

## Teachers' Beliefs and Practices of Teaching Grammar: the Case of Two EFL Teachers in Ethiopia



Zewudie Tamiru Tsehay

Bahir Dar University; College of Agriculture, Ethiopia

**Abstract:** This study was endeavored to investigate and to compare Bahir Dar town primary school EFL teachers' beliefs and classroom practices with regard to grammar teaching. Two EFL teachers were selected based on available sampling. Observations were held to see their actual practices. Moreover, post-observation interviews were also conducted to know their beliefs about grammar teaching. Both of them were analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study indicated that teachers still teach grammar following structural approach which has been criticized as traditional, teacher-centered and focus on accuracy or grammatical correctness. The findings of the unstructured interview also showed that the two teachers' favored the traditional approach to grammar teaching. Hence, the overall findings indicated that there is a correlation between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices.

**Key words:** grammar, traditional grammar teaching, communicative grammar teaching

### Introduction

Grammar is very essential in language teaching as it shows how language is used. It refers to the way in which words change themselves and join together to make sentences (Harmer, 1987). Grammar teaching is one of the essential elements of language that enables learners to communicate efficiently and meaningfully so as to develop their communicative skills. Providing

grammar lesson is successful when it deals with grammatical points that enhance communication (Nunan, 1991).

With regard to how people perceive about the teaching of grammar, various scholars wrote different points. Crystal, (2004: 6), pinpoints that “grammar is one feature of the English language classroom that few love, but many hate”. Likewise, Vannestal (2007: 17) explains that “mentioning the word grammar brings up bad memories for some, from their own grammar teaching experience”. Teachers’ beliefs have an impact on not only about what grammar is but also about how grammar should be treated in the classroom. Concerning the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices, different scholars conclude that most of the time, teachers’ beliefs about the best way to teach grammar is also reflected in their actual classroom teaching. Borg, 2003; Richards and Farrel, 2005 also support this idea and point out that beliefs have a significant role in how effective the teacher will be in the classroom.

Similarly, in selecting or choosing the best way to teach grammar, EFL teachers will draw on their beliefs and these determine and justify what they choose to teach, how they teach and why they teach the way they do. These beliefs will take the form of personal knowledge or personal theory. Teachers’ beliefs play a crucial role in how information on teaching is translated into classroom practice. Therefore, understanding teachers’ beliefs is essential to improve teaching practices and teacher education programs in general (Johnson, 1994). In this regard, Eisenstein-Ebbsworth and Schweers’ (1996) findings as cited in Borg (2003) show that beliefs about how grammar should be taught are largely shaped by teachers’ previous learning experiences much more than by the method that they learned in teacher training courses and subsequent Continuous Professional Development (CPD)-which explains why EFL/ESL teachers’ grammar teaching approaches are often outdated.

Generally, due to “the absence of clear guidelines about teaching of grammar particularly in situations when, the contexts and environments within which teachers work, many of the problems they encounter are ill-defined and deeply entangled” (Nespor. 1987:324). This problem has led teachers to create their own personal theories about how to approach grammar in language classroom and these personal theories are derived from their belief system (Borg, 1998). As a result, it is very vital to explore teachers’ beliefs about teaching English grammar and their actual

class room practices. Therefore, in this study, the researcher examined the case of two Ethiopian EFL teachers and investigated their beliefs and actual practices of grammar teaching.

### **The Problem**

As aforementioned, teachers' beliefs are said to be one of the factors which could affect the process of learning grammar. If teaching is mainly the result of a teacher's personal beliefs, there is a need to study the correlation between teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar and their classroom practices. Many researchers have recognized the significant role English language has in Ethiopian education system. For instance, Wartenberg (2001:18) argues that, "the English Language is indispensable, because it is the language of instruction for secondary schools (9-12) and for higher education". Ethiopian students should at least know good English in order to be competent in their future life. Though knowledge of the English language is considered as a key to success in education particularly at the secondary and tertiary level, students are also expected to have a good knowledge of English right from the primary level itself. This is because unless a foundation is laid for children at this stage, learning would become a difficult task later in their secondary and tertiary schools.

In Ethiopian context, as far as the researcher's reading concerned, grammar has been taught almost in all schools including primary schools. However, when students join universities, there are still complaints on the part of teachers about students being communicatively incompetent which incorporates also their grammatical incompetence. Thus, from the researcher's personal experience and informal discussion with colleagues, students at tertiary level have failed to communicate their ideas both orally and in written. On the contrary to this fact, the current literature states that grammar is being taught communicatively so as to enhance the students overall communicative competence and the tasks designed in communicative grammar teaching is also varied which allow the students to engage in a more meaningful, interactive manner and encourages EFL/ESL teachers to apply communicative activities. In relation to this, Saricoban and Metin (2000) explain that teaching is an art, which requires innovative and creative ideas to enrich its effectiveness and EFL teachers must not hesitate to use various communicative tasks such as games, simulations, role plays and all other available resources in the classroom. The authors further emphasize that the teaching of grammar should be supported by such techniques so as to enhance communicative grammar.

Therefore, this communication breakdown in the absence of correct use of grammar observed by the students and colleagues' complaint instigated the present researcher to investigate primary school EFL teachers' beliefs and classroom practices of teaching particularly on grammar teaching since nowadays, the teaching of grammar is becoming controversial. In this regard, Corder (1988) states that there is still ongoing debate about the best way to teach grammar. As suggested by Farrell (2004 a, b), and Richards and Farrell (2005), opportunities should be provided for teachers to reflect on their work so that they can be encouraged to articulate and reflect on their beliefs while also investigating any mismatches between their beliefs and classroom practices.

In relation to the teaching of grammar, there are a number of related studies conducted in the area in global as well as local level. Neyyer Hassen (2013) for example, investigated the impacts of teachers' beliefs on L2 grammar teaching in India Lahore College for Women University. Her findings have shown that there is a strong correlation between teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar and their classroom practices. In a similar vein, Habtamu Adem (2011) conducted a research entitled "Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Effective Grammar Teaching." His findings have also indicated that there is a match between teachers' beliefs about teaching English grammar and their classroom practices of teaching it. Nevertheless, as to the present researcher's knowledge, there is no specific study which has been conducted to investigate the case of two Ethiopian (Zenzelima primary school) EFL teachers' beliefs and practices of teaching grammar and this makes this study different from the previous similar studies. Hence, in this study, the researcher investigated the case of two EFL teachers' beliefs and classroom practices' regarding teaching grammar at Zenzelima primary school and attempted to answer the following two research questions.

1. What are EFL teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching?
2. How do EFL teachers teach grammar?

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **The Role of Grammar in English Language Teaching**

"In the past one-hundred years, there has been a spirited debate about what would be the best way to teach a language" (Brown, 2001:16). Regarding the teaching of grammar, Atkins, Hailom and Nuru, (1995) point out that grammar plays a primary importance in language teaching. The writers indicate that traditionally, grammar is regarded as a structure base-structural approach. They say

that this traditional grammar focuses on asking questions about the ‘form’ of the grammar items rather than the ‘meaning’ of the sentence in a context. As to the authors, traditionally, the students were supposed to learn about the language rather than to use the language communicatively. A similar point was also raised by Stern. He argues that “the main concern of the structural approach is to know the language” (Stern, 1983:140).

Grammar, which gives sense to language, is an important part of language we use in everyday communication. It is considered as an essential element of language teaching. Any language is systematically organized by its grammar that is inextricably linked to meaning and communication. It is very difficult to make meanings clear without shaping grammatical and linguistic structures (Frodesen and Holten, 2003). It is true that grammar plays a significant role also for Ethiopian students as well as even for EFL or other teachers and in general for educators.

To take an instance, in Ethiopia and people in the rest of the world who want to continue their studies abroad especially in the USA or the UK have to take an intensive course in grammar in order to pass exams like the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Like IELTS, TOEFL is a kind of English proficiency test including listening, speaking, grammar, reading comprehension and a short composition on a given topic. Hence, for many people who get scholarship, knowledge of the English language including knowing the grammar is considered as fundamental. In this regard, Nachiengmai (1997) point out that knowledge of grammar is what separates the educated from the uneducated.

The teaching of grammar has given different places and emphasis at different times. For instance, during the GTM, ALM and other traditional methods, the teaching of grammar is considered as the main pillar in language acquisition. Where as in communicative language teaching, the role of grammar, the emphasis given for it becomes very less and rather priority is given to the communicative use of language (Widdowson, 1978).

Concerning the role educators have given for grammar teaching during the introduction of CLT, Celce-Murcia, (1991) describes that the beginning of communicative language teaching has a tremendous impact on the way language should be taught and learned. She adds that it is a turning point for linguists and language educators to seriously review the role of grammar in language

teaching and thus since the emergence of CLT in language teaching, questions such as “Should grammar be taught?”, “When should grammar be taught?”, “What grammar should be taught?”, and “How grammar should be taught?” have been asking by English language teachers all over the world (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

In the communicative language teaching approach, the goal of language teaching is to develop “communicative competence” (Hymes, 1972). Helping students to develop their communicative competence is the central aim of foreign and second language teaching/learning. In this regard, Celce-Murcia (1997) states that communicative competence is the foundation of communicative language teaching and there is a strong relationship between linguistic competence and communicative competence. Linguistic competence is the spontaneous and correct manipulation of the language system. Communicative competence involves principles of appropriateness and readiness on the part of the learner to use relevant strategies in coping with certain language situations. Besides, linguistic competence is the basis of communicative competence. Without linguistic competence, there is no communicative competence (Wilkins, 1976; Stevick, 1982; Stern, 1983).

Therefore, from the above statements it is possible to deduce that even in a communicative language teaching, as far as the aim of language teaching is to promote learners’ communicative competence, grammar has a pivotal role whether in the traditional or in the recent ELT teaching methods and the big question should be how grammar should be taught communicatively so as to make students to use the English language rather than a mere argument about whether grammar should be taught or not. In general, Nachiengmai (1997) concludes that grammar is viewed as one component of communicative competence. Grammar interacts with meaning, social function and discourse or a combination of these rather than being a system to be learned for its own sake.

### **Phases of Grammar Teaching**

#### **The Presentation Phase**

Harmer (1987:17) defines this phase as the phase which “students are introduced the form, meaning and use of a new piece of language”. The best way is to present the language item in a meaningful context. In this phase of grammar teaching, the activities are controlled by the teacher. He/she might use a text, an audio tape or visual aids to demonstrate a situation or to present the lesson.

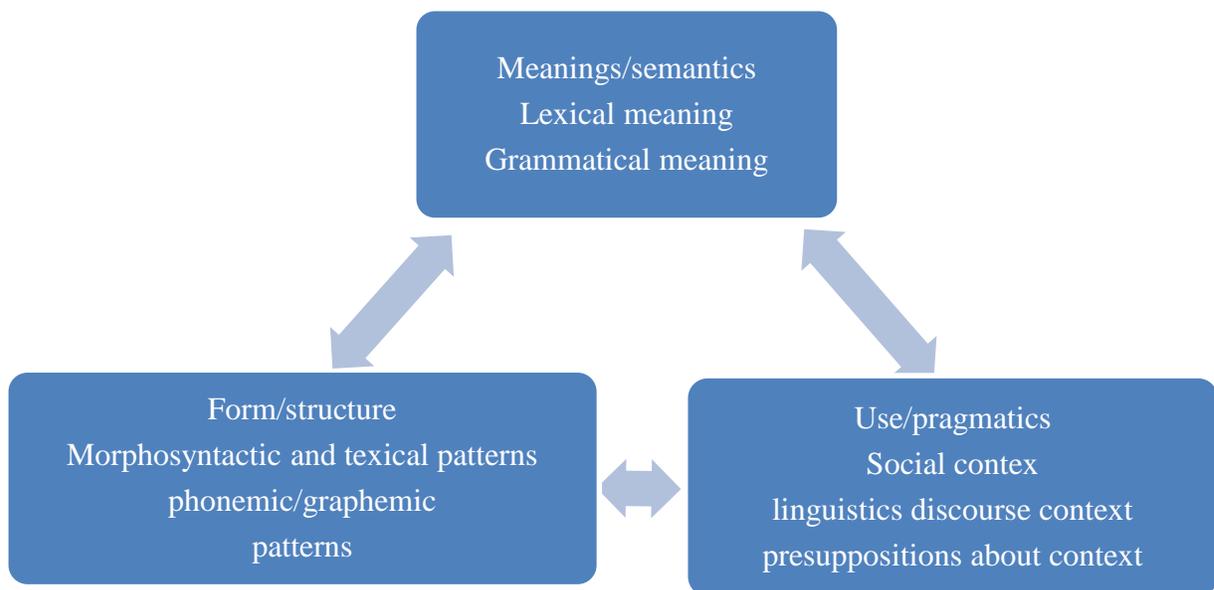
### The Practice Phase

It is the second phase of the organization of teaching grammar for communication purposes. Here, skills are learned by doing or through constant practice Harmer (1987). Ur (1988) identifies that this is the phase at which learners are given intensive practice in new structure, but their production of the language is very carefully guided and controlled by the teacher, so that correct form and meaning are consolidated and the possibility of error is reduced to a minimum. This makes the teacher role decisive. The teacher models the language item and learners have the opportunity to practice the language. The most common technique is drilling so as to involve the whole class to practice. In the practice stage, Ur (1988) also strengthens her idea and suggests that teachers should assist the students and help to avoid excessive errors and gradually reduce the control and move them to the final stage which makes students relatively free to use the language.

### The Production Phase

At this stage, the learners use the language meaningfully to communicate and complete messages. Therefore, teachers focus should be more on fluency, the ability to use the language rather than accuracy. Ideally, at this stage, students are free to say whatever they want. They choose the direction of their conversation (Celce-Murcia, 1988).

**Fig 1: A three dimensional grammar framework**



Larsen-Freeman (2001:252)

These three-dimensional framework of grammar developed by Larsen-Freeman (2001) consisting of form, meaning, and pragmatics. The three parts are closely interconnected with each other. In this framework, teaching grammar means enabling students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. Larsen-Freeman (2001) notes that for effective grammar teaching, grammar lessons have to comprise three phases: presentation, practice and production/communication.

Though the PPP procedures played their own role for effective grammar teaching as Larsen-Freeman (2001) points out, it is not free from flaws. From the 1990s onwards, this approach came under sustained attack from academics. Some of the major problems associated with it are mentioned here. For instance, as Ellis (2003) explains, PPP views language as a series of products that can be acquired sequentially as accumulated entities. However, SLA research has shown that learners do not acquire a language in this way rather they construct a series of systems, known as interlanguages, which are gradually grammaticized and restructured as learners incorporate new features.

Furthermore, research on developmental sequences has shown that learners pass through a series of transitional stages in acquiring a specific grammatical feature such as negatives, often taking months or even years before they arrive at the target form of the rule. In other words, L2 acquisition is a process that is incompatible with teaching seen as the presentation and practice of a series of products. Hence, PPP is seen as lacking a firm basis in second language acquisition (SLA) theory; being too linear and behaviorist in nature, so failing to account for learners' stages of developmental readiness (Ellis, 2003). Thus, it is unlikely to lead to the successful acquisition of taught forms (Skehan, 1996). In addition to these, Lewis, (1993) also criticized this model and argues that it is teacher-centered and does not reflect the nature of teaching and learning since it considers learning as straightforward and teaching as rigid. Generally, Lewis (1993) concludes that PPP was inadequate because it reflects neither the nature of language nor the nature of learning.

Therefore, even though the PPP has been applying for many centuries, unless the teachers' creativity is added to make PPP presented in a very smart way, the previous way of PPP required students to merely mimic a model in a fixed linear order without paying attention to the inherent

complexities of the language itself as well the teaching/learning process and it was simply time bounded; it did not give a chance for both teachers and students to adjust the lesson in the way they preferred.

## **Approaches to Grammar Teaching**

### **Deductive versus Inductive Approaches**

In a deductive approach, the teacher explicitly states grammar rules. Rules are exhaustively presented before examples are provided whereas in the inductive approach, there is no explicit presentation of rules. The students are made to discover the structures or may be asked to derive the rules that govern it from meaningful context/examples. Deductive grammar instruction is related to rules driven instruction whereas inductive grammar deals with discovering the rules. Deductive and inductive approaches are related to deductive reasoning which is from general to specific whereas inductive reasoning is from specific to general respectively (Rutherford, 1987).

### **Explicit, Implicit and Inclusive Approaches**

Explicit approach also known as formal instruction, overt grammar teaching, product oriented approach or deductive approach. It is an approach to teaching grammar which overtly presents grammatical rules (Harmer, 1987). In this approach, the teacher provides explicit grammatical rules and explanations for students. The assumption behind explicit instruction is rules that are learnt consciously can be converted in the unconscious process of comprehension and production (Cook,2001). Nonetheless, this statement contradicts with Krashen's (1985) statement in his 'acquisition-learning' hypothesis in that learning cannot turn into acquisition which is of course one of his criticisms.

Regarding implicit approach, it is also known as inductive teaching, skill oriented approach, covert instruction. It is an instruction whose aim is raising the learners' consciousness of specific grammatical structure (Rutherford and Smith 1985 as cited in Habtamu, 2011). Consciousness rising refers to the deliberate attempt to draw the learners' attention specifically to the formal properties of the target language (Habtamu, 2011). Harmer (1987) views this approach as a teaching of grammar where grammatical facts are hidden from students.

Inclusive approach to teaching grammar also known as balanced approach or integrative approach which is a combination of explicit and implicit approaches but it neglects their draw backs (Atkins, Hailom and Nuru, 2005). Sysoyev (1999) names this approach as integrative grammar teaching

which consists of three Es (EEE) which stand for Exploration/inductive, Explanation/deductive and Expression where learners are allowed to apply their knowledge of grammar to express themselves (to produce meaningful sentences). Therefore, in EEE method explicit and implicit instructions are integrated while teaching a lesson. According to him, there can be two ways to teach grammar in the inclusive approach one is by taking the positive sides of explicit and implicit approaches and integrating them and the other one is by applying either explicit or implicit alone depending on the context and their appropriateness where ever they required to fit for a purpose.

In general, although the authors gave different names for explicit, implicit and inclusive approaches to grammar teaching, when one reads deeply, it seems that there is no such a huge difference noticed among the terms explicit/direct/deductive; implicit/indirect/inductive and inclusive/integrative/eclectic approaches to grammar teaching and hence in my understanding, I took them as one as long as their purposes are very similar.

### **Focus –on- form, focus –on-forms and focus-on-meaning instruction**

1. **Focus-on-form**-draws learners' attention to the form/structures with in a meaningful context. "It refers to any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic forms" (Ellis, 2001:1-2).

2. **Focus-on-forms**-traditional, form alone.

3. **Focus-on-meaning instruction**-meaningful use of L2 in context.

Krashen and Terrell's "Natural Approach to Second Language Acquisition" is a good example of focus on meaning instruction (Brown, 2001; Spada and Lightbown 1993; Ellis, 2001). This approach "completely refuses any direct instruction on grammar, explicit error correction, or even consciousness-raising, as L2 is claimed to be naturally acquired through adequate exposure to language or "comprehensible input" (Krashen,1985:2). According to this view, explicit knowledge about language and error correction is unnecessary and even harmful as it may interfere with the natural acquisition process which learners would subconsciously analyze the forms and eventually deduce the rules from the language input themselves (Krashen, 1982; Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Nevertheless, both focus on forms and focus on meaning have been subjected to serious criticisms (Long, 2000). Focus-on-forms has been criticized for being teacher-centered artificial, boring and for not allowing meaningful communication and interaction, which are essential to language acquisition (Long, 2000). Likewise, focus-on-meaning has also limitations as it allows only a flood

of language input with no attention to grammar or error correction which results in fossilization and poor L2 grammar in language production (Swain, 1985).

### **Techniques of Communicative Grammar Teaching**

The presentation of grammar in a contextual, meaningful and purposeful manner is called communicative grammar (Nachiengamai, 1997). In language learning, mastery of the forms would be valueless without equal mastery of the meanings they convey. This shows that grammatical forms and grammatical meanings are equally important in language teaching. According to Dickens and Woods (1988:45) “Communicative grammar consists of content and construct, content refers to what is being presented to students and construct addresses how the content is being presented to learners via grammar learning tasks.” They further notify that grammar and communication are seen as two complementary elements needed for effective language use. In other words, communicative grammar is concerned with ‘content’ and ‘construct’. In relation to the ‘how content is being presented’ in a communicative grammar, Saricoban and Metin (2000), suggest the following techniques of presenting grammar communicatively.

1. **Pictures**- carefully designed pictures have the potential to motivate students and to respond more than a text because they are contextualized than students’ textbooks.
2. **Graphs**-are free to different interpretations and are able to entertain learners to different language usages.
3. **Games** –particularly play an important role to make the learner use the language communicatively and to practice the grammar items.
4. **Role-Play**- it is very useful to contextualize any grammar items and improve students’ communication skills. This technique also helps students to express their ideas using their own words, to dramatize. It is funny and dramatic so students are able to pretend and learn a lot from each other.
5. **Songs**- most songs are authentic materials and are rich in context.
6. **Poetry**- Poems like songs create image about cultural practice and reflect moral feeling of a society.
7. **Telling stories**. Most people like stories especially stories are enjoyable for children so that primary school teachers should select interesting stories which can be used to present the grammar item in a meaningful context and students induce both meaning and form from the story.
8. **Problem-solving activities**- the problems are either real or imaginary situations. They provide favorable conditions and usages for extended communicative practice of grammar.

Communicative grammar activities can help learners use the language appropriately in a given situation.

To sum up, the aim of grammar teaching in primary schools should not be simply to let students to memorize a mere collection of grammar items; instead, it should be to promote the students' overall communicative competence. Hence, communicative grammar teaching is very crucial for the students so as to communicate with others either in spoken or written. In this regard, Larsen-Freeman (1986) underlines that using the above various techniques can assist teachers to create a relaxed atmosphere which is enjoyable and motivating for the students and contributes a lot to bring the structural, semantic and communicative aspects of language in the classroom.

### **Research Methodology**

In order to answer the above questions, the researcher employed a qualitative study. The cases of two EFL primary school teachers were being investigated and compared.

### **Participants of the Study**

Two English language teachers of Zenzelma primary school, which is found in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, were selected as participants.

### **Sampling Techniques**

The study employed both purposive and available sampling techniques to choose the school and the research participants respectively.

### **Data Gathering Instruments**

The researcher used two data gathering instruments: observation and unstructured interview. The main purpose of a post-lesson interview was to gather information about their beliefs towards the teaching of grammar in general. All the interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed in full as well as coded which was used to explore the teachers' beliefs about the teaching of grammar and observation was meant to assess the way teachers taught one aspect of grammar that is an adjective.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

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

## **Results and Discussions**

In this section, the results obtained from classroom observation and post-observation interview discussed thoroughly.

### **Data Gathered from Classroom Observations (teacher one's and two's classroom observations or T1 and T2)**

This part of the analysis presents the situations of the classrooms observed focusing mainly identifying the limitations that was observed in the two classes in light of teaching grammar communicatively.

From the two observations conducted, it is possible to deduce that both T1 and T2 tried their best to engage students in pair and group works and in their classroom management. In addition, T2 prepared two questions those include list other adjective words and describe objects in the classroom which were not included in the students' text book which indicate her attempt of creativity though the way T2 presented the questions was not encouraging and students' did not involve in the activities as expected.

To begin with, even if T2 tried to revise the previous lesson, it was vague and in both T1 and T2 classes, there was no attempt to activate students' prior knowledge and to connect the previous learned grammar topic with the new one; however, Savignon (1991), suggests that learners focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and previous experience. In a similar way, both T1 and T2's lessons were not contextualized rather they tried to present the grammar lesson i.e. adjective simply its definition and examples. In relation to the best way to present grammar lessons, Harmer (1987) states that the best way to introduce the grammar lesson is to present the language item in a meaningful context. Here, it could be possible to infer that both T1 and T2's lessons were mainly teacher-centered and followed deductive approach which is being criticized as being ineffective or not recommended for young learners like primary school children rather it can be effective with adult learners who already know the basic structures of the language (Rivers and Temperley, 1978). Besides, T1 and T2 used simply lecture method to introduce the new grammar item; nevertheless, Cunnings worth (1984:32) recommends that "to introduce a new piece of grammar for a class, a teacher has to use various methods".

The other point was about T1 and T2's use of the textbook, their creativity and the 'what' of the teaching of grammar, though there were a few attempts made especially by T2, both of them were textbook dependent; no creativity and they focused on teaching the form of the grammar item instead of presenting the lessons in a meaningful context which allows the students to use the language. Nevertheless, this kind of grammar presentation has been criticized by scholars like Stern (1983). He argues that EFL/ESL teachers should give maximum attention to communication and the creativity of language use, but minimum attention to form. Thus, even if T2 tried to vary some questions, the lesson was simply teacher-centered because when students were failed to answer T2's questions, she began to explain and gave example by herself instead of trying to simplify the questions and helping students while they were working in pairs and in groups. In this regard, Richards and Rodgers (1986) point out that one role of a teacher is to be a resource person; therefore, when learners are missing, they deserve assistance.

To sum up, both T1 and T2's lessons were followed the structural approach which is traditional and focusing or giving due emphasis on accuracy rather nowadays, what is favored is communicative approach which aims to balance the form, meaning and use. In connection with the integration of the three grammar teaching focus areas, Abraham Degu's (2008) research findings indicate that most Ethiopian school English language teachers' beliefs that teaching grammar through the integration of form, meaning and use is more effective than the structural or form focused method of grammar teaching. The integrated grammar teaching approach is suitable in promoting pair work, group work and discovery technique in language teaching. It is also effective to enable learners acquire and understand the meaning of grammatical forms and their roles in communication.

Generally, from the two observations conducted, it is possible to conclude that the lessons were not very much interesting, there were very little teacher-student interaction and almost no student-student interaction though they were supposed to sit to work in groups and both lessons gave priority for the structural, traditional approach of grammar teaching which is according to Spada and Lightbown, (1993) criticized as being quite outdated and not aligned with the current wisdom in grammar pedagogy, which advocates a more eclectic approach (CLT) .

### **Data Gathered from Interview (Post-Observation)**

During post-observations, different questions were raised for the two teachers about their overall beliefs about grammar teaching and evaluation of their grammar classes they just taught. The interviewers' responses were almost similar. For instance, with regard to their beliefs about whether grammar should be taught or not, because it has become a controversial issue, both interviewers believed that grammar is very essential so as to help students to construct meaningful and error free sentences. To this end, Crystal (2004) also clarifies that grammar is a part of language that helps the learners to express themselves. Hence, it should be taught.

The next related question was if they agreed that grammar should be taught, what and how it should be taught. They replied that both form and meaning should be taught and the way should be using the students' textbook, pictures and context. The second respondent (T2) strongly argued that the form should be taught first before the students were given chance to understand the meaning because students did not identify the forms by themselves; however, prominent scholars such as Prabhu (1987) argues that for language learners, meaning should be more emphasized than the form. Besides, other researchers and scholars also stat about the purpose of language teaching and the how of teaching as it should not be only the form because it cannot make the students users of the language and even the way to teach should not be only what was presented in the textbooks or using pictures and context though they are also helpful, but they are not adequate.

In this regard, Robinson (as cited in Nassaji and Fotos, 2004) suggests that the main purpose of language teaching is to help learners to use the language for communication, so EFL/ESL teachers are required to teach grammar and communication in combination. Also, teachers' should reflect their creativity in delivering the lessons because Saricoban and Metin (2000) indicate that teaching is an art which requires the teachers' innovative and creative ideas and should be supported by different techniques. Moreover, Larsen-Freeman (1986) hold the belief that using different techniques to present the grammar items creates a relaxed atmosphere which is motivating and these kinds of delivery of grammar items brings the structural, semantic and pragmatic/communicative aspects of language in our classroom.

The third question was intended to check the two teachers' beliefs towards error correction. This is because the researcher observed particularly T1 interrupting students' responses and correcting

their grammatical errors. In relation to this, the interviewers believed that error must be corrected. However, the researcher argued that the way T1 treated students' errors were wrong and it was mere form correction which did not affect other students to understand the meanings of the sentences. As long as the errors students committed did not distort the meanings, errors of form kinds should be tolerated or at least the teacher should give a chance for the students themselves to correct their errors rather than directly pointing their grammar mistakes. In relation to how errors should be treated, Markee (1997) says that the focus of error correction should be on meaning, not merely on grammatical form. If the students failed to correct errors which distort meanings and if the teacher believes that it is necessarily to correct students' errors, Ur (1996) advises teachers to give feedback (oral or written) in a friendly way to help learners use the language for meaningful communication.

The fourth one was related to teachers' heavily reliance on the textbook. They admitted that very often they largely depend on the textbook and gave different reasons. Actually, even if T2 also believed that the textbook was the sole source that they depend on, during observation, the researcher observed two activities that T2 added which were not inculcated in that particular grammar lesson and appreciated, but from their overall interview, the researcher understood that in many grammar classes, the interviewers most of the time asked students to work activities in the textbooks and nothing else. As T1 admitted, "I heavily rely on the textbook and plan to cover it because it is in that way that we are evaluated in and for your surprise, if you were not here today, I would cover more portions." T2 also said that "I almost always depend on the textbook because it has everything rather the problem is students' have no any interest to learn."

Pertaining to varying textbook activities and preparing textbooks for effective grammar teaching, Alamirew (1992) recommends that it is decisive to prepare materials to teach grammar in a communicative way and incorporate communicative grammar techniques such as games, role plays, simulations, pair works, group works in order to enhance students' communication. Finally, Hislam and Cajkler, (2005) claim that teachers failed to prepare textbooks and rely largely on the textbooks because of the absence of adequate training in teaching.

The final question asked the interviewers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their lessons. They said that the objectives they intended to attain were not accomplished successfully as students

failed to engage in the activities actively. The way the interviewers regarded their classroom achievements goes in alignment with the following Dornyei's statement: effectiveness of any instruction depends on the extent to which the teacher intentions and learners' expectations, wants and needs are matched (Dornyei, 2005). However, it does not mean that these teachers did not do anything to support students. They did their best, but may be because they lacked confidence to report that they achieved their purposes. In this matter, the researcher argues that this statement may not be always true and cannot be taken for granted as there are cases where either teachers' or students' expectations become over and may not be achieved within a period or two periods.

To conclude, thorough out the interview, the interviewers were very much interested and genuine responses were given. The post-observation interview responses were actually very much similar with the observation data. In general, the teachers still favored the structural approach may be because of the influence of their previous learning or teaching experiences and their beliefs towards grammar teaching seemed not very much clear for them especially at the very beginning of the interview, but later after making some of the questions very brief, the researcher identified that their beliefs and practices were almost similar.

## **Conclusions**

This study investigated and compared the beliefs and actual instructional practices of two experienced EFL teachers of English language in a primary school in Bahir Dar. The findings indicated that these two EFL teachers were not very much aware of their beliefs regarding grammar teaching, but from the interviews it could be deduced that their beliefs and actual practices which were checked through observations were almost similar. However, there was a discrepancy among their beliefs, practices and what the contemporary literatures suggest about the best way to teach grammar communicatively.

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