

Review

An Investigation into EFL Teachers Awareness and Practices of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies in EFL Class Rooms: In Selected Schools of North Western Ethiopia

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The purpose of this study was to investigate EFL teachers' awareness and practices of vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes. The participants of the study were 16 teachers and 180 students at Debre Tabor secondary school, Woreta secondary school, and Tewodros II secondary school. Multiple instruments that included questionnaire, interviews, and observations were used to gather data. The findings indicated that grade 9 EFL teachers' understanding towards the principles and purposes of vocabulary teaching strategies were insufficient. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the EFL teachers didn't properly practice various strategies in their schools. Furthermore, the practices of vocabulary teaching strategies were not given sufficient attention at the schools of the study. Finally, it is recommended that teachers & students be given trainings on the strategies of vocabulary teaching, and the concerned bodies provide the availability of prepared materials for its effective utilization in schools.

Key terms: Awareness; EFL; Practice; Strategies; Vocabulary

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays pivotal role in foreign language learning, and teaching process. Teaching vocabulary is a significant issue in language teaching, since words play an important role in expressing our feelings, emotions, and ideas to others during communication. That means, without the mediation of vocabulary, no amount of grammatical or other types of linguistic knowledge can be employed in second language communication or discourse (Nation, 2001). However, it was during the communicative approach that the prominent role of vocabulary knowledge in second or foreign language

learning has been highly recognized by researchers in the field. The current popular communicative approach of language teaching has emphasized meaningful interactive activities over form (Brown, 1995).

It has also recognized that the vocabulary learning strategies that students use have greater impact on the success of their vocabulary teaching. The most important role of vocabulary knowledge in second or foreign language learning has been recently recognized by theorists and researchers in the field. Accordingly, many types of strategies exercises and practice have been introduced into the field to teach vocabulary. It has also been suggested that teaching vocabulary should not only

consist of teaching specific words but also aim at equipping learners with strategies necessary to expand their vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2001).

As Woodard (1998), noted that teaching vocabulary is a significant factor in language teaching, since words play an important role in expressing our feelings, emotions, and ideas to others during communication. In the absence of vocabulary, communication will not occur. Indeed, neither literature nor language exists without vocabulary (Harmer, 1991). The strategies that teachers mostly practice in their language classes is to enhance their students' vocabulary knowledge or help them to be able to communicate by reading; speaking and writing on the basis of good command of vocabulary is very crucial (Anderson and Nagy, 1992). According to Nation (2001), the awareness of teachers on vocabulary teaching strategies directly affects EFL teachers practice in teaching and learning of vocabulary. Since, without having sufficient awareness on the principles and purposes of teaching strategies, it is difficult to effectively practice it in the classrooms. Thus, effective learning occurs when correspondence exists between awareness and practices to apply strategies in the EFL class rooms (NIED, 1990).

It is true that vocabulary is central to a language and is of paramount importance to a language learner. Therefore, the interest of focusing on this vocabulary teaching strategy comes from various reasons. In the first place, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, it is one of the significant areas language teachers raise as a problem in relation to the practice of vocabulary teaching strategies and secondly, as a language teacher, vocabulary teaching through different strategies is very vital in language teaching.

On the contrary, EFL teachers in most part of Ethiopian secondary schools, particularly at the selected Secondary Schools still seem to have problems in practicing different vocabulary teaching strategies due to the following factors. Firstly, the learning experience of students at these selected schools. Secondly, there is inadequacy of the content of the text book to practice vocabulary teaching strategies fully which helps students develop their vocabulary knowledge.

Today, the importance of vocabulary for language teaching is admitted by all second language theorists and practitioners. Although it was believed that vocabulary could be taught only in isolated word lists for much times, nowadays there are lots of ways to teach vocabulary (Carter, 1988, Schmitt 2000, Coady & Hucking 2000, and Richards & Renandya 2002).

The movement toward effective methodologies for teaching vocabulary has emerged and researchers and language teachers have also suggested many strategies and techniques for vocabulary learning, which are dependent on the efforts of each learner (Macaro, 2007; Mizumoto & Takeuchi, 2009). Much has been said about

the discrimination of vocabulary teaching in EFL classes. There are several researches conducted in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary teaching on each without considering their interdependence effect on teaching language. But little attention is given to what extent EFL teachers practice different strategies in vocabulary teaching at Secondary Schools in Ethiopia, particularly at Debre Tabor, Woreta secondary school, and Tewodros II secondary school.

Even though the practice of vocabulary teaching strategies are assumed to be practiced at these selected Secondary Schools, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no systematically collected evidence on Schools which shows how much the strategies of vocabulary teaching is being practically practiced in EFL classes. Moreover, various researches both in Ethiopia and abroad conducted a study on the practice of vocabulary teaching strategy in language learning and teaching in different institutions at different levels. As a result, they came up with a variety of recommendations in line with varied problems of the institutions. For example, a research which was conducted by Cohen (2007), Desseie (1988), Tesfaye (1990), Alemu (1994) and Berhane (1998).

Even if many studies had been conducted about vocabulary teaching strategies on different aspects at different time in the EFL classes at the secondary schools levels in general, as far as the knowledge of this researcher is concerned, none of the researchers addressed the issue of EFL teachers' awareness & practices of vocabulary teaching strategies related to secondary schools in EFL class rooms. In the Ethiopian context, little attention is given to what extent language teachers practice of different vocabulary teaching strategies in general at the selected Secondary Schools.

Accordingly, the study is basically differ from the above studies in the aspects of investigating strategies of vocabulary teaching; it focused on the awareness, and frequency to which teachers practice strategies of vocabulary teaching and to what extent teachers get involved their students in every opportunity through which they can be exposed to different vocabulary learning-teaching strategies.

Of the Ethiopian secondary schools, particularly at the selected secondary schools (the focus of this study), vocabulary teaching has been paid less attention than it should have been, as compared to other language skills. This could hinder to these schools students' vocabulary deficiency. Hence, the researcher understood that the practices of vocabulary teaching through different strategies are one of the most important components of any language classes. It is thus crucial to investigate the teachers' awareness and practices of vocabulary teaching strategies in the EFL classes; among grade 9 secondary schools EFL teachers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do EFL teachers are aware of principles and purposes of vocabulary teaching strategies?
- How do EFL teachers practice vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frame work

Vocabulary as the entire stock of words belonging to a branch of knowledge or known by an individual. It is the lexicon of a language is its vocabulary, which includes words and expressions (Graves (as cited in Taylor, 1990). Krashen (as cited in Herrel, 2004) extends Graves 'definition further by stating that lexicon organizes the mental vocabulary in a speaker's mind. In relation to this, Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas and content together... making comprehension accessible for students (Logan & Nichols, 1998/99). Therefore, vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner.

Teaching Strategy

Teaching vocabulary is a significant factor in language teaching, since words play an important role in expressing our feelings, emotions, and ideas to others during the act of communication (Strasser, 1964). According to him, teaching strategy is a generalized plan for a lesson which includes structure, desired learner behavior, in terms of the goals of the instruction and an outline of tactics necessary to implement the strategy.

In other words, teaching strategy refers to a technique that is used by the teacher or instructor to ensure that the course has been well understood or it refers to a plan or a program that is extensively used to make sure that a certain message or lesson is passed from the teacher to the student. In brief, vocabulary teaching strategies are actions taken by the teacher to teach or practice target vocabulary. So teaching words well means giving students multiple opportunities to learn how words are conceptually related to one another in the texts they are studying (Ibid).

The Purposes of Vocabulary and Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

Vocabulary is obviously a very important element within a language as the overwhelming majority of meaning is

carried lexically; and, therefore, something to be taken into consideration both in Second and Foreign Language Teaching. ((McCarthy 1990). Vocabulary teaching is one of the most important components of any language class. The main reason is the fact that it is a medium, which carries meaning; learning to understand and express the meaning is what counts in learning languages. As pointed out by Harmer(1992,p.14), "Words are the building blocks of language and having a good supply of them is very important for students' right from the beginning of their English learning."

Strategies in Vocabulary Teaching

When vocabularies are being taught to students, teachers need to consider how to teach them. There are a variety of teaching strategies that teachers can use to improve student vocabulary learning. Actually, there is no best strategy as students may have preference to one over another. The teachers' task is to provide students with varieties of strategies and let the students choose on their own. Some strategies may be good for some students at certain level. The same strategy which works well to some students may not be enjoyed by others.

However, students should be taught to be an independent learner because they will not be in school forever. It is important to recognize that students at all levels do not simply see or hear a new word, look it up in the dictionary and then know it. For this reason much has been written about the strategies teachers can use to help learners develop their knowledge of vocabulary and guide them how the words work together with other words to perform meaningful communication (Gams and Redman, 1986; Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Research Design

In this study, descriptive survey research design which applies quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection (mixed approach) and analysis was employed because it is applicable to obtain information about EFL teachers' awareness and practices of vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes. The major purpose of descriptive survey is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present (Kothari, 2004).

According to this scholar, the main characteristics of descriptive survey enable the researchers to come up with what has happened or what is happening (Ibid). And the rationally why mixed approach was employed is that it enabled the researcher to see the issue under study both from qualitative and quantitative perspectives. And the nature of the problem and the research objectives invited the researcher to use this research method.

Population and Sampling Techniques

In Ethiopia, particularly in the Amhara National regional state, there are eleven zonal towns. From those, south Gondar zone was selected purposively for its ease of accessibility of information for the researcher. There are 12 high schools in south Gondar zone, from which the researcher selected Debre Tabor secondary school, Woreta secondary and preparatory school, and Tewodros II secondary and preparatory school were purposively selected to make the study more manageable and complete within the available time. There were sixteen grade nine EFL teachers (nine males & seven females) at these selected secondary and preparatory school in this year. The total number of Grade 9 student population including EFL teachers in the selected school were 3257.

Based on this fact, sixteen grade nine EFL teachers were taken for this study by comprehensive sampling as they are available in the schools. Since a number of teachers in the schools are manageable to take the sample as comprehensive. Regarding students' participation, there were 1521 males and 1720 females, totally 3241 students in the selected schools in 48 sections in this year. The rationally why the students were included as target population is that to see the teachers practice of vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes.

Gay (2003) pointed out that, in a study the sample size should be selected 10-20% of the total population. Thus, out of the total grade 9 students mentioned before, 18% that is 180 students were selected from all sections equally through Lottery method, as they are in the same class under the same school curriculum. Because, each member of the sample had an equal chance of being selected as the study participants.

Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used to collect data for the study were interviews, questionnaires, and, classroom observation. These instruments were selected because of their suitability for gathering important data for the study. Each of these instruments is briefly described below.

Interview

To the current study, unstructured interviews were conducted by the researcher for sample grade 9 EFL teachers who were teaching at selected secondary schools. Because, unstructured interviews was more flexible to collect the data for the current study as needed. According to Nunan (1992), the interview is suitable for the descriptive study for securing relevant data. Moreover, the purpose of interview was to know teachers awareness about vocabulary teaching strategies, and the way they practice it in EFL classes.

Thus, all the teachers were interviewed as well.

Questionnaire

In the current study, to get additional information to the data obtained from the teachers through the interviews, questionnaires were used as data collection instruments and were designed to collect relevant data from the sample students of the schools. The questionnaires items were developed through adapting items from through taking insights from the objectives of the study and literature. Since, the purpose of students' questionnaire is to see how their teachers' practice of vocabulary teaching strategies in the EFL class rooms.

Observation

As to Kumar (1996), observations are important tool that can be employed in descriptive research and other qualitative research types for gathering genuine and pertinent data on teachers' and students' behaviors in the actual setting. In the current study, the researcher used this data gathering tool as supplementary instrument to collect the available information for the study. Accordingly, the classrooms of the teachers were observed for two days each for 40 minutes to check/ to triangulate whether what the teachers' and students' responses to the questionnaires and interview questions match what they actually did in the EFL classes.

Data Collection Procedure

In the course of collecting data for the current study, all the necessary procedures were followed. Accordingly, after getting permission from the schools principals, the researcher observed teachers' EFL classes two times each at the different time. Then after holding the teachers' class room observations, the interview was held for sample grade nine EL teachers about their awareness regarding vocabulary teaching strategies and the way how they practice it. Beside this, challenges teachers face during the practice of vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes were in focus. Finally, next to the teachers' interview, the questionnaires were distributed for teachers, and students of the schools to see how their teachers practice vocabulary teaching strategies in their EFL classes.

Methods of Data Analysis

For the current study, the researcher employed mixed method (data were analyzed through both quantitative & qualitative methods) to see the issue under study both from quantitative and qualitative perspective. The responses of close ended items of the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed, and described

quantitatively frequency and percentage values. Since, these statistical tools are important for this study because they provide information about the average participants score on a measure. However, the analysis of the data collected using the interview, and observation items were analyzed using qualitative method of data analysis through using narrative form and in an interpretive manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis and discussion of the data collected from subjects to seek answers for the basic research questions raised in the statement of the problem. The primary purpose of this study was to assess EFL teachers' awareness and practices of vocabulary teaching strategies English focus EFL classes, among grade nine EFL teachers. Accordingly, 180 grade nine students responded to the questionnaires and the 16 EFL teachers responded to the interview, and classroom observation as a sample were assumed to be adequate for the analysis. The analysis was made in terms of the basic research questions raised in the first chapter of the study.

Results of the Study

Teachers' awareness towards the Principles and Purposes of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

Teachers' awareness on vocabulary teaching strategies is used as one component of vocabulary teaching principles in teaching and learning process. In line with this, teachers were asked to give their genuine responses about whether they are aware of vocabulary teaching strategies, its principles and purposes. According to these interviewed teachers, vocabulary teaching strategies should be considered as the way of using different dimensions in the teaching and learning of vocabulary in EFL class rooms. Even if they agreed on the purposes of practicing different strategies in vocabulary teaching, the researcher did not observe them while they practiced different strategies effectively in their language classes during classroom observations.

Thus, the analysis of data gathered through interview has not shown consistent results with findings of the questionnaire and observation. For example, when answering the first interview item, almost all teachers not only agreed on the purposes of practicing vocabulary teaching strategies, but also claimed that they practiced these strategies in their EFL classes. From here, it is possible to deduce that there is insufficient understanding of the principles and purposes of using different

strategies in the vocabulary teaching. Where there is no understanding of the principles and purposes as needed; there might be misled from the intended objectives. And the data obtained from the teachers revealed that using various vocabulary strategies are very important for learners.

But they didn't practice different strategies in the classroom during vocabulary instruction. When teachers were asked about the reasons for not applying, they explained that they do not have adequate materials like dictionary and training on vocabulary teaching strategies so as to practice these strategies in EFL classes and to equip their students with vocabulary knowledge.

And, the result obtained from class rooms' observation also approved that all most all teachers thought the way they use in vocabulary teaching as a means to improve students result rather than assisting learners to learn via learners' vocabulary knowledge. In other words, they misuse learners result for condition of pass and fail of learners in the teaching way. This revealed that most of the grade nine EFL teachers understood the strategies they use in vocabulary teaching is contradicted with the idea of the principles of vocabulary teaching strategies.

With regard to this idea, teachers were asked "to which one of the strategies they give priority most of the time during vocabulary instruction?" Most of them reported as they give priority for contextual strategy for its content to practice in the EFL classes. According to their response, they said that practicing contextual strategy is helpful for students and for teachers since they can practice it from their experiences and it is easy to practice in the EFL class rooms. Because it can be used through different sentences in order to indicate different meanings of one word in a sentence in which the teacher provide students different sentences according to its suitability.

The rest teachers gave priority to cooperative strategy because this strategy gives more chance of practicing and thereby retains more words. From these points, it is understood that most of the EFL teachers seems that miss conceptualizations/ aware of the importance using different vocabulary teaching strategies (which is an integral part of the vocabulary teaching and learning). In line with, teachers' experiences of using different vocabulary teaching strategies in the EFL class rooms, most of the teacher respondents from the interview replied that they plan to give vocabulary lesson that contain different vocabulary teaching strategies through integrating other language skills, but they didn't practice these strategies in the classes usually.

However, this idea did not tend to agree with the purposes and principles of using different strategies in vocabulary lessons; since the main purpose of applying different vocabulary teaching strategies is used to improve learning and to shape the instructional process. Hence, the teachers' responses are contradicted with that of the purposes and principles teaching vocabulary. This

is one of the indicators that show lack of awareness about the main intention of vocabulary teaching strategies in the vocabulary teaching, and learning process.

All in all, from the above analysis, it is possible to draw that the grade 9 EFL teachers did not have adequate understanding of using vocabulary teaching strategies, its purposes & principles. This has a negative impact on their practice of using various strategies in the EFL classrooms particularly in vocabulary lessons.

Teachers' Practices of Vocabulary Teaching Strategies in EFL Classes

In line with this interview questions, all the interviewed teachers were asked about vocabulary teaching strategies they employ in their EFL classes. Accordingly, all the interviewed teachers tried to list down one by one as follows. According to these interviewees, the vocabulary teaching strategies that they frequently practiced in teaching and learning of vocabulary are limited in numbers. As some of the teachers responded:

“As far as our knowledge is concerned, there was no any attempt to use different vocabulary teaching strategies, we only use strategy that is for us”(Teacher 1, 2, 3, and 5).

Regarding to this point, the other teachers responded that: “we know that employing different vocabulary teaching strategies in our vocabulary lessons are important for students. However, these couldn't be

practiced due to different factors at all.” From these points which the interviewees revealed before, one can report that the interviewees /EFL teachers use limited number of vocabulary teaching strategies in the vocabulary lessons. This could affect the learners' vocabulary achievement. Since, the use of various strategies in the vocabulary lessons enables the EFL teachers to assure learners achievement in different directions. This is to mean that the more different strategies used in the vocabulary classes, the better students' mastery of vocabulary skills exist. Thus, the following table presents their summary.

Haggard (1986), noted that vocabulary self-selection strategy is an interactive-learning instructional strategy that promotes word consciousness, as students are actively engaged in identifying important words from their reading to share with members of their class. Concerning this, item 6 in the above table asked that if the teachers practiced self-selection vocabulary teaching strategy to convey the meaning of words during their English classes. Accordingly, while 3(18.75%) of the respondents practiced self-selection strategy always during vocabulary instructions. Whereas 4(25%) of them said that they usually and sometimes did so respectively. But 6(31.25%) of the respondents said that they did practice self-selection rarely. This is in line with the researcher's actual class observation. During the observation sessions, the teachers were not practicing the self-selection strategy to develop their students' vocabulary use. With regard to item 7 almost half of the respondents 8(50%) confirmed that they rarely practiced self-selection vocabulary teaching strategy.

Table 1: Summary Teachers' Responses in line with Practicing Vocabulary Teaching Strategies in EFL Classes

No	Vocabulary Teaching Strategies	Scales									
		5		4		3		2		1	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	1.Self-selection strategies teachers use while vocabulary teaching	3	18.75	4	25	4	25	5	31.25	0	0
	2.Task based strategies teachers use in EFL classes										
	3.Opportunities given for students to communicate in peers in vocabulary lesson	3	18.75	1	6.25	4	25	8	50	0	0
	4.How much teachers practice according to their suitability	4	25	3	18.75	3	23.1	5	38.5	1	6.25
	5.The extent to which teachers practice cooperative teaching- learning strategy in vocabulary lesson	-	-	3	18.75	4	30.8	6	46.2	3	18.75
	6.The extent to which teachers teach vocabulary through context	2	12.5	2	15.5	4	30.8	8	50	0	0
	7.Collocation strategy teachers use in vocabulary in vocabulary lesson	2	12.5	9	56.25	4	30.8	1	7.7	0	0
	8.Teachers practice of vocabulary teaching strategies	3	18.75	3	18.75	3	18.75	7	43.75	0	0
	9.Definitional contextual clues teachers use in vocabulary teaching	2	12.25	2	12.25	5	31.25	4	25	3	18.75
	10.Types of contextual clues teachers use in vocabulary lesson	1	6.25	6	50	4	30.8	2	15.5	0	0
	11.Teachers-learners facilitations to practice meaning in group	1	6.25	6	50	4	25	2	12.25	3	18.75
		2	12.5	3	18.75	4	25	6	50	3	18.75

N.B (F=Frequency, %= Percentage, and (Scales: Always=5, usually=4, Sometimes=3, rarely=2, Never=1

Whereas 3(18.75%), and 1(6.25%) of the respondents answered that they always and sometimes did so respectively. Hence, according to the idea stated in the above table, for item 6 and 7 respectively seem to indicate that the respondents in the English Department of the selected Secondary Schools usually did not practice self-selection vocabulary teaching strategy.

In light of this, self-selection strategy was not practiced frequently during vocabulary lesson. Even if learners do

not have enough knowledge of the language structures, an adequate knowledge of vocabulary helps them to maintain a certain degree of communication (Wallace, 1982). Therefore, regarding classroom communication under item 3, 3(18.75%) of the respondents confirmed that they practiced to offer their students to practice communicative strategy for maximizing communication opportunities always and sometimes respectively.

But this is inconsistent with what the present

researcher observed in the classrooms since most of the teachers didn't practice to offer their students to communicate with their teacher or their peers in the EFL classrooms. Whereas 2(12.25%) and 6(50%) of the respondents said that they practiced communicative strategy in vocabulary teaching usually and rarely respectively. Class room observation on the other hand proved that only 7(43.75%) of the teachers practiced this strategy in their classrooms.

Concerning, practicing different types of vocabulary teaching strategies according to their suitability is concerned (item 9), while almost half of the respondents 9(56.25%) confirmed that they practiced rarely. Whereas (18.75%) and 4(25%) of the respondents replied that they practiced usually and sometimes respectively. However, during classroom observations, almost more than half of the teachers were observed rushing from one activity to another without paying attention to different strategies.

Also, item 5 and 11 asked if the teachers organized students into different groupings when they taught vocabulary. Accordingly, 1(6.25%) and 2(12.25%) of the respondents in both items (Items 5 and 11) reported that they always and usually organized students into different groupings when they taught vocabulary respectively, whereas in both items 4(25%) and 6(56.25%) of them said that they sometimes and rarely practice cooperative strategy. This confirmed that, during the observation sessions, almost more than half of the teachers were not seen effectively organizing the students into different groupings – whole class organization was the dominant one. This implies the importance of obeying Atkins *et al.* (1996) who recommend organizing students in small groups and in whole class during vocabulary teaching/learning.

Words in context increase the chances of learners appreciating not only their meaning but their typical environments, such as their associated collocations or grammatical structures (Thornbury, 2002). Students learn from context by making connections between the new word and the text in which it appears. Consequently, 2(12.5%), 6(56.25%) and 4(25%) of the respondents reported that they always, usually and sometimes practiced context clues so as to help the students to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words respectively.

In line with item 7, revealed, and 2(12.25%) confirmed that respondents always practiced how words go together to enhance students vocabulary use; while 3(18.75%) of them answered that they usually and sometimes did so. Whereas 5(31.25%) of the respondents replied that they practiced collocation strategy rarely. The mean value of item 12 (3.15) further shows that the respondents sometimes practiced this strategy to encourage their students to understand how to use words according to their collocation. This implies the importance of obeying Jaen (2007) who recommended collocations are very important part of second language vocabulary teaching.

Context clues are indicators of the meaning of a word. Such clues may be in the sentence that contains the word or somewhere else in the text within close proximity (Stahl, 1999). Consequently, practicing different types of context clues during vocabulary teaching which is used to highlight textual clues that lead to the meaning of the target word. This will enhance students' capability to recognize textual clues. Clues include synonyms, definitions, antonyms, contrasts, and examples.

In line with this, item 9 and 10 asked whether the teachers practiced or not definitional and different types of context clues when they taught vocabulary. Thus, 1(6.25%) and 2(12.5%) of the respondents answered that they practiced context clues always and rarely respectively. Whereas, 6(56.25%) and 4(25%) of the respondents replied that they practiced definitional clues and other types of context clues usually and some times during vocabulary instruction in EFL classes correspondingly so. Also, with regard to the teachers' use/employment of vocabulary teaching strategies in the teaching and learning of vocabulary in EFL classes, besides to the teachers' interview, grade nine students were asked to give their responses. Thus, the following table presents their summary.

In line with, self-selection strategy, teachers engage students in the process of vocabulary self-selection. Students work in small groups of three to five, and they read a short passage from the book with the teacher. They are guided by the teacher to identify a word they wish to select. The teacher demonstrates how to use context and other resources to figure out the meaning of the word (Haggard, 1986).

As can be seen from the above, the percentage for item 7(50%) is titled to words rarely. This could indicate that the EFL teachers in the selected Secondary Schools do not always practice self-selection strategy to engage students so that they do not get exposed to practice this strategy from a short passage or from the book with the teacher.

Table 2: Students' response regarding to their teachers practice/use of vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes

No	Vocabulary Teaching Strategies	Scales									
		5		4		3		3		1	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	1. Self-selection strategies teachers use while vocabulary teaching	19	13.3	19	21.1	69	28.9	30	33.3	53	29.4
	2.Task based strategies teachers use in EFL classes	17	14.4	19	21.1	56	28.9	32	35.6	60	33
	3. Opportunities given for students to communicate in peers in vocabulary lesson	22	13.3	19	21.1	87	30.0	32	35.6	30	16.5
	4. How much teachers practice according to their suitability	3	16.7	19	21.1	25	27.8	90	34	30	16.5
	5.The extent to which teachers practice cooperative teaching- learning strategy in vocabulary lesson	25	16.7	19	21.1	25	27.8	90	34	30	16.5
	6. The extent to which teachers teach vocabulary through context	32	24.4	31	34.4	24	26.4	63	14.4	30	16.5
	7. Collocation strategy teachers use in vocabulary lesson	18	8.9	17	18.9	32	35.6	90	50	33	18.3
	8. Teachers practice of different vocabulary teaching strategies	21	12.2	18	20	28	31.1	33	36.7	23.7	
	9. Definitional contextual clues teachers use in vocabulary teaching	23	14.4	30	33.3	25	27.8	82	24.4	30	16.5
	10. Types of contextual clues teachers use in vocabulary lesson	18	20	40	34.4	24	26.7	47	18.9	60	33
	11. Teachers-learners facilitations to practice meaning in group	21	12.2	31	23.3	35	27.8	33	18.3	31	17.2

N.B (F=Frequency, %= Percentage, and (Scales: Always=5, usually=4, Sometimes=3, rarely=2, Never=1

The students were also asked if their teachers practiced task based vocabulary instruction to encourage them so that they ask questions and express their ideas freely. For example, on item 2, item 3 and item 11 extracted, whether or not the teachers gave opportunities to create communicative learning process to the students so that they take responsibility to create a dialogue and communicate with their teachers and their peers for the improvement of their vocabulary use when they learn

vocabulary through task based and communicative vocabulary instruction.

This is why through tasks; teachers can have a number of options for enhancing attention to teach vocabulary. One of such options is to allow learners to work cooperatively to make sense of unfamiliar vocabulary via tasks. Regarding communicative vocabulary instruction, the teacher's role in Communicative Language Teaching especially vocabulary is mainly acting as a facilitator for

classroom activities as well as home take assignments to make learners engage in groups or pairs work. Instruction plays an essential role in passing messages and thoughts to learners. Teachers are expected to full fill what is required from them for the benefit of learners.

Also, item 8 was designed to obtain information from students if their teachers provide them with different vocabulary teaching strategies in which students are confronted to enhance their vocabulary knowledge and develop their understanding about vocabulary use and then they practice two or more strategies at a time. This also indicates that the EFL teachers rarely practice different vocabulary teaching strategies as resources of helping students practice vocabulary use.

Similarly, during the entire classroom observations made, few of the teachers rarely tried to practice various vocabulary teaching strategies according to their suitability. Again as it can be indicated from the above table, the percentage of 22.2% falls in the rarely range; and this would show that the teachers do not always and/or usually try to practice cooperative strategy to organize students into pair or group in order to engage in the tasks and arouse their interest when they teach vocabulary. From this, it can be concluded that teachers do not give due attention to make use of group/cooperative instruction when they teach vocabulary. The classroom observation result also confirmed this reality.

The students were also asked if their teachers encouraged them so that they figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words through definitional context clues or through different types of context clues (item 9, 10 and item 11) elicited whether or not the teachers gave useful text to present them in context and students are more likely to deduce meaning from a context. Divorcing words from their surroundings decreases the likelihood of comprehension and retention and it was emphasized that new vocabulary should only be met in sentences and meaningful contexts (Richards and Rodgers 2001). The results would seem to suggest that the teachers attempted to practice this strategy more than the other strategies to enhance the students' strategy to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words and develop their ability to practice how to guess the meaning of new words through these type of contextual clues. Likewise, this is very consistent with what the present researcher observed in the classrooms.

DISCUSSIONS

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the EFL teachers' awareness and practices of vocabulary teaching strategies in the EFL classes. The EFL teachers' awareness focused on the purposes and principles of vocabulary teaching strategies in teaching vocabulary. The practice also explores the strategies,

and frequency that how often they practice it in EFL class rooms. The results from the analysis of data from interview, questionnaire, and observations are discussed in line with some empirical findings.

1. The first research question was intended to identify EFL teachers' awareness on the purposes and principles of vocabulary teaching strategies. The question was raised to find out whether teachers are aware of the purposes and principles of vocabulary teaching strategies. The result obtained through the interview in this regard generally revealed that most of grade nine EFL teachers seem to have put doubt that EFL teachers use various vocabulary teaching strategies in their teaching and learning vocabulary. From this idea, it is possible to say that there is insufficient understanding of EFL teachers regarding the principles and purposes of vocabulary teaching strategies.

The finding of this study also tends to agree with Birhane (1998) finding that concluded teachers' awareness of the purposes and principles of vocabulary teaching strategies were insufficient. Instead, this result is inconsistent with Takeuchi (2009) found out that most of Tareff Science teachers college in Niger have adequate understanding regarding to the fundamental purposes & principles of vocabulary teaching strategies; since their method how to they implement it in the class room is an informal way.

2. The second research question was examining the extent how the EFL teachers practice vocabulary teaching strategies in their own EFL classes. This question was designed to assess the practice of different strategies in the EFL classes of vocabulary lessons (i.e. frequency that how often teachers practice these strategies in their EFL classes).

As mentioned earlier, the first issue that the researcher investigated was that teachers' practice of vocabulary teaching strategies in the teaching and learning of vocabulary. As the results of the study revealed, that teachers' practice of vocabulary teaching strategies in teaching and learning of vocabulary is minimal. The finding of this study tends to agree/ consistent with the findings of Solomon (2013) that pointed out that there was the improper practice of various strategies in the classrooms. With regard to this issue, Renandya (2002) also pointed out that teachers' use of different vocabulary teaching strategies at secondary schools is improper (i.e. the proper teachers' use of strategies are inadequate).

According to Tesfaye (1990), findings that concluded that vocabulary teaching was not properly practiced in the schools studied. Coming to the practice of various writing assessment techniques that EFL teachers use to assess the learners' writing skills; Harmer (1991) stated that "in vocabulary teaching, the learners' progress in a course, interests, work behavior, and self-esteem would be

assessed through using variety of strategies. These multiple vocabulary teaching strategies can help to improve the learners' vocabulary knowledge (Dessie, 1988). However, the data collected from student respondents showed that teachers use of various vocabulary teaching strategies were nearly ignored from the vocabulary lessons in grade nine EFL classes, particularly Debre Tabor, Woreta, Tewodros II secondary schools at all.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and discussions of the findings of the study, it is possible to conclude that grade nine EFL teachers of Debre Tabor secondary school, Woreta secondary school, and Tewodros II secondary school did not properly practice different vocabulary teaching strategies in vocabulary lessons. This conclusion is drawn depending on the overall findings of the study investigated concerning the major three research questions.

1. The analysis and discussion of data from all sources entails that EFL teachers' lack awareness towards the purposes and principles of vocabulary teaching strategies. There are misconceptions that teachers often take for grant in their practice etc. Hence, teachers misuse learners result for condition of pass and fail of learners rather build their vocabulary knowledge in teaching and learning of vocabulary. It is thus, seemed that there was a gap between the teachers' knowledge on the theoretical orientations of practicing vocabulary teaching strategies in EFL classes rooms.

2. Regarding to the practice of vocabulary teaching strategies, in the teaching and learning vocabulary, the grade nine EFL teachers of the selected secondary schools (the focus of this study) did not continuously employ different vocabulary teaching strategies in the vocabulary teaching and learning process. As it can be seen from the analysis, the involvement of various vocabulary teaching strategies practices in EFL classes did not always conform to the expectations at the selected schools. It is therefore concluded that various vocabulary teaching strategies were found to be a neglected area of practice.

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