

# TEACHERS' PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES OF TEACHING GRAMMAR: THE CASE OF GRADE 7 EFL TEACHER OF AZEZO PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

*This study was dedicated to investigate grade 7 EFL teacher's perceptions and classroom practices with regard to grammar teaching. Hence, an EFL teacher was selected based on available sampling technique. Observations were employed to see the actual practices of grammar lessons in the classroom. Besides, post-observation interview was also conducted to know the perceptions of a teacher about grammar teaching. Both of them were analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study, in general, indicated that teachers still teach grammar following structural approach which has been criticized as traditional, teacher centered and focus on accuracy. Moreover, the data gained via observation revealed that there is inadequate knowledge of the teacher in the teaching of grammar. The findings of the unstructured interview also showed that the teacher favored the traditional approach to grammar teaching. There was a discrepancy among perceptions and practices of the teacher, and what the contemporary literatures suggest about the best way to teach grammar in general. Be that as it may, the overall findings of the study indicated that there is a correlation between teacher's perceptions and classroom practices.*

**Key words:** *grammar, perceptions, practices,*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar is said to be rules of a language, and it is a system of meaningful structures and patterns that are governed by particular pragmatic constraints (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). In other words, grammar is a description of the rules for forming sentences, including an account of the meanings that these forms convey. In foreign language learning, accurate understanding of the language structures is the key part, so teaching grammar is an essential aspect of foreign language instruction. There has always been a debate about the most effective way of teaching grammar. Grammar instruction through context positively affects learners' competence to use grammatical structures accurately in language skills. It is always useful for learners to see how language works in sentences or paragraphs; therefore, teaching

grammar in context will give learners opportunities to see how grammatical structures function in sentences (Anderson, 2005). Teaching grammar in context will help learners to acquire nature of the language which will facilitate their understanding of the language. Hence, to be an effective language user, learners should study grammar because grammar skills will help them to organize words and messages and make them meaningful. Knowing more about grammar will enable learners to build better sentences in speaking and writing performances. A good knowledge of grammar helps learners to make sentences clear enough to understand. Improper use of grammar will not convey meaningful messages (Ellis, 2006). Students may not be able to understand how grammar rules work in a sentence, but learning grammar in context will allow learners to see how rules can be used in sentences. Language is context-sensitive. This means that, in the absence of context, it is very difficult to recover the intended meaning of a single word or phrase (Andrews (2003).

One, therefore, can have insight that teaching grammar in context provides a meaningful framework that connects to reality in the target language. For instance, if learners are not given opportunities to explore grammar in context, it will be difficult for them to see how and why alternative forms exist to express different communicative meanings. Many researchers stress the fact that learners need to experience grammatical conventions in various contexts in order to control and use them correctly.

### **1.1. Background**

In the last decade, grammar instruction had been considered by many teachers as having little or no place in a communicative classroom (Noonan, 2004). The argument that grammar does not facilitate language acquisition or that learners are capable of acquiring grammar through natural exposure to input rather than instruction was primarily initiated by Krashen (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). His beliefs have encouraged many teachers to downplay grammar in the language classroom.

Conversely, according to Williams (2005), four main types of grammar theories have been put forward as the focus of theoretical knowledge to be taught and exposed to EFL teachers before entering a language classroom, such as: prescriptive, descriptive, generative and functional grammar which can be directly linked to the three stages of grammar revolution (i.e., traditional grammar, structuralism and functionalism).

To begin with, in the theory of prescriptive grammar, Rothman (2010) argues that the rules of grammar should be explicitly learned and taught formally in school as the framework of the language. It is, however, argued that prescriptive grammar is considered by many modern linguists as “old fashion” and not valid cross linguistically and is always under strong arguments. Be that as it may, this theory can still be taken into consideration by teachers in exposing rules or structures of language for EFL learners. The second theory, which is descriptive grammar, on the other hand, is focusing on how students use language in their day-to-day speech and how the target language works. This is also

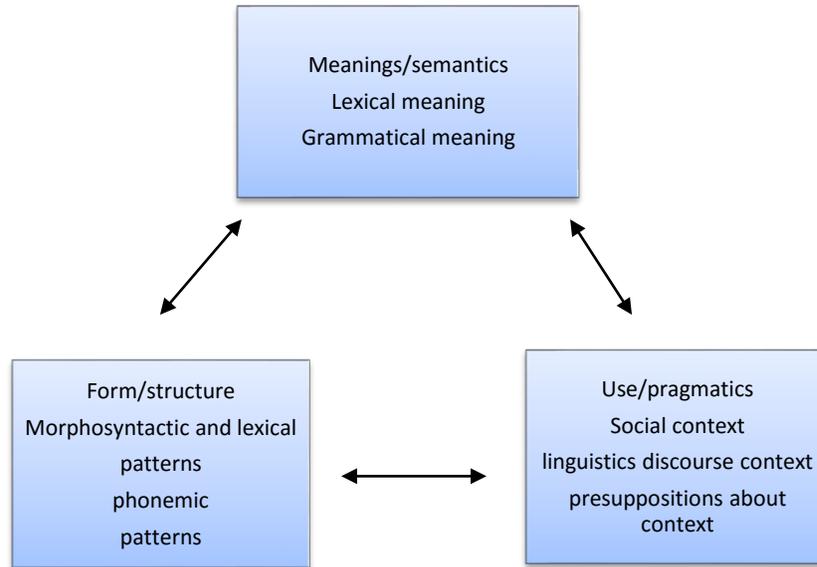
supported by Rothman (2010), in which this approach can lead students to the understanding of the unconscious knowledge as similar as the native speakers. The third theory is generative grammar, in which the notion was developed in 1950s by Noam Chomsky. This theory of grammar considers language to be a species-specific property which is a part of the human mind (William, 2005). As a result, teachers can be well prepared for any circumstances and challenges they may be facing in a language classroom. The last approach is functional grammar, which is a general theory of the organization of natural language as developed by Simon C. Dik and others, which sees the fundamental roles of different levels of grammatical organization (Williams, 2005). This theory seeks EFL teachers to suit the objectives of teaching in fulfilling the needs of the curriculum and students to deliver meaning effectively in different settings as to help learners to communicate effectively using different discourses.

Grammar is now again at a state in which it is considered an essential element of language teaching (Lee, 2008). Many linguists and researchers have given support to grammar instruction in ESL and EFL teaching and learning. For example, the communicative competence model of Canale and Swain (1980) clearly illustrates the significance of grammar. In this model, grammar is viewed as one component of communicative competence. Without grammar, learners can communicate effectively only in a limited number of situations. In addition, Brown (2000) strongly supports the teaching of grammar. According to him, grammar is highly valuable as an important part of the study of language, of ideas, and of writing.

In teaching and learning the English language, therefore, it is believed that grammar has always been an essential component, since it provides the speaker with the needed structures to organize words and ideas in a comprehensible form. It is through the use of correct grammar people tend to communicate efficiently and avoid misunderstandings. However, teaching grammar has always been an area of controversy (Braine, 2014). The discussion has, for the most part, focused on the role of grammar in the English language teaching and the different approaches to grammar instruction. Due to the emergence of the new methods and approaches in the field of English language teaching, teachers tend to develop different opinions on grammar teaching.

In presenting grammar, thus, teachers should have better **awareness** that they teach grammar but not teach about grammar, or as Larsen-Freeman (2000) states language learning is more important than language teaching. Besides, the main goal in grammar teaching is to enable learners to achieve linguistic competence and to be able to use grammar as a tool or resource in the comprehension and creation of oral and written discourse efficiently, effectively, and appropriately according to the situation.

*Fig 1: A Three-Dimensional Grammar Framework*



*Adapted from Larsen-Freeman (2001:252)*

Larsen-Freeman (2001) argues that grammar should never be taught as an end in itself but always with reference to meaning, social function, or discourse or a combination of these factors. In other words, teachers are required to have knowledge of linguistics because teaching grammar as meaning and discourse entails knowledge of syntax. As Fromkin et al. (1990) explain “syntactic knowledge plays a role in determining when two non-identical sentences have the same meaning and when they do not.” Besides, teachers’ knowledge of pragmatics will help learners to understand many aspects of language use such as social function. Furthermore, teachers should teach learners to understand how language is used in context and encourage them to use it in appropriate contexts as well.

This tells us that the ways grammar should best be taught differ from teacher to teacher, researcher to researcher, and methodologist to methodologist. According to Long (1991), in second language literature, two approaches to grammar teaching that are often discussed are *Focus on Form* and *Focus on Forms*. The former refers to an approach to teaching grammar whenever errors occur during a meaning-focused activity, whereas the latter refers to teaching grammar in isolation. Long (1991) specified that Focus on Form “overtly draws students’ attention to language elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (pp. 45-46). To clarify the point, Long & Robinson (1998) pointed out that “focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features by the teacher and/or one or more students triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production” (p. 23). Focus on forms, as Ellis (2008) indicated, refers to the type of instruction that seeks to isolate linguistics forms in order to teach them one at a time as when language teaching is based on a structural syllabus. In addition, Doughty

and Williams (1998) noted “to be clear, it should be borne in mind that the traditional notion of *forms* always entails isolation or extraction of linguistic features from context or from communicative activity” (p.3).

From this, it is possible to argue that English language teachers should be aware of how to deliver grammar lesson in the classroom. Consequently, it is indispensable to explore the teaching of English grammar and classroom instructions. Therefore, in this study, the researcher examined the case of grade 7 EFL teacher and investigated his/her perceptions and actual practices of grammar teaching at Azezo primary school.

## 1.2. The Problem

In recent years, educational research has stressed the role which teachers’ subject-matter knowledge plays in shaping what they do in the classroom; thus, in the classroom, grammar explanations should be presented clearly in simple and non-technical language (Borg, 2001). According to Lee (2008), the teacher should be able to explain, when it is appropriate, a point of grammar accurately and succinctly to non-native learners because many EFL learners have gained a better comprehension from the systematic explanation of grammatical points. Teachers should also be very careful about when and how they should explain grammatical rules. Otherwise, the situation may become even worse because it may cause more confusion or prove counter-productive for learners due to the exceptions to grammatical rules. Therefore, with explanations given too quickly, learners will feel confused rather than benefit from the teachers’ efforts. Ellis (2006) is also right in saying that teachers should “*stop explaining, start exploring*”.

This can be interpreted that teachers do not need to explain everything. Wise teachers know that the rules are not a short cut and that they are only a small part of the understanding process, which relates to several factors. For example, knowing a language means knowing what sentences are appropriate in various situations. Teachers, then, should not tell learners how the language works but ask them to explore or to discover it for themselves. According to Moini (2009), learning takes time; some areas need to be explored more than once through a combination of explanation and helpful hints such as informal guides, examples and diagrams. Teachers, therefore, should provide an appropriate atmosphere to encourage learners to explore for real understanding first. While exploring, learners should realize that they have to apply their grammatical knowledge first before coming to the answer. The discovery will be easier and more appealing if learners are provided with context.

In addition, both teachers and learners have to be involved in grammar instruction. Teachers need to clearly define the instructional objectives and presents grammar lesson to learners through practical examples and simple contexts so that there would be possibilities to gradually release the responsibility of teaching grammar to learners in group work in the context of language-promoting conversation.

In my own experience of teaching grammar in particular, I have understood that the best way to improve EFL learners' linguistic ability is by encouraging them to explore a variety of texts in the language and practice they have learnt in the classroom outside the classroom in various situations. I believe that language experience should not be confined to only what is formally taught in the classroom. I also agree with Krashen (1992) that getting learners interested in books will insure continued grammatical development long after the language course ends.

Coming to our own context at large, English language, at all school levels, is taught as a course that contains macro and micro skills including grammar which is the focus of the study. However, as far as my experience of teaching the target language is concerned, there are still difficulties on students in terms of their communicative and writing skills of their accuracy. Not only this, but also this is the fact that friends of mine, both in formal and informal discussions, have been grumbling about the students' accuracy in their speaking and academic writing practices. The complain goes to elementary EFL teachers as not endeavoring their efforts to assist their students develop their grammatical knowledge using suggested approaches discussed earlier.

Conversely, Ellis (2008) argues that it is best to emphasize the teaching of grammar in the beginning-level of EFL classes, and also it is best to emphasize meaning focused instruction to begin with and introduce grammar teaching later, when learners have already begun to form their interlanguages. A key premise of behaviorist theories of language learning is that "error like sin needs to be avoided at all costs." This premise holds that once learners have formed incorrect habits, they will have difficulty eradicating them and replacing them with correct habits. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that learners develop correct habits in the first place. This was one of the key premises of the audio-lingual method (Larson-Freeman, 2000). Other arguments can be advanced in favor of beginning to teach grammar early. The alternative to a form-focused approach emphasizes meaning and message creation, as in task-based language teaching (Ferreira, 2014), but many teachers believe that beginning-level learners cannot engage in meaning-centered activities because they lack the necessary knowledge of the target language to perform tasks. Thus, a form focused approach is needed initially to construct a basis of knowledge that learners can then use and extend in a meaning-focused approach. Finally, current connectionist theories of EFL learning, which give primacy to implicit learning processes based on massive exposure to the target language, also provide a basis for teaching grammar to *beginners*. This seems the reason Ellis (2005), in a similar manner, has suggested that learning necessarily commences with an explicit representation of linguistic forms, which are then developed through implicit learning. He suggests that teaching grammar *early* is valuable because it provides a basis for the real learning that follows.

Apart from theories to language teaching, abroad and local studies on this area were conducted. Kalam (2013), for example, explored teachers' attitudes and beliefs about grammar teaching in EFL

classroom. The major findings of this study show that teachers view grammar as an inseparable part of language teaching and learning and think that formal grammar instruction has a facilitative role in language learning. In teaching grammar, explicit instruction and contextualized use within communicative activities are preferred and inductive approaches and corrections of errors are considered effective and helpful by teachers. In the same vein, Firhan (2018) examined challenges of teaching grammar at tertiary level. The study reveals that EFL teachers face challenges in teaching grammar, such as: lack of experience, negative perceptions on the teaching of grammar and difficulties in preparing grammar lessons.

Local study of this area has been conducted by Zewudie Tamiru (2017) aiming at teachers' beliefs and practices of teaching grammar at Zenzelma primary school. The major findings of the study, thus, indicated that teachers still teach grammar following structural approach which has been criticized as traditional, teacher-centered and focus on accuracy or grammatical correctness. Likewise, Tiglu Geza (2008) did a research in exploring whether or not the techniques of grammar teaching used in a meaningful contexts and situations at grade 10 students of Gurage Zone. This study also shows that the majority of the grammar lessons are not presented in a meaningful contexts and situations. The students are not also encouraged to express their own feelings, attitudes and interests using the target structures, and they are still given the grammar rules explicitly with one or two examples.

Nevertheless, as far as the reading of the researcher is concerned, there is no specific study which has been conducted to investigate the case of Azezo primary school EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of teaching grammar, and this makes this study different from the previous studies. Therefore, the study investigated the case of grade 7 EFL teacher's perceptions and classroom practices regarding teaching grammar at Azezo primary school, and attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do EFL teachers perceive about grammar teaching?
2. To what extent do EFL teacher teach grammar?
3. Is there a discrepancy between EFL teachers' perceptions and classroom instructions?

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

As noted earlier, this study was conducted to investigate the perceptions and practices of English language teacher in teaching grammar. Therefore, the researcher employed a qualitative study to better understand the perceptions and practices of grammar teaching.

### 2.1. Participants, Sight and Sampling Techniques

An English language teacher of Azezo primary school, which is found in Gondar city administration, was selected as a participant. The study employed both purposive and available sampling techniques to choose the school and the research participant respectively.

### 2.2. Data Gathering Instruments and Procedures

The researcher used two data gathering instruments: observation and unstructured interview. Observation gives the firsthand account of situations under study, and it allows for a holistic interpretation of the situations which are being studied (Best & Kahan, 1989). The main purpose of conducting observation, therefore, was to investigate the actual practice of the teaching of grammar in the classroom. Hence, a series of two classes (i.e., about *active* and *passive* sentences) of a teacher was observed. There was audio-recording while the observation was conducted for more information. On the other hand, the main purpose of a post-lesson interview was to gather information about perceptions towards the teaching of grammar in general. All the interviews were audio-recorded.

### 2.3. Method of Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained from both interview and observations were analyzed qualitatively. The observation data were transcribed and analyzed using narrative approach. Similarly, the unstructured interview were transcribed, coded and presented in verbatim and analyzed thematically.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Results of Classroom Observations

This section consists of presenting the discussion of the actual classrooms observed in a series of two classes in light of teaching grammar. The discussion mainly focuses on the content of the target language presented, approaches used to teach grammar, and general strategies the teacher employed in the classroom.

To begin with, the teacher tried to remind the students that they learnt about vocabulary in the last class, and began to present the definition of *active* and *passive voices*; however doesn't appear in the correct manner. Thus the teacher started the discussion as follow. (*S* and *Ss* here refer to *student* and *several students* respectively, and *T* refers to the *teacher*):

**T:** Today we are going to talk about active and passive voices of present simple tense. Hence, *active voice* means *complete sentence*; whereas, *passive voice* means *incomplete sentence*. Do you

understand students? The teacher confirmed. Then, the teacher illustrated the definition using the following example which is provided on the textbook. *'My father builds this house.'* The teacher explained the example as: "*my father*"- in the sentence is-*the doer of the action*, and "*builds*"- in the sentence is-*action- do you understand, students?*

**S:** Yes!

**T:** Ok, in pairs, identify whether the activities 1- 8 are written in active or passive voice.

The teacher tried to encourage the learners to discuss the tasks orally, and then asked the students as follow.

**T:** Is the first sentence written in the active or passive voice? *Shewit bakes bread at the bakery.*

**S:** It is active voice.

**T:** What for?

**S:** himmm...

**T:** ... because "*Shewit bakes bread*"- is the doer of the action

**T:** What about the second sentence? *Delicious food is prepared by the cook.*

**S:** immm... It is a Passive voice.

**T:** Why?

**S:** himmm...

**T:** The reason is that "*delicious food*"- in this sentence is used to indicate passive voice.

**T:** Is the third sentence written in the active or passive voice? *We use "teff" flour to make "injera".*

**S:** It is an active voice.

**T:** Is he right, class?

**Ss:** Yes!

**T:** What for?

**Ss:** (*chatting*)

**T:** ...because *the product "teff"*- is the doer of the action.

**T:** Ok! What about the fourth sentence? *Tona buys cooking oil from the shop.*

**S:** It is an active voice.

**T:** Why?

**S:** ...because it is the doer of the action.

**T:** Yes, it is because in the sentence "*Tona buys*"-means the doer of the action, and "*cooking*" used in the sentence- means action.

**T:** Is the fifth sentence written in the active or passive voice? *Hailu eats "injera" for his lunch.*

**S:** It is an active voice.

**T:** Is he right, students?

**Ss:** Yes!

**T:** Is the sixth sentence written in the active or passive voice? *Rice is packed in sacks.*

**S:** It is an active voice.

**T:** Yes, it is an active voice! What for?

**Ss:** No, it is a passive voice. (*shouting, no, no...*)

**T:** Yes, it is not an active voice. It is a passive voice.

**T:** What about the seventh sentence? *Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in the 1876.*

**S:** It is an active voice.

**T:** Is she right, class?

**Ss:** Yes!

**T:** Is the eighth sentence written in the active or passive voice? *The Eiffel Tower is visited by over 5 million people every year.*

**S:** It is a passive voice.

**T:** Is he right, class?

**Ss:** Yes!

**T:** (*gave the students a homework and said good bye*)

### Discussions

From the observations conducted, the teacher didn't present the lessons in both classes using contexts; rather he/she simply defined the content and asked students to tell the definition of that content, and then tried to illustrate it by rendering instances from the textbook. Besides, the data revealed that the teacher in both classes tried his/her best getting students involved in pair works although there was problem of classroom management. The teacher also attempted to engage the learners to do tasks presented in their textbook, which is about identifying whether the sentences are written in *active* or *passive* voices in spite of the fact that there was problem of both subject-matter and pedagogical content knowledge. From this, the researcher can deduce that the focus of the teacher in teaching grammar was on *forms* not on *form*. Moreover, teacher's lack of knowledge of grammar impede the teacher concerning the actual language use in teaching grammar, and it was very difficult to students to be involved in grammar instruction. From the result of classroom observation, it can be also concluded there was immediate error correction technique employed by the teacher.

However, in light of the approach in which grammar should be presented Tugrul (2013) found that context-based grammar holds an important place for effective learning. It is more motivating for learners if grammar is taught in context so that students can have an opportunity to perceive how the new grammar structures work. Grammar rules are made easier if they are given in a context and teaching grammar in context provides accuracy in the target language. It is also argued that context-based instruction has always been useful for learners. Students need to learn language in logical contexts, either through authentic discourse-length input or through language learning materials (Hadley, 2003). On the other hand, in the case of EFL teachers, Borg (1991) claimed that teachers' knowledge of grammar plays decisive role in shaping what they do in the classroom. According to him, unless teachers are competent enough concerning the actual language use in teaching grammar, it is very difficult to be involved in grammar instruction.

### 3.2. Results and Discussions of Data Gathered from the Interview

#### Results

The interview items were designed for a teacher to understand about his/her overall perceptions about grammar teaching and evaluation of his/her grammar classes he/she just taught. The interview transcripts were systematically coded that were relevant to the study. Then, the researcher considerably combined coded data to form themes that emerged from the data. Eventually, the existing themes were defined and presented in the table below.

#### *Thematic analysis of the interview data*

Items	Response	Codes	Themes
1. What was the purpose of the lesson you delivered yesterday?	-I teach grammar to enable the learners to be accurate, especially, in their writing and speaking skills. Specifically, I taught about active and passive voices to enable to use this element appropriately.		
2. What procedure did you use in teaching grammar yesterday?	-I, first of all, tried to define what is meant by the grammatical element being presented, and then, asked students to tell me the structure of that linguistic element. If, unfortunately, the students can't answer the correct form of that element, I write the correct form on the blackboard, and then try getting the learners engaged toward the activities provided in the textbook.	accuracy, to develop skills, defining, focusing on structures, getting students to do tasks, focusing on forms & meanings	<i>Approaches to grammar teaching</i>
3. What approach do you use to teach grammar, do you focus on form, on meaning or both on form and meaning? Why?	-I use both form and meaning. Firstly, I focus on the structure and then I will come to the meaning of grammatical structures using different contexts.		

4. What content of language would you like to teach most? Why?	-I'm interested in teaching speaking skills than grammar because students should develop their speaking skills by making a dialogue using various contexts.	focus on speaking skills, grammar should be given, grammar helps to develop speaking & writing skills	<i>Perceptions</i>
5. Do you think grammar should be taught? Why?	-I believe that grammar should be taught because it helps the students to develop other language skills, especially, writing, & speaking.		
6. Do you think EFL teachers should use Amharic language in teaching grammar? If yes, what is the need of using it?	-Yes, I myself sometimes use students' first language in order to let them understand the content of the grammatical elements easily. Since the target language is not understood as their first language it is a must to use it for better understanding.	use of students' first language for understanding, feeling confident, lack of discussion, lack of time, large class size	<i>Inadequate knowledge</i>
7. How do you evaluate yourself in teaching grammar yesterday?	-I was confident in presenting the grammar lesson, but I failed in participating students so as to foster more discussion due to the fact that the class size is too large, and there was lack of time.		

### Discussions

The discussion focuses on the approaches the teacher uses in the teaching of grammar and his/her perceptions towards delivering the content. The discussion includes also the practice of the teacher and his/her subject-matter and pedagogical knowledge of grammar.

### *Approaches to grammar teaching*

The teacher teaches grammar to enable the learners to be accurate, especially, in their writing and speaking skills. However, the teacher is unable to achieve the intended objective of the grammar lesson because of lack of time. The time given for a class is not enough so as to help the learners understand the grammar lesson being taught. However, it is possible to be able to accurate if learners are dedicated in exerting their possible efforts to the lesson they are taught. As Thornbury (2001) points out, a focus exclusively on meaning may not be enough to trigger the reorganization of the learner's internal

grammar. Simply communicating with each other in pairs and groups is unlikely to push learners into uncharted territory. Students can get very good at communicating using only minimal resources.

On the other hand, the teacher follows a certain procedure so as to help the students understand the grammar lesson. To begin with, first of all, the teacher tries to define what is meant by the grammatical element being presented, and then, asked students to share their experience about the structure of that linguistic element. If, unfortunately, the students can't answer the correct form of that element, the teacher writes the correct form on the blackboard. Besides, he/she explain to the learners and get them engaged toward the activities provided in the textbook. In the same way, Larsen-Freeman (2001) explains that traditional grammar teaching has employed a structural syllabus and lessons composed of three phases: presentation, practice, and production (or communication), often referred to as "the PPP" approach. Underlying this approach is the assumption that one systematically builds towards communication. However, these days, most teachers embrace a more communicatively oriented approach, starting with a communicative activity such as task or content-based material. Hence, it appears better if teachers do not guide students with a structural syllabus (i.e., PPP approach), rather support students in the completion of the communicative tasks or making sense of a particular content area.

Besides, Jones (1993) argued that grammar teaching should stress the use of authentic materials as input and stimuli for the completion of interactive tasks relevant to students' interests related with them and integrated in skills. Thus, the goal of teaching the structure of the target language is to acquaint students with the second language as it is used naturally in real contexts and to provide those opportunities to use the language in these contexts.

The teacher use both form and meaning in the teaching of grammar considering that the learners should develop both structure of the linguistic elements and its meaning. Hence, the teacher explains the structure of the grammar lesson delivered, and then encourages the learners to understand the meaning of grammatical structures using different contexts. Azar (2007) states that teaching grammar through context helps learners perceive the structures of the language effectively. If learners are given grammatical structures in context, they will be able to master the language better because this helps learners to acquire new grammar structures and forms. Learners will use grammatical conventions more effectively in communication if they learn them in context. Similarly, Ur (1999) explains that the teaching of grammar should comprise language structure or sentence patterns, meaning and use.

### ***Perceptions of the teacher in teaching grammar***

The teacher is interested in teaching speaking skills than grammar because students should develop their speaking skills by making a dialogue using various contexts. However he/she believes that grammar should be taught because it helps, especially, to develop speaking & writing skills. From this

one can deduce that the teacher believes that grammar is essential for the students, but he/she is not interested to teach grammar in the classroom. Contradicting to the practice of the teacher, which treat grammar as less important, grammar was perceived as more important than other language skills especially for EFL learners (Widodo, 2006). The reason behind this argument is that without good knowledge of grammar, development of learners' language cannot be takes placed. Moreover, grammar is thought to furnish the basis for a set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In listening and speaking, grammar plays a crucial part in grasping and expressing spoken language (e.g. expressions) since learning the grammar of a language is considered necessary to acquire the capability of producing grammatically acceptable utterances in the language (Widodo, 2004).

### *Inadequate knowledge*

Since it was confirmed during the observation that the teacher was using students' first language, the researcher asked the need of using it in English language classes. The teacher, therefore, pointed out that sometimes EFL teacher need to use students' first language in order to let them understand the content of the grammatical elements easily. The teacher justified that since the target language is not understood as their first language, it is a must to use it for better understanding. In connection to this, grammar translation method, whose philosophy is based on teaching language rules and language structure intensively, is used so as to make students memorize the vocabulary of the language with the help of vocabulary lists, and making students perform translation studies from the target language into their mother tongue language and from their mother language into the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), especially, if students are beginners, they will rely on L1 language as a source of hypotheses about how the L2 works; when they are more advanced, they will rely increasingly on the L2. Although the researcher believed that there should be using students' first language for better understanding of the students about the new grammar content, the data gained from the observation and the interview item revealed that there is lack of grammatical content knowledge of the teacher. This seems the reason that the teacher argued that he/she is confident in presenting the grammar lesson, but failed in participating students so as to foster more discussion due to large class size, and lack of time. The researcher, as a result, can deduce that the teacher inadequate knowledge leads him/her to fail in promoting more discussion about the grammar content presented in the classroom. That is why it is believed that teaching methodologies and approaches, teacher education in grammar teaching play an important role in preparing teachers to teach grammar effectively and confidently. For instance, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) argued that teachers must be prepared to meet students' learning needs when they have a firm grounding in the grammar of the language they teach. Therefore, it is likely that in order to teach well teachers first need to master the grammar of the language themselves.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study attempted to investigate perceptions and actual practices of an EFL teacher of seventh grade students in Azezo primary school found in Gondar city administration. The findings indicated that an EFL teacher was not aware of the teaching of grammar, but from the interview it could be deduced that his/her perceptions and actual practices which were checked through observations were almost similar. However, there was a discrepancy among his/her perceptions and practices of the teacher, and what the contemporary literatures suggest about the best way to teach grammar in general. Moreover, the approach the teacher use in teaching grammar is more of traditional which impede the learners to understand the content easily. In addition, it is possible to deduce that inadequate knowledge of grammar hinders the teacher to be effective in the presentation of the lesson in the classroom.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study has different implications for teacher education and professional development, which should incorporate opportunities for EFL teachers to develop and sustain a realistic awareness of their knowledge of grammar, and an understanding of how grammatical content is taught. Thus, in addition to enabling teachers to develop their knowledge of grammar and pedagogy both during and after training, teacher education and professional development program should address different issues during and after the training respectively. To begin with, providing regular opportunities for teachers to develop their knowledge of grammar and pedagogy during training and to address continuing difficulty should be taken into serious attention of the teachers themselves and concerned bodies. Besides, equipping teachers to continue assessing their teaching of grammar throughout their career by analyzing data from their own classrooms, and completing periodical self-assessments is another issue to be taken into account by EFL practitioners. In the same manner, it appears also indispensable to give teachers opportunities to explore the shortcomings of their grammar instruction and pedagogy by themselves in terms of helping their students develop their grammar knowledge. Furthermore, helping teachers to develop a positive attitude towards teaching grammar, and making them aware of that inadequate knowledge of grammar can influence their classroom instruction. Generally, elementary EFL teachers should be aware of language teaching methods, and the theoretical information for the methods should be taught by being integrated with sample course applications; hence, EFL teaching methods should be taken as a basis while preparing the materials used in the process of English language teaching. EFL teachers, thus, need to be trained to apply the useful principles of language teaching methods, and they should also be informed about reaching the materials that will help them put into practice and even developing materials.

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