

Gender Differences in Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Grammar Instruction and Corrective Feedback

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This paper explores male and female students' and teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback. A questionnaire, administered to 60 male and female intermediate EFL students (30 males and 30 females) and 40 teachers (20 males and 20 females), elicited student and teacher perceptions concerning the role of explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback in learning English as a foreign language. Data comparisons revealed high agreement between students as a group and teachers as a group across genders on the majority of questions. A number of discrepancies were evident between students and teachers' beliefs within each gender. There were also some comparisons of sample groups based on gender differences which examined the effect of formal grammar instruction in foreign language teaching. Although the differences between students' and teachers' belief system can be a threat to learning, it is essential to mention that teachers' consideration of students' perceptions of those factors will improve the process of new language learning, and an effort to consider the potential mismatch between students' beliefs and teachers' instructions will enhance learning.

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There is no consensus among English language teaching specialists regarding the role of explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback. While some scholars believe that grammar instruction and corrective feedback, if done appropriately, are useful in adult foreign language classes (Lightbown, 1998; Long & Robinson, 1998; Lyster, Lightbown, & Spada, 1999), there are those who see very little benefit in devoting classroom time to teaching grammar rules or providing feedback to students' errors (Krashen, 1985, 1999; Prabhu, 1987; Semke, 1984; Terrell, 1977; Truscott, 1999). The scholars in the latter group consider classroom foreign language learning quite similar to first language learning and argue that as long as learners receive sufficient comprehensible input and do meaning-focused tasks, their success is guaranteed.

In recent years, corrective feedback has gained prominence as a number of scholars have investigated its nature and function in foreign language (FL) teaching and learning (e.g., Doughty & Varela, 1998; Havranek & Cesnik, 2003; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Oliver, 2000). Corrective feedback refers to "any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner utterance" (Chaudron, 1977, p. 31). Despite the fact that a great deal of FL learning takes place through exposure to comprehensible input, learners may require negative evidence (i.e., information about ungrammaticality) in the form of either feedback on error or explicit instruction when they are not able to discover through exposure alone how their interlanguage diverges from second language (L2) norms (see Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988). If corrective feedback is sufficiently salient, learners will notice gaps between their interlanguage and target language forms (Schmidt, 1993).

In another line of research, a number of educators and researchers have come to the point that student beliefs play a crucial role in the process of FL learning (Fox, 1993; Green, 1993; Horwitz, 1988; Kern, 1995; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Oxford, 1989).

FL educators need to keep these beliefs or perceptions in mind when designing classroom activities inasmuch as teaching activities need to be perceived in the learners' minds as contributory to learning.

Teacher perceptions regarding how languages are learned also play a decisive function in that they determine a teacher's tendency to probe new approaches. Musumeci (1997), for instance, attributed the lack of success of earlier pedagogical methods to the difficulty in chiefly changing the belief system of all people involved in the educational task. Furthermore, studies by Fox (1993) and Salomone (1998) illustrated the conflicts between what teaching assistants are taught in teacher education programs considering the role of grammar in FL teaching and what they believe based on their own experiences. Fox (1993) predicted that differences between teaching assistants' beliefs and the theoretical models of communicative language teaching would clearly lead to incongruities in teaching.

To the researchers' best of knowledge, the studies that have investigated the relationship between students' and teachers' perceptions of the role of explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback are not very many. Given the paucity of research in this line, there is clearly a need for studies that incorporate the gender factor into consideration. The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to examine whether male and female students' and teachers' perceptions about the formal study of grammar and corrective feedback differ or not. Thus, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of male and female EFL students regarding the formal study of grammar and error correction and how do they differ from each other?
2. What are the perceptions of male and female EFL teachers regarding the formal study of grammar and error correction and how do they differ from each other?

Method

This part of the paper will describe the context of the study,

the participants, the instruments, and the procedures of data collection.

Participants

The participants for this study were 60 intermediate EFL students (30 males and 30 females) with an average age of 20 and 40 EFL teachers (20 males and 20 females) with an average age of 35. The participants were both teachers and students at Kharazmi and Apadana Foreign Language Institutes in Karaj.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were adapted versions of two questionnaires (one for teachers and the other for students), the reliability and validity of which had been ensured by Schulz (2001). Both questionnaires were designed on a five-point scale, with values ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly (see Appendices A and B). Both teachers and students filled the English version of the questionnaires. The majority of the items on both questionnaires were similarly worded to allow for subsequent comparison.

Procedure

Most of the teachers' data were collected at an in-service training course held for teachers during the spring term (2009) in both institutes. In order to prevent possible bias in teachers' responses, the questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the workshops. The teachers marked their responses directly on the questionnaire for later manual tabulation.

The students' data were collected by participating teachers who administered the questionnaire to their homogeneous classes. Although the teachers were provided with written instructions for the administration of the students' questionnaire, no effort was

made to urge standardized administration procedures. The students, like the teachers, recorded their responses manually.

Results

It should be mentioned that the data were paraphrased by converting the 5-point scale used to elicit responses (agree strongly, agree, undecided, disagree slightly, disagree strongly) to a 3-point scale (agree/strongly, undecided, disagree/strongly). Of the 36 comparisons made (12 questions with three-response options each), in only 5 cases the discrepancy in agreement between male and female teachers was greater than 3%. In no case was the variation in responses greater than 5%. Tables 1 through 7 summarize responses for perceptions regarding the role of grammar for both male and female students as well as teachers. They also show the difference rate in the responses between students and teachers, and Tables 8 through 12 have a similar format and report students' and teachers' perceptions of the role of corrective feedback.

Male and female EFL students' and teachers' perceptions of the formal study of grammar

Tables and figures 1 through 7 display both students' and teachers' attitudes toward the formal study of grammar.

Table 1

Investigating statement 1: The formal study of grammar is essential to eventual mastery of a foreign language

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	26	23	2	2	4	-2	2	3	-1
Teachers	20	20	17	15	2	1	1	0	2	4	-2
Dis.			8	8		1	3		0	-1	

Note: F= Female; M= Male; Dis.=discrepancy in ratings

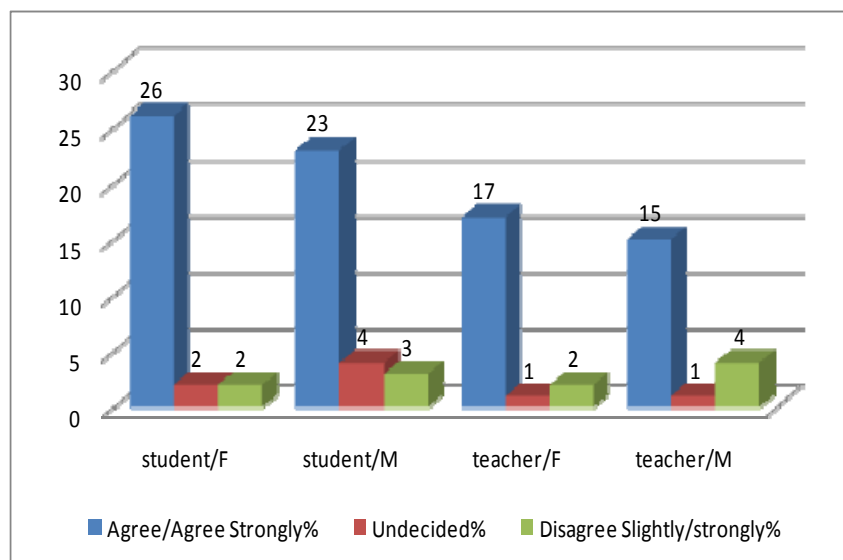


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 1

In order to examine whether the differences are statistically significant, a chi-square test was used, the result of which confirmed no meaningful differences, $X^2(6)=3.62$, $p=0.72$. Figure 1 displays the differences graphically.

Table 2

Investigating statement 2: *I believe my foreign language improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar of the language*

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	28	17	11	2	1	1	0	12	-12
Teachers	20	20	16	10	6	3	5	-2	1	5	-4
Dis.			12	7		-1	-4		-1	7	

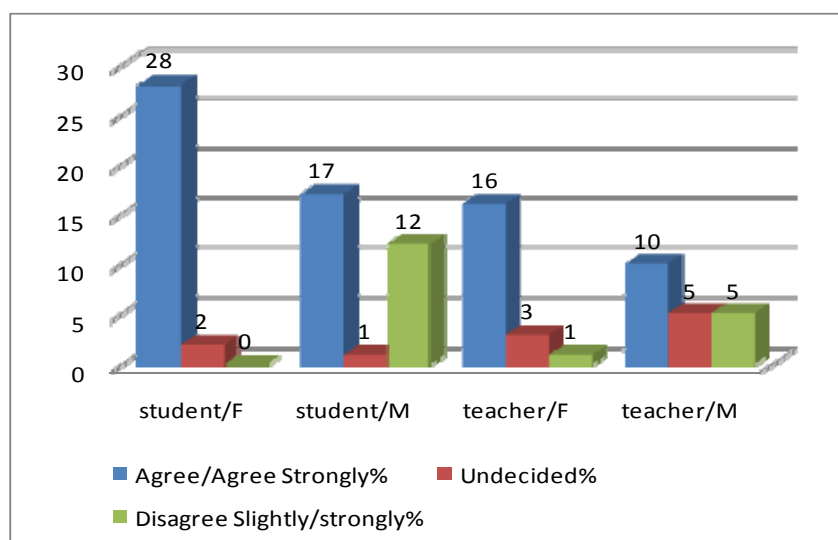


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 2

The result of the chi-square test employed revealed a significant difference between male and female perceptions, $X^2(6) = 30.02$, $p=0.001$. Thus, based on the obtained results, female students and teachers had the most favorable view regarding the second question. Figure 2 displays the differences graphically.

Table 3

Investigating statement 3: The study of grammar helps in learning a foreign language

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	28	26	2	2	1	1	0	3	-3
Teachers	20	20	16	16	0	3	3	0	1	1	0
Dis.			12	10		-1	-2		-1	-2	

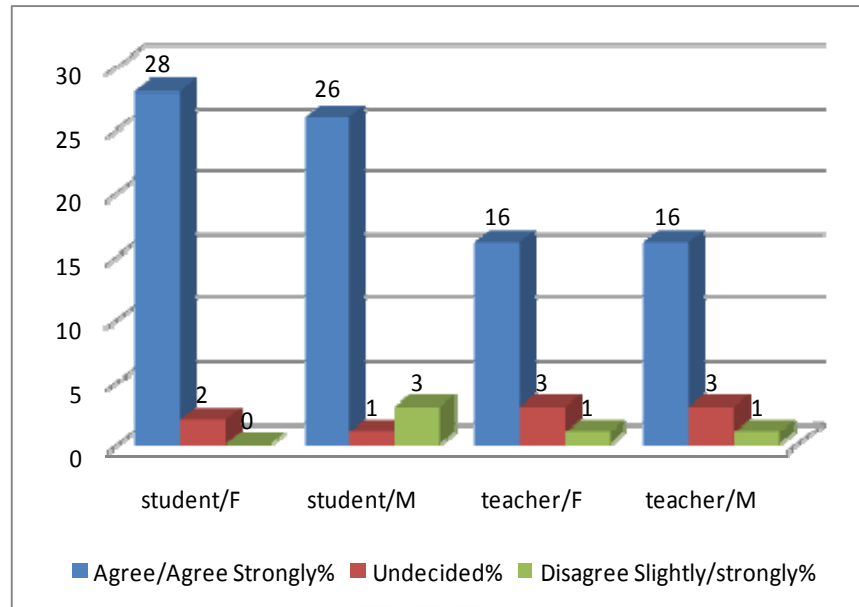


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 3

The result of the chi-square test showed the differences were not significant, $X^2(6) = 7.45$, $p = 0.28$. This suggests that male and female EFL students and teachers had more or less the same belief about the help the study of grammar offers in learning a foreign language. Figure 3 displays the differences graphically.

Table 4

Investigating statement 4: *I like the study of grammar*

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	28	8	20	1	1	0	1	21	-20
Teachers	20	20	17	9	8	2	3	-1	1	8	-7
Dis.			11	-1	-1	-2			0	13	

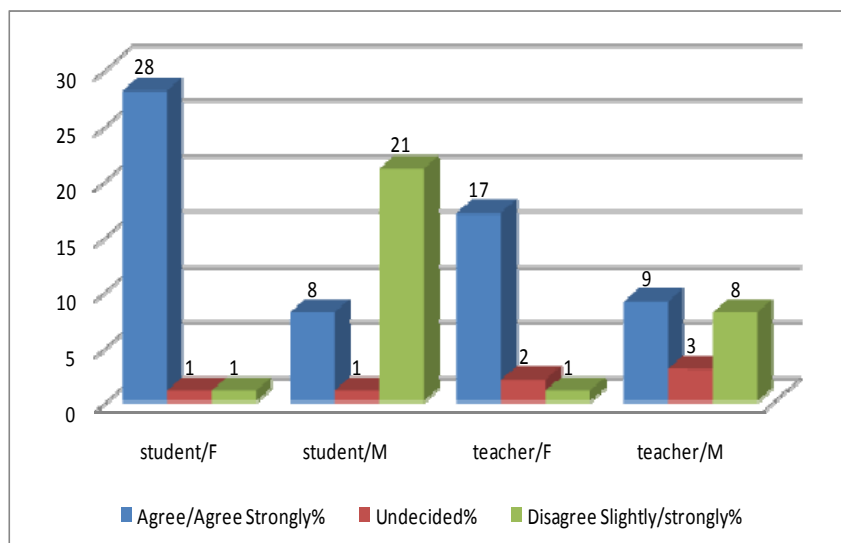


Figure 4. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 4

The result of the chi-square test showed that the differences were significant, $X^2(6) = 47.57$, $p = 0.001$, which indicates that both female students and teachers attached more importance the study of grammar than their male counterparts.

Table 5

Investigating statement 5: There should be more formal study of grammar in my FL/L2 courses

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly.			Undecided%			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	28	15	13	1	1	0	1	14	-15
Teachers	20	20	17	14	3	2	3	-1	1	3	-2
Dis.			11	1		-1	-2		0	11	

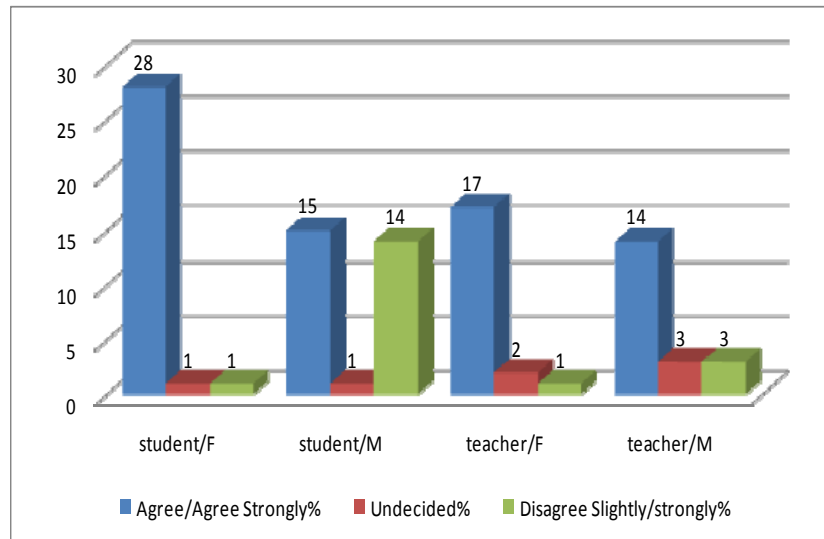


Figure 5. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 5

The result of the chi-square test revealed that the differences were significant, $X^2 (6) = 25.01$, $p = 0.001$, suggesting again that both female students and teachers favored formal study of grammar more than their male peers.

Table 6

Investigating statement 6: *I usually keep grammar rules in mind when I write in a FL or read what I have written*

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	28	26	2	1	3	-2	1	1	0
Teachers	20	20	17	16	1	2	3	-1	1	3	-2
Dis.			11	10		-1	0		0	-2	

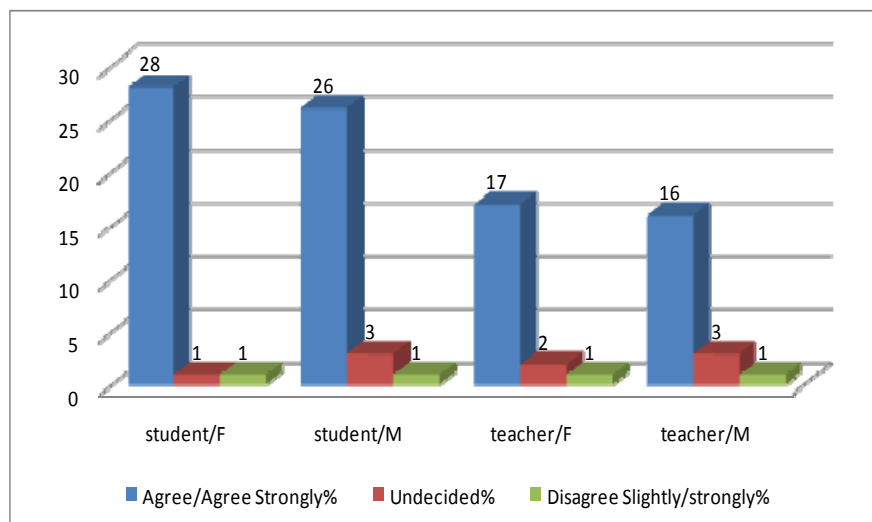


Figure 6. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 6

The result of the chi-square test showed the differences were not significant, $X^2(6) = 2.55$, $p = 0.86$. This means that both male and female students and teachers' attitudes did not differ significantly regarding the sixth statement.

Table 7

Investigating statement 7: It is more important to practice a FL in real-life situations than to study and practice grammatical patterns

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	26	23	2	2	4	-2	2	3	-1
Teachers	20	20	17	15	2	1	1	0	2	4	-2
Dis.			8	8	1	3			0	-1	

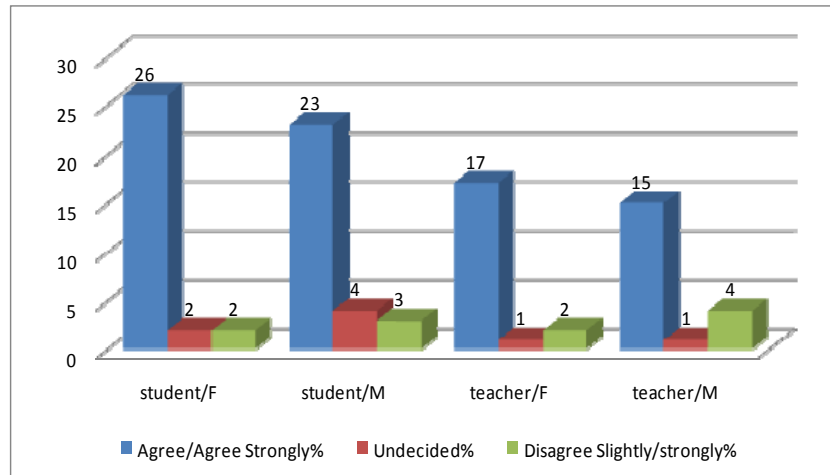


Figure 7. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 7

The result of the chi-square test showed the differences were not significant, $X^2(6)=3.62$, $p=0.72$, suggesting that both male and female students and teachers' attitudes did not differ significantly regarding the seventh statement, either.

Male and female EFL students and teachers' perceptions of the role of error correction

Tables and figures 8 through 12 display both students and teachers' attitudes toward the role of corrective feedback.

Table 8

Investigating statement 8: I dislike it when I am corrected in class

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	2	3	-1	2	2	0	26	25	-1
Teachers	20	20	5	6	-1	2	2	0	13	12	1
Dis.			-6	7		0	-1		13	13	

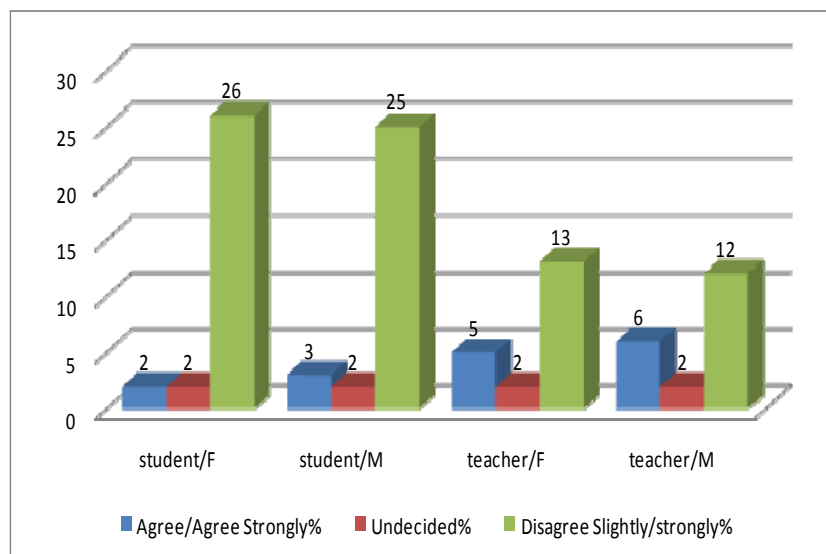


Figure 8. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 8

The result of the chi-square test showed the differences were not significant, $X^2(6) = 7.7$, $p = 0.25$, which means both male and female students do not like to be corrected and their teachers think so.

Table 9

Investigating statement 9: Teachers should not correct students when they make errors in class

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly		Dis.	Undecided		Dis.	Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M		F	M		F	M	Di.
Students	30	30	3	4	-1	3	4	0	24	22	2
Teachers	20	20	4	5	-1	2	2	0	13	12	1
Dis.			-1	-1		1	2		11	10	

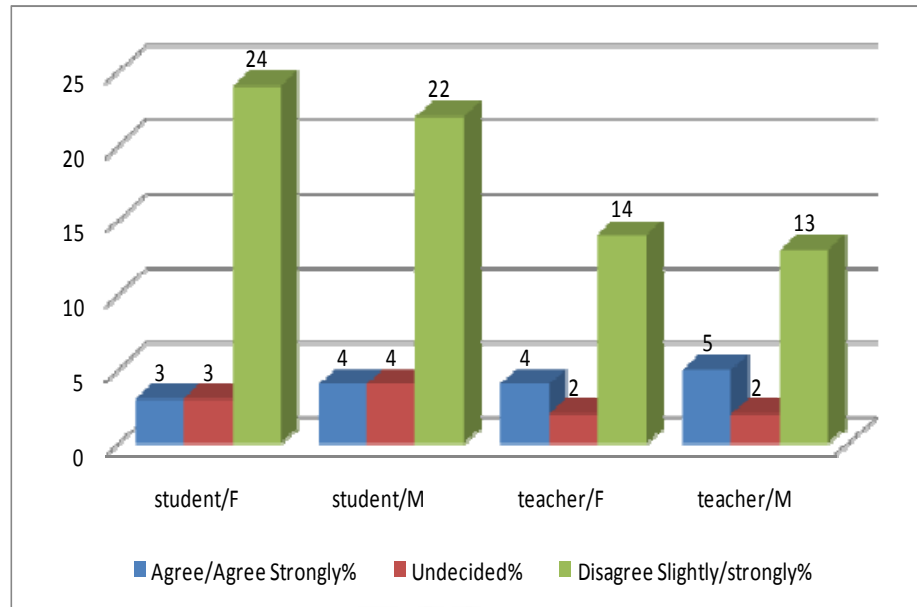


Figure 9. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 9

The result of the chi-square test showed there were no significant differences between the values, $X^2(6)=2.57$, $p=0.86$.

Table 10

Investigating statement 10: *I feel cheated if a teacher does not correct the written work I hand in*

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	4	5	-1	6	6	0	20	19	1
Teachers	20	20	6	5	1	5	3	2	9	12	-3
Dis.			-2	0		1	3		11	10	

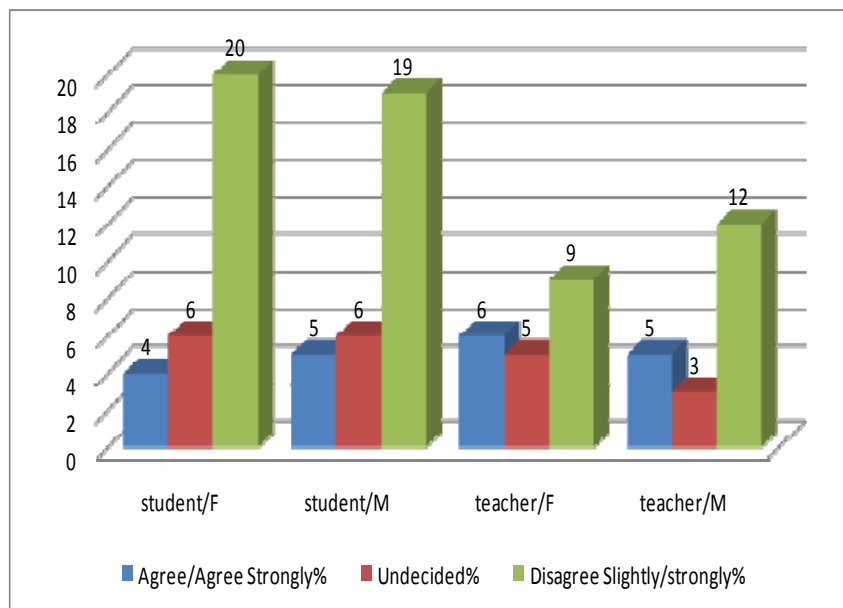


Figure 10. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 10

The result of the chi-square test indicated that there were no significant differences between the values, $X^2(6) = 3.62$, $p = 0.72$. In other words, male and female students' and teachers' attitudes were not different regarding the statement 10.

Table 11

Investigating statement 11: When I make errors in speaking this language, I would like my teacher to correct them

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly			Undecided			Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.	F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	10	9	1	12	14	-2	8	7	1
Teachers	20	20	6	5	1	5	3	2	9	12	-3
Dis.			4	4		7	11		-1	-5	

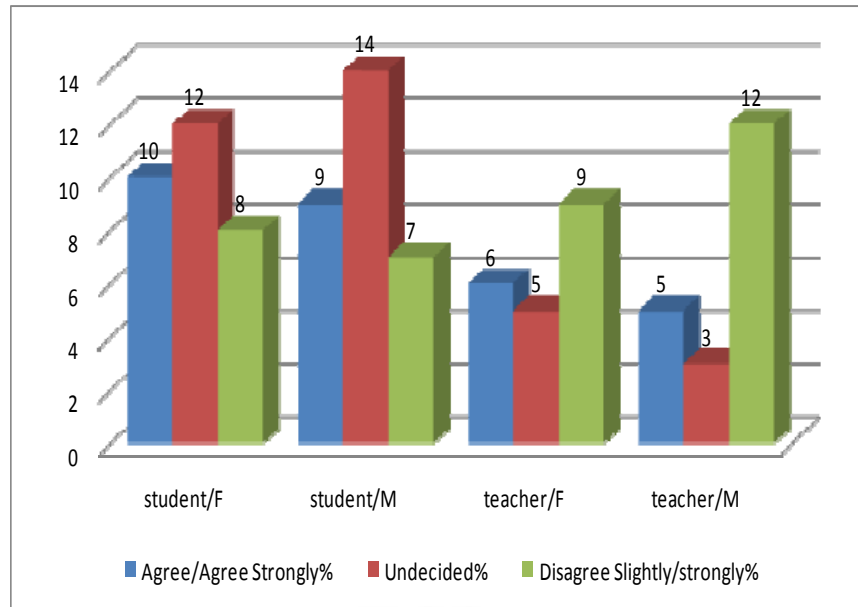


Figure 11. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 11

Again the result of the chi-square test indicated that there were no significant differences between the values, $X^2(6) = 10.32$, $p = 0.11$, which means both teachers and students of either gender would disapprove of correcting or being corrected while speaking.

Table 12

Investigating statement 12: When I make errors in writing this language, I would like my teacher to correct them

	N		Agree/Agree Strongly		Dis.	Undecided		Dis.	Disagree Slightly/strongly		
	F	M	F	M		F	M		F	M	Dis.
Students	30	30	28	26	2	1	3	-2	1	1	0
Teachers	20	20	17	16	1	2	3	-1	1	3	-2
Dis.			11	10		-1	0		0	-2	

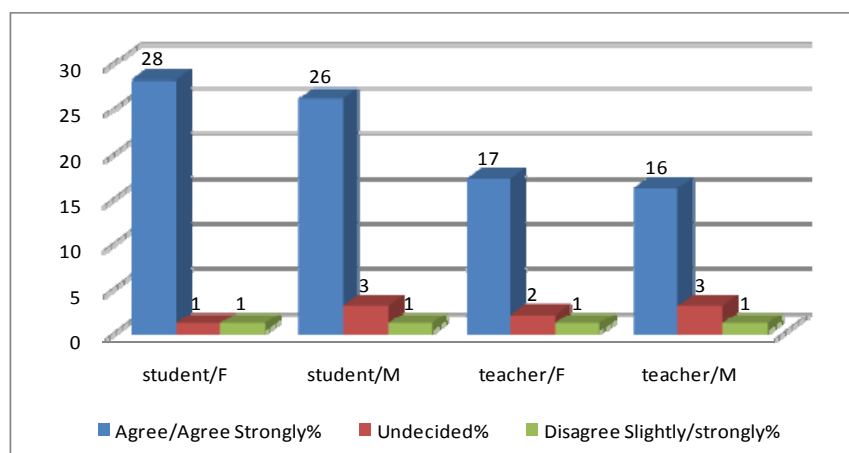


Figure 12. Frequency distribution of students and teachers' attitudes toward statement 12

The result of the chi-square test showed there were no significant differences between the attitudes of male and female students and teachers, $X^2(6) = 2.55$, $p = 0.86$. This means that both groups highly approved of error correction in written work.

Table 13 displays the summary of all data presented in Tables 1-7 (attitudes toward the role of grammar instruction) in percentages.

As shown in Tables 13C and 13D, meaningful differences (i.e., discrepancies higher than 10%) between students and teachers with the same gender were generally more frequent than between either male and female students as a group or their teachers as a group (Tables 13A and 13B). Whereas only three of the seven items comparing male and female student responses showed discrepancies of more than 10%, and only two of the comparisons between male and female teachers showed disagreement of over 10%, five of the seven items in Table 13C (1, 3, 4, 6, and 7) and Table 13D (1, 4, 5, 6, and 7) showed discrepancies in opinions ranging up to 41% (6 in Table 13C). Eighty percent of the male students versus only 64% of their teachers agreed that the formal study of grammar is essential for eventual FL mastery; 85% of the students versus 74% of the teachers believed that the study of grammar helps in FL learning; 46% of the students versus 18% of

the teachers thought students like the study of grammar; 68% vs. 27% believed that students kept grammar rules in mind when writing in the FL; and 69% versus 80% thought that communicative activities were more important than grammar practice.

Table 13

Summary of students and teachers' perceptions of the role of grammar in percentages

	Item#						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
13 A. Male /Female Student Comparisons							
Male Students	80	48	85	46	26	68	69
Female Students	82	77	93	76	51	58	66
Discrepancy	+2	+29	+8	+30	+25	-10	-3
13 B. Male/Female Teacher Comparisons							
Male Teachers	64	38	74	18	21	27	80
Female Teachers	59	71	84	30	31	35	82
Discrepancy	-5	+33	+10	+12	+10	+8	+2
13 C. Male Student/Teacher Comparisons							
Male Students	80	48	85	46	26	68	69
Male Teachers	64	38	74	18	21	27	80
Discrepancy	-16	-10	-11	-28	-5	-41	+11
13 D. Female Student/Teacher Comparisons							
Female Students	82	77	93	76	51	58	66
Female Teachers	59	71	84	30	31	35	82
Discrepancy	-23	-6	-9	-46	-20	-23	+16

The pattern of disagreement between students and teachers in their perceptions of the role of grammar (Items 1 through 7) was stronger in the female data than in the male data (see Tables 13C and 13D). As is the case in the male data for comparisons of student and teacher perceptions, five of seven items showed a discrepancy rate of over 10% that ranged from 16% (7) to 46% (4). Only two items revealed high agreement: Item 2, "FL competence improves most quickly through the study of grammar" (77% of the female students and 71% of their teachers) and Item 3, "the study of grammar helps in FL learning" (93% of the students and 84% of the teachers). For Item 1, "grammar is essential for FL mastery,"

82% of the female students and 59% of their teachers agreed; for Item 4, “students like the study of grammar,” 76% of the students versus only 30% of the teachers indicated agreement; for Item 5, indicating the need for more grammar study, 51% of the students versus 31% of the teachers agreed; for Item 6, acknowledging students’ use of a grammatical monitor, 58% of the students versus 35% of the teachers responded positively; and for Item 7, 66% of the students versus 82% of the teachers gave preference to communicative over grammar-focused activities.

Comparing the responses of male and female teachers to Items 1 through 7 (lines 2 of Tables 1 through 7) on the role of grammar, one finds sizeable discrepancies in opinions (i.e., discrepancies larger than 10%) on only two items. The largest disagreement was for item 2: 33% more of the female teachers than male teachers agreed with the statement, “Generally speaking, students’ communicative ability improves most quickly if they study and practice the grammar of the language.” The other item showing a discrepancy in rating of more than 10% was question 4, “Students generally like the study of grammar”; 48% of the female teachers disagreed versus only 35% of the male teachers.

Questions 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7 showed a discrepancy rate of 10% or less. It should be noted, however, that for all but one of the questions showing a discrepancy, the female teachers were somewhat more favorably inclined toward grammar study than their male counterparts. The only exception was Item 1, “For adolescents or adults, the formal study of grammar is essential to the eventual mastery of a FL/L2 when language learning is limited to the classroom.” Only 59% of the female teachers versus 64% of the male teachers agreed with that statement.

Table 14 displays the summary of all data presented in Tables 8-12 (attitudes toward error correction) in percentages.

The discrepancy rates between male students and teacher responses for the items dealing with error correction show striking disagreements.

Table 14

Summary of students and teachers' perceptions of the role error correction in percentages

	Item#				
	8 Agree %	9 Agree %	10 Agree %	11 Agree %	12 Agree %
14 A. Male /Student Female Comparisons					
Male Students	4	2	65	90	97
Female Students	4	3	74	97	98
Discrepancy	0	+1	+9	+7	+1
14 B. Male/Female Teacher Comparisons					
Male Teachers	22	33	80	30	92
Female Teachers	28	35	88	39	93
Discrepancy	+6	+2	+8	+9	+1
14 C. Male Student/Teacher Comparisons					
Male Students	4	2	65	90	97
Male Teachers	22	33	80	30	92
Discrepancy	+18	+31	+15	-60	-5
14 D. Female Student/Teacher Comparisons					
Female Students	4	3	74	97	98
Female Teachers	28	35	88	39	93
Discrepancy	+24	+32	+14	-58	-5

As displayed in Table 14C, four of five items (8, 9, 10, and 11) showed a discrepancy rate that ranged from 15% to 60%. Only Item 12, "When making errors in writing, I would like my teacher to correct them," revealed relatively high agreement among male students and teachers (97% and 92%, respectively). For the other items, 4% of the students versus 22% of the teachers thought that students disliked being corrected in class (Item 8); 2% versus 33% agreed that teachers should not correct students when they made errors in class (Item 9); 65% versus 80% agreed that students felt cheated if teachers did not correct their written work (Item 10); and 90% of the students versus 30% of the teachers agreed that students should not be corrected when they make errors in speaking (Item 11).

As was the case when comparing responses of the two student groups on the items dealing with error correction (see Table 14), male and female teacher responses showed relatively little disagreement. Discrepancies ranged from 1% (Item 12) to 9% (Item 11). 48% (male) versus 51% (female) disagreed with the

statement that students dislike error correction (see Table 8); an equal number of male and female teachers (48%) disagreed with the statement that teachers should not correct students when they make errors in class; 80% versus 88% felt that students feel cheated if a teacher does not correct the written work they hand in; 41% versus 40% disagreed with the statement, "Generally, when students make errors in speaking the target language, they should be corrected" (see Table 11); and 92% versus 93% agreed that, "Generally, when students make errors in writing the target language, they should be corrected" (see Table 12).

A comparison of discrepancy rates reported in Tables 14C and 14D, dealing with perceptions regarding error corrections of male students and teachers as a group and female students and teachers as a group showed no large differences between the two genders. In no instance was there more than a 6% difference in the discrepancy rates between the two genders. The picture becomes more complex, however, when one looks at Tables 14C and 14D, which show the discrepancy rates between male students and teachers as a group and female students and teachers on the statements dealing with the role of grammar in learning a foreign language. Items 4, 5, and 6 showed the largest discrepancy rate between the two genders, but Item 2 was interesting as well. Although the overall difference in discrepancy rates was only 4%, female students and teachers were much more convinced than their female counterparts that a FL improves most quickly if students study and practice grammar rules. Over 70% of both female students (77%) and teachers (71%) agreed, whereas under 50% of male (48% of the students and 38% of the teachers) indicated agreement for that item. Similar differences in perception were evident for Item 4 ("students like the study of grammar"); 76% of female students versus 30% of their teachers, but only 46% of male students and 18% of their teachers agreed with the statement.

To compare the overall strength of disagreements within and between groups (student/student, teacher/teacher, male student/teacher, and female student/teacher), the researchers calculated a numerical index by adding the discrepancy percentages for all comparisons reported in Summary Tables 13A

through 13D and 14A through 14D. Thus, examining differences in the four data comparisons presented in Tables 13A through 13D, which deal with the role of grammar instruction in learning a foreign language, the teachers as a group (male and female) appeared to be the most cohesive in their beliefs regarding the role of grammar in FL learning (sum of discrepancies equaled 80), followed by the students as a group (sum of discrepancies equaled 107). The sum of discrepancies between male students and teachers was 122, compared to 143 for female students and teachers, indicating that the differences in perceptions of the role of grammar and corrective feedback were strongest in the female group.

For the items dealing with beliefs about error correction (Tables 14A through 14D), the students as a group (male and female) had the strongest overall agreement (sum of discrepancies equaled 18), followed by the teachers as a group, with a sum of discrepancies of 26.

Comparing the strength of discrepancies between students and teachers from each of the two genders (Tables 14C and 14D), one notes that the sums of percentages expressing discrepancies in beliefs were quite close.

Discussion

Generally speaking, the data provide evidence of a strong positive belief on the part of the students of both genders that explicit grammar study and corrective feedback play a positive role in learning a foreign language. Sizeable majorities of students agreed that the formal study of grammar is essential to eventual mastery of a FL (Item 1); that the study of grammar helps in learning a FL (Item 3); that they usually keep grammar rules in mind when they write in a FL or read what they have written (Item 6); that they would like to be corrected in class (Items 8 and 9); that they feel strongly about having their written work corrected by the teacher (Items 10 and 12); and that they want to be corrected when they make errors in speaking as well (Item 11).

Although the majority of teachers in both groups agreed that

grammar instruction helps in language learning, agreement was less strong among the teachers than among the students. Both students and teachers did, however, clearly indicate that grammar study was not all there is to mastering a FL (Item 7). Particularly the teachers (more than 80% of the teachers vs. less than 70% of the students) felt that real-life communicative tasks play a very important role as well.

Overall, the data show that the female students, as well as their teachers, were more favorably inclined toward traditional language teaching, which indicates stronger beliefs regarding the efficacy of explicit grammar instruction and error correction.

It is interesting that of the 12 items for which both student and teacher data were available, 9 of the items (1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) showed highly similar beliefs between the students, and 10 of the items (1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) showed similar beliefs between both groups of teachers (i.e., with a discrepancy rate of 10% or less). Student and teacher agreement did not, however, always go in the same direction.

Whereas student agreement on the items mentioned was always expressed in sizeable majorities, the teacher data indicated majority agreement only for Items 1, 3, 7, 10, and 12. For the remaining 5 items on which teachers of both genders held similar opinions (5, 6, 8, 9, and 11) fewer than half of the responding teachers expressed their agreement with the statements.

There was considerable lack of agreement between genders concerning whether formal grammar study accelerates the rate of FL learning (Item 2). Whereas both female students and teachers strongly believed that grammar study served such an accelerating function, their male counterparts were more hesitant to make such claims. Item 4 showed considerable differences within and between cultures. Although a great majority of the female students indicated agreement with the statement, "I like the study of grammar," neither the responses of their male counterparts nor those of the teachers of either gender reached the 50% mark.

Of the items dealing with error correction (Tables 8 through 12), only Item 12, addressing corrections of written assignments, showed strong agreement between students and

teachers. Indeed, for Item 11, which dealt with the desirability of correcting oral errors in the classroom, there were discrepancy rates of 58% to 60% between the two female groups and the two male groups. Clearly, such sizeable discrepancies in perception between students and teachers in both cultures regarding the value of error correction need remediation if we believe that such discrepancies in belief systems influence learning.

Conclusion

Teaching grammar is one of toughest tasks a teacher faces, but we all know that grammar skills are essential to students' success on standardized tests and college entrance exams, in their ability to communicate orally and in writing, and in life. If the goals of language instruction include teaching students to use grammar accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately, then a compelling case can be made for teaching grammar. Instead of viewing grammar as a static system of arbitrary rules, it should be seen as a rational, dynamic system that is comprised of structures characterized by the three dimensions of form, meaning, and use (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

In conformity with the related literature in the field of grammar instruction and corrective feedback and also based on the students and teachers' reactions toward the same issue in this study, it is possible to conclude that there are at least three main reasons for consideration of grammar as a vital component of language instruction.

1. Schmidt (1993) suggests that noticing, conscious attention to form is a necessary condition for language learning. Similarly, Skehan (1998) has presented findings indicating that language learners cannot process target language input for both meaning and form at the same time. Thus it is necessary for learners to notice target forms in input; otherwise, they process input for meaning only and do not attend to specific forms, and consequently fail to process and acquire them.
2. Pienemann (1999) has proposed teachability hypothesis, which suggests that while certain developmental sequences

are fixed and cannot be altered by grammar teaching, there are certain structures can benefit from instruction any time they are taught. Based on this hypothesis, it is possible to influence sequences of development favorably through instruction if grammar teaching coincides with the learner's developmental readiness to move to the next developmental stage of linguistic proficiency.

3. The third reason is the inadequacies of teaching approaches where the focus is primarily on meaning-focused communication, and the grammar is not addressed. Research suggests that some focus on form is necessary if learners are to develop high levels of accuracy in the target language. Thus, the strong version of the communicative language teaching is found to be inadequate (see Doughty & Williams, 1998).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

1. The formal study of grammar is essential to eventual mastery of a foreign language.
2. I believe my foreign language improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar of a language.
3. The study of grammar helps in learning a foreign language.
4. I like the study of grammar.
5. There should be more formal study of grammar in my foreign/second language courses.
6. I usually keep grammar rules in mind when I write in a foreign language or read what I have written.
7. It is more important to practice a foreign language in real-life situations (i.e., ask and answer questions, engage in role-plays or other simulations, etc.) than to study and practice grammatical patterns.
8. I dislike it when I am corrected in class.
9. Teachers should not correct students when they make errors in class.
10. I feel cheated if a teacher does not correct the written work I hand in.
11. When I make errors in speaking this language, I would like my teacher to correct them.

12. When I make errors in writing this language, I would like my teacher to correct them.
13. A. I prefer to be corrected by my fellow students in small group work rather than by my teacher in front of the entire class.
14. I learn a lot when my teacher corrects the errors made by my fellow students in class.
15. I learn a lot when my teacher corrects the errors I make in class.

Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire

1. For adolescents or adults, the formal study of grammar is essential to the eventual mastery of a FL/L2, when language learning is limited to the classroom.
2. Generally speaking, students' communicative ability improves most quickly if they study and practice the grammar of the language.
3. The study of grammar helps in learning a FL/L2.
4. Students generally like the study of grammar.
5. Generally, there should be more formal grammar study in FL/L2 courses than is presently the case.
6. Students usually keep grammar rules in mind when they write in a FL/L2 or read what they have written.
7. It is, generally, more important to practice a FL/L2 in situations simulating real life (i.e., interview, role plays, etc.) than to analyze and practice grammatical patterns.
8. Most students dislike it when they are corrected in class.
9. Teachers should not correct students' pronunciation or grammatical errors in class unless these errors interfere with comprehensibility.
10. Most students feel cheated if a teacher does not correct the written work they hand in.
11. Generally, when students make errors in speaking the target language, they should be corrected.
12. Generally, when students make errors in writing the target language, they should be corrected.