

Cognition in Teaching Grammar and Actual Practices of Experienced and Less-Experienced Filipino ESL Teachers

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Abstract

Though studies in the Western and Asian settings have already provided ample evidence in the symbolic relationship between teacher cognition and classroom teaching, such relationship has remained unexplored in the Philippine setting. Hence, this study aims to describe the beliefs in the teaching of English grammar of experienced and less experienced Filipino ESL teachers in a senior high school. It also compared their beliefs and actual classroom teaching to establish if there is match between what they think and practice. Reasons for divergence from their beliefs were also explored. Results revealed that teachers' personal theories become the basis for their personal knowledge, thus have strong influence on their planning, instructional decisions and classroom practices. While both teachers share similarities on their cognition and practice on grammar teaching, minimal differences were documented. Experienced teacher has a greater tendency to translate stated beliefs to actual practice. Contextual factors such as time, curriculum, efforts to improve one's practice and the learners themselves were the cited reasons for teachers' divergence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar teaching remains a matter of controversy in the field of Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition. Issues faced by language teachers on how grammar should be taught brought about by the fact that linguistics affords a broad selection of grammatical models ranging from structural, generative, and functional grammars. With these choices, language teachers have, more often than not, remained in a state of confusion when deciding which of the three models they should adopt during instruction.

For Prashant (2010), grammar teachers are prompted with several issues, which include: whether to follow the structural approach or aim at the achievement of grammatical competence or communicative competence of the learners; to concentrate on the parts of the sentence by parsing them on the utterances of the speakers, and either to concentrate in pedagogy on the teaching of rules or the correct use of language. Those issues relative to grammar teaching ushered in inconclusive debates about the best way to teach grammar and significantly influenced language teaching practice development.

Borg (2003) noted that the absence of clear guidelines about the teaching grammar, particularly in situations when the contexts and environments within which teachers' work

and many of the problems they encounter are ill-defined and deeply entangled, have led them in creating their theories on how to approach grammar in the language classroom. These personal theories are derived from their belief system, which is said to form a structured set of principles and derived from teachers' prior experiences, school practices, and individual personalities. What teachers do in the classroom is said to be governed by what they believe, and these beliefs act as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made. The beliefs that teachers hold regarding teaching will strongly impact the kinds of decisions classrooms. These beliefs will guide the type of materials, activities, and instruction they will use in their lessons.

Teachers' personal theories are formulated and reformulated as they go through the stages of teacher development. Since beliefs shaped teachers' personal knowledge and beliefs consist of matter of opinions, judgment, and significant past episodes, it explains how and why different teachers have different reasons for selecting a particular content, different emphasis on the same content, different styles of teaching, and different modes of learning (Torres, 2013).

Research on teachers' beliefs and the relationship of those beliefs with pedagogical practice originated in America in the early 1970s (Bernard & Scampton, 2008). Since then, the relationship between teachers' thinking and the impact of their knowledge and beliefs on instructional practices has increasingly attracted educational researchers' attention, first in America, then elsewhere.

Studies by both Ng and Farrell (2003) and Yim (1993 in Farrel & Lim, 2005) investigated the extent to which teachers' theoretical beliefs influenced their classroom practices and found evidence to suggest that what teachers say and do in the classroom are governed by their beliefs. Farrell (1999 in Farrell & Patricia, 2005) examined the belief system of preservice teachers of English grammar in terms of its influence on teaching practice and found evidence to suggest that these beliefs may be resistant to change.

Borg (2006) reviewed 38 studies on grammar teaching with an emphasis on teachers' knowledge of grammar, a survey of teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and their classroom practices. The findings from all those studies suggest that teachers have a set of complex belief systems about the teaching of grammar and that these are sometimes not reflected in their classroom practices for various complicated reasons.

Incongruence between what teachers say and do reflects their belief sub-systems and the different forces that influence their thinking and behavior. Studying the underlying reasons behind such congruencies can enable both researchers and teacher educators to understand better the process of teaching (Phipps & Borg, 2009).

Nunan (1992 in Akbar & Tajik, 2009) found that less experienced teachers were more concerned with classroom management than experienced ones, who made more decisions related to language issues in the classroom. Experienced teachers seem to have internalized classroom management mechanisms at the subconscious level and, can focus more attention on content and learning issues in their classes. Mackenzie, Hemmings, and Kay (2011) conclude that experience in a particular educational context tends to shape teachers' perceptions. Similarly, Mackey, Polio, and McDonough (2004) maintain that educational research suggests that less experienced teachers are more concerned with maintaining

discipline in the classroom. Resultantly, less-experienced teachers stick to their lesson plan to maintain the flow of the teaching routines. On the contrary, experienced teachers are more adept at implementing teaching routines and thus willingly deviate from their preplanned activities. Investigating the relationships among experience, teacher cognition, context, and classroom practice in EFL grammar teaching in Argentina, Hugo (2010) found that experience could account for the significant differences between teachers' teaching theories, practices, and rationales.

Despite the increased levels of interest in the area of language teachers' beliefs, there have not been many investigations that have focused on the beliefs of experienced and less experienced language teachers to identify the role of experience in affecting the pedagogical thoughts of teachers in negotiating their classroom roles, their actual classroom practices and reasons for conformity or deviance to their pedagogical beliefs. Hence, the present study explores the beliefs of experienced and less experienced English teachers in grammar teaching. The study also aimed to validate whether the beliefs held by the two teachers on how grammar should be taught reflected in their practices. Reasons for their divergence from their beliefs were also explored.

1.1. Research Questions

- 1) What are the beliefs of experienced and less experienced teachers in grammar teaching and learning?
- 2) What are their actual classroom practices?
- 3) Why do the experienced and less-experienced teachers diverge from their beliefs in grammar teaching and learning during their actual teaching?

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Teachers learn to teach can only be understood through their verbal expressions and classroom behavior, which indicates their knowledge base, now known as teacher cognition in the language teaching field.

The examination of teachers' cognition is a new research direction following on from the product-process that scrutinizes teachers' decision making and thoughts as cognitive development that directs and has a powerful impact on teachers' classroom behaviors. In each teaching experience, teachers act on their thinking and plan and reflect on previous practices to know what to do in the classroom. These decisions are based on many sources, such as contextual factors and the knowledge and beliefs that teachers have exhibited (Shulman, 1987).

The concept of teacher's cognition includes "what teachers think, know and believe and the relationship of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language classroom. This refers to the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching - what teachers know, believe and think" (Borg, 2003, p.81). It encompasses all the assets which are related to the mental lives of teachers. These elements affect teachers' conception of teaching and the impact of all these on the way teachers teach and the justifications they provide for their teaching decisions. Therefore, teachers' belief is a component of teachers' cognition. Teachers' belief involves developing problem-solving skills based on their understanding of the context and grounded in their belief system (Smylie, 1994). Research studies have indicated that teachers'

beliefs significantly influence teachers' practice more than the relationship between knowledge and teachers' teaching practice (Wright, 2010). Hence, teachers' beliefs as part of teachers' cognition significantly impact one's teaching practice (Bartels, 2005).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

Two female English teachers from a senior high school in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, participated in this qualitative study.

The first participant, Mica (pseudonym), taught English subjects for six years and was considered the "less experienced teacher" in the study. She began learning English at the age of five and learned the language through reading comics and watching television shows, particularly animated series. It was reinforced when she started her formal schooling. Her six years of teaching made her realize that language teaching is a very challenging task and complex endeavor, for it entails the readiness and willingness of the learners to learn. For the first participant, there is no specific strategy that will ensure language learning.

The second participant, Ella (pseudonym), has been handling English classes for 18 years, therefore classified as the "experienced teacher." She started speaking English at the age of four. She speaks English, Filipino, and Ilocano. Listening to people talking around has always been her fascination, and she believes that it helped a lot for her to learn the language. When she had her elementary schooling, she listened most of the time to her language teachers. During her high school year, she constantly engaged in-class conversations, not for the sake of learning but because speaking English has been fulfilling for her since then. Her former language teachers had been very instrumental for her to love learning the language.

2.2. Research Design

Since the study aims to determine teachers' cognition and practices in teaching grammar from the teachers' own perspectives, a qualitative methodology was employed. This is in line with Phipps and Borg (2009) mentioned that studies that employ qualitative strategies to explore language teachers' actual practices would be more productive in advancing our understanding of the complex relationships between these phenomena. A case study approach was used to allow the researchers to have in-depth analysis of the participants' practices prior to considering the findings collectively. The two participants, the experienced and less-experienced teachers, went through three phases of data collection: pre-observation interview, non-participatory classroom observations, and post-observation interview.

2.3. Ethical Consideration

Before conducting interviews and classroom observations, the researchers explained to the two participants the nature and the purpose of the study. A letter explaining the background, rationale, and purpose of the study, was sent to them. The letter also presented to the two participants the study phases for them to have an overview of how the study would be carried out and the extent of their participation in the study.

2.4. Data Collection

2.4.1. Pre-Observation Semi-structured interview

This research tool was used to obtain information about participants' profile and language learning experience, beliefs and practices on grammar teaching, instructional resources, and ways to improve their pedagogy. The researchers and follow-up questions framed fifteen interview questions that were asked depending on participants' responses. Interview questions were adapted from existing research on teacher cognition and grammar teachings, such as those used by Borg (1998) and Borg and Burn (2008). The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed in full and coded.

2.4.2. Classroom Observations

Participants were observed following Borg's (2006) suggestion that this research tool gives researchers a concrete, descriptive basis for what teachers know. The participants were observed in their normal classroom settings, while one of the researchers was a nonparticipant observer. The classroom observation schedule validated what teachers actually did in the class, focusing on the class organization, teacher-student interaction and teacher talk. The classroom discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed.

2.4.3. Post-Observation Semi-structured interview

After the gathered data were analyzed, questions for the post-observation interview were framed. The main reason for the follow-up interview is to explore participants' reasons for conforming and deviating from their grammar beliefs during their actual teaching.

2.5. Data Analysis

The participants' interviews and actual classroom teaching were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes that arose that reflected the teachers' beliefs and actual classroom practice. Transcripts of the pre-observation interview were analyzed qualitatively. The researchers then identified the critical instructional episodes (Borg, 1998) to come up with categories for describing the participants' actual practice. Data gathered from the interview and classroom observations were analyzed following Dornyei's (2007) adductive and iterative manner and reduced through constant comparison. The central analysis theme highlighted the interactive relationship between beliefs, knowledge, and instructional contexts in teachers' personal framework of teaching grammar. The analysis of teachers' practices was based on Ellis's (2006) categories, including incidental/intentional focus on form, presentation/practice, inductive/deductive teaching, correction of grammatical errors, and use of grammatical terminology. Some of these categories were retained were salient in the data, while others were added as they emerged from the data.

Data from the interview and classroom observations were matched for convergence and divergence between beliefs and practices.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Cognition in Grammar Teaching

Table 1 shows Ella (experienced) and Mica's (less-experienced) beliefs relevant to grammar teaching and the instructional decisions regarding grammar teaching as informed by their pedagogical system.

Evidently, both participants stated that teaching grammar is at the end to master the rules and the standards expected in the use of the language. They were convinced that the reason for grammar teaching is to achieve fluency in the English language in general. Hence, they equated the notion that being fluent of the target language is for the students to learn and master the rules. This is cognizant of the principle that grammarians hold that language is rule-governed. This means that a language has a grammar or a set of conventions that organize its proper use. These rules set behavior around the meaning of words and dictate how words relate to one another.

The next belief of the teachers is in terms of explicit and implicit teaching of grammar. As the notion of grammar teaching and learning proceeds on fluency, both teachers appreciate the value of explicit grammar teaching in favorable conditions apply. According to Ella, there is a need for explicit teaching of grammar to produce students who know the rules. This is in line with the notion that explicit teaching of grammar enables the students to be conscious of the process and the output of learning (Ling, 2015). In the case of language learning, it is in the internalization of the language forms and concepts, and practically applying them to functional realization. For the experienced teacher, explicit teaching will satisfy the aim of making the students master the rules primarily as the students will be clearly aware of what they are learning and why they are learning it. In the process, explicit learning also facilitates the appreciation of the students to the target language for it specifically draws the line between what they are learning, and how and why they are learning it (Ellis, 2006). Ella also stated that explicit grammar teaching could just develop students who know the grammar rules but cannot apply the rules they learned in the actual context. Ella's realization as to how explicit grammar teaching can influence learners is in line with Reinders' (2008) observation that explicit instructions in the form of a noticing instruction do not differentially affect acquisition compared with implicit instructions.

Another belief in grammar teaching relates to the strategies employed by the two participants. The use of the classic methods, deductive and inductive, was another common ground between the two. However, the basis of using deductive or inductive method differ between Ella and Mica. What is a feasible strategy of teaching, according to Ella, is that which actually works in the realization of the learning objectives. Methods, activities, and instructional decisions are all orchestrated by the teacher to achieve the learning targets. To encourage and establish critical thinking among the students, she believes in employing HOTS in probing students' understanding. For Mica, the strategies should depend on the nature of the students. She believes that the inductive method works well for the more advanced students while the deductive for the less advanced students. The difference, according to Mica, is that more advanced students can generalize concepts through synthesis and relationships. Further, she believes that advanced students view the deductive method as boring because of its linearity and predictability. To use inductive is to challenge the critical minds of advanced students.

The less advanced students, however, as described by Mica, need to be guided. The students understand through exemplification and application of the presented concepts. This, too, challenges them. Hence, she believes in the use of communicative activities to ensure students' engagement. She also believes in the principle of content integration. Hence, she

also stated the use of popular literature as the springboard in teaching grammatical concepts as one of her beliefs in grammar teaching.

Table 1. Cognition in Grammar Teaching

Aspect of Grammar	Ella (<i>Experienced</i>)	Mica (<i>Less Experienced</i>)
1. Reason for teaching grammar	-for students to master the rules	-for students to master the rules
2. Explicit and Implicit teaching of grammar	- explicit grammar teaching should be practiced inside the classroom -explicit grammar teaching produces students who know rules but cannot apply rules in the actual context	-explicit grammar teaching should be applied inside the classroom to assist students in mastering language rules
3. Strategies in teaching grammar	-inductive, deductive -use of HOTS, cooperative learning/group activities -communicative activities	-depends on the nature of students (i.e., inductive for more advanced students, deductive for less advanced students) -communicative activities -use of literature as a springboard in teaching grammatical concepts
4. Teaching of grammar in context or isolation	-depends on the students' background of the topic Grammar is taught in isolation if students are already familiar with the topic. Grammar is taught in context if students are less familiar with the topic	- both in context and isolation, but it should be more in context
5. Error correction	- explicit error correction after the utterance	-explicit error correction during the utterance
6. Evaluative activities	-pen and paper test -group activities	-pen and paper test -composition writing
7. Role of L1 in learning English grammar	-negatively affects L2 learning but helps students express their ideas	-negatively affects L2 learning

Relevant to the strategies of teaching grammar, Mica believed that teaching grammar should be in context or in some cases be in isolation. Adhering to the principle of communicative language teaching and learning, she forwarded the notion that grammar teaching should be more contextualized. She further explained that this will make the language learning more authentic and relevant. Through contextualization, students realize the practicability and the reality of the rules of grammar thus making communication effective. For Ella, the teaching of grammar in context or in isolation depends on the students' background knowledge. According to her, grammar is taught in isolation if students are already

familiar with the topic, that they can already deduced by themselves the implementation of the rules. Indeed, grammar for the experienced teacher is also taught in isolation if definition, classifications of the structure are equally enough to enable the students to use the structures in their actual use of the language.

Another concern on teacher's beliefs in grammar teaching is on error correction. For Ellis (2006), variability between the two respondents was characterized by their view of errors. Although both believe that error correction should be done automatically and directly by the teacher to make students realize their error at once consciously, Mica preferred correcting error during an utterance. This supports Micah's belief that grammar teaching and learning should be done explicitly to master the rules. She further asserts that if she fails to correct errors at once or the error correction be delayed, the students may forget the structures and the condition where the error was committed. Hence, according to her, the error correction will become irrelevant. Ella, on the other hand, shows more flexibility in terms of error correction. Accordingly, she believes that if the error committed is severe, it radically affects the meaning of the expression and thought; error correction should be done at once. However, if errors are committed during the spontaneous flow of idea production, if it stops because of an error correction, the flow of ideas will be impeded. Error correction can be delayed and done after the utterance is completed. The intrinsic part of the instruction is the assessment. As stated by Brown (2000 in Ellis 2006), this is one of the primary considerations in the success of teaching and learning. The assessment outcomes and implications indeed guide the teacher in terms of the whole process of presentation and feedback. Based on Table 1, a formal assessment like a teacher-made paper and pencil test usually comprises the participants' evaluative activities. Ella would usually engage her students in group activities. This references the discussion of Ames and Archer (1988) that reiterates tasks being more student-centered and engaging.

The last item on their stated beliefs in grammar teaching is on the role of L1 in the teaching and learning of L2. Two opposing beliefs exist regarding the role of L1 in grammar learning, either one that facilitates or impedes. For Ella, she believes that the use of L1 in language classrooms negatively affects the spontaneity of thought processing and expression. Thus she encourages her students to express their ideas first in L1 then ask them to translate in L2. It may seem as Ella reiterates, but for her, what matters is first to make students talk and express ideas, then encourage them to translate from L1 to L2. In a way, she said the L1 would be a springboard of the meaning and structure. But this, she asserts, is only allowed but not encouraged for casual translation from L1 and L2 would result in a negative transfer.

Similarly, Mica believes that the use of L1 in L2 learning can hurt such. Unlike the experienced teacher who displays a level of flexibility for allowing students to use L1 still in L2 classroom, the less experienced teacher does not allow the use of L1 in her L2 class. She sees that L1 impedes L2 learning because of negative transfer. Nevertheless, mastery of rules and consistent, communicative activities are better ways of grammar teaching and learning.

3.2 Actual Classroom Practice

Though both Ella and Mica believe in the explicit discussion of grammar concepts and rules, the former also believes that adherence to such practice in a grammar class breeds students who only know the rules and can memorize the concepts but cannot apply such

terms and rules in the actual context. Having such belief, explicit teaching of grammar rules was not overtly observed in Ella's classroom discussion. As observed during Ella's actual classroom teaching, she mentioned at the beginning of the lesson proper that the topic for that session was on the perfect tense with a focus on the present tense. Though the topic was introduced, it was not followed by an explicit discussion regarding the background, definition, and uses of the present perfect tense.

Instead, what followed was the instruction (i.e., Write a sentence about an action that you have just done this lunchtime) given by Ella to one of the students. Extract 1 below shows how Ella introduced the topic and proceeded to the actual activity without providing students background information on the topic.

Extract 1: Teaching of Grammar Concepts (Ella)

- T: Our lesson for today is perfect tense focusing on the present tense. Please approach the board Ms. Jane and construct a sentence about an action that you have just done this lunchtime.
- S1: (writes the sentence: I have just watched my favorite noontime show).
- T: Please go to the board Sandra and write something about a hobby that you use to do during your childhood days and you still do until today.
- S2: (While the student was writing on the board, the teacher guides her by asking questions such as: Since when? The student writes in the board: I have been playing Word Factory since I was eight.)
- T: What have you have done in the past that you don't remember the exact date?
I can sense something why your sentences always start with "I".
- S3: (Writes in the board: I have danced crazy pipes.)

It can be observed based on Extract 1 that Ella prefers to teach the lesson from language use to language usage and focus on meaning rather than form by asking questions to students to let them elicit sentences in the present perfect form. Believing that conscious use of language forms may result in high affective filter and consequently poor language proficiency and fluency, she prefers to teach grammar this way. Ella's belief regarding the tendency for learners to memorize the concepts and rules and not really apply them in actual situations is related to what Krashen and Terrell (1983) mentioned that focusing on grammar explanation may take time away from acquisition activities. Although grammar explanation can serve as input for acquisition, the focus on grammar should be restricted to situations where it will not interfere with communication.

Mica's adherence to her belief that grammar should be taught explicitly was reflected on her practice. Extract 2 shows how such belief in explicit grammar teaching was translated in her classroom teaching.

Extract 2: Teaching of Grammar Concepts (Mica's Case)

T: This afternoon we are going to discuss adjectives, particularly the types of adjectives and the word-order of adjectives in a series. Are you excited to learn more about adjectives?

S: Yes

T: An adjective can be classified into two. There are different types of adjectives but this afternoon, we are going to focus on descriptive adjectives. Descriptive adjective is one of the types of adjective. And descriptive adjectives are classified into two: facts and opinion. Descriptive adjectives are the most commonly used type of adjective that add meaning to a noun or pronoun by describing its qualities. There are thousands of descriptive adjectives that exist in the English language, so it is not difficult to come up with one. They can tell what size something is, how something tastes, what something smells like, and so much more. Descriptive adjectives are the most commonly used kind of adjective. They are used to describe different qualities of the noun or pronoun being modified.

From Extract 2, it can be deduced that Mica provides her students with declarative knowledge about the language forms (i.e. adjective and descriptive adjective) and their uses leading students on the conscious awareness of the language structure. As observed, there is a high tendency for Mica to focus on grammar explanation. During the interview, Mica mentioned that the use of explicit grammar instruction is necessary to ensure that learners understand how grammar functions in communication. According to Brumfit (1980 in Hugo, 2010), teachers who adhere to explicit teaching of grammar tend to overly place a focus on language practice more than language use because language practice is often concerned with accuracy. Teachers may emphasize drills. This was shown in the use of drills during Mica's presentation of the topic.

Ella's belief that grammar should be taught in context and isolation depending on the learner's background of the topic was also observed during her classroom teaching. Since the present perfect tense topic poses difficulty among ESL learners, she decided to teach the topic in context rather than isolation. This was manifested when instead of defining and giving the uses of present perfect, she decided to contextualize it to the level of students by instructing them to write sentences referring to an action they just did during lunchtime and of a hobby that they have been doing in the childhood days up to the present.

In Mica's case, contextualized grammar teaching was not dominant in her overall classroom discussion. It was only at the latter part of the lesson when the teaching in context was observed, unlike in Ella's discussion in which the role of context in grammar teaching had been observed throughout the lesson.

Part of Ella's strategies in teaching grammar is the use of cooperative learning and group activities. Incorporating group activities as part of her strategies proves that these techniques have now become essential component of the recent approaches to ESL teaching. Researchers such as Hill and Flynn (2006 in Zarifiri & Taghavi, 2016) have agreed on the effectiveness of these techniques in language learning. Educators have found that cooperative learning groups foster language acquisition in ways that whole class interaction cannot. During the post-intervention interview, Ella replied when asked why she incorporated group

activities in her lesson that “in group activities, students become active participants in the process of learning through small group structures as far as they support each other to master the lesson.” As Slavin (1995) puts it, it is in this process in which students go through the process of debating and arguing with each other, assessing one another’s current knowledge and filling in gaps in each other’s understanding. Extract 3 illustrates how Ella applied cooperative learning and group activities in her class.

Extract 3. Use of cooperative learning and group activities (Ella’s case)

T: Let’s have an activity, may I call the Infancy group to do this exercise.
Will you read the direction for your group mates, Faith?

S13: Change the tense of the verb to the present perfect tense. Change the time expression to either recently or lately.

Example: I read an interesting article on Chinese literature.

I have read an interesting article on Chinese literature recently.

Mica’s belief that L2 negatively affects L1 learning can be seen in Extract 4 when she required her students to use English when asking a favor from her. Mica’s reason for requiring her students to use English during the class is that for them to get used to the language. She strongly adheres to the notion that to acquire a language; one must use it. During the interview, she recalled an incident while she was in high school in which their English teachers imposed an “English only policy” during their English class. She also remembered that her English teachers also required students to speak in English whenever they had to speak to them back in their primary and high school years. That is, even beyond or outside the class, they were required to use English when dealing with their English teacher. As a learner then, she had found such policy effective for her to learn the structure of the English language. Hence, she also adapted the practice in her own class. From here, the influence of Mica’s educational experience on what she believes in and practices is clearly manifested. This is in line with what Johnson (1999) pointed out that teachers’ beliefs on teaching may be based on their knowledge and experiences as former students.

Furthermore, their prior learning experiences play a significant role in influencing their decision-making in the classroom, thereby shaping their beliefs about teaching. It thus becomes clear that understanding what teachers impose in their classrooms is conceptualized from their memories of episodes in their previous school and schooling. Schooling is where teachers obtain value and meaning to participate over time in the specific socio-cultural context. This experience provides many constructs, one of which could be in one’s belief in grammar teaching.

Extract 4. L2 in L1 Learning (Mica’s case)

T: I said try to express yourselves in English. If you have finished them, you could put your works on the board. One more minute.

S: *Ma’am may tanong po ako. Puwede po mahiram ang glue?*

(Ma’am, I have a question. May I borrow the glue?)

T: I said, if you are to ask favor from me, try to express it in English. Yes, Miller?

S: Ma'am, may I borrow the glue?

At all proficiency levels, learners produce language that is not exactly the language used by native speakers. Some of the differences are grammatical, while others involve vocabulary selection and mistakes in the selection of language appropriate for different contexts. Regarding error correction in a language class, the two teachers have different views as to when an error should be corrected. For Ella, errors made by students should be made after the utterance, while for Mica it should be during the utterance. Extracts 5 and 6 show how the two teachers employed error correction in their respective classes.

Extract 5 (Ella's approach to error-correction)

S6: The boy has been waking.

T: You check your sentence, dear.

Check the verb.

Extract 6 (Mica's approach to error-correction)

S3: Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns. T: Will you repeat the answer, Rainier?

S3: Adjective describes nouns and pronouns.

T: Wait, adjective describe? Are you sure it describes? S3: Ma'am, the adjective describes.

Extracts 5 and 6 illustrate Ella and Mica's ways of dealing with the errors students produced in their respective classes. As seen from the extracts, both teachers did not explicitly correct errors their students produced. They also employed corrective feedback after students had produced the utterance. What their actual practice instead was to let the students figure out what was wrong in the utterances they made. In responding to students' errors, both of them were cautious not to focus on error correction since it will be detrimental to the acquisition of communication skills and confidence building. Implicitly, the two teachers let students realize when they are making errors so that they can work on improving. Hence, both of them exercised the principle that student should be encouraged to self-correct when they committed errors and that communicative activities should not be interrupted to deal with errors unless these interfered with meaning. As explained by Hendrickson (1978), teachers should be more tolerant to errors that do not destroy communication. Learners do not like to be corrected for each minor error they make since this practice ruins their confidence to use the target language. While the previous episodes reveal implicit error correction of the two teachers, their approach in correcting the errors their students committed as shown in Extracts 7 and 8 show otherwise.

Extract 7 (Ella's approach to error correction)

S8: I have seen him yesterday.

T: Yesterday? Do not use specific time for present perfect. Use time expression instead.

S9: I have just went.

T: What is your verb?

S9: gone. I have just gone.

Extract 8 (Mica's approach to error correction)

M: What about the combination of a fact and opinion adjective? Which should come first, Aaron?

S7: Opinion should come first.

M: Going back to our example, the ideal man of Ivy. According to Aaron, if you are to combine facts and opinions, opinion should come first.

S15: Tall should come first. It should be tall, handsome, dark.

M: You are not listening. The rule tells that opinion how big and what color should be the arrangement. So

S15: Handsome, tall, dark

3.2. Reasons for Divergence from their Belief System

What teachers do in the classroom is said to be governed by what they believe, and these beliefs often serve as a filter through which instructional judgments and decisions are made. Observations of participants' regular classroom practice provided substantiating evidence regarding the complexity of the interaction between teachers' beliefs and behavior. Some inconsistencies between beliefs and practices were identified, mainly relating to how grammar should be taught. 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.

The study compared the two teachers' beliefs in grammar teaching, and their actual practice revealed deviations from their stated beliefs. Ella's non-adherence to her belief that grammar concepts should be taught explicitly could be rationalized from her perspective that teaching students with the grammatical concepts explicitly could produce students who are knowledgeable with terminologies and rules but are not capable of applying what they have learned in a speech context. She also mentioned using HOTS as a strategy in teaching grammar and using pen and paper tests as evaluative activity, but these two were not observed during her class. In Mica's case, some of her stated beliefs on how grammar should be taught not seen during her class, include the use of a communicative approach in language teaching, literature as a springboard in teaching grammatical concepts, and use of pen and paper test and composition writing as an evaluative activity. Meanwhile, an approach to error correction, which was not stated as one of their beliefs, was observed during their class. This has to do with the implicit correction of students' grammatical errors.

Contextual factors such as time elements can have a powerful effect on teachers' classroom practice. Both participants 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. The complexities of the classroom atmosphere and the pace of teaching can constrain teachers' abilities to attend to their beliefs and provide instruction that 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. Teachers' stated reason for their divergence in their grammatical beliefs coincides with what Ng and Farrel (2003) and Farrel and Lim (2005) found that the lack of congruence between the beliefs and practices in grammar teaching of the English teachers in Singapore was explained in relation to the contextual factors, such as time, which exerted a powerful influence on what teachers did in the classroom. Another reason for divergence could be the issue of education curriculum in which the imposition of a certain curriculum hinders the creative exploration of teachers. Such programs, according to the participants (Extract 9), must include not only specialized syllabus but also a leeway to enhance learning experience through selections of appropriate materials. Both participants believe that educational programs find ways to standardized at the same time personalize learning activities. Another critical issue of concern deals with the practicality of the topics.

Extract 9

- M: I usually rely on the Curriculum Guide provided by the DepEd, but I incorporate grammar in context as much as possible. Language teaching as prescribed in the DepEd curriculum is more of communicative, that is, lessons in grammar are taught using popular literature or are integrated across discipline.
- E: I still believe that traditional teaching of grammar works though that might not be the case in our present curriculum. This is our orientation as far as language teaching and learning are concerned. However, as a teacher, it is my responsibility to see what actually works with my lesson to achieve the objectives.

Mica's reliance on the "prescribed" seemed in contrast to her "as much as possible I incorporate" thing. There is a consideration that she is under a system and ought to follow; that is what she brings to the classroom. However, her beliefs about doing 'the thing' come out when she is already inside the classroom.

The "I still believe" in Ella's response (Extract 9) is so powerful, implying deviance on the "that might not be the case in our present curriculum". Upon entering a classroom, most teachers would have already possessed a well-developed set of beliefs. It is generally acknowledged that teachers possess theoretical beliefs about teaching and learning and those beliefs and theories tend to shape the nature of their instructional practice. Consequently, the experienced teacher (Ella) really has the intention to follow the prescribed curriculum, but in some ways, once inside the classroom, she deviates because of the "responsibility to see what actually works with my lesson to achieve the objectives." According to Nespor (1987 in Borg, 2006), teachers are likely to teach in different ways because teachers' beliefs are more powerful than their knowledge in influencing how they teach.

The third reason for the divergence in their held beliefs is their intention of improving their teaching proficiency with particular respect to the pragmatic and semantic aspects of grammar instruction, as it was found to be one of the most significant weaknesses of participants' knowledge. Their responses in Extract 10 reveal such.

Extract 10

E: However, it is sometimes unfortunate that students remember only the term and not the function. During the discussion of definition, classification and conjugation, students know the terms, but if it is time for them to apply the concepts in practical, students fail to remember the functions of the terminologies.

M: Depending on the level of students, I would juggle between doing it deductively and inductively.

The experienced teacher expressed frustrations that in the course of teaching, what is expected is not what happens in reality. She feels that somehow what she ideally would like to happen with all her preparations and interventions, between the lines, something may gone astray, which *unfortunately* fail. Noting the disparity of what is ideal and what is real somehow forced the experienced teacher to deviate. The relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices is, in some instances, far from straightforward. What the teacher believed to be ideal and the frustration of what really explains the mismatching between teachers' beliefs and their practices through the external and internal constraints pressuring the teacher.

From Extract 10, it appears that the less experienced teacher possesses two types of beliefs. One type is her fundamental beliefs, which represent her true understanding and proper knowledge of grammar. Then the other type is her modified belief is shaped under the influence of some challenges. The “depending” remarks mark the possibility of deviance to what is expected of her as an ESL teacher and her perceived understanding of the actual need of the situation. She even reiterates, “I would juggle.” This expressed her weighing of things on a case-to-case basis; hence, nothing is fixed, neither her actual beliefs nor her modified belief.

It is also revealed that there are some serious challenges for participants who do not let their fundamental beliefs, whether wholly or partially, come to the surface. These challenges pertain to the most important factors of learning, the students themselves. These factors, according to the participants, are mainly responsible for their existing instructional behaviors. Such aligns with what Borg (1998) identified factors that may facilitate or hinder teachers' instructional decisions to perform their practices. Students' improvement or deterioration, according to the participants, will ameliorate or decline the effectiveness of their practices and make their real beliefs to be implemented or replaced by modified beliefs. The less experienced (Mica) instructional intentions is altered somehow by her understanding where her students are. She believes that affects are also consideration of effective teaching. The teacher's sympathetic view of students learning somehow would consciously and unconsciously make her deviate from the automatic error correction and or other learning activities that could impede or negatively stimulate students' learning. Therefore, teachers'

cognitions together with student factors would influence the extent to which they make their beliefs harmonious with their teaching behaviors. It also seems that, findings of this research study in terms of challenging factors, as discussed in above, can give a complete picture of the barriers in terms of student's well-being whose removal would possibly cause grammar instructions to be effective in at least high school context.

4. CONCLUSION

To begin with, the present study provides further evidence of the notion that teachers' mental and cognitive lives are worth investigating. The results presented ushered several issues as regards understanding the relationship between teachers' cognition on grammar teaching and their actual teaching practice. The findings confirm that teachers' cognition on grammar teaching has an impact on their work.

In general, not much difference was noted in the beliefs the two teachers have. Both have quite similar beliefs on how grammar should be presented to their students. This means that the beliefs of the two participants do not seem to be anchored in two extremely opposing poles. The only visible difference was that the experienced teacher provided more insights on why and how a certain approach can be carried out as well as its implications to teaching and learning. Such finding strengthens the role of experience in one's beliefs and practices. While the two teachers, experienced and less experienced, share some similarities in their beliefs and practice, still there are aspects in their beliefs and practices that are different. The only thing that experience has got to do in shaping their belief systems might be the insights developed by the experienced teacher attributed to her longer years of exposure with the students as well as the use of the different approaches. What then differentiates the two would be on the tendency to conform or deviate from their held frameworks on grammar teaching. The less experienced teacher has shown more instances of divergence from her stated beliefs than the experienced one. This is similar to what Farrel and Dennis (2013 in Tamimy, 2015) found that there is a higher degree of correspondence between beliefs and practices for the case of experienced teacher since the observed classroom practices of the experienced teachers were more clearly related to their beliefs. For Banturkmen (2004 in Tamimy, 2015), experience might be among the factors bringing about a higher convergence between espoused theories and theories in use.

Though both believe in the idea that explicit discussion of grammar rules is helpful for students, it was not much given emphasis during the classroom discussion. What had transpired instead was the learning of grammar points out of the examples solicited from the students. This leads to the key issue of second language pedagogy. The concern here is whether the learner should be taught to consciously approach the learning task as an intellectual exercise or be encouraged to avoid thinking about the language and absorb it intuitively.

Both agree that it is better for students to figure out for themselves why their previous answer was wrong and that all grammatical errors should be corrected in students' oral work. Hence, whenever the student produces ungrammatical sentences, they would not tell students that there is an error committed but what was done was repeat the sentence until the student realized that there was disagreement between the subject and the verb as the case may be.

Even though there have been some proofs about the strong relation between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice and several disagreements, it can be concluded that teachers' beliefs are dynamic, changeable, and non-resistant to contextual factors around them.

In a rapidly changing environment, teaching has become a multifaceted endeavor enacted with the dynamic context of student, curriculum and situation interactions. Hence, teachers are often faced with complex ambitious teaching and learning problems, which require analysis, interpretation, judgment and creativity to make decisions for actions. But social phenomena in a teacher's work setting proliferates and most of the time, teachers are caught in situations that constrain options and require immediate and intuitive responses.

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