Grammar Assessment in EFL Classrooms

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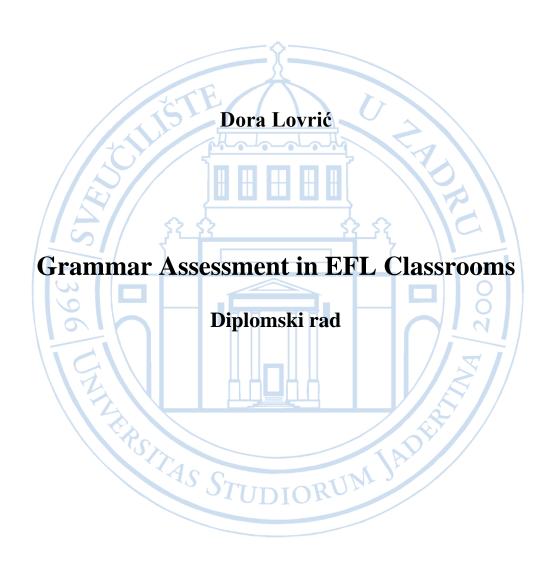
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Student/ica: Mentor/ica:

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Zadar, 2024.

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1. Introduction

Due to an increased usage of English in not only the working sphere, but in everyday life, it is safe to state that English has affirmed its position as the world's most dominant language. As a result, teaching English as a second language (L2) or English as a foreign language (EFL) has become a priority in many educational systems. Today's approach to teaching foreign languages includes Communicative Language teaching (CLT) which includes an emphasis on developing learners' communicative competence, including the development of the four language skills (listening, speaking, writing and reading), as well as grammar and vocabulary. In order to dominate all four language skills, and therefore use language accurately and fluently, grammar knowledge is rather necessary. Larsen-Freeman (2001) describes grammar teaching as a process of learning about the accurate, meaningful and appropriate usage of linguistic forms. Various authors have offered several principles for effective grammar teaching (Ellis, 2014; Loewen, 2011; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; van Lier, 2011, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). They suggest teaching all three of grammar's dimensions (grammatical form, use and meaning). This is where Brown & Lee (2015) suggest using visual aids such as drawings, diagrams, or maps which are traditionally used for practicing giving directions. Grammar teaching practices have served as a topic for many researchers who opted for explicit or implicit teaching practices. Effective grammar teaching is accomplished through usage of both-explicit and implicit grammar lessons that focus on communicative activities, but also consider lesson goals and students' needs (Ellis, 2014; Loewen, 2011; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; van Lier, 2011, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). The process of grammar teaching is later followed by different assessment practices that test students' L2 grammar knowledge. The research on grammar assessment proves the existence of various assessment practices that are used to assess students' L2 grammar knowledge.

Grammar assessment in L2 teaching has taken many forms. Ur (2012) states that mainly written closed-ended tests are used for grammar testing. Nevertheless, she claims that open-ended test items are complex, but represent students' true L2 grammar knowledge. Furthermore, Ur (2012) mentions translation as an amusing practice, but rarely used due to the necessary usage of students' L1. Due to the complexity of grammar assessment methods, several studies have been carried out focusing on various forms of L2 grammar assessment. For example, Larsen-Freeman (2009) has shown that discrete-point items (filling the blanks, sentence completion, etc.) have been the most frequently used L2 grammar assessment aids;

however, she suggested that they are rather unreliable for testing grammar in real-life situations. Some researchers have found that written timed essays were the most frequent grammar tools for assessing students' writing skills (Barkaoui, 2010a; Crusan, 2010; Cumming, 2013; Hamp-Lyons, 2011; He & Shi, 2012; Weigle, 2002, as cited in Neumann, 2014). On the contrary, Swedish secondary school teachers relied on both-traditional and somewhat alternative techniques which considered learners' needs and experiences in order to assess the grammar knowledge (Lomgren, 2022).

The changes concerning grammar assessment may be noticed among Croatian institutions as well. Croatia has recently introduced a new curriculum for English language teaching ('Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta Engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije', 2019) that aims to "establish organized and efficient educational and teaching system that corresponds to demands of modern and life-important education" (Karajić, Ivanec, Geld, and Spajić-Vrkaš, 2019, p. 38). The new curriculum introduces changes where grammar assessment emerges as one of the greatest changes in English language teaching. For example, grammar is to be assessed through communicative or writing exercises rather than through explicit testing, i.e., grammar tests. Since the introduction of the new English language curriculum, not many studies have considered grammar assessment practices among Croatian EFL teachers. As a result, this study will attempt to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the new language curriculum, their current grammar assessment practices, as well as the effectiveness of the new practices. In order to fully present the topic, this thesis is divided into six major sections. The theoretical background offers an overview of the historical changes of L2/EFL acquisition processes, teaching and assessment practices. The paper then presents the major aims and methods of the research, followed by the results, as well as a brief discussion. Finally, the main research questions are answered in the conclusion.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Second language acquisition

As it has already been mentioned, English is commonly referred to as one of the world's most influential languages. What is more, it has been attributed as *Lingua Franca*, that is, a language used for "communication in English between speakers with different first languages" (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339). Its omnipresence in modern life assured it to be taught as second (L2) or foreign language (EFL) among many nations. Being introduced as second language, it fulfills the function of "an official or societally dominant language needed for education, employment, and other basic purposes" (Saville- Troike, 2012, p. 4).

There are numerous conditions under which second language acquisition (SLA) may occur. To name a few, Saville-Troike (2012) suggest an informal contact with speakers of a different language, a need to survive in an unintelligible community, or formal directions offered by educational institutions. Whatever the circumstances are, the process of acquiring one's second language remains to be individual. Therefore, the success level of SLA was compared with some of the characteristics of learner's first language (L1), motivation to succeed, as well as personal attitudes (Saville-Troike, 2012). Likewise, Norris-Holt (2001) portrays motivation as a significant part of prosperous SLA. The comparison of first and second language acquisition helped to determined the three main phases of both acquisition processes, initial, intermediate and final states (Saville-Troike, 2012). How different the two acquisition processes are, was thoroughly analyzed by Saville-Troike (2012) who contrasted the main components of each acquisition phase, as well as referred to the main factors that are to facilitate the SLA process.

Although many argue that the initial stages of L1 acquisition may strongly rely on the *innate capacity* to acquire language, the same may not be true for L2 learning (Saville-Troike, 2012). According to Saville-Troike (2012), this *innate capacity* refers to an inborn genetic ability to learn language. While some linguists acknowledge the presence of *innate capacity* in L2 learning, others consider it to be just partial or even nonexistent in the process of acquiring later languages (Saville-Troike, 2012). However, what seems to be a widely accepted truth is the presence of L1 knowledge in the initial state of L2 acquisition. Additionally, one may consider world knowledge to be facilitating factor in the L2 learning process (Saville-Troike, 2012). This world knowledge comprises cultural knowledge as well as interactional skills found in one's L1: "requesting, commanding, promising, and apologizing, which have developed in

conjunction with L1 acquisition but are not present in the L1 initial state" (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 18).

When reaching an intermediate state of L2 learning, transfer of L1 knowledge will influence the development of a learners' interlanguage (Saville-Troike, 2012). As well as Saville- Troike (2012), Laldingliani Sailo (2019) acknowledges the L1 knowledge transfer to L2 learning, balancing, however, the intensity of the transfer with the language similarities. While this variable is rather impossible to be found in learner's L1 acquisition process, as the language development has been attributed to the maturation process, it is a frequent component of SLA (Saville-Troike, 2012). However, learners of both first and second language are to be exposed to an input, which is in case of L1 acquisition highly recommendable to be provided via direct, face-to-face contact (Saville-Troike, 2012). Nonetheless, second language learners were said to benefit, not strictly from a live contact with others, but are also able to acquire new languages through indirect input, such as TV, radio and internet (Saville-Troike, 2012). This phase of SLA may be greatly facilitated by the components such as motivation and feedback (Saville-Troike, 2012). These so-called "facilitating conditions" (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 17) are to alleviate, but most importantly, to increase the success of the SLA process.

Lastly, while the final phase of the first language acquisition process assures learners with a native linguistic proficiency and the ability to further expand their vocabulary knowledge, the SLA process allows learners to reach different proficiency levels, though the highest one is suggested to be limited to a *native-like* competence (Saville-Troike, 2012). However, L2 learner is not always assured to accomplish a native-like competence. What is more, Lenneberg's (1967) notion of a *Critical Period Hypothesis* suggests that after a certain age, children are not able to normally acquire languages (Saville-Troike, 2012). Belief in the presence of the critical period in the process of, not only L1 acquisition but the SLA, justified the presence of the *foreign accent* among the learners whose language acquisition started after passing a certain age (Lenneberg, 1967, as cited in Saville-Troike, 2012). Although it has been said that the older learners are somewhat faster acquirers in the initial stages of learning (Saville-Troike, 2012), some consider the younger ones and an early childhood to be a period of greater success due to remarkable absorbing, learning and retaining skills that even allow them to reach a *native-like* production (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011).

Taking into consideration all the differences and facilitating components between first and second language acquisition, several different theories attempted to interpret the SLA processes. The 1950s created theories such as Structuralism and Behaviorism (Skinner, 1957) that tried to discover the nature of SLA (Saville-Troike, 2012). While the first one accentuated

and described levels of speech production (phonology, morphology, syntax, etc.), Behaviorism advocated an idea of "habit formation resulting from S-R-R: *stimuli* […] *responses* […] and *reinforcement*" (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 26) according to which input from the environment is followed by a response that is later reinforced in case of a desired outcome (Saville-Troike, 2012). Therefore, language is considered to be acquired following the "general laws of learning […] imitation, practice, feedback on success and habit formation" (Laldingliani Sailo, 2019, p.70).

The 1960s brought new linguistic perspectives which created frameworks such as Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar (1957). Since the "logical problem of language acquisition" (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 26) could not be clarified, the theory argued the existence of *innate capacity* for children to acquire languages.

Second language acquisition has been investigated not only regarding its linguistic aspect, but through psychological and social components as well. The analysis of language acquisition processes has taken into consideration a variety of specialized functions controlled by different brain parts, possible brain plasticity, language dependency and organization in phenomena such as bilingualism or multilingualism, learner differences regarding age, motivation and many more (Saville-Troike, 2012). Meanwhile, the focus on a relationship between the language and the society unveiled the notion of *communicative competence* describing "what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a particular language community" (Saville-Troike, 2003, as cited in Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 106). A prominent 1950s' theory, Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1962), proclaimed a social interaction with other members to be a significant element of a language learning process (Saville-Troike, 2012). Analyzing Vygotsky's language acquisition theory, Turuk (2008) interpreted the importance of the sociocultural factors for Vygotsky's work by describing them as "indispensable for elementary natural process to develop" (pp. 244-245). Perceiving interaction as "an essential force," (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 118) the theory conflicts with other approaches due to the encouragement of learner activation, active participation and engagement rather than extensive teaching of structural language patterns (Saville-Troike, 2012). Within his theory, Vygotsky introduced the term *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* that, in a few words, "describes how cognitive growth occurs in children" (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011, p. 1550). This, according to Turuk (2008), astonishing contribution to the scholastic and educational sphere, refers to "an area of potential development" (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 119) that a learner is to reach only with help and assistance (Saville-Troike, 2012). Focusing on social contexts of SLA produced frameworks such as Accommodation Theory: a theory that states "how people

adjust their language and communication patterns to those of others" (Atalay, 2015, p. 1). What this entails is the unconscious change of speaker's pronunciation and sentence complexity so to equalize with the interlocutor (Saville-Troike, 2012).

2.2. EFL teaching: A historical review

The previous section discussed some of the most influential 20th century frameworks that attempted to understand the SLA process. It offered a closer look into predispositions, facilitating conditions and the basis of SLA. Different theories proposed language acquisition to be an intuitive, cognitive, skill-learning or habit- formation process (Ur, 2012). What is more, SLA processes may be stimulated by certain conditions such as the presence in an unintelligible community, informal contact with strangers as well as formal directions within educational institutions (Saville-Troike, 2012). Introducing second languages schools contributed to the creation and implementation of numerous teaching methods. Thus, the following section will present several of the most prominent English language teaching methods.

Teaching foreign languages period started along the implementation of the Classical Method, i.e., a method that based its teaching principles on grammatical rules, written exercises and translations (Brown & Lee, 2015). Although the method changed its name into Grammar Translation Method, many of its teaching practices remained unchanged (Brown & Lee, 2015). Consequently, the usage of students' first language (L1), numerous English translations and grammar rules remained the greatest characteristics of the method (Prator & Celce- Murcia, 1979, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). Although it is unlikely to be implemented in contemporary classrooms due to a lack of student interaction and communication in target language, focus placed on teacher rather than learner and imprecise translation, it is true that the knowledge of grammatical patterns may facilitate message comprehension of textual works as well as assure the production of grammatically valid sentences (Khan & Mansoor, 2016). Though this isolated grammar teaching has been seen as rather inconvenient practice (Weaver, McNally & Moerman, 2001), Khan & Mansoor (2016) consider it as rather beneficial for Pakistani students due to a lack of English-speaking communities that would facilitate the implementation of modern methods that emphasize development of speaking and listening skills. Therefore, the method maintained its popularity among Pakistani English teachers and has still not been completely disregarded (Awan & Nawaz, 2015).

The 1880s introduced The Direct Method that equalized the second/ foreign language learning process with the first one (Brown & Lee, 2015). Its approach to L2 learning included

instructions in L2, emphasis of oral production and listening, inductive grammar teaching as well as integration of basic vocabulary terms (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). In addition to this, Celce-Murcia (2001) alludes to the inductive teaching of the target language culture, as well as the presence of a native speaker or at least a teacher with a native-like language competence. Although the method was suggested to gain a great admiration by the end of the 19th century, its implication in public education was not visible due to a rather lower budget, classroom and teacher requirements (Brown & Lee, 2015).

This was later followed by one of the most prominent language teaching methods of 1940s/1950s, namely, the Audiolingual Method. As suggested, the method based its innovative teaching practices on dialogue forms that were to introduce the new content, greater usage of the target language, inductive grammar and vocabulary presentation, as well as accentuation of the pronunciation prominence (Prator & Celce- Murcia, 1979, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). The method was considered to be highly prosperous mainly due to the usage of dialogues as basis of learning content that were to contribute to a greater phonetic mastery (Mei, 2018). What is more, it has been regarded as the one that "has probably had a greater impact on second and foreign language teaching than any other method" (Nunan, 2000, p.229, as cited in Mart, 2013, p. 64). Basing its technique on imitation, teaching through the usage of L2 is suggested to be highly recommendable so for learners to construct error-free utterances (Mei, 2018). Although the emphasis of oral skills and learner communication are perceived as some of the greatest features that maintained the method's popularity, a minor negligence of social and cultural factors, as well as reading and writing abilities remain to be one of the major drawbacks of the method (Mei, 2018).

According to Brown & Lee (2015), the period of 1970s contributed to the creation of new, somewhat innovative English teaching methods, i.e., "designer methods". Among numerous original techniques developed *Suggestopedia*. This modern technique advocates a completely relaxed state of mind among learners in order for concentration and learning to happen (Colliander & Fejes, 2021). The four-stage method encourages enjoyable environment settings, listening and speech production within a baroque ambient, as well as implication of games that are to check the degree of learner comprehension (Kharismawati & Susanto, 2014). Though at first it may seem as a hardly popular method, research proves Swedish educational systems to be in demand for such an innovation (Colliander & Fejes, 2021).

Another distinctive teaching practice that marked the 1970s' period was James Asher's (1977) creation of Total Physical Response (TPR). The method identified its teaching practices with children's first language acquisition, i.e., before speaking, children are exposed to a lot of

listening that is followed by appropriate physical responses (Brown & Lee, 2015). In brief, TPR "establishes a link between speech, a primary mode of language and action" (Singh, 2011, p. 20). This alternation between listening and physical reaction to identified commands assures learners' active engagement due to which it is said to alleviate vocabulary learning among middle scholars (Werdiningsih & Mardiyah, 2019).

In accordance to TPR, Krashen and Terrell (1983) developed the Natural Approach, i.e., a communicative approach that would concentrate on teaching communicative skills and, unlike the Audiolingual Method, shift the focus from grammar (Mani, 2016). Letting their learners to speak only when completely prepared, teachers were seen as sources of intelligible input as well as stimulators of study activities (Brown & Lee, 2015). Although it was suggested that the main drawbacks of the method were somewhat detained oral production as well as overemphasized intelligible input (Gibbons, 1985, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015), both TPR and Natural Approach were seen as greatly innovative and rather beneficial at the beginning stages of language learning (Brown & Lee, 2015).

The year 1980 was marked by the notion of Canale and Swain's communicative competence, i.e., a concept that embarks grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse language knowledge (Brown & Lee, 2015) and is said to represent "a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication" (Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007, p. 96). The previously mentioned was seen as an influential factor in the field of English language teaching and finally, led to the establishment of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT was considered a revolution which involved the implementation of "social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language," along with the effort to create a real-life class communication by accentuating both language fluency and accuracy (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 31). Most importantly, the approach portrayed learner as an active participant in this student-centered cooperative learning (Brown & Lee, 2015). Learning to listen to each other within pair or group activities rather than being teacher-dependent, assured learners with greater responsibility and teachers in function of observers and facilitators (Richards, 2006). What is more, pair-work or group activities are said to increase learner's motivation along with the possibility of practicing linguistic fluency (Richards, 2006). As it has been suggested, Communicative Language Teaching "is not exclusively concerned with face to face oral communication" (Savignon, 2002, p. 7, as cited in Thamarana, 2015, p. 94), but places emphasis on the development of all four language skills. The same is done through role-playing, dramatization and genuine classroom activities that are to mirror truthful real-life events (Celce-Murcia, 2001). CLT changed the L2 in many aspects. It emphasized learner fluency which

increased motivation for language usage (Brown, 2001, as cited in Thamarana, 2015) and assured learner autonomy and responsibility through the usage of real-life communicative performances. While Ur (2012) states contemporary post-communicative teaching to emphasize both language fluency and accuracy for a complete comprehension, Thamarana (2015) assures that a minor negligence of oral correction and "accuracy in grammar and pronunciation" suggested the approach suitable for intermediate and advanced learners, due to a lack of guided practices for beginner learners and possible comprehension challenges for the less proficient ones (p. 97).

As Brown and Lee (2015) suggest, the late 20th century founded multiple CLT manifestations that accentuated the notion of communicative component in language teaching programs. The newly formed "postmethod era of language teaching" (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 40) involved approaches such as Learner-Centered Instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching, Theme-Based Instruction and many more.

An increased popularity of the Learner-Centred Instruction was due to an active learner role in the process of language learning. The approach viewed learners as class-moderators which assured them with enough autonomy to regulate the learning content, applied teaching practices, and finally, to evaluate the learning outcome (Tulasi & Rao, 2021). Changing the role of learners, adapting to their needs and preferences switched focus from teacher-dependent classrooms to the learner-centred ones where assessment of portfolios, projects and performances (Good & Brophy, 2003, as cited in Al-Zu'be, 2013) functions in favour of "diagnosing and promoting learning among the students" (Al-Zu'be, 2013, p. 25).

However, what remains to be "at the very heart of CLT" (Ellis, 2003 as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 46) is a Task-Based Language Teaching. The approach bases its teaching principle on the usage of appropriate task that focuses on meaning, communication problem-solving, and real-life activities (Peter Skehan, 1998, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). Therefore, a task may involve grammatical explanations, group work activities, as well as oral reports (Brown & Lee, 2015). Though the approach portrays learner as an active participant as well as assures collaborative atmosphere and meaningful discussions (Büyükkarci, 2009) it is suggested to be less productive regarding "the systematic teaching of new language" as well as suggested to pressure "instant communication rather than interlanguage change and growth" (p. 319).

The present section attempted to summarize the greatest changes in L2 teaching. Therefore, it indicated some of the earliest teaching methods that relied on grammatical explanations, translations, meaningful dialogued forms practicing phonetic proficiency,

language and movement alternation, or even aimed at establishing a relaxed class atmosphere. Along with other factors, the 1980s' innovation of communicative competence helped the integration of Communicative Language Teaching within the educational institutions. Focusing on the communicative purpose of language, linguistic fluency, accuracy and the four language skills, the approach obtained many manifestations seen as Learner-Centred Instructions, Task-Based Language Teaching and many more that remained implemented in contemporary English language classrooms.

2.3. Teaching grammar: Implicit vs. Explicit grammar teaching

Being aware of the fact that grammatical knowledge allows greater language proficiency, Weaver et al. (2001) reject the possibility of disregarding grammar implementation in language teaching and learning, but rather advise to carefully choose the aspects and methods for teaching them. According to Larsen-Freeman (2003, 2014, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015), for a proper language use, one is to familiarize with the three dimensions of grammar: form, meaning and use. Namely, the form alludes to structural constituents seen as "phonemes, graphemes, inflectional morphemes, and syntactic patterns" (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, 2014, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 463). Meaning, however, presents a semantic level of form, as well as comprises both meanings, lexical and grammatical. Finally, the dimension of use refers to the utterance meaning within distinctive contexts and discourse cohesion (Larsen-Freeman, 2003, 2014, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015). According to Brown and Lee (2015), although not all methods emphasized the three dimensions, they are mutually dependent. As noted, the Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual Method disregarded the use dimension whereas The Natural Approach put aside the form dimension (Brown & Lee, 2015). Though many recognise the importance of grammar for language learning, there seem to be contrasting opinions regarding the ways of presenting it. Therefore, different methods and approaches in the past opted for implicit/explicit grammar teaching. Though the majority of early methods of teaching, such as the Grammar Translation Method, incorporated explicit grammar teaching that demanded "deliberate study of grammar rule in order to recognize linguistic elements efficiently and accurately" (Scott, 1990, p. 779, as cited in Başöz, 2014, p. 378), contemporary CLT approaches initially favoured innovative, implicit grammar representation that assures learners with autonomy to notice the patterns themselves. However, it is possible to separate several studies that favoured implicit/explicit grammar learning. Larsen-Freeman (2001) referred to explicit language teaching as "ill served" (p. 251) which favours Krashen (1982, as

cited in Başöz, 2014) and his disregard of explicit grammar teaching due to it being naturally acquired, as well as Bourke (1996, as cited in Başöz, 2014) who viewed upon implicit teaching as a highly successful practice. Even some of the recent 21st century studies advocated the implication of implicit grammar teaching. Therefore, research found the majority of 176 English teachers attempting to avoid isolated grammar teaching (Borg & Burns, 2008, as cited in Başöz, 2014), as well as 86 prospective teachers stating that grammar teaching is to follow communicative activities (Başöz, 2014). However, Sopin (2015, as cited in Rahman & Rashid, 2017) states that research proved learners struggling to understand the implicit grammar rules. Therefore, Başöz (2014) accentuates that works such as White (1987), Burges and Etherington (2002) and Thu's (2009) still advocate explicit language teaching and, therefore, favour some of the earliest English teaching practices.

Nonetheless, the contemporary approach of Communicative Language Teaching considers the relevance of form-focused instruction, i.e., "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form" (Ellis, 2012, p. 271, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 466). Therefore, according to Brown & Lee (2015), the form was stressed through meaning-focused activities that combined explicit grammar instruction, noticing and input accentuation (Polio, 2007; Nassaji, & Fotos, 2011; R. Ellis, 2012, as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015), as well as implicit grammar learning (Brown & Lee, 2015).

Though different communities favor different teaching methods, sometimes it may be crucial to consider learners' needs and preferences due to which it is to mention Al-Kabani's (2004, as cited in Başöz, 2014) research proving learners more inclined towards explicit grammar teaching, and surprisingly, teachers towards more implicit forms.

2.4. Grammar assessment: Traditional vs. alternative approaches

Though the opinions on how to teach grammar differ, the importance of grammar for language learning has not been neglected. What is more, the modern teaching approaches have not only influenced the views regarding grammar teaching, but teachers' assessment practices as well. By embracing the concept of the CLT approach, Croatian educational system has introduced certain alternations regarding English grammar assessment and evaluation. Similar to Chinese English curriculum, that was reported to focus on learners' oral production and ability for communication (Mei, 2018), Croatian curricular prescriptions suggested grammar tests to be replaced by communicative and written exercises that questioned learners' language

knowledge. Due to this, the following section will present certain traditional, as well as alternative assessment practices.

According to Ur (2012), assessment of English learners' competence aims to detect learners' overall proficiency level, their progress, knowledge of certain materials, possible strengths and weaknesses, as well as helps to evaluate one's teaching. Defining assessment as "one of the crucial components of the instruction" (Dikli, 2003, p. 13), Dikli (2003) proceeds by naming the most popular traditional assessing classroom practices such as multiple-choice questions, short questions, true or false tasks and finally, essays. The same were said to contribute to an increased motivation, feeling of possible progress (Ur, 2012), as well as fast evaluation. Nonetheless, drawbacks such as a greater probability of guessing the right answer among true/false pattern, long-lasting essay writing (Dikli, 2003) as well as difficulty of multiple-answer organization (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, and Zvacek, 2000, as cited in Dikli, 2003) may be noted. To this, Ur (2012) adds questionable validity and reliability, as well as alludes to potential learner anxiety. According to Ur (2012), true/false pattern, as well as gapfills assess mostly receptive knowledge. Therefore, in order to construct a rather qualitive test, Brown and Lee (2015) suggest to consider practicality, reliability, validity and authenticity criteria.

As an alternative, Brown and Lee (2015) consider the assessment of learners' journals that may contain "grammar discussions; responses to readings; self-assessment" (p. 527). Ur (2012) suggests self-assessment, teacher assessment and implication of portfolio materials. Though the first two may be potentially subjective, portfolio allows assessment of long-term work, diminishes stress level, although demanding an extensive teacher review (Ur, 2012). What is more, Brown and Lee (2015) refer to a performance-based assessment that accentuates the usage of productive language skills, i.e., writing and speaking, as well as provides some degree of authenticity. This assessment type was suggested to be both learner and teacher-motivating since the tasks matched the course goals rather than question grammar or reading comprehension via multiple-choice format (Brown & Lee, 2015). Focusing on learner, these practices adapt open-ended answers, communicative tasks, as well as creative responses (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019, as cited in Lomgren, 2022) and have, despite the time-consuming component, found its place in contemporary classrooms.

2.5. Research on L2 grammar assessment practices

Since the previous paragraph analyzed some of the traditional and alternative tools used to assess and evaluate learners' language knowledge, the following is to allude to research that questioned English classroom assessment practices.

Neumann (2014) pointed to a lack of research focusing on grammar assessment in writing due to which his research unveiled teachers' importance of grammatical accuracy, as well as learners being aware of the accuracy criterion. The same is suggested to prevent learners from constructing complex sentences and consequently, reach for simpler ones to maintain the grammatical accuracy (Neumann, 2014). Nozadze's (2013) qualitative research, on the other hand, discovered learners and teachers favorizing tasks such as gap-filling, clause combining, error identification and transformation due to preparing and solving convenience. However, the same were suggested to be mechanical, uncommunicative, and possibly confusing (Nozadze, 2013). Duyen Pham's (2021) research pointed to the assessment of class-activity (attendance, participation, homework, mini-tests), as well as final tests. The research found teachers pleased with the current assessment tools as changing them would influence the time-management (Duyen Pham, 2021). Finally, Lomgren's (2022) study considered English teachers' attitudes regarding grammar evaluation, i.e., practices they implied and the underlying reasons for doing so. The analysis revealed teachers favoring both, formative and summative assessment. Therefore, they reported to use standardized tests, noninteractive performances, considered both written and oral productions as well as quizzes, the same allowed them to alternate between traditional and alternative assessment methods, as well as reflect on their prior personal experiences (Lomgren, 2022).

3. Aim and method

3.1. Aim

Although research on educational systems, language acquisition, teaching and evaluation criteria is a rather recurring topic, it appears that grammar assessment in EFL teaching has not been investigated thoroughly in the Croatian context, especially in relation to the recently modified Croatian English language curriculum. The primary aim of the present thesis was to examine grammar assessment in EFL classrooms. More precisely, the aim was to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes regarding grammar assessment, including attitudes toward the effectiveness of new assessment techniques, as well as the grammar assessment practices used by EFL teachers today. The study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. a) What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward the modified curricular guidelines and English grammar assessment? b) Do they prefer traditional or alternative assessment practices?

2. a) What are EFL teachers' attitudes toward the effectiveness of the new grammar assessment techniques? b) What do they consider to be some of the challenges?

3. a) What classroom practices do teachers currently use to assess grammar knowledge among EFL learners? b) How effective are they?

3.2. Method

3.2.1. Sample

The study was conducted among Croatian elementary and high school English language teachers, with a predominant focus on the educators working in Zadar and the wider Dubrovnik area. A total of 40 female teachers took part in the questionnaire, including 33 elementary (82.5%) and 7 high school teachers (17.5%). The sample included 2 teachers (5%) aged between 20-29 years of age, 9 (22.5%) of them between 30-39, 18 (45%) aged 40-49, and 11 (27.5%) teachers aged 50 years or older. Considering their working experience, 4 teachers (10%) had less than/or 5 years of working experience, 2 (5%) had been teaching for 6-10 years, 14 (35%) 11-19 years, and 20 (50%) educators had 20 or more years of active work experience. In addition, 8 female teachers, including 6 elementary (75%) and 2 high school teachers (25%), participated in the interviews. The teachers who were interviewed were between 38-52 years old, and had 9-27 years of active work experience. The results of the descriptive analysis of the sample are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Description of questionnaire sample: Gender, age, working experience, level of teaching

		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	40	100%
	Male	0	0%
	20-29	2	5%
Age	30-39	9	22.5%
	40-49	18	45%
	50 and more	11	27.5%
Years of working experience	0-5	4	10%
	6-10	2	5%
	11-19	14	35%
	20 and more	20	50%
Level of teaching	Elementary school	33	82.5%
	High school	7	17.5%

Table 2: Description of interview sample: Gender, age, working experience, level of teaching

	Gender	Age (years)	Working experience (years)	Level of teaching
Participant 1	Female	42	19	High school
Participant 2	Female	52	26	Elementary school
Participant 3	Female	49	22	Elementary school
Participant 4	Female	42	19	High school
Participant 5	Female	46	20	Elementary school
Participant 6	Female	38	9	Elementary school
Participant 7	Female	42	15	Elementary school
Participant 8	Female	51	27	Elementary school

3.2.2. Instruments

The instruments used in the study were a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was administered to 40 Croatian elementary and high school English

teachers. The questionnaire was adapted to focus on the research questions for this thesis and was based on several sources, such as Ur's (2012) practices and suggestions for grammar assessment, Brown & Abeywickrama's (2019, as cited in Lomgren, 2022) assessment implementations, as well as other questions that the researcher considered pertinent for the study, including attitudes toward EFL grammar teaching in relation to the new curriculum reforms. The questionnaire was divided into three major sections. The first section included background information, for example, personal data (gender, age, working experience, level of teaching and grades they taught). In the second section participants answered ten questions about the new curriculum guidelines with regard to grammar, as well as evaluated its effectiveness. They were asked to select their level of agreement with statements using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The third part of the questionnaire included six questions ranging from multiple-choice questions to open-ended ones regarding their current grammar assessment practices.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were carried out based on the adapted version of Lomgren's (2022) study, as well as questions considered important for this research. The introductory questions included background information, as well as eight questions aimed to examine teachers' attitudes regarding grammar assessment, their opinions about the effectiveness of various grammar assessment techniques, as well as their current classroom practices with regard to grammar assessment.

3.2.3. Procedures

The questionnaire was carried out in the period from May–November, 2023. The participants were informed of the research goals and were assured of the anonymity of the provided data. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that by completing the questionnaire, they were providing their informed consent. Teachers were asked to complete a Google form questionnaire that examined Croatian teachers' English grammar assessment techniques and attitudes. In order to ease the questionnaire fulfilment, as well as assure total comprehension of questions, the questionnaire was given in Croatian. However, for the purpose of the present thesis, the results were translated and presented in English.

Regarding the interviews, two teachers were interviewed in June whereas the remaining six were reached in October and November, 2023. Each participant was contacted to arrange the time of the interview that was to be held via phone call. When introduced with the study aims and assured of the anonymity of the data, the participants gave their oral, and later written

consent. The interviews took on average between 10-20 minutes, and were audio-recorded. Since, due to the previously elaborated reasons, the interviews were held in Croatian, in order to be properly analysed, they were translated into English and transcribed accordingly. In order to preserve participants' anonymity, they were labeled as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.

3.2.4. Data analysis

The data from the questionnaire was subjected to descriptive analysis using *Microsoft Excel* program that provided frequency (F), mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) calculations. Moreover, the open-ended questions were analyzed and grouped into themes that emerged based on the frequency of responses. The qualitative interview data was audio-recorded, translated, and transcribed. After confirming the validity of the interview transcriptions and some note-taking, the obtained data was analysed via the *NVivo* program. The data was organized according to the research questions, while the interview questions provided the framework for the analyzation. The answers to each interview question were divided into categories based on the teachers' answers. Subsequently, themes emerged from these categories which are presented in the results section.

4. Results

4.1. EFL teachers' attitudes toward grammar assessment

The results of the questionnaire

The first aim of the conducted research was to inquire about EFL teachers' personal attitudes toward English grammar assessment as well as toward the modified curricular prescriptions. Participants were therefore asked to express the level of agreement based on a 5-point Likert scale that expended from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Considering the attitudes regarding grammar teaching modifications, the results pointed to a rather low mean average (M=1.9, SD=.982). That is, a great majority of the questionnaire sample did not approve of the new changes in grammar teaching. Similar results were obtained when asked about the changes within grammar assessment practices. As previously, lower mean average was noted (M=1.85, SD=1.027). Therefore, only few approved the assessment novelties. From the presented results, it was possible to notice that both, grammar teaching and grammar assessment practices have not been positively welcomed by these teachers. Hence, both instances showed a rather negative reaction to the suggested modifications.

Furthermore, teachers were asked to express their attitudes regarding the assessment tools used to check learners' grammar knowledge. The questionnaire suggested grammar tests/standardized exams, multiple-choice format, interactive performances, and communicative tasks. As noted, grammar tests/standardized exams gained the highest mean average (M=4.25, SD=.954) and were followed by communicative tasks (M=3.825, SD=.984) and interactive performances (M=3.7, SD=.853). Somewhat lower mean average was assigned to multiple- choice format (M=2.65, SD=1.027) which was seen as least favorable. Since many participants previously disagreed with the new curricular prescriptions, it did not surprise that grammar tests/standardized exams positioned high on the scale. Nonetheless, despite the received disapproval, the mentioned innovative practices showed high mean averages. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' attitudes towards grammar assessment: Average means (M) and standard deviations (SD)

	M	SD
I like the new changes introduced by the new curriculum reform regarding grammar teaching.	1.9	0.98
I like the new changes introduced by the new curriculum reform regarding grammar assessment practices.	1.85	1.03
Grammar should be assessed through grammar tests/ standardized exams.	4.25	0.95
Grammar should be assessed through multiple-choice format.	2.65	1.03
Grammar should be assessed through interactive performances.	3.7	0.85
Grammar should be assessed through communicative tasks.	3.82	0.98

In addition, teachers were to state if traditional grammar tests were better in showing learners' realistic grammar knowledge when compared to the alternative tools. The analysis showed that a great number of participants favored traditional grammar tests (32). Therefore, only 8 teachers stated to consider communicative and writing tasks to represent learners' true grammar knowledge. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Teachers' preference for traditional/alternative assessment: Frequency (N) and percentage (%)

		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Do you think that traditional grammar tests are better in expressing students' true grammar knowledge than the alternative tools?	Yes	32	80%
	No	8	20%
Do you think that communicative and writing tasks are better in expressing students' true grammar knowledge than grammar tests?	Yes	8	20%
	No	32	80%

The participants were then asked to state the reasons for opting for traditional assessment practices in the open-ended questions. The majority of teachers stated that traditional grammar tests were of better quality (10), i.e., they considered them more detailed, concrete and best for learning grammar rules. What is more, 8 teachers stated that traditional grammar tests showed learners' real language knowledge. Furthermore, somewhat smaller number of teachers saw them as more objective (5) as well as convenient (4) when considering the time spent on evaluation, grading and task diversity. Additionally, traditional grammar tasks were seen as motivating (3) since they made learners learn the rules to use grammar. On the other hand, teachers who disapproved of the tasks stressed certain disadvantages such as unreliable results (3). That is, teachers stated that traditional grammar tasks did not express learners' true knowledge but the rule knowledge only. Others pointed to a lack of summative assessment (3) which did not motivate learners (1) as well as to a lack of communication (1) and restricted efficiency among learners (1). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: EFL teachers' evaluation of traditional grammar tests: Frequency (N) and percentage (%)

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
ADVANTAGES OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR TESTS		
Quality	10	25%
Reliability of results	8	20%
Objectivity	5	12.5%
Convenience	4	10%
Motivating	3	7.5%
DISADVANTAGES OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR TESTS		

Unreliable results	3	7.5%
No summative assessment	3	7.5%
Lack communication	1	2.5%
Unmotivating	1	2.5%
Not good for everyone	1	2.5%

Furthermore, through open-ended questions, teachers elaborated their preferences regarding communicative and writing tasks. A small number of participants (6) stated alternative tasks to express learners' realistic knowledge through real-life situations and communication. Nevertheless, a teacher pointed to these tasks as, although better knowledge indicators, difficult for certain learners as well as demanding for teachers. One teacher preferred the usage of both traditional and alternative assessment practices. Nevertheless, some teachers noticed certain disadvantages. A great majority (21) stated that alternative tasks did not (effectively) test grammar. For example, teachers stated that communicative and writing tasks used only a limited number of words and structures and did not allow evaluation of great aspects of grammar. What is more, when unaware of rules, learners freely combined grammar structures and did not notice mistakes. Teachers also stated that these tasks were shorter when compared to the variety of traditional tests, as well as had an inadequate grading system that assured learner to pass the exam despite the incorrect grammar usage. Along with that, participants added that the answers/written assignments were practiced in advance which allowed learner to memorize them without knowing the rules. Also, some stated that alternative tools were better for vocabulary learning, but grammar tests for testing grammar. Additionally, some declared that both traditional and alternative practices were needed (6) in order to get an objective grade whereas others perceived them as only certain level appropriate (2). That is, teachers stated that alternative tasks had better implication among higher grades and adult learners. Lower grades, on the other hand, found grammar tests much easier. Few expressed the need for summative assessment of both traditional and alternative practices as tests were testing the basics that were amplified through communication and writing. A smaller number of teachers stated that alternative grammar assessment tasks were less objective (2), professor-demanding (1) and even unnecessary (1) as they considered learners would develop communicative aspect of language regardless of tasks due to a frequent English language exposure. The results may be found in Table 6.

Table 6: EFL teachers' evaluation of communicative and writing tasks: Frequency (F) and percentage (%)

	Frequency (number)	Percentage (%)
ADVANTAGES OF COMMUNICATIVE AND WRITING TASKS		
Realistic results	6	15%
Combination of methods	1	2.5%
DISADVANTAGES OF COMMUNICATIVE AND WRITING TASKS		
Do not (effectively) test grammar	21	52.5%
Both are needed	6	15%
Only level appropriate	2	5%
Less objective	2	5%
Demanding	1	2.5%
Unnecessary	1	2.5%

The results of the interview questions

Similar to the questionnaire participants, the interviewed EFL teachers were asked to state their opinion regarding the grammar assessment guidelines in the new Croatian English Language Curriculum. Namely, the majority of teachers (5) expressed a disagreement with the prescribed practices. Among them, only one educator (Participant 3) showed strong discontentment with the new reform regarding grammar stating "I do not like it. I do not support it; I do not like it and I am not for it." Similarly, the remaining 4 participants approved of the traditional grammar practices. According to one high school teacher (Participant 4), when grammar was assessed "students paid much more attention to opening the book…learn the rules…revise the sentences, see why. And they applied it much better in essays than today." What is more, some teachers (Participant 1, Participant 5, Participant 7) even stated that many of county's seminar participants or English professor groups disapproved of the newly imposed practices. According to certain teachers (2) (Participant 4, Participant 5), a reason for disapproving of new prescriptions was a rather lower quality as grammar was suggested to be lost and many elements missing when checked through different components. However, their elementary school colleague (Participant 5) stated the same was rather beneficial for brilliant students, but much harder for the poorer ones as in written assignments a learner "has to incorporate those grammar elements within the topic[…] and it is hard for him because he has to construct the sentence all by himself ." Finally, what some teachers (4) (Participant 4, Participant 6, Participant 7, Participant 8) noticed was a higher percentage of unmotivated, inattentive learners that no longer possessed systematic working habits that provided them with thorough and complete impression of grammar acquisition. Thus, few teachers (3) (Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 6) stated to prefer regular grammar practices, to have a rubric for grammar assessment as well as a grade component. A lack of grade component in formative

assessment of grammar resulted in unmotivated learners. According to a high school teacher (Participant 4), "when you practice grammar with them, if it is not to be graded, 90ish percent of them refuses to do it… I mean…they do it. They do it without care." Similarly, Participant 6 concluded that "the more you grade, the more encouraged they are to learn." Moreover, some teachers (2) (Participant 1, Participant 8) stated to be only partially satisfied with the imposed modifications, due to which they both referred to somewhat less thorough grammar acquisition. Participant 1, however, stated to support a great majority of the changes but to prefer a compromise between the old and new grammar assessment practices. Finally, an elementary school teacher (Participant 2) ensured not to give a premature conclusion since "we will be able to see some real results only from students who were introduced to this new evaluation system since the first grade." Though assessment techniques have been changed and grammar is suggested to be formatively assessed, this teacher (Participant 2) saw it "hard […], both for them and unfortunately, for the majority of parents involved […] to suddenly change those habits of relying only and exclusively on summative assessment."

Another question which the participants were asked focused on their preference for traditional or alternative grammar assessment practices. Three elementary school teachers (Participant 3, Participant 6, Participant 7) preferred traditional assessment practices. One teacher (Participant 6) stressed the importance of grammar practice for literacy and communication, while another one (Participant 3) referred to more challenging tasks of traditional methods that required children to know more. According to Participant 3, traditional assessment tested learners' knowledge whereas the alternative techniques allowed learners to get by. She commented that alternative grammar exams assured that "a child who even doesn't know certain things, and is intelligent enough, will manage to correctly connect the line or even circle the right answer. Even to fill in the appropriate letter, because the intelligence will compensate it. And it will be evaluated as knowledge." Similarly, Participant 7 stated that alternative grammar exams (such as circle and fill in the sentence) were somewhat easier to correct, however they failed to express learners' relative knowledge. Though the participant did not directly state to prefer traditional/alternative assessment techniques, it was possible to notice her disapproval of alternative grammar tests. Thus, it is to accentuate that both teachers (Participant 3, Participant 7) disapproved of "traditionally" shaped exams (such as fill-in the sentence, circle the correct option tasks) that have been adapted to the new curriculum. On the other hand, the majority of teachers (5) (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 8) opted for a combination of both traditional and alternative assessment practices. Some teachers (2) (Participant 4, Participant 8) stated to approve of current

assessment via interactive tasks as well as to "like children talking, communicating, presenting, cooperating, doing role-plays (Participant 4)." However, both would additionally introduce summatively assessed grammar exams for learners to approach grammar more seriously and thoroughly. What is more, an elementary school teacher (Participant 2) stressed the need for each exam to have different difficulty level tasks, including multiple-choice and sentence order, "so that students who score as sufficient or insufficient may fulfil and solve a test to show their level of knowledge." Another teacher (Participant 5) said 6th graders favored the "old" tests as perceived it easier to learn the patterns. Nonetheless, she stated that the alternative tasks were more objective, but also harder both for learners as well as teachers that were to grade, correct and objectively evaluate them. Finally, a high school teacher (Participant 1) concluded that both assessment practices were different and variety was rather good. The same teacher emphasized the need to consider class needs and weaknesses as "If there is a class where you need to work on language content, you can use classical test, hm… grade it objectively, write it under *notes* but they will get a clear feedback about their knowledge." To this, she expressed happiness toward a variety of creative tasks that may be used as those were seen as interesting and significantly more motivating for learners than the classic tasks. Finally, she suggested teaching to be "as contemporized as possible and student- acceptable but with clear goals of each activity (Participant 1)."

4.2. New techniques: Effectiveness and challenges

The results of the questionnaire

Another aim of the study was to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes toward the effectiveness of the new grammar assessment techniques. Due to the fact that the recent curricular guidelines embraced and accentuated grammar learning and assessment through communication and interaction, a major aim was to question the efficacy of implementation in the classroom. Therefore, participants were questioned about the effectiveness, duration, validity and complexity of the new grammar assessment procedures.

With a higher mean average, the new techniques appeared to be time-consuming (M=4.05, SD=1.08) and greatly demanding (M=3.42, SD=1.34). What is more, lower scale results, concerning their reliability (M=1.77, SD=.97), as well as efficacy (M=1.87, SD=.88), stated them to be unqualified to show learners' real grammar knowledge as well as rather ineffective. Average means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each statement are to be found in Table 7.

Table 7: Efficacy of the new techniques: Average means (M) and standard deviations (SD)

	M	SD
The new assessment techniques are very effective.	1.87	0.88
The new assessment techniques are time-consuming.	4.05	1.08
The new assessment practices show students' real grammar knowledge.	1.77	0.97
The new assessment practices are too demanding.	3.42	1.34

The results of the interview questions

Teacher were asked their opinions about the effectiveness of grammar evaluation through communicative and interactive tasks. The majority of participants in the interview seemed somewhat ambivalent. Namely, 4 teachers (Participant 1, Participant 3, Participant 7, Participant 8) stated that the new assessment practices were only partially evaluating grammar as it was incorporated in writing, speaking or creative tasks. According to an elementary school teacher (Participant 7), unit-based oral examinations checked only grammatical content of the unit which made the objective grading difficult. Similarly, another teacher (Participant 8) pointed to an uncomplete impression of learners' knowledge as only 2/3 were said to be possibly incorporated and evaluated through written assignments. Everything else was suggested to "acquire too many instructions, directions that would confuse the students. (Participant 8)" Furthermore, participant 3 confirmed the efficacy of the alternative methods, however still criticized them by stating "They will learn to add -s or -es to a verb in third person singular…but they won't know that it is one tense, that it is one of the tenses." Finally, a high school teacher (Participant 1) described alternative assessment as meaningful but without a possibility to exclusively assess the language content. Thus, a teacher stated "they are taught to fulfill the assignment while aware that one part of the grade is language evaluation. But it is still true that… When you don't insist on something, like before with language content, they do not take it seriously as before (Participant 1)." In contrast to the previous answers, Participant 5 stated that these types of tasks might potentially be amusing for learners, but as previously mentioned, hard for proper assessment. Nonetheless, Participant 4 stated that communicative

and interactive tasks assess learner's grammar less effectively. According to this teacher "you need to ask them much more questions to understand what you want. Then you have to, for example, ask them a question using passive form and wait for them to answer using passive. At the same time, you need to consider if they use new vocabulary, topic familiarization, and if they can argument their own opinion and attitude (Participant 4)." In addition, one elementary school teacher (Participant 2) referred to tasks as successful however stressed that the same was not to be used exclusively. A teacher (Participant 2) emphasized the fact that the current assessment provided her with almost no negative learners. Finally, the last teacher (Participant 6) referred to methods' quick results. According to her, "We now, in every unit, learn new words and some grammatical structure. And, when asking "tell me, *on upravo gleda televiziju*" I can see if he can use present continuous and the vocabulary learnt […] There's not a lot to it."

When asked if the new assessment was somewhat more demanding and time-consuming, 7 of 8 teachers agreed. Although 1 teacher (Participant 3) stated that the new assessment was not challenging, 7 teachers stated the new practices were more time-consuming, demanding or both. Among the collected answers, 1 teacher (Participant 6) referred to the new applications as more time-consuming due to a lack of clear instructions regarding the assessment of written assignments. Nevertheless, she stressed the benefits of oral examinations that may simultaneously assess learners' listening and speaking skills. However, another elementary school teacher (Participant 2) stated that the new assessment practiced were much more demanding when compared to the old ones that evaluated many components and therefore, lead to a clearer grade. Therefore, she added "if you want to grade an essay, […] you have at least four grading segments. At least. If you will follow the recommendations and grade each of the segments by points, to grade a class with 25 students would result in a week-job along with all the other chores." What is more, Participant 8 pointed to a different evaluation that does not permit scoring points as a regular grammar test. In addition, she added that teachers were required to be more creative in order to incorporate as many grammar elements as possible in written tasks. Furthermore, 2 teachers (Participant 4, Participant 7) considered paper work they were to fulfill. As noted by one of them (Participant 4), preparing rubrics for everything prompted them to think they were "once again forced to do administration work and… let's say it is somehow useless." Similarly, Participant 7 alluded to a significant amount of paper work done through formative, summative assessment as well as self-evaluation that required them to calculate it all and finally, provide a conclusion. As a headroom teacher, she concluded that "this paperwork is sometimes really the hardest part of my work". Although describing the new assessment as demanding and time-consuming, a high school teacher

(participant 1) admitted that somewhat longer application of the practices eased their application. According to her, although the same required more thinking, a quality work done once may as well be used later.

English teachers were then asked to think about the ways in which the new modifications influenced their practices. Hence, they were to state if the new curricular changes contributed to certain educational improvements or declines in any way. When calculated, the results pointed to 2 teachers (Participant 4, Participant 5) stating that curricular reform did not introduce any major changes. Though an elementary school teacher (Participant 5) assured the lack of changes only among 1st-4th graders, a high school teacher (Participant 4) confirmed there was no need for greater modifications in English as the used textbooks had already emphasized learner communication and minimum of frontal work. Unlike them, 3 elementary (participant 3, Participant 7, Participant 8) and 1 high school teacher (Participant 1) referred to the changes in grammar assessment. While Participant 7 stated to eliminate a lot of grammar, the other 2 pointed to the lack of summatively evaluated grammar tests. Since perceiving it as a "Sisyphean task" due to learners' ignorance, a teacher (Participant 1) assured educators to had "lost the element of language content evaluation." Similarly, an elementary school teacher (Participant 3) pointed to extremely easy exams that were said to barely test grammar. Another teacher (participant 2) referred to learners' self- impression of knowledge commenting that "a student does not have a right feeling of his/her knowledge which may create higher expectations and the knowledge does not follow those expectations." The previously may well explain the need for an objective grading system that was implemented by another teacher (Participant 6 explaining "How much you know, that much you get. In black and white." Furthermore, 2 teachers (Participant 1, Participant 7) took into consideration the fact that there had been a greater focus placed on communication skills. According to Participant 7, the same increased the number of oral examinations. Although not diminishing the importance of message transmission as well as reading and listening comprehension, second teacher (Participant 1) alluded to the need for accuracy too. As for her, a certain deterioration was visible. In continuation, 2 teachers (Participant 4, Participant 7) commented on reading and listening evaluation. Though one teacher expressed a disagreement with those being separate grading elements (Participant 4), Participant 7 pointed to a higher inclusion of both skills. Namely, what used to be checked once or twice per year has now been evaluated three or four times. As for more, Participant 4 stated teachers' autonomy regarding topic choices to be the only improvement. Lastly, an elementary school teacher (Participant 2) stated that a greater attention

was placed on "individual student assessment", individual difficulties as well as student motivation.

4.3. Teachers' classroom practices: Grammar assessment

4.3.1. EFL teachers' current assessment practices

The results of the questionnaire

The third research question focused on EFL teachers' current assessment practices. Therefore, the final set of questions was intended to examine the diversity of techniques and tools teachers use to assess learners' grammar knowledge, as well as the reasons for their employment.

In order to enumerate the techniques used for learners' grammar evaluation, EFL teachers were asked to choose among the listed options in the multiple-choice question, as well as state any of additional tools that they use. The questionnaire listed grammar tests, dictation, essay/compositions, communicative tasks and translation as potential assessment tools. Additionally, participants were to justify their choices. According to the data obtained, the most frequent method of grammar assessment included essay/compositions as stated by 37 English teachers. The second most frequently used evaluation tool were communicative tasks that were used by 80% of participants. Nevertheless, grammar tests scored high as more than half of the sample stated to use grammar tests for examination of learners' grammar skills. Somewhat smaller number of participants stated to use translation exercises (7) and dictation (6) whereas only 1 teacher additionally referred to shorter written assignments (sentence, paragraph and dialogue writing) as well as oral expositions. The results can be found in Table 8.

Table 8: EFL teachers' assessment tools: Frequency (F) and percentage (%)

	Frequency (number)	Percentage (%)
Essay/ compositions	37	92.5%
Communicative tasks	32	80%
Grammar tests	21	52.5%
Translation	7	17.5%
Dictation	6	15%
Shorter written assignments	1	2.5%
Oral exposition	1	2.5%

When justifying their choices, several teachers seemed to agree that techniques they used were rather effective. Namely, 18 teachers considered their current techniques (grammar tests, essays, communicative tasks) to be objective, practical and with better results, too. But, most importantly, reliable. In other words, they stated that selected assessment tools were realistically showing learners' grammar knowledge. The following explanation for the usage of certain techniques was certainly curricular reform. Many teachers (14) stated curricular restrictions and modifications to be the reason for assessing grammar through essays and communicative tasks. Answers that were not as popular as previous were assessment type (formative/summative) and availability. A few teachers chose the assessment tools depending on the assessment type (grammar tests for formative and essays and communicative tasks for summative assessment) whereas only one teacher stated to use all available practices. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Reasons for assessment practice selection: Frequency (F) and percentage (%)

	Frequency (number)	Percentage (%)
Effectiveness/reliability	18	45%
Curricular reform	14	35%
Assessment type	4	10%
Availability	1	2.5%

The results of the interview

For a more thorough analysis of the obtained data, this section incorporated interview questions 2 and 3 since both referred to English teachers' current grammar assessment practices.

When asked about their current assessment practices considering the reform modifications, 6 teachers stated to evaluate learners' English language knowledge through writing skills. Therefore, learners were reported to receive assignments in forms of a modeled writing such as an informal letter, email, article, composition and essay. The tasks incorporated different topics (Participant 8) as well as assured learners to use appropriate tenses (Participant 4). According to Participant 5, imprecise instructions such as "a student can independently write a text about familiar topic using […] simple linguistic structures" assured professors with somewhat greater freedom. However, an elementary school teacher (Participant 2) pointed to essay/ composition writing as the most sensible part that was to evaluate grammar, alluding to the omnipresence of grammar and grammar knowledge that eventually becomes evident. Additionally, 5 teachers (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 6, Participant 7) reported using grammar-based (comprehension) tests. According to Participant 7, the tasks

within short grammar checks "are not as broad as before […] those are circle ABC and those. But there, just to have some work continuity." Similarly, Participant 3 referred to already prepared tests that incorporated tasks such as circle, letter completion, picture/word recognition and matching, however, she stated them to be "below every level." The majority of these tests was used for formative assessment only. Therefore, they were not graded but used for revision purposes (Participant 6) or assessed through percentages and notes (Participant 1, Participant 7), i.e., a "short note regarding the aspects they need to work on, aspects they learnt or didn't. (participant 1)" Furthermore, 2 participants affirmed to evaluate learners' oral expositions. A high school teacher (Participant 1) referred to several interrogation components, explaining "I am to evaluate the task fulfillment, if you answered to what you had to answer. Then I, let's say make a component for pronunciation and language component. Then I follow. Language of course, incorporates the usage of a great variety… to be as diverse as possible, but includes accuracy as well. The same refers to the grammatical and lexical content of what we learnt." On the other hand, an elementary school teacher (Participant 6) stated to evaluate oral examination with 3rd graders via visual materials. Hence, young learners were to answer teacher's questions referring to a given picture. Furthermore, a teacher (Participant 6) referred to reading and listening comprehension tests. Regarding listening checks, participant stated them to be rather simple and easier for younger learners than 4th graders who were to deal with affirmative/negative/interrogative forms of tenses. Finally, an elementary school teacher (Participant 5) pointed to possible dictation checks that were not accompanied by a grade due to which learners were to disregard them.

Additionally, teachers were asked to state the reasons for using current assessment tools. Namely, all 8 teachers agreed for a reason to be the reform. Among them, 2 teachers (Participant 3, Participant 4) assured to respect counselor's recommendations whereas the other one (Participant 8) considered module instructions. What is more, 2 elementary school teachers (Participant 2, Participant 7) stressed curricular suggestions they tried to follow while 3 teachers (Participant 1, Participant 5, Participant 6) pointed to a need for adapting to the new prescriptions that prescribed grammar to be evaluated through notes. According to a high school teacher (Participant 1), knowing that the reform has been legally accepted, it was their obligation to follow the prescriptions and respect the curriculum. Therefore, a teacher who assigned already prepared tests (Participant 3) stated to follow the recommendations and assess through tools that were prescribed on a country level and provided an equal grading system. In continuation, 3 teachers (Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4) accentuated possible counselor's control visits that would make them justify their decisions as well as annul the grade

if not given accordingly. Another factor that possibly conditioned teachers' current assessment may be mutual consultation during county meetings and seminars (Participant 1, Participant 7). Namely, some teachers reported to "consult each other quite frequently (Participant 7)", check "what do they assign, how do they assign (Participant 6)" as well as to be assured most of their colleagues were applying the same practices (Participant 1). Moreover, 2 highs school teachers (Participant 1, Participant 4) considered the acceptability criterium. Hence, one teacher stated her practices to be acceptable and legally permitted (Participant 1) whereas the other one assured "there is no other way (Participant 4)." What is more, Participant 1 referred to the practicality and objectivity of her current written practices confirming that "the grade is objective and you have still, through the writing exercise, evaluated the language content."

4.3.2. Teachers' self-assessment

Finally, teachers were to self-reflect on their own assessment practices. Thus, they were requested to evaluate the effectiveness of their own techniques as well as to state if they would prefer changing and replacing them. Furthermore, they were to elaborate their choices by offering reasons for possible substitutes in their assessment program.

The results showed that 8 schoolteachers (20%) estimated that their techniques were *very good* whereas *good* was the evaluation made by twice as many teachers (40%). A significant number of participants stated their assessment practices to be *acceptable* and only 2 (5%) as rather *poor*. Interestingly, not a single schoolteacher referred to her assessment implications as *very poor*. Detailed results are to be found in Table 10.

Table 10: EFL teachers' self-assessment: Frequency (F) and percentages (%)

		Frequency (number)	Percentage (%)
How effective do you think your assessment methods are?	Very good	8	20%
	Good	16	40%
	Acceptable	14	35%
	Poor	2	5%
	Very poor	0	0%

In addition, teachers were asked to state if they would prefer changing their current assessment tools and practices. The calculated results indicated that 22 schoolteachers (55%) positively answered to the question and thus, expressed a desire for change in the field of ongoing grammar assessment. The remaining 45% showed no aspirations for additional

assessment replacements. Furthermore, educators that provided an affirmative answer were requested to justify their choices. The calculations showed that the majority of teachers criticized the lack of quality (8) as well as insufficiency of their current assessment practices. What is more, current applications were said to provide worse and untruthful results. On top of that, some educators portrayed them as incomprehensive and suitable only for some learners. After questioning the quality of the ongoing practices, teachers emphasized the need for summative assessment of grammar (7), preferably through grammar tests. The previously stated allows to conclude that formative assessment of grammar tests was a stimulator that made teachers question their current assessment practices. In addition, some teachers (4) stated that current techniques were unmotivating for learners. Though some participants acknowledged learners being generally unmotivated, others believed it was due to the tests being formatively, rather than summatively assessed. Lastly, teachers considered time-management and complexity aspects (3). According to them, the ongoing practices took more time, especially due to unmotivated learners. What is more, teachers said that grammar teaching was harder, learners were coping more difficult and the same was rather demanding for teachers. Complete results may be found in Table 11.

Table 11: Reasons for assessment practice changes: Frequency (F) and percentages (%)

	Frequency (number)	Percentage (%)
Lack of quality	8	20%
Want old assessment practices	7	17.5%
Unmotivated students	4	10%
Demanding	3	7.5%

4.3.3. Final comments of the interview participants

To conclude the interview, teachers were asked to reflect on English language teaching and grammar assessment in Croatian contemporary EFL classrooms. Along with 1 teacher (Participant 8) who stated to prefer traditional grammar assessment, other 3 (Participant 1, Participant 4, Participant 7) stressed the negative influence of present techniques on the acquisition of language content. Hence, a high school teacher (Participant 4) pointed to learners' lower grammar results, comparing them to those resulted from traditional techniques of writing, copying and revisions. Her elementary school colleague (Participant 7) referred to a poorer quantity of a learned content assuring that learners were to finish the 8th grade without mastering

the basis of language. Finally, a high school teacher (Participant 1) referred to a negative influence of formative grammar assessment on the language usage. Both elementary (Participant 6, Participant 7) and high school teachers (Participant 1, Participant 4) noted learners' negligence of formatively assessed grammar since learners were said to be "too relaxed" about it which contributed "towards marginalization and poorer learning of language content (Participant 1)." Therefore, an elementary school teacher (Participant 6) stated to prefer to maintain grammar check. Her 2 colleagues (Participant 1, Participant 7) agreed on grammar being graded by maintain "language rules" (Participant 1) as the assessment component. Though Participant 7 pointed to 7th and 8th graders as completely unmotivated, Participant 6 agreed with a lack of motivation however assured learners to be motivated by the grade only. As for her, "For students, knowledge is never motivation, but grade exclusively. Which is sad, but it is like that." Similarly, Participant 4 concluded that not even an invention of grammar-based activities containing sticky notes, grouping, collecting as well as movement games would provide her learners with better results. What is more, 2 teachers (Participant 4, Participant 7) commented on an exaggerated game-based language learning. While an elementary school teacher (Participant 7) stated that contemporary education was reduced to a kindergarten level, a high school teacher (Participant 4) pointed to a frequent usage of games that occasionally confused learners. Nonetheless, some teachers still referred to certain benefits of the new practices. Namely, an elementary school teacher (Participant 8) referred to a diversity of evaluated written assignments as well as pointed to a communication-based practices that prompted "more students to communicate, to use the spoken language in everyday situations." Her colleague (Participant 5) said teachers were given greater freedom regarding topic selection and grammar teaching. What is more, 3 teachers (Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 7) took into consideration the advantages of digital technology and classroom equipment. While a high school teacher (Participant 4) emphasized well-equipped classrooms, an elementary school teacher (Participant 7) colleague stated to use technology in forms of an Iweb and publisher that provided a digital content so to "try to visualize it to them and… uhm… familiarize them with the language as much as possible and better." In addition, participant 3 added the usage of digital tools for restoring the old helpful practices. Finally, while an elementary school teacher (Participant 2) assured an adequate evaluation of the new techniques only when the youngest generation finished their education, 4 teachers accentuated the need for assessment that would combine traditional and alternative practices rather than just substitute the old ones. Though a high school teacher (Participant 1) supported communicative approach stressing "that it is important to accentuate the more natural way of language acquisition that is

not based on rigorous search for language mistakes and insistence on complete accuracy", elementary school teacher (Participant 3) added that "it is not really good that everything from before has almost been removed. […] There should be a balance."

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate Croatian EFL teachers' attitudes regarding curricular changes in English grammar assessment, the efficacy of the imposed guidelines, as well as EFL teachers' current assessment practices. Therefore, a questionnaire was administered to analyze elementary and high school EFL teachers' attitudes, and several teachers participated in semi-structured interviews.

The first research aim investigated EFL teachers' attitudes toward the new curricular modifications, as well as their preferences regarding traditional/alternative assessment methods. Thus, it was noted that a great majority of teachers disapproved of the new practices regarding both English teaching and assessment. According to the teachers that were interviewed, it was due to a lower quality of knowledge as well as formative grammar assessment that removed rubric and grade component and accordingly, demotivated learners. As teachers were generally displeased with the changes, it was rather expected that a higher number of them would agree on grammar being evaluated through grammar tests/standardized exams. Surprisingly, many still believed that assessment elements may incorporate communicative tasks and interactive performances. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers still pointed to traditional grammar tests as more truthful knowledge indicators due to their higher quality, reliable results as well as convenient and stimulating nature. However, some still considered them to be less truthful, unmotivating (due to formative assessment) as well as insufficiently communicative. Teachers who were interviewed expressed somewhat greater need for a combination of traditional and alternative assessment practices than questionnaire participants. As noted, teachers approved of learners speaking and communicating but would still prefer to have summatively graded grammar test for learners' more thorough approach to grammar. The same results were noted in Muñoz Restrepo's et al. (2003) study of Colombian teachers who reported that grading "keeps students motivated and encourages them to speak in class" (p. 68). What is more, Croatian teachers suggested incorporation of multiple-choice questions as well as different difficulty level tasks so that each learner could present his/her level of knowledge. Considering their convenience and somewhat simpler structure, it was rather expected that certain elementary school learners favorized the "old" tests. Similarly, Nozadze's (2013) study pointed to learners considering clause combining and gap-filling tasks to be easy. Samperio Sánchez's (2017) study, concluded that activities concentrating on traditional skills were learners' favourite. On the other hand, high school learners were said to benefit more form a greater variety of creative tasks that were referred to as greatly motivating and amusing.

The second research question in this study examined the effectiveness of the newly imposed grammar assessment practices. The results obtained showed that a high number of teachers believed the new assessment practices were time-consuming, demanding and what is more, did not reflect learners' real knowledge. In addition, teachers noted that the new assessment guidelines were rather ineffective. On the other hand, teachers who were interviewed did not completely agree. Namely, some stated that grammar was only partially assessed through alternative assessment practices. What is more, they contributed it to somewhat restricted unit-based oral exams as well as to written assignments that did not offer a precise insight into learners' knowledge. Although some teachers stated that the new practices were amusing for learners as well as provided quick results, others referred to somewhat harder proper assessment and advised to avoid an exclusive usage of the same ones. Similar to the questionnaire participants, as well as Vietnamese teachers who reported a lack of time for evaluation of learners' oral production (Duyen Pham, 2021), teachers who were interviewed stated that the new assessment was more demanding and time-consuming. According to them, the reasons were a lack of clear instructions for written tasks and somewhat complex grading system that requested creative teachers and more administration work. Expectedly, as reported, the new practices contributed to certain educational improvements and declines. While some EFL teachers in this study referred to a lack of grammar and accuracy, others pointed to a lack of summatively assessed grammar exams. Nonetheless, certain improvements were noted. As stated, the new assessment placed focus on communicative skills which increased the number of oral exams, as well as allowed higher inclusion of reading and listening skills. Among the rest of the advantages, participants stressed greater teacher autonomy and the stress on both individual differences and individual difficulties. Though both teacher groups disapproved of the imposed modifications, describing them as time-consuming and possibly demanding, teachers who were interviewed seemed to still notice certain improvements gained from the ongoing practices.

Finally, the third research aim investigated EFL teachers' current assessment practices, as well as their effectiveness. The majority of teachers stated that they assessed their learners' grammar knowledge via written assignments. While the quantitative data restricted answers to broad categories such as essay/compositions, paragraph and dialogue writing, the obtained qualitative data broadened the results and showed other forms of written assignments that teachers stated they used, including informal letters, emails, article writing. On the other hand, communicative tasks as well as oral expositions appeared to be frequently used among the questionnaire sample, whereas their usage among the teachers who were interviewed was rather

uncommon. The assessment of high school learners' oral performance included task fulfillment, pronunciation, variety of language, as well as accuracy, whereas the younger ones were assessed via visual materials. Similarly, Muñoz Restrepo's et al. (2003) study stressed Colombian teachers' assessment of oral expositions via presentations, picture descriptions as well as role-plays with younger learners knowing they were likely to take risks. As stated, their assessment considered grammar, pronunciation, meaning, fluency, etc. What is more, Cheng and Milnes's (2008) study of Canadian English learners referred to some teachers as "supplementing ESL students' written work with conversations aimed at ascertaining whether students had indeed grasped key curriculum concepts, but were struggling to express their understanding in written form" (p. 60). The usage of similar assessment tools was noted among Swedish English teachers who reported using "oral-and writing productions as a grammatical assessment method" and therefore, "appear to adapt alternative assessment" (Lomgren, 2022, p.10).

Surprisingly, both quantitative and qualitative data pointed to a greater implementation of grammar tests. Along with questionnaire participants who reported a greater usage of grammar tests, their colleagues who were interviewed also carried out grammar comprehension checks, as well as prepared tests designed according to a "circle" and/or "complete the right answer" pattern. Though Pham's (2021) study also pointed out that Vietnamese English teachers used multiple-choice format for grammar assessment, Croatian EFL teachers mostly used grammar exams for formative assessment through percentages or observation note. Similarly, Lomgren's (2022) study revealed teachers' usage of formative grammar assessment that allowed learners a continual knowledge feedback. Nonetheless, questionnaire and interview results pointed to certain differences. Though a smaller part of the questionnaire sample reported that they incorporated translation exercises and dictation, only one instance of the use of dictation was noted among the teachers who were interviewed. Finally, a surprisingly low percentage of interview participants reported using reading and listening comprehension checks, whereas the same were completely omitted by the questionnaire teachers. Curiously, research indicated that Mexican learners greatly favored listening and reading exercises in which they were to behave as information receivers and follow teacher's instructions, listen to a recording and proceed with exercises or even repeat afterwards (Samperio Sánchez, 2017). However, when asked to justify their assessment choices, many Croatian EFL teachers seemed to agree for a reason to be the curricular reform. While questionnaire participants placed it immediately after the efficacy and reliability criteria, teachers who were interviewed primarily referred to it alluding to methods' legal approvement and counselor's recommendations.

Similarly, although considering learners' needs, previous experiences as well as time constraints, Swedish teachers also referred to imposed guidelines and educational policy (Lomgren, 2022). According to Croatian EFL teachers, curricular guidelines were not the only justification for the applied practices. Namely, some teachers still considered assessment type, availability and acceptability criteria, their colleagues' practices, as well as practicality of the methods and objectivity of the results. All in all, the analysis pointed to a discrepancy between English teachers' attitudes and applied practices. Although they disapproved of the new grammar assessment guidelines, teachers still followed the recommendations and evaluated grammar through written assignments and communicative tasks. As a result, when self-evaluating their own assessment practices, somewhat greater number of teachers rated their implications as *acceptable* or *good*. Hence, many teachers preferred a change of their current practices due to their poorer quality, formative assessment that resulted in unmotivated learners, as well as their demanding nature. Finally, when giving their complete impression of English teaching and grammar assessment in light of the new curriculum reform, teachers stressed the negative influence of the current practices on grammar acquisition among learners. As stated, one of the reasons suggested by teachers might be somewhat poorer quality of the learnt content. Furthermore, they added that learners' ignorance of grammar may be due to a lack of formative assessment, as well as overemphasized usage of games that, apparently, greatly reduced the level of grammar. Similarly, Nozadze's (2013) study reported teachers finding grammatical games motivating, but not necessarily focusing learners' attention to grammar. Nevertheless, another research suggested Mexican learners enjoying grammar-based games (Samperio Sánchez, 2017). However, EFL teachers in this study also noted certain advantages of the alternative assessment. They stressed greater variety of written and communicative assignments, teacher autonomy and finally, the use of digital technology which was to refresh traditional practices. Though some teachers suggested that more time was needed for proper evaluation of the current grammar practices, many teachers agreed that both traditional and alternative practices should be used for English grammar assessment. Lomgren's (2022) study also showed similar results in Swedish classrooms.

6. Conclusion

The contemporary approach of Communicative language teaching (CLT) in EFL learning assured the implementation of all four language skills, along with vocabulary and grammar mastery, in educational systems. The new approach resulted in somewhat implicit grammar teaching that focused on learners' individual needs and differences. Consequently, changes were noted in Croatian EFL classrooms where traditional grammar assessment was replaced with somewhat alternative evaluation practices as a result of the new curriculum reforms. Thus, the guidelines prescribed traditional grammar tests to be only formatively assessed whereas communicative and written assignments were intended for summative evaluation.

The present study attempted to examine Croatian EFL teachers' attitudes toward grammar teaching and grammar assessment. The first aim of the conducted research was to analyze English teachers' attitudes concerning the new curriculum guidelines for grammar teaching. As reported, a significant number of English teachers were dissatisfied with the imposed curricular practices sighting poorer learner knowledge, as well as unmotivated learners since formative grammar evaluation removed a grade component. Therefore, many teachers confirmed the quality and reliability of traditional assessment practices. However, they also suggested the benefits of combining both assessment types.

The second goal of the study was to question the effectiveness of the new grammar assessment practices. The results showed that a considerable number of teachers felt that the new practices were time-consuming, unreliable, demanding and finally, not completely efficient. Though certain disadvantages regarding poorer grammar implementation and evaluation were noted, improvements concerning greater inclusion of listening, reading and speaking skill, as well as an emphasis of individual differences were noted.

The third aim of this study was to examine EFL teachers' current grammar assessment practices, and the reasons for their employment. The study found that the majority of teachers checked their learners' grammar knowledge via written assignments, communicative tasks, as well as formatively assessed grammar tests with a rather less frequent usage of listening and reading comprehensions. Moreover, teachers seemed to agree that the curricular reform was the reason many were using the mentioned practices. However, some still considered the quality of the implied practices. Rating their practices as *acceptable* and *good*, many teachers suggested that they wanted to change their current grammar evaluation practices. The reasons for their dissatisfaction were the poor quality, demanding nature and lack of stimulation of the current

formative assessment practices. Finally, except the noted overused gamification, teachers recognized the benefits of the new alternative assessment stating the greater variety of written and communicative tasks, as well as advantages of digital technology that could be used to combine the traditional and alternative grammar assessment.

      To conclude, certain research limitations of the study should be noted. Namely, the study took into consideration an uneven and rather smaller number of English elementary and high school teachers. Additionally, the questionnaire considered broad categories and therefore allowed only a few additional comments or clarifications. Moreover, it is to consider a rather smaller number of teachers for the interviews. A larger sample of teachers would offer a better insight in their attitudes. Nevertheless, the present study has offered an insight into EFL teachers' attitudes toward grammar assessment practices in light of the new curriculum reforms, and has shown certain advantages and disadvantages of the new assessment guidelines. Further research on the topic is needed to provide a broader view and possibly lead to policy changes.

7. Bibliography

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent form for interview participation

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH ENTITLED
GRAMMAR ASSESSMENT IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Research title: Grammar Assessment in EFL Classrooms

Mentor: Anna Martinović, PhD, Associate professor

Researcher: Dora Lovrić

By signing this paper, I give my written consent that:

a) I am willing to participate in the previously mentioned research and I have previously been introduced with the research aims.

b) I am aware that participation in this interview is completely voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time.

c) I am aware that participation in this interview is completely anonymous.

d) I was informed that the data gathered from the interview is to be audio recorded and later, transcribed.

e) I understand that the data obtained from the interview is to be used for the research purposes only and is to be safely and properly stored.

Signature: **Signature**:

(Participant)   (Researcher)

Date:

Appendix B: Questionnaire sheet

Questionnaire

*This questionnaire is a part of a study for a graduate thesis entitled "**Grammar Assessment in EFL Classrooms**" that aims to investigate grammar testing practices in EFL classrooms. What is more, the research investigates teachers' personal attitudes towards the changes concerning grammar assessment that have been introduced by the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum. The questionnaire is completely anonymous and voluntary. Your answers are to be used for research purposes only, so we kindly ask you to answer as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. By completing the questionnaire, you are giving your consent to use and analyze your answers for the study. It should not take more than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time to complete it.*

Personal information:

1. Gender:
   a. Female
   b. Male

2. Age:
   a. 20-29
   b. 30-39
   c. 40-49
   d. 50 and more

3. Years of teaching/working experience:
   a. 0-5
   b. 6-10
   c. 11-19
   d. 20 and more

4. Type of school you are currently working at:
   a. Elementary school
   b. High school

5. Which grades do you teach?

   _____

Questionnaire about the methods, tools and personal attitudes regarding the grammar assessment techniques in EFL classrooms:

The following statements will question your current grammar testing practices as well as your personal attitudes towards the changes introduced by the newly modified Croatian English Language Curriculum. Read carefully the following statements, and on a scale 1-5 offer your personal evaluation using the following:

1- *Strongly disagree*
2- *Disagree*
3- *Neutral/ uncertain*
4- *Agree*
5- *Strongly agree*

1.	I like the new changes introduced by the new curriculum reform regarding grammar teaching.	**1 2 3 4 5**
2.	I like the new changes introduced by the new curriculum reform regarding grammar assessment practices.	**1 2 3 4 5**
3.	Grammar should be assessed through grammar tests/ standardized exams.	**1 2 3 4 5**
4.	Grammar should be assessed through multiple-choice format.	**1 2 3 4 5**
5.	Grammar should be assessed through interactive performances.	**1 2 3 4 5**
6.	Grammar should be assessed through communicative tasks.	**1 2 3 4 5**
7.	The new assessment techniques are very effective.	**1 2 3 4 5**
8.	The new assessment techniques are time-consuming.	**1 2 3 4 5**
9.	The new assessment practices show students' real grammar knowledge.	**1 2 3 4 5**
10.	The new assessment practices are too demanding.	**1 2 3 4 5**

Please answer the following questions.

1. I use _____ to test my students' L2 grammar (multiple answers possible).
   a. Grammar tests
   b. Dictation
   c. Essay/ compositions

d. Communicative tasks

e. Translation

f. Other _____

2. Why do you use precisely those methods?

_____

3. How effective do you think your assessment methods are?

a. Very good

b. Good

c. Acceptable

d. Poor

e. Very poor

4. Would you like to change your current grammar assessment practices?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, why? _____

5. Do you think that traditional grammar tests are better in expressing students' true grammar knowledge than the alternative tools?

a. Yes

b. No

Why? _____

6. Do you think that communicative and writing tasks are better in expressing students' true grammar knowledge than grammar tests?

a. Yes

b. No

Why? _____

Thank you once again for taking the time to complete the questionnaire!

Appendix C: Interview questions

Interview questions:

*This interview forms an important part of my graduate thesis entitled: "**Grammar Assessment in EFL Classrooms**." It aims to investigate the current assessment practices used by teachers to test students' L2 grammar knowledge, as well as teachers' attitudes regarding the modifications that have recently been introduced by the Croatian English Language Curriculum. In order to analyze the data obtained, the interviews will be audio-recorded and the data prescribed accordingly. The participation in the mentioned research is completely voluntary and anonymous. By answering the questions, you give your permission to collect and analyze the data obtained during the interview.*

Background information:

Would you please introduce yourself as an English teacher?

1. Age
2. Teaching/ working experience
3. Classes of teaching

Interview questions:

1. How do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English Language Curriculum?
2. Tell me how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines.
3. You have told me you use_____. Would you be able to tell me if you have any particular reason to use them?
4. How have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices?
5. How effective do you think it is to assess grammar through communicative and interactive tasks?
6. Would you say the new assessment techniques are more time-consuming and demanding than traditional ones?
7. Do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques (e.g. fill-in-the gap, multiple choice, dictations, sentence transformations, matching, correct the mistakes, etc.) to the current practices? Why?
8. Do you have any other comments to add regarding grammar teaching and testing in the ESL classroom today?

Appendix D: Interview transcriptions

PARTICIPANT 1
I: Now, we can start. Firstly, if you could please introduce yourself as an English teacher? Just your age, teaching or your working experience and the classes you teach.
P1: Good. So… I am an English and Latin professor. I am 42 years old. I have been working since 2004. From 2004 till 2014 I taught at Klasična and Jezična Gimnazija in Sinj, Franciscan, both English and Latin and since 2015, I have been teaching English in Hotelijersko-turistička i ugostiteljska Škola in Zadar. Currently, I teach all classes from 1ˢᵗ to 4ᵗʰ and three professions and those are hotelijersko-turistički tehničar, turističko-hotelijerski komercijalist, and one class of kuhari). We use different coursebooks. So, for hoteliers, technicians and commercialists we use Školska Knjiga. The coursebook is **English for the Tourism and Catering Industry 1** and **2**. The first and second year we have Oxford's coursebook named **Insight Intermediate.** For the cooks we have a very, very old Školska knjiga coursebook titled **You're Welcome 1**. But it is really a 70s's coursebook so I use it minimally, though it was suggested so I have to. But I always have to find some extra materials. So, it's a sort of a challenge.
I: Great, thank you. The first question is how do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?
P1: The instructions regarding language grammar are clear. As we have adopted communicative language teaching approach, grammar, i.e. language content in sense of grammar and vocabulary has been left aside in sense that we cannot use summative assessment as before, but we assess the content through different skills. I have to admit that I support the majority of innovations that have been adopted along the reform **Škola za život.** However, regarding grammar, I would be much happier if there had been a compromise between the old and the new assessment practices.
I: Yes!
P1: Therefore, I am not completely satisfied, I have to say.
I: Thank you.
P1: And, and, and… As I communicate with my colleagues and attend county teachers' councils and seminars, many colleagues share the opinion.
I: And how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines? Do you stick to the them or…?
P1: Well… I stick to them because the reform **Škola za život** has formally passed through Croatian Parliament and has all the right documentation. Therefore, it is our obligation. So, we teachers are not to choose whether to apply it or not, but it is something we are to respect. So… As I said, I assess the language content, regarding the communicative approach, through student's speaking skill. So, when a student is assessed while speaking, one part of the grade covers the assessment of the language content. More specifically, for oral exposition, you make a rubric and, in that rubric, I mark that I will… while student is being interrogated… So, along with… along with…let's say… so, I make components for interrogation. So, I say… I am to evaluate the task fulfillment, if you answered to what you had to answer. Then I, let's say make a component for pronunciation and language component. Then I follow. Language of course, incorporates the usage of a great variety … to be as diverse as possible, but includes accuracy as well. The same refers to the grammatical and lexical content of what we learnt. That is just one example related to the speaking skill. Regarding the writing skill, it is also clever to check… because you also create an assessment rubric, so, for example, if we are writing… I don't know… from an informal letter to an essay… one component… one of the assessment components according to the assessment rubric may even be grammar, i.e. language content. Again, here, I also accentuate and subdivide the rubric, so they know in advance what to focus on. So, I accentuate the evaluation of language content in some way. So… If we have for

example, a component for writing and task fulfilment… I don't know… grammar, vocabulary, then they know they are to consider the accuracy and variety of use in the *grammar* and *vocabulary* part. Later, you somehow transform it into points and the grade is objective and you have still, through the writing exercise, evaluated the language content.

I: And regarding, for example, traditional tasks such as circle, correct the mistake, sentence transformation? Do you even use them anymore?

P1: Well… Now, I have to say that I haven't given up on those. I still have some grammar… pure grammar tests. For example, if we covered in the first unit, in the first grade, in the first unit we covered present simple and present continuous, we revised it and discussed vocabulary in the unit, they have… previously arranged… I grade it, we write a test that incorporates those "old", how should I say… those "old" tasks. But then, I do not write it, do not assess it summatively, but register it formatively under *notes*. That is, I write a short note regarding the aspects they need to work on, aspects they learnt or didn't. And, furthermore, I evaluate those through percentages. So, I correct them as we have always been doing with grammar and language tests, but, as I said, I do not assess summatively, with a grade in bars but formatively with a note in register.

I: Good. The next question you have already partially answered. Is there any particular reason why you are using the methods you use? Both, regarding writing, classical grammar tests…

P1: I am sorry, I haven't understood the question. If I have…

I: …**any specific reason for using the methods you use?**

P1: Well… the reason is… I have to say that the reason is realistic because… hm…Since the country has prescribed that the grammatical content is not to be assessed summatively as we had done it before, then you have to adapt somehow. You still have to evaluate it for your student somehow. So, through our county councils' meetings… somehow…through attending all those education programs, I came to a conclusion that most of my colleagues do it like that, as well as that it is an acceptable assessment technique. That is, that those are all acceptable methods and in accordance with the legal suggestions, I could say the law, that has been prescribed. Therefore, if someone wants to follow the suggestions, that's it. You have to check the language content somehow. You have to offer some feedback to the learner about what he/she has learnt or not. But yes… By doing so, I do not think I violate any regulation. And the next year, since I have made a progress in my occupation, I am a mentor, I expect to see my advisor and hopefully, through our conversation, she is to confirm the validity of my methods.

I: Yes. And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices? Did you add something, or lose something?

P1: Well… I have definitely lost... I still have grammar tests that require a lot of effort for constructing and correcting them. Of course, I no longer have the possibility to write the summative grade directly in the bars which sometimes seems like Sisyphean task as I do my job, write it under the *notes* that are clear and visible to both student and parent, but everything that's not in the bars is disregarded. And it is not only them. I am familiar with many cases where student's language content is very poor and has been formatively graded in *notes* section as that, and for example, those grades that are summatively in the bars resulted in some high percentage… you… though we have a right, when it comes to giving a final grade… and the rulebook says that the final grade does not have to be given according to the arithmetic mean. However, as soon as the arithmetic mean goes in favor of student, no matter what we have written in the formative assessment, in notes… how should I say… is considered to be less important. I know my colleagues had cases where supervision ruled in student's favor. So, we have definitely lost the element of language content evaluation. It has really been placed aside and, as I've said, I am not happy. I am still acceptably doing my job, I formatively give a grade

in *notes*, but they do not consider it important. So… In this case, I can see a certain deterioration in that sense. That is… I agree that it is important to transmit the message, and it is definitely more important that they are able to understand the message during listening, reading. However, I think that in language teaching, accuracy should be emphasized as well, accuracy regarding language constructions, and everything else. Because of that, I feel that I have lost much more than gained something new.

I: And how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through communicative and interactive tasks?

P1: Hm… How effective? Well, I cannot say it is not. I can't say that it hasn't got its purpose, but definitely, if my grammar assessment is, I make a column, let's say we have some creative task like… I give them for example…I don't know… some sort of summary or poster to make), I make… there has to be some evaluation rubric so that it could be graded as objectively as possible. If I put into that rubric that my assessment components are task completion… I don't know… layout, and I put *use of language*, that is grammar and vocabulary, then of course if I have four elements, grammar and vocabulary would make 50% of the grade. So, I cannot say that I can assess exclusively the language content. Through that grade. So… Grammar is always assessed partially through some… or creative work, speaking, writing. However, what is actually good… how should I say this… is that they are taught to fulfill the assignment while aware that one part of the grade is language evaluation. But it is still true that… When you don't insist on something, like before with language content, they do not take it seriously as before.

I: And, would you say the new assessment techniques are somewhat more demanding and time-consuming than traditional ones?

P1: Definitely.

I: Yes.

P1: Definitely because... Although, we have been applying them for… I don't know how many years, so… it is much easier to keep up with them. But whenever you have some creative task, in order for a grade to be as objective as possible, you have to think about how to create assessment rubrics, what is the most important aim of the activity, and how should I form the components of the rubric. Therefore, it requires much more thinking, but… when you did some quality work this year, you can, thankfully, use it the next year as well.

I: Yes, yes.

P1: But it is much… much more demanding. It is not like grading some… I don't know… grammatical content before so you have a, b, c and it is easy. So, yes… It is definitely more demanding.

I: Personally, do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques like fill-in-the gap, multiple choice, sentence transformations to the current practices? And why?

P1: Well… Actually, I love them both. I mean… Both of them are different and as anywhere else, variety is good here as well. So, as I have said, I assess the language content using the classical way, though I mark it as a note. Everything has its purpose. It depends on what you need in each grade and what are the things you need to work on. If there is a class where you need to work on language content, you can use classical test, hm… grade it objectively, write it under *notes* but they will get a clear feedback about their knowledge. However, these creative tasks… they really make me happy as there are so many possibilities, they find them very interesting and… hm… motivate them to participate much more than the classical ones. And that is what we need to consider as we are here for them. So, teaching should be as contemporized as possible and student- acceptable but with clear goals of each activity.

I: And to finish, do you have any other comments to add regarding grammar teaching and testing in the ESL classroom today?

P1: Well… where English is a second language? We mostly have English as first foreign language. Is that it?

I: First, second foreign language. In general, as it is not our mother tongue. Teaching…

P1: Aha, I understand. Well… I agree with the communicative approach that it is important to accentuate the more natural way of language acquisition that is not based on rigorous search for language mistakes and insistence on complete accuracy. Because all of us that have been working for years sometimes make a language mistake and we shouldn't search for mistake. But the thing is that a man learns on his mistakes. This language content… as for me… should not be, I won't say it is marginalized, but… I think that this formative assessment has negatively influenced students' correct usage of language content. This is something that, as I have heard, many colleagues are unsatisfied with. So… If it was for me, I would maintain the new, but would leave *language rules* as one of the elements of the assessment as it was before. Because…they, students, they react only… for them it is not the same when they get "insufficient" from the language content as a formative note. This is one thing they do not pay a lot of attention to. But when they are assessed summatively with "insufficient", 1, in the bars, the reaction comes from them, parents, etc. I think that our society still hasn't developed when it comes to responsibility. How responsible are you when you see that your teacher has written "has to work on the construction and usage of present simple, present continuous"? This means less to them than if it was written 50… 40% present simple, present continuous with 1 in the bars. I think this is something students got too relaxed about and it leads towards marginalization and poorer learning of language content.

I: Thank you. That would be all.

PARTICIPANT 2

I: Firstly, could you please introduce yourself as an English teacher? So, age, working experience and classes you teach.

P2: Well… I am 52 years old. Considering that I work in elementary school, we teach English from 1-8th grade. As for me, I have been constantly working 26 years and even more than 26 years. What else was the question?

I: Uhm… working experience, classes you teach and age. Yes. Years of teaching is 26 and more.

P2: There. I mentioned it all.

I: How do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?

P2: Well… I think that it is still too soon to tell as we will be able to see some real results only from students who were introduced to this new evaluation system since the first grade. Simply because students learnt… it is hard to suddenly change those habits, both for them and unfortunately, for the majority of parents involved, it is hard to suddenly change those habits of relying only and exclusively on summative assessment. That's the biggest problem. Because, everything else has pretty much stayed the same, except there is no summative assessment of grammar. There.

I: How do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines? Considering that there are no classical tests, what are some alternatives?

P2: Well… I think that the results are worse. Considering grammar, I think that the results are worse. There. That is, I repeat, before, student put much more effort into grammar learning. However, the problem is that, if that is the part of the answer, I am not sure if it is, the problem is that grammar is evaluated and maybe even through the most sensible part and that is essay writing, i.e. composition. Grammar is being evaluated and… the notion and knowledge of grammar is omnipresent. Therefore, if children, students haven't learnt it properly, it becomes visible sooner or later. Right?

I: Yes, yes.

P2: And, yes. I am not really satisfied with my students' grammar knowledge.

I: And, except the essays, and so… compositions, is there anything else you use? Such as…

P2: I have classical grammar comprehension checks. But, I repeat, it is only for formative assessment…

I: Yes.

P2: …uhm... uhm... which means they know the date and hour of the comprehension check. And…but…that can…We have been told that a formative assessment may influence the final grade, but the summative assessment is the main one, i.e. the GPA they have. We teachers are free to grade a child that has a good or excellent formative assessment… for example, if a GPA is 4.2 or 4.3, we are allowed to conclude it with an excellent. The same goes vice versa. I'm just saying, the problem is the reaction of other students and parents that still haven't accepted this assessment method. This goes not only for grammar, but in general.

I: And, generally, is there any particular reason you use…techniques you use? Or is it just because it has been recommended or…

P2: Well, of course, it is because it has been suggested. I mean, what else could it be?

I: I understand.

P2: So, yes. If there was… I don't know… I don't want to bother you with details… any reaction, any control… if it is not in accordance with the curricular instructions, or legal norms that have been adapted… then the grade goes down the drain. The grade is invalid.

I: And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices?

P2: Well… A lot. They had a great influence because… uhm…there was a lot of changes but, yes… they had a great influence because… uhm… today we are somehow more concentrated on individual student assessment. I don't know… individual difficulties are taken into consideration… student motivation and, as I have said, a student does not have a right feeling of his/her knowledge which may create higher expectations and the knowledge does not follow those expectations.

I: And how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through communicative and interactive tasks?

P2: Uhm… Well of course it is successful. However, it cannot be… it cannot be the only segment. But of course, it is successful. If a student makes mistakes through communication and verbal expression… You primarily think of it?

I: Yes, yes, yes.

P2: Yes. If a student makes mistakes in verbal expression, which basically is communication, we have categories that state "if a student makes little mistakes, but can be completely understood, the message is understandable, it is an excellent. If he/she makes more mistakes… and of course, this considers intonation, vocabulary, all this gives… is evaluated as very good.

I: Yes, yes.

P2: So… Mistakes that sometimes interrupt communication, but more less it is comprehensible, it is good. And finally, we got to those cases where the message is partially or completely incomprehensible, where there are grammatical mistakes that cause bad or disrupted communication.

I: Aha, aha. And would you…

P2: Taking into consideration the mentioned assessment… I'm sorry…

I: It's ok.

P2: According to the mentioned assessment, we almost do not have negative students.

I: Oh. Yes. Uhm… Would you say the new assessment techniques are demanding and more time-consuming than traditional ones? Traditional would be multiple-choice, sentence completion and so and newer ones would be communication-oriented tasks.

P2: Of course, it is more demanding. It is much more demanding because before you would assess every segment and the grade would be much clearer. Today, if you want to grade an essay, depending on a school agreement, but in my case, you have at least four grading segments. At least. If you will follow the recommendations and grade each of the segments by points, to grade a class with 25 students would result in a week-job along with all the other chores.

I: Ha-ha. Yes.

P2: If you would do the things right, each essay would take you about 30 minutes and some maybe more. Literally, by adding points.

I: And personally, do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques to the current practices, and why? Traditional ones would, once again, fill-in-the gap, multiple choice and the newer ones would be somewhat more interactive and communicative tasks.

P2: Well, I wouldn't agree that the traditional techniques are those of a multiple choice. I wouldn't agree as… uhm… each exam should contain, no matter if it is a listening, writing comprehension, expect speaking, tasks of different difficulty level. So, you start from the easiest one to the hardest one. Why? So that students who score as sufficient or insufficient may fulfil and solve a test to show their level of knowledge. Therefore, even today's tests, if you consider Matura exams, there is something called multiple choice or sentence order. That hasn't changed a lot, except grammar. Grammar is to be assessed only through essay. Because of that, I repeat, I am not completely satisfied.

I: Aha, aha. And to conclude, is there any other comment to add regarding grammar teaching and testing in the ESL classroom today?

P2: When speaking about grammar… I have already told you everything. I think… I think that we should combine the old and the new methods. Not to completely exclude the old ones. But we should also let some 8 years to pass, when speaking about elementary school, so that students that have enrolled into first grade and that have been adjusting to these new assessment techniques can finish the 8th grade so that we may see some results. And compare to those before. After passing some time, some results may be statistically determined. Although, the results are to be seen on the level of whole Croatia and not only one school because of the questionable interest, occupation… and of course, the criterium. Criterium. Although we all have the same criteria, there are still schools with an incredibly high number of excellent students, as well as those where there is a proportion. We are talking about the final grades.

I: Yes, yes. Well, that would be all.

PARTICIPANT 3

I: So, the first question, if you could please introduce yourself as an English teacher? So, age, teaching or working experience and classes you teach.

P3: So, it is like this. I am 49 years old and I have 22 years of working experience. I taught English for two years. I do not longer do it. Now, I'm a class-teacher, but from time to time, I am a substitute teacher so I am still informed. There it is. I f that can help, I am here.

I: Yes, it can.

P3: Yes.

I: It can. Teach… and, classes you teach…

P3: Only the little ones. From 1st to 4th grade.

I: Aha, aha. How do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?

P3: Well, I do not like it. I do not support it; I do not like it and I am not for it.

I: Aha. And how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines.

P3: Well… through those already prepared tests that are given to them. Everything has already been prepared, but …no… I… I am strictly against it. Against it because… because everything

is… uhm… everything is somehow damaging grammar. Really damaging grammar. Regarding the recommendations for oral and written examination. I noticed it. That… that… I don't like it at all.

I: And, except these already made tests, is there any any particular reason why you are using them?

P3: Why… I am sorry…

I: …why you use exactly those tests? Is there any specific reason?

P3: Well… it was… it was recommended…uhm… by the counselor a few years ago when I was deeply involved. It was recommended by the counselor and those already prepared tests are on the level of the whole country, so like, everyone has the same conditions, and everyone has… uhm… like… uhm… an equal grading system. Everything is equal. So…

I: And, how do these tests look like? Is it like circle the option or…?

P3: Well… they are really easy, they are really easy, for them to circle…uhm… add a letter, uhm… recognize the picture and a word… uhm… then match… they are below every level. There it is. But the recommendation is to use them.

I: Yes, I understand.

P3: That, I know. Yes.

I: And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices?

P3: Well… they influenced because… because… we have to work as told and we assess as told… and… I think that, in the end, it is not a good thing because of the knowledge itself and not necessarily evaluation. That is how I see it.

I: Aha. And how…

P3: The tests are too easy. The tests are too easy. They are really easy. Uhm… sometimes I have a feeling that, while watching them, they are made for special needs children … because they are… they are… really, really really easy and there is no some part that associates with grammar. Everything is somehow intertwined … but… uhm… it is not… it is not good. I don't like it at all …considering how it was before.

I: And, maybe you have already answered this, how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through …

P3: No… nothing. Nothing at all.

I: … and through these communicative and interactive tasks as it was recommended?

P3: Well, ok. Something could be done, but when you in fourth grade… so, the child has never heard that there is something called **tense**…

I: Hm, hmm…

P3: So, you cannot even mention that it is present simple… because… like… it has been removed.

I: Hmm.

P3: Yes. They will learn to add -s or -es to a verb in third person singular…but they won't know that it is one tense, that it is one of the tenses.

I: Yes, yes.

P3: And it is bad.

I: And… would you say the new assessment techniques are somewhat demanding and more time-consuming than traditional ones? The traditional ones being circle the answer, fill-in…?

P3: Well, no. No. I don't think so. I don't think so.

I: And do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques like fill-in-the gap, multiple choice, dictations…

P1: That's right. Yes, yes.

I: … to the current practices?

P3: Yes. Yes. The ones before.

I: Those. And why?

P3: Because they are more difficult. They are more difficult, demanding and children are to know more.

I: Hm.

P3: Yes. That's really knowledge and here it is even about knowing how to get along because a child in these… now I'm talking about those from the first to fourth grade… so, a child who even doesn't know certain things, and is intelligent enough, will manage to correctly connect the line or even circle the right answer. Even to fill in the appropriate letter, because the intelligence will compensate it. And it will be evaluated as knowledge.

I: Yes, yes.

P3: And in traditional way… when there's a dictation… you need to know…

I: Yes, yes.

P3: Yes! That's really about knowledge!

I: That's right.

P3: Therefore, this is no good at all.

I: And is there any other comment to add regarding grammar teaching and testing in the ESL classroom today?

P3: Yes, I have! Yes, I have! That's right. I have. I would return everything…. Well, no! There are certain things that are good… uhm… before we didn't have these tools… digital. Now, that is really good for studying, revision of content… uhm… it really is. However, it is not really good that everything from before has almost been removed. That is not good. There should be a balance…

I: That's right.

P3: … some balance… and use these digital tools to refresh those things that were very good from before. Because, we have all finished high schools with very good English knowledge. And we didn't use… well, our professors didn't use these methods and criteria… methods… nor assessment criteria. Isn't it like that?

I: That's right.

P3: And we still learnt it all excellent. Therefore, there wasn't any… greater need for some significant cuts… but… maybe to refresh a bit… yes… but this now… I am not glad… honestly.

I: That's all. Thank you very much.

PARTICIPANT 4

I: Good, so, the first question, if you could please introduce yourself as an English teacher? So, age, teaching or working experience and classes you teach.

P4: So, I am 42 years old and I work in a high school… grammar school… economic grammar school… and a three-year course- cook… uhm… I have 19 years of working experience and… that's it.

I: Good, thank you. Uhm… How do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?

P4: Uhm… the question is a bit too general. I mean, I… I would like grammar to be graded. … because our… uhm… our educational system… you know, children always ask "will this be graded" …

I: Yes.

P4: … and then when you practice grammar with them, if it is not to be graded, 90ish percent of them refuses to do it… I mean… they do it. They do it without care.

I: Yes, yes, yes.

P4: And then… for example, if you are checking grammar through writing or speaking… it is one of four, five components where you loose this grammar… and then, since they do not really know how to use it correctly, I have a feeling that last coupe of years we are creating generations that are much worse in English.

I: Hm. Hm. And tell me…

P4: … that is some my opinion through work, because I was working when we checked grammar and students paid much more attention to opening the book… learn the rules… revise the sentences, see why. And they applied it much better in essays than today.

I: Yes… And, tell me how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines.

P4: Well… the new guidelines… they say it is one of the components, so, let's say in writing, I try to assign a topic… uhm… so that I can assure they are to use… I don't know, conditional or passive or something like that, but that is one of the components, the other one is vocabulary, third one coherence, cohesion and… topic… well… that they covered the topic. And task completion. That's it. Matura exams are similarly graded, but I think that …uhm… our educational system in school is adapting too much to Matura preparations … which is bad because Matura is some intermediate level of knowledge on the country level that applies to Matura… I think that we should maybe focus a bit more on Cambridge exams… because… uhm… for example, a number of students that want to study abroad… has somehow been increasing, at least I…

I: Yes.

P4: … at least I have that impression. And… there is not a lot of use of Matura because, well, firstly, there is no speaking… And the things they want to check through some reading or writing… it's… well, too basic.

I: Aha. And, except essays, is there a grammar test that you have? Or, tests such as circle the correct answer, finish the sentence?

P4: I don't because… I'm a teacher- mentor and…a mentor, I mean counselor … says… not to check grammar, not even through formative assessment, so, I can't… I can't give them a test and write "you have gained xy" … there… she says that it doesn't make sense. But we should practice it with them. Let's say, formatively, uhm… for example, we do opinion essay… and formatively evaluate, let's say one essay writing… as an instruction it is necessary to learn this, to master this… and then, when there is grading the next time, then we grade it. But, again, grammar is to be revised as one component.

I: Yes, and now, except the essay and other things you mentioned, is there any particular reason why you are using them? That is, is there any specific reason why you decided to use precisely those assessment tools?

P4: You mean, essay?

I: Well, essay to be specific. Or… yes.

P4: Well, it can be essay, it can be formal letter…

I: Yes, anything. Is there a specific reason or is it because it was suggested not to give tests so…?

P4: Uhm… there is no other way. Because… when the counselor comes, she looks at the test types we are making and I think … it is difficult to incorporate the… well, let's call it *language comprehension test* because again, it is language. It is really… it is really hard to check it on any other way. It can be through oral production… However, when language mediation comes, in 3rd and 4th grade, then again, speaking rubric may be graded as speaking… and everything else can definitely go under mediation, as soon as you express your opinion, summarize a lesson… uhm… give arguments, comment regarding the picture, photograph. So, all that knowledge could go under language mediation and speaking under speaking. While in the first and second grade of high school, practically everything goes under *speaking*.

I: Good…

P4: But I don't know. They did it all…

I: I understand…

P4: …a bit… how should I say… they combined it all.

I: And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices? Has something changed?

P4: Well… curricular change hasn't changed a lot regarding English. Because… it wasn't needed. English textbooks have always had a student interaction where there was minimal frontal work. So, regarding English, not a lot could have been changed. The only thing that may be better is teacher's authority, the autonomy regarding topic selection… to select… maybe their own topic, they do not have to strictly stick to the coursebook, they can expand something. Let's say, that is… that is positive, but… I don't see any other positive thing. This language mediation is… I actually don't like the fact they separated reading and listening as two different… two different grading elements. As for me, it should be one grading element.

I: Hm, hm. And how…

P4: … Because it is all understanding.

I: Hm, hm. That's right. That's right. And how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through communicative and interactive tasks?

P4: Well, much less effective.

I: And would you…

P4: Less, because then they… they… you need to ask them much more questions to understand what you want. Then you have to, for example, ask them a question using passive form and wait for them to answer using passive. At the same time, you need to consider if they use new vocabulary, topic familiarization, and if they can argument their own opinion and attitude, let's say for a higher grade in grammar school. Uhm… It is really hard.

I: Hm, hm. And… would you say the new assessment techniques are demanding and somewhat more time-consuming than traditional ones?

P4: They are because you need to prepare rubrics for everything. And… In the end, the rubrics suggested by the ministry and in curriculum, for example, for my counselor, weren't good. She says those rubrics are also too general and that they should be a bit more differentiated. How many mistakes for 4, how many for 3, what does it mean level "good"? I think we are once again forced to do administration work and… let's say it is somehow useless.

I: And personally, do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques to current ones, such as interactive tasks, and why?

P4: There's no problem with interactive tasks. That's all great. I have nothing against it. I like children talking, communicating, presenting, cooperating, doing role-plays. For me, it's fabulous. However, uhm… I would like an old grammar test to be back.

I: Aha. Aha. And, to conclude, is there any other comment to add regarding grammar teaching and testing in the ESL classrooms today?

P4: Well… you think… school… how equipped it is… how to interpret it? I haven't understood it.

I: Whatever you want. Whatever. It's about your impression related to it all… if you think a lot has improved, that the old way was better…

P4: Well, here… I teach grammar and, since it is not graded, they are not motivated. In order to motivate them, I have to come up with interesting activities related to grammar. And then I think about different ways how, for example, I don't know, we are doing future tenses… Croatian has two, English has much more… and then I have to invent an activity, put sticky notes on the board… Come, prepare, group, collect… I incorporate movement, games, I invent things, and with all that, I do not have as good results as it was before when teachers would just come, write sentences, we would copy them, revise… we knew grammar much better.

I: Hm, hm. Do you think today…

P4: Nowadays it has to be some sort of gamification. But in that game, children are lost sometimes.

I: I get it.

P4: When it comes to the equipment… we are a small school; we have a really good classroom equipment. Each one has a projector… no problem… everything works, but again, I repeat, sometimes, the traditional way was better. At least, when referring to grammar.

I: I understand.

PARTICIPANT 5

I: Here we go. So, the first question. Could you please introduce yourself as an English teacher? Your age, teaching or working experience and classes you teach.

P5: So… I am 46 years old. Well, I work at school in Gruda. In Konavle. It's been about 20 years. Right after I finished my studies. And now I work, yes… now I mostly work… now I work in… 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th grade. So, mostly with the young ones.

I: So, elementary school.

P5: Therefore, grammar has stayed… grammar has stayed the same. The grammar hasn't been changed a lot; you know. So…

I: And…how do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?

P5: Well, generally, our English professor groups, and probably other foreign languages… uhm… we are not really happy with it knowing that the rubric does not exist any more and now, our grammar assessment rubrics are… grammar… grammar is combined with other… with all the other… these elements: reading, listening comprehension, writing and speaking. Mostly, it is good for children who are good at it, but for children who normally have some problems with English, it is really hard for them.

I: Hard.

P5: Meaning… yes. It is hard because he has to, for example, if it is writing, or some text, those are higher levels, 5th grade and so on, writing or some text, some topic, he has to incorporate those grammar elements within the topic, right? And it is hard for him because he has to construct the sentence all by himself.

I: Yes.

P5: Right?

I: That's right.

P5: And for them… it is hard. And that is really… it is really hard.

I: And tell me, how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines?

P5: Well those are… it is really… for us professors… it is really, again, the job is harder. So, grammar is evaluated through… through… through let's say… if it is writing… just a second… if it is writing… For us, the instructions are really… really…I don't know: "A student can independently write a text about familiar topic using" … those are our instructions…. "Using simple linguistic structures" …or "using grammatical structures accurately". It is all… nothing has been explained in details. That's what I think. A great freedom is given to teachers and professors. So that is… it is…

I: And do you assign dictations, or there are still those classical grammar tests or…

P5: Uhm… dictations can be given but they are noted under the *notes* section. So… I mean, you can assign them but they go under notes. Therefore, the grade isn't written in the "box" … Therefore, parents and children do not take it seriously. So…

I: And is there any particular reason you use the techniques you use? Or is it just because you are not to give a grammar test…

P5: Which techniques?

I: Well, dictation to be precise… then… essay…

P5: Well…no, no, we can use dictation but we cannot write it in… let's say… up in the grade, that's right. It is like that … they allowed it… and basically, that and then it goes under *notes* but that note hasn't been taken seriously so to say. Regarding that. But the other… those are all… all. All the same elements listening comprehension, reading comprehension that's ok. Writing and… speaking. Depends on the person…

I: So, everything has been incorporated.

P5: For those who are good at it, it is good but for those who aren't, it is really hard because he has to construct the sentence by himself.

I: And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices? Has something changes?

P5: Well, I am mostly… Well, it's like this. I am mostly with the young ones. Meaning from 1st to 4th grade. So… regarding them… it has remained the same. Since I've been working, it's been here. There is nothing to change. So… those are the young ones from 1st to 4th grade. Nothing has been changed there because there is nothing to be changed there. And grammar… it is more for the bigger ones from 5th to 8th grade.

I: Yes, yes, yes.

P5: That's it. And for the little ones from 1st to 4th, that is the same.

I: That is the same.

P5: There's nothing there. That's right. There's nothing to change.

I: And how…

P5: …because those aren't…

I: Aha. Go ahead! Go ahead!

P5: I don't know what I wanted to say.

I: And how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through, let's say, these alternative communicative and interactive tasks?

P5: Uhm… you mean like those writing tasks…

I: Well, yes, yes. All these… all these new ways that have incorporated grammar.

P5: It is maybe a great fun for them. But…

I: Hard.

P5: Yes, for them, it is maybe… you mean tasks for example on some board… It is really hard to evaluate those. It is… it is… really hard. So…

I: And… Would you say the new assessment techniques are somewhat more demanding and more time-consuming than traditional ones?

P5: Well, yes! Yes!

I: They are. And personally, which do you prefer? The traditional ones…those would be complete the sentence, multiple choice and so on. Or the more interactive ones?

P5: Well, to be honest, I really don't know which ones I prefer. I don't know which ones I prefer. I am mostly with the younger ones, but I do have 6th grades. They find it easier… they find it easier when they get these "old" tests you mentioned, like "complete and…"

I: Yes.

P5: It is easier for them. But I think these are good. These new ones are more objective. No matter how harder they are for them.

I: Yes.

P5: Let's say, in that sense. So those… Those tests from before, the grammar ones that we had… for example, "use…" I don't know, some time … for example, "put the verbs in the correct form", right? Or something like that. Those were the old tests.

I: Yes.

P5: They could do it because they would learn the "scheme" how it goes. Eh, but the newer one is harder for them, but also for the professors. To grade it.

I: I agree. I agree. I have to admit.

P5: It's harder. And for me, it is hard… that text… when they write it, if it is the 6th grade, irrelevant. For me, it is harder to… to… to grade it, to correct it and to give an objective grade. It is really hard.

I: And to conclude, is there any other comment to add regarding grammar teaching and testing in the ESL classrooms today?

P5: To be honest, I have been working for 20 years… if it is for example, the verb "to be" … it is the same as before… so there… how should I say… I don't know what to say…

I: I understand.

P2: Wee, teachers have been given a lot of freedom so it is not like everyone is strictly holding to everything. There is a lot of freedom in our work. We, not related to grammar, we are free to choose the topic and many more so there's a lot of freedom. And the grammatical structures that I am supposed to explain haven't been strictly determined. Yes, in general but…

I: Yes, yes, yes.

P5: It's nothing…

I: You still have some freedom.

P5: Nothing detailed. For example, 6th grade, they put present perfect and I am definitely not going to do it because it is too difficult for them… and so on. There's a lot of freedom. There really is.

I: Good! Well, that would be all.

PARTICIPANT 6

I: So, could you please introduce yourself as an English teacher? Your age, teaching, working experience and classes you teach.

P6: My years of life? My age, you mean?

I: The years you teach, your working experience.

P6: Aha, aha. Working experience. Good. Well, I'm an English teacher. I have been working for 9 years with students from 1st to 4th grade.

I: Good.

P6: And what else did you ask?

I: That's it. Years, working experience and that's it. The classes you teach… and yes! It's true, I have it written, age. So, if it is not a secret, could you give me an information about your age.

P6: 38.

I: 38.

P6: I have understood it like that, at first. 38. I am 38 years old.

I: Good. And how do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?

P6: Well, according to them, grammar assessment should not be explicit and it… uhm… my experience tells me that today students don't put a lot of practice into anything that is not graded. There. And… uhm... somehow, they are oriented… motivated by the grade. Meaning… the more you grade, the more encouraged they are to learn. And now, it… grammar is noted in oral expositions, both, in oral and written expression…

I: Yes!

P6: …but not as explicitly as it was…

I: …like before…

P6: …but according to me… I prefer regular grammar practice because we can communicate… even in Croatian, if we're speaking without any grammar in infinitive, they would understand us.

I: That's right.

P6: But we wouldn't be literate. Right? I just think that in order to have a good language literacy, one is to know both, vocabulary and grammar. And communi… and, of course, from that, as a result there is communication.

I: Hm, hm. And tell me, how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines?

P6: Well… now, regarding oral expositions, as I am working with the little ones, they do not have to… they don't know anything explicitly. They use grammar but they don't know that it is, I don't know, present simple or continuous.

I: Yes, yes.

P6: I don't know. 3rd graders will be shown a picture, I mean, we practice it first…

I: Yes, yes.

P6: …and then, there's a picture on which, I don't know, a character is swimming and now… "what is he doing" and he is supposed to say "he is swimming" or… "she is swimming", "they are swimming" and so on. That is regarding the oral expositions. Listening comprehension is much more simple because they can easily recognize who is doing what… uhm… 4th grade, there they need… it's a bit more…I don't know… present simple where they need to add -s/-es… so, present simple and then affirmative/ negative/ interrogative form and… and… continuous as well. Uhm… I have reading comprehension tests…

I: Good.

P6: Uhm… it's… there's not a lot of writing. And writing… just writing… according to a model… so, according to a sample, sorry… uhm… we have for example, a description… I don't know, a picture of a girl that described herself and now they have to describe themselves according to a sample. I mean, we practice it all. Yes, that's how it is with grammar.

I: And regarding these classical grammar tests like circle the correct answer, fill in with the verb in the right tense and so on… is it still there, or you don't use it at all?

P6: Uhm… with them, I… with them, I…I will revise it like that with the 4th graders…

I: …and not with the little ones.

P6: …but I do not grade it.

I: Yes.

P6: But I revise it with them. Because they are going into 5th grade and somehow, I have to prepare them for it.

I: They have to… yes, yes. And, everything that you have mentioned, writing by following the model, and listening and writing comprehensions… is there a specific reason why you use exactly those or you just had to adapt to the new instructions?

P6: I had to adapt to the new instruction. For me, this separation of reading, writing is still a bit confusing as I don't want to mess up. For me not to mess up as well. So, yes. I consult with my colleagues: what do they assign, how do they assign. Because if a man… if I do something by myself, I always risk that it may be too easy or too hard. And then, those things from the publisher are too easy, as for me. So, it is a bit… I'm conflicted.

I: And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices? Has something changed or everything has, more less, stayed the same?

P6: Well… I can say that I'm trying to be as objective as possible. For example, I solved these…uhm… when there was "Škola za život" those… all those… how should I call it…let's say workshops, let's call it like that. Also, there I agreed with some things, with some not so much. So, what I apply is to be as objective as possible and then, I don't know… I will give an example for the 1st graders. We learnt, in unit 1, for example 20 words. And I ask those 20 words, I put +/- on my paper, for me, and I calculate. He knew 16/20, it's a 4. This way, I am objective towards all of them. Because there are grades… before it was, there has to be someone

with 5, someone with… all grades have to be rearranged. And they do not have to. How much you know, that much you get. In black and white.

I: Yes, yes. And, according to you, how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through these new communicative and interactive tasks?

P6: Could you just give me some task type that you have in mind?

I: Yes! For example, instead of… well, you said you go through it, but instead of those classical grammar tasks (circle the correct option, or fill in the blanks), now you have to, through a story or some conversation with them, evaluate how well they know grammar.

P6: Well, for me…. It is… what I ask them. Because we will… I'm with the little ones. We now, in every unit, learn new words and some grammatical structure. And, when asking "tell me, *on upravo gleda televiziju*" I can see if he can use present continuous and the vocabulary learnt.

I: Yes, yes.

P6: And then I can see "aha, he knows the words but not so the grammar", so… because he immediately… or he'll know how to say it, or he will make a mistake… or most frequently leave out *is* "he watching" or something similar. And then, we really, really practice "he is watching".

I: Yes, yes.

P6: So, I immediately… I am maybe a bit stricter regarding it. We practice it and we… we… or we know it or we don't.

I: Yes. That's right.

P6: There's not a lot to it.

I: And would you say the new assessment techniques are demanding and somewhat more time-consuming than traditional ones?

P3: You mean assessment as learning and assessment for learning?

I: **Uhm… assessment of their knowledge. Whether it was an oral or written exam. Does this new practice take you much more time to evaluate them or it's all the same?**

P6: Well, I maybe even feel that it takes me more time.

I: **Because of different categories?**

P6: I feel it's longer. Yes because…. Well, actually from an oral exposition you can… can... ask a few questions for a student to answer and …sorry… ask a question in English and I automatically see if he understood what he heard.

I: **Yes. Yes.**

P6: And then, if he answers correctly, I can see… the element of speaking. Speaking, and listening understanding can be covered with one examination.

I: One…

P6: Two grades can be given. That's what I'm trying to say.

I: Yes.

P6: And the question is a bit… a bit… maybe a bit difficult. Because I don't know how well it's been determined… how to evaluate writing. For example, of some shorter text with, I don't know, 50 words. How to do it has not been clearly determined. It's a bit…Uhm… I don't understand it.

I: Hm, hm. And personally, do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques and simply give them an exam and have fill-in-the gap, multiple choice, dictations, or sentence completion…or you prefer these… through conversation we will see how well they know grammar, or pair work or something… did you prefer the old way?

P6: I'm more for the first one.

I: The first one.

P6: The more for the first one. I'm an old school. If you… if you don't practice grammar enough… I mean… we can speak but…

I: That's right. I understand.
P6: … but we won't be literate.
I: And to conclude, is there any other comment to add regarding grammar teaching and assessment in the ESL classroom today?
P6: Well, I cannot think of anything to say.
I: Something that you do not like from these new changes? Something old that you would like to keep? Or…
P6: I would… I would… I would maybe maintain the grammar check. I would maintain it. It can be through communication and through…
I: Writing.
P6: Tests like this. So, I would maintain both. I wouldn't eliminate grammar. I would leave it as… as a part of writing or…
I: Yes.
P6: There. I wouldn't eliminate it. Because I consider that they are motivated by the grade and they learn whatever that is to be graded.
I: They will learn it.
P6: What is not, there is just no motivation. For students, knowledge is never motivation, but grade exclusively. Which is sad, but it is like that.
I: That's right. That's right.

PARTICIPANT 7
I: There. So, the first question, if you could please introduce yourself as an English teacher? So, your age, working experience and classes you teach.
P7: Well, 42 years, 15 years of working experience and I'm teaching from 5th -8th grade. I have a combination of 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th. Basically, all classes from 5th-8th.
I: And, how do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?
P7: Well, we had a lot of seminars regarding the topic… and there are different opinions regarding it. I have to admit, colleagues have different attitudes. Though, the majority of us, including me, thinks that we were more satisfied with the assessment criteria that was present before and that included grammar rules. So, somehow, we felt that back then we had a complete impression of… well, acquisition.
I: Aha.
P7: Students were working systematically uhm… and learned the materials. Now, it is based on language competence, that is communication, but I think that… I think that many grammar elements are missing there. We still teach grammar and write it formatively that's all good but they do not take it seriously and for them, it is all like that… they know we won't check it and grade it and then they just skip that part. And then it reflects through communication, of course. And then, of course, in the written part where they have to a certain part… when we cover, I don't know, a short writing uhm… they have to use that grammar…. And those parts are problematic well. There.
I: Aha. And tell me, how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines. Has anything changed regarding the tests, comprehension checks? Is this grammar part still present?
P7: Well… we have decided to respect the new curriculum… so we removed those grammatical rules. We cannot have it among the evaluation and assessment criteria, only trough some exercises that are later put in the *notes* rubric that no one reads. Because, in the end, I think… in the end, we are the ridiculous ones, unfortunately. Because… because we write those short comprehension checks that are based on grammar. For example, the tasks are circle, fill-

in uhm… and the others that are similar. So, those tasks are not as broad as before… now those are circle ABC and those. But there, just to have some work continuity, we incorporate these exercises that are later noted in *notes* as points and that's it. Because there's no grade.

I: They are not graded.

P7: No.

I: And, have you decided to use this evaluation method for any particular reason or is it just because the rules are like that so you're trying to keep up with them?

P7: Well…that's it. That's it. I repeat… during those multiple seminars that we have had, all colleagues have implemented it like that so we are trying to stick to this… uhm… we, English teachers, have a really good collaboration and are frequently present on those county… we have county councils and we somehow, consult each other quite frequently. And then… we do as recommended. Although, there are colleagues that do not attend those seminars and do not strictly stick to it... as to a Bible… as we say it… there are some, honestly. But I somehow, if there is an inspection to come tomorrow in school or something, you have to justify your work, the curricular prescriptions and "plan and program" … so we stick to it. Because, once again, we do not agree with a lot of things. I would prefer to include grammar in partial, some part… in some higher measure. Honestly. As for me. I would like it.

I: And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices? Has anything changed? Is there something you had to remove or add? Something that you wouldn't normally use?

P7: Well, once again. I have removed a lot of grammar. It is now more communication- centred. There are more oral examinations and… and…uhm… this part with listening and reading comprehension. There. We have included this part. Before, it was used much less. We would have maybe one or two exams through the year, listening and writing. Now we have maybe three and four… three or four, like that.

I: And, according to you, how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through these, so to say, communicative and interactive tasks that are to replace one typical grammar test?

P7: Well, you can partially and not completely evaluate because after a certain unit we have an oral examination and then this certain unit counts with the usage of some certain… let's say past simple, if we have covered past simple then we grade only that part and then it is hard to grade it objectively. Of course, if a student had used grammatical structures correctly, then it forms part of the grade… but only that little part… only little grammar segment.

I: And would you say the new assessment techniques are demanding and somewhat more time-consuming than traditional ones?

P7: Well we do have much more paper work. That's the thing, yes. Yes. So, we have formative, we have summative, we have uhm… self-evaluation. We have… So, there are a lot of papers that we share and then later we add and take and then come up with a conclusion from all of that and it is really hard. Except that, I'm a headroom teacher, so this paperwork is sometimes really the hardest part of my work.

I: And personally, if you were to decide, do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques like fill-in-the gap, grammar test, dictation, change the sentence or you prefer these so to say, modern…?

P7: Well, look… this part with circle, fill-in, is easier to correct.

I: Yes.

P7: To be honest. It's easier to correct it. However, it is not… you cannot see a relative knowledge of a student, that is objective. Because… because…. uhm… it is really simple… the tests are maximally simplified. And everything benefits the student so that they could get as higher grade as possible and the knowledge they take with them is unfortunately, in the end, not that relevant. As for me. It seems that it's not relevant. Of course, it is, but according to

these criteria, it turns that it's not. Because, it is simple… the structures are too simple and we sometimes laugh at each other, my colleague and I quite often communicate. We laugh about what we assign. Because it is too ridiculous.

I: And…

P7: And they still don't do it as it should be done.

I: I understand. And is there any other comment to add regarding grammar teaching and testing in the ESL classroom today? Something that you would point out as it needs to be improved, or something that you still get and it's better than before?

P7: Yes. Look, I definitely keep up with the time. So, I use all available technology, iweb, absolutely every possible support. I took a publisher that offers everything in digital content. I try to visualize it to them and… uhm… familiarize them with the language as much as possible and better. However, as much as we tried… and…. And… and try to familiarize them with it… somehow, I have a feeling that, I don't know if it is the generation or the way of teaching, I don't know what's the problem, I have a feeling that it is going from bad to worse. There. That's my conclusion. I think that's also a conclusion from my colleague that I work with, my parallel. Because students from lower grades come with less and less knowledge. In lower grades it's al through game, you know? Everything has come to a kindergarten level. I used to hold a course and I worked in the kindergarten so I know how this part looks like. Unfortunately, that part has been transferred to school. So that it results in…. They come to the 5th grade with very poor knowledge and then it extends from 5th to 8th till we repeat all those basics and introduce them the real content as it goes. In 7th grade they are in cloud 9, in 8th they are not interested in anything and then it goes like that. A generation passes and I think that some basics, for some not for everybody… not everybody… there are parents who are included and aware that language is very important and they motivate their children and I can tell they keep track of them at home… and those students, there are only a few, unfortunately only a few, at least in this school where I work… I used to work in city school and there's a different situation there. You know? It's… this what I'm saying is highly relative because I can only talk about the school I'm currently working in.

I: Yes, yes.

P7: So there. Personally, I am not happy with the way, that is the quantity of the learnt content because they… finish the 8th grade and still make mistake regarding the basics, auxiliary verbs and others… not to mention. That's why this grammar is that important, according to me, and should be graded and then, maybe taken more seriously. There. That's my conclusion.

I: Excellent! Thank you very much!

PARTICIPANT 8

I: Ok. We can start. So, the first question, if you could please introduce yourself as an English teacher? So, your age, working experience and classes you teach.

P8: Good. I'm an English and German professor. I am 51 years old. Working experience… 27 years… I teach in elementary school, from 1st-8th grade.

I: Aha. And, how do you feel about the grammar assessment guidelines as prescribed by the new Croatian English language Curriculum?

P8: Well… uhm… I am not completely satisfied with them as I consider that… uhm… with this new assessment way, children do not thoroughly acquire grammar, as they used to.

I: Aha. And how do you assess your pupils' grammar considering the new guidelines, taking into consideration these new instructions?

P8: Well… I assess according to the instructions. So, grammar is assessed formatively, without giving a written grade, only through *notes*. It is accompanied by a note. And grammar I usually

assess through… through writing. So, writing different compositions, emails, articles… depending on the topic we cover.

I: And do you assess, at least with a grade in notes and not the rubric… do they have those mini grammar exams with circle…

P8: No! No! I do not have that. So, only… it is only for formative assessment.

I: And is there any any particular reason why you are using these emails, compositions…is it just so to stick to the rules…?

P8: Yes, it forms part of…. It forms part of a module, that is the units that are to be covered. According to the instructions.

I: According to the instructions. Aha.

P8: Yes, yes, yes.

I: And how have the changes within the modified Croatian English Language Curriculum influenced your assessment practices? Has something changed?

P8: Well… it has changed because I used to assign pure grammar tests where students had to… for example, put the verb in the correct tense or to apply some other grammar rules and now, it is not assessed summatively anymore.

I: Yes, yes. And how effective do you think it is to assess grammar through these new communicative and interactive tasks?

P8: Well… uhm… not completely. I am not completely satisfied because through this new assessment way, you cannot really… get a complete impression of student's knowledge. Nor you can include and evaluate everything that students are to master, through some written composition. So, one greater part… let's say 2/3 can be done through those written assignments and 1/3 cannot because it would simply… uhm… uhm… it would acquire too many instructions, directions that would confuse the students.

I: Aha, aha.

P8: So, we try to restrict to the basics.

I: The basics. Aha. And… would you say the new assessment techniques are demanding and somewhat more time-consuming than traditional ones?

P8: Well… uhm… they are definitely harder to be graded because they are not… you cannot score points as in one classical grammar test. It requires professors to have more…. How should I say it… more creativity…?

I: Aha…

P8: …to try to incorporate as much as possible of those grammar structures in some written assignment…

I: Hm, hm.

P8: Uhm…which is sometimes more and sometimes less successful. It depends on the topic that is covered.

I: Yes. And personally, if you had to choose, do you prefer traditional grammar testing techniques like classical exams with fill-in-the gap, multiple choice, and so on, or you prefer those more communicative…

P8: Well… it's like this. When it comes to that, I think that this way of… assessment is good. However, I would combine it with those classical grammar tests… So, I would just return… let it all stay as it is, but I would only return classical grammar assessment through tests.

I: Yes, yes.

P8: And nothing else. Summative assessment of grammar tests because students would then take it a bit more seriously. That is, they would take grammar more seriously. Because… they would maybe learn it more thoroughly than they are doing it now.

I: And to conclude, is there any other comment to add regarding grammar teaching and testing grammar in the ESL classroom today? Is there something you would like to change or something you would like to accentuate as really good or…?

P8: Well… there… about that… uhm… that curricular reform has brought some novelties that I like. For example, everything is more based on communication uhm… on encouraging more students to communicate, to use the spoken language in everyday situations… which is good! I like that they incorporated… uhm… a variety of written works that are to be graded like that. But, on the other hand, I have mentioned it, I would prefer if the grammar assessment was done following the traditional way, as it used to be.
I: Aha, aha. There. We are done.

Summary

Grammar Assessment in EFL Classrooms

Grammar assessment may be seen as an important indicator of learners' language knowledge. Since the Croatian English language curriculum introduced certain changes concerning grammar assessment, the primarily aim of the conducted study was to examine EFL teachers' attitudes, as well as practices used for learners' grammar assessment. The sample include Croatian elementary and high school EFL teachers. The instruments used in the study were a questionnaire, as well as semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that the majority of teachers were dissatisfied with the new grammar assessment guidelines stating reasons such as poorer learner knowledge which were the result of the lack of a grammar grade component which demotivated learners. Consequently, many teachers reported favoring traditional assessment practices, while referring to the current assessment as time-consuming, demanding, unreliable, and not sufficiently effective. The majority reported that they adhered to the current curriculum guidelines and assessed grammar through learners' written and communicative assignments. However, they still used grammar tests discreetly. A rather less frequent usage of reading and listening checks was noted. Teachers evaluated their practices as *acceptable* and *good*, as well as expressed a desire for changing them due to their poor quality, demanding character and unmotivating formative assessment. Finally, though pointing to a rather excessive use of games, teachers, nevertheless, stressed the benefits of the alternative assessment due to the diversity of writing and communicative exercises, as well as digital devices. They concluded that grammar teaching and assessment should include both traditional and alternative grammar practices.

Sažetak

Vrednovanje gramatike u učionicama s engleskim kao stranim jezikom

Vrednovanje gramatike može se smatrati važnim pokazateljem učenikova poznavanja jezika. Budući da je hrvatski kurikulum engleskog jezika uveo određene promjene vezane uz vrednovanje gramatike, prvotni cilj provedenog istraživanja bio je utvrditi stavove učitelja engleskog kao stranog jezika, kao i procedure kojima se koriste u svrhu vrednovanja učenikova poznavanja gramatike. Uzorak je uključivao hrvatske osnovnoškolske i srednjoškolske učitelje engleskog kao stranog jezika. Navedeno je analizirano anketom te semi-strukturiranim intervjuima. Rezultati su pokazali kako je većina učitelja nezadovoljna s novim smjernicama vezanim uz vrednovane gramatike zbog lošijeg znanja samih učenika uzrokovanog nedostatkom ocjenjivanja gramatike što je ujedno i demotiviralo učenike. U skladu s prethodno navedenim, velik broj učitelja istaknuo je kako preferira tradicionalne tehnike vrednovanja te opisao trenutno vrednovanje kao dugotrajno, zahtjevno, nepouzdano i nedovoljno učinkovito. Većina je istaknula kako se pridržava trenutnih kurikularnih smjernica te vrednuje učenikovo poznavanje gramatike kroz pismene i komunikacijske zadatke. Ipak, diskretno su koristili gramatičke testove. Primijećena je manje učestala upotreba zadataka čitanja i slušanja s razumijevanjem. Ocjenjujući vlastite tehnike kao *prihvatljive* i *dobre,* učitelji su izrazili želju za promjenom upravo zbog loše kvalitete, zahtjevnosti tehnika i demotivirajućeg formativnog vrednovanja. Za kraj, aludirajući na preveliku upotrebu igara, učitelji su se ipak osvrnuli na prednosti alternativnog vrednovanja vidljive kroz raznolikost pismenih i komunikacijski zadataka te digitalne uređaje. Naveli su kako je za podučavanje i vrednovanje gramatike potrebno uključiti tradicionalne, ali i alternativne metode.

Ključne riječi: podučavanje i vrednovanje gramatike u engleskom kao stranom jeziku, tradicionalno vrednovanje, alternativno vrednovanje, učitelji engleskog kao stranog jezika