

First-language English Teachers' Beliefs about Grammar  
and the Relationship of Espoused Beliefs to  
Pedagogical Practice

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First Language English Teachers' Beliefs about Grammar, and the  
Relationship of Espoused Beliefs to Pedagogical Practice

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an investigation into the beliefs held by practising teachers of L1 (first language) English in English secondary schools about the value of teaching grammar. Through case studies, it also relates beliefs to pedagogical practice.

The study was conducted in two phases. The participants in the first phase were thirty-one teachers, all of whom were taking part in the ESRC-funded Grammar for Writing? project (grant number RES-062-23-0775). Participants taught three writing schemes to their year eight class over the course of a year, and were observed and interviewed once during each scheme. The interviews elicited their beliefs about the teaching of writing in general and about teaching sentence level grammar in particular. The interview data were inductively analysed to explore the participants' espoused beliefs.

The case-study participants in the second phase were three volunteers from the original cohort. These teachers were each observed for a period of three weeks, teaching their own writing schemes to key stage three classes. Stimulated recall interviews were used to capture their reflections on their teaching practices, and think-aloud protocols were used to capture their thinking as they assessed writing samples. Phase one and two data were analysed to explore some of the different ways in which teachers practise grammar teaching, along with the matches, mismatches and tensions between their practice and their espoused beliefs.

The findings are presented using a model which explores teachers' conceptual, affective and evaluative beliefs about grammar, along with episodic influences. The study is significant in offering an up-to-date picture of teachers' beliefs and practice in this highly-contested aspect of English, as well as in offering insights into the relationships between conceptual, affective and evaluative aspects of belief, and into some of the causes reported by teachers for mismatches and tensions between beliefs and practices.

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