

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Exploring Teachers' Grammar Teaching Practices in EFL Classrooms: Grade 9 in Focus

Gelaneh Melak¹

Abstract

This study explored the grammar teaching practices of EFL teachers in classrooms. A single secondary school was selected purposively. Three EFL teachers were selected based on available sampling technique. Reflective journals and classroom observations were employed as data gathering tools. Qualitative data analysis methods were used. The findings of the study indicated that the teachers presented grammar lessons focusing on revisions, explanations and more example giving practices. Although the teachers reported that challenges came from the learners, the findings of the study indicated that the grammar teaching challenges were found to be orientated with the mismatched grammar teaching practices in the actual classrooms. Considering the overall findings indicated, recommendations have been included that EFL teachers have inadequate knowledge to teaching grammar and they need to have an inward looking about their teaching practices on how to maximize grammar learning to their learners.

Keywords: *Early Grammar teaching practices, EFL teachers, teaching challenges, EFL classrooms*

1. Introduction

Grammar teaching has been favored as an essential component in English language teaching (ELT). Grammar ability liberates language users from over dependency on lexical categorization and rule memorizations (Cullen, 2008). Richards (2015) also states that Grammar also serves as a communicative resource if users are capable of mastering it (Richards, 2015). Grammar teaching is a potential to effective communication for it is a key to enhance learners' communicative skills (Ur, 2011). Thus, teachers have to maintain the importance of grammar teaching by pushing learners to meaningful learning situations (Scrivener, 2011; Thornbury (2015).

In spite of its importance, grammar teaching has a long tradition to remain debatable among researchers for decades. Several approaches and methods have come and gone; millions of teachers and students have spent their entire time to the teaching and learning of English grammar. However, grammar teaching has remained with countless discussions

¹ PhD student, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Gondar
Email: gelanehm@gmail.com



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and has also been seen, in some conditions, as a hindrance rather than a benefit (Walker, 2011; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Grammar teaching is not as simple as we have talked about it (Harmer, 2007). That is why teachers are still hindered from playing their optimal roles to teaching grammar in ELT (Freeman, 1996; Hall, 2011; Benjamin & Berger, 2014).

For instance, in the 1940s and 1950s, intense criticism followed on the traditional grammar instruction based on two emerged schools, the structural linguistics and the behavioral psychology. The combined force of the two schools reshaped the language teaching pendulum to moving to the implicit instructional paradigm. During this period learning was viewed as a process of habit formation; grammar teaching was also seen as a system to be learned through mechanical drilling by employing audio-lingualism and situational methods (Nassaji & Fotos, 211).

In the 1960s, the generative-transformational school of thought emerged and the cognitive teaching approach greatly influenced grammar teaching placing learners to formal properties of language. In this period, methods like the Silent Way, the Community Language Learning (CLL) and the Total Physical Response (TPR) were employed. The grammar teaching was highly influenced by the Latin language grammar trends; teachers were also influenced to emphasize more on word parsing and sentence analyses (Richards, 2015). Another markedly different teaching approach, the communicative language teaching (CLT), emerged in the 1970s. This new paradigm shifted grammar teaching pendulum back to a more implicit grammar teaching approach by retreating grammar to its back seat. Within this framework, Krashen (1981, 1982) criticized the explicit grammar teaching approach that consciously learned knowledge could not be internalized and retrieved into meaningful communication. In this view, grammar instruction was believed to be excluded completely from the framework. Lewis (1997) also disregarded explicit grammar teaching by presenting an alternative hypothesis, Lexical Approach, over mere grammar teaching approach and he thought that learning was important if learners could acquire different lexical phrases and unanalyzed wholes in place of grammar rules.

In spite of changes in approaches, still there have been debates on how grammar should be taught in EFL classrooms. Although changes occurred, the status and the ways to teaching grammar have remained unsolved issues to teachers and researchers (Ellis, 1997). For example, in more recent times, 'focus on form' (FonF) approach has become an important and alternative grammar teaching approach. FonF is conceived as any planned or incidental instructional activity to induce learners to form and meaning with optimal levels and uses in contexts. This approach is believed to be a more effective teaching paradigm to be used as a midway scaled grammar teaching approach between 'forms' and 'meanings' by presenting such instructional options as inputs, explicit instructions, productions and feedbacks to the learning of grammar (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Grammar teaching endeavors still tend to teach grammar focusing on Content-Based Instructions (CBI) and Task Based Instructions (TBI) (Ellis, 2016). Contents and tasks are believed to play important roles in enhancing grammar learning. A task-based approach is considered to cater learners' skill developments in terms of procedural and lexical systems. Another alternative is that of the Van Patten's (2013) hypothesis, input processing. Unless teachers present grammar as meaningful inputs to be processed, learners would probably miss the grammar points and eventually be unable to communicate in reality. More approaches have been introduced and arguments have been postulated to grammar teaching effectiveness. However, none have become satisfactory options. Rather huge pendulum swings have variedly remained with teachers in ELT classrooms for decades (El-Dakhs, 2014) and the teaching of grammar has still remained a headache for teachers and researchers globally.

The Ethiopian context, teaching grammar is not exceptional. Documented evidences show grammar teaching has long been addressed deductively and the teaching of grammar has become difficult in Ethiopian schools (Jha, 2013, 2014). Other documents show grammar teaching is practiced traditionally focusing on formal structures of the language (Habtamu, 2011; Sharma, 2014; Mebratu, 2015). In addition, a study by Mengistie (2019) reveals that EFL teachers in the context of Ethiopia hardly created contexts in classrooms. Teachers tend to adapt the PPP approach, which favors the formal grammar teaching in the classrooms, and the grammar teaching practices are found to be of traditional nature. In line with teaching grammar in EFL classrooms, Girma (2005) investigated the implementation of communicative grammar at secondary schools and reported that teachers did not address grammar learning effectively because grammar teaching is more approached explicitly. Other researchers (Abraham, 2008; Tiglu, 2008; Haregewoin, 2008) have also indicated that grammar teaching is not integrated with others skills in the classroom situations. Girma (2015) also reported that teachers push learners to focus on several mechanical drills after explanations rather than meaningful and communicative activities. Besides, the classroom observations showed that teachers did not give enough time to the learners to do the exercises efficiently.

It is interpreted that teachers focused more on formal instructions than contextual inductive approaches. Teachers explain rules of the language as linguistic data (Larsen-Freeman, 2014) although they are not expected to give more explanation and too many examples while teaching grammar (Azar, 2007; Harmer, 2012). In this sense, teachers did not catch the attention of learners into their learning edges and they did not facilitate grammar learning practices accordingly (Scrivener, 2011).

It is possible to deduce that EFL teachers need to be aware of grammar teaching practices and the ways to implement matching approaches to EFL learners. Hence, it is indispensable to explore the EFL teachers' grammar teaching practices in classroom settings. Consequently, the researcher explored the grammar teaching practices and the challenges of three EFL teachers in the case of Azezo Dimaza Secondary School.

2. The problem

As aforementioned, grammar teaching is an important part of ELT. Many global researchers have recognized the necessity of grammar teaching in ELT (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Thornbury, 2015; Richards, 2015). Local researchers have also strong supports to the teaching of grammar in the context of Ethiopia (Haregewoin, 2008; Girma, 2015; Zewdie, 2017). Therefore, educational researchers on SLA and ELT strongly stress that teachers should be capacitated to address grammar teaching in line with global communication trends (Nassaji, 2017). Teachers should facilitate grammar learning to really engage learners to meaningful experiences in classroom settings (Scrivener, 2014; Thornbury, 2015).

In spite of the new grammar teaching trends and communication purposes, however, teaching grammar in the Ethiopian context has remained ineffective at schools (Jha, 2014; Sharma, 2014). Grammar teaching is not effectively implemented since teachers remain inflexible while teaching grammar in classrooms; grammar learning has not effectively been maximized to capacitate learners to use grammar in natural practices; learners have not been pushed for opportunistic roles (McDougald, 2018) and grammar teaching has not been integrated to other skills, particularly to writing and speaking skills (Myhill, 2014).

In the context of Ethiopian secondary schools, as I have experienced teaching grammar myself through rule analysis and many of my colleagues have done in this similar ways,

I believe that grammar teaching should not be confined only to what has to be presented to learners based on forms. Rather pushing learners to meaningful practices is the way to help learners use the grammar in live communicative practices. I support what Scrivener (2014) and Thornbury (2015) postulated that the EFL teachers should remain facilitators and learners need to be pushed to their learning corners in naturally experienced contexts.

Hence, coming to the Ethiopian context, English is taught as subject and grammar as a separate component of the language; grammar is presented as an isolated item being named under subtopics and terms. That is, teachers teach grammar deductively and learners have remained in trouble to understanding rules of the language.

Exploring teaching practices is an indispensable role of researchers and ELT educators (Richards, 2015) since teachers face grammar teaching difficulties because of the cognitions they hold about the teaching of grammar (Borg, 2003). Grammar teaching approaches are also decisive factors to be explored and reported for improved grammar teaching practices (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011) since the issue has continued to occupy central concern in both research curriculum design. Grammar teaching should be researched out since it is divorced from situated leaning practices (Thornbury, 2018). Grammar continues to be a problem unless there should be a rethinking for teaching it differently and associating teaching practices with writing skills (Myhill, Watson & Newman, 2020). Teachers need to be informed and shaped to plan, instruct and assess learners regarding the learning of grammar (Murray & Christison, 2020). For innovative and improved actions, the quality grammar instruction at specificity needs further studies to inform teachers introduce grammar teaching by mixing global and local practices (McDougald, 2018).

Local studies have similar evidences to EFL teachers in classrooms. For example, Haregewoin (2008) who conducted an experimental study to see the effectiveness of grammar teaching for students writing accuracy reported that grammar has to be addressed communicatively to improve learners' wring skills. Other researchers (e.g., Abraham, 2008; Bayissa, 2013; Eba, 2013) have documented that grammar teaching practices have still remained ineffective in the Ethiopian secondary schools because teachers focus on the formal teaching approaches; teachers did not push learners to meaningful learning endeavors. Similar studies by Jha (2013, 2014) in schools in the eastern part of Ethiopia have revealed that teachers focus on formal grammar teaching aspects and students only understood grammar but not mastered it for communicative uses. Other studies (e.g., Habtamu, 2011; Mebratu, 2015; Sharma, 2014) show grammar teaching in the context of Ethiopia is still practiced traditionally, by telling more information through explanations and examples about the language.

More studies have still been conducted at secondary schools (Bayissa, 2013; Abebe, 2013; Yemisrach, 2015; Mebratu, 2015) and the results show that students are not given opportunities to practice grammar in meaningful situations for teachers are reluctant to employ various techniques. Other evidences reveal that grammar teaching is still on deteriorating trends because of mismatches between theories and practices (Zewdie, 2017; Kidu, 2017). Mengistu (2019), who conducted a study on a single instructor at university level also reports that the teacher hardly created a context where learners' communicative needs necessitated the grammar structures. Rather the teacher adopted the PPP approach and situations and contexts were not created to emphasize the pragmatic practices on grammar learning. Similarly, Mengistie (2019) who conducted a study on a single teacher at elementary school reports that the teacher favored the traditional approach to grammar teaching and there was a discrepancy among perceptions and practices of the teacher. Gerencheal and Mishra (2019) reveal that EFL teachers in the context of Ethiopia still

hardly created grammar teaching contexts in classrooms; teachers tend to adapt the PPP approach, the formal grammar teaching in the classrooms.

Very recent empirical studies show similar realities to the teaching of grammar in the Ethiopian EFL classrooms. For example, Chali (2020) reported that teachers lacked skills to implement their beliefs to teaching grammar as communicatively as expected. Asratie (2020) who assessed the roles of English language teachers reported that teachers have few difficulties while teaching in classrooms and they should take part in training opportunities to create constant awareness on pedagogical aspects. Mulugeta (2020) also conducted an experimental study on 396 MA pursuing teachers among five universities and found out that teachers believed that implicit grammar teaching was viable, but they favored the explicit grammar teaching in their context.

The whole evidences show that grammar teaching practices have remained unchanged despite the claim on quality teaching policy in Ethiopia. There might be challenges that hinder teachers from practicing their roles in classrooms. Some of the teachers may merely favor their own practical theories and others might rely on more of a single approach. As Jha (2014) reports, teachers may teach grammar for the sake of understanding purposes, not for mastery and communicative uses. Or teachers may not employ effective learning practices based on the social and emerging realities to learning the foreign language based on the essentiality of grammar teaching in today's world. Grammar teaching practices show that significant practical changes on student learning have not resulted in the proper development of the language competencies in line with the new issuance and development in ELT curriculum (Eba, 2013; Mulugeta, 2020).

Thus, based on the global and the local gaps, the literature represented and the researcher's experiences, this study initiated to explore how EFL teachers teach grammar at a secondary school. The focus pertains to teachers' practices and difficulties they face in the actual classroom situation. Accordingly, two research questions have been raised.

1. How do EFL teachers practice grammar teaching in EFL classrooms?
2. What challenges do the teachers face while teaching grammar lessons in EFL classrooms?

3. Research Methodology

In order to answer the above research questions, a qualitative research approach was employed. Hence, a single case study design was used to explore the grammar teaching practices and challenges of EFL teachers in a secondary school.

4. Participants

Three EFL teachers were the participants of the study. They were taken from a single school, Azezo Dimaza Secondary School in Gondar town, Ethiopia. All of them were teaching English language skills for grade 9 in the academic year 2020/21.

5. Sampling techniques

The school was chosen based on purposive sampling technique for two reasons. All the three teachers in the school were more experienced in teaching English as a foreign language; the proximity of the school site was convenient to gather data through frequent observations. The three EFL teachers (coded as T1, T2 and T3) in the school were used as research participants based on comprehensive sampling technique.

6. Data gathering instruments

Two data gathering instruments were used: reflective journals and classroom observations. The first tool was used to grasp the whole grammar teaching practices of the teachers before the actual classroom observation in EFL classrooms. The observation data were video recorded for re-watching and understanding the practices.

7. Data Collection Procedures

To foster data gathering processes and maintain the validity and reliability of the data, procedures were used. First the teachers were informed about the research purposes. Second, the researcher addressed data gathering schedule to each teacher in accordance with the school program. Then data were collected based on designed reflective journal formats and observation data were also collected through note taking and video recording. Eventually, the data were transcribed, categorized and analyzed based on identified themes.

8. Data validation

The truth of data needs to be increased (Silverman, 2015). Therefore, the researcher attempted to offer similar reflective journal formats to each teacher. The data observed were supported by video records to increase credibility. The data were also transcribed based on the original information from each participant. The participant teachers checked the data whether information was biased by the motivation of the researcher or not. The data were also refined and categorized into themes for further analysis and discussions based on the data obtained from the teachers.

9. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data from the classroom observations and reflective journals were analyzed thematically based on the emerging concepts.

10. Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations were taken into account. The researcher made the objective of the study clear to the teachers and requested them if they would be voluntary. As the teachers were sure to be participants, consent agreement was made. Discussions and responsibilities were also made clear to the teachers and the researcher assured confidentiality would be kept.

11. Results

11.1. Results of classroom observations

This section presents the data obtained from teachers on grammar teaching practices as have been categorized into three themes based on the instructional phases in EFL classrooms.

Grammar lessons	While introducing grammar (Theme 1)	While teaching grammar (Theme 2)	While checking for understanding (Them 3)
T1 Present perfect Active/passive Conditionals	Revised lessons by asking learners to take part Asked learners to define terms (What is present perfect?)	Offered many examples Gave long explanations Showed rules to learners Did not establish interactions	Summarized points Explained grammar items Showed rules Encouraged learners
T2 Active /passive Conditionals Using 'ago'	Asked learners to remind her of previous lessons and for lesson concepts Told the class daily lesson Defined terms	Encouraged learners to participate Asked learners many questions repetitively Offered more examples followed by rule analysis	Gave chances to learners Otherwise, dismissed class with no homework provision or checking understanding
T3 Conditionals Active/passive Using 'ago'	Told the class daily lessons Spent much time on defining and naming lessons Encouraged learners revise	Explained grammar items Gave more examples at sentence level in more simple sentences	Summarized lessons eventually Told learners main points

Table 1: Observed grammar teaching practices

In the presentation phase, teachers employed similar practices; they revised previous lessons and tended to define terms focusing on giving conceptual understanding. Naming each grammar item and pushing learners to define terms were common practices observed. A few documented data reveal the grammar teaching practices of each teacher. For example, T1 began class by raising questions: "What is present perfect tense? Who can define it? What is the difference between passive and active?" Similarly, T2 began her class stating a few conceptual points: "What is an active sentence? What is a passive voice?" T3 had his own introductory expressions: "What is the meaning of 'going to'?" From the introductory phase of the grammar teaching, it is possible to deduce that EFL teachers focused on the formal grammar teaching practices. The teachers did not capacitate learners to meaningful practices and this is a bad lesson beginning since the start of the lesson would not engage learners for independent learning purposes. From this, it is possible to induce that the teachers did not establish interactive nature to grammar learning.

As EFL teachers extend to actual practices (middle phase) on grammar instruction, they are often expected to play facilitation roles being themselves co-constructors. However, the reality was not true of the observed teachers on the ground. Rather teachers continued still favoring more explicit teaching practices, having more dozens of examples and too long explanations. Instances taken from the actual observations can be revealed by taking what the EFL teachers relied on sentence analysis and rule telling endeavors:

Active: “Subject + verb + object (The boy broke a window)” (T1)

Passive: “Subject + be + past participle (A window was broken)” (T1)

Probable: “If you study hard, you will pass the exam” (T3)

Improbable: “If I ate lunch, I would not be tired now” (T3)

These rule-fronted teaching practices show that the teachers were pertinent to ‘forms’ of the language and the way teachers presented grammar entails that they were not playing the roles they were supposed to play. They relied solely on the linguistic features of the grammar instead of on the communicative practices. In this sense, grammar was taught traditionally with no contextual creativities.

At the production phase, still the teachers were observed narrating, telling and explaining grammar rules without contexts. The teachers were instantly in traditional grammar teaching routines having more repetitive examples and tedious explanations as can be evidenced from teachers’ direct expressions:

“Generally, the ‘active voice’ is about the doer of the sentence and the passive is about what happened to the object.” (T3) “Generally, active sentences are used to express about the subject of the sentence. Any passive sentence can be constructed using ‘verb to be’”. (T2) “The active voice is about actions done by the subject. The passive voice is about actions happened to the object.”(T1).

The grammar teaching practices of the teachers entail that not only summaries but also example sentences were used as part of lesson completion practices. The teachers gave more focus on the conceptual and structural aspects of the language, and they did not go beyond structure mastery; the teachers seemed to remain on grammar content mastery. From this, it is possible to understand that grammar teaching remained as part of concept understanding at linguistic, morphological and syntactic levels; grammar teaching can thus be considered as divorced from context and text integrations.

The teachers were also observed from the angel they were encountered with difficulties while teaching grammar in classrooms. The identified grammar teaching challenges have been presented in Table 2.

Themes	Codes	T1	T2	T3
Approaches or methods	Linguistic (syntactic) approach	Focused on forms Giving examples Showing rule analysis The teacher is idea generator with one way communication	Focused on rules Giving more linguistic data Regular teacher talks Learners remained listeners to the teacher	Defining terms Giving more quantity Teacher talks and examples Learners followed the teacher
Knowing learners	Little knowledge about learners	Teaching grammar when learners are not active participants	Giving unnecessary information about grammar terms and rule analysis	Defining terms when learners were not active in class
Pedagogy	Lack of skill on how to facilitate grammar learning	Teachers dominated the class. Grammar is presented in isolation. Learners do not experience the grammar	The teacher presented grammar explicitly with no participation of learners. Grammar is presented with no / little context in use	The teacher is the only source of grammar knowledge. The lessons are presented explicitly

Table 2: Observed grammar teaching challenges

Although the teachers reported in their reflective journals that students were their chronic problems to teaching grammar, the reverse seemed to be true based on the data observed. Based on the themes identified, the problems originated from the actual grammar teaching practices.

As the first theme reveals the EFL teachers are traditionalists in grammar teaching; they focused on the linguistic aspects in the absence of context and creativities. Classroom instances remained full of practices with inflexible teaching practices focusing on the declarative knowledge of grammar. The pace, the approach and the roles teachers played seemed the same throughout the teaching endeavors.

The other challenge seemed to originate from the teachers since they have little knowledge about their learners. Being dominant all the time and talking to much about the grammar rules and functions entail that the teachers did not know their students for their needs and interests. The problem came because teachers did not facilitate learning based on learners' interest and live situations in context. The last theme entails that the teachers have little experience about what grammar to teach and how. Although teaching grammar demands teachers' decisions and creativities in context, teachers did not push learners to their meaningful learning practices to the fullest.

11.2. Results of reflective journals

In the absence of the researcher, teachers were required to record about their grammar teaching practices and difficulties based on two guiding questions:

1. Please report your practices to teaching grammar (comparisons, modals and voices).
2. Please report the challenges you faced while teaching these grammar lessons.

Case	Teachers' practices reported	Codes	Themes
	While introducing grammar inputs		<i>Grammar instructional decisions and practices</i>
T1	"I revised previous lessons, introduced 'comparisons', told the concepts of grammar at the beginning.	The role of the teachers to grammar inputs	
T2	"I revised previous lessons, introduced the 'conditionals'. After that I gave examples. I showed the rules to the class"		
T3	I introduced the class comparisons (positive, comparative and superlative). I showed how to construct sentences using the rules.		
	While facilitating grammar learning	The decisions and practices to facilitate grammar learning	
T1	I showed rule, gave examples."		
T2	I showed rules, gave examples how to construct correct sentences using the grammar.		
T3	I gave examples, assigned group work, motivated students to participate. I gave homework and finish the lesson topic.		
	While checking for understanding at lesson closes	Responsive feedback to check understanding	
T1	I summarized the lessons by giving main points		
T2	I gave clear summary to the class.		
T3	At the end I gave clear examples how to use the rules in sentences.		

Table 3: Reported practices

According to the inputs introduced to the learners, the teachers gave more information to the learners. This implies that teachers relied more on declarative knowledge rather than the procedural, communicative one. The decisions they made were more of sentence analysis on discrete nature. As have been mentioned in Table 3, the teachers focused on giving examples and explanations and this showed similar evidences to what was observed in the actual classrooms.

For example, the evidence in both data showed that the teachers gave summaries at the end of grammar lessons. Feedbacks seemed also focused to pertain to concept understanding. In brief, the grammar teaching relied on declarative aspects of the language. The reported data implied that the teachers were traditional practitioners as they merely relied on linguistic data presentation, not on communicative inputs to serve learners in meaningful contexts.

Cases	Teachers' responses	Codes	Theme
T1: Comparisons Modals Voices	"I faced problems from students. They were poor in English; they did not know rules. They were not interested to learn grammar. The crowded class was another challenge."	Blaming students for being with poor backgrounds and inability	Students as source of chronic challenge to grammar teaching
T2: Comparisons Modals Voices	"Students do not know the grammar rules. It was difficult to teach more students in my class. There were over 70 students in class; they were not interested to learn."		
T3: Comparisons Modals Voices	"Students were careless and they disturbed. The textbook contents are not suitable to teach grammar. There are more notes in the book are presented several times."		

Table 4: Reported challenges

All the teachers reported that their problem came from their students. "Students are baseless on grammar rules and uses. They did not participate in class because they are passive; they had inadequate knowledge of English grammar" (T1). T3 also reported that "students were not interested in learning grammar; rather they disturbed in class and talked about their private issues." With a similar tone, T2 reported that "students were not able to construct active and passive sentences because they don't know the rules of the grammar."

Contrary to what was observed in the actual classrooms, the reflected journal data implies that students were thought to be the causes for ineffective grammar teaching practices. In their report, teachers blamed students and they seemed blind to their own teaching practices and situational factors in the classroom dynamics.

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12. Discussions

13.1. Grammar teaching practices

From the reported journals, the observations conducted and the results analyzed, the teachers did not present grammar lessons using contexts. They relied solely on presenting grammar lessons through revisions and discussions for concept understanding. Teachers were inflexible to the same routines and ways of presenting grammar lessons through explanations and examples in isolation. However, teaching grammar in these ways hinders learners from meaningful practices and in turn this reduces students' grammar awareness. That is why Azar (2007) strongly argues that too much explanation and too many examples are ineffective approaches to teaching grammar. Similarly, naming grammar items in isolation and presenting grammar in discrete fashions are bad beginning of grammar teaching. Rather teachers are advised not to stick to a single mode of teaching approach when they are required to be creative, flexible and opportunistic in EFL classrooms (Harmer, 2007, 2012).

As the teachers extended to the actual (middle phase) grammar teaching practices, they were found still to rely more on linguistic data offerings to the learners. Teachers focused on giving more examples and explanations in detail about the language and the rules. Such practices are also strongly objected by scholars in that examples and explanations are ways of giving information, not actually engaging practices to learning grammar (Scrivener, 2014). If teachers address grammar lessons depending on examples and explanations in more explicit nature, they are said to be traditionalists and are incapable of pushing learners to learning edges in the classrooms. Nassaji (2017) also argues against teaching grammar focusing more on 'forms' approach although explicit teaching can contribute its purpose in the teaching dynamics. Be it explicit or implicit, grammar teaching should have been addressed to capture the attention of the learners for meaningful learning (Scrivener, 2011; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Richards, 2015).

Conversely, in the observed classrooms, the EFL teachers were found teaching grammar focusing on sentence presentational through examples and analyzing the constituent parts of the sentences to show how language works. This reveals that teachers are teaching grammar as a subject to be understood for later uses and they did not make grammar learners master grammar for communicative uses on the ground. The actual grammar teaching practices also indicate that the teachers were not aware of why learners came to the classrooms. Learners come to the class to communicate, not to understand the declarative knowledge, not to learn the grammar for later uses. In this regard, scholars have to say a few single points. For example, Takala (2016) argues that learners come to class to communicate with the language not to understand concepts of the grammar terms. Jha (2014) also points out that grammar teaching should be seen as part of language teaching and it must be mastered. Understanding discrete grammar items is not enough for enabling learners communicate in class (Harmer, 2012). Grammar teaching should be presented as massive integrating macro and micro skills in situations (Nassaji, 2017) otherwise the trouble will linger among students. Myhill and Watson (2014) also point out that grammar teaching has to be integrated to what learners are able to write and communicate, as Dykes (2007) points out, by bringing the outside world into the classroom or take the classroom situations to the actual world for meaningful, playful and engaging learning practices.

Reported practices (through reflective journals) still show similar grammar teaching practices. The teachers focused more on rule analysis and explanations. They tended to define

terms for students (“Today we are going to learn about conditional” T1). The EFL teachers gave emphasis to applying the correct grammatical terms in the classrooms instead of serving learners practice in natural communications. Scholars suggest that naming and telling about each grammar item is not communicative and sensible to learn English grammar in a foreign classroom settings. For example, Scrivener (2014) and Ellis (2015) suggest that when teaching grammar through naming and explanations, teachers cannot really capacitate learners to communicate using the grammar.

As a whole, both the observed and the reported data entail that the EFL teachers addressed grammar lessons deductively. They did not provide learners with maximized grammar learning opportunities. The roles the teachers played were not sufficient to push learners to sensible grammar learning realities. The repetitive, imaged and explanatory sentences could not help learners communicate using the grammar as independently as expected. The teaching of grammar under teacher-led fashions cannot initiate immediate communicative experiences in EFL classrooms (Murphy and Hastings, 2006). Grammar teaching formally is said to be inauthentic and learners cannot be creative and socially initiated to communicate (Hoerath, 2019).

13.2. Grammar teaching challenges

Teachers reported that problems in grammar teaching came from their students. Because of low English language performance, students were not able to participate accordingly in classrooms and teachers blamed students for making anti-social behaviors in classes. If students are not active participants, literature supports teachers might not have presented grammar based on needs and interests of the students. If dry grammar is presented, students tend to disturb in class (Dykes, 2007). Grammar teaching at sentence level is often boring since the focus is on linguistic aspects, not communicative practices (Allen, 20104). Hence, the EFL teachers did not practice teaching grammar as meaningfully as possible.

However, the challenges observed entail that grammar teaching difficulties seemed to be from the presentational dynamism in the classrooms. Teachers did not capacitate learners to experience grammar in context. They did not realize that they were dominant in class. There were no rooms to engage learners in classrooms. Teachers presented grammar lessons telling more information than pushing learners to practices. Teachers presented grammar in imagined lives in artificial sentences, pre-planned by the teachers themselves (e.g., He is shorter than her. The table is broken by him).

Consequently, challenges came from mismatching between grammar teaching and learning performance. Larsen-Freeman (2014) and Harmer (2012) argue that teachers focused on forms of the language more frequently than on meanings and of uses. The problem was so because of more of linguistic feature presentation. As Sudrajat (2017) supports this idea, grammar teaching at word and sentence level is less effective. Grammar teaching was practiced by EFL teachers since they see grammar to be taught for concept understanding purpose (Jha, 2014). In this way, English was taught as a subject and grammar as a component part of the language. Grammar teaching information flows in much quantity from teachers to students and this fixed approach in teaching grammar blocks the active, independent learning experiences of the learners. Teachers did not give rooms for learners to share fresh, immediate socially created communications in classrooms (Benjamin and Berger, 2014). All this accounted the grammar teaching to remain manacled in the classroom practice as a hidden challenge to pushing learners into their meaningful learning corners. This indicates that teachers still have more responsibilities to mix top-

down skills and bottom-up skills into the classroom situations; they need to be dutiful to teaching grammar by going beyond sentence level and merge global and local aspects of grammar learning into ELT classrooms (McDougald, 2018). Failure to opt the merging and matching realities seem to be the embedded challenges that EFL teachers encounter in teaching grammars in classrooms.

13. Conclusion

From this study, it is concluded that EFL teachers are not aware of how to facilitate grammar learning. They simply presented grammar as if students were in class to understand the contents to know how the language works. Hence, more inductive instructional practices need to be made clear to the teachers through trainings that can bring radical changes. Teachers also need to be capacitated how to facilitate learning and to employ alternative options to teaching grammar primarily for its ultimate goal, communicative purposes. It is also concluded that teachers lack inward looking towards their own teaching praxis. Challenges were not only learner behaviors; challenges in grammar teaching were also originated from classroom dynamics caused by teaching that is monotonous and ineffective. Consequently, greater attention has to be given to grammar instructions endeavors for improved teaching practices and learning performance in ELT classrooms.

14. Implications

This study is a case study, a very small faction of grammar teaching practices at a particular school. Thus, the conclusion is based only on what happened in classrooms based on data from three EFL teachers. Hence, further studies are necessary to explore the grammar teaching practices extensively and report what EFL teachers need to be informed, capacitated and made aware of their pedagogical cognitions and current trends of ELT at global and local aspects. By doing more studies, teachers would be oriented for innovation, alternative and sound grammar teaching endeavors on how to teach, how to facilitate learning and maximize their teaching praxis to achieve grammar teaching for its ultimate goal, live communication uses. Hence, additional classroom observational studies should be conducted for more insightful grammar teaching enhancements.

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