Integrating Grammar in Adult TESOL Classrooms

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This paper examines the beliefs and practices about the integration of grammar and skills teaching reported by 176 English language teachers from 18 countries. Teachers completed a questionnaire which elicited beliefs about grammar teaching generally as well as specific beliefs and reported practices about the integration of grammar and skills teaching. Teachers expressed strong beliefs in the need to avoid teaching grammar in isolation and reported high levels of integration of grammar in their practices. This study also examines how teachers conceptualize integration and the sources of evidence they draw on in assessing the effectiveness of their instructional practices in teaching grammar. The major findings for this paper stem from an analysis of these two issues. A range of ways in which teachers understood integration are identified and classified into two broad orientations which we label temporal and contextual. An analysis of the evidence which teachers cited in making judgements about the effectiveness of their grammar teaching practices showed that it was overwhelmingly practical and experiential and did not refer in any explicit way to second language acquisition theory. Given the volume of available theory about L2 grammar teaching generally and integration specifically, the lack of direct reference to such evidence in teachers’ accounts is noteworthy.

INTEGRATED L2 GRAMMAR TEACHING

No area of second and foreign (L2) language learning has been the subject of as much empirical and practical interest as grammar teaching. Assumptions about grammar and its role in L2 learning often lie at the heart of different orientations to L2 pedagogy and the history of L2 teaching could arguably be described in terms of the different degrees of prominence which grammar teaching has enjoyed at different points in time. Several areas in teaching grammar remain the focus of debate (for a recent review and discussion of these see Ellis 2006; Sheen 2006). Nonetheless, it is now generally accepted that some formal attention to grammar can have a beneficial impact on learning and some general pedagogical guidelines for formal instruction have been proposed. One of these, which Mitchell (2000: 27) highlights, is that ‘grammar teaching needs to be supported and embedded in meaning-oriented activities and tasks, which give immediate opportunities for practice and use’. The notion of embeddedness (a term synonymous with integration) is relevant in the context of this study. A range of linguistic and methodological frameworks for integrating grammar work into the L2 learning process
exist: lexical approaches (Little 1994), systemic-functional linguistics (Burns 2003), task-based learning (Ellis 2003), discourse approaches (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000) and communicative language teaching generally (e.g. Johnson 1982). All of the above represent attempts to make learning grammar part of some broader linguistic, contextual, and communicational phenomenon.

More specifically, both Doughty and Williams (1998b) and Ellis (2006) analyse the relationship between grammar teaching and communicative activities in terms of broad instructional options available to L2 teachers. The former outline three models for integrating attention to form and meaning in L2 teaching. The first involves prior brief explicit instruction of formal knowledge, complemented by short interventions during subsequent meaning-oriented work to focus on form when required. The second model reflects a so-called presentation–practice–production approach to language teaching—moving from explicit explanation of grammar, to controlled practice and on to more extensive communicative practice which aims to enable learners to proceduralize their knowledge of the target grammar. In the third model, ‘attention to form and meaning [is] integrated at all times, with or without explicit instruction’ (Doughty and Williams 1998b: 250). They also distinguish between simultaneous integration of form and meaning (as in their third model) and sequential integration (as in the first). Ellis (2006) too highlights three options: focus on forms (which isolates grammar and maps on to the second model above), planned focus on form—‘where a focused task is required to elicit occasions for using a predetermined grammatical structure’ (Ellis 2006: 100), and incidental focus on form, which involves unplanned attention to form in the context of communicative work.

The general frameworks for integration mentioned earlier, combined with these more specific pedagogical options make it clear that, in terms of the relation between grammar teaching and communicative work, there are many options available to teachers. Additionally, as Ellis (2006) concludes, while there is general agreement about the need for learners to make form–meaning connections, there is no consensus among SLA theorists regarding the degree of integration between grammar and communicative work which promotes language learning most effectively.

LANGUAGE TEACHER COGNITION

Whilst the substantive focus for this study (integrating grammar) derives from SLA work, it is the field of language teacher cognition which most strongly informs our orientation. Teacher cognition refers to the study of what teachers know, think, and believe and how these relate to what teachers do. This perspective on the study of teaching has led in the last 15 years to a rapid increase in this type of research in the field of language teaching (Borg 2006). There has, more specifically, been considerable interest in teachers’ cognitions about grammar teaching (e.g. Andrews 2003; Burgess and Etherington 2002;
Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers 1997; Schulz 1996, 2001) and we will draw on these studies later. Much L2 teacher cognition research shows that, particularly in the absence of uncontested conclusions about what constitutes good practice, teachers base instructional decisions on their own practical theories. There is evidence that such theories are formed largely through experience and grounded in teachers’ understandings of their teaching contexts. This research also demonstrates the complex nature of teachers’ instructional decision-making and that such decisions are shaped by a range of interacting factors, both inside and beyond the classroom (e.g. Bailey 1996; Burns 1996; Borg 1999). Teachers’ instructional choices are thus motivated by diverse psychological, instructional, institutional and social influences; understanding these influences, as, amongst others Freeman (2002) and Johnson (1999) have argued, is therefore central to a better understanding of language teaching.

These insights inform the perspective we adopt here in studying the integration of grammar in adult TESOL classrooms. We believe that, especially given the lack of consensus referred to above, teachers will hold personally-defined understandings of the value of integration which, through interaction with other internal and external factors, will shape the way grammar and skills work are related in teachers’ practices. We also believe that insights into teachers’ conceptions of integration will extend current understandings of L2 grammar teaching and allow us to assess the relationships between theoretical models of integration and what teachers do. This work, therefore, provides opportunities for comparisons to be made between formal theory (as reflected in the SLA literature) and practical theory (as defined in teachers’ conceptualizations of integration).

With the above considerations in mind, our overall goal in this paper is to examine L2 teachers’ beliefs and reported practices in relation to the integration of grammar teaching and skills work. More specifically, we also consider the extent to which teachers’ accounts of their beliefs and practices refer explicitly to SLA theory.

METHOD

The data reported here are part of a larger study—based on surveys, classroom observations, and interviews—of teachers’ beliefs and practices about integrating grammar teaching in adult TESOL classrooms. For reasons of space, here we focus in detail only on the survey data.

The survey

The study utilized a cross-sectional survey. In the form of a questionnaire, this allows large amounts of data to be collected efficiently, economically, and in a standardized manner (Aldridge and Levine 2001; De Vaus 2002; Dörnyei 2003). Questionnaires (particularly when administered electronically) also facilitate data collection from geographically diverse samples (see Couper
2005 for a discussion of the use of technology in survey administration) and this was an important consideration in this study. Equally, however, questionnaires have a number of disadvantages, particularly when used to examine respondents’ beliefs. For example, they may generate superficial answers and do not allow in-depth exploration of particular issues (although the judicious use of open-ended questions can address these concerns, as this study illustrates). Responses may also be influenced by social desirability bias (Dörnyei 2003)—the tendency to give answers that are felt to be socially acceptable. Questionnaires, too, cannot measure action but only respondents’ reports of their actions (Babbie 2003; Borg 2006). We recognize that the questionnaire data we report on here represent teachers’ stated beliefs and reported practices, and we do not draw from these data conclusions about teachers’ actual practices; our main concern, rather, is the beliefs about and conceptualizations of integration that teachers hold.

Research questions

Informed by the literature on L2 grammar teaching and teacher cognition reviewed earlier, the research questions we addressed in this study were:

1. What beliefs about grammar teaching generally are reported by TESOL practitioners working with adult learners (18 years and over)?
2. Are the beliefs and practices about grammar teaching reported by teachers related to (a) their experience; (b) their qualifications; (c) the status of English for their learners (English as a foreign language (EFL) vs. English as a second language (ESL))?  
3. To what extent do teachers say that they integrate grammar teaching into their work?
4. What conceptions of integration emerge from teachers’ accounts of the relationship between the teaching of grammar and of language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in their work?
5. To what extent do teachers believe that their reported approach to the integration of grammar is effective in promoting language learning?
6. What evidence do they cite in justifying their views about such effectiveness?
7. To what extent do teachers’ explanations of their beliefs and practices vis-à-vis integration refer to SLA theory?

While the findings for research questions 1–3 are of interest, the major insights in this study stem from our analysis of questions 4–7.

Data collection and analysis

There is an extensive literature on questionnaire design which covers issues such as question types, item wording and sequencing, layout, instructions, and piloting (e.g. Oppenheim 1992; Gillham 2000; Aldridge and Levine 2001;
Brown 2001; De Vaus 2002; Fowler 2002; Dörnyei 2003). The construction of
the instrument used in this study (see Appendix 1) was informed by this lit-
erature. The questionnaire had three sections. Section 1 collected demographic
information. Section 2 presented 15 statements about grammar teaching and
learning for responses on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly
disagree). The statements (see Table 5 for the full list) aimed to cover a range of
key issues in grammar teaching, such as the role of explicit teaching (e.g. state-
ment 4) and of explicit knowledge (e.g. statement 2), the position of grammar
in instructional sequences (e.g. statement 5), the role of the teacher (e.g. state-
ment 9), the importance of practice (e.g. statement 3), deductive and inductive
learning (statement 12), comparisons between teaching children and adults
(e.g. statement 13), and the integration of grammar with other
skills (statement 6). Section 3 asked specifically about the integration of gram-
mar teaching with the teaching of other communicative skills. Teachers were
invited to indicate the extent to which they felt such integration took place in
their work, to illustrate their position, and to cite evidence for their belief in
its effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness). The open-ended questions in this
section were the source of the most insightful data in this study.

The questionnaire was piloted with a group of 15 teachers of English in Brazil
and eight in Australia and ethical approval was then obtained from the
researchers’ respective institutions. The researchers approached personal con-
tacts2 in a range of TESOL contexts and invited them to facilitate the admin-
istration of the questionnaire to groups of teachers of English to adults between
January and April 2006. We adopted a multi-modal approach where teachers
were able to respond in hard copy, through a web-based questionnaire, or via
an attachment which could be completed off-line and returned by e-mail.

Statistical analyses of the quantitative questionnaire responses were con-
ducted using SPSS 12. The two open-ended questions (Section 3, 1b and 2b)
generated over 11,000 words of text and were analysed qualitatively.
Responses were first transferred in full and sequentially from the question-
naires into a spreadsheet, and content analysis was then applied to code the
responses according to the different kinds of relationship between grammar
and the other skills they described (for 1b) and the different kinds of evidence
teachers cited in justifying the effectiveness of their chosen approach to inte-
gration (for 2b). In both cases, therefore, no a priori framework was applied to
the qualitative data and our focus was on identifying indigenous concepts
(Patton 1990) through a comprehensive analysis of the data.

For Question 1b, one of the principal investigators completed the initial
analysis and the resultant categories were then tested against the data by
the second principal investigator. Specifically, just over 20 per cent of the
responses, selected using a form of quota sampling (three responses were
chosen randomly from each original category to ensure each was represented),
together with a separate list of the categories identified by the first researcher,
were sent to the second researcher, who then independently coded the data
against these categories. After comparing our analyses (in which we agreed on
the categorization of just under 60 per cent of the responses used in the checking), we discussed further those responses to which we had assigned different interpretations and reached consensus on the most appropriate interpretation in each case. We stress that we did not conceive of this comparison of our analyses as a conventional exercise in inter-rater reliability but rather as an opportunity to compare our respective interpretations of a set of qualitative responses and, through a discussion of these interpretations, to develop categories which accounted for and were soundly grounded in the data.

For Question 2b, multiple analytic perspectives were also applied to the data; categories for different kinds of evidence cited by teachers in explaining their position vis-à-vis integration were initially developed (using the coding procedures described above) by a research assistant. These categories were subsequently tested for accuracy and comprehensiveness and refined against the data by one of the principal investigators, who conducted a comprehensive analysis of the full data set. The resulting categories were then submitted to a third stage of checking by the second principal investigator, following the inter-analyst checking process described above (with an initial level of agreement of 78 per cent). The outcome was a classification of the different kinds of evidence teachers cited in justifying their approach to integration which was soundly grounded in the questionnaire data.

Section 1: Background data

Excluding the pilot data, 231 teachers of English to adults from 18 countries completed the questionnaire. A total of 109 of these (46 per cent) came from Australia and New Zealand, with only 6 (2.5 per cent) from South America; 25.7 per cent were from Europe and 23.2 per cent from Asia. Given these extremes in the largest and smallest of these groups, and in order to define a more balanced sample in terms of geographical distribution, a random sample of 60 of the teachers from Australia and New Zealand was selected for analysis, and the respondents from South America omitted. This gave a revised non-probability sample of 176 teachers, broken down regionally as shown in Table 1. The results below are based on the responses of these 176 teachers. Tables 2 and 3 describe the respondents in terms of experience and qualifications.

Table 1: Composition of sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia &amp; NZ</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These tables respectively show that in terms of experience the sample was quite evenly distributed and that teachers with an MA or doctorate comprised just under 49 per cent of the sample. This profile suggests that this sample of English language teachers was relatively highly qualified.

Questions 4 and 5 in Section 1 collected information about the respondents’ institutions; the former found that 37.8 per cent of the teachers worked in the private sector and 57 per cent in the state sector, while the results for the latter are given in Table 4.

Overall, the majority worked in adult education colleges and in universities. The high percentage of university staff in this sample may explain to some extent the profile of high qualifications referred to earlier.

The final background question asked respondents if English was a foreign or second language for their adult learners. In terms of this variable, the sample was divided into two equal groups ($N=174$, 50 per cent in each category).

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**Table 2: Years of ELT experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>176</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Highest ELT qualification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>173</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 2: Beliefs about grammar learning and teaching

This section consisted of 15 statements about grammar learning and teaching. Respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement with each on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Table 5 summarizes the responses. Before discussing the levels of agreement evident here it is worth noting that nine of the 15 statements elicited over 20 per cent of ‘unsure’ responses. This pattern may reflect teachers’ actual uncertainties about various aspects of teaching grammar (e.g. over 26 per cent were unsure about whether direct grammar teaching was more appropriate for older learners). The trend may also reflect the difficulties some teachers faced in articulating their beliefs about grammar teaching—this may be an activity many teachers had not engaged in before.

Figure 1 collapses these results into two categories for each statement—‘agree’ (made up of agree and strongly agree) and ‘disagree’ (made up of disagree and strongly disagree). This allows the overall direction of the teachers’ responses to emerge more clearly.

For reasons of space (and in order to proceed quickly to the more insightful data below) we will not discuss the separate statements in detail here. Overall, though, what the responses to these 15 statements suggest is that the sample held strong views about the value of grammar practice as a means of developing fluency (the two statements which received the highest level of agreement were 3 and 8) and about the value of inductive grammar learning. The teachers did not see their roles primarily in terms of explaining rules and correcting errors. There was mild evidence of a belief in the value of indirect grammar work with younger learners (although, as noted above, over 25 per cent were unsure on this matter) and a preference for more explicit instruction with older learners. There was also some evidence that explicit knowledge of grammar was seen to be desirable and beneficial, although this does not imply a preference for direct formal instruction. A definite position on the role of grammar teaching in relation to CLT did not emerge. Two findings may seem contradictory: while over 48 per cent of the teachers agreed that a focus on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary or High School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education College</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Beliefs about grammar learning and teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Unsure %</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Strongly agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Teachers should present grammar to learners before expecting them to use it.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Learners who are aware of grammar rules can use the language more effectively than those who are not.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Exercises that get learners to practise grammar structures help learners develop fluency in using grammar.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Teaching the rules of English grammar directly is more appropriate for older learners.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 During lessons, a focus on grammar should come after communicative tasks, not before.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Grammar should be taught separately, not integrated with other skills such as reading and writing.</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 In a communicative approach to language teaching grammar is not taught directly.</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 In learning grammar, repeated practice allows learners to use structures fluently.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 In teaching grammar, a teacher’s main role is to explain the rules.</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 It is important for learners to know grammatical terminology.</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Unsure %</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Strongly agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 Correcting learners’ spoken grammatical errors in English is one of the teacher’s key roles.</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Grammar learning is more effective when learners work out the rules for themselves.</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Indirect grammar teaching is more appropriate with younger than with older learners.</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Formal grammar teaching does not help learners become more fluent.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 It is necessary to study the grammar of a second or foreign language in order to speak it fluently.</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Responses to statements about grammar teaching and learning
grammar should follow communicative tasks (Q1), 40 per cent also agreed that
grammar should be presented before students are expected to use it (Q5). However, closer analysis shows that responses on these two items actually
correlate negatively and that this relationship, while weak, is significant
\((N = 169, r = 0.293, p < .0001)\). Teachers who agreed with one of these state-
ments, then, tended to disagree with the other.

Of particular relevance here was the finding that over 84 per cent of the
teachers disagreed with the statement that ‘grammar should be taught sepa-
rately, not integrated with other skills such as reading and writing’. This find-
ing is not surprising, but teachers’ strong views about the desirability of
integrating grammar teaching with the learning of other language skills pro-
vides the basis for a deeper and more interesting analysis of their conceptions
of integration which we present below.

Section 3: Integrating grammar teaching

In Section 3 of the questionnaire teachers were asked about the extent to
which grammar was integrated into the teaching of other skills and to illustrate
and cite evidence for their position vis-à-vis integration. They were also asked
about the level of control they felt they had over the choice of instructional
materials they used. The open-ended questions in this section (1b & 2b) are
discussed below; we first present the responses to the closed questions (1a, 1c
& 2a) teachers answered here. Before proceeding, it is important for us to
clarify that, given the focus of this study, we did not provide teachers with a
definition of integration (e.g. one of those from the literature we discussed
earlier) against which they were asked to assess their practices. Our goal was to
elicit teachers’ conceptualizations of what integration is and providing our own
definition would have been detrimental to this goal.

Question 1a asked about the extent to which grammar was integrated with
the teaching of other skills. The results are shown in Figure 2.

Out of 162 responses to this question, 160 (almost 99 per cent) said that
there was at least some integration in their approach to teaching grammar
(only two teachers selected ‘no integration’). In answering this question,
teachers had to make a judgement about what no, some, substantial, and
complete integration meant and we acknowledge that these judgements
naturally varied. This is not necessarily problematic in exploratory work of
this kind, and while will we would not want to over-emphasize distinctions
between each discrete point on our scale of integration, the overall finding
here is indicative of the prevalent perception among the teachers that they
do not teach grammar in isolation.

Question 1c asked teachers about the degree of control they had in choosing
instructional materials. As Table 6, shows, almost 70 per cent of respondents
said they had much or complete control over their choice of materials. This
suggests that the position on integration teachers reported was not generally
imposed on them by prescribed materials and curricula (and thus was a
position they were more likely genuinely subscribed to). This is not to suggest, of course, that the instructional materials teachers used had no influence on their classroom practices.

The final quantitative item in this section asked teachers to rate the effectiveness of their approach to integrating or not integrating grammar. The results summarized in Table 7 indicate that (supporting the results in Figure 2) the large majority said they integrated grammar with the teaching of other skills; these teachers also overwhelmingly felt that doing so was an effective instructional strategy. This finding is congruent, too, with that reported earlier that the vast majority of the teachers disagreed with the view that grammar should be taught in isolation.

The open-ended items in Section 3 invited teachers to elaborate on the views expressed in Questions 1a and 2a. In Question 1b, respondents were asked to explain the relationship between grammar and the teaching of other skills. Our aim here was to gain insight into the conceptions of grammar integration held by the teachers. In Question 2b, teachers were asked to comment on the evidence they drew on in assessing the effectiveness or otherwise of their approach in integrating or isolating grammar. As noted earlier, the most
important findings for this study stem from an analysis of these items and we will now discuss them in turn.

Relationship between grammar and skills

Of the 162 teachers who answered Question 1a, 138 provided an answer to Question 1b and explained the relationship between grammar and skills work in their teaching. If we remove the two teachers who said there was no integration, this leaves 136 teachers who said there was at least some integration in their work and who provided comments to explain this (just under 6,500 words of text were provided in total, averaging about 48 words per respondent). Table 8 summarizes the different conceptions of integration which emerged from the analysis of Question 1b.

**Table 7: Effectiveness of degree of integration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness of degree of integration</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separate and effective</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate but not effective</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate and effective</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>90.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate and not effective</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8: Ways of integrating grammar and skills teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of integration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar in context</td>
<td>Presenting and practising grammar by placing it in meaningful contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deriving grammar from texts</td>
<td>Focusing on grammar which emerges from texts being used for skills work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting grammar through texts</td>
<td>Presenting grammar through texts chosen to illustrate it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-driven grammar work</td>
<td>Choosing a grammar focus with the needs of a communicative task in mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar in preparation for skills work</td>
<td>Using grammar work to prepare students for subsequent skills work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar after skills work</td>
<td>Focusing on grammar work to follow up skills work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive focus on grammar</td>
<td>Focusing on grammar in response to errors, questions and difficulties which arise during skills work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

468 INTEGRATING GRAMMAR IN ADULT TESOL CLASSROOMS
As Table 8 shows, integration assumes many forms for teachers and is clearly not a concept which is understood in this sample in a specific, shared way. Nonetheless, recurrent conceptions of what integration involves were discernible, and below we discuss and illustrate these with examples from the teachers’ comments. We should point out that these categories do not necessarily reflect exclusive instructional strategies; they reflect different perspectives on integration, perspectives which may, nonetheless, assume similar forms in practice. Also, the conceptions we discuss here do not all operate at the same level of generality, and thus some may be viewed as more specific realizations of others. We comment on this at appropriate points below. One further point to make is that the notions of integration we present typically allow scope for explicit grammar work; integration in the sense of a wholly implicit approach to the development of grammatical competence is not in evidence here.

**Grammar in context.** To start from a very broad conception of integration, there were a number of comments which explained the relationship between grammar and skills teaching with primary reference to the notion of putting or using grammar in a context. For example:

Integration is important so as to allow students to apply the rules / forms / structures in context. Teaching grammar rules alone will defeat the purpose. (1017, Malaysia7)

In such comments the value of context in teaching grammar was typically affirmed without an explanation of what this meant in practice for the teacher. Where some explanation was given, context was seen primarily in terms of skills work which provided a meaningful framework in which grammar could be used (with or without subsequent explicit focus). This notion of placing grammar in context is made more specific in the next two categories of responses, both of which describe integration in terms of a relationship between texts and grammar work.

**Deriving grammar from texts.** Teachers commonly explained that grammar work was derived from texts the students were working on. For example:

Grammar points are usually derived from reading texts (or sometimes spoken texts) that the students are already working with. Formal grammar exercises may be introduced if considered appropriate to their content material, but often the students work together to deduce the grammar rules by themselves from the context. (63, Japan)

This was the most frequently cited notion of integration (by 21 out of 136 teachers, or 15.4 per cent). What such comments share is an emphasis on the way grammar work emerges in relation to texts which the students have already been working on (in particular through reading). The implication is that the texts are primary, chosen perhaps in relation to specific themes or skills the teachers want to cover, and that grammar work is determined by and emerges in response to these texts.
Presenting grammar through texts. A number of other comments which also focused on the relationship between texts and grammar implied that it was the grammar that determined the choice of text. Here is an example:

Before dwelling on the grammatical rules, students read texts or listen to conversations which contain a high amount of the grammatical item in question. (2020, Turkey)

The differences in observable classroom practice between this and the previous form of grammar integration may be hard to discern; both involve the use of texts and both may postpone a focus on grammar until the text has been worked on from a skills perspective. Both, too, can also be seen as specific realizations of the notion of placing grammar in context. Conceptually, though, there is a clear distinction between text-driven (where the text is primary and grammar derived from it) and form-driven (where texts are chosen to serve grammatical needs) approaches to grammar integration.

Task-driven grammar work. Another way of providing a context for grammar work is to link it to the requirements of specific communicative tasks. One teacher, for example, explained that

I focus on the grammar and the grammar item that is essential in the task given; whereby the particular grammar item could impact on the effectiveness of the task to be completed. (1018, Malaysia)

The conception of integration in this category was that tasks were primary and that grammar work served the needs of the tasks, facilitating students’ work in completing them.

Grammar as preparation for skills work. In the conceptions of integration so far discussed, texts and tasks provided a meaningful context in which grammar could be used and studied. The relationship between grammar and skills work, though, was also conceptualized from a temporal perspective, and three positions relevant to this perspective emerged here. The first described grammar work as preparation for skills work, and this was also the second most common notion of integration in the data overall (mentioned by 13 teachers, or 9.6 per cent). One teacher summarized this kind of relationship simply as ‘horse and carriage’ (1066, Australia); another comment illustrates this position in more detail:

Reading—certain new/difficult grammatical items need to be explained before reading the text for learners to understand the text read. Writing—learners need to be taught certain grammatical structures required for the writing task to reduce errors made in their writing. (1012, Ukraine)

The foundational nature of grammar work is clear here; according to this respondent, a focus on grammar prior to reading facilitates comprehension while prior attention to form also facilitates writing and reduces errors. For all responses in this category, the need for grammar to precede skills work was consistently salient.
Grammar after skills work. A second temporal perspective on grammar integration is illustrated in the next set of comments:

grammar lessons naturally follow after introducing or studying a piece of reading or writing. (1058, Australia)

In my class I focus on the development of the skill first then the content and last find the most relevant grammar forms to discuss. (30, Indonesia)

The key characteristic of integration in these comments is temporal—grammar work is explicitly described as an activity which occurs after skills work. The contextual perspective to integration described earlier and through which grammar is derived from texts would seem congruent with this particular temporal perspective.

Reactive focus on grammar. A third position on integration which has a temporal perspective is reactive focus on grammar. This position is illustrated below:

I usually gather errors from their utterances and after the speaking tasks highlight the grammatical structures that they need to review. The grammar needs arise from their performance. (71, Turkey)

Statements in this category described explicit attention to grammar as an activity limited to situations where, because of student errors or questions, the teacher decided that such attention would be desirable. The temporal nature of this category derives from the fact that reactive focus on form is triggered by preceding skills work in which an error has been noticed by the teacher or which has caused a student to ask a question. The teacher may decide to focus on the grammar as soon as the error is noticed or the question is asked, or postpone attention to grammar until skills work has been completed. This notion of integration thus encompasses, but allows for a wider range of reactive practices than the definition of focus on form which sees it as unplanned and brief attention to grammar in the context of meaning-oriented work (Long and Robinson 1998).

Overall, then, in explaining the relationship between grammar teaching and the teaching of other skills, teachers highlighted a range of ways in which the notion of grammar integration might be conceived. We have organised these conceptions into two broad groups which represent different but complementary perspectives on integration. The first describes integration in terms of the context—textual and communicative—in which grammar appears. Under this category we included notions of integration which refer to context generically, involve deriving grammar from texts, use texts purposefully to present grammar, and define grammar work in relation to the goals of communicative tasks. The second group of conceptions define the relationship between grammar and other skills temporally; grammar may precede, follow, or occur during work with a skills focus. These contextual and temporal perspectives are not
exclusive but reflect different emphases in the ways the teachers accounted for the relationship between grammar and skills teaching. Irrespective of the perspective adopted by teachers, it is clear that explicit grammar work was a salient feature in the different views of integration they articulated; the need to avoid conducting grammar work in isolation of meaning-oriented activities also came across very strongly.

Sources of evidence

In Question 2b teachers were asked to explain the evidence they drew on in support of the position vis-à-vis integration which they chose in 2a (see Table 7). In answering this question 159 teachers provided a total of just over 4,800 words of text (slightly over 30 words per respondent on average). As noted earlier, by far the most prominent position reported by teachers was that they integrated grammar and found this approach effective in promoting language learning, and here we will focus on the sources of evidence teachers cited in justifying this position. These sources are listed in Table 9, in descending order of frequency (the last column specifies the number of teachers citing each source). We focus here on the four major sources of evidence teachers cited and provide a brief summary of the remainder.

Communicative ability. The evidence most commonly cited by teachers for the effectiveness of an integrated approach derived from their observations of students’ ability to use language and communicate effectively. For example, one teacher explained that ‘in general I can gauge it [the effectiveness of integration] by the ease in which they communicate clearly and effectively’ (1038, Australia). Other comments, though, were more specific in highlighting different perspectives from which effective language use might be judged. These are listed below and followed in each case by an illustrative comment:

- ability to use grammar correctly
  It is apparent through their correct production of the target grammatical point after having taught it. (51, Japan)

- ability to use grammar appropriately in context
  Adult learners show more confidence in both written and spoken outputs in the classroom when grammar teaching is integrated with the other language skills. They do not only know the rules but are also able to use them in appropriate contexts. (34, Philippines)

- ability to complete communicative tasks successfully
  The project-based approach has helped in the integration of grammar and the macro skills. Usually, most of my students end up writing a set of compositions on a list of topics like Myself,
My family, My goals in life, etc. after being introduced to similar passages.... The nett [sic] result at the end of the term is the proof of their achievement—completed compositions. (7, Australia)

Overall, then, the evidence most often cited in support of the effectiveness of an integrated approach to teaching grammar (which, using characterizations that emerged earlier, we interpret to mean explicit focus on form conducted in the context of or near to, temporally, meaning-focused work) was that it enabled students to communicate effectively, using grammar correctly and appropriately in the process.

**Progress.** Related to the previous category, but with a slight difference in emphasis, were comments which cited perceived progress in students’ use and knowledge of language as evidence of effectiveness in integrating grammar. A typical comment here was that ‘I believe integrating grammar is effective based on...their improved performance in communicative tasks’ (61, Philippines). Teachers also made comparisons between students at the start and end of courses in which grammar was integrated, such as ‘I see the students at the beginning of the term and at the end, and I see they communicate more correctly and more confidently’ (1033, Malaysia). There were also references to the way in which progress is achieved when explicit talk about grammar is minimized and the focus is placed on use in context: ‘my learners have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative ability</td>
<td>Students’ ability to communicate effectively (and to use grammar appropriately in doing so)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>Improvement in students’ use and explicit knowledge of language</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student affect</td>
<td>Positive impact of integrated approach on students’ attitudes and motivation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student feedback</td>
<td>Written and oral feedback from students indicating their satisfaction with an integrated approach</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance on assessment</td>
<td>Students’ positive scores on tests and assignments</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ experience</td>
<td>Teachers’ accumulated experience of using an integrated approach successfully</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure of isolating grammar</td>
<td>Teachers’ experience of the ineffectiveness of teaching grammar in isolation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ learning experience</td>
<td>Teachers’ own experience of learning a foreign language using an integrated approach</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ intuition</td>
<td>An intuitive feeling teachers have that an integrated approach to grammar works</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
made more progress when complicated grammatical terms are not referred to but are practised with a context relevant to their situation in mind’ (2034, Germany).

One specific type of progress that was mentioned a number of times was students’ ability to identify and correct errors:

I pay particular attention to the sentences my students use orally and in writing at the beginning of each term and gauge their improvement during the term. Many students are able to correct themselves when I highlight their mistakes. (13, Australia)

Integrating grammar works. This I discern from the level of confidence displayed by the learners. They are better able to identify their own errors even if they may not know how to correct them initially. (1026, Malaysia)

These teachers believed that one measure of the success of their integrated approach was the extent to which students were better able to monitor their output and that of other students and additionally to identify and even correct errors in this output.

Student affect. Teachers also commonly referred to the affective impact that integration had on students. A number of ways in which integrating grammar positively affected students’ feelings about learning English were cited. Again, these are listed below with illustrative examples:

- increased confidence in using English

Adult learners show more confidence in both written and spoken outputs in the classroom when grammar teaching is integrated with the other language skills. (34, Philippines)

- increased learner participation and interest

Students participate more in the activities presented and are more interested and aware of why they do something, the purposes for doing so. Ultimately participation facilitates language proficiency to some extent. (2002, Australia)

- student satisfaction

I think the closest thing I have to a reliable measure is student satisfaction. My students…are more satisfied when grammar is related to its use. Whether this means this approach is effective in improving my learners’ English is anyone’s guess! (75, Turkey)

One teacher also talked about the manner in which integrating grammar reduced the threat which students felt was presented by isolated explicit grammar work:

My learners are traditionally suspicious of grammar and many…have low levels of education in their L1. Integrating grammar
reduces the threat, while raising awareness of the patterns and structure of the language. (90, Australia)

For many teachers, then, an integrated approach to teaching grammar was justified by the positive affective impact it had on students.

*Student feedback.* While the comments above stemmed largely from teachers’ observations of their students’ reactions, there were also comments which referred specifically to student feedback, oral and written, as a source of evidence for the effectiveness of integrated grammar. For example, one teacher wrote: ‘Student feedback. They will tell me what they feel works or doesn’t and what they feel is most beneficial in improving their English’ (12, Australia).

In a similar vein a further teacher wrote that ‘My students have also mentioned to me that they like my integrated approach!’ (1061, Australia).

*Additional sources of evidence.* As Table 9 shows, teachers cited a number of other sources of evidence for their belief that integrated grammar teaching promoted learning effectively. We do not have space to discuss these in detail, but will summarize the key issues. Performance on assessment was specifically cited several times as evidence that integration works. In the words of one teacher, integration worked because ‘they all passed their final examination’ (15, Italy). Some teachers additionally referred to their accumulated experience of teaching as the basis of their belief in the effectiveness of integration, e.g. ‘Through many years of my teaching experience, I think that integrating grammar teaching is much more effective for my students to learn language than separating grammar teaching’ (1039, Australia). Integration was also justified with reference to negative experiences teachers had had teaching grammar in isolation. For example:

I used to try separating grammar lessons from teaching other skills. However, I encountered some problems: The grammar sessions were boring and mechanical, which reduces students’ chances to use the language in life-like situations. Students memorize the rules but still don’t know when to apply which rules. Students quickly forget the rules after some time. (58, Vietnam)

Two additional sources of evidence very few teachers cited were their own experience as learners and ‘intuition’. Three teachers said they believed their integrated approach to grammar was effective as it had worked for them as learners. This comment reflects this position:

I learn French as a second language. My teacher’s approach to grammar integration—which accords with [my] own approach—assists my learning of the language effectively. Thus I apply the same principles to my teaching. My own experience as a second language learner largely directs my teaching. (42, Australia)

A further three teachers, who did not cite any of the kinds of evidence mentioned so far, said they based their judgement on intuition. ‘I intuitively feel
that integration helps’ (1011, Ukraine) was the way one teacher put it. Another explained the same position at more length:

I don’t know but I feel that it [integration] helps…. Since I have more faith in this as a delivery method than I do in the isolated instruction of grammar, it seems better. Of course! (1034, Malaysia)

These comments about intuition raise the interesting issue of the extent to which the kinds of evidence teachers base their judgements on are reliable indicators of the effectiveness of their teaching. There were in fact other teachers who expressed a preference for integration but admitted they were unable to justify this. One simply wrote ‘no idea’ (2032, Germany), another explained that ‘I don’t [know that my approach is effective]. I just assume it is effective’ (2024, Germany).

One final point is that, overall, the evidence teachers cited contained no references to formal knowledge—specific insight or theoretical knowledge obtained through study, training, professional development, and reading. The only comment even hinting at such external sources of evidence was from the teacher who justified their views about integration with reference to:

my observation of learners learning English, also through my professional studies and training as well as through my own experience of learning other languages. (2029, Germany)

Overall, we conclude that the evidence cited for integration was largely practical and experiential rather than theoretical and formal; it was grounded predominantly in teachers’ past or more immediate classroom experiences, especially their perceptions of their learners’ achievement and affective states, and much less so in insights from received knowledge. We explore these issues further in the discussion below.

DISCUSSION

We focus our discussion on two issues. First, we briefly comment on the beliefs about grammar teaching which emerged from the 15 Likert statements. Then, at greater length, we consider the findings which relate specifically to teachers’ beliefs and reported practices regarding the integration of grammar.

In relation to the first issue, there are a number of published studies which survey teachers’ beliefs about grammar teaching; Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) studied 60 English language teachers (30 in New York, 30 in Puerto Rico); Schulz (1996, 2001) surveyed 92 FL and ESL teachers working in Arizona, USA and 122 FL and EFL teachers working in Colombia respectively; Andrews’ (2003) research involved 170 teachers in Hong Kong. Our findings can be mapped onto specific issues to emerge from this work, though the survey we have reported is distinct in the broader geographical perspective it provides (176 teachers from 18 countries).
Overall, our work adds to existing research which suggests that EFL and ESL teachers of adults are generally favourably disposed to some element of explicit grammar work (Schulz 1996; Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers 1997). This does not imply a preference among our sample for direct instruction though, as the number of teachers supporting discovery learning was almost three times greater than the number who favoured explaining rules (Andrews 2003, in comparison, found a much more balanced spread of preferences for inductive and deductive grammar teaching). Also, in line with Schulz (1996), the teachers here did not see the correction of learners’ grammatical errors as one of their primary functions. The teachers did, though, express a strong belief in the positive impact of grammar practice on the development of learners’ fluency; we can compare this finding to that in Schulz (2001), where 71 per cent of 122 foreign language teachers said that communicative ability develops most quickly if students study and practice grammar (in Schulz (1996), however, only 38 per cent of the teachers expressed this view). Overall, the portrait of grammar teaching which emerges here from teachers’ responses to the 15 statements is one characterized by regular phases of explicit work, a desire to encourage students to discover rules (without discounting the use of direct explanation), and regular opportunities for grammar practice. Importantly, as we discuss below, responses indicate that the above features should not occur in isolation but in relation to skills-oriented work. One final point to make about teachers’ beliefs about grammar as expressed in the Likert statements was that they did not relate in any significant way to teachers’ experience and qualifications or to whether English was being learned as a foreign or second language. These conclusions are not surprising when we acknowledge the complex range of factors (see our earlier discussion of teacher cognition) which interact in determining the personalized networks of beliefs that individual teachers hold. Given this complexity, seeking to account for the beliefs teachers hold in terms of discrete demographic variables is unlikely to be productive.

Moving on to our findings vis-à-vis integration, the key result from the Likert statements was the overwhelming belief that grammar teaching should not be separated from the teaching of language skills. This result was corroborated by responses to another part of the questionnaire (Section 3, Question 1a), where almost 99 per cent of respondents reported at least some integration of grammar into their teaching, and just under 67 per cent reported substantial or complete integration. Taken together, these findings add weight to existing research which has highlighted teachers’ positive views of integration. For example, Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers found that most teachers in their study advocated ‘some use of conscious instruction combined with communicative practice’ (1997: 250), while Andrews also concluded that the perspective on grammar teaching most widely supported by teachers in his study was one characterized by a focus on meaning; he interpreted this to mean ‘at the level of belief, if not implementation, a general acceptance of broad communicative principles’ (2003: 357). Whilst we did not
explicitly equate the integration of grammar with communicative language
teaching, broadly interpreted the latter encompasses many of the strategies
for relating form and meaning which teachers here referred to in explaining
their views on integration.

The most interesting insights to emerge from this study, in our opinion, are
those related to teachers’ conceptualizations of integration. In describing how
they integrated grammar and skills work, respondents illustrated a range of
ways in which connections between form and meaning could be conceived of;
almost exclusively, though, integration implied an element of explicit
grammar teaching (even in cases where teachers said they preferred to keep
grammar implicit unless students asked specific questions). While integration
emerged here, then, as a concept subject to varying interpretations, we did
discern in teachers’ accounts two general ways of looking at the relationship
between grammar and skills work. The first we called a contextual perspective,
which described integration in terms of the relationship between grammar
work and the text or task it was related to. The second perspective on integra-
tion was temporal; this was evident in comments which described integration
in terms of when, chronologically, grammar and skills work occurred in
relation to one another. As we noted earlier, the two perspectives are not
discrete and reflect the orientation most evident in teachers’ comments
rather than any necessary differences in classroom practice. Also, as noted
earlier, in this exploratory study we purposely did not restrict responses by
providing a definition of integration for teachers to assess themselves against.
Rather, a key goal was to elicit teachers’ understandings of what integration is.
On the basis of the accounts we now have, though, we can devise a series of
scenarios, each depicting a particular form of integration, and use these to
examine teachers’ beliefs and practices in a more standardized manner.

The teachers were overwhelmingly positive in their beliefs about the value of
integrating grammar and skills work. The insights we have provided into the
evidence teachers cited in support of these beliefs also, we believe, make an
important contribution to an understanding of integration. The sources of evi-
dence cited were overwhelmingly practical and experiential in nature; that is,
teachers justified their chosen approach to integration with reference to accu-
mulated experience of teaching, observations of learners’ ability, progress, and
achievement, feedback from learners, and their own language learning experi-
ence. There was a striking absence of evidence drawn from formal theory and
received knowledge (e.g. SLA research). This was perhaps even more notable
given the profile of high qualifications which characterized this group of
respondents. The experiential and practical nature of teachers’ rationales for
their work has been highlighted in previous research on teacher cognition and
grammar teaching (e.g. Borg 1999); one of the studies referred to earlier,
Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers (1997), also reached a similar conclusion:

Reasons given for how and why conscious grammar was
taught were based mostly on teachers’ perceptions of their own
experience as teachers and learners. It is interesting that our participants rarely justified their approaches by referring to research studies or any particular methodology. (Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers 1997: 255)

This lack of a formal perspective in teachers' rationales was also reflected in the absence of technical language. For example, there was not even one reference to ‘focus-on-form’, a key concept in contemporary discussions of grammar teaching in the SLA literature (e.g. Doughty and Williams 1998a). Models of integration mentioned at the start of this paper, such as discourse approaches to grammar and the lexical approach, were not referred to either; ‘task’ was mentioned a few times, though with the broad meaning of ‘activity’ rather than with specific reference to a task-based framework for L2 learning. This, we feel, is further evidence that teachers make sense of their work largely in relation to experiential and practical knowledge; this does not mean they are unaware of formal theory or that such theory does not exert an indirect influence (e.g. through instructional materials or activity types) on their beliefs and practices; our findings, however, do suggest that formal theory does not play a prominent and direct role in shaping teachers' explicit rationales for their work. The atheoretical nature, in formal terms, of teachers' support for their practices in relation to grammar integration, raises interesting questions about the role of such theory in the work of L2 teachers (see Freeman and Johnson 1998; Tedick 2005 for discussions of the role of theory in second language teacher development more generally). The largely experiential nature of teachers' evidence base in justifying their work similarly raises questions about the reliability of their judgements about its effectiveness. These are issues which merit continuing study.

Despite the absence of technical terminology, the range of conceptualizations which have emerged here reflect—and perhaps go beyond—those suggested by Doughty and Williams (1998b) and Ellis (2006) which we reviewed at the start of this paper; there was evidence of both sequential and simultaneous integration, as well as of incidental and planned focus on form. Many of the comments about presenting and practising language also implied the widespread use of a presentation–practice–production (PPP) approach to L2 learning. Doughty and Williams (1998b) argue that in this approach grammar is not attended to within the context of meaningful communication and they thus see it as an example of Ellis’ (2006) first category of integration—focus on forms. These arguments are justified in relation to PPP in its ‘pure’ form—that is, as contrived presentations of isolated grammar, followed by mechanical drills, and very restricted forms of production where the need for accuracy is never far from teachers' and learners' consciousness. However, in practice, PPP is not necessarily so restricted and we feel that many of the teachers in this study whose conceptualizations of integration reflect variations of PPP would dispute the claim that their approach to integration promoted form at the expense of meaning. This brings us back to a key theme which emerges
from this paper: that the formal frameworks which theorists bring to bear on the description and analysis of pedagogical activities may very often not be isomorphous with the personal and practical pedagogical systems through which teachers make sense of their work.

CONCLUSION

It is important for us to acknowledge that we have not engaged in the direct study of teaching and that our conclusions are based on teachers’ stated beliefs and their reported classroom practices. The non-probability nature of our sample is also a limitation which does not allow us to extend our conclusions beyond the group studied here. The sample was quite diverse geographically and demographically, but it was also characterized by well-qualified teachers working in universities and adult education colleges. These teachers were also all teachers of adults, and so we cannot assume that our findings apply to teachers of teenagers and young children. With these limitations in mind, we feel that this research has provided a number of valuable insights, particularly in relation to teachers’ beliefs about integrating grammar and skills teaching and regarding the range of ways in which teachers’ conceptualized the notion of integration. Of importance too is the overwhelmingly experiential and practical nature of the accounts through which teachers described and justified their chosen approach to integrating grammar. The sources of evidence teachers cited in support of their preferred pedagogy vis-à-vis integration may be relevant to understanding the ways in which teachers judge the effectiveness of their work more generally. The range of evidence cited also raises important questions about the role that formal theory from SLA plays in the ways teachers make sense of their work. Answers to such questions can be most productively achieved through the collaborative efforts of researchers working from both SLA and teacher cognition perspectives. Both perspectives have valuable contributions to make to our understandings of L2 grammar teaching; seeking ways of reconciling them, as Borg (2006) has argued, is key to the continuing development of research into language teaching and learning more generally.

Final version received November 2007

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

An appendix is available at Applied Linguistics online.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was funded by a TESOL International Research Foundation Priority Grant.
NOTES

1 Henceforth, we use ‘integration’ to refer to the relationship between teaching grammar (explicitly or implicitly) and developing learners’ communicative skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

2 We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the many people who facilitated data collection for us and to thank the teachers who contributed.

3 Although it can be assumed that the teachers working in universities taught students whose command of English was at least at intermediate level, learners in adult education colleges may span the full ability range.

4 We did not ask respondents whether they considered themselves to be native or non-native speakers of English; no direct relationship, though, should be assumed between the geographical location teachers worked in and their status in this respect (e.g. several of the teachers working in Australia would not have been native speakers of English).

5 It is important to note that these statements were not designed to form a scale. It is, therefore, not logical to summate each respondent’s answers to each statement in order to arrive at some general measure of their beliefs about grammar teaching and learning.

6 In terms of the reliability of the data, it is encouraging to note the moderate and significant positive correlation in teachers’ responses on these two thematically related items \( N = 167, r = .400, p < .0001 \).

7 Henceforth, qualitative data are followed by a number, which is the respondents’ ID in our database, and the country where they work.

8 The difference in emphasis is that here comments about ability were either comparative in nature or specifically referred to ‘progress’. Those in the previous category simply stated that students were able to do something well.

REFERENCES


