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Year 7 and 8 Teachers' Understandings, Beliefs and Practices around the Teaching of Grammar in Relation to the Teaching of Writing

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Abstract

In recent times, and in fact over the past five decades, the importance of teachers' knowledge of grammar and the teaching of grammar has encountered a resurgence of interest on the world stage as it has done within the research and educational communities of New Zealand (Hudson, 2004; Andrews, Torgerson, Beverton, Locke, Low, Robinson & Zhu 2004; Gordon, 2005; Locke, 2010; Myhill, Jones, Lines & Watson, 2012).

Various contemporary studies into teachers' understandings of grammar and the ways it is taught have utilised the knowledge and experiences of ESL (English as a Second Language) and pre-service teachers (Borg, 1999, 2001; Farrell, 1999; Burgess, Turvey & Quarshie, 2000; Nicholson, 2007; Harper & Rennie, 2008; Basturkmen, 2010). Some studies have emphasised linguistic elements related to the teaching of reading and spelling (Nicholson, 2007; Stainthorp, 2010; Cheesman, McGuire, Shankweiler & Coyne, 2009). However, there appears to be little research involving practising teacher participants, with a specific focus on grammar and its relationship to the teaching of writing.

This study explores the broad grammatical knowledge and teaching practices within writing of in-service, generalist teachers of intermediate-aged (year 7 and 8) children. It addresses issues of importance regarding the grammatical understandings, beliefs and teaching practices of teachers within a specific New Zealand educational context. A mixed methods approach to gathering data was utilised in this study. A survey involving 26 year 7 and 8 intermediate school teachers was implemented, followed by a series of semi-structured interviews with a sub-group of six of these participants.

The findings of this case study strongly suggest that, although many of the participants were uncertain of how to define grammar and lacked confidence in teaching grammar, their understandings and teaching pedagogies were stronger than they had perceived them to be. A clear majority of participants considered grammatical instruction to be important

in improving student writing outcomes, and most revealed that this was an element included within their teaching practices. Findings also indicate that teachers experience distinct limitations in developing their understandings around grammar and grammatical instruction and that their perception of these limitations affects their confidence in teaching grammar.

This study also points to a lack of conformity or standard of learning around teacher professional development in grammar. Moving forward, it would be interesting to determine whether there is, in fact, any form of standardised training around the teaching of grammar within and/or across other New Zealand schools, and what this might look like.

Evidence from this study suggests that we need to understand more about what New Zealand teachers know about grammar and the teaching of grammar, specifically within school and classroom writing programmes. Future studies in this vein would benefit from including an element of observation as a methodological tool to help validate reported findings, particularly when investigating teachers' approaches to teaching grammar.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to three strong women: Granny, Grandma and Mum.

These women have shown me the true depths of inner strength born of sacrifice, the sustenance of unwavering love and the faith that "all will be well". These treasured gifts are immeasurable in value and have brought me to this place. This is for you.

I also dedicate this thesis to my father whose words of wisdom and perspective have helped to always bring me back to the "big picture". His life-long belief in me, that I can and will be all that I want to be, has also provided me with the confidence to complete this thesis. Thank you Dad.

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My deepest gratitude also goes to my partner, Jay Warren, for his understanding and patience throughout the process of creating this thesis. For much of this time, you were also undertaking your own study and so were able to appreciate my efforts and advise me in some regards. Our journey has been one of 'give and take' and I thank you for all the giving you have done.

Finally, I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to the participants of this study, without whom this work would never have been possible. Your dedication to teaching and the lengths you go to, to provide the very best for your students, does not go unnoticed. I am indebted to your openness and honesty in contributing to this thesis.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

For many years the teaching of grammar, both nationally and internationally, has generated much contentious debate around its effectiveness and its place within school curricular.

Perhaps the most influential meta-analysis of international research in this vein has been a study released by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) group in 2004.

This group of researchers provided a systematic review of the available research into the effectiveness of grammatical instruction, focusing on the outcomes of grammatical instruction on 5 to 16 year-olds. Drawn from a pool of 4,566 papers, examination of 58 selected papers was undertaken, these having being published in Canada, the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand since 1900. This review of formal grammar teaching included strict quality control criteria in terms of the methodologies and appropriateness of the research chosen (Andrews et al., 2004, p. 2) but did not cover all approaches to the teaching of grammar.

As with much prior research, it was concluded that "there is no high quality evidence that teaching of traditional grammar or syntax (or the direct teaching of formal or generative/transformational grammars) is effective with regard to writing development" (Andrews et al., 2004, p. 5). Furthermore, the authors proposed that the study of teaching syntax to school-aged children "should cease to be a part of the curriculum unless in the context of rigorous evaluative research" (p. 11). Some hope, however, was offered in terms of the group's findings around the specific impact of a technique known as sentence combining as an instructional grammar practice which yielded beneficial results for student writing outcomes. Most importantly, the findings of the EPPI review provided many pertinent, unanswered questions and prompted serious thought and action in terms of further study around what does assist the development of children's skill in writing.

This thesis focuses on examining the teaching of grammar in relation to writing in a New Zealand context. Research which has occurred since this meta-analysis will be reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter One begins with an explanation of my interest in the topic (1.2). The following section presents reasoning as to the significance of the research (1.3). Finally, international and national historical detail and background knowledge around the teaching of grammar, in regards to student writing outcomes, will be addressed (1.4).

1.2 Interest in the Topic

Through fifteen years of teaching at the same school, I have developed a keen interest in the teaching and learning of literacy, mentoring teachers in this area through my role as Senior Teacher, Tutor Teacher, Associate Teacher and as Curriculum Leader of Literacy. Through formal and informal observations, appraisals and discussions with teaching colleagues, I have come to wonder about the levels of teacher knowledge and skill in regards to the effective use and teaching of grammar, particularly in regards to classroom writing programmes, and also in the expectations around the delivery of this. My interest in this topic has developed further through being involved in the Ministry of Education's Accelerated Learning in Literacy initiative[1] (Ministry of Education, 2016), for which I engaged in some self-directed study, and also in completing a masters' level paper concerning metalinguistic awareness for teachers and learners.

There has been much contentious debate in recent years over the importance and place of the teaching of grammar both globally and in relation to New Zealand's school-wide and classroom literacy programmes (Locke, 2010). Through my own research and experience, I believe that the teaching of grammar has been relegated a back seat in New Zealand

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[1] Accelerating Learning in Literacy is a government-funded 15-week intervention for year 1-8 students who are below or well below New Zealand National Standards in reading or writing. This intervention is a supplementary support to lift student achievement. It is in addition to, and connected to, students' classroom programmes.

schools for many years and that trainee teachers and even experienced teachers may not necessarily have been exposed to or provided with much or, in some cases, any professional development in this area. Andrews (2005, 2010) supports the position that the significance of knowledge about language should initially be viewed in relation to teachers' academic and professional knowledge. Andrews (2010) proposes that in order to understand more about the place of grammar in education, we need to first examine the academic and professional knowledge of teachers. I have therefore become interested in uncovering and analysing the status quo with regard to practising teachers' knowledge about language, in order to begin discussion around improving school-wide processes in the teaching of grammar in relation to writing in New Zealand schools.

1.3 Significance of the Research

My study explores the broad grammatical knowledge and teaching practices of in-service, generalist teachers of Year 7 and 8 children (11-13 years). It addresses issues of importance regarding the understandings, beliefs and teaching of grammar by teachers within a specific New Zealand intermediate school[2] context.

For the purposes of this thesis it is important to address the word *grammar* and its meaning with regards to its usage within this study. Although the concept of grammar can be defined with regard to various aspects of linguistic understanding and usage which can be organised, or even separated, at word, sentence and whole text levels, in the context of this thesis it needs to retain a broad definition including and combining all elements of linguistic understanding. In terms of the research undertaken, it was important not to pre-determine the understandings which participants already possessed around the concept of grammar and so a wide-ranging definition was deemed necessary to encompass a variety of possible understandings. Examples of broad terminology such as, "Grammatical

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[2] Intermediate is a term which correlates to Middle School, the terminology used in other Anglophone countries such as the US, the UK and Australia. Intermediate students may transition from primary to secondary education within an Intermediate school institution.

Subject Knowledge" (GSK) (Borg, 2001), "Knowledge about Language" (KAL) (Harper & Rennie, 2008), "Knowledge about Grammar" (KAG) (Jeurissen, 2010), and "Linguistic Subject Knowledge" (LSK) (Myhill, Jones, Lines & Watson, 2012), feature throughout this thesis and reflect an all-encompassing idea that every grammatical construct falls within an understanding of how language is put together and how it works as a whole.

Because the current research is a case study embedded within a New Zealand school context, it is important to provide a definition whose utility is connected to the teacher participants and New Zealand teacher practice. Within New Zealand curriculum documentation, The Ministry of Education broadly states that knowledge of grammar is "the ability to understand, respond to, and use those forms of written language that are required by society and valued by individuals and communities" (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.13).

For teachers, it is important to impart knowledge and skill in grammar so that students are able to reflect on how language works in terms of communicating meaning (Jeurissen, 2010). Students need to understand the effects of grammatical structures on written language to critically analyse texts and to write effectively (Derewianka, 1998).

A review of the literature has identified a few overseas and New Zealand studies around teacher understandings of grammar and their teaching of grammar, but these mainly involve work with teacher trainees and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers (Harper & Rennie, 2008; Farrell, 1999; Burgess, Turvey & Quarshie, 2000; Basturkmen, 2010; Nicholson, 2007; Borg,1999 & 2001). There appears to be little documented research into practising teachers' broad grammatical knowledge and teaching practice, particularly within New Zealand. Recent literature has made explicit the need for further research in this field (Hudson, 2001; Andrews et al., 2004; Myhill, 2010; Jeurissen, 2010). Therefore, I believe my research project has the potential to create new knowledge and promote inquiry in this area.

Furthermore, my study is centred on teachers' grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices in relation to the teaching of writing. This appears to be an area which lacks a strong foundation in research. Myhill (2005) asserts that, in comparison to an abundance of research on grammar for reading purposes, there is a significant absence of research on knowledge about grammar for writing purposes. Existing studies in this area emphasised linguistic elements related to reading and spelling (Nicholson, 2007; Stainthorp, 2010; Cheesman, McGuire, Shankweiler & Coyne, 2009) rather than writing. Apart from one major (and rather dated) study by Elley et al. (1979), there appears to be a lack of recent New Zealand research involving practising teacher participants, and with a specific focus on grammar and its relationship to the teaching of writing. My research seeks to address this gap.

A more detailed account of the aforementioned points, in regards to the significance of my research, is highlighted throughout Chapter Two of this thesis.

Finally, in establishing the significance of my research, I would like to point to a more pragmatic goal. My research outcomes are intended to be utilised by my research community in a very direct way. I am hoping my research will be used as a catalyst for effecting positive change within the research community and I anticipate that there will be direct benefit to the teacher participants, school management, and ultimately the students and wider community as a result. Through exposing and exploring a relevant pedagogical issue in this school environment, a window may also be opened for similar educational institutions to share and assess the findings, perhaps moving towards developing similar research models. My proposed research project addresses a relevant internal and external educational issue and therefore has the potential to influence future policy development with regard to the teaching of writing.

1.4 Grammar and its Relationship to Student Achievement in Writing

Historically, the role of grammatical instruction within the teaching of writing, and its place within English curricula, has been widely and vehemently debated across nations where English is the dominant language (Elley et al., 1975, 1979; Hillocks & Smith, 1991; Torgerson, Beverton, Locke, Low, Robinson & Zhu, 2004; Andrews et al., 2006). In fact, the fundamental question of whether the teaching of grammar has any direct or discernible benefit to students' writing outcomes has "haunted the teaching of English for over a century" (Andrews et al., 2004, p. 1). However, it is over the last five decades that particularly intense professional debates have raged among researchers, educationists and the public over definitions of grammar in terms of its value in utility, the effectiveness of its instruction, and how or even whether it should be developed within classroom writing programmes (Andrews, 2005; Andrews et al., 2004; Gordon, 2005; Hudson, 2001; Locke, 2009; Locke, 2010; Myhill, 2011; Jones et al., 2012; Myhill et al., 2012; Wyse, 2004).

Over time, ongoing arguments around the teaching of grammar have increased and amplified as a result of a general feeling of apprehension around falling literacy standards in predominantly Anglophone countries. As Locke (2010) states, "Reform drivers were often underpinned by discourses of crisis and a panic about falling standards, especially literacy standards" (p. 2). The grammar crisis has re-emerged in an era where writing as a subject is viewed as problematic in terms of student achievement levels, particularly when compared with student achievement in reading (Myhill, 2005; Andrews, 2010). The contentious nature of discussion around the teaching of grammar is reflected in the ways in which the public have engaged in these debates and have taken up fervent positions in response to the issues. According to Gordon (2005), the grammar debate has not only involved academics but has been one in which "the public have regularly and enthusiastically participated" (p. 48). In the United States (U.S.), Weaver (1996) discusses the influence of deep-seated, generational, and even religious public belief around the teaching of grammar as representing

order, authority and "something absolute" (p. 15). Therefore, it can be seen as an issue considered significant and pertinent to contemporary society.

Until recently, much of the relatively limited research into the benefits, or otherwise, of instructional grammar, has concluded that there is little, if any, positive impact on students' competence in writing (Hillocks, 1986; Elley et al., 1975 & 1979; Hillocks & Smith, 1991; EPPI, 2004; Andrews et al. 2006). Some academics and educationists firmly believe that the teaching of grammar can actually be detrimental to students' development in writing and that, as Elbow (1981, cited in Myhill et al., 2012) states, "nothing helps [their] writing so much as learning to ignore grammar" (p. 169). Students' attitudes towards English as a subject have also been found to be far more positive when not encumbered with the study of grammar (Elley et al., 1979, p. 98).

As a result of the perceived ineffectiveness of traditional grammatical instruction by academics and educationists, the teaching of grammar was side-lined and in some cases abandoned for a time. In the 1960s and 1970s the teaching of grammar in countries such as England, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand was neglected due to a belief that it was ineffectual in advancing the development of writing (Locke, 2009). In the U.S., after decades of contentious debate over how to teach grammar, traditional and routine approaches to teaching formal grammar were completely discarded and, as described by Locke (2010), "the baby was thrown out with the bath water" (p. 7). In retrospect, researchers such as Jones, Myhill and Bailey (2012) believe that a 50 year dearth of grammatical instruction in Anglophone countries has resulted in contemporary teachers being ill-equipped to teach grammar confidently, due to a lack of what is known as Grammatical Subject Knowledge (GSK) (p. 1245).

As previously stated, studies carried out in the mid to late decades of the twentieth century essentially agreed that there was no evidence to support the teaching of grammar as a way to improve writing instruction and subsequent student achievement levels in writing (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones & Schoer, 1963; Thompson, 1969; Elley et al., 1975; 1979; Perera, 1984; Hillocks, 1986). This idea was given credence by influential linguists such

as Noam Chomsky (1965) who espoused that grammatical competence is learned intuitively through the natural acquisition of the mother tongue and therefore the direct teaching of grammar rules is inconsequential (Hancock & Kolln, 2010). However, it is the findings of a study released by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) group in 2004 which have perhaps been most influential.

The findings of the EPPI report, presented at the start of this chapter, concluded that there is no evidence that traditional instruction in grammar provides any positive effect in regard to development in writing. Furthermore, the authors proposed that the study of teaching syntax to school-aged children "should cease to be a part of the curriculum unless in the context of rigorous evaluative research" (Andrews et al., 2004, p. 11).

Critics of the EPPI report and of earlier research findings have pointed to issues regarding the questionable nature of the studies reviewed in terms of validity, the pedagogical confidence of the teachers involved in the research, as well as to the limited primary focus on prescriptive, traditional and isolated grammar instruction, pointing to a lack of consideration for the inclusion of more descriptive and contextual approaches to teaching grammar (Hudson, 2001; Myhill, 2005; Jones et at., 2012; Weaver, 1996). One member of the EPPI group has subsequently questioned the "virtues" of this type of systematic review, revealing that it "begged a lot of questions" (Locke, 2010, p. 4). However, it appears that, until recent times, there has been little available research to review involving the teaching of grammar in any way other than that of "learning transformational grammar, grammar exercises and drills, or parsing sentences" (Jones et al., 2012., p. 1242).

A backlash against the theory that there is no benefit in teaching grammar as a way to improve students' writing development has arisen in recent times where a number of educationists and academics have highlighted the positive findings of research where alternate, non-traditional ways of teaching grammar have had a beneficial effect on student writing outcomes (Hudson, 2001; Fogel & Ehri, 2000; Fearn & Farnan, 2007, Myhill et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2012; Weaver, 1996 & 1996b).

In fact, even before the EPPI review, Hudson (2001) had identified a number of studies which provided positive results for the effects of grammatical learning on students' writing skills and concluded that "the idea that grammar teaching improves children's writing skills is much better supported than is commonly supposed" (p. 5). Particularly pertinent is his discussion around the findings of a Finnish doctoral study undertaken by Inkeri Laurinen in 1955, in which primary aged students improved their punctuation scores after being taught clause structures. Hudson believed the achievement reported in this research was due to the contextual nature of the grammar focus being integrated within the learning of writing. The grammar skill was therefore able to be directly transferred to the writing.

Since the release of the EPPI review and the resultant refocus on the teaching of grammar a strong movement away from formal grammar and towards a more contextual approach to its teaching can be seen in the research and within teacher pedagogy across many Anglophone countries, such as England, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. In terms of my own study, it is necessary here to briefly identify the dominant theories informing grammatical pedagogy, as their frameworks impact upon current teachers' understandings around the teaching of grammar and what grammar encompasses.

1.4.1 Traditional Grammar

The traditional and more prescriptive approach to teaching grammar presented fixed, pre-ordained rules for language use and set out ways to teach these rules in isolation (Hudson, 2004). Grammar, in this sense, would be taught separately, as a skills-based subject in its own right, and not necessarily assimilated within classroom reading or writing programmes. Historically it was taken for granted that this narrow, formal approach to teaching grammar would indirectly transfer the learning of grammatical knowledge and skill into student writing outcomes. As Weaver puts it, "we have simply taken for granted the behaviorist ideas that practice

makes perfect and that skills practiced in isolation will be learned that way and then applied as relevant" (1996, p. 17).

1.4.2 Contextual Grammar

In contrast to the traditional approach to teaching grammar, contextual approaches to grammatical instruction take into account how the use of grammar changes, and also continues to change over time, depending on the content and context of the written material in use. It can therefore be seen as descriptive, rather than prescriptive, in its study of "language in use" (Jones et al., 2012, p. 1244). Contextual grammar instruction takes into account the social, cultural and functional elements of language in its application (Carter, 1990; Janks, 2005; 2010) and, being fundamentally meaning focused, it meshes with and complements other writing outcomes during instruction. In this vein, rhetorical grammar, as espoused by Locke (2014, p. 181), positions grammar as being integral to both meaning-making and creativity within writing. It must therefore be functional within the context of the writing. According to Martha Kolln (1996), this type of grammatical instruction "identifies grammar in the service of rhetoric: grammar knowledge as a tool that enables the writer to make effective choices" (as cited in Locke, 2014, p. 1810).

New Zealand's take on the role of grammatical instruction within the teaching of writing, and its place within English curricula, can historically be seen to have followed the same trends as England and other Anglophone countries. According to Gordon (2005), questions over the effective transfer of grammatical knowledge to development in writing has been a regular theme since the 1880s. Since this time, New Zealand school inspectors have regularly highlighted a lack of evidence for the benefits of teaching grammar, this view being strongly espoused in the Thomas Review (1945) which formed the basis of the New Zealand School Certificate prescription (Gordon, 2005, p. 60). From the late 1960s and through the 1970s the teaching of non-contextual, traditional grammars was effectively ousted, reflecting international trends of the time.

The New Zealand study by Elley and colleagues (1979) held significant international influence in terms of the grammar debate, their findings having been widely referenced in academic literature. Their three year study into the effects of grammar instruction on writing achievement involved three groups of high school students, 250 pupils in total, and was based at a South Auckland school. The results showed that there was no marked difference in writing achievement between students who had been provided direct grammatical instruction and those who had not. The researchers suggested the teaching of grammar to be unnecessary and a waste of valuable curricular time, a view commonly held amongst many educationists of the time.

By the 1980s, despite the findings of Elley et al. (1975; 1979), there was a call from some educationists, particularly from university professors, to re-examine the lack of grammatical instruction in New Zealand schools. This was due to the identified problem of falling literacy standards seen in students moving into university study (Gordon, 2005). In an attempt to bring grammar back into the curriculum, the Committee on the 6th and 7th form Language Syllabus was established in 1986 to develop a new syllabus for these forms. In addressing the issue of grammar in its recommendations to the Ministry of Education, this committee proposed a comparable method of teaching English grammar through using examples from Maaori language, as well as English, to demonstrate and contrast grammatical themes. This recommendation received much negative attention in the public domain with many commentators viewing it as a political, pro-bicultural move (Gordon, 2005). The Labour government of the time quickly quashed this proposal and the grammar issue was again submerged, to be addressed at a later time.

The influence of emerging Hallidayan genre pedagogy in the 1980s (Halliday & Hasan, 1985) endorsed applied linguistics and its relationship to grammar as important in the teaching of writing. The teaching of this type of 'functional grammar' was championed as a way of analysing various text types or genres and could be regarded as contextual in nature (Christie, 2010). However, many teachers did not have the understanding or language

to teach the elements/functions of various genres in writing. A growing awareness around the lack of teacher confidence and knowledge in applying the concepts of functional grammar in the classroom became apparent, and this was thought to be due to a lack of linguistic training (Christie, 2010).

The Exploring Language project of the 1990s recognised the growing need to up-skill teachers in terms of knowledge about language, primarily as a means to effect more positive outcomes on student writing ability (Ministry of Education, 1996). The release of the book *Exploring Language* in 1996 was designed to instruct teachers in teaching grammar and included a broad metalanguage, which was believed to be easily accessible for both primary and secondary teachers of all experience levels (Gordon, 2005). Linguist Elizabeth Gordon (2005), who chaired the team responsible for the project, believed that "if we wanted more enlightened teaching of English language at all levels in New Zealand schools, then this had to come first of all through the education and re-education of teachers" (p. 59). Although limited government funding was initially dispensed to help cement the Exploring Language teachings in the form of teacher workshops, it was not enough to establish a new approach to the teaching of grammar within New Zealand schools. According to Locke (2010), New Zealand teachers needed further professional development, "underpinned by coherent theory and sound research, to help teachers know how to use in classrooms that 'knowledge about language' the big blue book contained" (p. 4).

Further discussion around the importance of the concept of metalanguage is necessary to understand its significance within the current study.

1.4.3 Locke and the Significance of Metalanguage; a shared grammatical language for both teachers and students in the classroom

Within the New Zealand context and internationally, the extensive work of former classroom teacher, teacher educator and academic researcher, Professor Terry Locke, has greatly influenced the direction of thought

around the place of grammatical instruction within education. Involved in the controversial EPPI review, discussed in the previous section, Locke moved towards providing answers to questions raised from the findings of this report (2009; 2010; 2012). Most specifically, Locke has investigated the question, "What explicit/implicit knowledge about language in teachers and/or students appears to enhance literacy development in some way?" (2010, p. 1). He emphasises the importance to literacy teaching pedagogy of developing a working instructional metalanguage for both teachers and students (Locke, 2014, p. 182). This view sits well within New Zealand's contemporary educational attention to the contextual exploration of language, rather than direct, traditional grammatical instruction in teaching writing (Ministry of Education, 1996). Locke has also highlighted the impact of political constraints and contexts that affect the ways in which knowledge about language was and is taught in New Zealand schools (2010).

Locke (2010) considers that teachers need to be aware of power relations which impact upon literacy practices. How writing lessons are framed in terms of the content and contexts used, and choices around what is taught, lie implicitly underneath an umbrella of dominant school writing discourses. These discourses are informed by state-imposed mandates on curriculum. Therefore, the metalanguages engaged in with students reflect dominant school and state discourses through teacher pedagogical approaches and practices. As Locke makes clear, "the prevailing discursive mix determines what can be said and how it can be said – hence the relationship to metalanguage" (p.172). He believes that drawing from a wide range of paradigms, each with their own associated metalanguages, is a way in which teachers can "spread the net widely" (p. 181) in terms of propagating a metalinguistic vocabulary in the classroom. It is also a way in which teachers can keep a hold of some individualism.

Agreeing with many of the international researchers previously mentioned, Locke points to the evidence that "the effective use of metalanguage in the writing classroom depends on the teacher's knowledge of language and their confidence in using it in situations where they are modeling their own writing identities and practices and engaging in process-related strategy

instruction" (2014, p. 182). His recently released book which focuses on the development of teacher-writers alongside learner-writers, is perhaps the first of its kind to not only provide guidance in strategy and instruction around the teaching of grammar, but is also clearly supported by theory and a broad research base. Locke has adopted a wide, contextual and rhetorical (see Kolln, 1996) approach to the teaching of grammar where grammar can be employed as a resource to help writers make more effective literacy choices (2014, p.181), being also particularly useful in responding to and revising texts. He advocates that the type and timing of metalanguage used and developed in the classroom should be dependent on learner competency (2014, p. 182).

In Chapter Two, I will review and discuss a variety of international and New Zealand studies into teachers' grammatical knowledge and practices, addressing their significance in relation to my own study. Chapter Two reveals that, while there has been some research concerning second language teachers of English, specialist language teachers and pre-service teachers, there appears to be very little research concerning the grammatical knowledge and practice of in-service, generalist teachers, both within New Zealand and internationally.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter reviews literature concerning teachers' grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices and is divided into two sections. The first section (2.2) discusses specific international studies found in relation to this study and includes research involving teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices around grammar and the teaching of grammar. The studies are reviewed in chronological order, from the latest to the most recently published.

The succeeding section (2.3) provides a look at New Zealand research, in terms of the place and significance of grammar and its teaching. New Zealand studies which involve teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices around grammar and the teaching of grammar are reviewed and compared to the current study. The studies are reviewed in chronological order, from the latest to the most recently published.

Lastly, the research questions for the current study are presented (2.4).

2.2 An International Review of the Literature: Teachers' Grammatical Understandings, Beliefs and Practices

As noted in Chapter One, the number of international studies into contemporary teachers' Grammatical Subject Knowledge (GSK) appears to be limited. Four such studies which can be related to the present study have been found to review here.

In 1998 a survey of English teachers, working at Key Stage 2 (with primary students aged 7-11) and Key Stage 3 (with secondary students aged 11-14) from ten local English education authorities, demonstrated a lack of confidence in and knowledge of the teaching of grammar. These results revealed that the teachers lacked confidence with clause structures and

syntax (Myhill et al., 2012) [3]. The study stressed the negative implications of this for the effective teaching of grammar within reading and writing. The UK Qualifications and Curriculum Authority concurs with this finding and summarises by stating, "Research confirms that most young teachers have knowledge of some parts of speech but little overall understanding of syntax or its relation to the development of writing and many lack a framework to assess pupils' syntactic development" (1988, p. 55).

International studies concerned with themes around teachers' understandings of grammar and the teaching of grammar have mainly involved research with pre-service teachers and teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) (Farrell, 1999; Borg, 1999, 2001; Burgess, Turvey & Quarshie, 2000; Harper & Rennie, 2008).

In examining the teaching of grammar within ESL contexts, Borg (1999, 2001) believes that after much debate, grammar instruction continues to be poorly defined and misunderstood with no firm or set pedagogical guidelines. Borg has investigated what he considers the "powerful influence of teachers' theories on their instructional decisions" in terms of classroom practice (1999, p. 157). One such study investigated the grammatical beliefs, understandings and practices of ESL teachers.

Borg's (1999) study into understanding teachers' theories underpinning their grammatical instruction practices was based in Malta and supported by the work of five primary teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Borg created a teacher development tool in the form of an in-depth personal questionnaire, by which the teachers in this study could examine and describe their own theories around teaching grammar and analyse these in relation to their grounded classroom practice. Borg found that "grammar teaching emerges clearly here as a complex decision-making process, rather than the unthinking application of best method" (p. 160). His study highlights the positive effects of teacher confidence, in terms of knowledge about grammar, on instructional practices. He stresses the

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[3] Despite extensive searches, I have been unable to obtain the original research on this study.

importance of self-reflection as a way to empower teachers to become more confident in delivering grammatical instruction.

Borg's findings regarding the grammatical knowledge of Maltese EFL teachers relates to the teaching of additional language learners. It would be interesting to know more about the grammatical knowledge of teachers of first language learners of English. According to Andrews (2010), "It appears that the research base for teaching formal grammar to first language learners is diminishing" (p. 92). Therefore, a need for research concerning the grammatical knowledge and practice of teachers of first language speakers of English is evident.

Closer to home, Harper and Rennie's (2008) Australian research into pre-service teachers' understanding of grammar was based on an assumption that pre-service teachers in Australia are inadequately trained and lack confidence in the area of language knowledge, and that this ultimately influences their ability to teach Knowledge about Language (KAL) effectively. The study set out to define and characterise the KAL of a group of 39 pre-service teachers in their first year of university study. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected through the use of surveys and focus group interviews. As with the study presented in this thesis, the purpose of the interviews was to explore and extend participants' responses to the survey questions. However, in contrast to the present study, the surveys in Harper and Rennie's (2008) study were set out in test-like formats, where participants needed to answer questions directly related to their linguistic knowledge.

It was determined that the participants in this study lacked analytical skills in all addressed areas of linguistic description in the surveys. Also highlighted in Harper and Rennie's (2008) study, through findings from focus group interviews, was that participants mostly described "fragmented, prescriptive and decontextualised" (p.31) experiences of their own historical learning about language. This finding is significant as it points to a more traditional approach to the learning, and therefore understanding, of grammar in these teachers' past schooling experiences. It also suggests

that the teachers' past learning may not have been particularly cohesive or consistent and so uptake may not have been effective.

The research in Harper and Rennie's (2008) study of Australian pre-service teachers illustrates ideas and approaches comparable to the study presented in this thesis. However, it is focused on pre-service rather than in-service teachers. I am interested to know whether a study centred on practising teachers might produce different outcomes.

Significant experimentation and research into the effects and use of contextual grammar in the classroom have also begun to emerge, in part as a response to the previously discussed EPPI review. Particularly noteworthy is the work of American educationist Constance Weaver (1996, 1996b, 2006, 2010). However, it is only very recently that the first robust and large-scale study has been presented into the effects of contextualised grammatical instruction on student learning in writing (Jones et al., 2012; Myhill et al., 2012). The findings of this research, presented in two separate papers, have been positive and unambiguous and this has been surprising for some, because it goes against the grain of much commonly held opinion.

Involving both quantitative and qualitative research methods in its approach, Jones et al.'s (2012) research into the outcomes of contextualised or embedded grammar instruction in British classrooms found there to be a convincing beneficial impact on students' writing outcomes. The teaching of grammar in this study was embedded within the learning of other, more general, writing foci. The research emphasises the efficacious link in making meaningful connections between grammatical structures and specific writing tasks as an important element of its definition of contextualised learning.

The researchers utilised a randomised controlled trial (RTC), text analysis, student and teacher interviews and lesson observations involving 744 students across 31 schools in the south-west and Midlands regions of England. Results showed a statistically significant improvement in student achievement levels in writing when targeted grammatical instruction was embedded within classroom writing lessons. The qualitative aspects of the

study also revealed that teacher Linguistic Subject Knowledge (LSK) and length of teaching experience had a significant positive impact on student learning outcomes in that "students in intervention classes with teachers with higher subject knowledge benefitted more than those with teachers who had lower subject knowledge" (Myhill et al., 2012, p. 152). The teachers' use of a specific metalanguage in implementing the set teaching programmes was also found to improve students' metalinguistic learning.

However, it must also be noted that less able learner writers in the study did not experience the same substantial benefits as of those who were more able. The researchers propose that further studies around the teaching of contextualised grammar should investigate the use of materials and metalanguage as factors impacting on the learning of less able writers.

Highlighted in Myhill's (2012) study is the relevance and role of teacher Linguistic Subject Knowledge (LSK) (Myhill et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2012) or teacher Knowledge About Language (KAL) (Harper and Rennie, 2008), which has rapidly come to the fore as a result of investigations into the effectiveness of contextualised grammar teaching. Andrews (2005, 2010) supports the position that in teaching grammar, the significance of knowledge about language should primarily be viewed in relation to teachers' academic and professional knowledge. Myhill (2003) draws attention to a relationship between teacher insecurity around grammatical subject knowledge and the inaccurate teaching of grammar.

In discussing the impact of teacher knowledge on the teaching of grammar, Hudson (2004) asserts that teachers are unable to expertly analyse text or structure teaching contexts effectively without a good grammatical knowledge base. Hudson (2001) also points to a lack of pre-service teacher training as an impediment to effective practice and considers grammar as "a subject with such weak intellectual underpinnings is doomed to eventual extinction, so it is imperative to ensure that the same mistake is not repeated" (p. 3). The "mistake" he refers to is the previously mentioned historical abandonment of grammatical instruction.

Borg (2001) also found clear examples of the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their knowledge about grammar and their actual teaching practices. In his 2001 paper, Borg utilised extensive quantitative data taken from his 1999 study into teachers' practices and understandings around second language grammar teaching. His analyses are based on data collected from classroom observations and interviews with five teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). He concludes that teachers with better developed Grammatical Subject Knowledge (GSK) display more confident behaviours in the way they structure and deliver lessons involving grammar.

In conducting the current study, teacher Knowledge about Language (KAL), as well as teacher confidence in teaching grammar, will be addressed as possible factors which impact upon participants' teaching pedagogies and practices. Andrews (2005) proposes that it is "likely to be the case that a teacher with a rich knowledge of grammatical constructions and a more general awareness of the forms and varieties of the language will be in a better position to help young writers" (p. 75). He believes that a teacher needs to have a good knowledge of the features of language in order to employ that knowledge when and where appropriate during writing instruction (Andrews, 2010, p. 100).

2.3 Review of New Zealand Research: the significance of grammar and its teaching and studies into teachers' grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices

Developing teacher knowledge about language appears to be a recurrent theme in New Zealand educational research. Four studies which can be linked to the current study and which pertain to teachers' grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices are reviewed here.

In 2002, Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis explored the effective function of metalanguage in an Auckland study which involved the teaching of English to 24 ESL learners, primarily from East Asia and Europe. Through lesson observation, the study investigated the effectiveness of the use of

metalanguage within contextualised grammar instruction. The researchers' definition of "Focus on Form" describes the teaching of grammar which arises incidentally during language lessons (p. 1). The researchers set out to discover whether the use of a metalanguage during the Focus on Form approach to teaching grammar would result in better learning or "student uptake" (p. 3). In simple terms it was concluded that "metalanguage appears to be an important means through which students can initiate discourse about language forms in the classroom" (p. 10) although, in contrast to the teachers in the study, the metalanguage that the students utilised was mainly of a non-technical nature. The researchers suggested that the use of metalanguage "may play a role in making linguistic forms more explicit and noticeable" for students during literacy lessons (p. 11).

The study by Basturkmen et al. (2002) highlights the mainly positive impact of teachers' knowledge and promotion of metalanguage within ESL literacy teaching pedagogy. The current study explores contemporary teachers' understandings of language knowledge and, in terms of metalanguage, whether and how this is being utilsed in the classrooms of the participants. In terms of the current study, it will be important to discover whether teachers who teach English to first language learners report the use of metalanguage within their own literacy lessons and whether they find this to be effective in terms of student uptake in writing. I am also interested to know whether teachers believe it necessary to implement a more explicit and technical approach if they do, in fact, use metalanguage in their teaching.

A number of world-wide studies have emerged around the importance of teacher linguistic awareness, particularly in relation to learning how to spell and read, including studies on teacher knowledge of phonemic awareness (e.g., Stainthorp, 2010; Cheesman, McGuire, Shankweiler & Coyne, 2009). One such New Zealand-based study utilised a detailed survey to discover where problem areas existed within 83 pre-service teachers' knowledge of linguistic terms (Nicholson, 2007). The participants were required to complete a pre-test questionnaire which mainly consisted of items related to morphemic and phonemic knowledge, and spelling, followed by three,

hour-long language lectures directly related to the test items. The same pre-test questionnaire was used as a post-test in order to provide "before and after" results for analysis. It was found that these pre-service teachers scored exceptionally low results for all but one item in the pre-test, however, they made some significant improvements in the post-test after direct instruction. Although Nicholson's survey included only pre-service teachers, it is interesting to note that he suggests that qualified and practising teachers may also be ill-equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to break down words analytically, to aid in the teaching of reading and spelling (Nicholson, 2007, p. 33).

Although comparable in terms of its emphasis on language knowledge, unlike Nicholson's (2007) study, the current study concentrates on broader ideas and definitions of grammar rather than specific word-level linguistic features. The linguistic items Nicholson chose to include were particularly pertinent to reading and spelling. In comparison, the current study focuses on teachers' broad understandings of grammar in relation to the teaching of writing. As mentioned earlier, this is an area which lacks a strong foundation in research. As Myhill (2005) asserts, there is a significant absence of research on knowledge about grammar for writing purposes in comparison to an abundance of research on reading. This illustrates a way in which my research seeks to make inroads into a perceived gap in contemporary research knowledge.

Some of the research coming out of New Zealand has highlighted issues regarding primary school teachers' lack of knowledge of grammar and the impact this has on their ability to teach and assess students' writing effectively. Jeurissen's (2010) review of New Zealand literacy curriculum documents reveals that in order to teach and assess the grammatical components of the curriculum effectively, teachers need to understand the grammatical terminology and concepts described in current curriculum documents such as The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), The Literacy Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, 2010) and Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1 to 8 (Ministry of Education, 2009). In her conclusion, Jeurissen (2010) states that, "alongside gathering

information about declarative KAG (Knowledge about Grammar), it is important to investigate teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching grammar, as well as their pedagogical practices, both reported and observed" (p. 79). This fits well with the intention of the study presented in this thesis.

In 2012, Jeurissen published research which reported findings from a study of New Zealand primary school teachers' knowledge and beliefs about grammar and the teaching of grammar. The research data comprised two cohorts of primary teachers, 42 primary teachers of Years 5-8 students (9-13 years) across 40 schools in total, who were undertaking a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) diploma. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied and comprised pre and post grammar knowledge tests, as well as interviews using a subset of the participants. Nine participants from nine different schools made up the interviewed group of teachers.

The results of Jeurissen's (2012) study point to a definitive lack of in-depth knowledge about grammar among the teacher participants. Findings also suggest that decisions made by these teachers around the teaching of grammar were disorganised, unsystematic and based on "their own school experiences and personal beliefs" (Jeurissen, 2012, p. 301). Furthermore, the teachers were reported as lacking confidence about how to teach grammar, being unable to recall anything about how to teach grammar during their teacher training. Jeurissen recommends that pre-service teacher educators ensure teachers are armed with a working grammatical knowledge, including the understanding and use of a grammar-based metalanguage.

Jeurissen's (2012) study is comparable with the current study in terms of the questions asked and the mixed methodology used. However, the teacher participants involved in the present study were not purposely involved in upskilling themselves in grammar knowledge at the time of the research. Being a case study of a particular context means the present study also comprises a narrower range of teachers, generalist teachers of

years 7 and 8 students only, who are from the same school. The teachers in the present study are also not ESOL trained. Furthermore, unlike Jeurissen's (2012) study, the current study focuses specifically on grammar knowledge for writing purposes only, and relates to teacher belief and reported knowledge.

Recently, a New Zealand study into the effect of teaching grammar within the context of a writing programme has shown a positive outcome in Year 9 student achievement (Barrett, 2013). Employing an intervention-centred inquiry, Barrett (2013) aimed to determine whether direct instruction around syntactical structures, within the context of teaching writing, would impact positively upon the writing outcomes of students. Through the use of quality text models, a Year 9 (13-14 years) class of 22 female students classified as "average to below" in literacy ability (p. 55) were provided with contextual and incidental grammatical instruction. This included mini lessons and peer-conferencing techniques. As well as demonstrating improvement across all marked measures related to syntactical sophistication, the students reported feeling more confident in their attitudes towards their writing. The use of cooperative, paired student groupings was considered essential as a method for reinforcing the understanding of newly learned grammatical ideas.

It is interesting to note that, in contrast to the Myhill (2012) study, reviewed in the previous section, the students in Barrett's study made significant grammatical progress despite being rated as average to below in literacy ability levels. Barrett (2013) also reported an improvement in the students' awareness and use of the appropriate metalanguage (p.104). Use of metalanguage and its effect on student learning outcomes in writing is a theme which the present study will also explore in terms of teachers' reported use in the classroom, their reasoning for this and its effects. Another aspect of the present study, related to Barrett's (2013) study, will be exploring the specific approaches teachers employ regarding their instructional grammar and whether these are of a contextual or more traditional nature.

The available New Zealand research concerning aspects of grammar related to the present study include ESL studies into the use and effects of metalanguage, studies on ESL and pre-service teachers' knowledge of grammar and studies into the effects of contextual grammatical instruction on student writing outcomes. However, there appear to be no documented studies into the broad grammatical knowledge base and teaching practices of in-service intermediate school teachers for writing purposes.

2.3 Research Questions

After reviewing international and New Zealand research, it is apparent that while there are studies concerning the use of specific approaches in teaching grammar and studies around the importance of teacher linguistic awareness and its impact on teaching confidence, including pre-service and ESL teachers, there are no studies concerning in-service, generalist New Zealand teachers' understandings, views and approaches in the teaching of grammar for writing purposes. This is the focus of the current study. Recent literature has made explicit the need for further research into this field (Hudson, 2001; Andrews et al., 2004; Myhill, 2010). With this in mind, the following research questions have been developed to direct my study:

1. How do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting understand the concept of grammar?
2. What views do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting have of the place of grammatical instruction in teaching writing?
3. What are the range of approaches that Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting report in teaching grammar during their writing lessons?

In Chapter Three I will outline the methodology used to answer these questions.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study described in this thesis was to explore the broad grammatical knowledge and teaching practices of in-service, generalist teachers of intermediate-aged (11-13 years) children. The research addresses issues regarding the understandings, beliefs and teaching of grammar within a specific New Zealand educational context.

The aim of this chapter is to document and provide an understanding of the methodological procedures employed in the current investigation in order to achieve that purpose.

A case study framework was adopted for the study, in which a mixed methods approach was employed to gather data. The primary means of data gathering was firstly through a survey which collected both quantitative and qualitative data about the grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices of a group of 26 year 7 and 8 teachers.

In addition to the survey data collected, in-depth qualitative data was also collected through six semi-structured interviews in the second stage of the study. Six teacher participants were purposely selected for this from within the survey sample of participants.

The following research questions are addressed in the research:

1. How do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting understand the concept of grammar?
2. What views do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting have of the place of grammatical instruction in teaching writing?
3. What are the range of approaches that Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting report in teaching grammar during their writing lessons?

In 3.2, I describe the research paradigm and methodology employed in this study, using contemporary literature to highlight key aspects. In 3.3, I position my research as a case study approach. Section 3.4 provides a rationale for the mixed methods approach utilised in this study, including the survey and semi-structured interviews. In 3.5 the influence of my role as insider researcher is explored. Section 3.6 presents a description of the setting where the research took place. In 3.7, I review the data collection process. 3.8 reports on the various forms of analysis used in the project, and in 3.9, I summarise Chapter Three.

3.2 Research Paradigm

In deciding to employ an interpretivist paradigm, I intended my research to follow an exploratory path without preordained or pre-prescribed outcomes. Fundamental to an interpretivist view is the belief that an understanding of reality is relative to a person's particular experiences and context (Markula & Silk, 2011). It was therefore important for me to recognise that individual participants would each have their own unique responses to the research questions and issues and that, as the researcher, I would play a part in constructing the responses. "In constructivist enquiry, the researcher and the people studied are engaged in an intersubjective and circumstantial dialogue in which it is acknowledged that the research participants affect the researcher and the researcher has an impact on the participants" (Markula & Silk, 2011, p.34). Through deep and specific individual reflection, rich local understandings of participants' experiences can be revealed (Taylor & Medina, 2013).

I believed that looking through an interpretivist paradigmatic lens, from a subjective standpoint, would provide the most useful data in seeking to understand how teachers view their own grammatical knowledge and skill levels within their classroom practices, as well as in understanding the various ways in which these teachers qualify their self-assessments. Although I have some understanding of the topic area and situational context, having taught literacy in the same educational environment as the teacher participants, I do not necessarily have the experience and

knowledge of these particular teacher participants and I expected my own ideas on the topic to be broadened and/or changed somewhat throughout the research process.

3.3 Case Study Approach

According to Stake (2000), "Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied" (p. 435). I decided to undertake my research project using a case study approach as I believed this would allow for the revelation and presentation of multiple voices of those experiencing one particular real-life context. I wanted to find out what could be learned from this single case (Stake, 2000) through the words of others, the context being one with which I have a strong connection and a vested interest in. I needed to position my participants at the heart of the research. In distinguishing the case study, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) highlight the authority of the subjects of enquiry over the methodologies of enquiry.

I believed a case study approach would help provide in-depth information on a limited number of participants and would also enable me to use multiple methods. Case studies are particularly appropriate for exploring situations where there are many variables at work and where there is a need for more than one tool for data collection. They allow for both qualitative and quantitative data collection and support the acquisition of many sources of evidence (Cohen et al., 2011). Using more than one method within a case study is powerful in terms of increasing corroboration of the data, limiting bias, and effecting more accurate conclusions (Reams & Twale, 2008).

"Case studies focus on one instance (or a few instances) of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance" (Denscombe, 1998, p. 32). I hoped that through using a case study approach, a "specific instance" would be shown to reveal "a more general principle" (Nisbet & Watt, 1984, p. 72, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). As a case researcher, I was interested in identifying that which was common and that which was particular about this case (Stake,

2000), as part of an attempt to link my findings to theory. However, importantly, as the findings of a case study, these findings would principally represent my case and not the wider world.

Of the three types of case study identified by Stake (1995), mine falls most compatibly into the instrumental category of study, rather than having a more intrinsic or collective slant. As an instrumental case study, my project aims to provide an insight into the issue of teacher grammar knowledge and instruction, being topic-focused and concerned with understanding this topic further, within the context of this particular study. Thus, the case plays a "supportive role" to the topic (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

In terms of previous research into teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices around the teaching of grammar, it appears that a case study approach has not been conducted to date. Utilising the case study method in the current research allows for a highly in-depth look into teachers' grammar knowledge and teaching practices within the parameters of their own school context. Having an intimate knowledge of this context will allow for a deeper, more meaningful understanding of participant responses.

3.4 Mixed Methods

I decided to use a mixed methods approach as a pragmatic way to obtain the most useful and comprehensive answers to my three research questions. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), "Taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions" (p.15). Seeing my research as both exploratory and content-driven, I felt it would be better informed through the use of more than one method. I decided to use a survey as well as semi-structured interviews in conducting my research.

3.4.1 Survey

My research began with a survey, in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data about the grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices of a group of 26 year 7 and 8 teachers. Because this was a descriptive survey, participants were asked to describe data on these variables of interest. "The attractions of a survey lie in its appeal to generalizability or universality within given parameters" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 257). However, as this case study comprises a relatively small-scale representative group, my survey's explanatory potential would be limited if evaluated in isolation, as a solitary data set.

In constructing the survey (see appendix A), the questions included were informed by my reading of the research literature, rather than based on questions from any existing surveys. I chose to divide the questions into three distinct categories, each one being directly related to one of the three overarching research questions. In this way the grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices of these teachers could be separated out, which would make the findings easier to analyse. The questions I chose for the survey were related to each of the three categories and designed to extract detail around a variety of aspects of teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices about grammar. For example, in the first section about teacher understandings of grammar, I provided questions involving the ways in which the teachers had developed their understandings of grammar and grammatical instruction, after first establishing what these understandings were. I believed it was important to understand how these teachers' understandings had come about as this was directly related to what these understandings were.

The survey was anonymous and used closed and open-ended questions. It provided base information which would help to inform the language and type of interview questions used in the semi-structured interviews. Results from the survey could then also be used to compare, contrast and triangulate data emerging from the follow up interviews (Menter et al., 2011).

The survey I carried out was intended to serve two purposes. The first was to give me a broad understanding of how the teaching community at this school perceived their beliefs, understanding and teaching of grammar. As such, it would describe the nature of "existing conditions" (Cohen et al., 2011, p.256). Relevant survey data would emerge through providing participants with questions which correspond to my three overarching research questions.

Secondly, the survey served as a tool in my selection of potential interview participants for the second stage of my study. After analysing the survey results from the set of teachers who volunteered to be interviewed, I chose a range of teachers to interview according to their perceived confidence in teaching grammar (from teachers with very little confidence to highly confident teachers). A scale was provided in the survey for teachers to specify where their confidence levels lay. Through the purposeful selection of teacher participants in this manner, I intended that a wide range of data would be provided in terms of answering the three research questions.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

In addition to survey data collection, more in-depth qualitative data was collected through six semi-structured interviews during the second stage of the study.

Interviewing, in its various forms, is an effective, well established, universal and highly popular qualitative research tool. Holstein and Gubrium (2002) believe "interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives" (p.113). It is a way of gaining authentic knowledge and insights from targeted individuals and groups of people.

Choosing to specifically use semi-structured interviews in my study allowed for flexibility, rather than rigidity, within topic areas (Fontana & Frey, 2000). These semi-structured interviews contained some regulating structure, as well as allowing the freedom to discover and probe new ideas within a topic

and to change or add topics as the interviews progressed. In semi-structured interviews, "the map or agenda is shaped by the research objectives but it is open to negotiation with the interviewee" (Menter et al., 2011, p.131). Semi-structured interviews can also be used to strengthen quantitative methods, such as surveys, as a way to provide deeper, more meaningful data collection from the study population (Menter et al., 2011, p.127). Fontana and Frey discuss the idea that open-ended, interactional interview types offer a significant breadth of data (2000).

3.5 My Role as Insider Researcher

Having an intimate knowledge of the research environment, and to a certain degree the participants of my research, made my involvement as a researcher highly subjective in nature. It was clear from the outset, that there was potential for bias in terms of making assumptions about participant meaning. As far as producing credible and valid research data, bias can also be of particular concern when employing a semi-structured interview method and when using an interpretative approach. It was essential that I obtain and present an authentic picture in terms of the participants' voices.

According to Holstein and Gubrium (1995), the researcher needs to be clear and transparent in presenting the research agenda, in both its purpose, biases and in the selection of specific participants. As personal bias was unavoidable, considering the subjective nature of my research approach and interview method, I needed to expose my epistemology, perspectives on the topic and motivations at the outset. This was firstly addressed during an information-sharing session about my research at an initial whole-staff meeting. I believe this was an important way of ensuring my respondents would give fully informed consent and would participate candidly, as well as fostering all-important trust within researcher-participant relationships. Restating and emphasising my research agenda also occurred directly before voluntary participation in the survey and the interviews.

As an "insider", I believe that my role as researcher actually evoked, for me, unexpectedly positive effects, which I later found have been explored and

commented upon widely by contemporary researchers. According to Bonner and Tolhurst (2002), the benefits of insider-research are threefold and include: having a deeper knowledge and understanding of the culture being studied, maintaining the established flow of social interaction and creating a confidence and closeness with participants which promotes both the recounting and judging of truth.

My having spent much time in the research environment, and understanding the setting, as well as knowing about the culture and language of the participants, went a long way towards ensuring that my research findings accurately represented the people at the heart of my research. For example, understanding the policies around this school's literacy planning and teaching meant that I was able to understand teacher responses in relation to the parameters within which this group of teachers are able to teach grammar. I also found that the participants often opened up to me in a surprisingly candid manner, something which may not have occurred with an outside researcher. For example, significant identification of and/or discussion around controversial school topics often ensued, both within individual interview sessions and within the survey data. These reportedly "difficult" but important aspects of discussed school politics intersected with my research questions and so were particularly relevant to my research.

The idea of reciprocity between researcher and researchee, as identified by Reinharz (1992), can be seen to have developed in my relationships with participants over the course of my study. I believe I was able to identify areas of concern for participants and found particular themes with which participants could clearly open up about and respond strongly to. Through mutual trust, participants felt confident to share controversial points of view, knowing that I considered their beliefs and ideas to be important.

During my interviews with participants, I often found that I could relate strongly to experiences they recalled. I was able to identify with and understand where the participants were coming from in these instances and I believe this helped to develop trusting relationships which, in turn, prompted participants to be more forthcoming. Bishop (1997) believes that

the use of interviewing as a tool to provide "collaborative storying", "goes beyond an approach that simply focuses on the cooperative sharing of experiences and focuses on connectedness, engagement, and involvement with the research participants" (p. 41).

I believe that being a member of this school community meant that I had insider knowledge which might take a long time for an outsider to obtain. In discussing case studies, Unluer (2012) believes that "insider researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it 'really works'. They know how best to approach people" (p. 1). I found this to be true for me.

Furthermore, Eisenhart (2006) discusses the idea of interpretive validity where the researcher's interpretations must be accepted by participants. Providing my participants with transcripts to appraise was another way I was able to seek validity in representation. Being highly reflexive in practice throughout the research process (repeatedly critiquing my own connection within the research experience), and providing thick descriptions also helped to counter such issues around personal bias and a potentially unbalanced power dynamic (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

3.6 Setting

3.6.1 School Context

The setting of my case study, including the wider school context and the school literacy programme, has impacted both upon the way in which my research has been conducted and the way in which the research can be understood by the reader. It is therefore important to describe that setting.

This case study is based at a large New Zealand Intermediate School located in the Waikato region of the North Island. At the time of the study 780 students were enrolled. Its 29 classrooms cater for a mix of Year 7 and Year 8 students, their ages ranging from ten to thirteen years. The composite classrooms include accelerate, digital, laptop, core and learning assistance options. This school is an urban, co-educational state school

with an ethnically and socio-economically diverse student population. Its school decile rating is 5[4].

The school has a diverse mix of ethnicities and nationalities. The current mix of students is approximately 59% NZ European, 28% Maaori, 4% Pasifika, 6% Asian and 3% Middle Eastern, Latin American or African (MELAA). There is a small group of students for whom English is a second language. These students, along with a small number of Korean and Japanese International students, receive extra support in learning English.

Twenty-nine full time classroom teachers, one per classroom, teach at this school with the help of an on-site Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), a number of teacher aides and also specialist teachers who provide student instruction in Science, Art, Music, hard and soft material technologies and food technology. The school is divided into six teams, each being led by a senior teacher who is responsible for the planning and organisation of the learning programmes. These senior teachers, also known as middle leaders, work with the three members of senior management (the Principal and two Deputy Principals) to ensure school policies and standards are being met school-wide.

Literacy Programme
The school literacy policy makes it compulsory for teachers to plan for and teach at least three separate student writing groups (based on ability levels) at least four times per week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). The same expectations apply to the teaching of reading. Teachers are expected to teach writing "across the curriculum" and usually particular forms or genres of writing are taught over the period of a term. For example, the particular knowledge and skills involved in forms of scientific writing might be taught over a term where science is seen as the "big learning" (focus area) for that term.

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[4] The Ministry of Education uses a decile rating (ranking) system for school funding purposes. Each decile contains approximately **10%** of schools. Schools in decile 1 have the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Schools in decile 10 have the lowest proportion of these students.

The school believes that identifying the specific literacy needs of students within their learning groups provides guidance for the way teachers plan for and teach writing in their classrooms. The teaching of grammar in any form is not a specific focus at this school and has held little importance in terms of professional development, despite a four year intensive school-wide focus on writing. Over the past four years of professional development in writing, there has been one 45 minute, whole-staff workshop on improving teachers' knowledge of grammatical conventions.

3.6.2 Participants

Twenty-six participants were surveyed for this study and from this cohort, six were then interviewed.

Survey Participants

Twenty-six teachers participated in the survey and of these only two were male (see Table 1). Participants indicated their ages as ranging from 20 to 60 years with a very even split between age-range categories. Seven teachers fitted within the 20-30 age range, seven teachers within the 30-40 age range, seven teachers within the 40-50 age range, and five teachers within the 50-60 age range. The number of years' experience in teaching ranged from just half a year to 36 years of teaching service. Twelve teachers reported having four years or less of teaching experience and five teachers reported having more than 15 years of teaching experience. The average length of time in teaching for this group of participants is 8.9 years. Only four of the participants speak and/or teach a second language, two of these languages being Spanish, one being Te Reo Maaori and one participant reported both Chinese and Japanese.

Interview Participants

Six of the surveyed participants were interviewed. Interview participants ranged in age from 20 to 50 years with three of the six participants indicating their ages as between 30 and 40 years (see Table 2). All participants were

female and two of these were able to speak and/or teach a second language. These participants had been teaching from between one year and 15 years. The average length of time teaching for this group was 7.8 years.

Table 1: Survey Participants' Bio Data

Survey Participant	Age	Gender	Number of Years Teaching	Other languages spoken and/or taught
Teacher A	20-30	F	2	
Teacher B	40-50	F	1	
Teacher C	40-50	F	7	
Teacher D	30-40	F	15	
Teacher E	30-40	F	14	
Teacher F	30-40	F	12	Chinese Japanese
Teacher G	30-40	F	3	
Teacher H	50-60	F	25	
Teacher I	30-40	F	1	
Teacher J	20-30	F	1	Spanish
Teacher K	50-60	F	9	Spanish
Teacher L	50-60	F	36	
Teacher M	20-30	F	2	
Teacher N	50-60	F	8	
Teacher O	30-40	F	10	

Teacher P	20-30	M	.5	
Teacher Q	40-50	F	.5	
Teacher R	30-40	F	4	
Teacher S	40-50	F	7	
Teacher T	40-50	F	20	
Teacher U	40-50	F	23	
Teacher V	20-30	F	.5	
Teacher W	40-50	F	14	
Teacher X	50-60	F	14	Te Reo Maori
Teacher Y	20-30	F	.5	
Teacher Z	20-30	M	2	

Table 2: Interview Participants' Bio Data

Interview Participant Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Number of Years Teaching	Other languages spoken and/or taught
Catherine	20-30	F	2	
Dale	30-40	F	15	
Kim	40-50	F	14	
Joanne	30-40	F	12	Chinese Japanese
Anna	30-40	F	3	
Grace	20-30	F	1	Spanish

3.7 Data Collection Process

Before any research data were collected I obtained formal permission from the principal of the school and then presented an information session about my study at a regularly scheduled staff meeting. All potential teacher participants were present at this meeting. Information sheets were provided for those teachers interested in taking part in the survey and semi-structured interviews, which together made up the research component of my study.

Three weeks later the 26 teachers who chose to participate completed a pen and paper survey and, as part of this survey, were asked to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in face-to-face interviews which formed the second phase of my research.

After analysing the results of the survey, I chose a range of consenting teachers to interview according to their perceived confidence in teaching grammar (from teachers with very little confidence to highly confident teachers). I recruited six teacher participants to interview and these interviews were held at a time and place suitable to the interviewees, over a five month period.

3.7.1 Administration of survey

The survey was completed at one time by 26 teachers in the school's science room. It comprised 14 questions which were both closed and open-ended in nature and took no more than 20 minutes to complete by hand. Teachers were asked to write their contact details on a detachable piece of sticky notepaper if they were interested in being interviewed for the second phase of the study. Once the surveys were assessed, these notes could be removed from the completed surveys in order to maintain survey response anonymity.

3.7.2 Choosing interview participants

I decided to choose six teacher participants to interview across a range of perceived confidence levels in the teaching of grammar. I wanted to

interview two teachers who lacked confidence in teaching grammar, two in the mid-range, and two who felt confident. Originally, I had intended to simply use the teachers' responses to question 14 for this purpose. Question 14 provided a Likert scale for the participants to self-assess their level of confidence in teaching grammar.

However, there were two factors which altered my approach to choosing participants. Firstly, only five of the 26 participants rated themselves as being reasonably confident (four participants) or highly confident (one participant) in teaching grammar, while the majority of teachers (21 out of 26) rated themselves as having "some", "little" or "no" confidence in teaching grammar. I was surprised at the limited number of teachers who felt they had a reasonable degree of confidence in teaching grammar. After looking more closely at the survey results, it became clear that the teachers' self-ratings were not always consistent with other aspects of their reporting. Therefore, in order to obtain a range of confidence levels, I made a judgement based on several aspects of their survey, for example, questions 2, 4, 6, 9 and 12B (see appendix A).

Additionally, after analysing the survey results in more detail, I found that some teachers reported quite a wide range of understandings and teacher practice around grammar. These teachers wrote more extensively than others and seemed to have fairly defined pedagogical ideas (having an understanding of their teaching strategies in terms of theory and/or experience) around the teaching of grammar, and yet these teachers mostly rated themselves relatively poorly in terms of confidence levels. I wondered why they were reluctant to rate themselves more highly. It therefore became problematic when separating the respondents into the categories I had initially assigned, based solely on the teachers' own rating of their confidence levels.

Because of these factors, I chose to select my interview participants by taking into account their responses throughout the survey, and not base my selection exclusively on the results of question 14's Likert scale. In these early stages, I could see a general correlation between teachers'

understandings of grammar and the teaching of grammar, particularly their application in classroom practice. I could also see that teacher experience played a role in perceived confidence levels. Teachers with relatively limited teaching experience felt far less confident than those with more years in the job. I needed to ensure I chose a wide-ranging group of teachers to interview, based on confidence levels, but also taking into account teaching experience and the understanding/knowledge of grammar and grammatical instruction.

Interestingly, despite my measures to obtain a wide range of participant confidence levels around the teaching of grammar, when interviewed, these participants as a group declared themselves to be less confident than they had reported in their survey data. As a result, only one of the interview participants positioned herself as being "reasonably confident" in her understanding and ability to teach grammar. The other five participants reported having some, limited or little/no confidence around this. It is remarkable, that in explaining their confidence levels in greater detail, through the interview process itself, these teachers presented themselves as having less confidence than they did in the survey.

3.7.3 How the Survey Helped to Inform Interview Questions

Completing a survey at the outset was beneficial in that it gave me insight into areas of particular significance which I thought might be explored in more depth during the interview stage of my research. I believed I would be able to probe these themes further if the interviews gave rise to exploration along these lines. After reading through the teacher responses and identifying areas of particular interest, I crafted a set of initial questions to be used in the interviews (see appendix A). For example, it became clear to me that the prevalence of teachers' grammatical understandings based on sentence level grammar, rather than whole text or word level grammar, was an important theme which required further exploration. I wondered whether teachers even considered sounds in words, or word level grammar, to be a part of grammar as a concept.

Another theme of interest for me was the reporting of a lack of time and/or limited content knowledge as being problematic in terms of the effective teaching of grammar. Tied to this was a clear lack of professional development in the area of grammar over the duration of the majority of these teachers' teaching careers.

3.7.4 The Interview Process

Once the six interview participants were selected, and had agreed to participate in this part of the research, I asked each teacher to choose a time and location for their interviews to take place. I wanted the participants to feel comfortable in their surroundings and unrestricted in terms of scheduling. Consequently, the interviews occurred over a two month period mainly during the primary school summer holidays in December and January. One teacher, who was particularly busy for personal reasons, needed to postpone her interview until March.

Each participant chose to either be interviewed in their classroom or at a favoured café at a time which was suitable to them. The duration of the interviews ranged from 18 minutes to 37 minutes, not including the length of time it took to go through the consent process and organisation at the commencement of each interview.

3.7.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues concerning this study needed to be considered, particularly in regard to gaining informed consent from participants and ensuring the protection of participants' confidentiality.

Firstly, formal permission was obtained from the principal of the school so that participants could be accessed and research could commence. The principal provided a signed letter of consent after detailed discussion around the content and parameters of the research with the researcher, and after reading a detailed information sheet regarding the research.

All participants who took part in the survey, including those who were subsequently interviewed, were initially informed of the content of the research in detail at an arranged meeting time. They were also provided the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research. It was made clear that being part of the study was voluntary and that it was their choice whether or not to take part. This was important because all of the participants knew the researcher and might have felt obliged to participate in the research. Subsequently, the participants were asked to read through an information sheet and make their own decision around completing the survey. Collection of the survey data was undertaken at a later date, after participants had been given plenty of time to consider their participation. Only teachers who were interested in taking part in the survey needed to attend.

The issue regarding participant confidentiality was important for both the survey and interview aspects of the study. It was possible that during the survey, and particularly during interviews, participants may offer unsolicited and negative commentary regarding aspects of the school in which they work. It was therefore made clear to participants that everything they reported would be treated confidentially.

During the selection process for interview participants, survey participants who wished to be considered as an interview participant, attached their names to their completed survey sheets using a removable post-it sticker. Once participants were selected for interviewing, the post-it stickers were removed from all survey data, to ensure confidentiality. When referred to in the study, a code is used for each survey participant. The participants who were interviewed chose their own pseudonyms to be used in the study. Through the use of codes and pseudonyms all participants were ensured anonymity throughout the study. The interview participants were also given time to read through and sign an informed consent sheet. It was made clear to participants, and included in this sheet, that participants had a right to withdraw from the study at any time up until their approval of their interview transcripts.

Ethical approval for the commencement of this research was granted by the University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee on 6th October 2014 (see appendix B).

3.8 Forms of Analysis

The intention of my research was to generate two kinds of data: 1) survey data (both quantitative and qualitative in nature); and 2) semi-structured interview data (qualitative in nature).

3.8.1 Analysis of Survey Data

The survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics. They were analysed broadly in terms of three general themes relating to the research questions – understandings, beliefs and practices around the teaching of grammar, using coding techniques.

I decided to apply multiple codings to one copy of my survey data and used a highlighting system to separate the codes (Delamont, 1992). This allowed me to see the data set in its entirety as well as in its fragmented form in the one place, and also made it possible for me to see links within and across codes.

Summary of the coding of survey results

Soon after completing the survey and compiling these results using an Excel spreadsheet, I decided to carry out an initial analysis of the results to see whether any significant common threads were evident. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82). In this data set, I wanted to determine key themes in relation to the prevalence of particular words and/or phrases tied to the same or similar meanings.

The themes I identified in the data also needed to have direct relevance and importance to each provided survey question and also to the broader, overarching three questions of my study. I found it very useful to have grouped the survey questions around these overarching questions. I was ultimately concerned with whether the responses provided information regarding teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices around the teaching of grammar.

I printed out the column of answers pertaining to each question and manually read through these, highlighting the same or similar words and/or phrases (codes) used by participants to answer the questions. It became very clear that there were common themes present as similarities emerged in the data.

For example, in response to Question 1 (What does the term grammar mean to you? What does it encompass?), I found that 11 out of the 26 participants explicitly mentioned the word "punctuation" which made up a significant response proportion from the group of participants. I colour coded the word "punctuation" with a highlighter. In reading through responses to all of the survey questions, I colour coded any commonalities, even when these were responses from two respondents only, and I also made note of answers that seemed to lie quite clearly outside the norm.

Summary of the Second Coding of Survey Results
The second coding of my data was intended to check my own consistency and thoroughness in analysing each question in the survey. I believed that the first coding was completed reasonably quickly and within time constraints and therefore the analysis needed more careful attention. I hoped to find trends and outliers in the data which I may have initially missed.

In checking for consistency and reliability in my coding of the data set during the second analysis, I found that I needed to make some changes in terms of the inferences I had made through particular word choices. I also found

a few new areas to code which I had initially overlooked and I began to see themes emerging from both within specific question responses and across the data set as a whole.

Through carefully checking for my own consistency and understandings of the data during the second analysis, I found that the data were providing me with more than information to organise, describe and report. As Boyatzis (1998)NOT ON REFS explains, thematic analysis "frequently goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

The influence of my 'insider' status on coding results

I believe it is important to note that I came to a realisation that my own interpretation of responses, due to my "inside" position as a teacher within this teaching environment, affected the way I coded the survey results. For example, my knowledge of recent staff PD around grammar, run by an outside school facilitator, allowed me to interpret and understand responses that might have otherwise been misunderstood by outside researchers (Question 3B).

Another factor relevant to my interpretations as an "insider" was my understanding of how this school and classroom literacy programmes operate. Group guided writing sessions were reported by six participants in response to Question 9. The school literacy policy makes it compulsory to teach at least three separate writing groups (based on ability levels) at least four times per week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). Having been a long-time teacher at this school meant that I could understand all participant responses in relation to the teaching parameters involved. Having insider knowledge gave me insight into some responses (particularly those to do with issues around lack of time and timetabling etc.). I realised this needed pointing out as I was initially taking my interpretations/meaning-making for granted. Researchers outside of this school context would not necessarily have the same understanding, and so would not necessarily reach the same conclusions as I had.

Being a teacher myself meant that I also had some topic-related/technical expertise which allowed me to interpret responses based on having the same/similar understandings as my teacher participants. For example, I have used my teacher understanding of subject-verb agreement to interpret the meaning of some participant answers as pertaining to the teaching of tense (see Questions 1 and 2).

Another example of this was in understanding the links between integration and teaching "in context" in terms of the participants' understandings and practice within this school environment. The two are encouraged to be interwoven within teaching/learning sessions at this school.

Intra-rater reliability

After analysing my survey results for a second time it became apparent that I needed to check my coding methods for reliability. To examine intra-rater reliability, I decided to complete an intra-rater reliability test. To do this I counted the number of categorised units that were included in all coding samples, including the new codes which were found or changed after the second analysis of my survey data.

Four hundred and fifty-two categorised units were counted after the second coding. Four extra units were counted for Question 1 and one extra unit was counted for Question 2, making a difference of five extra codes which were counted altogether.

Therefore an intra-rater reliability of 98.9% can be reported from the coding of my survey data.

Inter-rater reliability

To gain a better perspective on the reliability of my own coding and to promote validity in my findings I decided to use an outside coder to complete an inter-rater reliability check. I chose a primary school principal with extensive experience as a leader in literacy to complete this check as I

believed this person would have a good understanding of the grammatical ideas, and particularly the language, reported by participants. Exactly the same process was used by the outside coder as was used by me.

After the coder had completed the coding, I counted the number of categorised units that were included in all coding samples, including codes which were changed during the analysis of my survey data.

The overall coder differentiation of coding was 82 out of 452 individual codes. This provides a percentage difference of 18%. Therefore, an accuracy of 82% can be reported after the inter-rater coding of my survey data.

I believe differences found between intra and inter-rater coding may be partly accounted for through the differences in outsider vs. insider knowledge. Although the outside coder had a good understanding of the grammatical ideas or concepts described in the survey data, the language used by participants within the particular context of this study was not always understood as intended. However, the results of this inter-rater check do show that a high level of reliability can be seen in my coding of survey data.

3.8.2 Analysis of interview data

The data required to answer my research questions on a deeper level came through the completion of a thematic content analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) of the transcripts provided by participant interviews. Participants' views and ideas, in relation to the research questions on grammatical knowledge, understanding, beliefs and practice, were explored in more depth during the interview process. This ensured that plentiful qualitative data were produced.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p.79). Using this type of analysis sat well alongside my interpretive approach as it

provided flexibility and was conducive to allowing me to report participants' accounts in an in-depth and complex manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The semi-structured interviews produced a voluminous quantity of data to be processed and analysed. My digital interview recordings were first transcribed and then analysed in order to identify themes. In extracting, explaining and interpreting the thematic meanings of my study, I felt it important to stay true to the respondents' perceptions and the context as much as possible (Menter et al., 2011) so decided to have each recording transcribed in its entirety, rather than in parts or sections. I did not want to make value judgements in omitting or saving any of the information at this stage of the process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I also decided that, although time consuming, it was important for me to undertake my interview analyses "by hand", rather than employ any kind of computer software package. Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson (1996) believe that "analytic procedures which appear rooted in standardised, often mechanic procedures are no substitute for genuinely 'grounded' engagement with the data throughout the whole of the research process" (p. 76).

Once transcribed, my interview dialogues were read and analysed many times before drawing on significant themes to form theory. I used labels (codes) to identify key points in the information and from there I grouped similar codes, forming concepts, which could then be compared and contrasted. Through the analysis of these broader concepts, topical explanations began to emerge from the research. Analysing interview data in this inductive manner ensures that "little is assumed about the research topics and generates concepts/theory from the data" (Menter et al., 2011, p.145).

The identified concepts could then be grouped and organised within the three key sections of the study, according to teacher understandings, beliefs and practices around grammatical instruction. The interview concepts were grouped in parallel to findings from the survey data for comparison.

3.9 Summary

My study is positioned within an interpretivist research paradigm and, as such, follows an exploratory path without preordained or pre-prescribed outcomes. I have chosen a case study approach, using my own educational context within which to base my research. As a researcher, my interest in grammar as a topic is keen. Being an instrumental case study, the case plays a supportive role to the topic (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

Robust data were collected by utilising a mixed methods approach to the research. Comprehensive qualitative and quantitative data were gathered through both survey and interview methods.

The data for this study were firstly collected through the use of a descriptive survey involving 26 teachers, followed by a series of semi-structured interviews with six of these teachers. The data were collected in order to obtain a picture of the grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices of a group of Year 7 and 8 teachers at this particular school.

My keen interest in the topic and in this particular school setting, which is my own, make my position, as insider researcher of this study, both privileged and problematic. My subjective position as researcher is advantageous in terms of having an intimate knowledge of the research community and, to a certain extent, the participants of my research. However, issues around consistency and objectivity needed to be addressed in reporting an authentic picture in terms of participant voices. It was imperative that I remain highly reflexive and that I provide thick descriptions to help counter issues around personal bias (Fontana and Frey, 2000).

In the following chapter I will present the data which I collected through utilising the methods outlined above.

Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of my survey of participants and my interviews with a subset of the survey participants. The information provided by research participants comprised their understandings, beliefs and teaching practices in regards to grammar and the teaching of grammar. The findings have been divided into three sections, according to my overarching research questions:

1. How do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting understand the concept of grammar? (4.2)
2. What views do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting have of the place of grammatical instruction in teaching writing? (4.3)
3. What are the range of approaches that Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting report in teaching grammar during their writing lessons? (4.4)

Findings derived from research questions through participant responses are provided and have been grouped under each of these themes. The progression of ideas occurs in the same order as was provided in the survey and which was loosely followed during the interviews. Pseudonyms have been used to help safeguard the anonymity of research participants (Participants A, C, D, F, G and J).

The research findings derived from each research question have been divided in the following way. Each of the major sections is divided into three successive parts. The first reports results from the survey data, the second reports results from the interview data and a summary of both sets of data comprises the end of the section. In reading this chapter, it is also important to note that the interview participants were a subset of the survey participants and, as such, provided additional detail to that which was recorded in their survey responses.

It was important to divide the data in this way, detailing separately the data provided by the subset of interviewed participants, as it became apparent that the information which the interviewed participants provided during their interviews was far more detailed and, in some cases, different to what they had provided in their survey responses.

For example, in her survey response Catherine identified only "punctuation and sentence structure" when asked what grammar means and what it encompasses (see appendix A, Question 1). When interviewed, Catherine spoke of how her understanding of grammar was changing. She explained, "I've always kind of thought it was how you use apostrophes properly and semi-colons and things like that properly, but from a lot of things that I have been looking into, I think it encompasses a lot more of how the written word actually works, and it, how it's built, rather than just focusing on those things". These type of additions to participants' original ideas reported in the survey were common among all interviewed participants. When provided with an opportunity to elaborate and explore their ideas during interviewing, participants provide far more depth in terms of data gathering.

Another example of this was when all of the interviewed participants were able to provide comprehensive details of professional development they had undertaken to improve their grammatical knowledge. However, in the survey responses three of these teachers believed they had not undertaken any professional development in this area. One of these three participants did not respond to this question at all (see appendix A, Question 4). Although she provided no survey data when asked about professional development around grammar, Zoe was able to discuss in detail the learning and ideas around grammar which she had developed through teaching in the US. All of the interviewed participants added information and elaborated fully on their ideas, in comparison to their survey responses, when answering this question during interviewing.

It was important that the data results from the two contexts were provided separately, including the percentages for each, as the information and

percentages obtained for the smaller interviewed subgroup of teachers may have been more accurate in some cases.

4.2 Understanding the Concept of Grammar in a Classroom Context

This section explores research participants' understandings of grammar as a concept and their perceptions of what grammar encompasses. The aspects of grammar which participants' identify as teaching in their classrooms are investigated (4.2.1), as well as the ways in which the participants have developed strategies to teach grammar within their classroom writing programmes (4.2.2). This section also examines whether participants have experienced professional development around grammar and/or the teaching of grammar (4.2.3).

4.2.1 Understanding the concept of grammar

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 1 (see appendix A).

Many of the survey participants (19/26, or 73%) understood grammar to be about sentence formation and punctuation. Forty-two percent of the participants (11/26) explicitly identified punctuation in their understanding of grammar and 58% of the participants (15/26) explicitly identified sentence structure/formation in their answers. Grammar was mainly understood as encompassing sentence-level conventions or functions, rather than those at whole text level or word level.

Through the survey, most participants (22/26, or 85%) provided specific and narrow definitions of grammar which included examples mainly pertaining to sentence-level grammars. For example, Participant A stated, "punctuation and sentence structure". Only four of the 26 responses (15%) provided purely broad or more general definitions of grammar where these participants could possibly be seen to understand and relate grammar to

language as a whole and/or to whole text grammars. Participant L reported, "Rules of language. Conventions of language".

Only two participants in the survey (8%) included spelling (word-level grammar) as part of their understanding of grammar. Participant B answered, "Spelling, punctuation, figures of speech, sentences making sense, correct use of capitals, verb use – tense etc."

The participants who were interviewed provided greater depth in their responses in regards to their conceptualisations of grammar. Included in their extended verbal responses, five of the six interviewed teacher participants (83%) gave a general or wide definition of grammar, all of which encompassed the idea that written texts need to "make sense" to the reader. Dale identified grammar as enabling writing to be "correct" and Anna reported grammar as being about "making writing sound cohesive or correct". Joanne solely provided a wide definition of grammar stating that grammar encompasses the "rules of language" and the "conventions of language" which ensure that speaking or writing make sense. All three of the teachers who provided wider definitions of grammar rated themselves as having "some confidence" in teaching grammar.

Catherine, who described herself as "not at all confident" in teaching grammar, spoke of how her understanding of grammar was changing. She explained, "I've always kind of thought it was how you use apostrophes properly and semi-colons and things like that properly, but from a lot of things that I have been looking into, I think it encompasses a lot more of how the written word actually works, and how it's built, rather than just focusing on those things".

Sentence structure and punctuation were identified by four of the six interviewed participants (67%) as examples of grammar when providing definitions of grammar. Anna stated, "I think it's about … using the right sentence structures so that the writing kind of flows … and punctuating it so it works for the reader". Three of the interview participants (50%) included the use of correct vocabulary as being a part of what grammar is about. This was understood in terms of relationships between sets of words at the

sentence level. For example, Anna spoke of subject-verb agreement, Grace identified "plurals matching up" and Charlotte discussed the use of correct word identification and usage in terms of the differences between words such as "there, their and they're".

One of the interviewed participants (17%), who described herself as having "little confidence" in teaching grammar, said that she was unsure about defining grammar. Grace stated, "I feel like I don't even, like I know what's right and wrong, but I don't even know what's classed as grammar". Her overall response to this question was brief in comparison with the those of the other participants.

This question asked participants to explain what the word grammar means to them and what it encompasses. Findings from both survey and interview data point to a prevalent understanding that grammar encompasses sentence-level elements of language, such as sentence structure and punctuation. However, half of the interview participants also discussed correct vocabulary usage as being a part of what grammar is about. Only two participants identified and included word-level grammar in their definitions of grammar.

Although only four participants (15%) provided a wider or more general definition of grammar through the survey, five of the six participants interviewed (83%) discussed grammar in more general terms where grammar was related to language as a whole. However, all but one of these interviewed participants then narrowed their ideas to explain and provide concrete examples of their grammatical understandings as being at the sentence level only. One participant who was interviewed (17%) was unsure how to define grammar.

4.2.2 Aspects/areas of grammar taught in teacher writing programmes
This section deals with participant responses to survey question 2 (see appendix A).

Seventy-four percent of participants (17/23) reported through the survey that the areas of grammar which they taught were the same as those which they identified in answer to the previous question, relating to their understandings of grammar. For example, Participant A reported, "Punctuation and sentence structure", which was the exact answer this participant provided when asked to provide an understanding of grammar as a concept. Therefore, teaching practices around choice in areas of grammatical instruction strongly reflected teachers' understandings of what grammar encompasses. The teachers taught what they knew or understood grammar to be. Most participants (18/23, or 78%) reported teaching sentence-level grammars, mainly around sentence structure and punctuation. Seventy percent of participants (16/23) reported the teaching of sentence structures and 52% reported the teaching of punctuation (12/23). Participant W provided a typical answer here: "Structure – sentencing, punctuation to share a clear message". Only two participants (9%) included the teaching of spelling in their answers. Participant B answered, "As much as I can of previous question (spelling, punctuation, figures of speech, sentences making sense, correct use of capitals, verb use – tense etc.)".

The interviewed participants were able to expand on and provide further depth to the answers they had provided in the survey. Three of the six participants interviewed (50%) stated that they were currently unable to and so did not plan to teach grammar for various reasons. For one of these participants, choosing not to teach grammar was a deliberate decision as she believed teaching grammar was not beneficial to student learning. In discussing her past experiences, Joanne stated, "I have found when I set out to teach grammar on the odd occasion, when I have done that, it, I think it's a waste of time". One of these three participants, Catherine, reported on having included spelling as part of her writing programme but did not consider this to be related to teaching grammar.

The remaining three participants who were interviewed (50%) all reported teaching grammar in various ways relating to sentence structures. Two reported teaching aspects of punctuation, and two reported teaching word

categories, such as nouns, adjectives and verbs. For these participants, much of their reporting mirrored their responses to the previous question regarding their understanding of grammar. Dale reported teaching "sentence length, punctuation and how to use verbs and nouns and adjectives". Grace spoke about using strategies to teach conjunctions in sentences and Anna stated, "I teach the use of complex punctuation because I'm finding that the basic, common use is pretty prevalent [in the students' writing]".

This question asked participants to describe the aspects or areas of grammar that are taught in their writing programmes. Through the survey, it was shown that most participants (17/23, or 74%) and all interviewed participants who answered this question (50%) reported teaching the same grammatical concepts as those they had identified in their definitions of grammar for Question 1. For these participants, this mainly included the teaching of sentence structures and punctuation. However, two of the interviewed participants also included the teaching of word types in their responses. Three of the interviewed participants (50%) reported not teaching grammar at all at the time of the study.

4.2.3 Professional Development
This section deals with participant responses to survey questions 3, 3B and 3C (see appendix A).

In the survey, the majority of participants (16/26, or 62%) reported not having taken part in any professional development around the teaching of grammar at any time.

Of the ten participants (38%) who reported having participated in professional development around teaching grammar, only four identified the relatively recent, whole-staff grammar workshop held in the school with a school advisor. Two of these ten survey participants indicated having had grammar training in relation to ESOL/second language learning. A further

four of these participants mentioned participating in professional development with particular educationists and one participant reported having gained grammatical knowledge through completing university papers.

Learning from the identified professional development included the following key ideas/phrases: integration of grammar into literacy programmes, applying grammar in context, modelling, use of models, use of mentor texts, repetition and explanation. Particular books, professional development courses and/or resources were mentioned by four of the participants in the survey.[5]

Detailed discussion around participants' experiences of professional development was made possible through the interview process. Three of the six participants interviewed (50%), reported having received no professional development around the teaching of grammar since beginning as practising teachers. However, one of these participants reported engaging in professional development outside of school. Catherine, who described herself as lacking confidence in her ability to teach grammar, completed a Real Spelling[6] course but was unsure as to whether spelling was related to grammar and so did not count this as professional development related to grammar. Five of the six interviewed participants (83%) also reported having received no professional development around grammar or the teaching of grammar during their years of teacher training.

One of the participants who was interviewed identified a requirement for undertaking professional development around the teaching of grammar in isolation. This occurred when she worked as a teacher in the United States. She believed this professional development was highly important in this particular educational context, as grammar was taught as a subject in its own right and was taught independently of reading and writing. Joanne

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[5] '10 Things Every Writer Needs to Know' by Jeff Anderson, 'Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation' by Lynne Truss; professional development courses with Jeff Anderson and Gail Loane; reference to Elsie Nelley in regards to PM Writer

[6] Described by the participant as a natural, context – based approach to spelling correction

stated, "it (grammar) was taught as a subject and the teaching there (in the US) was very much … the whole year was geared towards getting the students to pass an exam at the end of the year".

Another participant, Anna, recalled an occasion at the current school when the entire staff was required to complete the Year 10 Grammar PAT test at a staff meeting. She believed this was undertaken in order for staff to affirm, or otherwise, their own grammatical knowledge, due to a perception by senior management that grammar was being taught incorrectly by some teachers. However, Anna was unsure if this was meant as professional development as there were no follow-up, improvement sessions, only this stand-alone test.

At a previous school, Dale recalled learning about asTTle writing[7] and its associated marking rubric and believed this was helpful in terms of understanding particular grammar for genre types. She also remembered a short professional development session run by an outside facilitator at the current school. Dale identified this learning as being about the use of "mini lessons" and also the incidental teaching of grammar. "What they are trying to say in the PD is that, I think, not to teach these things [aspects of grammar] individually, not to teach capital letters and full stops as a lesson". Dale reported that this was a brief, one-off session, however, and that it did not continue as a focus for professional development at the school.

All three of these interviewed participants who reported having participated in professional development around the teaching of grammar described themselves as being "reasonably confident" or having "some confidence" in teaching grammar. Two of the interview participants who reported having received no participation in professional development described themselves as having little or no confidence in teaching grammar. The remaining interview participant, reporting no professional development around the teaching of grammar, rated herself as having "some confidence" in teaching grammar.

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[7] A national writing assessment for learning framework

The first question for this section asked participants whether they had taken part in any professional development around the teaching of grammar, either before or during their teaching careers. The majority of participants (16/26, or 62%) and half of the subset of interviewed participants (3/6, or 50%) reported that they had not taken part in any professional development around the teaching of grammar at any time. However, one of these interviewed participants had taken part in professional development around word-level grammar (spelling) which she did not recognise as being related to grammar. Five of the participants who were interviewed also reported having received no professional development around the teaching of grammar during their years of teacher training.

Thirty-eight percent of all participants (10/26) and half of the subset of participants who were interviewed (3/6) reported having experienced professional development around the teaching of grammar and were able to recall significant learning from these sessions. However, one of the interviewed participants was unsure as to whether what she had experienced was actually professional development, as opposed to a stand-alone, knowledge-gathering activity.

The second question in this section asked participants to name the professional development undertaken and the third question asked them to describe the learning remembered from the professional development. For the ten participants involved in the survey and three interviewed participants who reported having taken part in professional development a wide variety of professional development types were mentioned and various experts acknowledged. The reported professional development included training in relation to second language teaching, workshops with educationists, specific grammar training in schools outside of New Zealand, completing university papers, sitting a grammar test, and learning how to use the asTTle writing marking rubric.

Four participants (15%) from the survey data and one of the interviewed participants (17%) mentioned the relatively recent whole-staff grammar workshop held in the school with a school advisor. Participant Dale identified

this learning as being about the use of grammar "mini lessons" and also the incidental teaching of grammar.

Reported learning from all forms of professional development included the following key ideas/phrases: "integration of grammar into literacy programmes", "applying grammar in context", "modelling", "use of models", "use of mentor texts", "repetition", "explanation", "teaching grammar in isolation", and "understanding particular grammar for genre types". References to particular books and/or resources were made by four of the ten participants in the survey data. These participants had all reported having received professional development.

4.2.4 Developing strategies to teach grammar

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 4 (see appendix A).

Through the survey, seven participants (28%) reported not having developed any specific strategies to teach grammar. Three of these participants, Participants G, M and O, simply stated, "Not specifically".

Seven participants (28%) mentioned the development of strategies through engagement with students, through "noticing", conferencing and monitoring groups or individual students, and through learning on the job with or through the students. Participant L reported, "through practice and experience. Finding what works best with different groups". Similarly, Participant E provided, "Measuring student engagement. Results dictate style that works".

The other 11 survey responses (44%) were varied and included the use of mentor texts (text models), assessment tools (Assessment Resource Banks), annotating texts, occasional or mini lessons, the use of resources/books and professional readings, specific learning for the teaching of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) lessons, through more general writing professional development, observation of

model lessons, trial and error, discussions with other teachers, and through using examples from texts.

Participants also reported having developed their own methods through using their own initiatives. Participant W reported, "From watching others model lessons. Reading. Accept I am a learner as well". Participant V had developed strategies to teach grammar through "discussion with other teachers. Professional readings. Examples from texts".

In the survey, fifty-six percent of participants (14/25) either relied on general teaching strategies/approaches to develop strategies around teaching grammar (7/25) or they reported no development of specific strategies to teach grammar (7/25).

The subset of participants who were interviewed elaborated on the strategies they utilised to teach grammar. Five of the six interviewed participants (83%) referred to undertaking their own research and reading around grammar to find ways to improve and develop their own teaching of grammar. Anna had purposefully looked for and found professional readings to help her teach grammar. She firmly believed that all teachers need to do their own research when they are unsure of anything. She stated, "I've learnt heaps but mainly from my own reading rather than a school directive" and "it's really worrying about people that don't do that [their own research] … so I did a lot of reading especially along the lines of complex sentences and punctuation".

Grace, Catherine and Anna made multiple references throughout their interviews to using ideas gained from reading about the grammatical strategies provided by educationist Jeff Anderson. Anna attended a Jeff Anderson workshop which she funded herself and believed herself to have "professionally fallen in love with him [Jeff Anderson]". Dale and Charlotte had found Sheena Cameron resources useful in their development of strategies to teach grammar and Dale mentioned the book *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss as being particularly useful. Charlotte also mentioned having bought Alison Davies resource books to help develop her grammar teaching practice.

As well as completing her own research and reading around grammar, Catherine reported encouraging her students to ask questions about grammar, providing opportunities for students to improve their grammatical understandings through using google and other online resources. She stated, "I use Google quite a bit when I get stuck on something, or I get the kids to google and find out. So they might ask me why we use certain words to connect two sentences, or something, and if I don't know I'll say, 'Oh here's a good opportunity to look into it yourself' ". Catherine preferred to learn about grammar with her students. Grace had also used online resources in the past, searching for ideas on how to teach grammar and how to make it more interesting for her students. Both Catherine and Grace, who reported using online resources to support in their teaching of grammar, respectively rated themselves as having "no" confidence and "little" confidence in teaching grammar.

For two interviewed participants, both of whom reported being reasonably confident teachers of grammar, teaching in junior schools overseas had been the primary source of strategy development in terms of grammatical instruction. Dale believed she learned a lot about how to teach grammar during her time teaching in the UK where grammar was taught as a separate subject. She had seen the benefit of teaching grammar in isolation. She reported, "I might do lessons on verbs and nouns and things like that and I felt that the kids over there [in the UK)] had a better grasp than the New Zealand children of what grammar was or what the components of a sentence were". In contrast to Dale's experiences, Joanne learned how to teach grammar in isolation in the United States and firmly believed that this isolated instructional method was test-focused and ineffective, saying of the US students she taught, "Their written grammar was of a lower standard than the written grammar of equivalent children in New Zealand". She reported that her negative experience of teaching non-contextual grammar in isolation had turned her off teaching grammar at all.

Two of the interviewed participants reported that their previous teaching of grammar to younger students in other New Zealand primary schools had informed their teaching practice around grammar. Charlotte, who described

herself as having "some confidence" in teaching grammar, discussed teaching students at Years 3 and 4 and Dale, as a reasonably confident teacher of grammar, spoke of working at the junior level in a primary school where there was a heavy focus on learning about and using the asTTle rubric (Glasswell, K., Parr, J., and Aikman, M., 2001) in relation to grammar.

Three of the interviewed participants, Dale, Catherine and Anna, described their development in teaching strategies around grammar as being "hit and miss" at times. Through "trial and error" they found approaches that worked for them and that were more successful with their students. When speaking of her time as a beginning teacher, Anna stated, "I think I was more instinctive about my own approach to grammar, like I think it was a bit hit and miss".

Dale, Anna and Grace believed they used ideas suggested by other teachers and found this useful in learning how to teach grammar successfully. Dale has developed strategies "from seeing what other people do, what other teachers do or seeing other people's planning and getting ideas from other people". Anna had a mentor teacher who worked at a different school. This teacher offered her ideas and suggestions on ways to move forward with her instruction in writing, and also specifically in teaching grammar.

This question asked participants to describe strategies they had developed to teach grammar. Overall, fourteen percent (7/25) of participants reported in the survey that they had not developed any strategies around the teaching of grammar. In comparison, all (100%) of the subset of participants who were interviewed discussed the development of specific strategies in order to teach grammar effectively.

In the survey, fourteen percent (7/25) of participants reported the development of grammatical instruction strategies through engagement with students on the job and through general teaching strategies. Participants from both data sets acknowledged that "trial and error" had been used as a way to move forward and three of the interviewed participants (50%) described their development as "hit and miss" at times.

Engaging in research, including online research, and professional reading around grammar to improve understanding around grammatical instruction, was cited by four participants (15%) through the survey and five of the six participants who were interviewed (83%) as a way to develop instructional strategies around grammar. Collaboration with other teachers in the form of observation and discussion was also reported in both data sets.

In contrast, two of the interviewed participants developed grammatical instruction strategies through learning to teach grammar in overseas junior school settings. Two other participants who were interviewed reported developing strategies through teaching at the junior level at other primary schools in New Zealand.

4.3 Beliefs around grammatical instruction

This section explores participants' beliefs about the importance and effectiveness of grammatical instruction in terms of student writing outcomes. Participants quantified the degree of importance they placed on the effect of grammatical instruction on improving student writing outcomes (4.3.1). Investigation into beliefs around how the teaching of grammar has helped to improve student writing, or otherwise, is explored through participant commentary on their classroom experience (4.3.2). Finally, participants reported on the importance grammatical instruction had for their writing teaching practices (4.3.3).

4.3.1 Quantifying the degree of importance grammatical instruction has in improving the quality of students' writing

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 5 (see appendix A).

When required in the survey to indicate by using a Likert scale the degree of importance of grammar instruction, the majority of participants (22/25, or 88%) believed it to be important or highly important in improving the quality

of students' writing. Only one survey participant (4%) considered grammatical instruction to be unimportant.

The subset of interviewed participants was able to provide more comprehensive responses. Three out of the six participants who were interviewed (50%) responded directly to this question and made statements regarding the importance of grammatical instruction in improving students' writing outcomes. These participants believed grammatical instruction to be of importance but qualified their answers by saying that grammar was only one area of importance in the teaching of writing as a whole and not necessarily the most important aspect. Charlotte said that grammar "needs to be balanced with other areas of writing, such as ideas" and Grace reported that grammar should not be the most important aspect. Although Charlotte stated that "there are parts of grammar that you do specifically need to teach", she wondered whether grammar was "something they [students] will naturally pick up".

Through the use of a Likert scale, this question asked participants to indicate how much they believed grammatical instruction contributed to improving student writing outcomes. The survey demonstrated that most participants (22/25, or 88%) believed grammatical instruction was important or highly important in improving students writing outcomes, while three out of the six interviewed participants (50%) who directly responded to this question thought grammar was somewhat important in this regard. For these three teachers, teaching grammar was seen to be one aspect of writing instruction and not necessarily the most important aspect.

4.3.2 Beliefs around how grammatical instruction improves students' writing

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 6 (see appendix A).

Most (18/23, or 78%) participants reported in the survey that grammatical instruction improves student writing. Of these responses, five participants (22%) specifically reported direct improvement in learning in terms of

sentence-level grammar. Participant C stated, "Correct punctuation makes a piece of writing flow much better. It allows the writing to be read with tone". Similarly, Participant J noted, "Makes it [the writing] make sense to the reader. Different sentence structures and clauses make it flow better".

Many responses in the survey (11/23, or 48%) were of a general nature and described the effect of students' grammatical improvements on language as a whole, in terms of effective communication, clarity, correctness, creating interest and adding effect. Participant D believed that "it creates specific meaning and gets across the message". Similarly, Participant V reported, "They have a clearer understanding of the sentence. What it is saying. They can identify issues with writing and use comprehension skills to identify grammatical problems". Participant W noted, "The message is clear – gives impact – interest. Coherence".

Five (22%) participants did not agree, or were unsure/unconvinced, that the teaching of grammar improved students' writing. Participant S reported, "But does it improve overall writer confidence? Knowing rules – will they learn without a specific focus? Not sure."

Of the six interviewed participants, five (83%) provided full responses to this question and all but one of these five participants gave concrete examples of how the teaching of grammar was improving or had improved their own students' writing.

Anna and Catherine discussed how having a good working grammar pushed student writing to the next level and improved student confidence. Catherine, who described herself as being "not at all confident" in teaching grammar, gave an example of her students deliberately choosing to use more complex punctuation after direct instruction and she discussed how this "refined" their writing. Anna, who described herself as having "some confidence" in regard to teaching grammar, expressed great delight and surprise when she reported the grammatical "pick up" and improvement in her students' writing, linking this directly to their grammatical learning. However, she modified this by stating that "for some it works and for others you could teach it every day for a year and they'd still never use it".

Generally, Anna had identified "more sophistication of expression" in her students' writing since employing a more purposeful approach to teaching grammar.

Dale and Grace spoke of students' improvement in meaning-making and in their overall understanding of writing through the teaching of grammar. Dale, as a "reasonably confident" teacher of grammar, believed grammatical instruction was important in improving students' understandings, particularly when re-reading their own writing. She noted a particularly positive impact on her ESOL students because "it's quite unique in English … how we compose or how sentences can be composed so differently". Grace, who described herself as having "little confidence in teaching grammar", believed grammatical instruction was only beneficial if it improved the meaning of her students' writing. She found that some of her students made improvements in their use of more complex sentences after direct instruction.

One participant who was interviewed expressed ideas in opposition to those of the other participants. Despite rating herself as having "some confidence" in teaching grammar, Joanne explained that grammatical instruction had very little impact on her student writing outcomes. She believed that for native speakers of English, "it's [grammar] just something you instinctively learn from learning your language". Joanne provided an example from when she had to teach grammar in isolation as part of a US literacy programme. She reported that the students did not transfer this learning in grammar to their own writing.

This question asked participants to comment on how they thought grammar helped to improve student writing outcomes. To sum up, 18 of 23 participants in the survey (78%) and five of the six interviewed participants (83%) believed that grammatical instruction improved student writing outcomes. Five of the 23 participants in the survey (22%) and one participant who was interviewed (17%) did not agree, or were unsure/unconvinced, that the teaching of grammar in fact improved students' writing.

Eleven participants indicated in the survey (48%), and four of the six interviewed participants (67%) provided some description of student grammatical improvement in writing of a general nature, in terms of effective communication, meaning-making, clarity, correctness, refinement and sophistication of expression, and creating interest or adding effect.

Participants from both data sets specifically reported direct improvement in student writing outcomes in terms of sentence-level grammars, particularly around punctuation and sentence structure.

4.3.3 The importance of grammatical instruction within writing teaching practices

This section deals with participant responses to survey questions 7 and 8 (see appendix A).

In the survey, participants were first asked to comment on their beliefs about the importance of grammatical instruction through the use of a Likert scale. This system of quantification showed that most survey participants (17/25, or 68%) believed grammatical instruction to be either important or highly important to their teaching practice in writing. Twenty-eight percent of the survey participants (7/25) were neutral about its importance, while only 4% (1/25) believed it to be unimportant.

When providing more detail in sentence form as to the importance, or otherwise, of grammatical instruction to teaching practices in writing, most participants (19/23, or 83%) reported the teaching of grammar to be important to varying degrees. Participant W stated, "For writing to be clear and coherent, students need to be exposed and understand grammatical conventions". Likewise, Participant U reported, "It would be difficult for a child to keep progressing and developing without correct grammar knowledge".

Four participants (17%) said grammar was not the main focus for lessons (two of these participants spoke of integrating grammar within their writing lessons). Participant O stated, "It [grammar] is not a focus. It is included if

required in the reading/writing lesson. WALTs [learning intentions] do not normally focus on grammar"

Some of the participants (5/23, or 21%) mentioned in the survey their own difficulties with grammatical content knowledge and time constraints related to the school-wide literacy programme, in terms of their ability to employ effective grammatical teaching practices. Six participants (26%) mentioned the lack of time (in writing programmes) to include grammatical instruction and/or limited content knowledge or understanding as being issues in terms of the importance and place of grammatical instruction in their writing programmes. Participant Z explained, "I would want it [grammar] to be important! I can see the benefits. However, I remain neutral because I don't have the time or PD [professional development] to do this effectively well". Participant K responded, "I believe grammatical instruction to be important, however there is little time". Although participants mostly reported on their beliefs around the importance of grammatical instruction, some felt it necessary to explain why they felt unable to devote the time and attention it might require in practice.

Four of the six interview participants (67%) provided direct and detailed responses to this question.

Joanne reported her belief that grammatical instruction was not important in improving student writing outcomes and that it was not important to her practice. However, she modified this response by adding that she believed that the incidental teaching of grammar might be useful.

Dale believed grammatical instruction was important within her practice and that it was necessary for students to develop their ability to make meaning and question texts. She reported, "I think it's [teaching grammar] pretty important because, like I was saying with reading even, you know, if you don't, you can get a totally different message or you get totally in it, and I think about the kids that I teach who don't have the background knowledge or the ability to question things, they will just take it as a given, whatever they read".

Anna reported agreeing with educationist Jeff Anderson in his view that grammar is a part of the process of writing but not necessarily the most important part. She spoke of the importance for higher level writers to use more complex forms of grammar as a way to improve their level scores and to achieve greater sophistication in their writing.

Catherine believed that teaching grammar was somewhat important to her practice. She stated, "I'm not going to say that it's not important but it's not a main focus, and once they've [the students] got all that other stuff sorted, it's kind of like that grammar is going to push them over the edge".

Two of the teacher participants, Charlotte and Grace, were unsure of the significance of grammatical instruction for them. Charlotte discussed an issue she had identified around trying to make grammar more interesting for her students. She was not interested in teaching grammar if her students were bored by it.

The questions posed in this section asked participants to indicate how important grammatical instruction is to their teaching practice, both through the use of a Likert scale and through written commentary. Although most participants (19/23, or 83%) reported in the survey their beliefs about the importance of grammar to their writing instruction, some (6/23, or 26%) felt it necessary to explain why they felt unable to devote the time and attention which it required in practice. Grammatical content knowledge and time constraints related to the school-wide literacy programme were mentioned, in terms of perceptions of a lack of ability to employ effective grammatical teaching practices.

The subset of participants who were interviewed were more tempered in their responses to this question. Three of the interview participants (50%) believed that grammatical instruction was somewhat important, or important to a certain degree, to their instructional writing practices. These teachers discussed the need for grammatical instruction in terms of improving student meaning-making and questioning of texts, and one participant spoke of a need to make up for a lack in some students' background knowledge. Two of the interviewed participants reported on a need for more able learners to

use more complex and sophisticated forms of grammar to further improve their writing outcomes.

Two of the six interviewed participants (33%) were unsure of the significance of grammatical instruction for them. Another participant who was interviewed (17%) reported instructional grammar as being of no importance to her writing teaching practice.

4.4 Approaches used in grammatical instruction

This section explores the ways in which participants incorporated the teaching of grammar into their writing programmes (4.4.1). It also investigates the frequency of grammatical instruction within participants' writing programmes (4.4.2) and whether this was dependent on the ability levels of students (4.4.3). Participants also reported on their use, or otherwise, of a shared metalanguage during grammatical instruction and reasons for this (4.4.4). Finally, perceived impediments to the effective teaching of grammar are explored (4.4.5), as well as participants' confidence levels as teachers of grammar (4.4.6).

4.4.1 Ways in which grammatical instruction is incorporated into writing programmes

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 9 (see appendix A).

In the surveys, approximately one third of survey participants (8/25, or 32%) reported using an incidental or "as the need arises" approach when incorporating grammar into their writing programmes. The following words and phrases were reported as examples from these participants: "notice and explore", "incidental conversations", "as it comes about", "point things as the need arises", "noticing", "incidentally", "Often there will be opportunities to fix students' writing or identify punctuation" and "I stopped the lesson based on a common weakness I saw".

Some of the participants (6/25, or 24%) described in their surveys the integration of grammar into writing lessons where grammar was not seen as the main lesson focus. Participant D reported that grammatical instruction was "mostly integrated within writing or in mini lessons at the beginning or end of lessons".

Eleven out of 25 of the participants (40%) reported the use of mentor texts (text models) and/or teacher modelling in their grammar teaching practice. Participant T explained, "Look at different pieces of writing. Talk about what has been used, how we can correct it, change it". Participant W noted, "Mentor text – model – explicit teaching around it".

Three participants (12%) referred to spelling programmes in their surveys. Participant L reported, "Break it right down to individual sounds and how they're written in English".

Two other participants (8%) referred to individual conferencing in their surveys. Participant Y reported, "Through guided writing sessions and in one-on-one conversations with students".

The interviews with the subset of six participants allowed an opportunity for these participants to expand upon their responses, which were far more qualitative than quantitative in nature. Four of the interviewed participants (67%) reported an "indirect" or "incidental" approach to teaching grammar, where the learning intentions of the lessons were not grammar-based and the instruction around grammar had not been pre-planned. Teachers' perceptions of their own confidence in teaching grammar varied in this group of four participants. Dale believed incidental instruction was important in addressing grammatical issues which might arise during writing lessons. This was based on student need at the time of instruction and sometimes took the form of a mini-lesson. She provided an example of this: "They were struggling with the task that I had been doing, then something … I think they were trying to use commas and they were using them incorrectly. I just stopped what we were doing and I said to the teacher aide, right we're just going to do a lesson on commas, and I actually got a shopping list out of my handbag".

Catherine discussed using an incidental approach to teaching grammar which was focused on individual student need, particularly when looking at surface-level features. She reported, "I kind of try and pick up on opportunity, so if I'm looking at a kid's work and they haven't used capital letters or they have structured their sentence wrong, then we will look at that with that child, rather than kind of doing that with the whole class". Grace also said she mainly taught grammar in an incidental manner where she might integrate grammar into her writing group lessons around genre. Although Joanne did not plan for or deliberately teach grammar, she believed grammatical concepts might be taught incidentally, if and when they were required, for individual students or for ESOL students.

The use of mentor texts to address grammatical areas of need in group writing lessons was reported as a useful strategy by three of the teachers interviewed (50%). Anna mostly used mentor texts or mentor sentences taken from larger pieces of text as a place to start and a way to introduce new grammatical ideas to her students. Anna believed this was useful in that students could identify grammatical conventions and develop an understanding of the effects these have on pieces of writing. Students were then able to experiment with these concepts in a variety of personal and meaningful writing contexts. Anna used mentor texts as models and she reported that this created interest for students. She saw it as a way to produce more sophistication of expression in student writing. Anna stated, "the mentor texts thing does work to kind of whet their [the students'] appetite and their interest and so it is really important, but it's a part of that process not a stand-alone thing because you can't have that". Anna saw the use of mentor texts as a useful stepping-stone towards student experimentation with grammatical conventions in their own writing.

On the occasions when Grace's writing lessons were planned around grammar, she used mentor texts to identify and explore grammatical concepts with her students. Catherine also used mentor texts in group lessons where she asked students to notice the grammar and think about why it was being used.

During the interviews, three of the participants (50%) discussed the benefit of stand-alone grammatical instruction taught in isolation. Dale reported that students need stand-alone lessons to understand some grammatical concepts, such as using verbs, nouns and adjectives. She stated, "I think unless you do little lessons like that (stand-alone lessons), kids don't understand how they are to then put them into sentences or use them correctly".

Although Charlotte was not teaching grammar as part of her writing programme at the time of her interview, she intended to teach non-contextual, stand-alone grammatical instruction once a week in the near future. She would call it "grammar of the week". Charlotte had decided to approach this as whole class, activity-based instruction which would then be identified and reinforced throughout the week during students' reading and writing activities. This was an approach which had worked successfully for Charlotte at a previous school. She explained, "So it might be the twos (to, too, two) and then teach it on a Monday. Give them an activity and then throughout the week when they come to me as a group … 'Right, what's our grammar thing? Find it in your writing, wherever you used it'. Then get them to relate it back to their writing. That's how I'm envisioning next term".

Grace contemplated whether isolated grammatical instruction or practice sheets might be beneficial, particularly for her lower-level learners. She said she was unsure of her approach to teaching grammar: "I still feel like I'm not sure whether it should be taught in isolation or like integrated. So I don't really know which path to go down".

Five of the six interviewed participants (83%) mentioned individual conferencing as a way to provide grammatical instruction, although time constraints were reported as a factor affecting how frequently this might occur. Grace and Catherine discussed recognising when individual students needed help with grammar, and attempted to see these students individually after group lessons.

Anna stated that there was no room in the literacy programme for individual conferencing. However, by using Google docs with her students she was

able to provide feedback from home, which had been particularly useful in terms of learning about grammar. She had found that this was particularly motivating for boys, who prefer to write using electronic media rather than pen and paper, and found the process faster and more enjoyable. Anna also spoke about making suggestions to her students in terms of grammatical changes to improve the quality of their writing. She did not believe in altering or correcting others' writing as this could be demotivating for students.

This question asked participants to explain the ways in which they incorporated grammatical instruction into their writing programmes. Participants from both data sets reported using an "as the need arises" approach to teaching grammar. Eight respondents (32%) in their surveys and four of the subset of participants who were interviewed (67%) used an "indirect" or "incidental" approach to teaching grammar, where the learning intentions of the writing lessons were not grammar-based and the instruction around grammar had not been pre-planned. This was reported as occurring during ability-grouped instruction and when conferencing with individual students. Some participants specifically used the term "integration" when describing the way they incorporated grammar into their writing lessons.

The use of mentor texts as text models to help address areas of grammatical need in group writing lessons was reported as a useful strategy by three of the six interviewed participants (50%). Similarly, 46% participants (11/24) reported through their surveys the use of mentor texts and/or teacher modelling in their teaching practice around grammar.

When given the opportunity to elaborate during their interviews, three participants (50%) said they thought that stand-alone grammatical instruction, taught in isolation, was beneficial. In their surveys, three participants (12%) referred to their use of spelling programmes as a means of incorporating grammatical instruction into their writing programmes, whereas this was not reported by any of the subset of participants who were interviewed.

In the survey data, only two participants reported using grammatical instruction during individual student conferencing times, whereas five of the subset of six interviewed participants (83%) mentioned individual conferencing as a way to provide grammatical instruction, despite reporting difficulties with finding the time to do so. This shows that given the time and reflection that the interviews allowed for, some of these participants were able to add student conferencing as a way in which they provided grammatical instruction to their writing programmes.

4.4.2 Frequency of grammar teaching during group writing lessons

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 10 (see appendix A).

The majority of participants (20/26, or 77%) reported in their surveys on the incorporation of grammatical instruction within their writing lessons every time (15%) or every few lessons (62%). Two participants (8%) said they were unsure if they included any grammatical instruction at all.

Of the participants belonging to the interview group, two were unable to provide any kind of quantification for their regularity, or otherwise, in teaching grammar. Joanne made a decision not to teach grammar at all and Charlotte reported that she felt unable to teach grammar, given the current constraints of the school literacy programme.

Catherine discussed running a 10-15 minute spelling "warm-up" session, four times per week, with the whole class before beginning her grouped literacy rotations but this did not always happen, due to time constraints.

Grace believed she might teach grammar "every few weeks" but reported that this was difficult to quantify given the random and integrated way she incorporated grammar into her writing programme. Dale also reported an unplanned approach in which she taught grammar "every so often".

Only one of the interview participants reported a degree of regularity in teaching grammar. Anna, who described herself as having "some

confidence" in teaching grammar, planned for specific grammar instruction "at least once a term" and this might take her a week or two weeks of group teaching time to complete. On top of this, she reported including incidental teaching of grammar which she couldn't quantify.

This question asked participants to comment on the frequency with which they taught grammar within their classroom writing programmes. Seventy-seven percent (20/26) of all participants reported incorporating grammar into their group writing lessons every time or every few lessons. Only two (8%) participants reported being unsure whether they included any grammatical instruction at all in their group writing lessons.

The responses from the group of interviewed participants were more difficult to quantify. Although these participants had all quantified their teaching of grammar when they filled out the survey, one of these participants was unable to provide any kind of quantification for regularity in teaching grammar during her interview. One other interview participant reported not teaching grammar at all.

Four of the participants belonging to the interviewed group (67%) provided some idea of the frequency with which grammar was taught during their writing programmes. One of these teachers attempted to incorporate grammar in the form of a spelling "warm-up", four out of five teaching days a week, when time permitted. However, this was a whole class activity rather than being ability-group focused, as the question inquired. One participant believed she might teach grammar "every few weeks", although this was an approximation, and one participant stated "every so often". Only one interviewed participant was clear in her answer; she specifically planned for grammatical instruction once per term, lasting between one and two weeks of group teaching time.

4.4.3 The teaching of grammar as dependent on the ability levels of writing groups

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 11 (see appendix A).

The answers reported for this question were fairly equally divided with slightly more participants (39%, or 9/23) grouped from the survey as teaching grammar more frequently and/or more explicitly to lower-level ability groups. For example, Participant J reported that "I feel as though lower groups need more support than higher ones". Participant U responded, "More often with the lower-level children". Alternatively, Participant C stated, "I teach it more, or recognise it more, in my higher groups". Twenty-two percent of participants (5/23) reported that higher level ability groups have a better understanding of grammar, and that these students need more frequent, direct and/or complex grammar lessons.

Thirty percent of the participants (7/23) did not differentiate between ability levels in terms of the frequency of grammatical instruction. Participant A stated simply, "It does not depend on ability levels". Instead, other factors were mentioned as impacting upon reasoning for teaching grammar to particular students. Participant K responded, "I have found that higher level children are more interested in the actual terminology". Participant X noted, "I try not to depend on their ability because (otherwise) the lower levels will not try (my opinion)".

This question was not applicable to the two participants from the interviewed group who did not teach grammar at the time of the interviews. Of the four participants interviewed who reported teaching grammar, two participants (50%), Dale and Anna, did not differentiate between different ability levelled writing groups, in terms of the time spent teaching them grammar. These two participants rated themselves as being "reasonably" confident and having "some confidence" in teaching grammar.

Catherine, who described herself as being "not at all confident" in teaching grammar, reported spending less time on grammar instruction with her lowest-level learning group as she believed they had other, more significant, areas to develop in writing. Her lowest-ability groups "were so low, level one and twos, and so they had many gaps in actually writing and that was kind of a big focus".

In comparison, Grace, who reported having "little confidence" in teaching grammar, believed that her lower-level writing groups had a greater need for grammatical instruction as they made more mistakes. She reported, "Most of my top writers don't make that many grammatical mistakes so I guess there's more need for it (teaching grammar) with the lower groups". However, Grace also talked at some length about her feelings of inadequacy and her lack of strategies when trying to teach grammatical concepts, particularly to her lower-ability Maori and Pasifika students.

This question asked participants to comment on the frequency of their grammatical instruction as a factor dependent on their students' ability levels.

Thirty-four percent of participants and 50% of the subset of interviewed participants reported no differentiation between student-ability levels and frequency of grammatical instruction.

Nine of the total number of participants (39%) and one of the subset of interviewed participants (25%) reported teaching grammar more frequently to lower-level student ability groups. Five of the total number of participants (22%) and one of the interviewed group of participants (25%) reported that they considered higher-level students needed more frequent and direct grammatical instruction. For the teachers who did differentiate between the amount of time spent teaching grammar according to students' ability levels, student need was the deciding factor in these decisions. These teachers viewed the needs of their higher and lower-ability students in different ways.

Two of the group of interviewed participants, who were not teaching grammar at the time of the interview, did not respond to this question.

4.4.4 Use of a metalanguage
This section deals with participant responses to survey questions 12A and 12B (see appendix A).

The majority of participants (23/26, or 88%) reported in their surveys that they used a metalanguage to describe the language of grammar with their students (to varying degrees).

Nine participants (43%) identified the importance of students becoming "familiar" with correct terminology. According to Participant C, "I always try to use the correct terminology in all curriculum areas so they (the students) are familiar with it for the future". Participant S uses a metalanguage with students "so that everyone is using the same language".

Five participants (24%) referred to the importance of understanding grammatical terminology for the future, particularly for high school. Participant U reported a belief that using a metalanguage will "assist with high school, it's uniform from one class to the next so avoids confusion".

Five participants (24%) commented on the usefulness of using a metalanguage in terms of the learning itself and/or improving learning outcomes. Participant B reported a belief that metalanguage was useful "to reinforce our learning and success criteria". Participant E noted that it "increases understanding – makes deliberate".

Two participants (10%) specifically stated that students were capable and comfortable with learning and using the correct terminology. Participant L stated, "because unless a term needs explaining, students are capable of being taught/using the correct terminology – especially students who are confident in their first language".

The interviewed participants were able to provide more comprehensive responses to this question. All of the interviewed participants who taught grammar at the time of the interviews (4/6 or 80%) believed it was important to use a metalanguage when teaching grammar. Grace promoted the use of a metalanguage in her classroom as she believed it was good to use the correct words because the students understood them, and that this knowledge was useful for when students move on to high school. She said: "As they [students] go on to high school, they will use the proper terms more,

so it's good that they know". Catherine too said she used a metalanguage with her writing groups.

Anna reported that she "always introduces the correct terms for grammar and punctuation". However, she did simplify the metalanguage for her less able learners before she built them towards using correct terminology. She reported her more able writers were able to deal with the more technical language sooner. Similarly, Dale used a metalanguage with her students but believed it was important to speak at the level of the child and so modified the language used with her "students with special needs". She reported that "if we phrase it in a way that is at their level, they've got more opportunity of remembering".

Although not currently teaching grammar, Charlotte strongly believed that correct terminology needed to be used when teaching grammar, as she had done in the past. "They've [students] got to know what it's called or they won't know how to use it", she stated.

The questions used for this section asked participants whether they used a shared metalanguage of grammar with the students in their classrooms and if so, why. In total, 88 percent of participants (23/26) and all five of the interviewed group of participants (100%) who answered this question reported using a shared metalanguage in the classroom to describe the language of grammar with their students. This was reported as occurring to varying degrees. For example, two of the interviewed participants said that they modified the language they used to help their less able students scaffold understandings towards using the correct terminology.

Three main reasons were provided across both data sets to explain why using a metalanguage was a part of these teachers' teaching practice.

Forty-three percent (9/21) of participants believed that developing a familiarity with grammatical terminology by using a "shared language" helped to promote understanding around grammatical meanings.

Twenty-four percent of participants (5/21) and 20% of those interviewed (1/5) reported on the importance of understanding grammatical terminology

for future educational purposes, particularly for preparing student understanding for high school.

Twenty-four percent of participants (5/21) and 20% of participants who were interviewed (1/5) clearly defined the usefulness of using a metalanguage in terms of there being a relationship between using correct grammatical terminology and the learning itself (improving learning outcomes).

4.4.5. Perceived impediments to effective grammar teaching

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 13 (see appendix A).

Through the survey, eleven participants (50%) reported having a lack of content knowledge or understanding of grammar and identified this as an impediment to teaching it effectively. Participant N reported to "not knowing enough about it myself" and Participant O added, "I personally have limited knowledge in this area".

Five participants (23%) reported time constraints as being a significant problem in terms of the effective teaching of grammar. Participant A reported "time restrictions" and Participant D provided, "Time – pressures of timetables". Three of these participants mentioned constraints of the school-wide literacy programme as impinging on the effective teaching of grammar. Participant Z reported, "Time schedule. Intensity of four groups a week. Time taken to get through each".

As well as the more common responses reported above, this question produced an eclectic range of responses, including: lack of teaching experience; issues around student competence; beliefs brought about through past experience of grammar teaching; students' understanding of grammar and its purpose; and the value placed on grammar instruction by teachers, the school and therefore the students. A perceived difficulty in catering for a wide range of student abilities was also reported, as well as a difficulty in maintaining student interest.

When given the opportunity to discuss these limitations more fully during interviews, five of the six interviewed participants (83%) expressed dissatisfaction with the current school-wide literacy policy and implementation plan, in terms of these not providing enough time to allow for the teaching of grammar within writing programmes. These participants referred to the mandatory, ability-grouped teaching/learning rotations in writing and reading where each group must be seen for fifteen minutes, four out of the five teaching days per week.

Dale reported that "there's a time limit on everything and everything's really tight for time". She also stated that, "Personally I just don't feel it's enough time to give enough service, you're doing a disservice to the learning and the kids". In the same vein Anna stated, "I sometimes feel like we're on a real treadmill, that there's just this kind of churning over and that you don't have enough time to work with it [grammar] enough for them [students] to get it because it feels like a production thing".

Catherine, Grace and Charlotte also spoke on a number of occasions throughout their interviews about the lack of time to include grammatical instruction in their writing programmes. Catherine said,, "We see our writing groups every single day so realistically we've got fifteen or maybe twenty minutes with each group, and so in that time there's so much you need to get through in writing techniques, that sometimes the grammar and spelling gets pushed out". Charlotte clarified that it was purely time constraints that prevented her from teaching grammar in her writing programme. "Time. Purely time. Yep, because in other schools I've taught it [grammar]]. These three teachers reported having "no", "little" and "some" confidence in their ability to teach grammar.

As well as seeing time restrictions as impinging on the teaching of grammar, in terms of the school-wide literacy programme, four of the six interviewed participants (67%) believed that group teaching alone was not necessarily conducive to quality grammatical instruction. Anna, who reported having "some" confidence in teaching grammar, believed that her students would benefit significantly from some whole-class instruction, particularly in terms

of teaching grammar. "Sometimes I believe that a couple of days of whole class instruction may get better results, rather than teaching the same thing three times for no real purpose … there's not a lot of flexibility". Anna also spoke of a lack of teacher autonomy and trust in teachers "knowing what's best for their students".

Two of the participants who were interviewed (33%), Catherine and Grace, elaborated on the limitations concerning the lack of professional development around the teaching of grammar, and not having a school-wide focus on grammar. They believed these factors had made it difficult to feel confident when teaching grammatical concepts to their students. Grace spoke of feeling "unprepared" to teach grammar as a beginning teacher. She had also been told that providing student feedback in terms of "other things like ideas and vocab", needed to take precedence over any feedback around grammar. Grace reported to feeling unsure of how to teach grammar effectively to students with such a wide divide of ability levels in her class. Both of these participants reported having little confidence in their abilities to teach grammar effectively.

This question asked participants to explain any impediments they might have experienced in relation to their effective teaching of grammar during their teaching career. From both data sets, two main impediments have been reported as being experienced by participants in relation to their effective teaching of grammar.

Through survey data, half of the participants (11/22) and two of the subset of interviewed participants (40%) reported having a lack of content knowledge or understanding of grammar and/or strategies to teach grammar. They identified this as an impediment to teaching grammar effectively. The two interviewed participants here reported a need for professional development in school to support them with their teaching of grammar.

Twenty-three percent of all participants (5/22), and all five of the subset of participants who were interviewed and responded to this question (100%) reported "time constraints" as being a significant issue in terms of their

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effective teaching of grammar in this school context. Some survey participant responses and all five of the interviewed participant responses expressed dissatisfaction with the current school-wide literacy policy and implementation plan, in that these did not provide enough time to allow for the teaching of grammar within writing programmes. As well as this problem, four of the five mentioned interviewed participants (80%) believed that the school-wide focus on mandatory ability-group teaching alone was not necessarily conducive to quality grammatical instruction.

4.4.6. Teacher Confidence in Teaching Grammar

This section deals with participant responses to survey question 14 (see appendix A).

In their surveys only five of the 26 participants (19%) rated themselves as being reasonably confident or highly confident in teaching grammar, while the majority of teachers (21 out of 26, or 81%) rated themselves as having "some" (12, or 46%), "little" (7, or 27%) or "no" (2, or 8%) confidence in teaching grammar.

The interviewed participants were able to elaborate further on the responses which they had provided through their survey data.

In her survey, Dale rated herself as being "reasonably confident" in teaching grammar. During her interview, Dale said that she believed she had developed in confidence over the years, mainly through her own experiences as a teacher and the use of her own research and initiatives. She also reported that her time teaching in England had given her confidence in her ability as a teacher of grammar.

Although Joanne reported to being "reasonably confident" in teaching grammar in her survey, this question, concerning confidence in teaching grammar, did not come up in her interview as she no longer taught grammar.

In her survey, Charlotte rated herself as having "some confidence" in teaching grammar. During her interview, Charlotte spoke of being

"reasonably confident" with her own grammatical knowledge but also of being unaware of what she doesn't know and that she felt this was a problem for her.

Anna reported to having "some confidence" in teaching grammar, both in her survey data and during her interview. She reported that her confidence level was based completely on her own research and experimental work around grammar instruction.

In her survey, Grace rated herself as having "little confidence" in teaching grammar. During her interview she said that her own understanding of grammar was good but that she did not feel confident in teaching it. She spoke about identifying an emphasis on the teaching of deeper level features of writing when she was training to become a teacher and that, because of a lack of professional development, she was unprepared to teach grammar in her classroom.

In her survey, Catherine rated herself as "being not at all confident" in teaching grammar. During her interview, she reiterated this lack of confidence. She reported that the negative experiences of her own learning of grammar, particularly spelling, at school had "stuck with her". This influenced how she felt when she was trying to teach grammar. She said that she needed to complete a lot of reading around grammatical instruction to gain ideas for her students, as she felt very limited in her capacity to teach grammar effectively.

This question asked the participants to indicate their confidence as teachers of grammar through using a Likert scale. Overall, the majority of participants (21 out of 26, or 81%) rated themselves as having "some" (12, or 46%), "little" (7, or 27%) or "no" (2, or 8%) confidence in teaching grammar. Similarly, most participants who answered this question during interviews reported having very limited confidence (2/5) or some confidence (2/5) in teaching grammar. This question was not asked of the interview participant who did not teach grammar at the time of the study.

4.5 Summary of Survey and Interview Findings

The following is a summary of the findings described in this chapter. The reported findings have been divided into three sections which pertain to the research participants' understandings (4.5.1), beliefs (4.5.2) and teaching practices (4.5.3) in regards to grammar. As such, they answer the three overarching questions outlined in my study:

1. How do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting understand the concept of grammar? (4.2)
2. What views do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting have of the place of grammatical instruction in teaching writing? (4.3)
3. What are the range of approaches that Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting report in teaching grammar during their writing lessons? (4.4)

In reading this summary it is important to note that the interview participants were a subset of the survey participants and so provided detail additional to that recorded in their survey responses.

4.5.1 Understandings

Findings from both survey and interview data point to the participants' prevalent understanding of grammar as encompassing sentence-level elements of language, comprising mainly sentence structure and punctuation. Half of the subset of participants who were interviewed also discussed correct vocabulary usage, at sentence level, as being a part of what grammar is about. However, in the survey only two participants identified and included this word-level aspect of grammar within their definitions of grammar.

The predominant understanding of grammar at the sentence level was reflected and detailed throughout the research. For example, when exploring teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar, most participants believed grammar instruction had a direct and positive impact on student

learning outcomes. The participants who specifically reported direct improvement in student writing outcomes, provided concrete examples of this in terms of sentence-level grammars only, specifically around punctuation and sentence structure.

Only four of the 26 participants provided purely broad or more general definitions of grammar which could possibly be seen as relating to language as a whole and/or to whole text grammars. Although most of the subset of interviewed participants initially offered a wider or more general definition of grammar, they subsequently narrowed their ideas to explain and provide concrete examples of their grammatical understandings as being at the sentence level only. Therefore, grammar was mainly understood as encompassing sentence-level conventions or functions rather than those at whole text level or word level.

When identifying particular aspects of grammar included in their writing programmes, most participants reported teaching the same grammatical aspects as those they had noted when defining the concept of grammar. Grammar instruction mainly included the teaching of sentence structures and punctuation. However, two of the participants who were part of the interviewed group also included the teaching of word types in their responses (e.g. nouns, verbs and adjectives).

It was also evident from the interviews that aspects of word level grammar were being taught but were not identified as grammatical instruction. An example of this became apparent when, during an interview, Catherine mentioned having included the teaching of spelling as part of her writing programme but had not considered this to be related to teaching grammar. Another interview participant voiced her feelings of confusion over how to define grammar. Grace stated, "I feel like I don't even, like I know what's right and wrong, but I don't even know what's classed as grammar".

Catherine came to see that she was teaching aspects of word-level grammar in the form of morphemes, graphemes and root words as part of her spelling programme. Charlotte had at first overlooked that her individual conferencing and incidental teaching around punctuation and vocabulary

use was to do with grammar instruction. These examples suggest some teacher uncertainty about grammar as a concept.

The majority of participants said that they had not taken part in any professional development focused on grammar or the teaching of grammar at any time. However, one of the interviewed participants discussed taking part in professional development around word-level grammar but did not recognise it as being related to the broader concept "grammar".

Some participants reported having experienced professional development about the teaching of grammar and were able to recall significant learning from these sessions. A wide variety of professional development types were mentioned and various experts acknowledged. Interestingly, when reporting on their participation in professional development around the teaching of grammar, most participants did not recall the relatively recent, whole staff grammar workshop which had been held in the school with a school advisor. This was a mandatory professional development session which all research participants had attended.

In terms of the participants' development of strategies to help them to teach grammar, some reported not having developed any such strategies. In comparison, when provided with an opportunity to elaborate during an interview, all six of these participants discussed their development of specific strategies in order to teach grammar effectively. Some participants reported the development of grammar instruction strategies through engagement with students on the job and through general teaching strategies. Participants from both data sets acknowledged that "trial and error" had been used as a way to move forward and three of the participants from the interviewed group described this type of development as "hit and miss" at times.

Engaging in research, including online research, and professional reading around grammar to improve their understanding of grammatical instruction was cited by some participants as a way to develop instructional strategies. Collaboration with other teachers in the form of observation and discussion was also reported. A small number of participants had developed

grammatical instruction strategies more directly, through learning to teach grammar in overseas junior school settings and at primary schools within New Zealand.

Therefore, despite a widely reported lack of opportunity to engage in professional development to support the teaching of grammar, a resourceful and investigative outlook was apparent in the number of teacher participants willing to upskill themselves.

Many participants attempted to develop individual strategies around teaching grammar through a variety of means. As one interview participant put it, "I've learnt heaps but mainly from my own reading, rather than a school directive" and "it's really worrying about people that don't do that [their own research] … so I did a lot of reading, especially along the lines of complex sentences and punctuation". This particular teacher revealed a sense of feeling proud of the efforts she had gone to in attaining this knowledge, as well as with the results this knowledge produced.

4.5.2 Beliefs

Most participants believed grammatical instruction to be important or highly important in improving students writing outcomes. However, half of the subset of interviewed teachers, when providing further detail, believed grammar to be only somewhat important in this regard. For these participants, teaching grammar was seen to be just one important aspect of writing instruction but not necessarily the most important aspect.

When discussing the impact of grammatical instruction on student writing outcomes, most participants believed that grammatical instruction improved student writing outcomes.

Descriptions of students' grammatical improvements in writing were reported in both data sets. These included improvements in terms of effective communication, meaning-making, clarity, correctness, refinement and sophistication of expression, and creating interest or adding effect. Direct improvement was reported in student writing outcomes in terms of

sentence-level grammars, particularly around punctuation and sentence structure.

Although most participants reported a belief that grammatical instruction was important to their writing programmes, some felt it necessary to explain that due to their own poor grammatical content knowledge and constraints around the school-wide literacy programme they were unable to devote the time and attention which they believed effective grammar teaching requires in practice.

4.5.3 Practice

When reporting on the ways in which grammatical instruction was incorporated into their writing programmes, many participants reported using an "as the need arises" or indirect approach to teaching grammar. In these instances, learning intentions within writing lessons were not grammar-based and the instruction around grammar had not been pre-planned.

The use of mentor texts as text models and teacher modelling to help address grammatical areas of need in group writing lessons was reported as a useful strategy by close to half of the participants.

Despite reporting issues around time constraints, some participants reported individual conferencing as a way to provide grammatical instruction while others believed in the benefits of stand-alone grammatical instruction taught in isolation.

In terms of the frequency of grammatical instruction when teaching writing, most participants reported incorporating grammar into their group writing lessons every time or in every few lessons. A small minority of participants reported being unsure as to whether they included any grammatical instruction at all in their group writing lessons.

In comparison, the responses from the subset of interviewed participants provided approximate and/or irregular frequencies in which grammar was

taught during their writing programmes, including "every so often" and "every few weeks".

When asked to comment on the frequency of their grammatical instruction as a factor dependent on their students' ability levels, many participants reported no differentiation in terms of student-ability levels and frequency of grammatical instruction.

A similar number of participants reported teaching grammar more frequently to lower-level student ability groups as with those who reported teaching grammar more frequently to higher-level ability groups. For the teachers who did differentiate between amounts of time spent teaching grammar according to students' ability levels, student need was the deciding factor in their decisions. These teachers viewed the needs of their higher and lower-ability students in different ways.

The majority of participants reported using a shared metalanguage in the classroom to describe the language of grammar with their students. Three main reasons were provided for using a metalanguage as part of these participants' teaching practices.

Firstly, it was considered that understandings around grammatical meanings would be promoted through developing a familiarity with grammatical terminology and using a "shared language".

Secondly, participants reported on the importance of understanding grammatical terminology for future educational purposes, particularly in preparing students for high school.

Finally, participants clearly defined the usefulness of using a metalanguage in terms of there being a relationship between using correct grammatical terminology and the learning itself (improving learning outcomes).

Impediments to the effective teaching of grammar were reported as being experienced by close to half of the participants. Many reported having a lack of content knowledge or understanding of grammar and/or strategies to

teach grammar. Some participants conveyed a need for professional development to support them with their teaching of grammar.

Many participants reported "time constraints" as being a significant challenge in terms of their effective teaching of grammar. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current school-wide literacy policy and implementation plan, saying they did not provide enough time to allow for the teaching of grammar within writing programmes. As well as these time constraints, some participants believed that the school-wide focus on mandatory ability-group teaching alone was not necessarily conducive to quality grammatical instruction.

When indicating confidence levels in teaching grammar in the survey, most participants rated themselves as having "some", "little" or "no" confidence in teaching grammar. Similarly, when interviewed, the subset of six participants reported either having very limited confidence or some confidence in teaching grammar.

In Chapter Five these results will be discussed in relation to the existing literature on the subject. Limitations of the current study will also be identified as well as possible directions for future research.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents discussions of the findings from the survey of participants and the interviews with participants. The discussions make links to existing literature and have been divided into three sections in accordance with the overarching research questions:

1. How do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting understand the concept of grammar? (5.2)
2. What views do Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting have of the place of grammatical instruction in teaching writing? (5.3)
3. What are the range of approaches that Year 7 and 8 teachers in a New Zealand Intermediate setting report in teaching grammar during their writing lessons? (5.4)

As well as answering the research questions, this discussion explores further ideas which have developed in relation to the topic of grammatical knowledge, beliefs and practice amongst New Zealand Year 7 and 8 teachers. Furthermore, there are instances where participants' ideas about grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices intertwine and so these ideas could not be solely discussed in isolation.

The progression of discussion points occurs in the same order as was provided in the survey and which was loosely followed during the interviews. The research discussions follow the major themes related to each subheading.

The limitations (5.5), affordances provided (5.6) and future focus (5.7) of this study will then be addressed before closing with the conclusion in 5.8.

5.2 Understandings

In this section, teachers' understandings of grammar as a concept, in terms of its meaning, are explored. Links between research participants' conceptualisations of grammar and how these understandings impacted on their teaching practices are investigated. Teacher experiences of professional development in relation to grammar and teaching grammar are also discussed, particularly in terms of consistency and cohesion. Lastly investigated are the ways in which these teachers have developed instructional strategies in order to teach grammar, based on their understandings of grammar.

A significant theme to emerge through both survey and interview findings was a prevalent teacher understanding that grammar encompasses sentence-level elements of language, such as sentence formation and punctuation. Grammar was predominantly understood as encompassing sentence-level conventions or functions rather than at whole text or word level. As no other studies have been found requesting teacher participants to define grammar directly in this way, comparisons are unable to be made around teachers' conceptualisations of grammar.

In terms of their teaching practices, most participants reported that the aspects of grammar which they teach are the same as those they identified in their conceptualisations of grammar. Therefore, teaching practices around choice in areas of grammatical instruction seem to reflect teachers' understandings of what grammar encompasses. These teachers teach what they know about grammar and what they understand grammar to be. In his study of grammatical instruction in an ESL context, Borg (2001) highlighted that the willingness, or otherwise, of teachers to engage in grammatical instruction is dependent on their own understandings and knowledge of grammar. He believes that teachers are more willing to engage in grammatical instruction when they feel confident that their knowledge of grammar is adequate.

A predominant focus on teaching grammar at the sentence level at this particular school suggests a possible school-wide teacher belief that

Intermediate School students, at this age and stage in their writing development, have a knowledge and skills gap in terms of sentence-level grammars. There may be an assumption that word-level grammars are taught more comprehensively earlier on in students' writing development, during the primary school years. Thus, a systematic educational progression of moving from a focus on word-level grammars into the teaching of sentence structures and sentence-level grammars may be evident at this school.

Despite extensive research, no discussion could be found in the literature of the notion that children are expected to learn word-level grammars more extensively at primary school before progressing to a more substantial focus on sentence level grammar learning. However, a plethora of teaching resources for word-level grammars, particularly spelling resources, aimed specifically at the lower primary school level, may provide some substance for this theory.

The results of this study suggest that the teacher participants may be established within an institutionalised, "bottom up" approach to teaching grammar (Locke, 2015, p. 177), whereby a system of teaching grammar develops through firstly addressing word-level functions before transitioning to sentence-level aspects of grammar, including the teaching of clauses and phrasing. Lastly, grammar is addressed at the paragraph and whole text level (Locke, 2015, p. 177). This approach to teaching grammar contrasts with what Locke (2015) terms the "top down" approach where teaching is primarily focused on the whole text and its context, and the teaching of different grammatical functions at all levels, including word and sentence levels, is strongly tied to the function of the whole text. The majority of teachers in this study did not directly address grammar in terms of making links to the function of text as a whole or through a genre approach to writing (Halliday & Hasan, 1985).

Another interpretation of these findings is that the predominant teacher focus on sentence-level grammars suggests a lack of teacher subject knowledge and understanding, and therefore skill, in teaching grammar at

the word- or whole text levels. As Borg's (2001) study highlighted, the teacher participants might deliberately teach only that which they understand.

Conversely, as outlined in the summary of Chapter Four, it might also be supposed that some of the teachers in my study did not actually recognise word-level or whole text grammars as being a part of grammar as a concept. These aspects might be understood and taught but not identified as grammatical instruction. Through the observation of her own teacher-students of literacy, Jeurissen (2010) states, "it has become apparent that teachers vary considerably in their explicit or declarative KAG [Knowledge About Grammar]" (p 68). This suggests that some of the teachers in the current study may not consciously recognise and/or be able to verbalise the grammatical understandings they actually possess.

Although similar to the present study in its focus on the knowledge and beliefs about grammar held by New Zealand teachers, Jeurissen's study included only primary school teachers who were undertaking TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) diplomas. Therefore, this variation between participants in the two studies might impact on the findings.

In light of data I found relating to participants' unrecognised teaching of grammar, Borg's (2001) assertion that teachers' engagement in grammatical instruction is dependent on their own understandings and knowledge of grammar may need further examination. Teachers in my study revealed understandings and practices around grammar and grammatical instruction which they utilised in their practices without an awareness that they were, in fact, providing grammatical instruction. For example, some teachers did not realise grammatical components were involved when conferencing individually with students around the cohesion of their written texts.

Furthermore, because this particular school focuses largely on using e-asTTle (Glasswell, Parr, & Aikman, 2001) as a formative and summative writing assessment tool, teachers are required to teach grammatical

constructs according to specific forms of writing. For example, students are taught the layout, organisation and language use for different text types in order to fulfil a writing purpose (to persuade, explain or describe etc.). The teachers in this study did not recognise that teaching elements of the cohesion of whole text types in this manner is an aspect of literacy related to grammar.

The significance of participants having an understanding of word- and whole text level grammars, as well as those at sentence level, can be illustrated by Andrews et al. (2006) in their claim that **"Sentence level grammar is contingent upon the levels of text grammar ('above the level of the sentence') and word grammar ('below the levels of the sentence')"** (p. 41). This suggests that sentence-level grammars are meshed with those at word- and whole text levels, and therefore difficult to separate. Clark (2010) discusses the non-linear and interrupted nature of grammatical uptake and supports Clay (1975) in espousing that "learning takes place over all three levels of word, sentence and text simultaneously" (p. 193). Therefore, these teachers may understand and access knowledge of word and whole text grammars without recognising it, in order to effectively teach sentence level grammar. Observations of classroom practice would be necessary to explore this possibility.

Considering the primary use of the e-asTTle writing tool (Ministry of Education, 2005) in assessing students' writing and in terms of consolidating and amalgamating teacher writing content knowledge, the participants in this study were aware of and might use the rubric functions of this tool in order to teach sentence-level elements of grammar. If this is the case, it might be argued that participants were employing a "top down" approach to teaching grammar rather than a "bottom up" approach (Locke, 2015). Teachers may be teaching elements of sentence-level grammars within the specific contexts of text genres.

There is also evidence in other areas of this study that teacher participants might have been employing a "top down" approach to grammatical instruction (Locke, 2015). For example, when discussing their observations

of improvement in their students' writing, many participants used language which could be construed as referring to whole text structures. Some of the reported writing improvements consisted of ideas around effective communication, meaning-making, clarity, refinement of texts, sophistication of expression, and creating interest or adding effect to students' whole written texts.

It was also apparent, particularly through interviewing participants, that word level elements of grammar were understood and being taught in a few classrooms.

Therefore, although these research findings suggest a strong emphasis on the participants' understanding and teaching of sentence level grammars, it cannot be ruled out that word-level and whole text grammars are also being taught, despite the lack of reporting around these forms of grammatical instruction. As one interview participant commented, when reflecting on her grammatical understanding, "you don't know what you don't know".

In terms of the development of understandings around grammar and/or the teaching of grammar, a lack of professional development was strongly identified by the teachers in this study. Many participants reported they had not been provided with opportunities to develop their own knowledge of grammar and/or the teaching of grammar, through either deliberate school-based professional development or outside instructional learning.

Various studies into teachers' knowledge about language have concluded that there is a lack of teacher training in this area which affects teachers' ability to teach grammar successfully. As mentioned earlier, Harper and Rennie's (2008) Australian study of 39 pre-service teachers was based on an assumption that pre-service teachers are inadequately trained in the area of Knowledge About Language (KAL). Through surveys and focus group interviews, specific questions in the study were highlighted regarding the "content of teacher education programmes and beginning teachers' preparedness to teach literacy in schools" (Louden et al., 2005, as cited in Harper & Rennie, 2008, p. 22). Harper and Rennie's (2008) research found

that teacher trainees lacked analytical skills in many areas of language knowledge and most specifically in the area of grammar (p. 31).

Similarly, through utilising a detailed survey, Nicholson's (2007) study into New Zealand teachers' linguistic knowledge revealed a gap within 83 trainee teachers' knowledge of linguistic terms. The research also suggested that qualified and practising teachers as well may be ill-equipped to teach literacy, due to limited linguistic knowledge and skill. Nicholson states, "They [teachers] may not have a good understanding of the layers of the English language" (Nicholson, 2007, p. 33).

The findings of the current study appear to share some common ground with the two studies cited, in regard to a reported lack of professional development around grammar. However, the research here points more closely to a lack of formalised professional development around grammar over the course of the teaching careers of these practising teachers, rather than solely at the pre-service stage.

The results of Jeurissen's (2012) study into New Zealand primary school teachers' knowledge and beliefs about grammar also share similarities with the current study. The teachers in Jeurissen's study were unable to recall learning anything about grammar or teaching grammar during their training years and, at the beginning of the study, Jeurissen highlighted that the "teachers were generally unaware of their lack of KAG [Knowledge About Grammar], and the possible implications of this for their classroom teaching" (p. 311). In relating findings from the Jeurissen (2012) study with the current study, it might be supposed that New Zealand teachers are provided with little, if any, professional development around grammar and/or the teaching of grammar, at both the pre-service and the practising stages of their careers.

Although the participants in Jeurissen's (2012) study were completing a TESOL course at the time of the research, they were also teachers of students at the same age and stage as the teacher participants in the current study. Therefore, it is reasonable to make comparisons between the two studies.

It is also important to note, however, that most of the research participants in the current study failed to recognise and report on a relatively recent professional development meeting based on grammar and attended by all staff. Only four of the 26 participants mentioned this whole staff grammar workshop, which was held in the school and run by a school literacy advisor. The focus of the 45 minute learning session was on punctuation and spelling, and ways to move students towards achieving at Level 4 of the New Zealand Curriculum. Much of the learning time was spent going through the Deliberate Acts of Teaching (DATs) (Ministry of Education, 2006) and other teaching strategies which might help in relation to the teaching of grammar. Time was also spent identifying school-wide areas of student need, in terms of punctuation and spelling, within curriculum documents. Despite being a relatively short learning session in comparison with most professional development sessions at this school, and although not all of the learning was directly related to upskilling in terms of teacher knowledge around grammar, it is surprising that this grammar-focused professional development was not recognised and identified by more of the teacher participants. This finding may, therefore, point to a more general teacher uncertainty around what grammar encompasses.

Of the participants who reported having taken part in professional development around grammar, a wide variety of professional development types were described and various experts acknowledged.

As well as reporting a wide variety in the types of professional development experienced, the learning reported by participants was also wide-ranging. Some similarity between the learning reported from these professional development experiences can be seen; however, some of the learning pedagogies reported could be viewed as incompatible. Ideas relating to both contextual and more traditional forms of teaching grammar were cited.

Through looking at related literature around grammar teaching pedagogy, a clear dichotomy between traditional and more contextual approaches to teaching grammar appears to exist, as evident in this study's findings. Historically, there has been much debate over the most effective way to

teach grammar, and in fact whether the teaching of grammar is even beneficial in improving student writing outcomes.

Educationists and researchers such as Locke (2009, 2010) have brought attention to decades in the history of literacy instruction where it was deemed acceptable to discard the teaching of grammar, due to a belief that the traditional methods of instructional grammar were ineffectual (Hillocks, 1986; Elley et al., 1975 & 1979; Hillocks & Smith, 1991; Torgerson et al., 2004; Andrews et al. 2006). Researchers such as Jones, Myhill and Bailey (2012) believe that a 50 year dearth of grammatical instruction in Anglophone countries has resulted in contemporary teachers being ill-equipped to teach grammar confidently, due to a lack of Grammatical Subject Knowledge (GSK).

Hudson (2001) also describes grammar as being a subject with "weak intellectual underpinnings" (p. 3) and says that the historical abandonment of grammatical instruction has led to a situation where teachers are unable to structure effective teaching contexts due to a poor grammatical knowledge base.

In light of this literature, it may be supposed that many teachers in this study experienced little or no grammatical instruction during their own years of schooling and that contemporary teacher educators are breaking new ground, experimenting and finding their own ways in regards to establishing effective professional development around the teaching of grammar. When discussing low levels of teacher knowledge around grammar amongst New Zealand teachers, Jeurissen (2012) highlights, "this is not surprising because the teachers are unlikely to have had any explicit teaching about grammar in their own school years" (p. 311). Jeurissen then goes on to cite the Ministry of Education's (1996) statement that "teaching about language [grammatical conventions] has not been consistently available to all" (p. 2).

The teacher participants in my study may have reported such a wide-ranging variety in the approaches to teaching grammar due to a dependence on their educators' own experiences and individual theories around effective grammatical instruction. Teacher educators working in the

area of developing teacher content knowledge of grammar may be faced with making pedagogical choices between traditional and more contextual forms of grammatical instruction, or perhaps a combination of the two. The age of teacher educators may be a factor in their choice of approaches towards professional development around grammar, as older teachers may have experienced some form of training in traditional grammar, and may have formed opinions around this, whereas younger teachers have most likely not. Harper and Rennie (2008) believe that it is likely to be the case that "teachers who were schooled in the post-traditional grammar years since the early 1970s" (p. 25) will not have experienced consistent or explicit instruction in grammar.

Although no specific research could be found concerning the age of teacher educators in relation to their grammatical understandings, Harper and Rennie's (2008) study pointed to its participants' experiences of learning around grammar being "fragmented, prescriptive and decontextualised" (p.31) throughout their schooling. The participants in Harper and Rennie's (2008) study comprised a cohort of 39 first year, pre-service teacher students, suggesting the participants would probably include many young adults. This reported historical experience of instructional grammar would likely play a role in determining the approaches of these participants' future instructional grammar pedagogy. Although the topic was not explored fully in the current study, it would be interesting to ascertain the influence of the current participants' experiences of school grammar in future research.

As outlined in Chapter 1, traditional and more prescriptive approaches to teaching grammar present fixed, pre-ordained rules for language use and set out ways to teach these rules in isolation (Hudson, 2004). Historically, grammar was taught separately, as a skills-based subject in its own right, and not necessarily assimilated within classroom reading or writing programmes. It was believed that a narrow, formal approach to teaching grammar would indirectly transfer the learning of grammatical knowledge and skill to student writing outcomes. The teachers in my study who reported learning pedagogy based on ideas around repetition (rote learning) and isolated instruction can be seen to have engaged in professional

development encompassing a more traditional approach to teaching grammar.

In considering the current re-emergence of a more positive view of the value of teaching grammar, a more contextual and non-prescriptive approach to grammatical instruction has developed (Carter, 1990; Weaver, 1996 & 1996b; Hudson, 2001; Myhill, 2005; Janks, 2005 & 2010; Locke, 2009, 2010 & 2014; Christie, 2010; Jones et al., 2012). This pedagogical approach takes into account the changing nature of grammar over time, and is dependent on the content and context of the written material in use. Contextual grammar instruction takes into account the social, cultural and functional elements of language in its application (Carter, 1990; Janks, 2005 & 2010); and being fundamentally meaning focused, it meshes with and complements other writing outcomes during instruction. The teachers involved in my study who reported professional learning around integrating grammar into literacy programmes, applying grammar in context, the use of models and mentor texts, and understanding particular grammar for genre types, can be seen as learning from a primarily contextual approach to grammatical instruction.

From the findings of this study, it appears that no set, nation-wide rules or guidelines have been established regarding best practice in teaching grammar and upskilling teachers towards better grammatical instruction. The conflicting pedagogies of traditional and contextual models were cited by the participants of this research when describing the learning gleaned from their professional development experiences.

Interestingly, as mentioned in Chapter 1, a deliberate attempt to reintroduce grammar into the New Zealand school curriculum was initiated in the 1990s but largely failed to take root or have lasting effects on teacher pedagogy. The Exploring Language project, chaired by linguist Elizabeth Gordon, recognised the growing need to up-skill teachers in terms of knowledge about language (Ministry of Education, 1996). The book *Exploring Language*, released in 1996, was designed to instruct teachers in the teaching of grammar and included a broad metalanguage which was

believed to be easily accessible for both primary and secondary teachers of all experience levels (Gordon, 2005). Limited government funding and a lack of ongoing professional support to help cement the book's teachings was not enough to establish a new approach to the teaching of grammar within New Zealand schools. According to Locke (2010), New Zealand teachers needed further professional development, "underpinned by coherent theory and sound research, to help teachers know how to use in classrooms that 'knowledge about language' the big blue book contained" (p. 4).

Having either limited or no experience of any type of standard or formalised professional development in relation to the teaching of grammar over the course of their careers and within this educational context, many teacher participants in this study reported initiating and developing their own individual pedagogies around how to teach grammar effectively.

Participants reported the development of grammatical instruction strategies through direct engagement with students while teaching, in order to investigate approaches that work, and through the use of general teaching strategies. Participants acknowledged that "trial and error" had been used as a way to move forward in teaching grammar successfully. Three of the participants who were interviewed described their development in this respect as "hit and miss" at times. It is apparent that for many participants there is a willingness to engage in extending their own skill levels around teaching grammar effectively.

Clearly, some participants took it upon themselves to develop their own knowledge of teaching grammar. Engaging in research, including online research, and professional reading about grammar, was cited by some participants through the survey and by most participants who were interviewed as a way to develop instructional strategies around grammar. Collaboration with other teachers in the form of lesson observation and discussion was also reported by participants.

No related and detailed literature into the ways in which teachers engage in self-initiated professional development around grammar could be found to

discuss in relation to this study. However, it is evident that many of this study's participants acted on a perceived need for self-initiated professional development. International research suggests that teachers acknowledge self-driven professionalism as important in creating positive change in pedagogical effectiveness (Spillane, 1999; Ritchie & Rigano, 2002; Simegn, 2014; Stefani & Lewis, 2002; Riveros, Newton & Burgess, 2012). Simegn (2014) notes that due to shifts in school management structures, professional learning communities and teacher education itself, it is more common that teachers "are required to identify their needs of professional improvement, design strategies of self-development and take actions accordingly" (p. 1109). The participants in this study can be seen as self-motivated and committed, two characteristics inherent in the demands of self-initiated professional development (Guskey, 2000, as cited in Simegn, 2014).

Two of the participants who were interviewed also reported developing more informed grammatical instruction strategies through learning to teach grammar while teaching in overseas junior school settings. Two other interview participants reported developing instructional grammar strategies through teaching at the junior level at primary schools within New Zealand. These teachers found their understandings of grammar itself and how to teach it were improved through working with younger students at a lower literacy level.

In examining the teaching of grammar within ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts, researcher Simon Borg believes that after much debate, grammar instruction continues to be poorly defined and misunderstood with no firm or set pedagogical guidelines (1999, 2001). He believes that teachers' pedagogical understandings around grammatical instruction have a strong impact on their teaching practices and has made investigations into what he considers the "powerful influence of teachers' theories on their instructional decisions" in terms of classroom practice (1999, p. 157).

With this in mind, I believe it is therefore important to recognise that the ways in which the teachers in this study constructed and continue to construct their own knowledge about teaching grammar impacts significantly upon their teaching practices.

As previously discussed, the reported limited opportunity to engage in professional development by teachers in this educational context, the high number of participants who said they had not developed any strategies for grammatical instruction, and the perceived need of many of these teachers to upskill themselves can be seen as contributing to participants' widely-held belief that a lack of grammatical content knowledge impacted negatively on their practices. A need for improved grammatical content knowledge was cited as one of the most frequently reported impediments to these participants' effective grammar teaching practices. Many of the participants who provided reasons why they felt ineffective in their teaching of grammar said that it resulted from a lack of grammatical content knowledge. Clarke (2010) stresses the need for a united pedagogic grammar "which all teachers should be able to understand, regardless of their educational experiences" (p. 191).

Likewise, in her review of current New Zealand English curriculum documents, Jeurissen (2010) states that, "grammatical terms feature frequently throughout the documents and become increasingly complex as the curriculum levels progress" (p. 69). This can be problematic for teachers with little grammatical subject knowledge. For this reason, Jeurissen (2010) believes it is imperative that a cohesive understanding of grammar be developed for the teaching of grammar within New Zealand schools.

Catherine and Grace reported that a lack of professional development about grammar and not having a school-wide focus on grammar had made it difficult to feel confident when teaching grammatical concepts to their students. Grace spoke of feeling "unprepared" to teach grammar as a beginning teacher. She noted that she had been advised as a trainee teacher that providing student feedback in terms of "other things like ideas and vocab", needed to take precedence over any feedback around

grammar. Grace reported feeling unsure of how to teach grammar effectively to the students in her class. Both Grace and Catherine reported having little confidence in their abilities to teach grammar effectively.

In comparison, Anna, who had upskilled herself by undertaking numerous professional readings and courses focused on grammar and grammatical instruction, felt more confident in teaching grammar and was able to discuss the progress her students had made through the introduction of particular grammatical constructs. This was reported as a direct result of her grammatical instruction.

These examples demonstrate a strong link between grammatical content knowledge and teacher confidence to provide grammatical instruction. Research has drawn attention to a relationship between teacher insecurity around Grammatical Subject Knowledge (GSK) and the inaccurate teaching of grammar (Myhill, 2003). As discussed in Chapter Two, Jones, Myhill and Bailey (2012) propose that teacher content knowledge has a significant positive impact on student learning outcomes in that students show greater grammatical improvement through instruction provided by teachers with higher linguistic subject knowledge.

5.3 Beliefs

This section discusses participants' beliefs about the importance and effectiveness of grammatical instruction on student writing outcomes. Various factors relevant to these beliefs are explored. Also investigated are participants' beliefs about the ways in which grammatical instruction improves student writing outcomes.

The belief that grammatical instruction is important or highly important to improving student writing outcomes was reported widely by participants through the survey.

However, three of the six participants who were subsequently interviewed modified this widely-held belief by stating that grammar was only one area within the teaching of writing as a whole and that it was not necessarily the

most important aspect. Charlotte believed time restrictions impacted her decisions to teach grammar and stated that grammar "needs to be balanced with other areas of writing, such as ideas", and Grace declared that grammar should not be the most important aspect when teaching writing. A sense that elements of writing instruction which promote the growth of student creativity are more important than grammatical aspects might be inferred from these participant responses. It is interesting to note that grammar here is not seen by Charlotte as being associated with student "ideas" in writing. Grammar may be viewed by these participants as an isolated aspect of instructional writing. This can be partially explained by Locke's (2009) consideration that teachers who adopt a personal growth discourse of writing sometimes argue that "any preoccupation with "grammar" wastes time, is demotivating, and a distraction from the real business of fostering creativity in students" (p. 181).

When participants reported their beliefs about the importance of grammatical instruction within their own teaching practices the proportion of those who believed grammatical instruction was "highly important" or "important" dropped somewhat compared with when these participants provided a general response as to the importance of grammatical instruction on student writing outcomes. Teacher confidence levels around the teaching of grammar can be seen as accounting for this, in part. Almost one third of the participants deemed it necessary to explain why they felt unable to devote time and attention to practice which they believed grammatical instruction requires. Two main factors, a perceived lack of grammatical content knowledge and time constraints related to the school-wide literacy programme, were considered to contribute to an inability to employ effective grammar teaching practices. In fact, half of the participants identified having a limited grammar content knowledge as a major impediment to their effective teaching of grammar.

Of the subset of six interview participants who provided a wider range of responses around the importance of grammar to their writing instruction, three believed that grammatical instruction was "moderately important", or "important" to a certain degree, within their instructional writing practices.

Two were unsure of the significance of grammatical instruction within their instructional practices and one reported instructional grammar as being of no importance to her writing practice.

When examining their own teaching practices, the three interview participants who reported beliefs around grammatical instruction as being somewhat important discussed the need to teach grammar in terms of improving student meaning-making. The importance of teaching grammar in relation to the effective questioning of texts was also cited, and one participant spoke of a need for grammatical instruction to help make up for a deficiency in some students' literary background knowledge and understanding. Two of these interview participants also reported a need for more able learner writers to use more complex and sophisticated forms of grammar to further improve their writing outcomes. Thus, through the reporting of specific experiences, these interview participants were able to provide reasons why they considered grammatical instruction somewhat important to their literacy teaching practices.

Interestingly, although no other studies can be found which explicitly examine the importance, or otherwise, of grammatical instruction for teachers within their own writing programmes, Barnard and Scampton (2008) do suggest that EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teachers in New Zealand "appreciate the centrality of grammar in their language teaching and have a critical awareness of the problems and issues involved" in teaching grammar (p. 59). Borg (1999) also found the teaching of grammar to be a "complex decision-making process, rather than the unthinking application of best method" in his research, which included five primary teachers of English as a foreign language. He also found that the teachers in his study were able to examine and describe their own theories around grammar in relation to their teaching practices. Both of these studies, therefore, suggest teachers believe grammatical instruction is important.

The belief of the current study's participants that teaching grammar helps improve understanding and adds sophistication to student meaning-making

in writing may somewhat echo Locke's (2014) wide, contextual and rhetorical approach to grammatical instruction, where value is recognised in enabling students to make more effective literary choices (p. 181). In speaking of the utility of a rhetorical grammar, Nunan (2005) states, "When we give students the stylistic tool of different kinds of grammatical instruction, we enable them to express ideas in artful ways" (p. 72).

A clear majority of research participants thought that grammatical instruction does improve student writing outcomes. Some of the improvement reported was of a general nature and consisted of ideas relating to effective communication, meaning-making, clarity, refinement, sophistication of expression, and in creating interest or adding effect to students' whole written texts.

More specifically, participants reported the direct improvement in student writing outcomes in terms of sentence-level grammars, particularly around punctuation and sentence structure. This finding links directly to this study's identified prevalent teacher focus on sentence-level grammars, as discussed in terms of teacher understandings in the previous section.

One of the participants who was interviewed expressed ideas in direct opposition to those of most other participants. Although rating herself as having "some confidence" in teaching grammar, Joanne explained her belief that grammatical instruction had very little impact on her students' writing outcomes. She stated that for native speakers of English, "it's [grammar] just something you instinctively learn from learning your language". Joanne's belief here reflects an understanding of the significance of implicit over explicit knowledge of grammar and requires some explanation.

According to Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006), "the term 'implicit' refers to knowledge that learners are only intuitively aware of and that is easily accessible through automatic processing" (p. 340). This can be juxtaposed against "explicit" knowledge, which "learners are consciously aware of and is typically only available through controlled processing" (p. 340). Names or "metalinguistic labels" (p. 340) may be attached to explicit knowledge of

language. These authors argue that implicit and explicit knowledge of language are not mutually exclusive.

Joanne provided an example of when she was required to teach grammar in isolation as part of a United States literacy programme. She reported that her students did not transfer this isolated, stand-alone learning of explicit grammar to their own writing. Joanne also reported instructional grammar as being of no importance to her current writing instructional practice and that she would never deliberately plan to teach grammar. Joanne holds a belief that student learning of grammar is implicit and does not need explicit teaching for uptake.

Joanne's belief that the teaching of explicit grammar has no positive benefit in improving student writing outcomes is a belief which was once widely supported and backed by research evidence in the mid to late stages of the twentieth century (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones & Schoer, 1963; Thompson, 1969; Elley et al., 1975; 1979; Perera, 1984; Hillocks, 1986). Most research into the effects of grammatical instruction, including the New Zealand research of Elley et al. (1975; 1979), concluded that the teaching of grammar held little, if any, value at all in terms of advancing student writing outcomes. In fact, some of this research proposed that the teaching of grammar had a detrimental effect on student achievement in writing. Elbow (1981) declared, "Nothing helps [their] writing so much as learning to ignore grammar" (cited in Myhill et al., 2012, p. 169). It should be noted that the teaching of grammar at this time was mostly traditional and taught in isolation, as a subject in its own right.

The historic belief that teaching grammar provided little or no benefit in improving student writing outcomes was given further credence by linguists such as Noam Chomsky (1965) who argued that grammatical competence was learned intuitively, through the natural acquisition of the mother tongue and, therefore, the direct teaching of grammar rules was inconsequential. According to Hancock and Kolln (2010), Chomsky believed "language was far too rich and complex not to be somewhat innate" (p. 26). Some, such as Humboldt (1965), believed that due to its innate nature grammar should not

be taught, but rather that grammatical competency would develop spontaneously or naturally through exposure to rich literacy conditions (as cited in Chomsky, 1965, p. 51).

In opposition to this stand-alone natural theory of grammar acquisition are those who believe an implicit understanding of language usage, and particularly grammatical competency, can be acquired through the uptake of taught writing skills (Locke, 2015). This implicit development of language knowledge suggests we can know or use a grammatical concept without necessarily being able to name it explicitly. Van Gelderen (2006) simply asserts that children must be exposed to language instruction to build on their grammatical knowledge and that no language-specific feature can be purely innate.

The primary belief in grammar being acquired naturally rather than more directly learned through instruction was also alluded to in my study through the reporting of two other research participants. In Charlotte's interview, despite stating that "there are parts of grammar that you do specifically need to teach", she also wondered whether grammar was "something they [students] will naturally pick up". Here, Charlotte comes back to the idea that parts of grammatical understanding and uptake may be implicit as opposed to those others which need to be formally and explicitly taught. In the survey, Participant S reported, "But does it [grammar] improve overall writer confidence? Knowing rules – will they learn this without a specific focus? Not sure." However, in total, only a minority of participants did not agree, or were unsure or unconvinced that the teaching of grammar does improve students' writing.

5.4 Approaches

In this section, various approaches through which participants incorporated grammatical instruction into their writing programmes are discussed, including teacher pedagogies associated with these. The frequency of participants' grammar teaching during group writing lessons is also examined, including links between frequency of instruction, participants'

teaching practices and confidence levels. The participants' use of metalanguage during writing instruction and the rationalisation for this is examined, as well as how student ability impacts on teacher practice. Finally, perceived impediments to the effective teaching of grammar are explored, as well as participants' reported confidence levels as teachers of grammar.

Employing an "as the need arises" approach to teaching grammar was commonly mentioned by participants. Furthermore, some participants described their approaches to grammatical instruction as being "indirect" or "incidental", where the learning intentions of writing lessons were not grammar-based and the instruction around grammar had not been pre-planned.

Dale believed incidental instruction was important in addressing grammatical issues which might arise during her writing lessons. She described this as being based on student need at the time of instruction and provided an example, stating "They were struggling with the task that I had been doing, then something … I think they were trying to use commas and they were using them incorrectly. I just stopped what we were doing and I said to the teacher aide, right, we're just going to do a lesson on commas, and I actually got a shopping list out of my handbag". Research suggests tangible benefits that this type of grammatical instruction provides. Engagement in explicit grammatical instruction, when it is needed most, builds knowledge in learner writers which they can then use directly in their own writing (Weaver et al., 2006).

Participants also specifically used the term "integration" when describing ways in which they incorporated grammar into their writing lessons. The integration of grammar into writing lessons using this approach was understood to be pre-planned, as opposed to the incidental approach described above. Integration was also understood to be driven by student need. One participant explained in her interview how the majority of her grammar teaching was integrated into her genre-based writing group

lessons. Grace discussed how the learning around grammar was not usually the predominant focus of the lesson.

The contextual use of mentor texts as text models to help address grammatical areas of need in group writing lessons was mentioned as a useful strategy by close to half of all participants. The use of mentor texts was also cited in close association with teacher modelling of grammatical skills. Participants described the utility of mentor text use, explaining how mentor texts enable students to identify grammatical conventions, develop understandings around the effect these have on particular texts, and then experiment with these concepts in a variety of personal and meaningful ways within their own writing. The use of the mentor text can be seen as a guide to both help the students to understand grammatical concepts and enable the teacher to then model these.

As an insider researching within this school context, I have observed the way in which teachers at this school use mentor texts in order to highlight and copy grammatical concepts, and to emulate text examples for students to follow. This approach is often used as a way to enable students to write more effectively for specific genres.

Using the mentor text approach during written instruction promotes authentic modelling through "real-world" texts, as well as from the teacher (Gallagher, 2011). According to Newman and Fink (2012):

> Writers learn to write by emulating and adapting what their favourite authors do – this is the crux of the mentor text approach. Mentor texts – those books, stories, poems, essays, and other writings that we come back to over and over again – are a powerful tool for helping students contextualise and situate their own language and experiences within the stories of other writers. (p. 25)

Conclusions can be drawn from these well-defined examples of the predominant ways in which grammatical instruction is incorporated into these participants' classroom writing programmes. Significantly, grammar does not appear to be taught in isolation or outside of the writing context in

this educational setting. Grammatical concepts appear to be taught predominantly within the context of specific writing lessons, through the use of whole texts, and this instruction often occurs incidentally or as the need arises. Only one interview participant used the phrase "warm ups" which referred to her use of whole class teaching around spelling, occurring before the commencement of writing group learning sessions. However, apart from this example and despite some curiosity reported around isolated instruction, there is no other evidence of grammar being taught as an isolated subject among the 26 participants in the school being studied.

Similarly, Barnard and Scampton's (2008) research into New Zealand teacher attitudes towards grammar and grammar teaching found that the use of more contextual approaches to grammatical instruction was preferred over decontextualised and more traditional approaches. For example, the findings of this study point to its participants favouring the teaching of grammar "through its emergence in whole texts, rather than its presentation in decontextualised sentences and structures" (Barnard & Scampton, 2008, p. 59).

Despite sharing this similarity with the current study, Barnard and Scampton's (2008) study involved university and unitech teachers who taught EAP courses to undergraduate and pre-undergraduate level students. While the teacher and student participants of this study are at a different level of those in the present study, the findings do suggest that this integrated and contextualised approach to teaching grammar is common at several levels of education in New Zealand.

In terms of frequency of grammatical instruction during writing instruction, most participants said they incorporated grammar into their group writing lessons every time or every few lessons. When given the chance to discuss frequency in more detail, those who were interviewed provided only approximate and/or irregular frequencies with which grammar was taught during their writing programmes, including statements of "every so often" and "every few weeks".

Also remarkable, when considering the broad reporting of high levels of grammatical instruction, is the contrasting prevalence of low confidence levels reported by participants in regards to teaching grammar. The majority of participants rated themselves as having "some", "little" or "no" confidence in teaching grammar. Despite being specifically chosen to represent a range of confidences, as indicated in their survey responses, those participants who were subsequently interviewed reported having very limited confidence or some confidence in grammatical instruction during interviewing. Only one interviewee reported feeling "reasonably confident" about teaching grammar. With general perceptions of such limited confidence around teaching grammar, it is perhaps surprising that so many of the participants in this study were willing to include grammatical instruction so frequently within their writing programmes.

This anomaly between teacher confidence levels and frequency in teaching grammar may be partially explained by looking more closely at these participants' instructional grammar practices. About one third of participants reported teaching grammar using an incidental and irregular approach where the teaching was not pre-planned. Quantification of this type of instruction would therefore be difficult to indicate and possibly unknown by the teachers. During writing instruction, these participants reported including instruction around grammatical concepts "as the need arises". This instruction would be dependent on the teachers' understanding and awareness of grammatical issues which surfaced during writing lessons. Perhaps the high frequency of reported grammatical instruction by participants includes an estimate of incidental teaching. There have been no other studies found which directly investigate the frequency of teachers' grammatical instructions, and future studies involving actual observation are needed to corroborate the findings reported by the participants.

In discussing the use of a shared metalanguage within writing group instruction, the majority of participants reported using a shared metalanguage to describe the language of grammar with their students. This was reported as occurring to varying degrees and in various ways, dependent on both the learning and the learner. For example, two of the

participants interviewed reported that they modified the grammatical language they used during group lessons to help their less able students scaffold understandings towards using the correct terminology. Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis (2002) believe that "this use of semi- or non-technical terms" does not detract from the learning itself and does help with students' ability to understand and use grammatical concepts (p.10).

One of the interview participants, Anna, reported that she "always introduces the correct terms for grammar and punctuation". However, she explained that she simplified the metalanguage for her less able learners before she built them towards using correct terminology. She noted that her more able writers were better able to deal with the more technical language sooner and that using this language helped increase sophistication in their writing. Similarly, Dale used a metalanguage with her students but believed it was important to speak at the level of the child and so she modified the language used with her "students with special needs". She reported that "if we phrase it in a way that is at their level, they've got more opportunity of remembering". Dale also believed that her lower level learners were better not being overloaded with technical terms which might detract from the learning itself. It appears that these teachers may be engaging in a broad principal presented by Locke (2015) where decisions around the type of metalanguage used "are best determined by the kind of metacognitive activity you want to encourage your students to engage in" (p. 183).

Three main reasons were provided across both data sets for using a metalanguage as a component of these participants' teaching practices. Firstly, it was believed that through developing a familiarity with grammatical terminology, and using a "shared language", understandings around grammatical meanings would be better fostered.

Secondly, participants reported the importance of understanding grammatical terminology for future educational purposes, particularly in preparing students' understanding for high school. Survey Participant U stated that using a metalanguage will "assist with high school, it's uniform from one class to the next, so avoids confusion".

Finally, participants clearly defined the usefulness of using a metalanguage in terms of there being a relationship between using correct grammatical terminology and the learning itself. These participants saw a relationship between using the language of grammar and improving student learning outcomes. Survey Participant B reported "To reinforce our learning and success criteria", and Survey Participant E noted, "Increases understanding – makes deliberate".

Metalanguage has been described as "a language that is used to talk reflectively and to some extent systematically about language use" (Locke, 2010, p. 170). The participants in this study were mostly able to comment on their use, or otherwise, of a metalanguage with their students, despite not being provided any kind of definition for this term. This suggests a significant knowledge base around the understandings of its utility among the teachers at this school, which is also supported by the depth of understanding described in participant responses.

A New Zealand study by Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis (2002) highlights the positive impact of teachers' knowledge and promotion of metalanguage within ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. Through the deliberate inclusion of metalanguage during contextual and incidental grammar instruction, 24 ESL students were better able to discuss their learning using this language about language. The researchers reflected that the use of metalanguage "may play a role in making linguistic forms more explicit and noticeable" for students within literacy lessons (p. 11).

While the focus of the Basturkmen et al. study (2002) was on outcomes for learners whose first language was not English, it appears that participants in the current study shared the belief that using a metalanguage with their first language learners of English would foster better learning outcomes in writing.

Locke (2015) advocates the use of a shared metalanguage in the classroom, arguing that a wide knowledge of grammar can help foster better writing outcomes for students (p. 179). He provides explanation and instruction around the benefits of using a metalanguage with students,

particularly through applying a rhetorical pedagogy where grammar knowledge is viewed "as a tool that enables the writer to make effective choices" (Kolln, 1996, as cited in Locke, 2015, p. 181).

There is evidence to suggest that some of the teachers in this study take this rhetorical approach to instructional grammar, particularly when considering the previously discussed use of an incidental teaching approach towards grammar. Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis's (2002) study into the use of metalanguage and its effect on student uptake during linguistic instruction concludes that there is evidence that the use of a metalanguage "helps students notice linguistic items and incorporate them into their production" (p. 12). Furthermore, they state, "Metalanguage appears to be an important means through which students can initiate discourse about language forms in the classroom" (p. 10). In contrast, however, Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis's (2002) study points to a better student linguistic uptake when grammatical instruction is explicit and is pre-planned, rather than incidental. Notably, this study was conducted with intermediate aged students for whom English was a second language. It is possible that results may have varied if the study had been conducted with native speakers of English.

Some participants in the current study reported that the frequency of their grammatical instruction was dependent on student ability levels. As reported in Chapter 4, over a third of participants taught grammar more frequently to their lower level students while approximately one fifth of participants taught grammar more frequently to their higher level students.

For the teachers who did differentiate between the time they spent teaching grammar according to student ability level, student need was the deciding factor. These participants viewed the needs of their higher and lower-ability students in various and non-uniform ways.

Recently, an intervention-style New Zealand study into the effects of contextualised and incidental grammatical instruction on student writing outcomes has shown that students with average to below-average ability levels in literacy can make significant progress in grammatical uptake

(Barrett, 2013). Barrett (2013) reported an improvement in the awareness and use of an appropriate metalanguage by the 22 Year 9 (13-14 years) students in her study as well as an improvement in their syntactical sophistication and confidence in writing. The students in this particular study were only a little older than those taught by the teachers in the current study and so it might be assumed that similar grammatical improvement might also be possible with the lower-level students taught by the teachers in the current study.

In contrast, a large-scale British study into the use and effects of contextual grammar instruction in the classroom found that although a convincing beneficial impact in student writing outcomes was evident this did not extend to lesser able learner writers in the study (Jones et al., 2012). The researchers proposed that the use of metalanguage and materials may have been factors affecting the grammatical uptake of these lower-level literacy learners and that further research into this is needed.

It is clear that further investigation is needed to understand ways to improve grammatical uptake for students achieving at different ability levels in writing. What works for more able students may be quite different to what works for those who are less able. In terms of the current study, it is evident that many participants were aware of these differences and made practical adjustments including the time spent and, in some cases, the metalanguage used, according to the abilities of their students.

When indicating their confidence levels in teaching grammar, 21 of the 26 participants rated themselves as having "some", "little" or "no" confidence in teaching grammar. It is apparent that a lack of confidence around grammatical instruction is evident within the particular context in which this study is set. The limited confidence levels reported by most participants appear to be directly related to particular concerns reported as impeding participants' effective teaching of grammar.

Impediments to the effective teaching of grammar were reported as being experience both in the survey and during participant interviews. Half of all participants reported having a lack of content knowledge or understanding

of grammar and/or strategies to teach grammar. Most participants who were interviewed reported a need for professional development to support them with their teaching of grammar. These participants also identified specific issues around content knowledge.

Survey Participant N reported, "Not knowing enough about it [grammar] myself" and Survey Participant O stated, "I personally have limited knowledge in this area". As discussed earlier in this chapter, a widely reported limitation of opportunity to engage in professional development by participants may be seen as contributing to the widely reported belief that a lack of grammatical content knowledge impacts negatively on participants' practices and confidence levels.

Additionally, many participants reported "time constraints" as being a significant issue in terms of their effective teaching of grammar. In both data sets, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current school-wide literacy policy and implementation plan in terms of it not providing enough time to allow for the teaching of grammar within classroom writing programmes.

Many of the comments made by interviewed participants indicated that time constraints around what needs to be taught in writing made it difficult to plan to include grammatical instruction in their writing programmes. Some of these participants spoke of an inability to do justice to the teaching of grammar due to tight schedules in terms of writing programmes and one reported choosing to omit the teaching of grammar from her writing programme altogether because of a lack of time. Most of the participants who were interviewed also felt that the school-wide focus on mandatory ability-group teaching alone was not necessarily conducive to quality grammatical instruction.

As there are no other case studies to compare these findings around time constraints and school-wide writing programmes against, it cannot be assumed these are problems common for teachers in other schools. This is an area which perhaps warrants further research in order to uncover possible institutionalised constraints for developing instructional grammar.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This section identifies the limitations of this study and pertain to methodological effects and outcomes concerning the use of a case study approach, survey reporting and interviewing. It is important, however, to highlight that the limitations of this study are also linked to its strengths.

It is apparent that there were difficulties around making generalisations from this case study due to issues with the ways in which information was reported by participants. Findings provided by the subset of participants who were interviewed indicated some variation and, at times, contrasted with findings provided by the survey, making it somewhat difficult to form generalisations. However, differences in reporting through interviewing participants also points to deeper and more thoughtful production of ideas and often added to and strengthened the survey data.

Using a formal pen and paper survey was problematic in that it did not allow participants the time or reflective discussion to probe deeply into their understandings and, because of this, important information may have been excluded. For example, there was a significant omission in the reporting of a recent professional development meeting based on grammar which had been attended by all of the research participants. At times it was difficult to ascertain exactly how accurate the survey reporting was.

In comparison, the ability to delve deeper into teachers' knowledge and understandings within the more interactive interview framework meant that the interview process itself served to remind teachers of knowledge and experiences which were often not easy to recall. Possibly, like the subset of interviewed participants, many more research participants would have remembered ways in which they had developed their own strategies to teach grammar, if they had been provided with the conditions of an interview. The inclusion of more participant interviews would benefit future studies of this nature.

It appears that, in isolation, the survey data prevents a certain complexity in understanding participant beliefs and does not provide a complete picture on its own. Menter et al. (2011) believe that semi-structured interviews can be used to add detail and strengthen quantitative methods, such as surveys, as a way to provide better or more meaningful data collection from the study population. Clearly, utilising both survey and interview data provided strength for this case study.

To uncover the participants' understandings and beliefs around grammar and the teaching of grammar, it was important that participants themselves were able to report directly on these. These aspects were central to the study itself. However, for many of the study's questions, an observational element would have helped to strengthen and verify what was reported by participants. Including observation as part of the methodology would have been useful when investigating teachers' approaches to teaching grammar and what happens during teaching times. Data around teacher practice such as the frequency of grammatical instruction and the participants' use of metalanguage in the classroom are two areas which would be particularly aided by observation and which should be considered for future research purposes.

Using a case study approach also made it difficult to generalise findings against other studies. Being focused on one particular context lead to an overall inability to make generalisastions from the evidence found, linking to other research and to teaching communities outside the teaching context of this study. This was mainly due to the fact that no other similar studies could be found which wholly and solely explored teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices around grammar and grammatical instruction. Being a case study, no other like research could be found which was directly comparable.

However, this can be also seen as a strength. Using a case study approach has allowed new information to come to the fore and has provided avenues for future research in the area of teacher grammatical understandings, beliefs and practices. Rich information has been provided by a limited number of participants from a single context, the generalisations found from

within this context have been linked to theory and now need to be explored across other teaching contexts.

5.6. Affordances

This section discusses the affordances of using a mixed method research approach. It also details the advantages found in using a case study approach which utilises insider research.

Although the data provided from the survey can be seen as having limitations, the rich and more complex information gleaned from the participant interviews provides a greater insight into these teachers' understandings and experiences around the teaching of grammar. Therefore, it has proved to be highly beneficial to include more than one method of data collection in this study, in order to extend and validate findings.

Through the interview process itself, some teachers' understandings around grammar were developed, including their understandings around how they teach grammar. Schwandt (1997) describes qualitative interviewing as "a linguistic event in which the meanings of questions and responses are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent" (p. 79). In their discussion on active interviewing, Holstein and Gubrium (1997) note the importance of the interviewer helping participants to "conceptualise issues" and "make connections" in exploring their "stocks of knowledge" (p. 125). In this way, it is apparent that a greater accuracy in the data was obtained and a deeper level of meaning was accessed through using semi-structured interviews as a methodological tool. The survey data alone excluded the depth of participant understandings that may often have been latent when exploring surface-level ideas.

Using interviewing as a methodological tool allowed the freedom and flexibility to discover and probe ideas within topic areas and as the interviews progressed. In semi-structured interviews, "the map or agenda is shaped by the research objectives but it is open to negotiation with the

interviewee" (Menter et al., 2011, p.131). Interviewing produced a depth of interaction that allowed participants' own voices to be heard through the open-ended dialogue. Participants could provide as much detail as necessary and were not curtailed by response requirements, as in the more structured survey. There was a desire to understand the ideas presented by both interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, using this interview approach served to go "beyond the descriptive" (Menter et al., 2011, p. 126) and offered a significant breadth of data (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Using a case study approach allowed a significant depth and breadth of quality data to emerge as it was situated within and concentrated on the findings from only one context.

It is important to note that, being a case study, the research involved a particular educational context of which the researcher was a part. This has meant that insider knowledge is factored into the study's findings and the theories developed. Having a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the programming around the teaching of writing at this school has allowed for a deeper picture to emerge which might have been missed by an outside researcher.

As an example of the positive impact insider research had on the findings of this study, regular and recent observation of the way in which teachers at this school use mentor texts meant the reporting around this by participants could be understood and verified. Discussions about the use of mentor texts during interviews with participants were informed by both interviewer and interviewee in ways to which both could relate.

The role of researcher as an insider within this case study evoked many positive effects through having worked in the research environment, understanding the setting, as well as knowing about the culture and language of the participants. My familiarity with this school's literacy policies, planning and teaching enabled better understanding of teacher responses, in relation to the parameters within which this group of teachers was able to teach grammar. Smyth and Holian (2008) note that the extensive knowledge an insider already possesses would take an outsider

a long time to acquire. Furthermore, the participants were able to open up in a candid manner, something which may not have occurred with an outside researcher.

5.7 Future Research

In completing this study, further questions arose warranting exploration in terms of enhancing the findings and understandings of the current study. For example, the extent to which participants' experiences of their own schooling in grammar affected their current understanding, beliefs and practices regarding grammar and grammar instruction could usefully be examined. This has been touched on in Harper and Rennie's (2008) research where participants' historical experiences of instructional grammar appear to have had some impact on their grammatical understandings. Although incidentally discussed during participant interviews in the current study, this topic was not provided as a specific question in the survey.

Another area worthy of future investigation, in terms of understanding perceived issues around the teaching of grammar, is that of teacher reported contextual limitations to high quality instructional grammar practices. As there are no other case studies to compare with this study's findings regarding the problems reported associated with time constraints and school-wide writing programmes, it cannot be assumed that these are problems common for teachers in other New Zealand schools. This is an area which warrants further research in order to expose possible common institutionalised constraints for developing instructional grammar.

The current study suggests that there is little conformity or standard of learning within and across teacher professional development in grammar. It would therefore be interesting to determine whether there is, in fact, any form of standardised training around the teaching of grammar within and/or across other New Zealand schools. Findings from this study now need to be compared and linked to findings across other schools, particularly schools operating at the same level of learning. Jeurissen (2010) concludes her review of grammar in the New Zealand English curriculum by stating

that "investigating teachers' knowledge and beliefs about grammar should be attended to with some urgency in New Zealand" (p. 79).

Finally, the current study brought to light the challenges teachers face when providing grammar instruction to students of different levels of ability. It is clear that further investigation is needed to discover ways to improve grammatical uptake for students achieving at different ability levels in writing as there appears to be little other documented research on this topic.

5.8 Conclusion

The findings of this case study strongly suggest that, although many of the participants were uncertain around how to define grammar and lacked confidence in teaching grammar, their understandings and teaching pedagogies were stronger than they perceived them to be. A clear majority of these teachers considered grammatical instruction to be important or highly important in improving student writing outcomes, and most participants revealed that this was an important element within their teaching practices.

For the majority of participants, despite reporting a lack of available professional development concerning the establishment of better understandings and practices around teaching grammar, it was important to develop their own pedagogies, upskilling themselves in grammatical instruction. Many teachers used their own initiatives and were proactive in this regard.

A strong focus on sentence-level aspects of grammatical instruction was identified by the majority of participants, in terms of their understanding of grammar and in their choice of grammatical instruction in practice. This might, on the surface, appear highly limited and limiting in approach. However, although not often consciously aware of the word and text level grammars understood or taught within their writing programmes, this study revealed that the participants had probably included these elements in their pedagogies without consciously recognising them as being elements of

grammar. It may be that many participants simply did not have the conscious or declarative knowledge to clearly identify their ideas around grammar and grammatical instruction.

The findings of this study suggest there is a clear need for ongoing, school-wide professional development in grammatical understandings and teacher practice in order to improve teacher confidence levels. However, participants' thoughtful and reflective use of a shared metalanguage within instructional writing lessons suggests that many teachers may underrate themselves in their perceptions of their understandings and skill levels in regard to the teaching of grammatical constructs. Teacher confidence levels do not seem to match their ability in this regard. Observation clearly needs to be carried out in order to make firmer conclusions around this finding.

Additionally, the commonly reported contextual use of incidental and integrated approaches to teaching grammar was seen to be chosen deliberately, and often with firm reasoning. It appears clear that in this regard the participants have a progressive teaching approach in implementing contextual rather than traditional teaching strategies.

In conclusion, the findings of this case study of practicing generalist, intermediate teachers' has provided insight into teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices around grammar and grammatical instruction in regards to writing. Findings indicate that teachers experience distinct limitations in developing their understandings around grammar and grammatical instruction and that their perception of these limitations affects their confidence in teaching grammar. Results of this study also show that teachers believe the teaching of grammar to be important in improving student writing outcomes and, as a result, many teachers undertake self-initiated professional development to upskill themselves in grammatical instruction.

The overwhelming weight of evidence from this study suggests that we need to understand more about what teachers know about grammar and the teaching of grammar, specifically within school and classroom writing programmes. Given Locke's extensive work highlighting the importance of

grammar in learning to write, this author must concur with Jeurissen's (2010) assertion that "investigating teachers' knowledge and beliefs about grammar should be attended to with some urgency in New Zealand" (p. 79).

Future research in the same vein would need to include an element of observation to verify findings which are reported, particularly around teacher practice.

As a result of the ongoing research of the current study, some school-wide professional development around instruction in grammar has been implemented at the studied school. Many teacher participants also continue to go out of their way to look into changes they can make to improve their grammatical instruction practices, despite a general lack of confidence in this area. Given that these teachers have historically experienced so little in terms of professional development around grammar and its teaching, one can only imagine the effects a more consistent and standardised application of professional development might have on their confidence levels and practices. Ultimately it is the students, at the heart of teacher pedagogy and practice, who will benefit from future changes in direction around the teaching of grammar in New Zealand schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey

Research title:

Year 7 and 8 Teachers' Understandings, Beliefs and Practices around the Teaching of Grammar in Relation to the Teaching of Writing

This survey should take no more than 20 minutes of your time and will explore aspects of your understandings, beliefs and practices around the teaching of grammar. It is essential that I obtain data representing a wide range of understandings and confidence levels on this topic. The survey is not a test of your abilities as I am simply interested in describing the status quo at our school.

Please confirm the following;

I understand that through completing this survey, I am giving consent for the information to be used as part of the researcher's thesis and for any other scholarly publications and/or presentations which may develop from this.

Yes/No (please circle)

Biodata:

Age:

Gender:

Number of years teaching:

Do you speak or specialise in teaching another language? Yes/No

If so, what language/s?

Understanding grammatical instruction:

1. What does the term 'grammar' mean to you? What does it encompass?

2. What aspects or areas of grammar do you teach in your writing programme?
3. Have you taken part in any professional development or instruction specifically around the teaching of grammar either before or during your teaching career? Yes/No
- If yes, what was the professional development?
- What do you remember from this professional development?
4. How have you developed strategies to teach grammar?

Beliefs around grammatical instruction:

5. How important is grammatical instruction in improving the quality of students' writing (please indicate on the scale below)?

1	2	3	4	5
Not important at all	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Highly important

6. How do you believe it improves students' writing?

7. How important is grammatical instruction to your literacy teaching practice (please indicate on the scale below)?

1	2	3	4	5
Not important at all	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Highly important

8. In one or two sentences, please comment on the importance, or otherwise, of grammatical instruction to your teaching practice?

Approaches used in grammatical instruction:

9. How (in what ways) do you incorporate grammatical instruction into your writing programme?
10. How frequently would grammar be taught in your group writing lessons (how often would grammatical instruction occur for each writing group)? Please circle below

In every lesson   Every Few lessons   Once a term
Other

_____

_____

11. How does this depend on the ability levels of your writing groups?
12. Do you use a metalanguage including the names of specific concepts and terminology to describe the language of grammar with your students?
    Yes   No   (circle one)
    If you answered yes, please comment on why this is a part of your practice.
13. Explain any impediments you have experienced in relation to your effective teaching of grammar during your teaching career?
14. How would you rate yourself on a scale of one to five in terms of your confidence as a teacher of grammar (one being very low in confidence and five being extremely confident)?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all confident	Little confidence	Some confidence	Reasonably confident	Highly confident

As part of this research I plan to interview several people about grammar teaching, to follow up on ideas from the surveys. It is really important that I speak to people from a range of confidence levels, so it would be great to have volunteers who are not at all confident right through to those who feel highly confident. If you are happy to volunteer to have an interview with me (approximately 30-40 minutes) at a time and place to suit us both, please indicate this by writing your name and contact details on the yellow post-it notepaper and sticking this to your survey form. In addition, you can email me at mneumann@fairfieldintermediate.school.nz

Thank you all so much for taking time out of your busy day to fill in this survey form for me.

Mel Neumann

Appendix B

Ethics Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To:	**Melanie Neumann**
cc:	Dr Nicola Daly
From:	**Associate Professor Garry Falloon** Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee
Date:	6 October 2014
Subject:	Supervised Postgraduate Research – Application for Ethical Approval (EDU079/14)

Thank you for submitting the amendments to your application for ethical approval for the research project:

**Year 7 and 8 teachers' understandings, beliefs and practices around
the teaching of grammer in relation to the teaching of writing**

I am pleased to advise that your amended application has received ethical approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Garry Falloon

Associate Professor Garry Falloon
Chairperson
Research Ethics Committee