

# Teacher Beliefs About Focus on Form: Differences and Similarities Among Native and L2 Spanish Speakers

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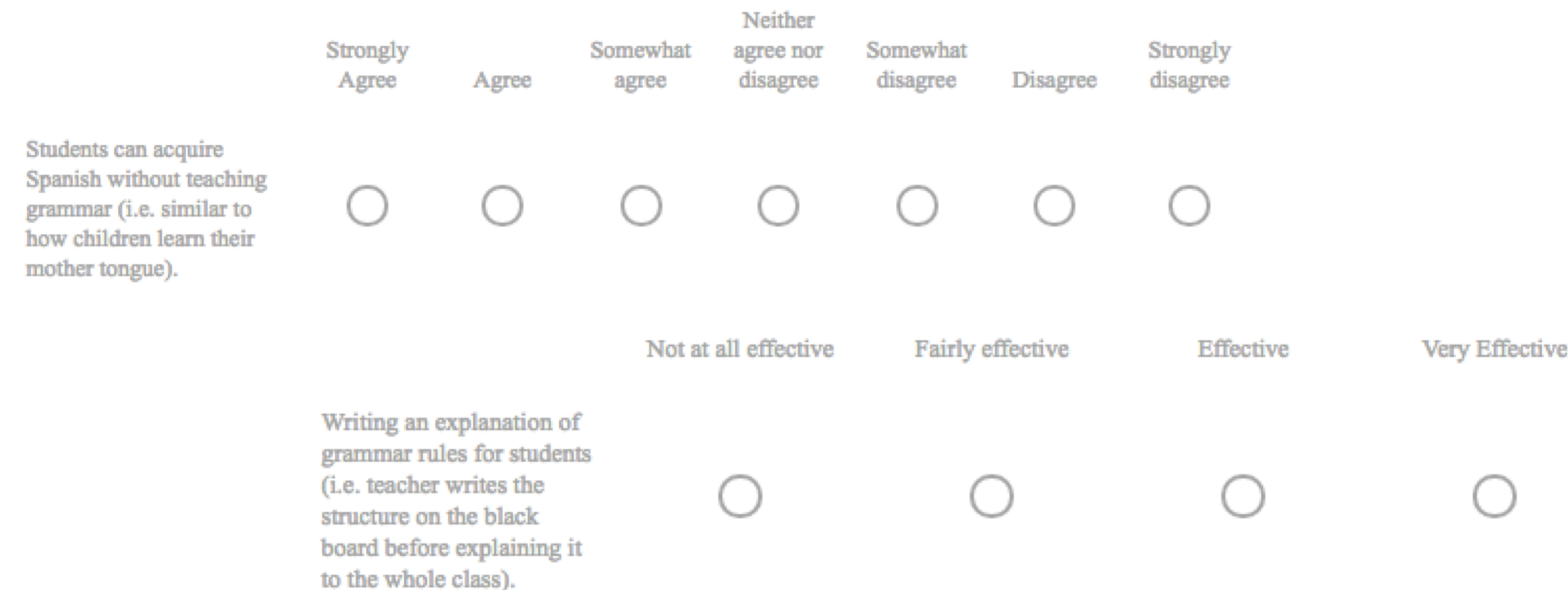
## ABSTRACT

Although there has been research conducted around the beliefs of English as a foreign language teachers in regards to grammar, this research has not been extended to Spanish as a foreign language teachers. This study seeks to fill this gap in literature by identifying differences between native speakers (NS) and speakers of Spanish as a second language (L2) who are teachers of Spanish as a foreign language. Specifically, it aimed to investigate their differing beliefs toward grammar instruction. In this quantitative research study, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire, which included statements about grammar instruction in the classroom. Participants were asked to choose their level of agreement on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Additionally, participants ranked the effectiveness of various teaching strategies on a scale from “very effective” to “not at all effective”. Analysis is based on 59 Spanish as a foreign language teachers who completed the questionnaire, with 45 L2 and 9 NS participants.

Results indicated that L2s and NSs differed in their beliefs toward the way learners learn Spanish and the importance of grammar in learning Spanish. Participants also agreed upon various points, specifically those pertaining to the teaching of grammar and lack of effectiveness in error correction in oral and written works. The analysis indicates a relationship between the way teachers first learn the language and their beliefs toward grammar instruction in their classrooms. These findings suggest a need for examining the way that teacher beliefs affect their teaching practices.

## Material/Method

- Questionnaire
  - Adapted from N. A. A. Ezzi’s study titled “Yemeni Teachers’ Beliefs of Grammar Teaching and Classroom Practices” (2012)
  - Qualtrics
  - 5 questions regarding professional experience and how the participant acquired the Spanish language
  - Likert scale from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”
  - Likert scale from “Not at all effective” to “Very effective”
- Participants
  - World language departments in OPS and LPS
  - Distributed through emailing an anonymous link to the school districts to distribute to the teachers
  - Some participants from personal connections and teacher Facebook groups
- Analysis
  - Qualtrics reports: bar graphs and majority response charts comparing participants’ responses



## Research

Focus on form is a type of communicative language teaching in which grammar is taught through communicative activities.



There are two types of focus on form: incidental and planned. Incidental focus on form is one in which the students infer their own grammar rules through communicative tasks. Planned, on the other hand, is when the teacher has a specific grammar rule in mind when creating and implementing the communicative activity.

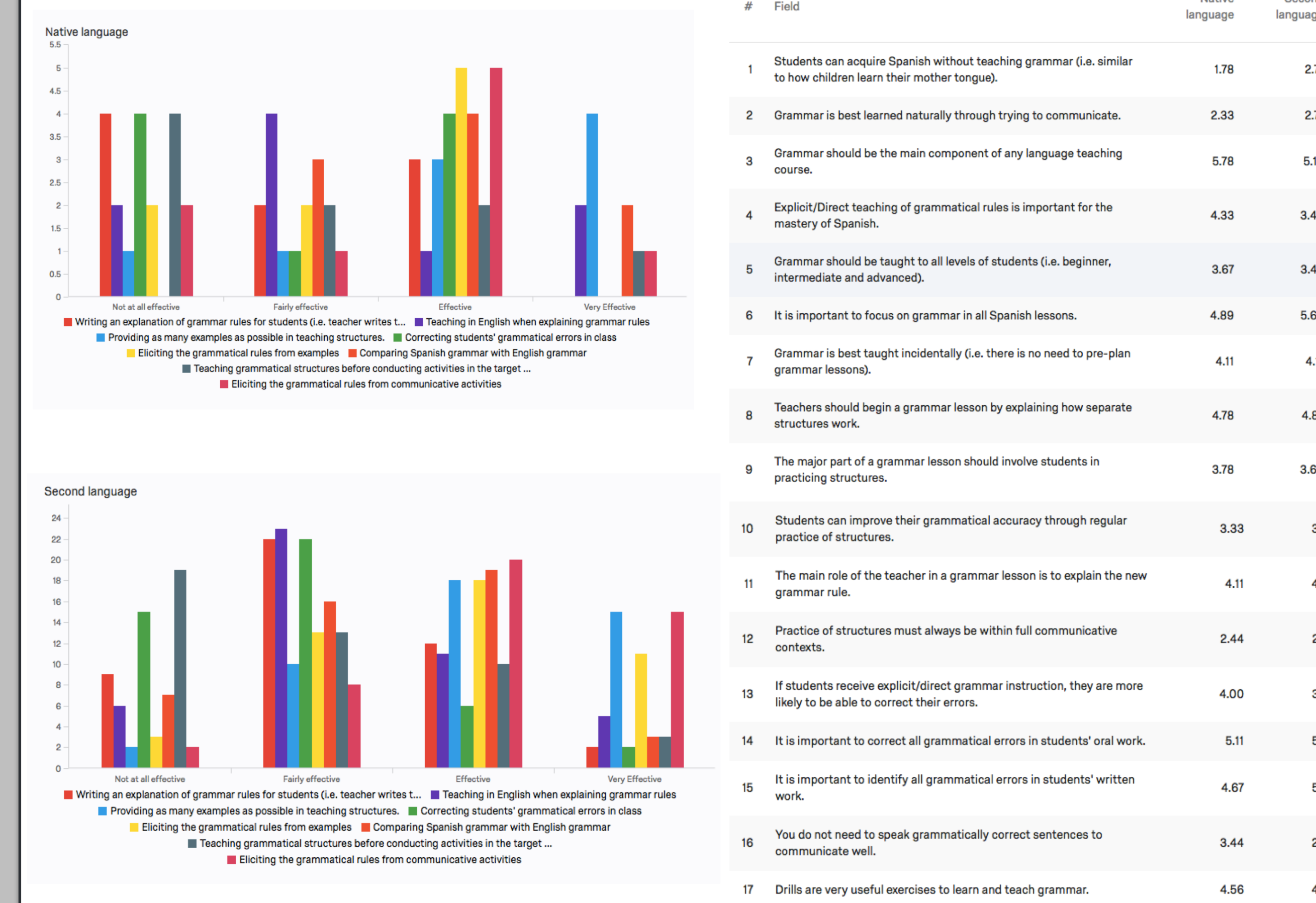
## Research

In recent years, there has been an increase in research done on teacher beliefs and specifically on teacher beliefs pertaining to grammar instruction in the classroom (e.g. S. Borg 2003; Chiu Yin Wong, & Barrea-Marlys, 2012; Alghanmi, & Shukri, 2016; Ezzi, 2012; Jeurissen, 2012; Graham, 2011; Schulz, 1996; Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004). For the sake of this study, “beliefs” are defined as “statements teachers made about their ideas, thoughts, and knowledge that are expressed as evaluations of what ‘should be done’, ‘should be the case’, and ‘is preferable’” (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004). Among teachers and academics, there is a continuing debate on how much grammar should be taught and how it should be taught in the language classroom (Hu, 2012; Peng, 2017). Some research has been done on the beliefs of teachers of foreign languages. Cathy Chiu Yin Wong, & Mirta Barrea-Marlys (2012) studied the perceptions and practices of six Spanish as a foreign language college-level professors dealing with grammar instruction in a CLT classroom. Additionally, Simon Borg (2003) studied the differences between teacher cognition and student cognition pertaining to grammar instruction. There has been no research done specifically pertaining to Spanish as a FL teachers and the differing beliefs of teachers who are native speakers (NS) of Spanish and those who are second language (L2) speakers of Spanish. This study will focus on these teachers’ beliefs toward focus on form and explicit grammar instruction in the classroom.

Aside from focus on form, focus on forms is the teaching of grammar rules (Chiu Yin Wong, & Barrea-Marlys, 2012). Many researchers argue for the advantages and effectiveness of using focus on form in the classroom (Alghanmi & Shukri, 2016).

## Results

While L2 speakers reported stronger disagreement in the need to focus on grammar in all lessons, NS reported stronger beliefs toward the importance of learning grammar in a communicative context. NS also reported stronger agreement that students could acquire Spanish without learning grammar.



## Conclusion and Future Directions

- Relationship between teacher beliefs and their own experiences in learning the Spanish language
- NS speakers reported stronger feelings toward the ability to acquire the Spanish language without learning grammar and that the best way to learn the language is through communication
- Both groups of teachers reported similar beliefs on the effectiveness scale

A furthering of this research in looking at the actual practices of teachers in the classroom would be effective in determining how their beliefs correlate to their teaching and if teaching practices differ between NS and L2 Spanish speakers.

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