson that focused on reported speech. She noted that it was a lesson that she had taught in another educational context and not one that she would “dare to even consider” using in her current context [G.RJ.18/5]. In the lesson, Gul had selected two students to come up to the front of the class, one was given the part of a “deaf grandmother” and the other (the “grandson”) was told to repeat

everything that was going on to the “deaf grandmother.” She then got the rest of the class to call out sentences which had been put up on the board (e.g. I am going to school). The “grandson” had to repeat these to the “deaf grandmother” in indirect speech (e.g. Sana said that she was going to school). Gul explained that it was her most successful lesson in teaching grammar because she got her students involved in role playing and they all really enjoyed the lesson.

Bakur could not think of any lessons or activities that stood out as being particularly successful. He maintained that any lesson in which he was able to impart some new knowledge to the students was successful.

Adila explained that with a new group of students, she always first began by teaching them the parts of speech “because it is very easy to teach and easy to learn” [A.RJ.18/5]. She described that she would begin the lesson by writing “a long sentence” on the board, and by explaining the parts of speech through labelling the different parts of the sentence. She would then get her students to do the same with several more sentences, and, Adila recalled, “they would always have learned it by the end of the lesson” [A.RJ.18/5].

Dalal described a lesson he had recently taught; one that aimed to get his students “to practise future tense” [D.RJ.18/5]. He recalled that he had first explained the differences between present, past and future tenses. He then gave a brief fill-in-the-blanks exercise which the students needed to complete using the correct tense. He then moved on to getting his students to write an essay about life in the year 3013. Dalal considered this to be a very successful lesson because the students were able to progress smoothly from listening to the explanation, doing a simple transformation exercise and then producing writing of their own using the target structure.

### *Teaching Approach*

#### *Need to teach grammar in context.*

A strong theme that was evident in the interviews with the teachers was that grammar should to be taught in context. Elma, who had strong reservations about teaching

grammar, was equally passionate about teaching grammar in context when the need to focus on grammar arose:

I don't teach separate grammar activities. I don't like using fill in the blanks and things like that...Because I don't think they are useful. It's not correct to teach grammar separately. [E.I.1]

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I teach grammar in context. ... I don't teach grammar exercises. They are not useful. Grammar should never be taught out of context. [E.I.2]

Asked to give some examples of how she would teach grammar in context, however, Elma was unable to think of any specific examples.

Dalal too believed in the importance of teaching grammar in context because then students would be "able to see it in real application, in real context" [D.I.4]. He explained that this was "far better than resorting to ... mechanical grammatical exercises" [D.I.4]. Asked about an example of a contextualised grammar activity, he explained:

I have given them [a] guided writing exercise. There ... also first I gave them the rules, how to change direct into indirect speech and all that because they should know these rules first ... then I gave them... a ... conversation between two people. Like a play. In dialogue form. That is the context. So I just give them the context, the whole context. ... So then I ask them to write the indirect form like a story. So they have to change this dialogue in direct speech into a story told in indirect speech. So it is all done in context ... not just changing things from this to that mechanically. [D.I.3]

Bakur focused extensively on grammar in his teaching. But he maintained that he always taught grammar in context and that "mechanical exercises [were] meaningless" [B.I.3] and did not create a lasting impact. He explained his approach, with reference to a lesson on conditionals:

What I do is, ... I will teach conditional sentences but rather than giving an exercise to complete sentences or write their own sentences, I give them a related writing exercise where they have to use conditional sentences to complete it. [B.I.3]

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With contextual exercises, there is no way that they can mechanically apply whatever it is they have learned. They have to think. So I always use contextual examples and exercises. [B.I.3]

Both Cala and Fazla too got their students to practice particular grammar structures through extended writing. For example, Cala had asked her students to write about “My Earliest Memory” in order to get them to write in the past tense. To get her students to practice changing active and passive voice, Fazla had asked them to rewrite an account of a road accident (written in the active voice) in the form of a newspaper report, using the passive voice.

### *Presentation and practice techniques.*

At one workshop session, I asked the teachers to imagine that they were going to teach the present perfect for the first time to a group of students. I asked them what kinds of techniques they would use to introduce the new structure. My intention, in asking this question, was to get the teachers to suggest what they believed to be the most effective ways of presenting grammar. The answer was unanimous: explain how the structure worked and give some examples, followed by some form of practice exercise (the types of exercises suggested were different, ranging from fill-in-the-blanks type of exercise to extended writing tasks using the present perfect). No one suggested anything else. Not a single teacher. I later noted what happened:

I then gave them a handout showing twelve different possible techniques of introducing the present perfect, and asked them to comment on the advantages and possible problems with using each. The teachers thought that the techniques in the handout were “all very good”, especially the rule discovery technique and the one using the reading text. They could not think of any problems with any of them except the technique of explaining the rule to the students. Gul commented that rule explanation was “not very interesting.” Adila added that it was “dull and boring and not very student-centred.” All teachers agreed. Yet, these same teachers had – only minutes ago – suggested rule explanation as the technique they would use, were they to teach the present perfect to their students. [RJ.28/5]

In the teachers' responses to the beliefs questionnaire, six out of the seven teachers<sup>42</sup> in this school agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that "Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how a particular structure works." Five out of the seven teachers also agreed/strongly agreed that "The primary role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point" and that "Explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of a language."

In my observations of their lessons I found that whenever there was a focus on grammar, teachers invariably resorted to explanation of the structure. Whether a structure was being introduced for the first time, or was being practised further, grammar lessons involved a lot of explanation on the teacher's part. The explanations ranged from just a few sentences to lengthy lectures of 20 – 30 minutes long.

Adila, for example, spent the first 20 minutes in one lesson, explaining the difference between "present, past and future tenses". The following extract shows what happened after this explanation.

- 3.30 T writes on board:
- I read – simple present*
  - I am reading – present continuous*
  - I have read – present perfect*
  - I have been reading – present perfect continuous*
  - I read – simple past*
  - I was reading – past continuous*
  - I had read – past perfect*
  - I had been reading – past perfect continuous*
  - I will read – simple future tense*
  - I will be reading – future continuous*
  - I will have read – future perfect tense*
  - I will have been reading – future perfect continuous*
- T explains differences between the sentences/tenses

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<sup>42</sup> The only teacher who disagreed with this statement was Fazla.

T gets class to read aloud together, the above sentences. Does this three times.

3.45 T: I will say the name of the tense. Then you must all shout out the example sentence. Present perfect.

Sts: *I have read.*

T: Simple future tense.

Sts: *I will read.*

....

[A.LO.8/5]

The drilling continued for another eight minutes. Then Adila distributed a page-long newspaper report on a hurricane and asked the class to underline all the verbs and to state which tense they were in. The focus was purely on the form and no attention was paid to form-function relations. In Adila's responses to the questionnaire too she noted the importance she gave to oral drills and maintained that these were the most effective means of teaching grammar:

I am of the opinion that the teaching of English should involve the maximum amount of drilling so as to get the students used to the structures in a way that it becomes second nature to them. I use a lot of drills. I find them very useful and I think the students enjoy the chance to speak in English in that way.

[A.Q.E]

When a new grammatical structure was being introduced, most teachers asked the students to copy down "notes" on the structure, which the teacher may put up on the board or dictate to the students. Bakur, for example, dictated the following after a lesson on active and passive voice.

In sentences written in active voice, the subject performs the action expressed in the verb. The subject acts. The subject of the sentence performs the action expressed in the verb and comes at the beginning of the sentence.

E.g.

1. The cat ate the rat.
2. Scientists have conducted experiments to test the hypothesis.

In sentences written in passive voice, the subject receives the action expressed in the verb. The subject is acted upon. The agent performing the action may appear in a "by the . . ." phrase or may be omitted. The subject is not important.

E.g.

1. The rat was eaten by the cat.
2. Experiments have been conducted to test the hypothesis. [B.SW.4/5]

The teachers were observed to follow a routinised pattern of instruction that was personal to each individual teacher. For example, Bakur would always go through the same actions when he came into class every single time (i.e. wipe the board → greet the class → check the notebook of the student nearest to the teacher's desk → write the topic on the board → state the focus of the lesson to the student). Similarly, he would present new grammar in the same way:

1. state the structure (e.g. "We are going to look at conditionals" [B.LO.16/5])
2. explain the rules and form of the structure (e.g. "There are two clauses in the first type of conditionals. The first clause is called the if clause. The second clause is called the main clause. The pattern to be used is if + simple past tense + present conditional..." [B.LO.16/5])
3. write rules on the board, with examples and draws attention to important points (e.g. "Notice how we use 'were', the past subjunctive, and not 'was', even with a singular subject.")
4. asks students to copy down the information from the board.
5. sets an exercise to practice the structure (e.g. Students are asked to complete sentences such as: "If I was offered the job, I think I \_\_\_\_ [take] it.").
6. give the answers to the exercise.

Grammar practice, for most teachers, was characterised by written exercises such as fill-in-the-blanks. All seven teachers reported in the questionnaire that they frequently used written grammar exercises in their teaching. During their interviews, when asked about the kind of activities that they normally used in class, all teachers – except Elma – responded in the same way: "fill in the blanks and changing the verb form." Additionally, some teachers asked their students "to make their own sentences" using

the target structure, or asked them to underline instances of it in a reading text. Also, Adila often wrote a sentence on the board and got her students to identify its subject, verb and object, as well as the tense and voice, and label all the parts of speech. She would often pick out random sentences from a reading text and get her students to analyse it in this way.

### *Rule-discovery tasks.*

In responding to the questionnaire statement, “Students should be given the opportunity to work out grammar rules from examples,” five out of the seven teachers in this school disagreed/strongly disagreed. Cala and Fazla were the two teachers who were in favour of this statement.

In the initial interview with the teachers, I showed two examples of rule-discovery tasks (Appendix L contains one of these) and asked the teachers whether they would consider using something similar with their students. Teachers’ responses to this were mixed.

Elma felt that the tasks shown were unsuitable for her students and asserted that she would never use them herself because she “never [taught] grammar out of context like that” [E.I.3], and that her students would find them “very difficult and not at all interesting” [E.I.3].

However, after reading the description of Teacher D in the interview, Elma agreed with the view that “grammar should be treated as an area of discussion and discovery”. But, as the conversation progressed, it was apparent that she did not have a clear understanding of what was meant by teaching grammar through discovery:

Elma: Well the part about grammar should be treated as an area of discussion and discovery. That I like. I mean ...

NM: But thinking about your own students, are they able to talk about grammar? Do they have the ||

Elma: || Yes, hmm hmm especially when I talk about Dhivehi and English grammar and try and show them little bit about ... I mean I am not going to try and teach separately English and Dhivehi together in the

class. Of course not. But for example, when they are having difficulty I point out that verbs are “kan” and adjectives are “nan ithuru”, then they will get the idea. They will have difficulty otherwise. Specially the weak classes.

NM: Right, so you mean to say that you would explain English grammar in reference to Dhivehi grammar. Yeah? Using terms that they can understand?

Elma: Hmm.

NM: Do the students take part in this discussion?

Elma: Yes sometimes if I talk about Dhivehi, then they understand. Maybe not discuss, but they will understand.

NM: What about the part about grammar being an area of discovery?

Elma: Yes I like that.

NM: What do you like about it?

Elma: Everything.

NM: {pause, waiting for Elma to elaborate, then continuing when she didn't} Do you treat grammar as an area of discovery in your class?

Elma: Yes.

NM: How?

Elma: You mean?

NM: In what way do you treat it as an area of discovery?

Elma: {no answer}

NM: What I mean is, how do you encourage students to discover the grammar of the language?

Elma: {very long pause} I'm not sure.

NM: For example, do you get students to discover grammar rules on their own?

Elma: What do you mean?

NM: Um.. well because ... Okay. You say that you agree with this teacher in that grammar should be treated as an area of discussion and discovery. I'm just trying to understand how you actually do this in your own classroom.

Elma: {very long pause} On their own. On their own they will find out the grammar and I will help them whenever they want.

NM: Okay. Right. And how do you help them to discover the grammar?  
Elma: I will maybe correct their mistakes. And explain the grammar.  
NM: Okay.  
Elma: So like that.  
NM: So you mainly [focus on grammar] through the feedback you give to them?  
Elma: Yes. And explanation.  
NM: So not much discovery then. On the part of the students.  
Elma: Well they will discover the grammar ... through my explanation.  
[E.I.8]

Elma's lack of understanding of the concept became even clearer in one workshop where I had explained the effectiveness of rule-discovery tasks.

After I discussed the results of the study, I commented that despite teachers' reservations about using such approaches to teaching grammar, the study is evidence that it actually does work, even in this context, with the very students that they are teaching. As soon as I'd said that, Elma jumped to her defence and said that discovery approaches were a strong focus of her own teaching too; that for example, last term she had once taken her students on an outing to the beach and on their return to class, she had asked them to write an essay about the outing!! She clearly did not understand that teaching grammar through a discovery approach meant that you got the students to work with examples of language use and got them to find out what the underlying rules were, or how a particular structure worked.[E.RJ.28/5].

Adila, Gul and Cala responded very positively when they were shown the discovery tasks. They explained that they had not tried such tasks previously, but felt that they were "very useful" [G.I.4] and "interesting" [A.I.3] ways of focusing on grammar, and claimed that they "would love to do something like this" [C.I.2]. Cala explained why she thought so:

Cala: I've always believed in giving more independence for the students. Let them do things on their own. And this would do that I think. It will be very useful... because the students will be in control, no?

NM: And you think it would work with your students here?

Cala: Yes I think so. I think they will enjoy this. Because it's different. We always do the same things over and over again. It's always good to do something different. Change the momentum. [C.I.2].

Dalal thought that the tasks were "too difficult" [D.I.3] for his students. Bakur thought they were "too simple" [B.I.3]. At the same time, Bakur claimed that "grammar discussion and discovery and all that is well and good if you are studying for postgraduate level" [B.I.4], but that it was "not appropriate" [B.I.4] for students at Rural School.

The idea is good, but this much of attention is not needed for O level students. It is best simply to explain and tell them what is happening rather than go into all this trouble of making them find the rules. There is really no need for that. If a rule needs to be given, we can just simply explain it to them without going into all this rigmarole. [B.I.4]

Fazla appeared to be the only teacher who encouraged her students to discover the underlying rules of grammar. After being asked to describe her approach to teaching grammar, she stated that she did not "believe in teaching some rules first."

I would instead rather prefer [my students] to find the rules. So instead of myself going up and saying okay this is the rule, I want them to find out the rule from a given [example]. [F.I.2]

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Maybe it's because that's how I prefer to learn. I don't like it when people tell me things. I like to be left to discover things on my own. ... And I can see that some of the children have that preference too. [F.I.2]

I asked her how effective she had found that approach to be, and if her students were in fact successful in finding the rules on their own.

Yes. Sometimes. Sometimes. Actually most of the time they can [find the rule]. I mean when I did it in [another teaching context] they were able to because of the standard of English is better there. Here the good ones are able to do that and analyse [the language] and the others need some help in doing that. But in the end, with my help, they can. The thing is I think most students

can find the rule, they just don't know how to put it into words. And actually I find the students learn better if I do it that way. And they enjoy it much more too. Because they think ... I think they gain a lot of confidence you know? Because they can see they are able. That they can ... deal with it, you know? [F.I.2]

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I think they actually find this much simpler because they are working at their own speed and finding things out for themselves. It depends on the examples you give. It should be simple ones not difficult ones. And if you start with the simple ones they should be able to do it and of course when you come to the complicated stuff we can help them, but by then they should have had some practice doing this also. And also they remember better. They remember how to apply the rules rather than me going and telling them these are the rules to be applied. Especially with children here they need confidence. And this gives them that confidence. [F.I.3]

On being asked to give an example of a discovery task she had used with her students in the past, she told me:

Last year I was doing direct and indirect speech and so I would write down examples of both forms on the board and ask them what is the difference between the two and from that they will tell the differences which I will put on the board and from that they will be able to tell the rule, how to change from direct to indirect and so on. That has been successful because they were doing it themselves without me telling them that this is the rule and that you have to change the tense you have to change the first person into the second person and all that. So maybe that method was the best. I always prefer that method instead of going on teaching this rule and that rule. [F.I.3]

I should note here that Fazla brought up the issue of using rule-discovery tasks prior to me making any mention of it. In fact she had mentioned that she used such an approach even when completing the beliefs questionnaire:

I feel it is better for students to discover grammar rules on their own, through the help of the teacher. This way they learn better and remember more. In my

experience students also enjoy to learn in this way rather than simply being explained the rules over and over again by the teacher. [F.Q.B5b]

It was after she talked about the benefits of using rule discovery tasks during the interview that I showed her my example tasks. On seeing one of them, she claimed that she had in fact used a very similar one with her own students too, and later showed me the task that she had used. Fazla noted however that discovery tasks were more time consuming – both to plan and to implement – and therefore were not used on a regular basis, or even “as much as [she] would ideally want” [F.I.4]. Furthermore, Fazla felt that it was not possible to “teach every bit of grammar through discovery because for one thing students will get bored then... and anyway some things are just better just simply explained” [F.I.4].

### *Errors and error correction.*

All teachers expressed their “frustration” [F.I.6] at not being able to get students to use “error-free language” when communicating (either orally or in continuous writing) when these same students were “able to do grammar exercises perfectly” [B.I.2].

Dalal explained that “most of the time” he “just ignore[d] grammatical mistakes”, especially in oral language because “there [were] just too many mistakes to correct.”

[B]ut sometimes if I feel that it is a mistake that this girl should not make at this level then I will correct it. The others also can listen [to] what I am talking, ...more than that what I do is I correct their books and later on I discuss all their mistakes with them. I just tell them now why this is wrong and what is the correct way to say it...because of course it's very important for them to know what their mistakes are and how to rectify them. [D.I.2]

But, at a later stage during the same interview, he said:

I have studied very carefully the Cambridge examiners' reports and they accept grammatical mistakes and they don't penalise them ... So if these people, these native people, are prepared to ignore grammatical mistakes, then who are we to try and pin point all their grammatical mistakes? [D.I.3]

Elma maintained that she did not focus much on errors because she did not “really care about grammar” [E.I.5]. Even in the questionnaire, Elma had identified that she rarely discussed errors with her students and found this to be a strategy that was not at all effective. She explained that she did not point out or correct errors because she wanted her students to “learn on their own, from their own errors” [E.I.5]. She believed that it was possible for her students to “absorb grammar rules on their own through their own reading” [E.I.5] even if she did not teach any grammar, or focus any attention on errors. She claimed that this was how she learned English herself, and that she didn’t think the “constant stream of grammar lessons [that she received] at school had any effect” [E.I.7] on her. In her questionnaire comments too, Elma repeatedly mentioned how it was important to encourage students to read more as this would help them unconsciously gain a better understanding of grammar:

We shouldn’t teach grammar directly. Or bother about the grammar errors that students make. It is better to get students to read and gain [an understanding of] grammar in that way. [E.Q.B3b]

During my observations of her teaching, I found that Elma did overtly focus on grammar in several lessons. However, she focused on grammar almost always as a result of noticing errors in students’ writing. The following extract is from a descriptive writing lesson in which Elma asked her students to write a description of a favourite actor. It is typical of how Elma focused her students’ attention on grammar.

T walks in. Greets.

T: OK. Today’s topic is imaginative writing. {Writes “My Favourite Film Star” on board} We are going to talk about film stars. Who is your favourite film star?

Asks individual sts about who their favourite film stars are. T writes the names up on the board.

Sts very interested. Sts talk about {in Dhivehi} both Maldivian and Indian film stars. T also questions and comments frequently in Dhivehi.

T elicits common features of film stars: beautiful; young; handsome... {mainly adjectives describing appearance} Writes these on the board.

T: these are all words describing our favourite film stars. These are called adjectives. Adjectives are used to describe something. They come after a noun. And describe or modify or qualify a noun.

T asks to write a paragraph about their favourite movie star, using as much description as possible.

T: This is imaginative writing, so you need to use a lot of adjectives.

Sts start writing {individual work}. Class is quiet. T sits down at desk at front of class. Appears to be marking books from a different class.

T circulates round sts' desks and checks work in progress. Reads aloud one student's work. Encourages and praises. Goes back to own desk and continues marking.

T goes back to st's desk {same st as before} and reads aloud his work again. More praise. Goes back to sit at desk and continues with marking. Sts working quietly.

T circulates round class. Stops at a st's desk {different st this time}, and reads aloud from his book, correcting errors aloud as she read.

T [reading aloud]: *My favourite film star is a Maldivian film star. She is name Shirani. No you must say her name. Her name is Shirani. She is very beautiful and very good. She acting is very good. No. Her acting is very good. Use the pronoun, ingey. She have beautiful black eyes and long black hairs. Black hair. Not plural. She has black hair, ingey? I liked her very much. You don't like her anymore? {Student laughs} Then why are you using the past tense? You must use the present tense. I like her very much. Not past. Not liked. Change it to I like. Yes, that is very good. [E.LO.3/5]*

Although Elma maintained that grammar was not important, she believed that accuracy was more important than fluency:

It is more important to be accurate. They don't need to be fluent actually. They don't have to be fluent. It is not important. More important to be accurate. ... Yes. I think so. Accuracy is very important. [E.I.6]

She also explained that:

one of my aim[s] in teaching English is to ensure that my students produce error free language at all times... That is very important. I support that 100%. [E.I.6]

The importance she gave to maintaining accuracy is also reflected in her responses to the questionnaire, where she strongly agreed with the statements that “It is important to correct all grammatical errors in a student’s oral language” and “It is important to identify all grammatical errors in a student’s written work.”

Gul, too maintained that accuracy was more important than fluency:

Accuracy must come first definitely. Fluency and communication is not so important. But accuracy is very important. We must get our children to be accurate all the time. [G.I.4]

She always immediately corrected all errors that her students made, and got them to speak in “complete sentences” because, she claimed that “short answers are wrong” [G.LO.4/5]. The following extract shows some instances of her error correction techniques.

4.45            T writes on board: *Teacher said, “It is raining heavily today.”*  
T:            Who can change this to indirect speech?  
No volunteers. T chooses one student and asks to come to board to write the answer.  
S writes on board: *Teacher said it is raining today*  
T:            No. Verb must coordinate. If it is present, everywhere it must be present. If it is past, everywhere it must be past. Understand?  
S nods. T asks S to correct the sentence.  
S changes sentence to: *Teacher said it was raining today*  
T:            No that is not correct, child. Can you see the mistake children? Yes, we have to change today to that day. So we must say Teacher said it was raining that day.  
T asks S to make the change. S corrects it, but full-stop at the end is missing.  
T:            No you are still not writing fully correctly. Where is the full stop? This is a sentence, so we must put a full stop at the end. Don’t you know anything still? {Student adds full stop} Okay. Good.

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- 5.10 T: Next question. The teacher asked, “What’s your name?”  
 {Writes: *The teacher asked, “What’s your name?”* on board.}
- S: My name is ||
- T: ||No {laughs} not your name. Tell the indirect sentence. You need to say The teacher asked me my name. {T writes this on the board.} Understood?
- 
- 5.20 {Student enters class}.
- T: Is it raining outside?
- S: No.
- T: No you must say in complete sentence. No, it is not raining outside. Say that.
- S: No. It is not raining outside.
- T: Very good. Now it’s correct. Go and sit down.

[G.LO.4/5]

Like Gul, Adila too resorted to immediate correction of errors. She also corrected errors in students’ written work while they were still writing. Adila would start correcting errors as soon as the writing had begun. She moved from one student to the next, observing what they were writing, and corrected grammatical errors and spelling mistakes as they wrote. She did this she said because it was easy to correct while the students were “still trying to form the sentences because their full attention will be on getting that sentence right” [A.I.5]. But I sometimes overheard students commenting to each other in Dhivehi that this practice of correcting everything while they were still writing interrupted their train of thought and broke up the flow of writing. They did not however mention this to Adila.

Bakur believed that it was important to focus on students’ errors “if you want to improve their language” [B.I.3]. He stated that students must be made aware of “each and every one of their errors” [B.I.3].

But later he contradicted this by saying that he did not worry too much about students' grammatical mistakes, saying grammar errors were "a natural part of language production":

Now I have taught even British students. Even they make grammatical mistakes... If you go through the books of even British students, you will find they make many mistakes, even in very good writing. Everyone makes these errors. Even the very best students. So I think it is accepted. It is generally accepted that grammatical errors are a part of writing. ... It makes no difference [to the meaning]. ... I have even emailed these Cambridge people and they say they don't worry about grammar, they are only concerned about meaning. So I don't focus on grammar that much. Especially mistakes and errors and all that. [B.I.4]

Less than five minutes later, Bakur explained that because students keep making the same errors over and over again, he has to focus on grammar, especially on those areas that they found difficult. He said that:

Sometimes it can take one year also to teach one simple thing. So we are going to the fundamentals. Especially grammar you know. We have to. At least it will help them gain something good. They need to know the basics. Keep it drilled in. We have to go on and on until it becomes drilled into them. [B.I.4]

For Cala too, student errors were what helped her decide which areas of grammar to focus on. She explained that she examined students' writing and selected the most problematic areas. Cala would then provide an explanation of the selected problem area. Cala explained that although she corrected all the written errors in students' work, she did not "put too much emphasis on their spoken errors. Because I don't want to discourage them from speaking" [C.I.2].

Fazla believed in correcting all errors in her students' written work.

[When I am marking essays] I try to correct everything. It takes a hell of a lot of time but I try to do it. In fact most of the essays are written by me {laughs} because there are so many mistakes and I make all the corrections and write out everything in detail so it seems like that. [F.I.4]

In my observations of her teaching, I noticed that if she perceived errors while her students were working on a task, she often tried to elicit from her students where an error was, why it was wrong and what the correct form was, letting the students solve the problem rather than solving it for the students.

Dalal, Gul and Adila maintained that it was because of errors that they did not encourage students to speak to each other in English. They feared that erroneous language use will hinder learning. Dalal explained:

For argument's sake, let's suppose that these [students] can use English and are willing to speak in English to each other. Their English has so many mistakes that I think making them speak will cause more problems. Then other students will feel that okay this fellow is saying it this way so maybe this is the way I also need to say it and in the end they pick up more and more wrong ways of using English. So it will be more problematic. I think it's far better ... for the teacher and only the teacher to speak. Then at least the language that they hear will be 100% grammatical and correct in every way. [D.I.11]

### *Lesson plans.*

The issue of lesson planning and the extent to which the plan is followed in actual teaching was often discussed by the teachers in their interviews and also, at the workshop discussions. Most teachers claimed that even though they sometimes planned meticulously, they changed their plans depending on the way the students responded to a lesson. Fazla for example, noted:

Sometimes I change my lesson plan. It depends on the mood of the children also. I mean sometimes I stick to it but sometimes I have to change. If suppose I have chosen one topic for an essay in my lesson plan but then maybe the children are not interested in it then I will try to modify it and like that. Like today I was discussing about prepositions but they didn't know [what prepositions were] so I stopped and explained what prepositions were, gave them a small exercise on prepositions, just to refresh their memory, and then started on a reading passage. Then I realised that they were having difficulty understanding the passage and it wasn't a very interesting passage also. So I

decided to go back to the grammar and did some more exercises on prepositions and things. So generally yes I don't always stick to the plan. It depends upon the students' previous knowledge also. [F.I.3]

Cala stressed the importance of “know[ing] the answers” [C.I.4] before facing her students, “especially for a grammar lesson” [C.I.4]:

The children are full of questions about grammar and word meanings. I have to be fully prepared making sure I know everything when I go into class. It would just not do to say that I did not know the answer. The teacher must always know everything. And for that you have to plan meticulously. The students expect that. ... It would be terrible if they asked a question and I didn't know the answer. [C.I.4]

Elma admitted that she did not usually plan her lessons before going to class:

Actually I don't do much planning before I go. I look at the topic to be done that day and depending on the mood of the students I will decide to do something in class...Well sometimes [I plan]. Not always. But sometimes I don't have the time to do that. [E.I.5]

At the end of one workshop on a Saturday evening, I asked Elma if I could observe one of her lessons on Sunday<sup>43</sup>. On Sunday, I noted in my research journal:

Yesterday I asked her if she had any preferences about which lesson/class I observed this week, and she shrugged saying, “Any time on Sunday or Monday. I don't mind. It's the first two days of the week so of course I won't be really doing anything much.” [E.RJ.20/6]

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When I went into school today, Elma was in the waiting area of the office, reading the paper. I asked her if I could come with her to her 9B class, which was about to start in 10 minutes. She agreed, but added: “I haven't thought of what I am going to do yet. May be I will think of something when I go in. So don't expect it to be a very good lesson.” [E.RJ.20/6]

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<sup>43</sup> In Maldives, working days are Sunday – Thursday.

Elma sometimes gave the same tasks to her grade 9 class and grade 10 class. When I once asked her why she did so, she told me that she “didn’t have time to plan for both classes” [E.RJ.28/5], so sometimes did the same lesson in both grades.

Gul claimed that grammar formed the basis of her lesson planning:

[W]hen I go through the lesson for the next week, first thing I look is to see what kind of grammatical structures are there. So if there is something new I will teach the grammar first and sometimes children even get bored but you have to do it, no? [G.I.4]

Bakur too stated that lesson planning usually involved considering the grammar that would need to be focused on. He explained that even when preparing for a reading lesson, the first thing he would do is to read the selected text and consider which grammatical aspects could be highlighted in the lesson. However, he noted that he rarely followed any plans he made. Bakur often began a reading or writing lesson but ended up explaining and practising grammar for most of the lesson, as evidenced in the following lesson transcript.

- 8.10           Writes Travel and Tourism on black board. Says that this is the topic of today’s reading passage. Distributes passage.
- 8.12           Asks students to read passage silently.
- 8.20           T:     What is the passage about? Can you summarise in one sentence?
- No response from students.
- T:     notice how the passage begins by referring back to time.
- T starts reading passage aloud.
- T makes a list of “difficult” words on board, and writes down meanings next to them. Asks students to copy down.
- 8.28           T asks students what ‘since’ means {the first word of the passage}.
- No response from students.
- T explains usage and meaning of since. Asks to make a sentence with “since”.
- No response from students.

T: When you use the present perfect you use since. For example, I can't run since I am very old. I have been reading since four o'clock.

T writes down these examples on board. Asks students for differences in meaning.

No response from students.

T: I am reading. This is now. So it is present continuous tense.

T writes *I am reading – present continuous tense* on board.

T: What about past perfect tense? What is the past perfect tense of this sentence? Now past means something has happened in the past. Before. Something has happened sometime before. Sometime ago. Past perfect means something has happened before a certain time.

T draws a (rather confusing) time line on board and explains difference between present, present continuous, past, past continuous and past perfect. Students look bored/confused.

8.45

T: Now you have a sentence. I eat. I eat. That is the sentence. I eat. What is the tense?

No response from students. They look bored.

T: It is simple present tense. I eat. Very simple. Next sentence. I am eating. What is the tense? Present continuous tense. This is all very simple. But still you don't know. Now, I have eaten. What is the tense? I have eaten. It is now in the past. But... this is a little bit difficult. Because it is still called the present perfect tense. But, it is the action has happened in the past. Now let's change this to the simple past tense. Then we say I ate. That is simple past tense. If I say I was eating. Then it becomes past continuous tense. I was eating. Because we are talking about the past and at a particular point of reference time in the past. Then the next tense is...

[B.LO.12/5]

He continued his monologue in this way, until 9:10, when the bell rang, signalling the end of the period. His intended reading lesson had turned into a lecture on tenses. This was a frequent occurrence in Bakur's teaching, as he himself recognised:

Earlier I used to worry about [losing the focus of the lesson]. But later I realised that more than losing the focus of the lesson it is more important to teach them something useful. And children forget easily. So I need to drive it in, spent time on it. It doesn't matter about the rest of the lesson. I can start again. [If] the students [do] not understand there is no purpose in my teaching. I have to make sure that they know what they are reading about. Sometimes I will spend maybe two weeks on one passage, because I have to explain every word, every structure in it. Yes, everything. Only then can they fully understand. So however much time it takes me to explain everything over and over again, I will do it. I always do it. [B.I.8]

Adila felt that lesson plans must be followed closely, and should not be altered during teaching. She explained why:

I spend a lot of time thinking about what grammar to teach and how to teach it and prepare my plan very carefully. So I think it must be followed very closely. I don't abandon a plan once I have started it because then I won't know how to carry on and then get to the – and achieve my objective. So I always stick to my plan... If I sway with everything that the students do, I will never get anything done in the class, no? [A.I.5]

### *Teacher-centred classrooms.*

The teaching in Rural School was very teacher-centred, with little time or incentive for students to use the language. At the end of my first week in Rural School, I noted in my journal:

Even before I came here, I knew of course that it was going to be very teacher-centred. But I was not prepared for just how teacher-centred it was going to be. Students hardly ever speak. In today's double period lesson in 10C, for example, Bakur did all the talking – with most of the time spent on explaining the difference between active and passive voice. Not even one single utterance by a student. In most classes, students don't even have the opportunity to do

an activity on their own. As soon as a task is set, the teacher will dictate all the answers and the students simply copy it down!!! Then the teacher puts a tick on their note books and moves on to another exercise. No wonder, with so much spoon-feeding, that the students are unable to do anything on their own.

[RJ.6/5]

The students were generally passive, unenthusiastic and remained seated at their desks throughout the lesson, with little or no interaction among them. During the first three weeks of observations (i.e. before I started the workshops) I saw no instances of any pair or group work in any of the classes. Teaching was simply a process of knowledge transference from the teacher to the students.

Bakur, Adila and Gul's classes were particularly teacher-centred, with the teacher providing almost all the answers (even dictating essays!) without allowing the time for students to work out anything on their own.

4.45 T writes on board: *He looks me.*

T: There is a word missing here. It is a small word.

But without it, the sentence is wrong. We must say, He looks at me. Then it is correct. This is the preposition.

4.48 T writes a list of sentences on the board {e.g. She went \_\_\_ a walk. He went \_\_\_ an excursion. He put \_\_\_ his swimming dress. She took \_\_\_ her bikini and jumped \_\_\_ the sea.} and asks to copy down and fill the blank in each sentence with a preposition.

S1: What is bikini?

T: A bikini is a small dress that European ladies wear.

S2: What is bikini?

T: Already I explained. Are you deaf? Don't talk. Don't ask unnecessary questions.

4.51 T asks S3 to come up to board and write the answers {Ss still copying down sentences from board} S3 stands in front of board. Says {in Dhivehi} that he didn't know the answer. T whispers {answer?} in his ear and S3 writes the preposition for the first sentence on the board.

T: Very good. Now Ali come and do the next one.

Ali comes to board and keeps staring at it.

T: Just write the preposition. {waits 5 seconds} Write down on. He went on an excursion. Preposition is on.

Ali writes answer.

T: Very good.

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5.40 T asks to do exercise on reported speech in the textbook. Sts start work.

5.43 T: Have you finished all the answers? {Some students still getting the textbook out of bag; none have finished even half of the exercise}

5.45: T: Okay Mariyam, tell the answer for number a.

Mariyam: Not finished, Madam.

T: Come on, hurry up. {gives answer}

T: Okay, next question, who can tell? Who can tell answer for b?

No response from students {most are still completing the exercise}

T gives answers for b, c, d and e. Sts copy down answers as she dictates.

T: Do you want me to write in the board?

Ss: Yes madam.

T: Okay I will write in the board.

S3: Madam answer for e?

T: E? I was telling so many times. Why have you not written? Okay write down. {Dictates answer for E for the second time}

T: Okay now F. Copy down the answer {dictates answer for F and G}. Okay. Now who doesn't have an answer up to G?

Some sts raise their hands. T repeats answers for all questions.

[G.LO.18/5]

After observing the above lesson, I first asked Gul to tell me about the lesson. She said:

That was something I learnt in a workshop which a British lady taught. It is the most recent method of teaching grammar. We have to try and involve as many students as possible. Not just talk dryly about grammar all the time. [G.RJ.18/5]

I asked her specifically why she kept giving all the answers without allowing the students to do any work on their own. She told me:

I should have let them do it on their own, no? But I wanted to speed up the lesson. If I had to wait for them to do the whole thing, it would have taken a long time. So sometimes I do that. I give them the answers. Then easy for me to mark also, no? {laughs} I then just need to put a tick, no need to read. {laughs}. [G.I.6]

Despite innumerable such incidences, Gul described her own teaching as being student-centred.

Gul: Yes I have been very fortunate to learn about child centred methods, because I used to go to so many workshops by these British volunteer trainers in those days. They used to tell us all about it. ... and that is the method I practice.

NM: Can you explain to me what you mean by child centred methods?

Gul: Yes this is the current the modern method, no? In that method, everything is the child. You have to focus everything on the child itself... We have to teach at the level of the child. So I explain things very carefully so that they can fully understand. Each and everything we have to explain to the child. So the child can get the best learning, no? [G.I.3].

Gul explained that her habit of frequently getting students to “write the answers on the board” was further evidence of her student-centred approach:

Then the child will feel important no? That’s why I do it. It’s for focusing the attention on the child. ... And if they don’t know the answer I can just quietly

whisper it in their ear so they won't be embarrassed by not knowing the answer. [G.I.3].

Dalal also had a tendency to explain everything to his students. After observing a reading lesson where Dalal did all the talking, I asked him to explain his actions. He said:

I always take a lot of time [explaining] because [the students] don't have any idea or knowledge about anything. What I do is, I do loud reading. Some teachers will get the best students to read aloud but I don't. If I give the best student to read aloud she will make mistakes and won't be able to pause at the proper point and all these problems so I always read aloud the passage myself. If you don't read it in the proper manner you won't understand what the writer is saying. And then I ask them to underline any words [that] they don't understand. I know you don't have to understand each and every word to understand a passage but since we are trying to teach more words and [trying to help] them to understand as much as we can I want to try to get them to understand everything. Every single word. Then I always explain about the grammar in the passage. What tense it is. What time. What aspect. All that. Because they have to know. Otherwise they won't know. [D.I.5]

Many of the teachers felt this way, and indicated that the teacher's input – whether in the form of explanation or correction – was central to learning.

## *Professional Development*

### *Attitudes toward professional development.*

In the initial interviews I asked all teachers to describe ways in which they attempted to reflect on their teaching, improve and develop themselves as teachers. Teachers' responses to the question showed that continuous professional development was a foreign concept to most, as many teachers did not regard teacher learning to be an important issue.

Elma, who was then in her second year of teaching English, responded that “there is not much to develop” [E.I.9] and that “there are no facilities for such things” [E.I.9].

Elma: I don't think I need to improve. My students like me very much. My goal is to help them pass their exam. If I can ... achieve that, I don't think I need to ... change or ... improve.

NM: So you don't really do anything to improve or learn more?

Elma: Well I read. I read a lot. For history.

NM: What about for English?

Elma: There isn't much I can do for English.

NM: Why is that?

Elma: What can I do? There is nothing ... to do. [E.I.10]

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Elma: I don't think there is anything I need help with. I think I am a good teacher. My students like me. They have never complained about me. [E.I.10]

But later, she commented that she would “really appreciate a Cambridge workshop to tell us how to mark essays” [E.I.10]. This was not necessarily because she herself needed to improve, but because:

some teachers are very strict in the marking, some teachers focus too much on grammar, some teachers don't look enough at the grammar and so on ... so a Cambridge workshop would help everyone learn about the right way to mark [E.I.10].

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most of the other teachers are very old fashioned and backward [so] they need to be taught about a modern way of teaching, a student-centred method of teaching [E.I.10].

Dalal explained that he improved himself by “reading model essays in essay writing textbooks and [by] reading examiners' reports and marking schemes to see how they have awarded marks” [D.I.6]. He believed that he was a good teacher and had “loads of confidence in my abilities and that I am doing things the right way” [D.I.6].

So I know I don't need any more training or improvement of that sort. I need to concentrate on my teaching and gain more experience now... I feel that I can go on like this for some more years without any more training or

development ... or any kind of learning on my part. I know that I know enough. [D.I.6]

Dalal stated that he always followed his own methods and did what he believed was best rather than follow someone else's footsteps:

...the problem is that I think I am rather [reluctant] to follow others. I always have my own way and I will never give in to other people. {laughs} Nobody has managed to change me so far. I'm not the kind of person to do something just because someone tells me to do it. In fact that's probably a reason why I will not do it... now if I come across someone whom I think I [will] learn from I might listen to their ideas, but I will most probably not try them out. Because the problem is in me. I am who I am... no one can change me. [D.I.6]

Bakur also claimed that he was resistant to change:

[S]ometimes I feel [that] I can't modify just myself however much I try. I cannot adapt myself to something. I cannot change my ways. But then, I have been doing things this way for so many years, why should I change? [B.I.8]

Bakur further added that he had no desire to learn anything new or change in any way since he was ready to retire in a couple of years.

Fazla found that talking to other teachers and exchanging ideas was very helpful for her own learning as a teacher:

I like talking to senior teachers who are more experienced than me. Especially here in school I like talking to Bakur Sir I mean he is much more experienced than me and he has visited some other countries also, in Europe also, I mean he has taught some British children also, so, then I like to talk to him about the lessons and about language in general because he is very knowledgeable about these things. ... And sometimes I like to compare with other teachers especially Bakur Sir what they have done in their class and sometimes I like to try their ideas to see how it works for me. [F.I.6]

Several other teachers also had a great respect for Bakur because of his experience working in Europe, and mentioned this regularly as evidence of his expertise as a teacher.

Speaking about how she tried to learn more, Cala stated that she “read as widely as possible” in order to “keep up to date with new methods.” However, she noted that:

When it comes to actually trying new ideas with my students, I find that if I really like something I might try it. But if it doesn't work for me once, I will not bother with it again. I don't have much patience like that. [C.I.6]

Gul noted that she had attended various workshops “conducted by many British people” [G.RJ.10/5] when she was in her native country, but that “no such facilities” [G.RJ.10/5] were available in their current teaching context. She explained that she kept “a file of everything – all lesson plans, tests, handouts prepared” [G.RJ.19/6] from previous years when she used to teach in a very reputable school in her home country. Most of these had been “prepared by experts” [G.RJ.19/6] who had conducted in-service workshops in the school. She recycled these lessons and handouts when she needed a change from the textbook she had to follow. Gul did not see the need to add to her repertoire of teaching strategies, but felt that this collection of resources she had was adequate for her, whatever teaching situation she was in.

If I want to do something different I can use some exercises from it. It's all there. I can just get it photocopied and teach it. It's easy when I am feeling lazy and haven't done any preparation for a lesson, no? [G.RJ.19/6].

Adila too noted that she had in the past attended teacher development workshops, and had tried to adopt some of the techniques they introduced. But, she stated that it was difficult to “change to something new” because “we are so used to doing things in a particular way” [A.I.7]. She emphasised the need to make small, gradual changes:

[N]ow we are following the new method, no? The old method we used mainly grammar. But now [it is a] very different method ... according to that we are doing our level best now... to use that method. A student-centred method. But ... we can't just start new methods, we have to also have some time to think and learn to do it and the students will also get confused so we have to go slowly slowly only. That way only we can try new methods. ... And even then

it's very difficult ... not knowing if what I am doing is right or helping them or ... you know? [A.I.7]

### *Changes to beliefs and practices.*

As the above extracts from teacher interviews show, teachers at Rural School were generally set in their ways, and were unwilling to adopt new ideas. Even though some of them claimed that they were always looking for new ideas and ways to improve their teaching, I realised from the first workshop itself how difficult it was going to be to get them to try anything different. Everything I suggested at that first workshop was met with resistance, the teachers defending their current teaching methods by claiming that they worked. Any new ideas I suggested were deemed “inappropriate” for Rural School. Bakur once told me: “whatever you may say, we just can't do these things here... It's nothing against you or any suggestions you give. But we are set in our ways and people don't like changing.” [B.RJ.22/5].

It was therefore not surprising that at the end of the 12 weeks, little had changed about the teaching at Rural School.

In order to identify if there were any changes to teachers' beliefs, I repeated some of the key questions from the first interview in the last interview. In my informal conversations with the teachers too I casually brought up issues that I was interested in analysing. For example, I would often ask teachers why they did something in a particular way in a lesson; or tentatively suggest an alternative to what had done in a lesson, then ask them if that would have worked. No differences in teachers' responses were identified, indicating that the teacher development programme had not had any effect on their beliefs about teaching grammar.

Where their actual teaching of grammar was concerned, again, no differences could be observed. Teachers did not adopt any of the suggested techniques for focusing on grammar. Nor did they use any of the materials for grammar teaching that were discussed at the workshops or given to the teachers as handouts. Nor did they use any

of the materials<sup>44</sup> they themselves had produced at the workshops. They continued to teach grammar more or less the way they had been teaching at the beginning of the project.

One of the workshop activities was to design a rule-discovery task of their own. After showing them various rule-discovery tasks, I had asked them to select a structure that they were going to teach in the next few weeks, and to design a task that would involve some kind of grammatical problem solving on the students' part. The teachers started on this activity at the workshop, but due to time constraints, were not able to complete the tasks during that workshop session. All teachers had however selected a structure to focus on, and had made some kind of outline about what the grammar task would involve. I had expected at least some of them to use the tasks that they had designed when they were teaching the structures in class. But this was not the case.

I asked Gul, Adila and Cala why they did not use the tasks they had designed in their teaching. They commented that they were "afraid that it would not work" [C.RJ.6/6], found direct explanation much easier and that they "did not want the students to be confused" [G.RJ.6/6]. They also felt that such tasks would inevitably lead to classroom disruption and cause managerial difficulties. Cala further noted that nothing had changed at the management level, indicating that change would have been more forthcoming if it had been mandated by the school.

However, there were changes of a different kind. Changes that affected their general teaching approach. Previously, teachers did not use pair/group work, fearing that the class would become too noisy. But, soon after the first workshop, I noticed that all teachers (except Bakur) gradually started using pair and group work, and continued to do so in increasing amounts as the weeks progressed. Teachers also appeared to provide more opportunities for the students to work on their own; to refrain from providing too much assistance; to encourage students to self correct their errors; to ask more open ended questions. Bakur who previously interacted with only the four students seated nearest to the board was observed to interact with a greater range of students, paying individual attention more often.

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<sup>44</sup> Apart from grammar tasks, a number of reading related activities were designed by the teachers. These were also not utilised.

Although the teaching of English at Rural School focused a lot on reading and writing skills, teachers previously used the same techniques and activities in teaching and practising these skills. Reading lessons invariably involved the teacher reading aloud from a text (or getting individual students to take turns in reading parts of the text aloud), the teacher ‘explaining the meaning’ and the students answering a number of comprehension questions based on the text. Following the workshop session on reading skills, three of the teachers (Cala, Dalal and Fazla) started focusing on various reading strategies (e.g. skimming, scanning, etc) and/or utilised a range of post-reading activities in addition to the obligatory ‘comprehension questions.’

Adila also maintained that she had started focusing on different reading strategies and post-reading tasks, although the ‘changes’ that she claimed she had made were not obvious to me through observation. Adila maintained that she:

now use[d] different reading strategies ... first of all when the passage is given by skim reading and then scanning and then reading for gist and also reading for detail and then finally summarising and also finding out the meanings of new words [A.I.10].

But my observations of her reading lessons found no evidence of her use of these strategies.

Where writing was concerned, the norm was for the teacher to give a topic (e.g. ‘An accident’), suggest one or two possible ways in which the topic can be approached and let the students write. In some instances, after allowing about 10 – 15 minutes for the students to write, the teacher would provide a ‘model’ version of the same essay and either get students to copy it or modify it slightly before writing it down in their books. In each case, the focus of writing was on the final product, not on the process of writing. During the course of the programme however, Dalal and Cala started adopting a more process approach to writing by focusing on planning, drafting and revising stages.

In this way, each of the seven teachers at the school was observed to have made some kind of change, although none of them related to the instruction of grammar. The changes they made were small, generic changes, but nonetheless, changes that they

had adopted during the course of the programme. They had initiated practices that were different from what they had been used to before.

*Response to evaluation questionnaire.*

At the end of the last workshop, the teachers completed an evaluation questionnaire, the purpose of which was to obtain their feedback on the effectiveness of the whole professional development programme. The teachers’ responses to the questionnaire were very positive. Out of the seven teachers, four claimed that the programme in general was “very satisfactory” and three thought that it was “satisfactory.”

**Table 20.** Responses to Evaluation Questionnaire, Rural School

Description	SA	A	N	D	SD
The programme objectives were clear	42.9	57.1	-	-	-
Time management was properly observed	57.1	28.6	14.3	-	-
The programme was successful in conveying new knowledge	28.6	42.9	28.6	-	-
The programme was successful in conveying new approaches to teaching	71.4	28.6	-	-	-
The programme deepened my understanding of how grammar is acquired	42.9	28.6	28.6	-	-
The programme was a useful forum for exchanging and developing ideas	57.1	28.6	14.3	-	-
The programme was relevant to my teaching situation	57.1	42.9	-	-	-
I was fully involved in the workshops’ activities	57.1	28.6	14.3	-	-
I intend to use the materials from the workshops in my teaching in future	71.4	28.6	-	-	-
I intend to adopt the approaches introduced at the workshops in my teaching in the future	57.1	42.9	-	-	-
The handouts were informative and useful	42.9	42.9	14.3	-	-
The feedback given following observations was helpful	71.4	28.6	-	-	-

*Note.* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The table above shows the teachers’ responses to the 11 Likert scale statements. The statements are provided in the first column. The figures show the percentage of

teachers who strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), were neutral (N), disagreed (D) and strongly disagreed (SD) with each statement.

As can be seen in the table, none of the teachers disagreed with any of the statements. Despite the fact that none of the teachers had till that time used any of the workshop materials in their teaching, they agreed that they would do so “in the future.”

Their responses to the open ended questions were equally positive. In this part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to note what they considered to be the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the programme. Teachers commented that they found “explanations clear,” “examples understandable and applicable” and “handouts useful.” Several teachers appreciated “the step-by-step approach,” “being shown new techniques through clear demonstration,” “the emphasis on collaboration and working JOINTLY as a group to find solutions to our teaching problems” and “an abundance of hands-on activities that involved us in planning and designing lessons to follow the new approaches.” Others noted “regular feedback,” “positive encouragement” and “really listening to what EVERYONE had to say” made them feel “equally able and competent” while giving them a “confidence boost.”

On the weaknesses of the programme, two teachers noted that feedback was lacking, and that the suggested approaches were not “entirely relevant or applicable” to their context. One teacher commented that the timings of the workshops (Saturday afternoons from 2 – 5pm) were not favourable.

## *Urban School*

### *The Teachers*

The English department at Urban School was led by Komal, a teacher with nearly 40 years’ experience in ESL education. Before arriving in Maldives in 1991 Komal had previously worked as a teacher, lead examiner and teacher educator elsewhere. In Urban School she taught grades 9 and 10.

Idris had begun his professional career as a policeman before attending teachers’ college. Both he and Hamd had taught in various schools for over 20 years before

moving to the Middle East where Idris worked as a teacher and Hamd set up and ran a school for children of expatriate professionals. After several years Idris returned to his native country to work as a temporary English instructor at a university before arriving in Maldives in 1999. Hamd arrived in Maldives in 2003.

Nur had worked as an English teacher in Maldives for more than 22 years and prior to that, elsewhere for five years. He had not received any training before starting his career because, he claimed that at that time “they don’t ask for these diplomas and degrees and all that nonsense” [N.I.1]. He had recently completed a degree in education through distance education but maintained that his teaching was still influenced almost entirely by the way he himself learnt English when he was in school.

Liban and Mika had taught in various schools for several years before arriving in Urban School in 2003 and 2000, respectively. Liban taught grade 8 while Mika taught grades 9 and 10.

Before arriving in Maldives in 2002, Jana had worked mainly in business and administration. She had also worked as a volunteer for a number of years in Africa. Nevertheless, Jana had been tutoring students in one-on-one situations privately for a number of years. In Maldives, her first appointment was as a business studies teacher in which post she remained for two years before transferring to Urban School. This was her first formal appointment as an English teacher. Although English was not her mother tongue, Jana considered it to be her main language of communication both at home and outside. She claimed that her “instinct and common sense” [J.I.2] guided her teaching as she had not done any formal teacher training.

It is important to note that all these seven teachers were also employed at other schools while they were at Urban School, and provided private tutoring in students’ homes as well. Komal and Liban, for example, taught in another school in the morning, worked at Urban School in the afternoon and tutored private students in the evening. Nur, Idris and Hamd taught both in the morning and afternoon sessions in Urban School (a total of six classes each) as well as teaching elsewhere. Mika noted that as expatriate workers, they were all teaching in Maldives to earn an income for

their families back in their home countries and this involved “moving from one teaching situation to another, from morning till midnight, seven days a week” [M.RJ.8/8]. As a result, they had little time to plan, mark student work or reflect on their teaching.

### *The Goal of Teaching English*

Helping their students to pass the Cambridge GCE Ordinary level examination was the main goal of five of the seven teachers in this school. Komal was concerned about the low numbers of students who actually passed in the examination, and was “always thinking about ways of helping them” [K.RJ.8/8] to do better and to increase the number of students who passed.

Jana was not so focused on the examination. Although passing the examination was important, Jana maintained that her main aim in teaching English was to “teach them to use and understand a language that is such an important passport in today’s world” [J.RJ.12/8]. For Jana, obtaining a pass grade in the examination alone was not sufficient. She noted that many students were unable to converse in English even after they had completed ten years of schooling in the English medium. Thus, she claimed that “if, after completing school they have learned how to use English for simple communication, then my purpose would have been fulfilled” [J.RJ.12/8].

Hamd too believed that the examination was secondary. What was more important for him was to teach his students “enough English so that they can at least understand basic things” [H.RJ.12/8]. A secondary goal for Hamd was to “teach them some life skills, advising them about the teachings of Islam” [H.RJ.12/8].

### *Traits of an Effective Teacher*

The teachers had very similar conceptions of what it was to be an effective teacher. Six out of the seven teachers identified “explains clearly” and “maintains discipline” to be the most important qualities of effectiveness. Two of the other most commonly mentioned characteristics of such teachers were: “plans well” and “is knowledgeable.” In responding to the questionnaire, Nur also commented that:

Students here don't understand how hard the teachers work. It is the teacher's job to explain clearly the rules of the language. A good teacher will do that. All the student has to do is to be quiet and listen to the teacher and learn. To try and absorb the knowledge that he is being given by the teacher. [N.Q.E]

### *Use of the Scheme of Work*

In Urban School, teachers prepared the scheme of work at the beginning of each term. Generally, a different teacher was assigned the duty of preparing the scheme each time. In this way, they shared in the planning and preparation stages, although Nur noted that in previous years the school management would simply "bring schemes of work from various other schools and ask us to follow them" [N.I.6]. During the term, the teachers held fortnightly meetings to discuss lessons to be taught for the two following weeks. At these planning meetings, which generally lasted about 30 minutes, Komal asked the teachers in each grade how far they had managed to complete the previous fortnight's work, and allocated more work to be done for the next fortnight, using the schemes as guides.

The schemes specified the "teaching items" and "teaching materials" for each week, and designated the number of periods to be spent on each lesson. Each week there was a "comprehension" lesson (the passages were not specified in the scheme – this was decided by the teachers at the meetings), and some form of writing. The writing lesson varied between essay writing, guided writing, letter writing, report writing, summarising and handwriting (again, the actual writing task/essay topic was set at the meetings). In addition to this, grammar featured every week, with a minimum of three periods (out of a total of nine) allocated to grammar in all grades. The grammatical focus ranged from tenses, parts of a sentence, passive/active voice, direct/indirect speech, wh-questions, subject-verb agreement, and parts of speech. This was the case in all grades. As Hamd noted,

in every grade, normally in the first term we teach all the tenses and parts of speech. Then second term we teach active and passive voice and reported speech and third term we teach subject verb agreement and parts of a sentence and question types. All the grades we follow the same way. Every year. [H.I.2].

Teachers appeared to generally stick to the scheme of work quite rigidly. Liban, for example, stated that even if students were not interested in a particular lesson and were not paying attention, he would “have to persevere with it” [L.I.4] because it was “after all [his] job to teach what [was] in the scheme so it [did] not matter whether the students like[d] it or not” [L.I.4].

Hamd stated that he only deviated from the scheme if he felt that the students were not able to understand the grammar:

If they do not [understand] something then I have to go back to basic grammar. Without that I cannot carry on. So sometimes I have to give two [or] three extra grammar lessons. Only after developing their grammatical standard they will be able to tackle ... comprehension and all that. [H.I.3]

Mika explained that they were planning on changing the scheme of work for the following year, so as to concentrate even more on grammar:

Mika: Actually we are planning now for next year that we should concentrate only on grammar in the first term. Teach nothing else. Only grammar for the entire term. Whether it is grade 10 or 9 or 8 or 7. Everyone will learn only grammar for the first term, the entire term. And the first term exam will also only be on grammar.

NM: Don't you think the students may find that a bit boring?

Mika: That is their problem. Now our job is to teach them and this is the best way I think that we can improve their English. ... And what I feel is ... they don't know enough grammar ... so we need to focus more on the basics. And by doing that we can get them to realise that they can do it. That they are capable of learning English and passing the exam.

NM: But you are already doing a lot of grammar even now.

Mika: But not enough. We only do grammar normally three or four periods a week

NM: So what you are saying is that by concentrating solely on grammar for the first term, you are going to encourage them to study harder?

Mika: Yes then by the end of the first term ... they would have learnt all the grammar and we can start adding more comprehension and composition ... we will still continue with grammar in the second and

third terms but do less of it ... and once they know the grammar, they will be able to tackle anything. That is what we are going to do next year. [M.I.4]

### *Teachers' Concerns*

During the 12 weeks I spent at Urban School, there were four main issues that teachers continually raised – issues which they claimed were directly or indirectly related to all aspects of English teaching in the school including the poor examination results, the teaching approach they adopted and the difficulty of introducing innovative teaching methods.

#### *Disciplinary issues.*

All teachers raised the issue of student discipline – or the lack of it – stating that this was their main hindrance to teaching. Maintaining discipline was their main concern in the classroom, with teaching English reduced to a lesser priority. This was especially true in the boys' classes of the morning session. Idris went so far as to claim that in Urban School:

it is not possible to teach. It is very difficult ... very difficult. Sometimes it is impossible to teach. I spend all my time shouting at the students and very little time teaching. It's very difficult. [I.I.1]

Hamd noted that most of his lessons involved detailed lectures on grammar with little student involvement because it was “the only way of keeping the class quiet for sometime” [H.I.7]. He admitted that this was not the most favoured of teaching strategies, but he did it because:

if you ask them to do many things there will be so much noise. So this way they are quiet and they will maybe be able to learn something. I can make them involved but then maybe only four or five boys will take part and then I will be a failure in front of the students and I won't be able to control the class. So it is better this way. [H.I.7]

In fact, Hamd and Idris defined a successful lesson as one in which “at least some of the students do some work” [H.I.5] and one in which they are “able to teach without much disturbance” [I.I.5].

Mika explained that he had had no problems with maintaining discipline when he taught in his previous school, where he would teach large classes of up to 100 students and “still be able to maintain perfect silence among them” [M.I.3]. But because teachers did not “have the liberty to physically punish students” [M.I.4] in Maldives, Mika noted that most teachers faced

a very desperate situation where we can't control even 40 students and everything just gets completely out of hand every single day so much so that usually we have to deal more with discipline issues than with teaching itself [M.I.4].

He believed that this was because “nobody is interested in English. Nobody thinks it's very important to learn. So students just do what they like” [M.I.4]. He felt that teachers of other subjects were at an advantage because “other subjects are naturally more interesting and also more important to study, so somehow they manage to control the classes and get the students to pass the exam” [M.I.4].

### *Lack of resources.*

Urban School was financed partly by the government and partly through student fees. The school management maintained that it did not have adequate funds and were not in a position to improve its resources. Teachers did not have facilities for photocopying, computing or printing. As a result, most teachers used only the material from the textbook. This was especially the case in the morning session. The teachers in the afternoon session often collected money from their students to pay for additional photocopied or printed materials. Students who did not or could not pay this additional fee did not receive the additional handouts or worksheets.

The school library was the size of a classroom and did not have “any decent books” [H.I.3]. The management confirmed that it could not afford to buy books for the library and depended solely on donations from various charitable organisations. The last such donation was made in the 1980s, according to one supervisor. It did however have a small selection of relatively recent resource books in a locked cupboard for the use of teachers. This included the set textbooks and “one or two additional resource

books for each subject” [H.I.3]. They were not borrowable, and were meant to be used only in the library.

Jana raised the issue of cramped classrooms.

We have 40 to 45 students in a class. And the rooms are so small you can’t even move around and see what each student is doing. It’s just not possible. I mean it takes a good few minutes for a student in the back row to try and make her way out to the front if she was going to the bathroom or something. Because so many of the others have to get up and move furniture in order for that one child to walk to the door. So doing group work ... had never even occurred to me because it would be such a problem trying to organise the classroom and get them seated in groups. [J.I.3]

### *Teaching load.*

In the average Maldivian school, English teachers were responsible for three classes, with 7 – 8 periods per class per week. In Urban School, English teachers were allocated 4 classes, with 9 weekly periods per class. In addition to this, the class sizes in Urban School were between 40 – 45 students whereas in most schools the class size was an average of 30. The teachers noted that this “heavy workload” [K.I.5] negatively affected their teaching as they were unable to pay individual attention to students and were overworked, having “only one or two free periods every day” [L.I.6] during which they marked student work and planned lessons or “simply relax[ed] and breathe[d]” [J.RJ.24/8] between teaching periods.

### *Students’ language ability.*

According to the teachers, the students at Urban School were very weak in English, having joined Urban School after either being expelled from other schools, or after completing Dhivehi-medium primary schools. They noted that “only a handful of students” [M.I.8] pass the end-of-school examination every year. Idris and Hamd talked about the need to “start teaching from the very basics” [H.I.2] because the students’ “English standard [was] so low” [I.I.2].

Nur explained that the students “have a lot of gaps in grammar” [N.I.5] because in their previous schools, “grammar [was] not dealt with in enough detail. So the children find it difficult” [N.I.5]. According to Mika,

most of these students did not get a good start in English in primary level and without that head start, there is no interest also in the language. So they don’t do well when they come to this later stage. [M.I.4]

Another problem was that even though many of the students enrolled in Urban School after being expelled from other secondary schools<sup>45</sup>, they continued to repeat in every grade in Urban School too. Apart from being much older than average for the grade and lacking interest in studying, Nur explained additional difficulties teachers faced as a result of these students:

Some of them have finished the textbook once or twice from beginning to end either in the previous year or in a previous school. So if I give one exercise they just copy the answers [from their previous years’ work]. They don’t think or try and do it on their own. They just copy. And if I explain it even in a slightly different way from the previous year’s teacher, they will say “But Sir that is not right. That is not what so-and-so said.” Some of them will even go and complain to the principal saying I’m not teaching properly. [N.I.6]

### *Importance of Grammar*

As already noted, grammar played a major role in the schemes of work used in the school. The importance teachers gave to grammar was highlighted in their responses to the beliefs questionnaire, where all seven teachers in this school noted that it was essential to teach grammar and disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement that “A learner can acquire a second or foreign language without grammar instruction.” All seven teachers were also unanimous in agreeing/strongly agreeing that “Explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language.”

In their interviews, the teachers further emphasised the importance of grammar in learning and teaching a language.

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<sup>45</sup> Students may be expelled from school as a result of poor discipline or lack of academic achievement.

Nur was “surprised to read that in some countries they advocate teaching English without teaching grammar” [N.I.4]. He could not imagine such a situation:

How can you do that? Grammar is language. Language is grammar. You can't separate the two. No I don't accept that [language can be taught without teaching grammar]. I don't agree with it. ... The essentials need to be taught and grammar is an essential. ... And in my opinion it is most important to teach grammar. [N.I.4].

Idris was equally emphatic about the need to teach grammar:

Of course we must. Of course we must teach grammar. Without it there is no language no? ... We can't not teach grammar. It is what makes the language. So if you are teaching the language, you have to teach grammar. That is very simple. [I.I.4]

Mika was dismissive of communicative approaches to language teaching. He claimed that:

Now I don't believe in this communicative approach because it doesn't really get into the deeper level of language. You just brush past the language without delving into it. That's what I think. Now these native speakers if you ask them is this sentence correct they will say if it is correct or not. But they can't say why it is correct or not correct. So that is the problem with using the communicative method. If you learn the grammar, if you learn the rules, you have the tools to study the language more and learn on your own by doing so many of these books. That is how I improved my grammar and that is what I recommend to anyone who wants to improve their language. So I think paying a lot of attention to grammar and analysing the rules of the language is very important. [M.I.5]

He believed that it was essential to start teaching grammar from the very beginning. Maldivian students who studied at government schools were, according to Mika, “good in English because they pay so much attention to grammar right from grade 1 where they learn grammar side by side vocabulary. So from the beginning they are able to use words in the proper way” [M.I.5]. In comparison, he said that grammar is not given too much priority until grade 7 or 8 in his home country, “and the results are

obvious. The students' English is then so much poorer than the average student here" [M.I.5].

Liban believed that it was "because they had not been taught grammar properly" [L.I.5] in their previous schools that students who joined Urban School were weak in English. "By focusing on improving their fundamental grammar, we help them to improve their overall language ability. Grammar is the key to it all" [L.I.5].

Jana and Komal however stressed the fact that "grammar is not the be all and end all of language teaching" [K.I.4]. They emphasised that although grammar was important, it was essential that it was not the sole focus of teaching and that it supplemented the communicative aspects of language. Jana noted that "If you teach a lot of grammar it really bombards their brain and they begin to both hate the subject and the teacher" [J.I.3] and so she only focused on grammar when it was necessary to draw students' attention to form.

My weekly observations of the teaching in the school revealed that a significantly large proportion of teaching time was spent on grammar, even during skills-based lessons. As noted earlier, each of the seven teachers was observed 10 – 12 times during the course of the data collection period; a total of 78 lessons. Out of these, grammar was the main component of 38 lessons. Furthermore, grammar was focused on to varying degrees in 35 other lessons. This latter group of lessons included ones where a teacher corrected students' grammatical errors followed by a brief explanation; and lessons where students completed a number of activities including some which concentrated on grammar. Thus in more than 93% of the lessons observed, teachers had drawn attention to grammar in some way.

### *"My Best Grammar Lesson"*

In my interviews with the teachers, I asked them to talk about what made lessons successful, and how they would evaluate the success of a lesson. I also asked each teacher to describe to me a particularly successful grammar lesson which they had previously taught.

Many of the teachers were very vague in replying to this question, and surprisingly had great difficulty in trying to remember a successful lesson. Hamd and Nur could not think of a particular lesson that had been successful for them, claiming that “any lesson in which I can get [the students] to sit still and do some work for five minutes is a success” [N.I.7]. For them, success was measured in terms of maintaining discipline and order in the class, rather than in terms of student involvement or learning.

Idris too shared this view, and described his most successful grammar lesson as follows:

Last week we did nouns. I explained all the different kinds of nouns and gave them some examples. Then I gave an exercise... Just one of these usual exercises from the book. It was about nouns. They had to underline the noun and say what kind of noun it is. Like proper noun or common noun like that. ... Most of the students were able to do [the exercise]. So it was very successful. And I didn't have to explain many times, so in that way also successful. Because they would have understood, no? To be able to do on their own. [I.I.7]

Komal could not recall a particular lesson that had been successful. But she shared the view with Idris that if her students were able to do an activity that was required of them without too much assistance on her part, it was a successful lesson.

Liban too highly valued lessons where students “do things on their own without [him] having to do everything for them, explain every little detail” [L.I.7]. Yet he too could not however think of any particular lesson that stood out as being successful.

Jana recounted a lesson which involved “a series of the usual type of grammar exercises you find in textbooks” [J.I.4]. She recalled that it was a double period lesson sometime at the beginning of that same year. She had selected the exercises based on the students' problematic areas, and had given them a selection of exercises to complete; discussing the answers orally after everyone had completed the activity. What made it so successful for her, despite the mundane nature of the activities themselves, was:

the fact that everyone, and I mean every one of the 44 girls in the class took part. They each contributed something, however small, to the lesson. Many of them gave the answers to the exercise, some of them helped to write the exercise on the board, some of them talked to me individually about some aspect of it, and like that they each contributed to it in some way. That is what makes a lesson successful for me. [J.I.4].

Mika thought long and hard in order to answer this question, claiming that “it [was] very difficult to remember past lessons” [M.I.7]. He finally said that his most successful lesson was one which he had taught during his teaching practice as a student teacher, some 12 years previously:

We were following a syllabus made by the British Council, we were told that we would be observed and all that. ... I did a lesson that was very successful because the observer was very happy that the students were able to do the task. It was something to do with grammar. I don't remember exactly what it was. But [the observer] was happy that the students were doing the activity ... I actually can't remember much about the lesson now but I know that I had [the students] grouped together and doing things in groups. What they did also I can't remember now. But I know it was group work and I also remember telling them a story and having made some charts and things which really impressed [my observer]. So I will say that was my most successful lesson. And I don't think I've ever taught like that after that. [M.I.7]

### *Teaching Approach*

#### *“Informal/casual way”*

Having emphasised the need to focus on grammar, teachers described their approach to teaching grammar in various ways. Nur and Hamd advocated an “informal grammar approach” [H.I.2], while Idris and Jana called for a “casual way” [I.I.1] of teaching grammar.

Hamd pointed out that “modern education does not recommend teaching formal grammar” [H.I.2] which, according to him, involved:

pointing out whether this is noun or verb or preposition and so on and doing many drilling and explanation. We should not teach like that. It is not good. Instead we must teach grammar in an informal way [H.I.2].

However, Hamd appeared to use a lot of drilling and explanation in his teaching, as I pointed out to him.

NM: But in the classes that I have observed so far, you do teach like that. Even yesterday you were doing a very detailed grammar lesson with your 9C students, using a lot of metalanguage and involving nothing except explanation and drilling.

Hamd: Yes. That is true. I teach in the formal way.

NM: But why do you teach it that way if you feel that this is not the way you should be teaching?

Hamd: Because what I feel is ... [the students] are not capable of ... following the teacher. They take a long time. ... I have to teach from the beginning because they just don't know anything. So if I am to finish the syllabus on time I have to find a way of teaching quickly. So that is why I do it this way. [H.I.2]

Jana explained that she followed a “casual way” of teaching grammar, which she claimed involved building a good rapport with her students and encouraging student participation. “The grammar should not be the focus. The grammar should be just casually focused on without the students feeling that they are really learning any grammar” [J.I.3].

Jana was certainly one of the few teachers in Urban School who appeared to make an effort to involve the students in the lesson. She encouraged students to participate and provide input, as seen from the following extract from one of her lessons.

- 2.00            T:     What are the parts of speech?  
                  Sts:   Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions  
                  T:     What else? What do you call this [writes the on board]  
                  S:     Particles  
                  T:     Article. What are the articles?

S: The, a, an  
 T: Very good. {T draws two roads intersecting on the board. Points to the intersection and asks what it is called.}  
 S: Junction  
 T: Yes. So in writing also, when two sentences meet, the word that connects the two sentences is called a...?  
 S: Junction  
 T: No. But it's a word very like that. It's called a conjunction.

---

2.15 {T discusses different types of conjunctions, getting students to suggest examples of each type.}

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2.25 T asks S1 to write one sentence to describe T on the BB. S writes: *You are a teacher.*  
 T asks S2 to write one sentence to show the time she worked in the school. S2 writes: *You work in the afternoon.*  
 T: Can you guess when I finish working here?  
 S3: 7.10pm  
 T: No I take another class for the adults in the evening, and finish at 8.30pm. So write one sentence to show what time I finish work.  
 S3: You finish work at 8.30pm.  
 T asks S4 to now combine all three sentences into one sentence using conjunctions. S4 does so and writes this on the BB.  
 [J.LO.29/8]

Although her teaching was still teacher-directed, she encouraged student participation. For Jana, getting all her students to contribute to the lesson in some way was very important:

I need to hear students' voices. I need to see that they are following what I am saying. I prefer to say less and find more ways to make them say more. Even if it is something small, some little insignificant thing, I try to get as many students as possible to talk. [J.RJ.30/8].

### *Presentation and practice techniques.*

One of the teacher descriptions I used in the interview depicted a teacher who followed a typical Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) format<sup>46</sup>. After reading this description, most of the teachers stated that this was the model of teaching that they followed, and the one they related to the most out of the four different teacher descriptions that I used.

Referring to Teacher C's description, all teachers claimed that they taught grammar "exactly like this" [N.I.6]; that "this is the only way to do it" [K.I.7]; that "this is how a teacher should teach" [I.I.5]. Nur further explained:

Yes that's how I always teach. I normally write all the rules on the board and they will copy down then I will give a simple exercise and when they do that I will give a [harder] exercise. [N.I.6]

In fact, Nur wrote almost everything on the board and hardly ever spoke to his students. He would usually come into class, stare at the students until they calmed down and sat in their seats, then – still without a word – write the topic of the lesson on the board and write down the instructions and the exercise to be done. If it was a new lesson, he would write down the rules and examples on the board followed by the exercise. Having written everything down on the board, he would stand at the back of the class until a student completes the exercise and brings the book to Nur to be marked. Nur "taught" in this way in almost every lesson, never uttering a word the entire time (except to reprimand a student for misbehaviour). If it was a double period lesson, Nur would often spend the second period only marking, while the students sat idly. Even when marking books, he didn't usually speak to the students, but simply corrected their work and handed the books back to them without a word of praise or encouragement.

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<sup>46</sup> The description given to teachers was as follows: "Teacher C regards language as a system of grammatical structures. Her aim in teaching English is to ensure that her students can produce error-free language at all times. She plans her lessons around a range of grammatical structures (e.g. passive voice, present perfect, etc). When introducing new grammar, she first presents the structure to the class, explaining how it works and any necessary terminology associated with it. She then moves on to getting her students to do some activities which would allow them to practice the new structure in a controlled way. Once the students are confident with using the structure, she sets up activities which would allow them to produce the language more freely."

Liban thought that the PPP model was a “good model” for teaching grammar, but added that he did not have enough time “to go through all the stages, from presentation to practice to free production” [L.I.6] and therefore usually concentrated on the first two stages. It could be said that this practice was true of all teachers as they engaged in only presentation and practice but not free production.

Mika too stated that the PPP model was what he aimed to achieve but that he often did not have the opportunity to put it into practice because he was in an “eternal cycle of explanation and exercise” [M.I.9]. He explained that unlike teachers of other subjects, who can just go in and explain and go out again... English teachers ... have to get [students] to be confident and interested in learning ... If I just go in and explain something for half an hour they may remain quietly and listen. Which is good. But if I ask them to write or do an exercise, they will have problems. So you have to be constantly at them, telling them what to do and explaining everything over and over again. So I don't ever get to this stage of students producing language freely. [M.I.9]

Describing a grammar lesson which focused on the order of pre-modifying adjectives, which he intended to teach that day, Mika said that he would first “explain the order, with examples” [M.I.8] followed by “an exercise from the book” [M.I.8]. He noted that if the structure was something new, he would spend 20 – 25 minutes on the explanation, where as if it is a revision lesson he may reduce the explanation to about 15 minutes. Mika further added:

Whatever approach you use you have to always explain the rules to the students. Whether it is a communicative approach where you speak and do all sorts of things or whether you follow a structural approach where you teach rules. Explaining the rules is very much necessary. That is of utmost importance. For me rules are what grammar is about so that is what I pay attention to most. Grammar teaching is something like teaching maths. You teach formulas and teach them to apply the formula correctly. That is the way to do it. [M.I.8]

In my observations, I found rule explanation to be a key feature of most teachers' teaching. Liban for example, taught a lesson on participles<sup>47</sup> where he explained all the different types of participles in great detail. The following extract from a lesson shows how he explained the grammar structure.

Present particles you can easily identify. The words of the present particle end in I.N.G. Example smiling running walking talking like that, okay? Sometimes it can be used as an adjective. What is an adjective? And adjective is a part of speech. It is a word that qualifies a noun. What is a noun? A noun is a name. You have proper nouns and common nouns. Proper noun example is Aishath. A name. Common noun example is girl. So {pauses, checks notes} an adjective qualifies a noun and the present particle can be used as an adjective. Another use of particles is this. {writes on board: As/since/because + subject + verb} If one of these words {indicating as/since/because} and one subject and one verb is there, we can replace the verb with a present particle.

[L.LO.29/8]

At the end of a double-period lesson he was still explaining the rules, and the students had had to sit and listen (and occasionally take notes down from the board) to the explanation for the entire lesson. During the course of the presentation, Liban drew attention almost exclusively to form rather than explain the structure in terms of form meaning mappings. A high degree of metalanguage was also used.

The importance Liban gives to form is further illustrated by the following comment he made in answering the beliefs questionnaire:

it is essential that students are made aware of grammar rules. This is highly important. Learning grammar is like learning maths. You give them the formula, which is the rule, or the structure and then you get them to apply it by for example making a sentence following that rule. That is all there is to it.

[L.Q.B3b]

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<sup>47</sup> Liban however referred to it as “present particles” throughout the lesson.

Jana was different from the other teachers in that she was strongly opposed to the PPP model of teaching stating that she did not regard language to be a system of grammatical structures:

I don't go in and start okay today we will do such and such a topic. ... I prefer to do it in a more fun way like if I am doing reported speech I will tell them a story and then get them to write it in the reported speech. ... I don't use much terminology. I quite dislike that kind of teaching. I don't want to talk like a grammar book. I prefer to say something like okay this is what happened to me yesterday. Can you now tell me what happened to you, or what you did? Like that I will get them to use the grammar. And then I will say so what is the tense that you have used? ... Without paying too much attention to the terms and the fact that they are actually learning new grammar. [J.I.3]

This response indicates that Jana appeared to favour an inductive approach to grammar instruction, without focusing overtly on rules and metalanguage. Nevertheless, Jana's responses to the beliefs questionnaire indicated otherwise. Her questionnaire data suggests that she frequently used written grammar exercises and explained grammar rules and found both of these activities to be very effective teaching strategies.

Additionally, Jana claimed that she did not think it was a good idea to move from controlled to free practice like the PPP model outlines, but that she preferred to move "from communication to grammar" [J.I.4] in that she would carry out a "communicative" activity based on the target structure and then focus students' attention on the grammar.

However, in the questionnaire, Jana indicated that she had never used communicative tasks to teach grammar and did regard these to be very effective. Furthermore, most of the grammar lessons that I observed her teaching began with rule explanation and moved on to practising the structure. For example, in one lesson, Jana spent the first 15 minutes explaining the different types of verbs and then gave four different exercises where students had to underline the verb and say what kind of verb it was (main verb, auxiliary verb, etc). Here is an extract from the beginning of another lesson, which focused on reported speech.

T writes *reported speech* on board.

T: We are going to do a little grammar today. We've already done some reported last term, so this is not going to be entirely new. But still there will be some new things also, so pay attention when I am explaining. {writes My teacher said, "I am very happy today."} Now you need to find out what kind of tense is there in this sentence. Who can tell me?

S1: present tense.

T: Good. It is present tense. What kind of present tense? Present simple? Or present continuous?

S2: Present simple.

T: That's good. So we need to change it into what tense? To make it into reported speech?

S3: Present continuous.

T: No. We don't do that. We change the present simple into the past simple. If the tense is present simple, we change it into the past simple in reported speech. Who can tell me how to change present continuous. What tense will it change to?

S3: Past continuous.

T: Very good. Present continuous changes to past continuous. And Present perfect tense?

S4: Past perfect tense.

T: Very good. Now let's do some exercises. Copy this down. {starts dictating exercise}

[J.LO.11/8]

Despite Jana's assertion that she did not go into a class and announce that "we are going to do grammar today", this is precisely what she did that day. As the extract above shows, she then reviewed the tense changes made while converting direct speech into reported speech, using mainly metalanguage, and without the use of examples to illustrate the difference between the changes. The students then went on to do a series of transformation exercises. There were no instances of free production.

### *Rule-discovery tasks.*

In the initial interview, I showed two examples of rule-discovery tasks (see Appendix for one of these) and asked the teachers whether they would consider using something similar with their students. Teachers' responses to this were mixed.

Mika felt that the tasks were "very interesting" [M.I.6] and felt that grammar teaching should involve discussing with students how the language works and should allow the opportunity for students to discover the rules with tasks such as the one shown. However, he admitted that he had never used such an approach "in case it may not work in reality" [M.I.6].

Liban felt that "the idea behind [it was] good" [L.I.8] but that the students in Urban School did not have the ability to hold a discussion in English, lacking fundamental communication strategies. He also felt that the students were not motivated enough to spend time working out the rules.

Nur shared this view, adding that:

Finding rules [is] not easy. Even we have to refer to grammar books for that. So how can these children do it? This is like giving the answer and asking them to find the question. They won't be interested. It is pointless and they will have no desire to waste time on it. [N.I.7]

Komal felt that such tasks would be confusing for students, especially if they are shown examples of both correct and incorrect language. She claimed that she preferred to explain rules and give practice exercises.

Jana could not understand why a rule discovery task would be useful.

What's the point of asking them to find the rule? I don't understand the use of this... It's very complicated. Even I don't understand what to do here. ... They won't be able to do this. They don't need to know how to find the rule... We are not training them to be researchers or linguists. We just want them to be able to use correct language in simple communication. [J.I.8]

She admitted that she had never tried anything like it before, but added that “there is no point in trying” [J.I.5] as she already knew that it would be too difficult.

Hamd too did not agree that the tasks had any benefits, and declared that “rather than go round the bush I prefer to dive into it straight. ... It is better to explain and explain well with many examples. Then only they can understand” [H.I.7]. In answering the questionnaire too, Hamd had strongly disagreed with the statement that “Students should be given the opportunity to work out grammar rules from examples” and stated that “The best way, in fact the only way to teach grammar is to simply explain it to the students” [H.Q.E].

### *Errors and error correction.*

Because grammar was such a focal component of their teaching, and because teachers were concerned about the accuracy of students’ language, I expected teachers to be very much concerned about errors and error correction. Surprisingly, that was not the case. None of the teachers brought up the issue of errors without being prompted by me. On being asked about their position on the matter, most teachers brushed it off, saying they did not pay much attention to errors. Nur believed that there as little point in paying attention to errors when students were so unconcerned about improving their English. He admitted that he did not “waste any time on unnecessary correction” [N.I.6] and only checked books to see if students completed the work that was given.

Liban stated that he preferred to make overall comments on students’ writing such as their style or vocabulary rather than on grammar errors: “I believe that if I correct them there may be some advantages but the disadvantages are greater because they will feel like I am picking on them and criticising them” [L.I.5].

However, in their responses to the questionnaire, six out of the seven teachers in Urban School had indicated that they frequently corrected student errors and believed error correction to be a very effective teaching strategy.

Both Jana and Idris claimed that they identified and corrected all errors in students’ writing. When he found that more than three students were making similar mistakes,

Idris would “do another grammar lesson on that topic and explain everything again and give them an exercise on that topic” [I.I.5].

Mika also picked out common errors from time to time and explained them to the class, but he claimed that because the students were “not interested at all ... regardless of [his] repeated explanations they continue[d] to do the same mistakes again and again” [M.I.6].

Komal had a different approach to error correction from other teachers. Because of the lack of time to mark student work, Komal explained that after every piece of written work, she would read everyone’s work, but chose a different student each time to do detailed correction.

Now you saw that girl’s work yesterday no? She makes a lot of grammar mistakes. So this week I went through her essay in detail and identified all the mistakes and wrote everything out correctly for her. ... In fact most of the final version [of the essay] was my own writing. I can’t do that for every student every time, so I choose one student in every class each week to correct. And then I deal with all her errors and discuss it later with her when I have corrected it. I mean sometimes they don’t like it also but we have to do this. [K.I.4]

Observing the students’ notebooks, I saw this to be true. Komal had not marked each and every piece of work that her students did, but when she did mark, it was very thorough. In fact, as she explained, Komal had often re-written entire essays for the student, correcting not only the grammar and spelling mistakes, but also meticulously revising vocabulary, organisation and style.

All seven teachers believed that accuracy was more important than fluency. Hamd explained that “accuracy has to be given more importance because we do [mostly] written English and [not much] spoken English.” [H.I.6]. Mika stated that achieving fluency was not a priority for teachers in Urban School because they did not “follow a communicative approach and so [did not] see any benefit in focusing on fluency.” [M.I.7].

### *Teacher-centred classrooms.*

The teaching at Urban School was very teacher-centered, with a remarkably high amount of teacher talking time. In many classes, all that was required of the students was to sit passively and listen to the teacher, copying down whatever was written on the black board. Very few teachers attempted to involve the students in the lesson, and make them active learners and users of the language.

Several teachers stated that they preferred to teach in a lecture-style method. Idris was one such teacher.

Now when I was teaching in [an overseas university] it was very easy. Adults no? Very obedient. And lecture method no? So it was easy. No need to plan much or think. Just go and teach, no? I prefer that method. But here in this school, everything we have to go from the beginning, no? ... We have to explain over and over again until they get it into their heads. Actually I prefer to do just lecture method because that is the easiest, no? ... But not all the time because ... can't, no? [I.I.2].

Liban explained that he followed a “student self learning method” of teaching [L.I.2] where the teacher has a low profile and he gets the students to “do the work on their own and learn on their own, and play a bigger part” [L.I.2] in the teaching-learning equation. My observations of his lessons showed that Liban did encourage students to read aloud and answer questions orally. Like Jana and Komal, Liban also encouraged student participation. But his role in the classroom was not “low profile” as he had maintained. Liban played the main role, and student input was limited to responses to teacher-directed questions.

### *Testing grammar.*

Several teachers commented that since grammar was taught so extensively in the classroom, it should also feature strongly in the school exams. During the period of time I spent at Urban School, the end of term examination was based on the GCE Ordinary level examination which tested reading and writing skills. There was no overt focus on grammar, but students' use of complex structures and the degree of accuracy were taken into account during marking.

Mika and Nur were particularly strong proponents of the view that a separate grammar component needed to be added to the exam. Nur felt that testing was necessary to encourage students to pay more attention to grammar during lessons and to ensure that they took account of the grammar lessons when preparing for the exams.

Nur reasoned that without the pressure of being tested, students simply do not pay attention to learning grammar. He said that if they introduced “a grammar section in the test, [the students would] start to pay attention to the teacher” [N.I.4] during grammar lessons because “they will be thinking this might come in the question paper so I must listen carefully to what he is saying” [N.I.4].

Mika agreed with this argument and added that testing would play a diagnostic role, and would be a way of identifying common areas of difficulty which they could then address through remedial teaching. In addition to testing grammar in the term examination, Mika also felt that there was a need to “test their grammar at least every week ... so that at least they will know what their standard is and maybe that will help them to realise that they need to work harder” [M.I.6]. In fact, weekly grammar tests were introduced to students in grade 10 during the term I spent at the school.

### *Use of metalanguage.*

The teachers at Urban School generally used a very high degree of metalanguage in their talk. Mika claimed that it is important for students to know the correct terminology as it would help them “to understand grammar books” [M.RJ.28/8]. Nur did not think it possible to draw attention to grammar without using terminology. “There’s nothing wrong with using grammatical terms,” he said [N.RJ.15/8]. Hamd was one of the teachers who used the most amount of metalanguage. For example, during the 35 minutes of one lesson, he had used the following terms in the given frequencies.

**Table 21.** Hamd’s use of terminology in one lesson

Term used	Frequency
Adjective	5
Adverb	4
Adverbial clause	1
Clause	1
Conditional	3
Continuous tense	1
Countable noun	5
Ditransitive	3
Infinitive	1
Intransitive	9
Modal	1
Noun	4
Object	8
Plural	4
Preposition	7
Pronoun	4
Singular	3
Subject	13
Transitive	10
Uncountable noun	3
Verb	11
Total	101

Despite his own high use of grammatical terminology, Hamd maintained that he would not use “much technical language [if he was teaching] under ideal conditions” [H.RJ.6/9].

## *Professional Development*

### *Attitudes toward professional development.*

In the initial interviews, I asked all teachers to describe ways in which they attempted to reflect on their teaching, improve and develop themselves as teachers. Teachers’ responses showed that although some teachers claimed that it was necessary to improve oneself as a teacher and keep on learning to improve professionally, teachers

failed to either make time for it, or more commonly, were not aware of ways in which such development could be brought about.

The most common response to my question was that “the opportunities to develop” or the “facilities to improve” were “not available.” Teachers recalled that in previous teaching contexts they had been mandated to attend various workshops and in-service days. But in Maldives, in-service development was not a common feature and therefore such options did not usually exist. Hamd claimed that he therefore opted to read as much as he could, but added that at the present time, he was “not really that interested” in seeking other options [H.I.9].

I don't bother with things like that too much. I think I have now learnt all there is to learn about teaching. I want to now concentrate more on getting good results. ... I won't say that I won't be interested [if an opportunity arose]. But it's not something that I give priority to right now. [H.I.9]

Nur felt that professional learning was not something that applied to an experienced teacher like himself. He felt that since he was “not a new teacher anymore” [N.RJ.25/9] he didn't feel the need to engage in more learning. He recalled that as a novice teacher he had “read books and gathered ideas” [N.RJ.25/9] But that at the current stage of his career, he felt that he had “learnt what there is to know about teaching” [N.RJ.25/9].

Idris recounted that he had attended several in-service days in the past, which he described as “one or two day affairs with special lectures and things... to bring us up to date” [I.I.10]. I asked him if he had found these in-service days to be useful.

Idris: So far as keeping up to date is concerned, yes. We were told about so many different new things and trends like. But that was just information I think because there was very little guidance on what to actually do. In the classroom.

NM: What kind of guidance would you have wanted?

Idris: Well in so many ways. It's one thing to be told this is the new way to do something. To teach even. But you have so many questions and so many problems when you start to try them in your own classes. So it was very difficult. [I.I.10]

Idris further added that he had not adopted any new techniques as a result of such in-service sessions, and in fact had not enjoyed most of the sessions he had attended in the past. He said he reflected on his teaching by “thinking back to [his] own days as a student and trying to remember how [he] used to do things [at the time]” [I.I.10]. When I asked him about whether he kept up to date with current methods and trends, Idris exclaimed:

Teaching is teaching, no? Whether it is done today or yesterday or fifty years ago, teaching is teaching. So I don't think we need to think of any new ways or anything like that. I prefer to - I always try to think of how I learned. That's all. ... And to be frank [previous experiences of in-service development] were not that useful to me. And now of course I am old and feeble. Why would I want to learn anything new now? [I.I.10]

Liban appeared to be eager to learn and improve himself as a teacher. He believed in the need to “renew and recharge the professional batteries ... every now and then” [L.I.9] but explained that it was no easy feat when he worked in an environment that was not conducive to improvement.

Nobody comes to supervise us or observe us or give us any feedback on our teaching. So I don't really know what areas I need to improve. ... I have been teaching here for almost four years now and so far I have been observed only once and that too for less than 15 minutes. I didn't even get any feedback. You are the first person to really observe my teaching. I don't think I have ever been observed so much in my life! {laughs} So I would really like to know what my weaknesses are and how can I can improve my teaching. [L.I.9].

Jana also noted the lack of teacher appraisal in Urban School. She added that since she was not a trained teacher and had had very little experience of teaching English so far, she was keen to find out how well she was teaching, but because teachers were not observed and discussions between teachers did not move beyond “making a list of things to teach in the next fortnight” [J.RJ.23/8], she had little chance of learning more about teaching through other teachers. Jana explained that she enjoyed trying out new ideas in her teaching and adopted new techniques as a result of experimenting through trial and error. But, she added that she would only try new ideas if she felt that they would be “worth trying” [J.RJ.23/8].

Mika was different from the rest. He described how his attitudes towards learning and development changed over the years:

When I finished my training I felt like I knew enough about teaching. I was a teacher. Teachers are supposed to know everything, right? And I didn't make any effort to improve my um... this thing... um knowledge or abilities, right? Then after a few years I started reading again. ... I am not that interested in the theoretical part of teaching and all anyway. But I mean reading in the sense that I can - I started looking at new books textbooks and all and seeing ways of teaching and putting ideas across to the children in new ways. I found that the more I read new things like this the more I realised how much there is to learn. How little I really knew, you know? [M.I.8].

Mika recalled that he had first started attending in-service workshops with much enthusiasm, but soon found "workshops that claimed to improve ... teaching [were] quite useless ... and not applicable to [his] teaching situations" [M.I.9]. It was partly because of this, he explained, that he lost interest in learning and was no longer interested in improving himself, but was "more concerned about making money" [M.I.9].

I teach in two schools and I give private tuition as well. At weekends I teach at [name of private language institution]. I don't have time to spend on planning and thinking about various types of techniques and approaches and what the current trends are and all that. I like to do something that is simple and straight forward. Go into the class, explain the lesson and go out. That is what I always do. My rule is that I will only think of teaching when I am in the school. I am not going to think about teaching once I leave the school gate. I will not spend extra time here because I have to earn money and that is my main purpose. Whether I stay here for the session time or whether I come back and mark books or do something else in my extra time, I will get the same amount of money at the end of the month. Whether I do something from the textbook or whether I spend hour dreaming up exciting lessons, I will get the same amount of money. So why should I bother? Why should I spend any more time and effort than is absolutely necessary? [M.I.9]

Mika's lack of desire and hesitancy to try new techniques was further evidenced by the two following excerpts:

There was one teacher he was a foreigner, from America actually. He used to do some drawings to show the tenses ... timelines or something they were called. I think that was a very effective strategy because he used to show everything by drawing a line and it was very easily understood. But I'm afraid to use it in my teaching in case I don't do it the right way and I end up making my students even more confused and make a fool of myself in the process.  
[M.I.2]

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When we were training we were told you must get the students to speak and tell stories and all that but in the real classroom how can we do that. So I always go for the easier option that is I go in and I explain and I get them to do some exercise from the textbook. There is no time and also I don't have all the facilities or the energy to do all this communicative approach nonsense. I don't believe in teaching in that way. I can if I wanted to. I just choose not to. I mean I always asked those British Council people are these techniques that we can really apply in our classroom and they will say why don't you try it in the class and see. Even they know we can't do it. So why should we try it in the class if we are going to make a fool of ourselves in front of the students?  
[M.I.3]

### *Changes to beliefs and practices.*

It must be recalled here that at Urban School I met with the teachers as a group for a total of three sessions – each of which lasted 60 to 90 minutes – during the course of my 12 weeks at the school. This was because of the lack of time available for regular workshop sessions. I offered instead to meet with teachers individually. I set up the first two meetings with each teacher myself, and provided feedback on the observations of their lessons I had made thus far. I also discussed with them their intended lesson plans for the following week, suggesting ways of making them more student-focused and interactive, particularly in the case of grammar. After the first two weeks, I invited each teacher to make further appointments with me if they wanted my help/feedback further. Since they were busy teachers with little time to spare, I doubted at the time whether any of the teachers would return. So I was a

pleasantly surprised to find that they all came back to meet me. I met with Nur and Idris for one additional meeting. Hamd and Mika met with me twice after the initial two meetings. However Mika would always discuss lessons and request feedback on our way to and back from classes. He also always made it a point to show me his lesson plan before going into each class so that I knew what to expect. Jana and Komal met with me on most weeks. Komal talked mainly about other teachers and managerial issues rather than her own teaching. Liban met me regularly at a set time every week to discuss the past weeks' lessons and also to plan the lessons for the next week. On two occasions, he even arrived in school in the morning<sup>48</sup> to meet with me to prepare materials for his lesson in the afternoon. The duration of these individual meetings varied, and depended on the teacher, ranging from 15 to 45 minutes.

At the end of my 12 weeks at Urban School, little had changed about the teaching of most teachers. Most were hesitant to try new ideas and were dismissive about experimenting to see if they did work. However, changes were observed – to some extent – in three of the teachers. They were the three teachers whom I had had the most frequent contact with in the form of one-on-one meetings, and who had sought regular feedback on the lessons that I had observed them teaching.

Jana, who did not approve of rule-discovery tasks when I first showed them to her during the initial interview, was willing to try them with her students after being told about their effectiveness in the studies that I had conducted in both New Zealand and at Rural School. Because Jana had been quite opposed to the idea of discovery tasks at the outset, I was surprised when she told me that she had trialled one of the tasks I had given to the teachers in a handout<sup>49</sup>. She had chosen to trial the task on a day when I would not be present to observe her, but she told me about it the next day, as I recorded in my journal:

When I met Jana today, she told me that she had used in her 9Q class the discovery task that I had showed them during the interview. She said it all went well – she seemed quite surprised that it had gone well! She reported that

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<sup>48</sup> Liban teaches in Urban School during the afternoon session; he teaches elsewhere during the morning. I found it very surprising that he opted to meet with me in the morning on these two occasions as it meant he would be coming into school for just that purpose.

<sup>49</sup> The task that she had trialled was the same one that I had used as an example task in the interview. See Appendix L for complete task.

she had used it following a reading comprehension task, and that with much scaffolding and assistance, her students were able to identify and verbalise the rule.[J.RJ.9/9]

That week, as Jana discussed the lessons she had planned for the following week, she expressed a desire to try more inductive tasks. She noted that her scepticism regarding their effectiveness was beginning to fade and that she would like feedback on her implementation of the tasks, because she felt that her first attempt at implementation involved her providing far more assistance to the students than was required.

Jana felt that her students were having difficulties understanding the different uses of “would” and so she wanted to focus on how “would” could be used for talking about past habits; impossible present situations; as well as for talking about future events. We talked about possible ways of focusing on these aspects of “would” in an inductive way. “I want [my students] to see the difference between the future and past uses of ‘would’. I don’t think I want to focus so much on the structure or a rule,” [J.RJ.10/9] she told me. The following week, when Jana taught the lesson, I was in class to observe her.

Jana began by distributing handouts on which were two short dialogues, which she instructed her students to read.

#### Conversation 1

- A: My cousin is getting married in Addu next week.  
B: Are you going to go for the wedding?  
A: I really want to go, but I can’t get any seats on the boat. It’s all booked until the end of the month.  
B: Why don’t you go by aeroplane?  
A: I would do that if I had enough money.  
B: So what are you going to do?  
A: I don’t know yet. But he would never forgive me if I didn’t go.

#### Conversation 2

- A: Do you remember our holiday to Utheem?  
B: Yes, that was really fun.  
A: We must have been about seven or eight years then.

- B: I think so. I remember spending a lot of the time on the beach.
- A: But every evening we would go and explore the old palace, remember?
- B: That's right.
- A: And at weekends we would all go fishing in a little dinghy.
- [J.SW.15/9]

Once everyone had read the given extracts, Jana got four volunteers to “act out” the dialogues at the front of the class. She asked individual students a few questions about the dialogues (e.g. How do you think A can get to the wedding? How do you think his cousin would feel if he was not able to go? Have any of you been to Utheem?) then asked the class to underline all the verbs in both the dialogues. This, the students were able to do without much difficulty. The lesson progressed as follows:

- T: Right. Now let's look at the first one. This person's cousin is getting married in Addu. He has been invited. And he wants to go for the wedding. But what is the problem?
- S1: He can't go.
- T: Why can't he go?
- S1: Because the boat is full.
- S2: And the ticket... aeroplane ticket is too expensive.
- T: That is correct. When his friend suggests going to Addu by plane, he says “I would do that if I could afford it, but its too expensive.” Isn't that so? {Students nod} Now, can anyone tell me what tense it is? {No response} Okay tell me, has this already happened? Or is it happening now?
- S: Miss, what?
- T: Look at the last two things that A says. {reads out the last three lines from handout.} Is it present, past or future?
- S: Present. No future. Because it is not yet happening.
- S: Going to happen, so future.
- T: Okay. Look at the sentences again. I would do that, if I had enough money. Is it referring to future, past or present?
- S: Future.
- T: Does he have money?
- S: No.

T: Is he talking about having money in the future? Or not having money in the future?

S: No miss, it's present. Because no money now.

T: Yes. This sentence refers to present time. But look at the verbs. What are the verbs you have underlined here?

S: Do and had

T: Yes. So tell me the tense.

S: Do is present tense. Had is past tense.

T: Okay. Let's talk about the next one. We will come back to this again.

---

T: So they are talking about something that – a holiday that they had taken when they were small. Long time ago maybe. Right? And so they talk about some of the things that they used to do while on that holiday. What are some of the things that they did?

S: Go to the beach.

T: Yes.

S: Explore the old palace.

T: Yes.

S: Go fishing in a dinghy.

T: Yes. Good. So these are the things they used to do. So this time, are they referring to present, past or future?

S: Past.

T: Why do you say past?

S: No present.

T: Why present? Just now you said past.

S: {talks with next student, then says to T} No past. Past. Past.

T: Why?

S: {consults with next student, then to T} Because already finished. Holiday was long time ago. So past time.

T: Good. That is right. But do you notice anything similar about the two dialogues? {Students study handout} Do you notice how one word is used when describing the present, future AND the past?

S: Go?

T: Not go. Look at the last three lines of each conversation.

- S: Would?
- T: Yes. Would. {Writes the four sentences from the handout that includes 'would' on the board} Which one refers to the present?
- S: I would do that, if I had enough money.
- T: Yes. {writes 'present situation' next to the sentence} Which one refers to the past?
- S: Last two. But every evening we would go and explore the old palace. And at weekends we would all go fishing in a little dinghy.
- T: {identifies these sentences on board with 'past'} And what about this sentence? He would never forgive me, if I didn't go.
- S: Future. Because has not happened yet.
- T: Good. {identifies the sentence on board with 'future'}[J.LO.15/9]

Jana continued the lesson in this way, prodding students with questions, to establish that 'would' can be used to refer to past habits, impossible present situations and future events.

In her next grammar lesson, Jana focused on relative clauses. She began the lesson with a reading text selected from the textbook. Students took turns to read aloud the text, as was normal in her classes. A brief discussion of the text followed, and Jana clarified any difficulties students had with vocabulary and comprehension. Jana then asked the students to underline all the relative clauses in the text. She had briefly taught the structure to the class earlier in the year and with some help, the students were able to identify five examples in the text.

Jana wrote some more relative clauses on the board (e.g. The building in which we live was burnt down last night; The school that I go to is one of the oldest schools in the country), and asked the students to read them. She didn't at this point indicate that some of the sentences were ungrammatical (e.g. The park in which we play in has been closed down; The beach about that you told me was deserted). Before long, one student noticed that something was amiss:

- S: Miss, why is this 'that'? The beach about that you told me? Is this is mistake?
- T: What do you think?

S: I think... The beach about that you told me About that you told me...  
Miss, isn't it about WHICH you told me?

T: You are very good. You found a mistake. That is indeed correct, what  
you said. It should be The beach about WHICH you told me is  
deserted. Not that. Can you tell me why it is wrong?

S: Don't know, Miss.

T: What about the other sentences? Can anyone find any other mistakes?

---

{Students have identified three out of the four ungrammatical sentences and  
there has been some discussion about why they were incorrect}

T: There is one more sentence that is incorrect. Can anyone see it?

{No response}

T: Okay. I will tell you which one it is, but you have to tell me why it is  
wrong. {Indicates sentence: The park in which we play in has been  
closed down.}

{Students discuss among themselves about the sentence, in Dhivehi}

S: Miss, 'in'. Two times, there is 'in'.

T: Very good. Why is that wrong?

S1: Because only one time.

S2: No need to write twice.

S1: Yes.

T: Right. Very good. [J.LO.22/9]

At the end of the discussion, once the students had identified the errors and talked  
about where the error lay, Jana gave them the following rules to complete:

Using prepositions in relative clauses

If the relative pronoun is which or whom, the preposition can be used \_\_\_\_\_  
of the clause and/but not \_\_\_\_\_ of the clause.

If the relative pronoun is who or that, the preposition can be used \_\_\_\_\_ of  
the clause and/but not \_\_\_\_\_ of the clause.

A preposition should never be used \_\_\_\_\_ of the clause and/but not  
\_\_\_\_\_ of the clause. [J.SW.22/9]

It took some time for the students to realise that the blanks referred to the position of the preposition. Once this was made clear, the students were able to complete the rules on their own.

At the end of this lesson, Jana told me that she had been surprised at how smoothly things appeared to progress during the lesson:

Do you know, I first kept thinking 'no this is not going to work' ... but things turned out alright, didn't it? ... I think this way I can see more clearly that step by step they are with me, you know? That they are following me and going onto the higher step little by little... and I can see clearly if they are following me. [J.RJ.22/9]

Jana's main concern with using discovery tasks was judging the amount of assistance to offer:

It's very difficult for me to just wait until they have figured it out. I know they can do it eventually, but I just get nervous and anxious every time, just waiting for it to happen, you know? And I keep thinking okay shall I just jump in and explain that bit and then we can get on with it? But I don't {laughs} and I think it's helping them to become more confident in their own abilities to decipher the whole grammar. [J.I.11].

Even from the beginning it was clear that Jana attempted to make her lessons interactive, but because of the cramped nature of the classrooms and the large number of students, she had been reluctant to try group work. However, she soon made group work a regular part of her teaching, and created a sense of responsibility and ownership among the students in various ways. For example, she would often involve them in discussing how to allocate marks for a writing task. Jana would get students to volunteer to read out their piece of writing, then discuss with the class how many marks it should be awarded, taking into consideration the style, the grammar, the number of errors, the use of vocabulary and so on.

She also took up my suggestion of allowing students to design grammar quizzes for each other. Finding it to be popular with her students, she extended the idea by getting students to design post-reading activities in a reading comprehension lesson. She

divided the class into five groups and asked each group to design a specific kind of activity based on the reading text. One group would design a series of multiple choice questions, one would create a list of true/false statements, one would design a grammar activity, etc. These student-produced post-reading activities would then be exchanged between the groups and worked on. Other changes Jana made to her teaching included adopting a more process approach to teaching writing skills, encouraging students to self-correct errors and making her questions more open ended.

Jana explained that she had changed her views about rule discovery tasks “after having seen how they can engage students to study the language” [J.RJ.22/9], labelling them to be “extremely effective in drawing their attention to the rules ... while making them really think and use their intellectual powers” [J.RJ.22/9]. However, Jana repeatedly asked me not to mention to other teachers that she was using some of my suggestions in her teaching. She said that she was “already the odd one out” among the teachers, and did not want to be “branded a goody-two-shoes as well” [J.RJ.16/9]. At the end of the programme, she felt that she had “gained more confidence” and that she would “certainly be more willing to try something else again, to give it a go before making up my mind” about its applicability and effectiveness [J.RJ.19/9].

After the meeting with the teachers where I discussed the effectiveness of rule discovery tasks, Liban requested to see more examples of such tasks. We looked at several tasks, and talked about ones which would be most suitable/adaptable for his students. In the end, we devised two tasks, both of which were based on tasks from Thornbury (2001). One dealt with the difference between active and passive voice, while the other focused on distinguishing between simple past tense and the present perfect tense.

In the first task, which focused on the active-passive distinction, students were shown pairs of drawings showing opposite actions (e.g. one showed a man eating a fish; the other showed a fish eating a man). Students were given a list of picture descriptions (e.g. The man ate a fish; The man was eaten by a fish) and asked to match the correct sentence to the correct picture. Then, the students were divided into groups of three.

Each group was asked to draw three sets of pictures of their choice, in the same way. The groups then swap these self-created tasks with another group and complete the task by matching the sentences with the pictures.

The second discovery task was on the past simple – present perfect distinction. For this task, eight ‘postcards’ were designed by pasting magazine pictures of famous tourist attractions to a piece of postcard-sized cardboard. Writing was added to the other side of the ‘postcard’. Some of the writing was in the present perfect (e.g. Hello Adnan! This has been the most amazing holiday. We have travelled all around the country from the misty hills of Nuwreliya to the beaches of Hikkaduwa. We have visited beautiful temples, green tea plantations, and have seen lots of elephants – I have even ridden one!...). Some of the writing was in the simple past (e.g. Hi! Fabulous holiday. Did lots of shopping and sightseeing. Bought you some lovely gifts. Travelled all over North Island. The mud pools and geysers in Rotorua were awesome. And the glow worm caves at Waitomo were just out of this world...). The lesson began with a general discussion about ideal holiday destinations, talking about the kinds of activities people normally engage in during holiday travels. The names of eight countries/cities were put up on the board and students asked to provide information about places of interest or other facts about each destination. This meaning-focused activity was used to create interest and to also provide some general background information necessary. The class was then divided into eight groups and each group was given one of the postcards. Each group was asked to study their postcard and decide which of the listed destinations the sender had been on holiday to and whether the sender was still on holiday when the postcard had been written. Once the group had decided this they passed the postcard onto the next group and in this way the postcards were circulated until each group had seen all the cards. Groups then put forward their answers and discussed the difference between describing something that had finished and something that was still going on. Students were encouraged to identify these differences in structure through prompting questions from the teacher. Once this difference between the simple past and present perfect was established, students were asked to transform the writing on one postcard from simple past to present perfect or vice versa.

Once the tasks were devised Liban asked me to teach two lessons using these tasks, because he claimed that he wanted “a demonstration first” as he didn’t want to “fall flat on [his] face on [his] first attempt” [L.RJ.11/9]. After I demonstrated the lessons in two of his classes, he asked me to then observe him teach the same lessons. He proceeded to teach each of the lessons in his two other classes, then repeated them again so that each class had been taught both lessons. Liban maintained that he wanted to practice using discovery tasks in this way so as to “gain confidence in using them” and “be clear about how to actually do it” [L.RJ.22/9].

In this way, Liban appeared to be eager and interested, and wanted to improve himself as a teacher. As already noted, we had regular weekly meetings together where we discussed ways in which his lessons could be made more interactive and student-centred. During one meeting, towards the end of the time I spent at the school, Liban commented that he had “really learned a lot from [my] feedback on [his] teaching”, and that he felt that he was “a better teacher now than [he] was a few months ago.” [L.RJ. 2/10].

At the end of the 12 weeks, Liban noted that rule discovery tasks had “surprised [him], but in a good way” and that he would continue to use them in his teaching, adding that “I probably would not have tried them or anything else for that matter, if I hadn’t had so much of support and guidance” [L.RJ.2/10]. Liban also appeared to be more aware of the learning that occurs in his students, as the following comment indicated:

Previously I used to think ‘okay how can I explain this?’ and ‘what exercise shall I give them?’ ... And even when I am actually there [in the classroom] I don’t think I thought ... I thought mostly ‘have I explained clearly?’ or ‘do we have enough time to finish this exercise?’ ... Now it’s not like that. Now I am all the time thinking all the time trying to umm judge if they can follow me, if they are able to see ... the CONNECTION that I am trying to make. I worry that they won’t see it, ... I am trying to see from their faces what they are thinking, are they seeing it... [L.I.7].

One year later in an email dated 19th August 2005, Liban noted that he had continued to use discovery tasks in his teaching, and that they had become a regular part of his

grammar lessons, having incorporated it into his repertoire of grammar activities. He noted that although he had been unsure about its merits and applicability at the outset, with repeated use, both he and his students were now able to use it confidently and with much success.

Finding out that I had taught two lessons in Liban's classes, Komal also invited me to use a discovery task in one of her classes. Afterwards, I suggested that she then use the same task in another class. She did so, but claimed that although they "appeared to work" [K.RJ.22/9] designing such tasks was not easy and took a lot of time, and so was not practical to be used regularly. She did however make other changes to her teaching, including framing more open ended rather than close ended questions, involving students in making general classroom decisions and using a variety of post-reading activities.

#### *Response to evaluation questionnaire.*

The teachers' responses to the evaluation questionnaire used at the end of the 12 weeks to judge the effectiveness of the teacher development programme were very positive. Table 22 shows their responses to the 11 Likert scale statements. The statements are provided in the first column. The figures show the percentage of teachers who strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), were neutral (N), disagreed (D) and strongly disagreed (SD) to each statement.

**Table 22. Responses to Evaluation Questionnaire, Urban School**

Description	SA	A	N	D	SD
The programme objectives were clear	28.6	71.4	-	-	-
Time management was properly observed	28.6	57.1	14.3	-	-
The programme was successful in conveying new knowledge	42.9	42.9	14.3	-	-
The programme was successful in conveying new approaches to teaching	42.9	57.1	-	-	-
The programme deepened my understanding of how grammar is acquired	28.6	42.9	28.6	-	-
The programme was a useful forum for exchanging and developing ideas	71.4	28.6	-	-	-
The programme was relevant to my teaching situation	42.9	57.1	-	-	-
I was fully involved in the workshops' activities	42.9	42.9	14.3	-	-
I intend to use the materials from the workshops in my teaching in future	42.9	57.1	-	-	-
I intend to adopt the approaches introduced at the workshops in my teaching in the future	57.1	42.9	-	-	-
The handouts were informative and useful	28.6	57.1	14.3	-	-
The feedback given following observations was helpful	71.4	28.6	-	-	-

As can be seen in the table, none of the teachers disagreed with any of the statements. Out of the seven teachers, three claimed that the programme in general was “very satisfactory” and four thought that it was “satisfactory.” Equally positive were their responses to the open ended questions. Teachers recognised that “regular feedback over an extended period of time,” “individual discussion sessions,” “positive encouragement,” “constructive criticism,” “building our confidence” and “listening with interest to what we have to say” were the main strengths of the programme. Two teachers noted that the suggested approaches were inapplicable due to lack of resources and ability of students.

In addition to the positive response to the questionnaires – and perhaps more indicative of the effectiveness of the programme – was the teachers’ willingness and enthusiasm to meet and discuss their teaching with me on a regular basis, especially

given their workload. It was not mandatory in any way and the focus of the discussions was also left entirely up to the teachers. All teachers requested feedback. Some teachers requested help with designing tasks. Some teachers preferred to discuss other issues such as dealing with disruptive students or – in the case of Komal – making their fortnightly planning meetings more fruitful. I emphasised from the outset that I was offering to discuss any teaching-related issues with them that they wished to discuss, not as an expert of any kind – because I did not see myself in the role of an expert – but more as a two-heads-are-better-than-one kind of collegial endeavour. When, at the end of the term Jana told me that she had “enjoyed sharing ideas” [J.RJ.30/9] with me and Komal commented that she would “miss having someone to talk to about [her] problems” [K.RJ.30/9] I realised that I had helped these teachers reflect on their teaching by acting as their sounding board. On my last day at the school, Liban told me that he had “learned a lot simply through talking about things” with me and that it was “nice to feel that someone was taking an interest in me as a teacher and appreciating the work that I do” [L.RJ.1/10].

## *Chapter Summary*

This chapter has focused on the results obtained from Rural School and Urban School. It has described the beliefs as well as the instructional practices of the teachers in these schools, particularly those that related to the teaching and learning of grammar. This summary highlights the common features of both schools and points out the key differences in the themes that were identified in the data from the two schools.

Teachers in both schools recognised the important role grammar played in language learning and spent a high proportion of time on teaching grammar. Most teachers saw grammar not as a procedural tool but as a declarative set of facts to be learnt.

In Rural School, teachers were reluctant to admit that they focused on grammar in the classroom, perhaps because they had been specifically instructed not to teach grammar. Teachers at Urban School on the other hand wanted to increase their focus on grammar, and had introduced regular grammar tests in an effort to focus student attention more on grammar. In their teaching of grammar, teachers focused almost exclusively on the form and not on meaning. The grammar lessons involved mainly

rule explanation by the teacher followed by exercises such as identifying the target structure. A lack of student involvement in activities was identified in both schools.

In Rural School students were extremely passive, and refrained from speaking during lessons. In contrast, teachers identified that students at Urban School were disruptive and unmanageable, with disciplinary issues taking up more class time than actual teaching. Another difference between the two schools related to the issue of errors and error correction. This was an issue that greatly concerned teachers at Rural School, who seemed to want their students to use “error-free” language at all times. Teachers at Urban School did not recognise student errors to be a significant issue of concern to them. Urban School teachers were more concerned about their relatively high teaching load and the lack of resources available to them in the school.

Table 23 summarises stated beliefs and observed instructional behaviour of all fourteen teachers at the beginning of the programme. It identifies the stated beliefs of each teacher and their observed instructional behaviour.

It was observed that teachers in general were not open to change. Some teachers stated overtly that they had no desire to learn new methods and techniques. For other teachers, it was not a case of not wanting to change; they felt that there was no need to change, that there was nothing more to improve. This lack of wanting to change was most noticeable in Rural School teachers. In Urban School, most teachers seemed to recognise the importance of continuous professional development. But they did not have the time to devote to it. Several teachers also noted the lack of procedural knowledge of how to change/improve.

Changes were observed in two of the teachers. There appeared to be some indication that these changes in practices also corresponded to a change in beliefs. From the other twelve teachers, except for Idris, Mika and Nur in Urban School, some changes – however minor – were adopted by each teacher. The changes observed for each teacher are identified in Table 24.

**Table 23. Summary of teachers' stated beliefs and observed practices (NB. A – N: indicates the initials of the teachers)**

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	
Stated beliefs	Accuracy is more important than fluency	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
	Grammar instruction is not essential					✓					✓					
	Grammar is best acquired unconsciously/inductively					✓					✓					
	Grammar should be one of the main components of teaching syllabus	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Grammar should be taught in context		✓	✓	✓	✓										
	Grammar should form the basis of lesson planning	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓					✓	
	It is best to teach grammar intensively rather than extensively												✓		✓	✓
	It is important to identify and correct all student errors	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓			
	Mechanical grammar exercises are useless and should be avoided		✓				✓					✓				
	PPP is an ideal model for grammar instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Regular and repetitive grammar practice is essential for language mastery	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Rule explanation is key to a successful grammar lesson	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Students learn best through a mix of clear explanation and regular practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Students pick up ungrammatical language from each other	✓					✓		✓		✓					
	Students should be encouraged to analyse language and discover rules	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	
	Students should be encouraged to self correct their errors			✓			✓	✓								
	Students should be familiar with metalanguage	✓		✓				✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
The primary role of the teacher is to transmit knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Observed Practice	Avoids use of metalanguage					✓										
	Corrects student errors immediately	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓				✓		
	Describes English grammar with reference to Dhivehi grammar					✓										
	Encourages self correction of errors					✓	✓					✓				
	Encourages student involvement & participation			✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			
	Focuses on grammar following student difficulties/errors		✓			✓	✓				✓					
	Follows a transmission model of teaching	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Presents grammar through rule explanation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Promotes language analysis and discovery						✓									
	Uses metalanguage extensively	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Uses regular grammar practice exercises	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

**Table 24.** Summary of changes observed to teaching after week three of the programme.

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Changes	Asks more open questions						✓				✓	✓	✓		
Observed	Creates opportunities for students to interact in pairs/groups	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	*	✓		
	Creates opportunities for students to interact with teacher												✓		
	Cuts back on 'spoonfeeding'	✓						✓							
	Encourages problem solving						*				✓	✓	✓		
	Encourages self correction of errors			✓		*	*				✓	*	✓		
	Encourages students to plan – draft – and revise during writing tasks		*	✓	✓						✓	*	✓		
	Gives more individual attention to students	✓	✓												
	Interacts with a greater range of students during teaching		✓												
	Involves students in making classroom decisions				✓						✓	✓			
	Starts using a range of reading strategies and/or post-reading tasks			✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		
	Uses grammar discovery tasks						*				✓		✓		
	Uses brainstorming strategies during pre-writing stages			✓	✓	*					✓		✓		

*Note.* \* denotes that this was not a new strategy and that the teacher was observed to have used the technique during the first 3 weeks of observation. A – N: indicates the initials of the teachers

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Discussion

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#### *Introduction*

The results of the study, reported in the two previous chapters, revealed several strong beliefs that teachers in Maldivian secondary schools shared regarding grammar and its role in learning and teaching English. These beliefs were apparent from the teachers' responses to the questionnaires and interviews. Through the regular observation of their instructional practice it was also evident that teachers were not always able to act in accordance with their beliefs in their day to day teaching. The previous chapter also recounted the experiences of the 14 teachers involved in the professional development programme run at Urban and Rural schools, and found that by the end of the programme two of the teachers from Urban School had started using grammar discovery tasks in their teaching. Several of the other teachers had also started to make some changes to their teaching with regard to moving from a teacher-dominant approach to one that was more student-friendly. Four teachers continued to teach without making any alterations to their practice.

To help guide the discussion, this chapter returns to the research questions that the study seeks to answer. In each of the following six sections of this chapter, I will first provide a brief summary of the results that pertain to the particular research question which serves as the focus for that section. This will be followed by an interpretation of the results, with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter Three.

## *What Beliefs Do English Teachers In Maldivian Secondary Schools Hold About L2 Grammar, Its Acquisition And Methods Of Instruction?*

### *Summary of Results*

Regardless of other factors such as prior experience and type of training, the teachers in this study appeared to hold similar beliefs and conformed to a particular pattern of teaching. The overriding belief of the 197 teachers who participated in this study was that grammar instruction is a pivotal component of the language classroom. This appeared to be a “resilient or core belief” (Clark & Peterson, 1986) that the teachers shared, and lends support to other studies of teachers’ beliefs (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001; Schulz, 1996) which showed that teachers generally favour explicit grammar instruction. For the teachers in this study, grammar was seen to be a central component of a language curriculum. In fact, close to half the teachers surveyed believed that grammar should be the main element of any teaching syllabus and that it was important to focus on grammar in all lessons. Teachers claimed that in using a language, accuracy was far more important than fluency. Fluency was associated almost exclusively with speaking skills and therefore was not deemed a priority as this was not a skill that was focused on in Maldivian schools and examinations.

The fact that teachers showed such a positive attitude towards grammar instruction is not altogether surprising, considering that grammar has always played a significant role in language classrooms in these schools. But it is also possible that such a response was triggered by the nature of the questionnaire and the fact that the teachers were aware that the broad focus of the research was on their views about grammar. As noted in the methodology chapter, this was an unavoidable limitation associated with questionnaires of this nature.

### *Views about Grammar and Teaching*

Joyce & Burns (1999) showed that teachers’ personal views of what constituted grammar influences the way they approach the teaching of grammar in the classroom. For the teachers in this study, the dominant view of grammar was that of form, with

most teachers equating it with the explicit rules of a language. There was little acknowledgement that grammar could be implicitly taught and/or learned. Neither did teachers appear to be aware that learners have mental grammars, which go through transitional phases as they pass through the various stages of noticing new input, comparing it with existing knowledge and restructuring and integrating the new knowledge to create more advanced interlanguages (Ellis, 1994).

Grammar, for most of these teachers, referred only to explicit rules. Very few teachers highlighted the role of meaning in reference to grammar. Even fewer teachers connected the three dimensions of form, meaning and use (Larsen-Freeman, 2003) in their definitions of grammar. The majority of them seemed to concentrate on the idea of grammar solely as a static body of knowledge of the formal properties of a language, unrelated to the process of acquiring or applying that knowledge.

These views indicate that, in general, the teachers' theory of language learning is a hybrid one, combining the constructs of potentially conflicting language learning theories. The teachers' preoccupation with grammar and explicit rules is similar to the proposals of Cognitive Code Learning and Grammar Translation. The lack of importance teachers give to speaking and listening skills and the high regard for accuracy and deductive techniques are further indications of the influence of Grammar Translation. On the other hand, there also appears to be a significant influence of Behaviourism, such as the teachers' beliefs that pattern practice and memorisation are effective teaching techniques; that students make grammatical errors largely as a result of interference from the mother tongue; and the teachers' preference for immediate error correction lest the errors became habitual.

Such notions of language and learning relate in part to the teachers' own language learning histories. Most teachers reported having learned English through a teacher-centred grammar-oriented methodology, focusing heavily on rule memorisation and drills. Consequently, these teachers had adopted similar approaches in their own teaching. Echoing Farrell's (1999) findings, several teachers commented that these techniques had worked for them as learners, and therefore should also work for their students.

There were, however, a few teachers who seemed to adopt teaching approaches that directly contrasted with the way in which they themselves had been taught the language. Elma, from Rural School, was one such teacher. She believed that the twelve years she had spent learning English at school had made little impact on her English proficiency. Instead, she believed that it was mainly her own efforts to read voraciously that helped her achieve the level of proficiency she currently enjoyed. As a result, Elma claimed that she would not resort to using the techniques that her teachers had used. A similar argument was evident in the responses of those teachers who commented that their teaching differed greatly to the kind of teaching they were exposed to as learners. For example, one teacher who completed the questionnaire commented that:

I did not find my own learning experiences to be very good. I was educated at a small rural school where the teachers did not employ effective teaching strategies. It was very boring with lots of memorising and homework. It was not beneficial... When I became a teacher, I made a conscious effort to never give any of those things to my students. Because I know from first hand experience that they do not work. You cannot learn a language in that way.  
[B3.Q.1]

Such responses suggest that if a teacher's own experiences of language learning were positive and if she believed that the experiences had largely been beneficial, then she was more likely to adopt at least some of those methods in her own teaching. If on the other hand a teacher believed that her own experiences did not have a significant influence on her learning, then she was more likely to reject the methods that had been used by her teachers.

### *Rejection of Contemporary Methodology*

On being asked to describe an ideal teaching situation without the constraints of mandated policy or school culture, 11 of the 14 teachers interviewed stated that they would teach in much the same way as they did now, suggesting that they were content with their current practices. The teachers dismissed most modern methodological trends as impractical, providing evidence in support of Krashen's (1982) conclusion that teachers, in general, reject theories. For most of the teachers in the study,

contemporary approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching or Task Based Language Teaching were only reserved for “other teaching contexts” [E.RJ.22/5] and were beyond the scope of their students and school. At best, these approaches were relegated to the purpose of increasing fluency; grammar instruction was seen to be essential for the serious business of knowledge building. Moreover, such learner-centred approaches to teaching were seen to be mainly “fun” approaches, something to periodically exploit in order to increase student motivation. The approaches were not seen to be methodological choices that would lead to the same degree of learning as would a pedagogy that promoted knowledge transmission; instead, they were simply a “side show” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279).

Part of the reason for this dismissal of approaches that did not have a strong grammatical focus as ineffective or inappropriate may be due to the teachers’ lack of adequate knowledge of the approaches. Given the fact that the large majority of teachers were untrained and from non-ELT backgrounds, and the lack of easy access to current research and methodological trends, it is possible that the teachers were unacquainted with the philosophies that underlie the current language teaching approaches. Thus, though they may have been familiar with labels such as Communicative Language Teaching, they appeared to be unaware of what these really involved. This may explain why the teachers, similar to those in the Eisentein-Ebsworth & Schweers’ (1997) study, rarely referred to any particular methodology. In general, teachers were unable to clearly describe their own teaching methods or express coherent rationales for their views about teaching. The following excerpt from Idris’s first interview, where he was asked to describe his approach to teaching, exemplifies this:

NM: How would you describe your approach to teaching?

Idris: My approach to teaching?

NM: Yes.

Idris: What do you mean by approach?

NM: Your style of teaching. The methods that you employ.

Idris: Um... methods of teaching... methods... um... can you explain more about your question?

NM: Well, different people teach in different ways. I think we all have a particular way of teaching that we find to be successful, that we tend to

use regularly. So really ... I'd like you to describe how you normally teach.

Idris: That is actually... actually very difficult to answer. You may be knowing more about my approach and methods since you have been observing my teaching. I don't think there is any method that I follow. I just go in and teach... When you are talking about teaching like this... I mean its very difficult to try to describe how we teach [laughs] I think the best I can say is it is something ...inherent in us... we just follow our minds and do what we think is best.[I.I.2]

When asked about what they felt were the best ways to learn/teach a language, none of the teachers in the case study schools were able to provide a clearly thought-out answer. Most teachers either acknowledged that there was no best way, or felt that a combination of grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing exercises laid the guaranteed path to language learning.

Adila's response to this question of what the ideal way to teach a language is emphasised how important the development of grammar and vocabulary was to her:

The grammar and the vocabulary are the most important. Because without that you can't create language. Definitely the grammar you have to learn in a lot of detail. They should know that the sentences that they write are correct. And they should have the ability to understand the language. That is why we are giving more passages and all but definitely the grammar we have to do and then reading also is important because that is how you have to get knowledge and essay writing also they have to think and write and develop their topic and write. And of course grammar. That is very essential and vocabulary also that is a must. The words they have to know how to use in the correct way, and of course we have to always teach grammar. Those are the things that are essential to teach, and that is the way I go about teaching.[A.I.11]

Almost all teachers responded in a similar way, listing what they would teach rather than how they would go about teaching. This suggests that for these teachers, the content to be taught was far more important than making this content understandable to their students through effective teaching techniques.

Idris noted that he had previously “never really given much thought to the process of learning the language” [I.I.7] as he had been “so concerned about the teaching side of things” [I.I.7], taking learning “so much for granted... automatically [assuming] that it is... really quite easy” [I.I.7]. Such responses indicate that possibly these teachers had little more than a lay-person’s understanding of language learning and teaching, and had devoted little time to thinking seriously about either. Reasons for this will be explored later in this chapter.

The four teachers who had a background in ELT training were able to verbalise their beliefs regarding optimum teaching conditions more clearly, indicating that teachers who have a theoretical understanding of language learning are more likely to be articulate about their beliefs than those who do not have this awareness. All four teachers, however, had reservations about the practical applicability of these ideal situations. Mika highlighted the importance of matching teaching methods to the particular context, by stating that “a method which works for one school or even one class may not work for the other one, so its really a matter of trying to find the best method to suit the students” [M.I.10].

### *Learner-Centred Teaching*

Most of the 14 teachers who were interviewed described their teaching as being learner-centred, but in reality they held beliefs which were not compatible with learner-centred methods of teaching. For example, teachers saw learning as acquiring a body of knowledge (exemplified by their need to cover the syllabus/scheme of work); that the teacher had this knowledge and that the learner did not (“I always take a lot of time [explaining] because [the students] don’t have any idea or knowledge about anything”); that the role of the teacher is to impart this knowledge to the learner through various activities (“We have to keep on teaching and explaining until they learn”; “I always explain about the grammar in the passage. ... Otherwise they won’t know.”). Thus, although they stated that their teaching was learner-centred their beliefs about teaching indicate that they favoured a transmission model of teaching (Barnes, 1976).

In the teachers' descriptions of an ideal teacher, the three most common features were "explains clearly", "is knowledgeable" and "maintains discipline." None of these relate directly to engaging students, improving learning or developing successful learners. They focus on the teacher rather than highlighting the interaction of teaching and learning, and the important role that the teacher plays in making this process a fruitful one. This to me is indicative of the teachers' view that learning occurs in a linear process, dependent solely on the actions of the teacher.

Despite this, the concept of learner-centredness was a dominant issue that was focused on by the teachers. Nevertheless, different teachers appeared to have different conceptions of learner-centredness. For example, Jana equated it with group work. For Hamd it meant "moving from simple exercises to more and more difficult exercises ... at the pace of the students" [H.I.5]; for Gul it meant "explaining each and everything ... so the child can get the best learning" [G.I.3]; while for many others such as Idris, it involved behaviour such as getting students "to come to the blackboard and write the answers" [I.I.3]. Learner-centredness, while commonly upheld as desirable, was conceptualised in different ways and these conceptualisations did not necessarily match the notion at a theoretical level.

### *Classroom Management Takes Precedence*

The teachers appeared to be concerned more about classroom management issues than teaching approaches or the learning process. Their hesitancy to adopt more learner-centred techniques such as encouraging group discussions among students stemmed from their fear of disruption and losing control of the class. Teachers regarded classroom management as a necessary and sufficient condition for learning to occur. As Joram & Gabriele (1998) point out, such a view of teaching is consistent with a transmission model of learning and does not reflect current theories of education.

One possible reason why these teachers focused so much on classroom management may be the fact that the school culture equated quiet classrooms with effective teachers and productive teaching. In fact, teachers reported that on the rare occasions that they were observed during teaching by a senior member of the school management team, the observer would provide feedback mainly on the teacher's

classroom management skills and not on other – arguably more important – aspects of teaching. When supervisors or principals talked of teachers, they seemed to evaluate a teacher’s effectiveness based on their ability to maintain discipline among the students. In Urban School, for example, Komal was seen as a good teacher because she could keep the students quiet; Idris was viewed as less effective simply because there was usually a lot of noise from students in his classes.

During the time I spent at both the schools I was always struck by how different the school leaders’ conceptions of the best class in the school were from my own. In Rural School, for example, the school leaders felt that class E was the best in its grade level because the students were all very quiet during teaching. They also achieved excellent grades in their exams. Class G in the same grade, achieved equally good results, but was not considered to be the best by either the school managers or teachers because the students in class G tended to be more vocal. These students questioned teachers, were more keen to interact and did not remain silent during the entire lesson. They were less hesitant to speak up when asked a question, and indeed, voluntarily did so. In comparison to class E, they were more confident and outspoken. In class E, teachers had to call on a student and wait for a long time before the student would respond, yet this was regarded as the “best” class.

### *Inconsistencies between Beliefs*

In analysing the stated beliefs of the individual teachers, several inconsistencies were identifiable. This often related to the extent to which grammar should be the focus in the classroom. For example, Bakur claimed that grammar should be the most important aspect of the teaching syllabus, but at the same time, he also insisted that it should not be the focal point of teaching. This perhaps reflects inconsistencies between their own deep seated beliefs and the beliefs they preferred to project, to be more in line with the school’s policies and their understanding of current teaching methodologies. When I first met with the teachers at Rural School, they were all unanimous in claiming that they didn’t teach grammar, with Gul even speaking with me after the meeting to explain that teaching grammar was not congruent with current methodology. Yet, these same teachers unreservedly endorsed focusing on grammar when I individually interviewed them, and again went back to their anti-grammar talk

during the workshop sessions. This seems to indicate that the teachers were keen to appear to fit in with the school culture, yet were struggling to do so, given the persistent dissonance between their own beliefs and the values endorsed by the school. As Fang (1996) noted, inconsistencies can stem from varying psychological, social and environmental factors in schools if these prevent teachers from implementing their own personally held beliefs in their instructional decision making. Additionally, while inconsistencies between beliefs are to some extent expected due to the interconnected nature and complexity of beliefs, persistent inconsistencies may indicate a weak understanding of the subject knowledge.

Despite the fact that the majority (over 60%) of teachers agreed that students rarely become error-free due to the complex nature of the English language, teachers made statements which indicated that getting their students to produce error-free language was important for them, and that it was a goal they wished to achieve. This inconsistency, relating to Nespor's (1987) recognition that teachers' beliefs include conceptualisations of ideal situations that differ from reality, may be explained in terms of what teachers would like to ideally be able to achieve (i.e. error-free language) even though they knew that it was an unrealistic goal.

Another inconsistency related to teachers' beliefs about whether explicit instruction was beneficial for learning. This is not really surprising, as even at a theoretical level, the relationship between formal instruction and learning is fiercely debated. Most teachers believed that students do not generally learn the grammar structures they are taught, yet at the same time they were convinced that such instruction should continue to take place. This is similar to Borg's (1998b) findings, where he discovered that a teacher's decision to teach grammar explicitly did not necessarily indicate that the teacher believed such instruction would lead to learning. Borg recounted how one of the teachers in his study had integrated explicit grammar work into his instructional practice simply because the teacher believed that his students expected it and reacted positively to it.

Dalal, one of the teachers at Rural School, also shared this view. While he acknowledged that students did not usually learn the grammar that he taught, and lamented the repeated grammar errors students made, he also believed that students

enjoyed grammar lessons. Two other teachers at the same school – Fazla and Cala – also believed that grammar was difficult to learn yet commented that they frequently gave grammar exercises as “filler activities” or if they felt their students needed something “easy” to do, which also helped to boost their confidence.

There may be various explanations for such inconsistent beliefs. Green (1971, cited in Richardson, 1996) suggested that people hold beliefs in clusters, with several belief clusters existing within a belief system of a person. He argued that there is little cross-fertilisation between clusters, with incompatible beliefs remaining side by side, unless these are examined for consistency. According to Basturkmen et al (2004), inconsistencies between beliefs may be explained by the fact that teachers draw on different sources of knowledge when talking about teaching in the abstract and when referring to a specific teaching episode. This may well be one reason behind some of the inconsistencies in beliefs displayed by the teachers in this study too.

Another possible explanation for such contradictory beliefs may be related to what Shultz (2001) describes as the “perturbing differences” (p.348) between learners and teachers’ views regarding how second languages are learned. All but one of the 197 teachers involved in this study were teaching a language that was not their own<sup>31</sup>. It is inevitable that they would have developed a cluster of beliefs about language learning and teaching during their years as a learner of the language (Horwitz, 1985). Once they began teaching, a different cluster of beliefs would have developed, based on their teaching experiences. Since beliefs once formed are strongly held – often unconsciously – and are resistant to change (Kagan, 1992), these two clusters of beliefs are likely to exist side by side, regardless of contradiction, with teachers drawing on both their beliefs as language teachers as well as their beliefs as (former) language learners. As Farrell (1999) notes, when teachers who have learned the language through traditional methods undergo teacher training which calls for a more modern approach to teaching, there can be a mismatch between their prior understandings and knowledge gained from the training.

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<sup>31</sup> The only teacher who claimed that English was her mother tongue was Indian and also spoke several other Indian languages.

Dalal appeared to be aware of the contradictory views he had acquired through his learning and teaching experiences. He recounted that he grew up in a non-English speaking environment without any exposure to the language except during English lessons at school, lessons which did not involve any explicit grammar instruction:

We were not taught grammar. None at all. When I was doing my A levels, I did not even know the difference between present perfect and past tense. ... I never actually studied grammar until I started my [teacher] training...[But] somehow I seemed to have picked the grammar spontaneously, without overt teaching. So based on my own experience, grammar [teaching] was not necessary for proficiency [D.I.3].

At the same time, he struggled with opposing beliefs that had developed as a result of his teaching experiences:

But since becoming a teacher, I have started to think that it IS actually necessary. I am teaching in a similar kind of context to where I learned. ... But still I feel that – I’m not saying we should be teaching grammar most of the time or anything like that, but certainly I think it is very useful to teach grammar. ... All the rules and technical terms and everything DO have a place and should be taught... But then on the other hand I didn’t learn any grammar so... I don’t know. [D.I.3]

Because of these conflicting views, Dalal was undecided about the value of explicit grammar instruction, taking different viewpoints about its necessity on different occasions. One may argue that these differing views indicate the development in thinking and the evolving nature of belief systems. However, in this particular instance, because Dalal held both these beliefs to be equally true with no indication of one being stronger than the other, and because he was able to some extent articulate why he believed each to be true, it can be taken as evidence of inconsistency of beliefs rather than development.

Most other teachers were unaware of inconsistent beliefs they held, and on occasion, unwittingly contradicted themselves. For example, Hamd first described the teaching of grammar as an “unnecessary rigmarole” [H.I.3]. But later he claimed that being an English teacher, he was “duty-bound to teach the English language” [H.I.3], and

therefore he “must teach grammar, even basic grammar because without that foundation” [H.I.3] he could not “teach the language properly” [H.I.3].

Basturkmen et al (2004) suggested that experience in teaching may be a factor that would proceduralise technical knowledge, making inconsistencies such as those described here possibly disappear over time. They found that in their study the less experienced teachers held more inconsistent beliefs. The present study did not identify any clear relationships between teaching experience and the extent to which teachers’ beliefs were consistent. It was evident that even teachers with more than 20 years’ experience, held contradictory beliefs.

## *What Factors Are Responsible For Shaping These Teachers’ Beliefs?*

### *Summary of Results*

A variety of factors were seen to affect the formation of beliefs, with the teachers’ own learning experiences being a strong influence here. The teachers judged whether a teaching technique or method was useful, applicable or effective largely based on their previous experiences, mainly of language learning, and to a lesser degree, of teaching. Among those that were derived from their experience of teaching, teachers often referred to established practice, which had led them to form particular beliefs about learning and teaching. It was common for example, for a teacher to state that a specific way of teaching was practised because that was what the teacher had always done or what the norm in the school was. Other influences on beliefs related to student expectations, syllabus requirements and available teaching materials.

### *Own Experience*

The teachers’ reliance on their own experience is consistent with a number of other research studies (e.g. Farrell, 1999; Hollingsworth, 1989; Johnson, 1994; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004), which highlighted the impact of teachers’ educational histories on the formation of their beliefs. As teachers, the professional content and methodology courses as well as the actual practice of teaching appear to have given rise to a different set of beliefs, based on their professional experiences. Johnson (1992) found

that teachers tend to adhere to instructional approaches that were prominent during their initial experiences of teaching. Her study revealed that those teachers who were identified as having dominant skill-based theoretical orientations had begun teaching when the skill-based approaches were prominent. Those who appeared to favour a rule-based approach or a functional-based approach had started teaching during the heyday of these approaches. A similar finding was made with the participants in the present study. The more experienced teachers such as Adila and Idris defined grammar as rules of language and advocated a grammar-dominant approach to teaching, favouring a strict teacher-led style of instruction. The less experienced teachers such as Dalal and Fazla tended to emphasise the development of language skills rather than grammar and wanted their students to be more interactive. Elma, who was in her third year of teaching during the time, and was the least experienced in the group, argued for a no-grammar approach, stressing the need for communication in order to develop competence. As Johnson (1992) notes, teachers tend to follow the same approaches that they were exposed to – either in their own language learning experiences or during pre-service training – despite the theoretical or pedagogical advancements made in the field since then.

### *Impact of In-service Programmes*

The teachers in this study did not identify in-service programmes as being a significant source of influence for them. This is in contrast to Richards et al's (2001) study which found that in-service programmes were reported by teachers to be by far the biggest source of influence on their decisions, inspiring them to change their teaching and beliefs. The teachers in their study had commented that they found the experience of meeting with other colleagues and sharing of ideas and experiences to be rewarding and informative.

There are three possible reasons why teachers in the present study did not rate in-service programmes so highly. One is that these teachers were not regularly involved in such programmes as professional development activities were not given much priority in their teaching context. Those programmes that they had been involved in may not have been effective and consequently were not regarded very highly. Alternatively, those programmes may not have been considered worthwhile by the

teachers if the assumptions inherent in their proposals had not matched the beliefs that the teachers had.

A second reason is that these teachers were not accustomed to act as team players. Collaborating with other teachers was not seen to be essential or particularly rewarding. If the opportunity to exchange methods and materials and discuss instructional practices with colleagues is not appealing to a teacher, that teacher is unlikely to rate in-service programmes as being particularly effective. Furthermore, the teachers in both Rural and Urban schools appeared to be reluctant to work collaboratively and did not appreciate each others' expertise. A workshop activity conducted at Rural School clearly showed this. For the activity, the teachers were expected to identify one positive aspect of each teacher in the group, in an effort to recognise those areas of their practice that others valued. Most teachers were unable to identify anything positive about their colleagues, claiming that they were not very familiar with each others' teaching practices. Nonetheless, in private conversations with me, teachers were quick to criticise the professional activities of their colleagues. The extent to which teachers are willing to work together and respect each others' opinions and practices appear to have a great influence on their views of about usefulness of professional development activities.

The third reason why teachers did not rate in-service programmes as being highly effective may relate to the resistance that teachers are generally expected to have towards mandated change. As Morimoto (1973, p. 255) pointed out:

When change is advocated or demanded by another person, we feel threatened, defensive, and perhaps rushed. We are then without the freedom and the time to understand and to affirm the new learning as something desirable, and as something of our own choosing. Pressure to change, without an opportunity for exploration and choice, seldom results in experiences of joy and excitement in learning.

### *Experimentation*

Both the questionnaire and interview data suggested that the teachers often experimented with new teaching ideas, and that such trial and error approaches often

led to a change in beliefs and practices. Close to half of the survey respondents noted that their biggest trigger of change to either beliefs or practice was (1) experimenting with new ideas; (2) self-discovery; or (3) trial and error. This seems to suggest that these teachers often did attempt new instructional techniques. It can be assumed that if those techniques appeared to work favourably a change in beliefs may have resulted. The following comments from Liban show how he changed his techniques of error correction:

I used to think that the best way of drawing attention to errors is to simply correct them. But later after several years of doing this I realised that the disadvantages of this are greater because [students] will feel like I am picking on them and criticising them. So I stopped correcting [oral] errors... and concentrated instead on their written work. [L.I.2]

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I started focusing on a particular error, say for example subject verb agreement, and then stick to that only for that day. And so I will correct only those kinds of errors in their writing. Then the next time I may choose something else like tenses. And like that I now find that trying to correct everything is quite useless, but if I select one thing then... the students are able to get more out of it ... and it also makes the marking easier for me. [L.I.3]

His dissatisfaction with his error correction technique led Liban to try a different approach, and following its successful application, Liban appeared to have changed his beliefs about how best to highlight errors in students' work. As Richardson (1996) observed, an interactive relationship exists between beliefs and behaviour, with one affecting the other. In the case of Liban, it was experience and reflection which led to changes in his beliefs about error correction, and not vice versa.

Teachers' stories of change such as this demonstrate that they do undertake change voluntarily through experimentation. It would also appear that since such changes are made of their own volition, based on feelings of what their students need and what is lacking in their teaching, they would be long lasting changes. Nevertheless, Richardson (1998) argues that such voluntary changes are often minor and inconsequential, and based on unwarranted assumptions, suggesting that for major

instructional changes to occur, outside mandates may be necessary. Furthermore, as Richardson points out, voluntary changes made to their instructional practices do not necessarily lead to exemplary teaching. Changing teaching practices does not necessarily mean an improvement to the status quo.

## *How Do Teachers In Maldivian Secondary Schools Deal With Grammar In The English Classroom?*

### *Summary of Results*

Due to the high regard teachers placed on grammar, it was not surprising to find that in their classroom teaching they relied heavily on it. Teachers were observed drawing attention to grammar in some way in most lessons. Grammar lessons typically followed the same routine: presentation of the structure followed by controlled practice and, on some occasions, an extended writing task based on the target structure. It was, however, clear that for many teachers learning explicit knowledge of grammar was seen to be important, rather than using the rules of grammar, and applying that knowledge. Teachers emphasised the need to learn grammatical terminology and grammar rules. Yet inadequate attention was paid to producing the language for a communicative purpose.

### *Comparison of Teachers' Self-Reported Practice and Actual Observed Practice*

Teachers' self-reported practices – in the questionnaire and interviews – indicated that their students' interests and level as well as the availability of materials were the three most influential aspects they considered when making instructional decisions. This self-reported practice appeared to be congruent with actual observed practice. Teachers often dismissed an activity as being unsuitable, reasoning that their students would not find it interesting; that it would be too difficult for them; or that the school did not have the necessary resources to put it into practice. A question that arises here is whether the teachers' impressions of what students would find interesting would match the students' real interests. Initially, most teachers felt that the discovery tasks would be too difficult and uninteresting for their students. However, student responses following task completion indicated that they found them exciting and appealing,

indicating that teachers are not always correctly able to judge what students are likely to find interesting.

Teachers at Rural School consistently maintained that they did not devote much attention to grammar during their teaching. Yet, classroom observation revealed a large proportion of class time being focused on grammar. This, as noted before, appears to be due to the conflict between the teachers' views of what constituted best instructional practice and the school's policies.

Many teachers reported in the questionnaire survey that they frequently used communicative grammar tasks<sup>32</sup> in their teaching. But in their actual practice observed in the two schools this was not evident, and teachers appeared to be unfamiliar with what constituted communicative tasks in general. Teachers may have reported that they used communicative tasks frequently in order to project a more contemporary methodological style.

In their decisions regarding activities to be taught and approaches to be followed, the questionnaire data indicated that teachers were more influenced by current research in the field than their feelings about the viability of an activity or approach. The data also suggested that current research was more influential than even their own personal beliefs and goals, in helping teachers to make pedagogical decisions. Nevertheless, it was discovered through classroom observation that teachers were generally unfamiliar with current research and were hesitant to try teaching tasks which they felt would not work. It appears therefore that the teachers may have embellished their responses to the questionnaire, in order to present themselves in a more favourable light, by declaring themselves to be in tune with current trends.

Teachers consistently maintained that student learning was of utmost importance to them. Nevertheless, observational data revealed that the teachers appeared to be less concerned with whether students were learning, and more concerned with maintaining the flow of their teaching and keeping pace with other teachers regarding the content

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<sup>32</sup> It was not possible to clarify teachers' conceptions of what a communicative grammar task was, as it was a postal questionnaire. However, the questionnaire did define these as *tasks which require the use of the target form in purposeful communication*.

being taught. Being able to tick off topics that had been “covered” was not accompanied by probing into whether the students had actually learnt each grammar point. For example, several teachers maintained that their students “should know their tenses” by the time they reach secondary school because they had been already been taught these in the primary grades. They justified the poor student learning on circumstances beyond their control (e.g. parents did not speak English; no opportunities for students to use English outside the school; poor standard of teaching at primary level, etc.), and failed to relate it to their own inadequate teaching techniques.

Lack of student interest was reported to be the number one difficulty faced by more than 64% of the survey respondents. This was seen to be true in the two case study schools. Students in Rural School were passive and silent, appearing uninterested much of the time. Rather than attempt to make them more involved and thereby ignite some interest, most teachers – while acknowledging that their students appeared uninterested and were inactive – did not make a concerted effort to change the situation. At Urban School, students (especially boys) were most of the time not paying any attention to the teacher, and were more involved in talking to each other; the noise of their conversations often drowning the voice of the teacher. Yet, despite this obvious lack of interest on the part of the students, teachers were seemingly unwilling to try new strategies for making their teaching more interesting. They dismissed the idea that trying something different might help to get students’ attention. Nur, from Urban School, exclaimed that it wasn’t a case of the teaching techniques being uninteresting; the students were just not interested in learning per se.

According to the questionnaire results, discussion of errors in class was the most frequently used grammar-based activity. It is possible that teachers took “discussion of errors” to mean “error correction” because actual observation revealed that although errors were frequently identified and/or corrected both orally and in writing, these errors were not usually discussed, either with the individual student making the error, or with the whole class. Teachers appeared to be concerned more with the correction of errors rather than engaging in any form of discussion or clarification relating to the errors made.

There were three exceptions to this. Fazla often provided scaffolding to assist the students to self-correct their errors. This would usually involve some amount of interaction between Fazla and a student, discussing what was erroneous, and why this was so. Bakur and Hamd resorted to lengthy explanations of grammar whenever a student's error was highlighted. Bakur explained that previously he worried that interrupting the lesson to explain a problematic grammar point may bore the students and draw attention away from the focus of the lesson. However, he claimed that he "later realised that it was ... more important to teach... something useful [even if it meant] losing the focus of the lesson" [B.I.6]; that because students "forget easily", it was important to repeatedly explain problematic grammar structures. He further explained:

There is no point in carrying on with a lesson when I know that someone is having difficulty understanding something, or has got the wrong idea about some aspect of the language. I have to stop and explain, even over and over again. I need to drive it in, spend time on it until each and every one is sure about it. It doesn't matter about the rest of the lesson. I can start again. [B.I.6].

In general however, teachers were concerned more with eradicating errors rather than focusing on why an error was wrong or encouraging the students to self-correct their errors. The constraints of time and teachers' reluctance to interrupt the flow of an activity seem to be two possible reasons why this was so. As Jana noted:

Time is very limited. So I am not always able to point out common errors during class time. But I always correct errors in written work... And then I don't want to draw attention to their mistakes when they are trying to say something anyway. I try to let them say it however they can. [J.I.5]

### *Influence of Teachers' Knowledge About Language*

The teachers' general tendency to overlook why students were making errors and to refrain from explaining them may also be an indication of weaknesses in terms of the teachers' knowledge about language (KAL), as Brumfit, Mitchell, & Hooper (1996) also discovered with the teachers in their study.

This certainly appeared to be the case with Elma. Elma acknowledged the patchiness of her KAL, explaining that this lack of well established knowledge greatly affected her instructional decisions. She explained that she was “terrible at grammar” [E.I.5], could never remember “the names or rules of all the many tenses and all these conditional things” [E.I.5]. Lacking this KAL, Elma did not have enough confidence to “deal with [grammar] unless completely necessary” [E.I.5], and even refrained from correcting errors, supporting the findings of Brumfit et al. (1996), and Borg (2001) that teachers’ self-perceptions of their KAL influence their pedagogical decisions.

This does not necessarily imply that a well-developed KAL will automatically transfer to instruction; teachers need to develop language analysis skills in order to decide what structures to teach when (Bigelow & Ranney, 2005) and indeed, the pedagogical awareness of how to best teach these. It seems more likely that most teachers did have the necessary KAL; what was lacking was not this declarative knowledge, but the procedural dimension of how to formulate explanations of that knowledge in a way that their students would understand it in order to enhance learning (Andrews, 1997).

Adila, believed that she could “speak English almost like a mother tongue” [A.I.11] and that she had an exceptional understanding of “all the technicalities of the English grammar” [A.I.11]. However, she had difficulties in effectively explaining grammar, as she herself acknowledged:

I explain again and again. Everyday I try to explain. But still these children won’t understand. ...Even after so many years, and learning so many grammar books I am still struggling... to explain something in a simple manner so that the children can easily understand. [A.I.4]

In this instance therefore, it is not a question of insufficient KAL, but insufficient pedagogical knowledge about how to simplify the teacher’s expertise in KAL to the level of the students. Adila’s remedy for her problem was to “learn more and more about grammar” [A.I.4] and to refer to various grammar books, further increasing her declarative KAL. However, increasing teachers’ declarative KAL alone in this way

does little to improve their teaching, unless they receive accompanying awareness raising instruction relating to procedural skills.

### *Teacher-Dominant, Grammar-Focused Instruction*

Despite teachers' claims that they had over the years, adopted communicative, student-centred approaches in place of teacher-dominant, grammar-oriented ones, lesson observations revealed that teaching was undoubtedly teacher-dominant and focused to a large extent on grammar. Part of the reason for this preference for teacher-dominant techniques relates to the teachers' need to maintain discipline and minimise noise in the classroom. Lack of opportunities for students to speak meant of course less noise. As Carless (2004) notes, teachers in traditional contexts often handle teacher-fronted instruction better than they handle communicative or task based approaches to teaching. Like the teachers at Urban and Rural Schools, Carless's teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools were seen to be concerned over issues of noise and discipline, which inhibited the successful implementation of Task Based Language Teaching. As Carless, following Tsui (2002) notes, teachers in such situations should learn to tolerate constructive noise, differentiating between off-task noise – which should not be permitted – and on-task noise – which should be allowed. The reason for this distinction is to ensure that instructional objectives are achieved rather than a need for the teacher to reinforce his authority. Carless (2004) argues: “Good teaching is characterised not by establishing routines, ... but by possessing the judgement that informs executing the routines with some flexibility” (p. 656).

In addition to this issue of maintaining discipline, the teachers' preference for teacher-dominant instructional styles may also relate to their unfamiliarity with how to conduct a more student-centred lesson. When I was obtaining information from the teachers regarding the kind of focus they would like the teacher development programme to have, five out of the seven teachers at Rural School requested that I deal with the issue of learner-centred teaching, stating that they would like concrete examples of the kinds of activities that could be carried out and how to deal with managerial issues. Similar comments were also made by some teachers from Urban School, further indicating that an extensive knowledge of grammar alone is not

adequate to ensure that grammar is dealt with in a way that is most conducive to learning.

A further reason for the teachers in this study to opt for a teacher-fronted approach may also reflect the simple fact that it is just easier to teach via a lecture method than in any other way. English lessons in Urban School were markedly more focused on grammar with the teachers and prescribed textbooks playing more dominant roles than the lessons observed at Rural School. This is hardly surprising though, given the fact that the Urban School teachers had a heavier workload, teaching between 25 – 35 hours per week, dealing with up to 240 students, in comparison to the 14 weekly teaching hours allocated to Rural School teachers who dealt with up to only 90 students. Urban School teachers also faced a palpable lack of resources (e.g. no photocopying, printing or computer facilities; an under resourced library) whereas those at Rural School were fortunate enough to have these resources at their disposal.

As Crookes and Arakaki (1999) pointed out, difficult conditions, including heavy workloads and/or uncooperative students, negatively affected teachers' instructional practices. When burdened with heavy workloads (as in the case of Urban School teachers) teachers would undoubtedly spend inadequate time planning lessons. As Richards and Pennington (1998) found in their study of first year teachers in Hong Kong, situational constraints (e.g. unresponsive students, examination pressures, a set syllabus, pressure to conform to peers, student resistance to new ways of learning) led teachers to diverge from innovative practices and discouraged them from experimentation. These situational constraints were faced by teachers in both Urban and Rural schools, and this would have undeniably encouraged the teachers to opt for the safest and easiest instructional strategies. As Richards and Pennington (1998, p. 187-8) note:

without any relief from these factors and without any reward for innovating in the face of them, the teachers would naturally be led back toward a conservative teaching approach to align themselves with the characteristics of the existing teaching context.

One reason that strongly impacted on students' unwillingness to be more active participants in the lesson related to an aspect of school culture. Students were

expected to stand up to greet the teacher, raise their hands if they wanted to speak, and wait to be called on to speak, which they were expected to do standing up. In the case of some teachers, students would need to speak in “complete sentences” even though this was quite unnatural. For example, Gul in Rural School once did not accept the following as an answer: “because it was greedy.” She insisted that students say the “complete sentence”: The dog wanted both the real bone and the one in the reflection because it was a greedy dog [G.LO.12/6]. Rules imposed by teachers like this clearly inhibited students’ participation and discouraged them from speaking out in class. Such expectations by the teachers relates to Richards’ (1996) contention that teachers are concerned with more than simply issues of curriculum content: “they also attempt to implement a personal philosophy of teaching which reflects their understanding and beliefs about what good teaching is and how it is achieved” (p.286).

### *Diverse Views of Effectiveness*

Teachers appeared to be more concerned about what was being taught rather than what was being learnt. The frequent reference teachers made to a successful grammar lesson being one in which their explanation of the grammar point had been clear and detailed exemplifies this. Asked about how teachers knew whether students had grasped an idea or learnt a new structure, teachers would often respond that learning was indicated by students’ ability to complete an exercise or from the expression on the students’ faces:

We can see no that if they have understood by just looking at the faces. I can tell if they are having difficulty from the way they look at me. ... And if they can do the exercise I give them after explaining then of course I will know for sure if they have learnt the lesson. [N.I.7].

For Elma, the effectiveness of her teaching was clear to her as she had “never had any complaints from students” [E.I.6] and because students had never indicated to her that they remained confused or had difficulty understanding.

As Huberman (1993, cited in Cheung, 2005) notes, teachers judge the effectiveness of their teaching based on “principles derived from observations of their own – and virtually no one else’s – experience in the classroom.” This lack of insight into their

instructional practice is further aggravated by the fact that teachers in these schools received little feedback from others regarding aspects of their teaching. Thus, teachers remain uncertain of the connections between what they teach and what their students learn. Furthermore, the discrepancies between individual teachers' goals and those of the school or students meant that there was little agreement regarding what constituted effective teaching.

### *Individual Variations between Teachers*

Although many generalisations can be made regarding the 14 teachers' practice of grammar instruction, individual variations between teachers were also observed. While most teachers corrected errors almost immediately, Liban was one teacher who was not comfortable correcting oral errors as he believed that it may discourage students from participation. While in the case of most teachers grammar instruction was preactive rather than reactive, Elma focused on grammar almost exclusively as a result of student errors and never seemed to pre-plan a grammar lesson. While deductive grammar instruction was the norm in both schools, Fazla preferred to teach grammar inductively. While grammar was focused on in more than 70% of the lessons observed of most teachers, in Elma's case, this figure was much lower and she did not appear to teach grammar simply for the sake of teaching grammar.

Such individual variation in the teachers' practices echoed Breen et al's (2001) study, in indicating that although teachers shared similar beliefs and principles (e.g. the need for formal instruction; the importance of accuracy), there was some diversity in terms of how these beliefs were realised in practice. Furthermore, each individual teacher seemed to follow a particular routine, which they followed fairly rigidly, especially when presenting new grammar structures.

## *To What Extent Do Teachers' Beliefs Correspond To Their Practices?*

### *Summary of Results*

Although there was some degree of congruence between teachers' stated beliefs and their observed classroom behaviour, several conflicts between teachers' beliefs and

their actual practice were identified in the analysis, confirming Parajes' (1992) view that stated beliefs are an unreliable indicator of actual practice. For example, more than half of the teachers surveyed believed that grammar is best acquired unconsciously through meaningful communication. Yet, teachers taught grammar explicitly, with a lack of communicative tasks. Also, almost 80% of the teachers surveyed claimed that students should be given the opportunity to work out rules from examples. Yet, little evidence of this was observed in students' previous work, teachers' lesson plans or in the lessons observed prior to the teacher development programme. Furthermore, teachers' stated beliefs indicated a preference for learner-centred instruction as this was seen to be more conducive to learning than one that was dominated by the teacher. However, in their actual teaching, this approach was not put into practice.

### *Justification of Mismatched Beliefs and Behaviour*

When such differences between teachers' stated beliefs and actual practice were pointed out to them, some teachers tried to alter and re-state the belief to make it more congruent with observed practice. For example, in responding to the questionnaire, Gul had maintained that for optimum results students should be given the opportunity to use the language and practice new structures in communication. Asked why she did not put this belief into practice, Gul claimed that there was no one way of achieving success, that grammar explanation and drilling, if done effectively, were just as good in promoting learning.

Other teachers attempted to justify why they were acting against their beliefs. Hamd initially strongly dismissed drilling and memorisation techniques as being "old fashioned" [H.I.2] and ineffective, preferring to teach in "modern, student-centred ways" [H.RJ.15/8]. Yet, he wrote "model essays" on topics that were likely to be asked in the school examinations and gave these to his students to memorise and reproduce in the examination. He explained that he did this so that his students did not need to "waste time during the exam worry[ing] about writing grammatically or eloquently" [H.I.11]. Asked why he was doing something that was so fundamentally against what he believed in, Hamd explained it wasn't a matter of acting against his principles, but simply being more "accommodating towards [students'] difficulties"

[H.I.11], that “sometimes we have to act against our beliefs if we know that that action is going to benefit ... in some way” [H.I.11]. He argued that by “helping” students in this way, he was actually “putting students first [by] teaching at their level” [H.I.11] and addressing their difficulties in a “constructive way” [H.I.11].

Furthermore, the main instruments of ascertaining teachers’ beliefs in this study were the survey questionnaire and the interviews. It is widely recognised that such self report instruments (particularly in the case of questionnaires) are not fully reliable as there is a tendency in human nature to present ourselves in a better light than what is actually true. In fact Gul once explained how she had “referred to lots of books” before completing the questionnaire because she wanted to “get it right” [G.RJ.13/6]. “Of course, at that time I didn’t know you were then going to come and observe us, and check if we actually do these things,” she remarked [G.RJ.13/6].

### *Espoused Theories vs. Theories in Use*

Argyris and Schon (1974) describe how teachers’ espoused theories and theories in use exist side by side. The difference between teachers’ espoused theories and their theories in use, and especially the fact that teachers may remain completely unaware of the incompatibility between them, is one possible explanation for the differences observed between teachers’ beliefs and practices. This difference may explain why teachers are unable to describe the reasoning behind their routinised instructional practices, beyond simply stating that “that’s what I always do” [B.RJ.9/6] or “that’s usually how we teach grammar here” [K.RJ.26/9]. Their theories in use have become so routinised that they are unable to explain the beliefs that underlie their actions.

Other possibilities for the difference between teachers’ beliefs and practices are considered in the following section.

## *What Factors Constrain These Teachers When Translating Their Beliefs Into Practice?*

### *Summary of Results*

Several factors were seen to be responsible for why conflicts between beliefs and practices exist. These include conflicting beliefs, the degree of teacher's professional motivation, teachers' personalities and other unavoidable situational factors.

### *Conflicting Beliefs*

One reason for the mismatch between beliefs and practices may be the conflicting beliefs of the teachers. For example, in general, teachers believed that a quiet classroom was conducive to learning, but at the same time believed that communication and interaction were necessary. The teachers seemed to think that education was about what the teacher does rather than what the student learns; that knowledge is something to have rather than to use. Thus, despite their conscious agreement that student-centred instruction was a more educationally sound approach, they were unlikely to follow it because it clashed with these other more strongly held values and beliefs.

Similar to the findings of Sato & Kleinsasser (2004), when teachers' personal beliefs clashed with the school culture or community beliefs, these personal beliefs were seen to take a backseat. In Rural School, for example, most teachers felt that grammar should be focused on to a greater extent, but were reluctant to follow their beliefs because of the school policy. Thus, although several teachers were dissatisfied with the school's policy, they continued to teach in accordance with it, relying on teaching practices that were inconsistent with their projected beliefs.

Teachers' belief about the suitability of an approach to the context also appears to hinder the application of their beliefs in practice. As Farrell (1999) showed, even when teachers are enthusiastic about inductive approaches to teaching grammar, they may remain reluctant to practice them, if they perceive that they may not be applicable to the context, and if they feel that both they and their students are generally more secure when grammar is taught in a deductive approach.

It would appear therefore that when a conflict between beliefs arise, the stronger, more deeply held belief is likely to drive their behaviour.

### *Contextual Factors*

As previously noted, contextual factors such as the availability of resources and time, school culture and overcrowded classrooms can have a powerful effect on teachers' classroom practice. Teachers in both case study schools identified that time was a key factor that constrained them in putting their beliefs into practice. They felt that considerable time was required for more learner-based approaches to teaching; time that they did not have at their disposal. Many teachers expressed the desire to conduct more communicative lessons, but appeared to lack the expertise and the confidence to actually carry these out, fearing classroom management problems.

The complexities of the classroom atmosphere and the pace of teaching can constrain teachers' abilities to attend to their beliefs and provide instruction which corresponds with their theoretical beliefs. The need to make split-second decisions during instruction may mean that teachers do not always have the time to deliberate regarding what would be the best action to take. As Hatch (1999) observed, the need for teachers to make "a multitude of complex decisions in rapid fire fashion" (p. 230) combined with the lack of reliable feedback teachers receive on their teaching, leave them unaware of how their instructional decisions affect the accomplishment of their overall goals.

In addition to this, the teacher's personality is also likely to be a factor here. Their willingness to compromise their beliefs to follow established practice, their alertness to students' reactions, for example, are some of the ways in which a teacher's personality traits can affect the extent to which they are able to practice what they believe.

Other factors that seemed to hinder teachers' applications of their beliefs included students' language abilities and the availability of resources. At Urban School, for example, the lack of resources forced teachers to limit themselves to using largely textbook-based activities.

## *Teachers' Professional Motivation*

The extent to which teachers were motivated to teach well also figures strongly when considering factors that constrain teachers in this regard. Adila explained that after graduating from university, she had decided to take up teaching because it was “an easy job suitable for a lady [with the added bonus of] a lot of holidays” [A.I.1], indicating that rather than a passion for the profession, it was the (in her view) undemanding nature of the job that attracted her to teaching. In such cases, it can be assumed that the teacher will avoid teaching situations which would demand more effort and take up more of her time.

Almost all of the teachers interviewed explained that they had taken up their current teaching positions due to financial reasons. Most of these teachers had left their families behind and had arrived in Maldives on their own. They typically lived in rented bedsits, often shared with other teachers. Almost all of them had at least one other teaching post. Some of the teachers like Mika were juggling three teaching positions in three different institutions as well as offering private tutoring, which meant teaching “from morning till midnight, seven days a week” [M.I.9].

Considering these factors, it is understandable that some teachers choose to opt for the easiest possible way. As Mika noted:

Whether I do something from the textbook or whether I spend hours dreaming up exciting lessons, I will get the same amount of money. So why should I bother? Why should I spend any more time and effort than is absolutely necessary? [M.I.9].

This relates to what Crookes (1997) refers to as the psychological separation between teachers as human beings and teachers in their working environments. When teachers have to “work in conditions in which they cannot maintain professional standards, and are unable to derive ... satisfaction and opportunities for personal growth” (p.74), it is hardly surprising that their professional practice is not at the optimum; and that for these teachers, survival rather than pedagogic concerns are the priority.

Neither Rural School nor Urban School had a systematic scheme for teacher observation and appraisal. Also, the dire need for teachers meant that once appointed, teachers were rarely made redundant<sup>33</sup>. Thus there was little incentive for the less motivated teachers to go the extra mile. This would to some extent explain why teachers claimed to believe that a communicative approach which encourages learners to be active participants in the learning process is the ideal way to teach a L2, yet failed to put this ideal into practice because such an approach entails far more work for the teacher.

Jana and Komal were noticeably more passionate about their work than the other teachers. Dissatisfied with using only the textbook activities, both these teachers would occasionally use other materials, with individual photocopies made for students at the teachers' own expense. Because the school library did not have adequate resources, Jana would lend interested students some of her own books because she wanted to inspire them and develop in them a love for reading. Actions such as these suggested that these two teachers were seemingly more enthusiastic about their work, and thereby more likely to attempt to teach in the way they feel would be the most beneficial.

### *To What Extent Does A School-Based Professional Development Programme Affect Teachers' Beliefs About Grammar & Their Instructional Practices?*

#### *Summary of Results*

As apparent from the previous chapter, only a limited number of teachers made changes to their teaching following the professional development programme. These teachers attempted to make their teaching more learner-centred, for example by introducing group work, the inclusion of problem-solving activities and involving students to some extent in classroom decision making. In the case of the grammar discovery tasks, which was the innovation introduced through the professional

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<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, teachers are appointed by the Ministry of Education, and individual schools cannot dismiss a teacher without the MoE's approval. In cases where school leaders make repeated requests to the MoE to remove a teacher from their school, that particular teacher is usually transferred to a different school and so still remains in the system.

development programme, only three teachers (Liban, Jana and Komal from Urban School) trialled the given sample tasks with their students, two of whom went on to use them repeatedly as part of their range of grammar teaching techniques.

Some of the other teachers however did use some aspects of the tasks in their teaching. Dalal for example used part of a given task (drawing attention to the differences between grammatical and ungrammatical uses of negative adverbs of frequency), but refrained from using the entire task because he believed that his students would have become confused had he tried to engage them in working out the underlying rules of the target structure. Some other teachers such as Cala applied various features of discovery tasks in her teaching. She would for example, make use of students' ungrammatical utterances, discussing with students why they were ungrammatical, and urging students to correct the errors, thereby taking a more analytical stance than the purely knowledge transmission style of grammar explanation. Thus, several teachers had in fact started applying some of the ideas behind grammar discovery, although they were seemingly not prepared to fully adopt the innovation.

With reference to the various stages of innovation that Bailey (1992) describes, it would be fair to say that about half of the teachers in this study had shown some interest in the innovation and had begun to evaluate and trial it with their students. Due to the time frame of the study, it was not possible to see if these teachers did in fact continue their evaluations and trialling, and perhaps move along to the next stage(s); or if they had in fact discontinued or rejected the innovation after a certain stage.

Only two teachers (Liban and Jana) had progressed to adopt the innovation during the time of the data collection. Their comments during the adoption process and in their concluding interview indicated that their initial view of discovery tasks had changed after having trialled the tasks with their students, and having observed their effectiveness. Also noteworthy was how the use of discovery tasks appeared to influence their instructional decisions. They both noted how they now focused on the learning of grammar rather than the teaching; that they attended more to whether the students were learning and making connections rather than things such as whether

there was time to complete an exercise. This indicates that they were critically examining their own practice of teaching which is essential for belief changes to occur and for teachers to arrive at reconceptualisations of teaching (Freeman, 1992).

It was interesting to note that while Jana had been quite strongly opposed to the tasks when she was first introduced to them, by the end of the programme, she was one of the only two teachers to have adopted the innovation. This reflects Clark and Peterson's (1986) assertion that if teachers try out an innovation which does not conform to their prior beliefs, and if the innovation turns out to be successful, accommodation of an alternative belief is more possible than in any other circumstance. Liban reports to having continued using discovery tasks, nearly one year later, his comments indicating that positive changes had occurred at all three levels – materials, beliefs and behaviour – which Karavas-Doukas (1998) identifies as being crucial for successful long term implementation of an innovation.

Given the fact that the professional development programme that was initiated as part of this study resulted in less than satisfactory outcomes, I will now examine the extent to which the proposed innovation was successfully diffused in the selected context, considering possible reasons for the results obtained in the current study and discussing potential alterations to the process that could be taken to make subsequent attempts at bringing about change more rewarding. In doing so, I will first evaluate the innovation itself, considering the extent to which grammar discovery tasks fulfil the ten attributes of innovation that Ellis (1997) identifies. Next, I will focus on the professional development programme, discussing the degree of success attained, based on (Guskey, 2000) five levels of evaluation, and considering how the method of implementation may have hindered the innovation uptake process. Then, I will examine the roles played by the adopters (i.e. teachers) and analyse possible reasons why teachers may have resisted adopting the innovation.

### *Evaluating the Innovation*

The grammar discovery tasks that were introduced to the teachers in the two case study schools were by no means an absolute innovation (Ellis 1997), but were perceived to be an innovative way of teaching grammar by the teachers in these

schools. Unlike pattern practice, which was fundamentally how grammar was taught in these schools, grammar discovery tasks are learner-centred and promoted inductive teaching, which learners typically find appealing (Mohamed 2004). As described previously, these were some of the reasons why this particular proposal was selected.

Ellis (1997) identified several attributes of innovation that need to be considered in applying innovative proposals to teaching. These include initial dissatisfaction, feasibility, acceptability, relevance, complexity, explicitness, triability, observability, originality and ownership.

In considering the first of these attributes, all teachers in the two case study schools expressed some sense of dissatisfaction with the teaching of grammar. In particular, they recognised that repeated attempts to teach and practice grammar structures were often in vain as learners did not seem to internalise the target structures, and kept on making the same errors. On being asked to suggest topics of interest for the professional development workshops, several teachers requested that the workshops focus on “new ways” of teaching grammar; and asked about ways of teaching that would fit into a learner-centred approach. This clearly suggested that teachers were not fully satisfied with their current situation.

The success of the innovative tasks with the selected groups of students at Rural School, as described in the previous chapter, indicated that the tasks were feasible for the context. Despite teachers’ uncertainties in this regard, the two groups of students were able to successfully complete the tasks and declared them to be an interesting way to deal with grammar.

The view of grammar adopted by the discovery tasks was largely one relating to form. This model of grammar was therefore compatible with the teachers’ beliefs and did not challenge them, indicating that discovery tasks would be an acceptable innovation for the selected context. On the other hand, it was perhaps not an innovation which was fully compatible with the teachers’ existing style of teaching. Discovery tasks allowed learners to play a key role and be actively involved in constructing knowledge. For the successful implementation of the tasks, the teachers would need to

relinquish their dominant role in favour of acting as a facilitator, which was likely to be a change that they were not fully comfortable with.

In terms of relevance, although some teachers believed that the innovation was relevant to their specific teaching contexts, other teachers disagreed. Some teachers argued that it was not necessary to focus on grammar “to such an extent” [B.I.7] as to ask students to find out the rules of the language; some teachers felt it was “too focused on grammar” [H.I.8], some teachers felt that students would be unable to carry out the tasks on their own. However, other teachers felt that the tasks were an effective yet simple means of drawing students’ attention to grammar, and would be useful especially in dealing with problematic structures.

With regard to the attributes of complexity and explicitness, it could be said that at the outset, teachers struggled to understand the merits of discovery tasks. Teachers especially found it hard to grasp the fact that a grammar task that was not intended to lead to immediate production of the target structure could be useful at all. But through explanation, demonstration, and through the process of examining several sample tasks, teachers began to better understand what they involved. Nevertheless, it was clear that although teachers were somewhat familiar with the rationale behind the innovation, they remained unconvinced regarding its effectiveness. Their scepticism in this regard was reduced to some extent after learning about the effectiveness of the tasks with their own students.

Teachers were provided with guidance and support during the trialling and implementation period, and were provided with prepared materials, negating the need to create ones of their own at the initial stages. The attributes of triability and originality therefore seemed to have been largely met.

The crucial attribute that teachers in this study did not relate to was the one of ownership. Despite the involvement of teachers in planning of the workshops, it cannot be denied that the innovation was introduced largely through a top-down approach. As a result, the teachers never really identified with it being their own and distanced themselves from it, leading to a lack of responsibility towards the innovation and its implementation.

Stoller (1994) observed that the adoption rate of an innovation depends on a perceived middle range, or a zone of innovation (p.314); that when sufficient elements of these attributes are perceived to be present in the innovation, adoption rates were likely to increase. Stoller also found that the perceived absence or excess of an attribute can negatively affect innovation adoption. This seems to suggest that teachers are likely to be affected by the “Goldilocks’ syndrome” (p. 314) favouring innovations that are “just right”, being sufficiently dissimilar, but not too dissimilar from their status quo. It can therefore be argued that grammar discovery tasks did fall into this zone of innovation, since it only partly satisfied the essential attributes of innovation discussed above. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that adoption of an innovation is not dependent solely on whether teachers considered it to be “just right.” The way in which it was implemented plays a key role too, and it is to this that I now turn.

### *Evaluating the Method of Implementation*

The professional development programme that was offered to the teachers in the two case study schools adopted a fusion approach, combining characteristics of a training model and a mentoring model (Kennedy, 2005). This method of professional development was chosen because despite its drawbacks, the training model is acknowledged to be an effective means of introducing new knowledge (Hoban, 2002). It was believed that these drawbacks would be minimised as it was context-specific, took place over a reasonable period of time and was flexible enough to allow teachers to contribute to the content, method and logistics related to the programme to a large extent. In addition to this, teachers were coached through regular one-on-one meetings with them to assist with the implementation stages.

According to Guskey (2000), the effectiveness of a professional development programme needs to be evaluated at five different levels: participants’ reactions, participants’ learning, organisational support and change, participants’ use of new knowledge and skills, and student achievement. The results of the programme evaluation questionnaire showed that teachers reacted very favourably to the programme, highlighting many positive features of the experience. Several teachers also indicated (in the evaluation questionnaire and/or in the concluding interview) that

they had gained new skills and knowledge as a result of participating in the professional development. In terms of the first two of Guskey's levels therefore, the programme appears to have been fruitful.

Level 3 related to organisational support and change. Clearly, how school leaders act and behave, and the professional practices that they encourage will have strong implications for the uptake of innovation. A school climate that supports teacher development is highly conducive to change and innovation uptake. This support for change was lacking in both the case study schools, and particularly in Urban School. As Komal once noted, “[Urban School] is not an educational institution; it's a business venture” [K.I.5] as the school management was almost “solely interested in making money” [K.I.5] and were unconcerned about improving standards. School leaders in both the schools appeared to assume that teachers would never change, that despite any reform efforts, they would continue to teach as they have always done. Following the conclusion of the professional development programme in each school, I presented a written report of the programme to the school leaders, outlining the findings and recommending changes to be made within the English department in order to maximise the efforts of the teachers and to improve learning. Whether these were implemented was not followed up on due to the time constraints of the study.

The fourth level of evaluation related to teachers' use of knowledge and skills attained from the professional development – the observable changes made to teachers' classroom practices. As already noted, only two out of the fourteen teachers had adopted the innovation at the end of the data collection period, an adoption rate of less than 15%, which although typical (Joyce & Showers, 2002), is far from satisfactory. The results chapter described how several other teachers made some alterations to their teaching, such as introducing group work, in an effort to adopt more learner-centred methods. Although these were minor, superficial changes, the fact that several teachers did decide to make an alteration to their well established instructional routines is a positive finding. Change is a slow process and different teachers change at different rates (Richardson, 1996). That the programme was able to initiate what could be the first gentle ripple in a gradual process of change needs to be recognised. Possible reasons why the innovation failed to be adopted will be explored further in the next sub-section.

It was beyond the scope of the study to fully investigate the fifth level of evaluation: the effect of professional development on student learning. As the study was concerned about the interplay between teachers' beliefs, instructional practices and a school-based professional development programme, it did not seek to investigate any effects the professional development may have had on student learning – the study focused on the effects of development on teachers' beliefs and practices. Part of the reason why student learning was not focused on was because it was felt that any effects would not have been immediate and thus would have involved a longer time frame than it was possible to devote to a study of this scale.

### *Failure to Adopt Innovation*

According to Bitan-Friedlander, Dreyfus, & Milgrom (2004) teachers develop various strategies of behaviour in order to escape from, avoid or delay the implementation of the innovation. Several factors appear to have hindered the successful diffusion of the innovation in the two case study schools. Time was one critical factor that affected the issue in two ways. One was that teachers did not have adequate time to devote to professional development. In the case of the Urban School teachers, they had a high teaching load that did not allow them enough time to even mark the students' work. In such cases, teachers cannot be expected to devote additional time and effort to professional development without adequate incentives (such as time off from teaching duties) to encourage them to be involved. Time was also important in the sense that more time should have been allowed for teachers to trial and implement the innovation because change takes time. As Adey (2004) reported, and Bitan-Friedlander et al (2004) discovered, innovation was fully adopted by the teachers in their studies only in the second year of training. In fact, Bitan-Friedlander et al report that two of the second year participants never reached the adoption stage. Thus, time appears to be a critical – but perhaps not a sufficient – factor.

The issue of ownership was another crucial issue. Teachers need to be involved in the planning and delivery of the professional development, which in many respects was put into practice, as noted in the methodology chapter. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there was a lack of ownership on the teachers' part. In an effort to enhance ownership, teachers were encouraged to design tasks that would target a grammar

structure they were about to teach their students. Yet, as noted in Chapter 6, none of the teachers at Rural School actually used any of these self-prepared tasks in their lessons. Perhaps part of the reason was that they were never directly told to use it. Perhaps part of the reason lay in the teachers' (mis)understanding of the programme itself. Gul, for example, commented that she hoped I would find the material they had designed useful for my studies. Perhaps it never occurred to her that these were tasks that were meant to be used by the teachers themselves in their teaching, rather than as something that was designed exclusively for my benefit.

My role as change agent in the two schools was clearly a factor that affected implementation. For the teachers at Rural School, I was a researcher who was in their school for the purpose of obtaining data for my research. They were fully aware that the professional development workshops were being run as part of my research. At Urban School, the management downplayed my status as a student researcher, and I was treated as a 'resource person' to work with the English department in improving teaching and learning. As far as the teachers in Urban School were concerned, I was helping them to improve their teaching in my capacity as a resource person at the school; the interviews were conducted for my research needs as a student. I feel that this difference in my role at the two schools was one reason for the difference in teachers' attitudes towards both me and any proposals I put forward. Although it appears that more teachers at Rural School had made changes to their teaching, the changes made were more general and superficial. In comparison, the teachers at Urban School who made changes to their teaching made consistent changes both in terms of practice and beliefs.

I believe that if the change agent had been someone in a more authoritative role, proposing the innovation in an official capacity, the results would have been different. My unofficial status, limited experience in teaching and teacher development, and age are likely to have negatively impacted the uptake process. In fact, as noted in the methodology chapter, Gul from Rural School made it clear that she and many of her colleagues were sceptical of my abilities given that I was younger than all the teachers there and that I had only a fraction of experience in the field when compared with several other teachers in the school.

A fourth factor that affected the lack of innovation diffusion, leading to what Holliday (1992) refers to as “tissue rejection”, was the teachers’ lack of perceived need to develop. Teachers did not regard professional development as an integral part of their work. Many of the teachers were opposed to development, challenging the very idea that they needed to develop, stating that they had nothing new to learn. Teacher learning was an alien concept to them. South Asian culture deems teachers as experts, or as Gul put it, “gods and goddesses” [G.RJ.14/5]. Such an image of teachers as all-knowing conflicts with the notion that teachers must continue to learn and adopt new practices. As Wood, Cobb & Yackel (1990) note, significant changes in a teacher’s knowledge or beliefs will occur only when the teacher sees something problematic in his or her own practices. The teacher needs to question the effectiveness of her pedagogical beliefs and practices – to find a reason to try to change her teaching. This was clearly lacking with most of the teachers concerned in this study, who had fossilised professional routines and were not interested in improving their teaching. According to Borko & Putnam (1996), this reliance by experienced teachers on routinised knowledge about how to conduct lessons and manage classrooms may impede their efforts to reflect on their own practices, to see things in new ways, or to learn new instructional approaches.

One teacher who did express a desire to continue to learn was Jana. Jana, who had worked in various educational and managerial positions in several countries, noted that each of her professional experiences had “added to [her] learning curve” [J.I.2], indicating her openness to learning. Liban too expressed his desire to “renew and recharge the professional batteries ... every now and then” [L.I.9], demonstrating his positive attitude to change.

Most teachers did not see the connection between improving teaching and improving learning. They believed that implementing the proposed innovation alone would do little to create meaningful change in the wider perspective of things. Large numbers of students in their schools consistently failed to achieve the ultimate goal – a pass grade in the final examination. Since these teachers attributed this failure to factors beyond their control, they did not see the need to change as any change would have been, in their opinion, futile. As Anderson (2004) observes, in such contexts, teachers must be

shown that a change – however small – on their part can make a difference to learning.

This appears to be a key factor, as both Jana and Liban (the two teachers who did adopt the innovation) were both noticeably keener to improve themselves as teachers. They also appeared to recognise the crucial connection between teaching and learning – that in order to improve learning, the teaching itself needs to improve. Rather than simply blaming other factors for the lack of student achievement, these two teachers were willing to take a risk and trial the innovation even when they were not convinced that they would work. They did not follow the same route that many of their peers did – discarding the innovation as unworkable without even trying it out.

Also, although a large proportion of teachers claimed that they were open to innovations and frequently experimented with new ideas, their attitude towards the discovery tasks indicated otherwise. The teachers were reluctant to try anything new. The fact that they were wary of the effectiveness of the discovery tasks may be one reason for their reluctance. Another, more likely reason, is that change is difficult and requires more work. As previously discussed, many of the teachers in the study had low levels of professional motivation, and few teachers – Jana being one – expressed a desire to be upwardly mobile and seek better career positions. This finding echoes Kennedy's (1988) recognition that change places great demands on teachers, especially when teachers are poorly paid, have more than one job and have to do more work as a result of the innovation without any equivalent financial recompense.

Teachers' age and career stage may also affect the degree to which they are willing to change. According to Hargreaves (2005) teachers in the early stages of their career were the most open to change, and those nearing the end of their career showed the most resistance while mid career teachers who were relaxed in their professional duties were also fairly flexible and positive towards change. Although there was some indication of the relationship between teachers' career stage and their attitude towards change among the 14 teachers in this study, there were also many exceptions to this generalisation. In general, more experienced teachers showed more scepticism towards innovation – perhaps because they felt their work in the past was being devalued. Teachers such as Bakur and Idris who were planning to retire soon, may not

have wanted to learn anything new so late in their career. This is understandable and expected.

What was not expected was the strong opposition to change from teachers such as Elma and Dalal who were still in their early career stages. In the case of Elma, who was strongly opposed to teaching grammar in the first place, it may be that she felt her authority as HoD was being undermined when changes were proposed by other people (i.e. myself).

Related to this factor of teachers' career stage, is their position in the teaching context. In the case of Elma, for example, although she was a novice teacher, she was also the HoD and therefore a person of authority. Moreover, she was the only local teacher among all the expatriates at Rural School. In contrast, Liban and Jana<sup>34</sup> were both mid-career teachers. But, they were both new to Urban School. Jana once commented about how she felt alienated by the other teachers in the school, describing the staffroom atmosphere as "cliquey" [J.I.11]. It is possible therefore that a teacher's perception of her status and the stability of her position in a teaching context may affect her attitude to change.

As previously noted, the teachers appeared to be unwilling to collaborate and work together. During discussions in the workshops, some teachers hesitated to share their teaching activities with others and did not seem to want to reveal any information about their own teaching. Questionnaire results also showed that teachers were unconcerned about what their peers were doing, and did not rate collaboration between teachers to be of particular value. This echoes the findings of Sato & Kleinsasser (2004) who investigated high school Japanese teachers, noting that there was a lack of interaction between teachers and for many of them, teaching was a "private undertaking" (p.811).

The present study also found that teachers did talk to each other regarding subject matter and the content to be taught (particularly in terms of keeping pace with other teachers and the prescribed scheme of work) as well as disciplinary issues, but there

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<sup>34</sup> Although it was Jana's first appointment as English teacher, she had been teaching other subjects in schools for several years and had often provided one-on-one private tutoring in English.

was a lack of discussion between teachers regarding instructional practice. Sometimes there even appeared to be some degree of rivalry between teachers, with teachers accusing each other of “stealing” their ideas when they inadvertently used the same activities with their respective students. Jana’s insistence that none of the other teachers at Urban School be told about how she had successfully used discovery tasks to teach grammar is also indicative of this lack of mutual cooperation between teachers. She asserted that she did not want to be known by her colleagues as “a goody two shoes” [J.RJ.11/9] and so would prefer to keep her experiences of using the innovation to herself. I strongly feel that had she been less guarded about her successful adoption of the innovation, other teachers would have been more likely to trial it themselves. If the other teachers had had the opportunity to hear about her experience of using the discovery tasks with her students, they may have been more inclined to accept its applicability in their context, rather than the same information being expressed by an outsider such as myself. At the same time, I am not aware to what extent Liban shared his experience with other teachers, and if he did, whether it had any effect on the likelihood of their implementing the change.

Based on the evidence found in these two schools, collaboration does not seem to be suitable for all teachers. Personality and cultural differences affect teachers’ willingness to work with other teachers. It must be recognised that professional development – and especially one that involved teachers in reflective sharing of experiences – was not a regular part of their work, and this was perhaps why many teachers felt uncomfortable reflecting on their teaching and being publicly open about their needs to improve. For example, although each workshop session included some reflective writing activity aimed at making teachers aware of their own practices, it was often the case that teachers did not fully engage in the reflection and were always reluctant to discuss the difficulties they faced. Similarly, teachers appeared reluctant to work together on tasks during the workshops<sup>35</sup> preferring to work on their own. This lack of collaboration between teachers in their efforts to improve teaching, and thereby learning, greatly hinders the process of change. As Hawley & Valli (1999, p. 141) claim, “without collaborative problem solving, individual change may be possible, but school change is not.”

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<sup>35</sup> This was especially the case with male teachers in both schools, who always worked by themselves.

Another factor that affects innovation uptake and is related to teachers' personality is the level of risk teachers were willing to take. Asking them to trial alternative models of teaching is asking them to take a huge risk, as these challenge their existing beliefs and deeply ingrained practices. Some teachers also appeared to lack confidence in their ability to make the necessary changes successfully and still manage the class adequately. Mika for example was unwilling to take that risk because he did not want to lose face in front of his students by not being able to maintain discipline. The extent to which teachers feared change also therefore, was important. This need for teachers to be confident in their abilities to adapt to change reflects Lamie's (2002) findings.

### *Summary of Chapter*

This chapter has discussed the key findings of the study presented in the two previous chapters. It has shown the complexity of issues related to teachers' beliefs and practices, discussing the ways in which various conflicts exist within the belief systems of teachers regarding grammar instruction, with some teachers being aware of these conflicts and others remaining oblivious to them. To varying extents, teachers' beliefs are reflected in their classroom practices, yet the constraints of their teaching situations were seen to greatly affect the extent to which beliefs drive behaviour. Three types of teachers were identified: (1) teachers who resisted all change, and made no alterations to practice or beliefs (2) teachers who selected – usually minor – aspects of the proposed change that they found to be favourable and applied these in controlled measures to their teaching; but maintained their pre-existing beliefs (3) teachers who were willing to take the risk, and applied the innovation to practice, with a corresponding change in beliefs. Various impediments were seen to constrain change efforts, including openness to change and support for change in the school culture. The individual nature of the change process was also identified.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Conclusion

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#### *The Research Study*

Although in recent years there have been an increasing number of studies examining the cognitive dimension of teaching, few studies have investigated in detail the linkage between teachers' beliefs and their actual teaching. Also absent from the existing literature is research on in-service L2 teachers and how their beliefs and practices are affected as a result of learning opportunities available to them. Little is known about the nature of innovation uptake that L2 teachers go through and the impediments that they face in the process of change. In an attempt to address these gaps, this study aimed to explore the connections between teachers' beliefs, their classroom practices and professional development, with particular regard to the instruction of grammar. Through the introduction of an innovative approach to teaching grammar, the study was also intended to develop a deeper understanding about the process of change, evaluating the extent to which professional development impacted on teachers' beliefs and behaviour.

The research reported in this thesis investigated the beliefs of 197 English teachers from 51 secondary schools in the Maldives. From these, the central focus of the study was on 14 teachers who took part in a 12 week professional development project conducted at two schools. The professional development programme at Rural School consisted of weekly workshops and regular classroom observations. Due to the difficulty of conducting regular workshops at Urban School, the teacher development programme in that school involved three meetings with the whole group followed up with several individual discussions with the teachers.

The extent to which these opportunities to engage in reflection and teacher learning affected their existing beliefs and instructional practices was investigated. The study extends the current research knowledge of how L2 teachers operate in three ways:

1. It explores the connections between teachers' beliefs and their classroom teaching, with particular attention to the teaching of grammar.
2. It analyses the effects of a school-based professional development programme on teachers' beliefs and practices.
3. It explores the nature of the uptake process and describes the challenges faced in attempting to bring about instructional change.

This concluding chapter will present a summary of the main findings as they relate to the research questions; discuss the implications of the study (a) in terms of the provision of professional development in the Maldives and (b) in relation to the contributions it makes to existing theory and research. It will also draw attention to the limitations of the study and make suggestions for how future research could build on the findings of this study.

## *Main Findings*

### *Teachers' Beliefs about Grammar*

It was clear from the teachers' responses to the questionnaire and interviews that their pedagogic beliefs represented an interconnected system where some beliefs were central. These core beliefs were seen to influence other less strongly held beliefs. One strong core belief that almost all teachers shared was that grammar instruction was not only necessary but that it should form a substantial part of the curriculum. Grammar was regarded by the teachers as a declarative set of facts to be learnt and grammar instruction was seen to entail the explanation of grammar rules. Teachers did not appear to make a connection between grammar instruction and students' subsequent ability to use language fluently in communication. This could either be because teachers were not overly concerned about students' communicative language ability, or because they were unaware of the theoretical debate that has revolved around the issue of whether grammar instruction enhances communicative language use.

Interconnectedness between beliefs did not necessarily indicate consistency. Teachers held several mismatched beliefs about language learning and the role grammar instruction played in the process, but few teachers appeared to be aware of these inconsistencies between their beliefs. For example, many teachers struggled to

balance their belief that errors need to be corrected so as to maintain accuracy, and their view that error correction by the teacher can negatively impact on the learner's language production and confidence. There was some evidence that such contradictory beliefs existed as a result of beliefs derived from different sources, such as previous language learning experiences and current language teaching experiences.

Conflicts between beliefs were not only apparent within a teachers' own system of beliefs. Conflicts also existed between the beliefs of a teacher and institutional and systemic conventions (e.g. although a teacher may feel it important to teach grammar extensively, the school policy did not allow her to do this); as well as between the beliefs of different teachers. In Rural School for example, Elma's beliefs were often in direct contrast to those of the other teachers.

Although as a group, the teachers often shared a set of core beliefs, the strength of these core beliefs varied depending on the individual teacher, resulting in personal and idiosyncratic belief systems. One shared belief among the teachers was that the teacher is the custodian of knowledge and therefore learning should be directed and controlled by the teacher. Beliefs relating to the type of direction and how much control should be exercised varied from teacher to teacher. Fazla for example, believed in paying individual attention to students, and the facilitation of learning through one-on-one assistance. Komal deemed it important to teach at the pace of her students, even if it meant abandoning a lesson plan when she felt that her students were not following her in the way she had envisaged. In contrast, Nur believed that the teacher must be in full control, and did not give importance to the individual needs of his students, while Adila did not believe in abandoning a lesson plan regardless of student difficulties.

### *Factors That Affect the Formation of Teachers' Beliefs*

Teachers' prior experiences of language learning appear to play a significant role in the formation of beliefs. Teachers who reported positive learning experiences seemed to endorse those practices they had been exposed to as learners, while those teachers who described negative learning experiences tended to reject the methods used by their own teachers. To a lesser extent, previous experience in teaching also affected

their beliefs. Some teachers recounted incidents involving experimentation with new techniques which had led them to change their beliefs.

Beliefs derived from learning and teaching experiences can exist side by side, even when these beliefs do not correlate, as exemplified in Dalal's case, who described how he was undecided about the need for explicit grammar instruction, based on his contradictory views of its value. Having learnt English in an EFL environment without overt attention to grammar, Dalal on the one hand felt that grammar instruction was not necessary. On the other hand, based on his teacher training and teaching experiences, he felt that focusing on grammar was important. In such cases, if the teacher is able to relate to both – one from a learner's point of view, and the other from a teacher's point of view – even though he is aware of the mismatch between them, conflicting beliefs continued to be held.

### *The Practice of Teaching Grammar*

Grammar instruction was observed to take up a considerable amount of class time in both Rural School and Urban School, validating teachers' reports of similar practices in the questionnaire data. In 82% of the lessons observed in Rural School and 93% of those in Urban School, teachers drew attention to grammar in some way. The teachers' instructional decisions were strongly motivated by their beliefs about what needed to be taught, rather than what the students really lacked or enjoyed learning. In many cases, teachers were seen to provide explicit grammar instruction even when they did not believe that it would be successful or effective in promoting learning. Teachers' confidence of their own knowledge appeared to be an important factor in determining the extent to which they engaged in grammar instruction.

In contrast to reports of the adherence to communicative methodology by a large number of teachers in the survey sample, including such reports by many teachers from the two case study schools, observational data revealed that teachers followed a transmission approach. Grammar teaching involved a routinised pattern of rule-explanation followed by practice exercises. A student's ability to correctly complete an exercise was taken to be evidence of successful learning. Subsequent errors in the use of that particular structure were often interpreted as carelessness on the part of the

student and were remedied by additional exercises. The teachers in both the survey and case study samples generally appeared to be unfamiliar with/did not use inductive approaches to grammar instruction.

### *The Relationship between Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*

Observation of their regular classroom practice provided substantiating evidence regarding the complexity of the interaction between teachers' beliefs and behaviour. Several inconsistencies between beliefs and practices were identified, relating mostly to how grammar should be taught. In most instances, although teachers projected themselves as 'modern' teachers who believed in teaching through student-centred methods of instruction and in communicative approaches to teaching, in reality their practices were teacher-dominant and grammar-focused, with little opportunity for students to use the language.

### *Factors That Constrain Teachers from Practising Their Beliefs*

Several possibilities as to why the teachers were unable to enact their beliefs in their teaching were identified. Even though teachers may have wanted to adopt student-centred approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching and Task Based Language Teaching, their unfamiliarity with such approaches may have led them to teach differently. A second reason may be the straightforward nature of teacher-fronted lessons, which would be favourable to teachers such as those at Urban School who faced large workloads and difficult working conditions and were seen to have low levels of professional motivation. Additionally, the issue of maintaining discipline was a central theme that was evidenced in the data. A teacher-dominant approach would help to minimise student talk, and therefore make it easier to maintain discipline.

Another explanation for the mismatch between beliefs and practices may be attributed to the difference between teachers' espoused theories and their theories-in-use. This difference may explain why teachers were unable to articulate the reasoning behind their routinised instructional practices, and verbalise the beliefs that underlay their actions.

Furthermore, the conflicts between teachers' beliefs and systemic conventions may also have acted as barriers that prevented teachers from enacting their beliefs.

As already noted, it is also likely that teachers presented themselves in a more favourable light in answering the questionnaire and in responding to interview questions, as it is human nature to portray ourselves in the most positive manner.

### *Effects of Professional Development on Beliefs*

As a result of the professional development programme, a change in beliefs regarding the effectiveness of inductive grammar instruction methods was evident in the case of 2 out of the 14 teachers involved. These two teachers, who had at first been sceptical about the value of inductive grammar tasks, came to regard them as an effective means of drawing attention to grammar and in helping students to gain more confidence in their abilities to uncover grammar rules. It was evident that in the case of these two teachers, trialling the innovation led to a significant change in beliefs. However, no changes in beliefs were found to have occurred in the case of the other 12 teachers.

### *Effects of Professional Development on Practice*

The professional development sessions affected the teachers' practice in three ways.

1. Four out of the fourteen teachers (all of whom were from Urban School) did not make any changes to their practice.
2. Eight teachers, including all seven from Rural School, made some alterations to their teaching, with regard to making their practice less teacher-dominant. Although they were not specifically related to grammar instruction, some of these changes involved the use of group work, encouraging students to self correct their errors and including students in classroom decision making.
3. Two teachers from Urban School were seen to adopt the proposed innovation by starting to use grammar discovery tasks during the 12 week time frame of the project.

It is not known to what extent the two teachers who adopted the innovation continued the process of implementation, integrating it into their regular routines. It is also not

known whether any of the other teachers attempted implementation after the duration of the programme. It would be interesting to examine these teachers' practices now, more than a year after the programme was completed.

### *Factors That Affect Change*

A number of factors were seen to be responsible in leading to or preventing change. What appeared to be of crucial importance were teachers' attitudes towards learning and their openness to change. Teachers who believed in the sufficiency of their knowledge for teaching were generally unreceptive to new input and were disinterested in adopting change. Even when teachers had been open to learning and saw the value in adopting change, teachers reported that their lack of procedural knowledge about how to change had hindered change efforts in the past.

Teachers need to see the relationship between teaching and learning. The majority of teachers in this study were dissatisfied with the level of learning and student achievement in their schools. However, they attributed the low level of student achievement to external factors such as parents' language abilities and the lack of exposure to the language outside the school. They did not acknowledge that even if these factors did play a part in the process, changing their own teaching would make a direct impact on the students' learning.

Furthermore, various situational and personality factors also appeared to affect the degree of implementation and uptake. With regard to situational factors, time, workload and support from the school leaders appeared to be important. There was also evidence that a teacher's level of confidence, willingness to take risks and readiness to collaborate affected the extent to which they engaged in professional development activities. A teacher's age and career stage, and more specifically her status or position in the school may also have some impact on whether she implements the proposed change.

### *The Process of Uptake*

This study has shown that unless teachers are open to change, and willing to trial new ideas, successful change cannot occur. Although these features were present in the

two teachers who did implement the change, it was also clear that the process of uptake was quite different for each of the two teachers. Jana had trialled one discovery task, seemingly out of curiosity regarding its effectiveness, unknown to any of the other teachers. When she had used the task in class, she had been pleasantly surprised to see that it had gone well, and it was at this point that her scepticism regarding discovery tasks began to fade. It was also at this point that she began to discuss with me more lessons using such tasks and to request feedback on her use of the tasks in teaching. Yet, even at the end of the programme, Jana was adamant that the other teachers were not told about her use of the tasks because she did not want to be known as “a goody-two-shoes” [J.RJ.16/9].

Unlike Jana, Liban lacked the confidence to trial a discovery task on his own. Even after spending much time preparing for the use of discovery tasks in class, Liban was reluctant to trial them because he didn’t want to “fall flat on [his] face on [his] first attempt” [L.RJ.11/9]. His confidence in using what was to him a new way of teaching grammar had to be built gradually through observation and coaching.

The difference between the two teachers and their process of uptake might reflect the difference between the teachers’ personalities and their confidence in their abilities as a teacher. Their attitudes towards the innovation were also different at the outset. While Jana questioned it in terms of acceptability and feasibility, arguing that it could not be used successfully with students at Urban School, Liban was more concerned about triability, and lacked the confidence to trial something that was new to him. Yet through trialling, they were both able to see the way in which the tasks helped their students to think for themselves and “decipher the whole grammar” [J.I.11], while gaining confidence in their abilities as learners.

### *Implications*

Several implications of the study can be identified. While many of these are practical suggestions that relate to the provision of professional development, several deductions can also be drawn from this study that contribute to theory and research of L2 teacher development.

## *The Professional Development of L2 Teachers*

The research findings presented here can enable professional development providers to better guide teachers through the change process. Although the following relate specifically to the teacher development situation in the Maldives where the study was based, many of these recommendations may be relevant to other educational contexts and to professional development in general.

To establish a climate that values the continuous professional development of teachers, it is necessary to foster positive attitudes towards teacher learning and change. As Crookes (1997) asserts, in most countries school cultures are not conducive to the concept of teacher learning. This lack of support for teacher learning was evident in this study as the notion of teacher as learner was seen by many to be a threat to the teacher's expertise. Teachers' beliefs about the sufficiency of their knowledge contributed to their lack of receptivity to the teacher development experience. Because of the prevalent view of teachers as experts, teachers appeared reluctant to admit gaps in their knowledge and felt that they should "always know everything" [C.I.10]. If teachers are to develop and improve their practices so as to improve student learning, it is important to change their attitude to change and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own development through reflection and learning. It is only then that the misleading notion of teachers as all-knowers can be discarded and teachers can become receptive to change. As this study has shown, if teachers are open to change and willing to trial new practices, successful change can occur.

A supportive school context is likely to make this change process easier. For successful change to occur, schools must create an atmosphere that is both supportive and persuasive. On-going support as well as pressure is crucial for continued improvement and systematic implementation. Support allows teachers the scaffolding and encouragement they need while pressure can help to initiate change among those who are not overly motivated to change. The two schools that this study focused on did not overtly support change and did little to encourage teachers into improving their practice. As a result, many teachers remained lax and unconcerned about the quality of their teaching. This study did not demand that teachers implement change.

Change was invited, but not required. Due to this lack of pressure on the teachers, and owing to the disjunction between the teacher development project and the schools' agenda, teachers did not feel the need to trial the innovation. Some teachers explicitly referred to the lack of involvement of the school management in the project, and indicated that the implementation of the innovation would have been more successful if it had been mandatory. This suggests the need for more pressure on teachers to implement change if the uptake process is to be successful.

The involvement of school leaders in professional development programmes is also important for another reason. As teachers appear hesitant to apply practices that are in conflict with institutional norms and expectations, the involvement of school leaders in development sessions can provide the opportunity to negotiate and reconcile any differences between them and build consensus in working towards a shared vision of learning and teaching.

The findings indicate that teachers in this context did not value each other's expertise and did not seek to learn from each other. Expertise was seen to rest with native speaking teachers and teacher developers, with many teachers involved in the study making references to this. For example, Bakur in Rural School was regarded by most of his colleagues as an exceptional and knowledgeable teacher because he had previously taught in Europe, with some of his students including native English speakers<sup>36</sup>. This suggests the need to inculcate in teachers the value of their own knowledge and experience; that expertise lies not only with native speaking teachers. The value of teacher collaborations and peer support needs to be acknowledged and emphasised.

It has been shown that teachers have a hierarchy of beliefs, in that some beliefs are core and others are secondary or more peripheral. As the core beliefs affect all others, professional development sessions should begin by addressing the most fundamental of beliefs, such as: What is knowledge? How do learners come to know what they know? What teachers believe about knowledge and knowing will significantly affect other beliefs related to teaching and learning. If teachers regard knowledge as a

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<sup>36</sup> Although it was history and not English that he taught at the time.

commodity that is transferred from teacher to learner and that learning involves absorbing and remembering the transferred knowledge, they are unlikely to accept teaching approaches that do not fit into this view. Through the investigation of teachers' beliefs, an understanding of knowledge construction and knowledge sharing needs to be built, in order to help teachers appreciate and come to terms with educational models and theories as well as make sense of their own personal theories and teaching behaviours.

Teachers are more likely to change when they are shown that a discrepancy exists between what they would ideally like to do and what they actually do. At Urban School, teachers were not observed by the school's supervisors during teaching. At Rural School, where intermittent observations by the senior management did occur, teachers were not provided with feedback to help them improve their teaching. Thus, most teachers remained unaware of their own inadequacies and strengths. During this study, when these teachers were provided with feedback on their teaching, several commented on how they had previously been unaware of their own classroom behaviour and shortcomings. It is only after teachers become aware of their skills and weaknesses that they can begin to address how to improve their practices. Therefore, regular observations of teaching followed by constructive feedback focusing on developing their procedural knowledge of how to change appear to be important in improving practice and maintaining quality instruction.

The study has shown that the design of teacher development programmes can affect, to some extent, the level of impact it has on teachers. While workshops can implant interest in an innovation, teachers are likely to need further support at an individual level to encourage them to attempt implementation and put the ideas gained from the workshops into practice. Currently, teacher development in the Maldives involves one-shot workshops, and is not usually school-based. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that this practice be expanded so as to extend the length of development programmes and to include individual mentoring sessions with the teachers, involving clinical supervision (Gaies and Bowers, 1990). It is also essential that development programmes are not removed from the everyday pressures of the workplace and that it provides sufficient opportunity to make the ideas personally meaningful in terms of the realities of their teaching situations.

The provision of attractive incentives may encourage an active participation in professional development activities. The teachers involved in this study often remarked on the unavailability of time and the demands of their professional lives. Engaging in professional development was seen to be too time consuming and of little personal benefit to them. It appears therefore that providing an incentive to persuade participation would be crucial for success. The type of incentive may depend on the particular teaching institution and its teachers, but it is possible that some relief from teaching duties to engage in development activities may encourage participation.

Teachers need evidence of improvement in learning as a result of change. For this reason, it seems essential that development programmes address how teacher change will impact on student learning outcomes. Whether this impact relates to student reactions, attitudes or performance in a test must be decided by the teachers and the programme providers. This evidence must be available to teachers to evaluate and understand the effects their actions are having on learning. If this evidence is not available, teachers are likely to revert back to their previous practices. The two teachers who trialled the innovation in this study were encouraged to proceed with the implementation due to the positive reactions of the students. If teachers are able to see the positive results their actions can have on their students, they are likely to gain more personal satisfaction from their work and be driven by an intrinsic motivation to improve their craft and achieve greater success in their profession.

Finally, the success of professional development programmes must not be based wholly on self report instruments such as questionnaires as these are not reliable indicators of actual practice. Systematic evaluation involving observation of classroom practice is essential in order to evaluate the extent to which teachers implement new strategies. In this study, the teachers' responses to the programme evaluation questionnaire were extremely positive, indicating that it had been a successful and constructive process for the teachers, with many commenting that as a result of the programme, they had become more aware of how grammar is acquired. While this implies that change may have occurred at the level of awareness, it was not a directly observable change and was not seen to affect actual teaching in most teachers' cases.

## *Contributions to Theory and Research*

This study has shown the resilient nature of teachers' beliefs, particularly those that were formed early in life as a result of a person's education and experience. Teachers' core beliefs can be so ingrained that they act as impediments to change and alternative approaches to instruction cannot be appreciated. The study also supports the existing literature (e.g. Pajares, 1992; Nespor, 1987) which describes beliefs as being interconnected and multifaceted, with conflicting beliefs existing side by side. The findings point to the need for a better understanding of the issue of conflicting beliefs and the possible processes which may provide the most effective means of reconciling these beliefs.

The complex relationship between beliefs and practice has been alluded to extensively in the literature on teacher cognition (e.g. Calderhead and Robson, 1991). Many writers (e.g. Freeman, 1991; Pajares, 1992) call for the need to make explicit teachers' beliefs, so that those beliefs that are detrimental to learning can be challenged and modified during the course of development. Teacher development is aimed at altering those beliefs, with the expectation that a change in beliefs will lead to a change in practice. A contrasting view is presented by Guskey (1986) who argues that if teachers are provided with ideas that they see to be successful, changes in belief follow, rather than precede, changes in practice. Based on the findings of this study, it can be argued that the first step in creating change is to make teachers question their existing belief systems. This was achieved through the workshops by presenting new ways of teaching grammar, with research evidence to show the effectiveness of the innovation. Teachers then need to take some action in order to either confirm existing beliefs or change their belief systems. Whether or not a teacher is likely to take this action depends on a number of factors including the teacher's level of confidence, willingness to take risks, workload, availability of time and a supportive school culture. Taking the action of trialling discovery tasks and observing their effectiveness in practice led Jana and Liban to change their beliefs.

Therefore, it appears that teacher development should focus not only on altering beliefs, but should involve teachers in trialling new ideas and evaluating their effectiveness. As such, the study provides support for Borg's (1999) contention that

when teachers are allowed to examine pedagogic practices that are not part of their current instructional repertoire, it is possible that they will incorporate strategies which they had previously dismissed. Thus, the necessity for reflection on one's own practice and practical experimentation with new strategies that are not part of one's own thinking and teaching are crucial.

Current approaches to professional development emphasise the need to focus on the teacher and to allow the programme to be directed by the teachers themselves, rather than adopting a top-down approach (Richards, 1991). While it is imperative that development programmes address the needs of teachers and build on their existing knowledge, this study suggests that teachers are more likely to implement new strategies when change is mandated by an authority they recognise. This may be related to the culture of the context and the values it upholds. Although top-down initiatives are often regarded as being intrinsically defective, such approaches to change can succeed in collectivist, power-oriented societies described by Hofstede, (1991). Teachers in this study showed some reluctance in adopting change because they did not feel that these were changes that had been directly endorsed by the school authorities. Unless the change was formally authorised, it may have appeared to threaten or challenge the existing power structure. Thus, the school and national cultures and the power structure they uphold appear to be important in deciding the design and nature of the development programme.

Pre-service education alone is not adequate to fully prepare a teacher for a lifetime of teaching. Continued professional development is essential, especially when teachers have not undergone initial teacher training (as was the case with the majority of teachers in this study) and therefore have not received the "front loading" which Freeman (1994) refers to. If teachers are to move beyond a model of teaching based on their apprenticeship of observation, and reconceptualise their theories of language learning and teaching, they need to be made aware of alternative models and approaches and be provided with opportunities to put these into practice.

What appears to be vital in developing teachers' awareness about their teaching is the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, analyse behaviour, articulate objectives and evaluate outcomes. This need for critical reflection on one's own practice has

been referred to frequently (e.g. Wallace, 1991), but requires emphasis here. Through the observation and feedback of a mentor, teachers can gain an understanding of their practice from an external perspective and, as a result, learn from their own teaching experiences in a way that may not be possible through self reflection alone. The findings of this study thus stress the value of mentoring and peer collaborations in gaining better understandings of teachers' beliefs and actions.

The study also supports previous research (e.g. Lamb, 1995) by revealing the difficulties teachers face in implementing change and the overall lack of success of teacher development programmes directed at innovation uptake.

### *Limitations*

As with any study, the findings must be considered in the light of the limitations of the research.

This study utilised a questionnaire to survey teachers' beliefs so as to obtain data from a large number of participants. However, self report questionnaires have many limitations as a source of data including the lack of assurance that the questions were answered truthfully. It is possible that teachers may have interpreted questions differently from what was intended, and may have unknowingly provided inaccurate responses.

It will be recalled from the methodology chapter that I faced a number of difficulties in obtaining access to research sites. School leaders were reluctant to allow research to be conducted in their schools due to concerns over time and the intrusive nature of classroom observation. Doubts about my ability to conduct research and my lack of experience as a teacher developer was also an issue in one potential research site. Such attitudes prevented me from obtaining a representative selection of schools and teachers for the project.

The fact that I was a student researcher and novice teacher developer with no official status clearly affected the way in which I was received by the schools and viewed by the teachers. As the teachers were aware that I was conducting the professional

development programme for the purposes of my research, this may have affected their attitudes towards it, and may explain to some extent why there was a low degree of uptake.

Although one phase of the study targeted the whole population of English teachers in Maldivian secondary schools, the main focus of the study used a small purposely selected sample of participants from this population. Due to this, and the fact that it was based in a particular context, I can only make modest claims about the generalisability of my findings to all teachers and contexts. Nonetheless, the triangulation, verification and rich description of the data enhance the validity of the analysis that was carried out, and make it possible for others to judge to what extent the findings may be applicable to their own contexts.

### *The Way Forward*

Considering the fact that the two schools in the study and its teachers were fairly typical of the whole population, it is disconcerting to realise that only a fraction of the teachers were interested in attempting an approach to teaching that students in the same educational context had judged to be beneficial and more interesting than their regular method of learning grammar. This therefore leads to the question of what could be done to make professional development and the implementation of educational innovations work in this context.

Based on the findings of this study, it would appear that if change efforts are to make an impact and lead to uptake, it has to be approved at a higher, authoritative level. In a culture where teachers are expected to perform uniformly and are cautious about making individual alterations to their practice unless the change is mandated, innovations are unlikely to be widely applied.

But most importantly, I would argue that to bring about change, attitudes towards teaching and teachers need to first change. If teachers are to evolve and learn to teach in new ways, schools must first be viewed as places for teachers as well as students to learn. Teachers must be regarded as learners who need to continually expand their knowledge and improve their practice.

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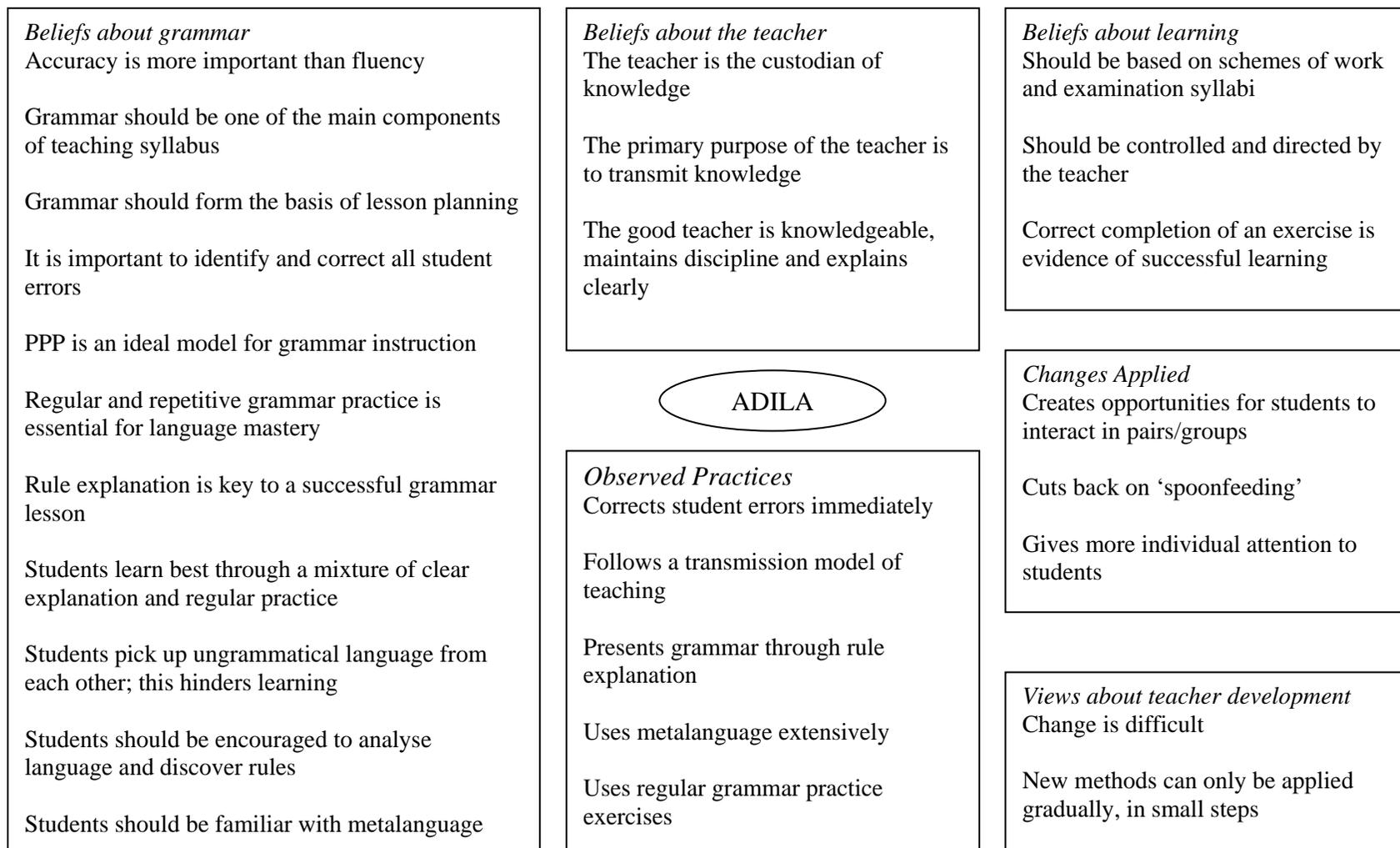
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## *Appendix A: Sample Teacher Profile*



## Appendix B: Sample Observation Notes

Teacher: Idris

Observation 2

15<sup>th</sup> August 2004

8B

34 boys present in class

11:20 T enters class. Cleans BB. Writes on BB:

*Direct/Indirect form with wh form words.*

*She asked him, "What are you doing?"*

T: So this is direct and indirect form using wh words. I have written here one sentence. *She asked him, "What are you doing?"* Now, how to change to reported speech?

Voice can hardly be heard at back of class, where I am sitting.

Without waiting for any input from sts, T changes sentence to reported speech

Writes 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence (*He inquired, "Where can I find a shop?"*) on BB and asks S1 to change it.

S1: I don't know.

T changes sentence to reported speech, and writes this on BB.

Ditto with 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence (*She asked her mother, "What is for lunch?"*)

11.35 T asks to copy down examples from BB.

11.40 T writes ex on BB (5 similar sentences) and asks to convert to reported speech, working individually.

11.45 T asks to bring completed work from previous lesson to mark. T is sitting at desk. Sts go (one by one) with book to him.

One student is standing at the window, looking down at street below. Another is clipping toenails with feet on desk. A third student appears to be sending a text message on his mobile phone. A fourth student has his head down on the desk and appears to be asleep. Very few students are actually doing the assigned work. The teacher continues to mark books at his desk.

11.50 T sends sts back to seats, bangs on desk. Asks how many students have completed the given work. No one seems to have done this yet. T asks class to orally change the given sentences to reported speech.

S: He asked them "What are you going to do?" will change to He asked us what we were going to do.

T: Yes. Very good. The next one. We asked her, “Where will you sleep?”

S: We asked her where will you sleep.

T: Yes Very good.

T fails to recognize that the answer given was no correct, and continues on.

T: Teacher asked, “Have you finished the work?”

S: Teacher asked have we finished the work.

T: Yes. Good.

Again, T accepts incorrect answer. Also, this is not a wh question, although it is included under an exercise supposedly to practice changing wh forms from direct to indirect.

T rubs out BB. Writes five more wh questions on BB and asks class to change to indirect form. Sts are uninterested and pay no attention to T. This doesn't seem to bother T. T writes correct answer on BB and asks sts to copy down.

Class very noisy – esp at back – but many sts copy down work.

12.10 T walks round class; then goes back to desk and sits down.

One by one, sts take work (copied down form BB) to be marked by the teacher.

3 sts standing at window, looking out. Some others throw books to each other across the room. 2 sts start chanting *Allah Akbar*. T appears to be oblivious.

12.25 There are five minutes more before the bell. T is sitting at his desk, looking outside. Sts are seated at their desks, wearing their bags and ready to go home.

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## *Appendix C: Sample Interview Transcript*

Interview I with Jana  
Date: 24<sup>th</sup> August 2004  
Time: 3.15pm

...

Q: How long have you been teaching here?

A: I joined here this January. In fact I was in [Rural School] before.

Q: Oh, I was there last term.

A: Yes, so I've heard. My friend rang up and told me.

Q: Oh, so you've been warned [laughs]

A: [laughs] I was teaching to A level classes there. Business studies. But I wanted to come to Male' so then I just applied for a post in Male'. This is my third year in Maldives.

Q: And you are [nationality], right?

A: Yes.

Q: So how long were you working there for before you came here?

A: Actually my ... I have been a programme officer. I was working as a programme officer at the United Nations in Colombo. There we have a lot of civil problems in Colombo. Then my two daughters they went to the United States. So I thought there was no point in staying in Sri Lanka with them both gone. So then I went to Botswana and I got a job as a teacher there. I was the only non-white VSO there out of the 24 VSOs working there. I was there for five years. It was adult education.

Q: And this was the first time you were teaching?

A: I was doing some part time teaching before too, from time to time, to cover my monetary problems, but this is my first full time teaching job.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your own experiences of learning English. Are you a native speaker?

A: My mother was not a local but my father was a local, so we used to speak in English at home. I knew the local language also, but we spoke mainly in English at home.

Q: And you would have attended English medium schools as well?

A: Yes I always went to English medium missionary schools.

Q: And have your own experiences affected you in any way in your teaching?

A: Very much. Very much.

Q: In what way?

A: Um... to have a command of the language. And secondly to... good expression. It's a part of my life. I always spend time explaining ... not only in one way but I always found that teachers will explain things in two three ways, you see? The same thing they will use the different words, so it expanded my vocabulary. I didn't realise this, and when I became a teacher I used their technique of explaining things in different ways. So sometimes you can explain things in a more advanced way and you can bring it down to a lower level to explain it to a very lower standard people also we can explain.

So that is the main thing... I remember my ... a British missionary lady she was our principal also and she used to emphasise the mode of expression that we should say the same thing in two three different ways and how if we are writing an essay how we should say it once then in the second say the same thing in such a way that we have to enforce it and in the third point that you list the advantages and the disadvantages like there is a black point and a white point, and then conclude it with your own expressions. Doesn't matter even if you have criticised the statement you have enforced but just say what you want to talk about don't just camouflage it for the sake of doing an examination. Be honest with your self. So like that I have picked up things from my own teachers and used these techniques in my teaching even now.

Q: And would you describe your approach to teaching?

A: I would say first and foremost, it is my instinct and commonsense that guides my teaching, rather than anything else. Now I have worked in Botswana and there they find it difficult learning English. English a second language. The same thing happens here also in the Maldives. So we have different categories. Some are immediate learners. Some are interested in the process. Some want to expand what they know already. And some are just not interested. You get a larger group of that kind here. First and foremost, we should not teach the language. You should not go into class and say look I came to teach the language. I want to teach English. First and foremost you have to build a rapport between yourself and the students. Maximum amount of time must be used for them to place their confidence on the teacher. Then they must understand that oh this teacher is particularly interested in me. She likes me. She wants me. I always say to my students. I want you. I need you. Even when I want to punish the students I say I want you here I need you here so don't go out of the class. Just stay here and listen. And I compliment them a lot. Like that. you must make them to feel that way. And we must be prepared to help them. We should be able to answer any question immediately, and make the students know that you can help them. That you know what you are talking about. We can't say no don't talk, stop talking... all the time. We can't do that. You should always be able to see with one glance what each one is doing. They need to know that we know, we understand what they are doing. At the same time we can't just ignore the ones who are talking. You can go ahead with the lesson and when you want to you can raise your voice.

Q: What about grammar? How much importance do you give to grammar?

A: Because I was an English speaking woman all this time, I won't say that grammar is not important, but it is a natural thing ... and it comes by communication. If a child or a group of people don't use grammar in their talking you keep on talking their way.

Q: What do you mean, use grammar in their talking?

A: Use grammar... it's a you know it's a ... methodology no? That you need to communicate. You have to use the right sentences and the right words in the right way. And sometimes I in my teaching I use grammar like this. I tell them you have got to think in English. Thinking in English is very important. Because in my language if you say come here, it says here come. So you have to think in the language you will automatically write the way in the correct grammar. So if you start beginning to think in English in my class you think in English. So I have been able to make a little impact on certain people, if not 100%. January up to now they have made a lot of improvement in this way.

Q: So you don't do much explicit grammar teaching then?

A: No I do. In the sense because the syllabus calls for it so we have to do it. I do give like fill in the blanks and things like that. and especially connectives, linking words and I always do that and problem words and I don't stress. Grammar you know is very stressful. It is you know very useful for people who already know their English and they want to have a mastery of the language. But just pick up a little bit of the language and just to say I have learnt a little English, I don't think you need to learn much grammar. I think I would describe my teaching my approach to grammar as being very casual. I use a casual way of teaching it.

Q: How do you mean?

A: Well, I think the grammar should not be the focus. The grammar should be just casually focused on without the students feeling that they are really learning any grammar. Especially with these students.

Q: So in this situation, you would say that grammar is not so important... for your own students' requirements?

A: No. Not that much. Because all they need to do is to be able to write a few essays and answer some comprehension questions. It's not necessary to go into a lot of grammar. If you teach a lot of grammar it really bombards their brain and they begin to both hate the subject and the teacher. It works like that. So I tell them doesn't matter.

Q: So this week or the next week, do you plan to do any particular grammar lessons?

A: Yeah, we have been asked to do some thing. I forget what it is. But there is some grammar planned for next week.

Q: And how do you normally deal with grammar lessons?

A: I don't go in and start okay today we will do such and such a topic. ... I prefer to do it in a more fun way like if I am doing reported speech I will tell them a story and then get them to write it in the reported speech. Or I will give them the story but leave in some blanks which they will need to fill in. I don't use much terminology. I quite dislike that kind of teaching. I don't want to talk like a grammar book. I prefer to say something like okay this is what happened to me yesterday. Can you now tell me what happened to you, or what you did? Like that I will get them to use the grammar. And then I will say so what is the tense that you have used? Everything I will cover like that. Without paying too much attention to the terms and the fact that they are actually learning new grammar. Unconsciously only I teach.

Q: Right. So you would get them to do a task related to the structure that you want to focus on, but you would draw their attention to it after they have actually done the task?

A: Yes, afterwards. I don't know if that is the correct method to do, but that is what I do.

Q: I notice that you try and involve a lot of students in your teaching. You ask a lot of questions and

A: Yes that is very important for me. But its also very difficult to do that because there are so many students in one class. We have 40 to 45 students in a class. And the rooms are so small you can't even move around and see what each student is doing. It's just not possible. I mean it takes a good few minutes for a student in the back row to try and make her way out to the front if she was going to the bathroom or something. Because so many of the others have to get up and move furniture in order for that one child to walk to the door. So doing group work ... had never even occurred to me because it would be such a problem trying to organise the classroom and get them seated in groups.

Q: Is there any particular lesson that stands out as being a particularly good lesson?

A: No we do different kinds of lessons. We do comprehension. Then we do guided writing and composition. And then grammar. I have given a lot of guided writing. And I think that has been very successful. Now last week ...

[describes a successful guided writing lesson related to transport/development]

Q: What about a lesson involving grammar?

A: Well, I did a lesson sometime ago just a – I mean it wasn't anything unusual. But just a series of the usual type of grammar exercises you find in textbooks but it was quite successful because everyone in the class was involved in it. It was a double period. I think it was at the beginning of the year. Yes. The first month itself I think. Anyway. They were having some problems with prepositions and I selected some exercises from several books I had based on their difficulties with prepositions. After everyone had finished the exercises I discussed the answers orally with them and then marked the books.

Q: Why do you consider this particular lesson to be successful?

A: Well, I know it sounds really ordinary. But for me it's quite good. The fact that everyone, and I mean every one of the 44 girls in the class took part. They each contributed something, however small, to the lesson. Many of them gave the answers to the exercise, some of them helped to write the exercise on the board, some of them talked to me individually about some aspect of it, and like that they each contributed to it in some way. That is what makes a lesson successful for me.

Q: ... Now I'd like to show you some descriptions of teacher and I'd like you to tell me how similar or different you are to each one. So first teacher A.

A: no I'm not like this. I do follow the syllabus, but I don't follow it blindly. I sometimes do different things also. Some stories or something interesting.

Q: Next teacher.

A: Yeah, I agree with this. These students find it very difficult to communicate, so I think this is the way to go, to improve their communication. Sometimes they talk to me also in Dhivehi, and I have to help them gently to say it in English. Its not that they wont speak in English, they just cant. Now the latest method that I have adopted is this. I give them a very difficult passage and we take turns to read it. And when they are reading I ask them to underline the words that they don't understand. And then I ask them to come up with the words that they don't understand and I ask other students to explain the meaning. To the class. That way I can get them to talk and I can also see what different people have understood from the passage. And often they will say no it's like this and not like this and they have a big argument among them and that is good. And after that I will explain. So I like to try new methods and I always like to experiment.

Q: Then teacher C.

A: I don't regard language as a system of grammatical structures. No.

Q: What about the way in which the grammar lesson is conducted?

A: No. I would never do it like this. In fact I go the other way round. Moving from communication to grammar.

Q: Okay. And finally teacher D.

A: No. this is not something I agree with either. Actually I think if these students are given more opportunity to talk, that is more important. So for instance it will be reported speech and ... I will tell them a story or I will get a student to say something and I will say to them okay this is the grammar, but you also need to be able to say it this way. And I will put more emphasis on the writing part in indirect speech than on explaining the grammar behind it. That way I can find... I find that more useful.

Q: I know what you are going to say to my next question, but I'll ask you anyway. What do you think of a task like this? This is a task designed to help students to discover the grammar rules for using prepositions in relative clauses.

A: Relative clauses... but here you are giving the answers and asking them to find the questions?

Q: No. The students are given examples of the use of relative clauses, both correct and incorrect usage, and they are required to come up with the rules themselves.

A: So that means they don't have the rules at hand?

Q: That's right. It's something they need to work out themselves... my question is do you think this is something that would be suitable for your students?

A: No I don't think so. What's the point of asking them to find the rule? I don't understand the use of this. This doesn't make any sense. It's very complicated. Even I don't understand what to do here or what they are supposed to do. It's too complicated for them. They don't need to know how to find the rule. They won't be able to do this. They don't need to know how to find the rule. We are not training them to be researchers or linguists. We just want them to be able to use correct language in simple communication. They learn the rules as a by pass, a by-product. You shouldn't be focussing their attention on it this much.

Q: Would you be interested in trying it out with your students?

A: No. What's the point? I know its not going to work. So there's no point in trying. It is just too complicated.

Q: Now lets move on to errors. How much attention do you give to errors in their language, either spoken or written?

A: I do mark errors in their essays and writing. I do. What happens is here even in one class if I correct one child's book then everyone will look at it and copy everything down so what is left is just a carbon copy of the correct version in everyone else's books. So what I do is I mark one book and I keep it with me, I don't give it back until I have marked most of the books. That way they will have to do it themselves. I give all four classes the same exercises at the same time. And I try to mark everything as soon as possible. I do. But its very difficult because they make so many mistakes. I point out all the errors. Every written work.

Q: And what do you do once you've marked it?

A: I give the books back.

Q: No what I meant was, do you discuss the common errors with the class or perhaps individually with each students, or anything like that? Or do you simply return the book and let them read through your corrections?

A: I do discuss, but not always. Because we have the time ... Time is very limited. So I am not always able to point out common errors during class time. But I always correct errors in written work... And then I don't want to draw attention to their mistakes when they are trying to say something anyway. I try to let them say it however they can.

Q: In what ways do you try to find opportunities to help you develop as a teacher?

A: Experimenting and trying different things with my students. I am a risk taker. I like to think of ways in which I can do better. That my students can do better. And if an idea comes to my mind, I will try it and see what happens. I get feedback from my students. I ask them what they thought. If they liked it and so on. Because after all that's more important than what I thought. If they feel that it was something that helped them to learn then I will continue to do it. So by doing things like that I think I am becoming a better teacher, and finding out about teaching and learning too in the process. ...

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# Appendix D: Beliefs Questionnaire

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about your views of the role of grammar in the language classroom. It is NOT an evaluation of you as a teacher. It is NOT a test. There are no right or wrong answers. All your responses are confidential.

### Part A

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

- 1) Name:.....
- 2) Nationality:.....
- 3) Gender: (please tick)     Male         Female
- 4) Academic qualifications (please tick and complete):
  - A teachers' certificate in .....
  - A diploma in .....
  - A bachelor's degree in .....
  - A master's degree in .....
  - A doctorate degree in .....
  - Other (please specify).....
- 5) Number of years of teaching experience
  - a. in Maldives: .....
  - b. elsewhere: .....
- 6) School that you currently teach in:.....
- 7) Grades that you currently teach (please tick) 8  9  10  11  12
- 8) English is your (please tick)     mother tongue         second/subsequent language
- 9) Age that you began learning English .....
- 10) Other languages that you speak (if applicable):.....
- 11) Please describe your own language learning experiences (e.g. where and how did you learn; was it a positive or negative experience; did you have exposure to the target language community; etc.):  
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**Part B**

1) Please describe what the word *grammar* means to you.

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2) What role do you think grammar plays in language learning and teaching?

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3) a. Do you think it is necessary to teach grammar? (Please tick)  Yes  No  
b. Please explain why you think so.

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4) a. Have you ever experienced any difficulties in teaching grammar? (Please tick)  
Yes  No

b. If yes, please describe them briefly.

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### Part C

The following table shows some activities that could be used to teach grammar.

- 1) Please indicate how often you use each of the given activities in your teaching, by circling the appropriate number in the first column (“Frequency”). Please use the following scale to answer this question:

**1 Never      2 Rarely      3 Occasionally      4 Frequently**

Activities	Frequency	Effectiveness
Written grammar exercises. <i>E.g. a fill in the blanks exercise</i>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Explanation of a grammar point. <i>I.e. teacher explains the structure to the whole class.</i>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Communicative grammar tasks. <i>I.e. tasks which require the use of the target form in purposeful communication.</i>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Discussion of errors with class. <i>I.e. Discussing common errors that students make; suggesting ways to avoid them.</i>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Comparison with mother tongue grammar. <i>E.g. comparing how the passive is used in English and Dhivehi grammars</i>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Oral pattern-practise drills. <i>E.g. Teacher: He stole the picture. Class: The picture was stolen. Teacher: He left the door open. Class: The door was left open. Teacher: A dog attacked her. Class: She was attacked by a dog. Teacher: The doctors discharged her from hospital today. Class: She was discharged from hospital today...</i>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Comprehension-based grammar tasks. <i>I.e. tasks that require learners to comprehend a grammar structure but not produce it.</i>	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

- 2) Now look at column two (“Effectiveness”) in the above table. Imagine that you are going to teach the passive form in your next grammar lesson. Using the scale given below, please indicate how effective you think the above activities will be in teaching the passive form to your students. Circle the most appropriate number for each activity in column two (“Effectiveness”).

**1 Not At All Effective      2 Fairly Effective      3 Effective      4 Very Effective**

3) Please note down any other types of grammar activities (not mentioned here) that you use with your students, indicating how often you use them.

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 .....  
 .....

4) In deciding how to teach and the type of activities you use, rate how important each of the following factors are for YOU personally, on the following scale, by circling the most appropriate number.

**1 = Not Important    2 = Fairly Important    3 = Important    4 = Very Important**  
**5 = Essential**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. The interests of my students         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. What I learned from teacher training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Current research in the field        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. The availability of materials        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Whether I think it will work         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. What feels right at the moment       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. My school's goals and policies       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. My personal goals and beliefs        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. The way my peers operate             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j. The level of my students             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Part D**

**Rate each of the following statements by circling the most appropriate answer on the given scale.**

- 1) A learner can acquire a second or foreign language without grammar instruction (i.e. similar to how children learn their mother tongue).  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
  
- 2) All students will learn the different structures of English in the same order.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
  
- 3) Attention to grammar ensures that students become aware of how the language works.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE

- 4) Explicit knowledge of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of language.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 5) Grammar can be successfully taught without extensive use of grammatical terminology.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 6) Grammar instruction may not offer immediate results.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 7) Grammar is best acquired unconsciously through meaningful communication.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 8) Grammar is best learned naturally through trying to communicate.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 9) Grammar is best taught incidentally (i.e. there is no need to pre-plan grammar lessons).  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 10) Grammar should be taught to all learners (i.e. beginner, intermediate and advanced).  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 11) Grammar should be the main component of any teaching syllabus.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 12) If learners receive grammar instruction, they are more likely to be able to correct their errors.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 13) It is best to teach grammar intensively (i.e. concentrate teaching grammar into a few weeks of a term) rather than extensively (i.e. over the whole school year).  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 14) It is better for students to figure out for themselves why their previous answer was wrong.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE

- 15) It is essential that students are familiar with the correct grammatical terminology.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 16) It is important for students to be given the right answers after a written exercise or test.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 17) It is important to correct all grammatical errors in students' oral work.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 18) It is important to focus on grammar in all English lessons.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 19) It is important to identify all grammatical errors in students' written work.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 20) It is more important to teach grammar to beginners than to intermediate/advanced learners.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 21) Regular practice exercises ensure that grammar is quickly and successfully acquired.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 22) Students generally do not learn the grammatical structures they are taught.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 23) Students learn grammar at different rates.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 24) Students rarely become error-free because English grammar is very complex.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 25) Students should be given the opportunity to work out grammar rules from examples.  
STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE

- 26)** Students will be able to learn from their errors if teachers just say the correct sentence after a student has made an error (i.e. without explaining the error).  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 27)** Students will learn a grammar point only if they are developmentally ready for it.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 28)** Students will learn grammar better if they understand grammatical terminology.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 29)** Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how a particular structure works.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 30)** The effects of grammar instruction are not long lasting.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 31)** The major part of a grammar lesson should involve students in practising the grammar point.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 32)** The major part of a language course should focus on teaching and practising grammar.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 33)** The primary role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 34)** The teaching of grammar enables students to produce more complex sentences.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE
- 35)** You do not need to speak grammatically in order to communicate well.  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE    DISAGREE    NEUTRAL    AGREE    STRONGLY AGREE

**Part E**

Any additional comments or suggestions about teaching/learning grammar:

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Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire ☺

## *Appendix E: Interview Schedules*

### **Initial Interview**

*Opening statement:* Thank you for taking part in this research and for agreeing to be interviewed. The interview will last about one hour. The purpose of this interview is to establish your background in language learning and teaching, and to understand your views about the role that grammar plays in language learning. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers. The validity of this investigation depends on the extent to which your responses are open and frank, so please answer honestly and in as much detail as possible. Your responses will be used for research purposes only and will remain confidential. I would like to record the interview, with your consent.

Before we proceed, is there anything you would like to ask me?  
(allow time for any questions and begin recording)

*List of basic questions (additional questions may be asked in relation to the teacher's answers to the basic questions)*

- Please tell me about your own experiences of language learning.
  - Can you remember what kinds of activities you did?
  - How were you expected to behave as a learner?
  - What kind of role did your teacher take?
- Do you think your own language learning experiences have any influence on the way you teach?
- Now tell me about your background in teaching.
- Can you tell me about a good language teacher that you know, perhaps one that you have worked with, or a teacher who taught you?
- How would you describe your approach to grammar?
- Has your approach to grammar changed in any way during your career as a teacher? If so, how and why?
- Think about the lessons you have taught or have planned for this week. How often has grammar been your focus?
- When planning lessons, how do you decide which grammar features to focus on?
- Can you describe to me a good grammar lesson that you have previously used?
- What kind of grammar activities do you normally use with your students?
- How do you feel about activities like this (show example of discovery task)?
- Can you tell me about a grammar lesson that you have planned for next week?
- How do you feel about the use of grammatical terminology in the classroom?
- Now I am going to tell you about four different teachers and how they teach. I would like you to tell me what you think about their approaches to teaching and if you think it is in any way similar to how you teach in your own classroom.

Teacher A:

uses the prescribed syllabus and scheme of work in planning lessons. Except on very rare occasions, she generally sticks to what is prescribed. Even though she sometimes does not think they are appropriate or interesting, she tends to carry out the activities in the coursebook, and follow the same order in which the activities are presented.

Teacher B:

argues that the primary purpose of teaching English is to develop students' ability to use the language appropriately in various situations. The teaching materials he uses are based on teaching language functions (e.g. greeting, apologising, etc). For him, fluency rather than accuracy is more important.

Teacher C:

regards language as a system of grammatical structures. Her aim in teaching English is to ensure that her students can produce error-free language at all times. She plans her lessons around a range of grammatical structures (e.g. passive voice, present perfect, etc). When introducing new grammar, she first presents the structure to the class, explaining how it works and any necessary terminology associated with it. She then moves on to getting her students to do some activities which would allow them to practice the new structure in a controlled way. Once the students are confident with using the structure, she sets up activities which would allow them to produce the language more freely.

Teacher D:

sees grammar as being fundamental to language, and therefore the teaching of grammar as being essential if students are to develop confidence in their ability to use language in various social and educational settings. He argues that grammar should be treated as an area of discussion and discovery. Thus it is necessary to develop a metalanguage which students can use to talk about grammar consciously and confidently, in the same way that they may use technical language in other areas of learning.

- Let's move on now to the students. Do your students see learning grammar as important?
- Do you correct your students' grammatical errors? If so, when and how?
- How would you know if a grammar lesson has been successful?
- In what ways do you try to find opportunities to help you develop as a teacher?
- Can you recollect a particularly significant developmental experience?
- What kind of in-service training would you find most helpful right now?
- Thank you very much for your time. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding the learning and teaching of grammar?

Additional questions:

- What are the sources of the grammar material that you use?
- Do you sequence grammar teaching activities in any particular way?
- Within the context of a whole lesson, at what stage does grammar work occur?
- To what extent/how do you attempt to encourage students to discover language for themselves?
- How do you check student's understanding of grammar?
- Why do you teach grammar the way you do?

## **Post Observation Review Session**

### *Opening statement:*

The purpose of this session is to help me understand more clearly the lesson(s) that I recently observed. I would like to focus specifically on that/those lesson(s). This will take about fifteen minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

*(allow for questions and begin audio recording)*

### *Basic questions:*

- Please tell me about the observed lesson. What were your intended aims and objectives of that lesson.
- Do you think you achieved those aims?
- How do you know this?
- Can you explain to me why you chose to use that/those particular method/activity?

(additional questions relating specifically to the lesson(s) and/or the teacher's responses may also be asked)

## **Final Interview**

- What do you think is the best way to learn a language? Why do you think so?
- What aspects of language do you feel are essential to learn/teach?
- How much thinking do you typically do in advance of a lesson and how carefully do you plan your lessons? Is it more important to plan some kinds of lessons than others?
- Many teachers have expressed the need to cover what is in the syllabus. At the same time, several teachers have also talked about the need to address the needs of the students. How do you personally try to find a balance between covering the syllabus and being responsive to your students as individuals?
- Thinking back to any teacher training courses you may have been involved in, in the past, are there any points of conflict between what you were taught and what you have learned from your own experience?
- How do you personally react to change? [follow up with do you make changes in your teaching on your own accord or according to what is required by your teaching situation?]
- Can you tell me about any kind of change that you have made in your teaching recently, say during the course of this term? [follow up with why you made this change; has it been a successful change?]
- What do you consider to be your strengths as a teacher? And weaknesses?
- In what ways would you like to change your perceived weaknesses into strengths?

## *Appendix F: Programme Evaluation Questionnaire*

**Please answer the following questions about the teacher development programme you were recently involved in, by circling the most appropriate answer.**

1. The programme in general was:  
Very Satisfactory    Satisfactory    Not Satisfactory
2. The programme objectives were clear, attainable and measurable.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
3. Time management was properly observed.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
4. The programme was successful in conveying new knowledge about approaches to grammar teaching.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
5. The programme deepened my understanding of how grammar is acquired.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
6. The programme was a useful forum for exchanging and developing ideas.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
7. The programme was relevant and applicable to my teaching situation.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
8. I was fully involved in the workshop's activities.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
9. I am confident that the programme will positively influence my teaching in the future.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
10. I enjoyed working as a group with other teachers.  
Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

11. The programme was successful in introducing me to new ideas for the language classroom.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

12. I intend to use discovery tasks to teach grammar to my students in future.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

13. The handouts were informative and useful.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

14. The activity which I found to be the most beneficial was \_\_\_\_\_

15. The activity which I found to be the least beneficial was \_\_\_\_\_

16. Please write down what you felt were the strengths of the workshop:

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17. Please write down what you felt were the weaknesses of the workshop.

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18. Any other comments:

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Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire! 😊

## *Appendix G: Participant Information Sheets for Teachers*

*Project title:* An investigation of teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar in language learning

*To:* Teachers

*Phase:* One

---

My name is Naashia Mohamed. I am a student at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, enrolled for a doctorate degree at the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics. I am conducting research for the purposes of my thesis. My research focuses on teachers' beliefs regarding grammar and its role in language learning. It is not my intention to evaluate your teaching or to test your knowledge. Rather, I believe that such a perspective can offer a descriptive account of why teachers do what they do, and provide the basis for teacher development.

As an English language teacher, you are invited to take part in my research and I would appreciate any assistance you can offer me. Your assistance would involve the following.

1. Complete the consent form and the attached questionnaire.
2. Seal the completed consent form and questionnaire in the envelope provided.
3. Hand the sealed envelope to your principal/head teacher who will return it back to me.

The questionnaire will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. All your responses will be confidential. No one except myself will have access to the information that you provide. Neither your name nor the name of your school will be used in any reporting of the research. Your Principal/Head Teacher has agreed for the research to be conducted in your school. However, participation is voluntary. You may withdraw information at any time before the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003, without giving reasons or being disadvantaged.

Thank you very much for your time and for making this study possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please contact me at:

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Auckland, New Zealand.  
Phone: +64 9 373 2355 (Home)  
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For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair,  
The University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee  
The University of Auckland, Research Office  
Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019  
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The local contact person regarding my research is:

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Educational Development Centre  
Male', Maldives  
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Approved by the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee on  
11 June 2003 for a period of 3 years from 12 June 2003. Reference: 2003/173

Project title: *An investigation of teachers' beliefs about the role of grammar in language learning*  
Phase: *Two*  
To: *Teachers*

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My name is Naashia Mohamed. I am a student at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, enrolled for a doctorate degree at the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics. I am conducting research for the purposes of my thesis. My research focuses on teachers' beliefs regarding grammar and its role in language learning. It is not my intention to evaluate your teaching or to test your knowledge. Rather, I believe that such a perspective can offer a descriptive account of why teachers do what they do, and provide the basis for teacher development.

As an English language teacher, you are invited to take part in my research and I would appreciate any assistance you can offer me. Your assistance would involve the following:

1. As a first step to gaining insight into your views about the role of grammar in language learning and teaching, I would like to conduct two interviews, each of which would last no more than an hour, and would be recorded with your consent. If you so wished, you will be able to discontinue recording at any time during the interview.
2. I would like to observe your teaching weekly, for a complete school term, in order to better understand what happens inside a language classroom. Each observation session will last the duration of two back to back English lessons (approximately 70 mins). As a follow up to the observation, I would like to hold a brief feedback session where you may explain to me why you did what you did during your teaching. These sessions will last 10-15 minutes and will be arranged at a time and place that is mutually convenient.
3. I am also interested in organising a series of workshops for English teachers, focussing particularly on grammar, because I feel that this is often a problem area for language learners. The exact nature of the workshops will be decided on in collaboration with the teachers in your school, so that you it can cater to your individual needs and wants. I would appreciate your assistance in the organisation of the workshops and invite you to attend the sessions yourself. Ideally, I would like to hold a two-hour workshop every fortnight for the duration of the school term.
4. In order to understand if you were able to incorporate any of the ideas presented at the workshop in your day to day teaching, I would also like you to maintain a regular journal in which you record your teaching activities that focus on grammar and the extent to which you were able to use any of the techniques suggested in the workshops. I propose that a journal entry be made once a week, summarising the lessons for that week.

All the data collected from this research pertaining to you (i.e. journal entries, observation notes, interview transcriptions, etc.) will be summarised and presented to you before the end of the academic year 2004, so that you may review the information and make any necessary amendments to it before it is used in my thesis.

All information that you provide will be stored in a locked cabinet for the duration of the project and will then be destroyed. Neither your name nor the name of your school will be used in any reporting of the research. Your Principal/Head Teacher has agreed for the research to be conducted in your school. However, participation is voluntary. You may withdraw information at any time before the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2004, without giving reasons or being disadvantaged.

Thank you very much for your time and for making this study possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please contact me:

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a period of 3 years from 15<sup>th</sup> April 2004, Reference: 2004/028

## Appendix H: Sample Tasks from Workshops

### Reflective Writing: Changes in Teaching

Think of a positive change you have made in your teaching. It could be a change in content, philosophy or procedure. The important thing is that it be a change for the better which you have made and which has remained with you. I am interested in learning about changes that last in your work as a language teacher. Please describe briefly the actual change itself. Please explain WHY you made the change and HOW it happened.

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### Analysing a Grammar Lesson

A. When presenting grammar, what strategies do you employ to maximise learning? Make a list of what you think are effective grammar presentation techniques.

B. Read the following extract from a lesson transcript.

	T enters class and bangs on desk to gain attention. SS calm down.
learn	T: Today we are going to do grammar. Look at page 234 in your textbooks. We are going to learn about adjectives ending in -ed and -ing.
	T writes on BB: excited/exciting (film, game, story) interested/interesting (film, game, story) bored/boring (film, game, story)
	T: Can anyone tell which of these adjectives is the suitable one for the nouns?
	S: -ing
	T: Very good. Tell me why.
	S: I don't know.
thing. book -ed	T: Okay. I will explain. There is a rule for using these. You use -ing always to refer to a thing. You use -ed to always refer to a person. For example, girl, student. The rules are there in the book for you to read later and learn about. In short what it says is you use -ing to refer to things and adjectives to refer to people. Understood?
	SS nod.
	T: Okay. If you have understood, now do the exercise on page 245.

C. Discuss:

What was clear about the grammar presentation?

What would you change to make learning more effective?

Any other comments?

## *Appendix I:*

### *Sample Rule Discovery Task Used in Workshops*

A. After doing a reading activity, the teacher provides the following sentences, based on the passage they have just read. She asks the students to indicate whether each sentence is *grammatically* correct (C) or incorrect (I), by circling C or I next to each sentence.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| i. I have brought books to the class.                  | C | I |
| ii. The children have understand the teacher's joke.   | C | I |
| iii. She have begun school a bit late.                 | C | I |
| iv. The children have just started school.             | C | I |
| v. The lessons has started today.                      | C | I |
| vi. Melissa has not been to school before.             | C | I |
| vii. Miss Tremor has been Headmistress for many years. | C | I |
| viii. They have all finished their work on time.       | C | I |
| ix. You has not done your duty as a prefect.           | C | I |
| x. It has been the most wonderful day at school.       | C | I |

B. The students then complete the following table.

#### ***Present Perfect Statements***

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Have/has</i>	<i>Rest of the sentence</i>
I		e.g. ... been to school before.
You		
We		
They		
The children		
He		
She		
It		
Melissa		

C. The students then correct the errors in the previous sentences and create some more sentences of their own using the present perfect.

## *Appendix J: Outline of Experimental Study*

### **Purpose**

To test the viability of discovery tasks in the Maldivian context

To find out the relative effectiveness of inductive and deductive grammar instruction

### **Participants**

Three groups were randomly selected

Three groups of similar age group (i.e. 15-17 years) and similar range of ability

Three groups studying science stream subjects

Three groups taught by same teacher in same school

Each group had 28 students

### **Procedure**

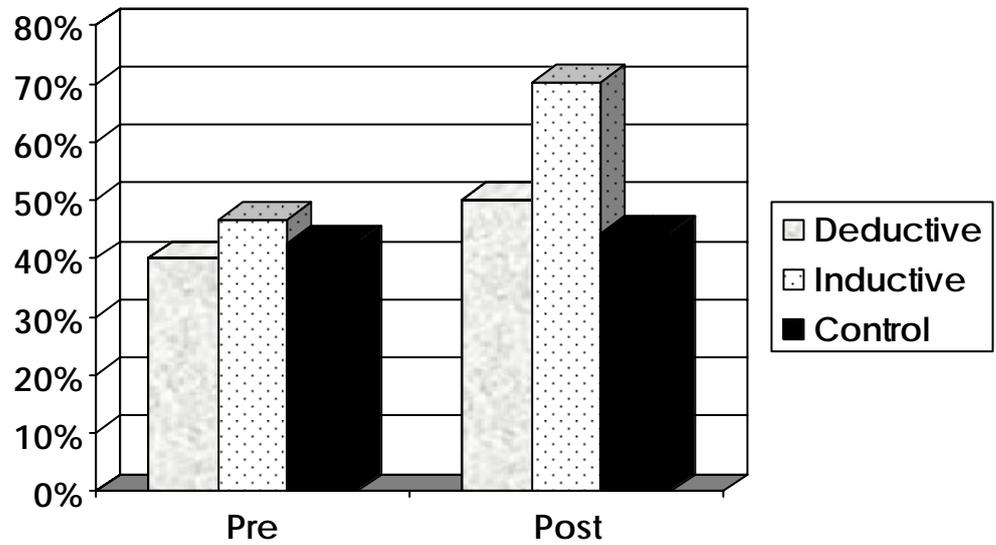
- Two target structures – that the students were not familiar with – were chosen:
  1. stative verbs (e.g. have; know; believe)
  2. dative alternation (e.g. He gave the book to me; He gave me the book)
- Discovery tasks
  - guided students to discover rules of target structures
  - exemplified contextual use of target structure
  - approved by native and non native teachers
- Deductive instruction involved the use of the same examples, but took the form of direct rule explanation followed by a brief practice exercise.
- Students were tested before and after instruction by use of a grammaticality judgement test
- Grammaticality judgement test included
  - 20 sentences of each structure
  - 10 grammatical (e.g. I know the way home; I explained my problem to him.)
  - 10 ungrammatical (e.g. I am knowing the way home; I explained him my problem.)
- Students completed a brief questionnaire after instruction to indicate how easy/difficult, interesting/dull, useful/not useful the lesson was.

<b>Group 1</b>	<u>Week 1</u> Pre-test Direct lesson (Stative verbs)	<u>Week 2</u> Discovery lesson (Dative alt.) Post-test
<b>Group 2</b>	<u>Week 1</u> Pre-test Discovery lesson (Stative verbs)	<u>Week 2</u> Direct lesson (Dative alt.) Post-test
<b>Group 3 (control)</b>	<u>Week 1</u> Pre-test non-grammar lesson	<u>Week 2</u> non-grammar lesson Post-test

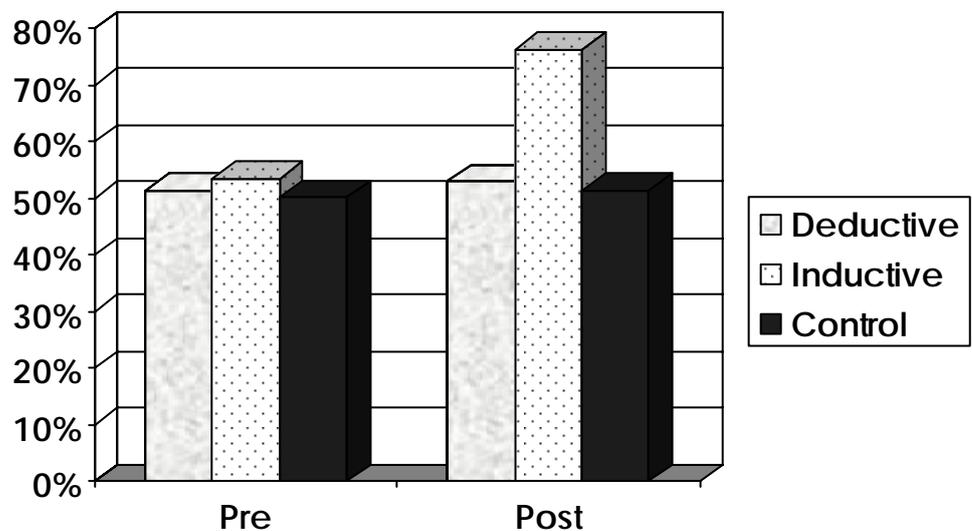
### **Results**

The results of the study showed that students gained significantly higher scores on the post test when the instruction had been inductive.

The following figure shows the average test scores achieved by the deductive and inductive groups after instruction in stative verbs.



The following figure shows the average test scores achieved by the deductive and inductive groups after instruction in dative alternation.



83.8% of the students felt that discovery tasks were more interesting than direct explanation. 62% felt that discovery tasks were slightly more difficult than rule explanation. Both treatments were judged to be very useful in learning more grammar.

## *Appendix K:* *Data Reference & Transcription Conventions*

### **Data Reference Conventions**

Where verbatim quotes are used, I have referred to the original data by indicating first the initial of the teacher (A, B, C, ... N), followed by the source of the data (I – interview, RJ – research journal, LO – observation notes, Q – questionnaire data and SW – student work) and either the page number (in the case of interview transcripts), the date (in the case of research journal, student work and observation notes) or the question number (in the case of the questionnaire data).

Thus, the following would indicate data from Adila on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page of her interview transcript: [A.I.3]

The following example shows that the data was from Bakur, based on a lesson observation made on 28<sup>th</sup> of May: [B.LO.28/5]

The next example shows part of the response to the question E in the questionnaire by Cala [C.Q.E].

### **Transcription Conventions**

I have transcribed broadly, using the following conventions:

- restart  
If I do that then I think - but did you feel...
- { } contextual description  
oh God what will I say? {long pause} You can say that it ...
- [ ] added text  
how can I waste my time on [the other] 20 students?
- WORD raised voice  
A: No. NO, NO, NO!
- || overlapping speech  
Q: What about ||  
A: || And students don't
- ... omitted text  
they will learn it ... eventually.
- italics* reading aloud/written text on board
- break in conversation
- S/Sts Student/Students
- T Teacher
- BB Blackboard

*Appendix L:*  
*One Rule Discovery Task Shown During Interview*

**Apostrophes for Possession**

1. Look at the sentences below. Working with a partner, discuss the answers for the given questions.

The boy's teeth were bleeding.

Questions: How many boys were there? One or more than one? How can you tell?

The cats' fur was all mouldy.

Questions: How many cats were there? One or more than one? How can you tell?

2. Now look at these sentences. Look at the way the apostrophes are used. What does the apostrophe in each sentence tell you?

The horse's legs were dripping in sweat.

The horses' legs were dripping in sweat.

The girl's knees were badly bruised.

The girls' knees were badly bruised.

3. Based on 1 & 2 above, think of a rule to explain how to use apostrophes for possession.