Teachers' strategies on teaching grammar; facts and expectations at senior high schools in ambon

**Threesje Roza Souisa1, Lelyemin Yanuarius2**

1Department of English Education, Pattimura University, Indonesia

2English teacher of SMA Negeri 1 Dobo-PP Aru.

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| **Article Info** |  | **ABSTRACT** (10 PT) |
| ***Article history:***  Received Jun 9, 2018  Revised Nov 20, 2018  Accepted Dec 11, 2018 |  | This study is aimed at describing the EFL senior high schools teachers' perceptions on grammar teaching; their teaching strategies which are the most and less frequently applied in their classroom practices and the challenges that they have in teaching grammar. Explanatory mixed approaches were conducted involving 63 teachers as the sample population in collecting quantitative data, and 5 selected teachers as participants for collecting the qualitative data. The findings showed that teachers' perceptions of grammar teaching are based on their conceptual knowledge as they have experienced it and it is based on grammar theories. The teachers applied vary grammar approaches and strategies but they still face with the challenges in teaching grammar such as students' learning styles and less of teaching references. |
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| ***Corresponding Author:***  Threesje Roza Souisa,  Department of English Education,  Pattimura University, Indonesia,  Jln. Dr. Tamaela Campus PGSD Ambon, Indonesia.  Email: nauluambon@gmail.com | | |

1. **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most controversial issues in the field of English as the foreign language research is grammar teaching [1], [2], [3]. Debates on teaching grammar actually focused on the ways whether it is taught implicitly or explicitly and deductively or inductively which is aimed at helping students master it so that they can use it in their communication skill both in oral and written language [4],[5].

In terms of teaching grammar in EFL context, teaching grammar is mainly focused on assisting learners to internalize the structures/rules of language, and it is taught in such a way that learners can use it for communication both in written and spoken the language [6], [7]. One of the reasons to teach grammar is its capacity to make learners understand the existence of language which intends to make linguistic production more practical [8], [9]. Therefore, in the frame of EFL, teaching grammar has traditionally been dominated by a grammar-translation method and as results foreign language learners still facing difficulties in using it into communicative tasks [10], [11]. Moreover, that Grammar teaching is the process by which learners realize the forms and features of the target language with the help of various methods and useful activities that guide learners to use the language in an effective and communicative way [12], [13]. He then briefly stated that “the main function of grammar teaching is to empower the learners to comprehend these sets of rules and so to provide them with the skill of interpretation in the target language”. As a conclusion, it is clarified by most of the researchers that knowledge about grammar rules is milestone for the proficient use of a language, and that learners may use grammar knowledge to discover, comprehend and produce purposeful meaning in the context of daily life [14].

In facts, EFL Teachers in senior high schools in Ambon still adopted the grammar-translation method where the use of mother tongue is clearly important to elicit the meaning of target language by translating it into the native language. They also applied some strategies/methods with aimed at helping their students to learn and master the ways of language are constructed; provided the grammar rules & examples and asked learners to memorize and apply them both in spoken and written form. Based on this basic assumption, then the research is conducted to; 1) finding out the EFL senior high schools teachers' perceptions on grammar in their teaching practices, 2) describing teaching grammar teaching approaches and strategies applied by the EFL Senior High teachers in Ambon, 3) identifying the most and less frequently using of teaching grammar strategies in the EFL Senior High teachers in classroom practices, and 4) explaining the EFL Senior High teachers' challenges in teaching grammar.

1. **RESEARCH METHOD**

In conducting the study, explanatory mixed approaches design under the quantitative-qualitative model was applied to collect the data. Mixed research approaches combine quantitative and qualitative data in a single study and it is aimed at building on the synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone [15], [16]. In quantitative qualitative design, quantitative data are collected first and more heavily weighted than qualitative data. The findings of the quantitative study determine the type of data collected in the second study or phase that includes qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation [17], [18].

The setting of this study was conducted in all senior high schools in Ambon city and there are 15 state senior high schools and 11 private senior high schools in Ambon city with the number of English teachers is 63 teachers. In distributing the questionnaire to collect the quantitative data, all the English teachers were used as sample population of this study because it is less than 100. Whereas for collecting the qualitative data, 5 English teachers from 5 districts were selected based on the following qualification; 1) the teacher has teaching experience more than 10 -15 years, 2) the teacher had involved in teaching methodology workshops locally and nationally, 3) the teacher is the English instructor and a member of Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP).

In gaining all the data, the researchers were the key instrument as it is called as Human Instrument. It meant that the researchers had the important role in collecting the data, analyzing and interpreting the data. Therefore to help the researchers in collecting the data, some instruments were used such as questionnaire, review documents, in-depth interview, participant classroom observation, and field notes.

The questionnaire is used to collect the quantitative data about teachers' grammar teaching strategy and it was distributed to all the English teachers at senior high schools in Ambon city. It was written in English and used Liker's Scale. Review documents in this study refer to English' teachers' lesson plans, their teaching materials (Existing English textbook). In-depth interview was conducted for 5 selected teachers in 5 districts and the interview was conducted by using the Indonesian language with aimed at helping teachers to dig up deeply their ideas, thoughts, and know when they talk in the Indonesian language. To capture all the English teachers' ideas and thoughts on grammar teaching strategy, the recorder was used. Participant classroom observation was necessary to conduct to describe more about their teaching grammar strategy and it was conducted only one time for each teacher. During the classroom observation, field notes were done to write any condition happens in the classroom practices due to teachers' grammar strategy.

In regards to quantitative data, the data were analyzed as quantitatively using descriptive quantitative such as percentage. After analyzing quantitative data then it was continued with qualitative data analysis. In analyzing qualitative data, in which data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing take place interactively [19], [20].

1. **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Teaching and learning English grammar in the foreign language frame still placed as controversy issue whether it should be taught as deductively, inductively, implicit or explicit from time to times. The significant findings from relevance previous studies report that many different perspectives on teaching grammar from foreign language teachers are based on their conceptual and procedural knowledge of English grammar itself. The findings also reflect that the ways of grammar should be taught from teacher to teacher, researcher to researcher and methodologist to methodologist. From the relevance theories, it also described that development of teaching grammar approaches, strategies and methods are varied and it is selected based on the characteristics of the grammar content that be taught.

The findings of this study both quantitative and qualitative reveal that the English teachers in Kota Ambon still have good enough clear picture about the concept of grammar, teaching grammar approaches, strategies, and methods as the result of comprehending conceptual and procedural knowledge on grammar itself. The following discussions are presented based on the research questions.

* 1. **Teachers' perception of grammar concept in their teaching practices**

As one of the components of language learning, grammar is viewed as the crucial part that should be learned and mastered by foreign language learners to build good communication. The more they aware of how language works, the more they can monitor the meanings and the effectiveness of the way they use a language. In line with this, one of the reasons for teaching grammar is to help learners to understand the existence of a language, which means to make linguistic production more practical [21]. In achieving this goal, it is expected that EFL teachers can enrich their teaching grammar methodology and develop it into their classroom practices based on their conceptual and procedural knowledge.

The research findings from quantitative data reveal that EFL teachers in Ambon City have the various concept of grammar concept and how it is contributed to their teaching grammar approaches, strategies, and methods. The data of distributed questionnaire for 63 English teachers in senior high schools in Ambon show that 58 teachers or 92 % of the teachers understand that grammar is a part of the language that helps learners expresses them. The teachers realize that by awareness in using grammar and helping students to understand grammar itself can encourage them to express their selves by several of ways in English. It is about 61 teachers or 97 % of the teachers have a clear concept of grammar in which it is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence. This conceptual idea is based and it reflects that knowing the meaning of words is not enough to convey the intended message in communication, but applying grammatical rules in a conversation make it possible for speakers to convey a detailed and meaningful message [22]. This idea implied that the principle goal of a language is to convey the message in a meaningful way and it is who suggests that the essential thing in language teaching should be conveying messages in a meaningful way, and that learners should not be engaged with the forms of grammatical structures [23].

About 57 teachers or 90 % of the teachers placed their conceptual knowledge on grammar under prescriptive grammar type in which teaching grammar should be focused on the correct and incorrect use of a language. The idea is under prescriptive grammar type in which tends to classify between the correct and incorrect use of language. General the aim of prescriptive grammar is to have a standard and formulated language with correct and good rules. From the responses, it can be inferred that the teachers focus on the rules as they should be used, therefore they believe that in certain forms are correct while other forms are incorrect, although all these forms are used in daily language by most native speakers. On the other hand, 44 teachers or 70 % of the teachers put their conceptual knowledge under descriptive grammar type which is teaching grammar should be covered kind of structure that consists of how language is used and only describes the daily use of native language. Descriptive grammar endeavors to describe grammar what native speakers use a language in daily life, so it is focused on describing and explaining the way people use language in daily life and avoid to making a judgment about wrong or right usage [24], [23].

Under the traditional grammar type, 49 teachers or 77 % of the teachers believe that in their teaching grammar, it should contain eight different parts of speech formed by noun, verbs, articles, pronouns, prepositions, participles, conjunctions and adverbs. To learn a language, learners should study these eight categories separately and develop rules in accordance with their use in translation. The teachers realize that sometimes don't have background theory in general, they just figure out a language as an object to be instructed [25].

From the discussion of quantitative data, it can be inferred that teachers' conceptual knowledge of grammar is based on some theories related to the type of grammars. Almost EFL senior high school teachers understand the concept of theories under the umbrella of prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar and traditional grammar. Their responses show that their teaching grammar experiences have already suit with the grammar theories, and it can reflect from their grammar classroom practices. On the contrary, the results of classroom observation for the five selected teachers show that their conceptual knowledge is based on traditional grammar type. They view grammar as the set of rules consist of eight categories such as nouns, verbs, pronouns, prepositions, participles, conjunctions, articles and adverbs, and it is reflected through their teaching grammar materials. As it is written in the relevance theory on grammar that traditional grammar does not have a background theory in general because language is considered not as a tool, but as an object to be instructed. Therefore using a textbook is essential in this type of grammar and usually, students learn the grammar structures by memorizing passages and literature pieces. The five selected teachers mostly use texts to teach grammar point starting with reading a text, identify sentences, find the language use of a text and then make sentences use the standard rules of grammar.

* 1. **kind of teaching grammar approaches applied by senior high school EFL teachers in Ambon**.

In comprehending the concept of teaching grammar approaches whether it should be taught as deductively, inductively, or implicitly and explicitly, or focused on form or meaning, the teachers give vary responses based on their perspectives as the result of their teaching experiences. When teaching grammar as inductively, 52 teachers or 82 % of the teachers understand that in teaching grammar, they should consider learner as active processor and producer of a language, 55 teacher or 87 % of the teachers believe that engaging their students to discover a generalized grammar or pattern is a good way to teach grammar, 57 teachers or 90 % of the teachers view grammar as growly and changing mechanism, so it is important to consider grammar as learning as continuous activity. 53 teachers or 84 % of the teachers have commitment that it is better to provide students with different examples of language use and engage them to use the target language in their classroom practices, and 56 teachers or 88 % of the teachers believe that the goal of their teaching grammar is involving students be actively participating in grammar activities. To support this finding, Sik Kubra (2014) declares that in teaching grammar inductively, teachers should make students ‘notice’ the targeted structure with the help of different methods of language teaching.

On contrary, in teaching grammar as deductively, 55 teachers or 87 % of the teachers place their selves as the main role of grammar lesson activities. 52 teachers or 82 % of the teachers start their grammar class with the presentation of grammar rules and examples. Deductive approach maintains that a teacher teaches grammar by presenting grammatical rules, and then examples of sentence are presented. Once learners understand rues, they are told to apply the rules given to various examples of sentences [26], [27].

In regards to teaching grammar as explicitly, 49 teachers or 77 % of the teachers strongly agree that teaching grammar explicitly results in more successful learning of target structures than teach it implicitly. 57 teachers or 90 % of the teachers have experience in using a communicative process to help their students' mastery grammar well. This result shows that when teachers teach grammar explicitly, they deal with a language and the uses to which language can be put [6], and teaching grammar explicitly refers to the conscious knowledge of grammatical rules that can be learned through formal classroom instruction [26], [28].

As implicitly, 54 teachers or 85 % of the teachers agree that grammar teaching is more than making learners memorize a set of rules in the target language. 54 teachers or 85 % of the teachers understand that the function of grammar teaching is empowering their students to comprehend the set of rules and provide them with the skills of interpretation of the target language.

When teaching grammar focused on the form, 53 teachers or 84 % of the teachers point that their grammar teaching is mostly focused on the form which is learners should know and master the grammatical role for a specific formation, 57 teachers or 90 % of the teachers have experience in applying task-bask instruction which is focused on form. This finding shows that when teachers teach grammar focused on form, they start with attract students attention to linguistic forms and encourage students awareness of grammatical aspects. The ‘focus on form’ approach suggests drawing learners’ attention to linguistic forms as they arise in activities whose primary focus is on meaning [29].

Meanwhile, when it is focused on meaning, 52 teachers or 82 % of the teachers have experience in using authentic language. This result supports theory about the characteristics of grammar instruction focused on meaning such as ; a) They emphasize using authentic language, b) They emphasize tasks that encourage the negotiation of meaning between students, and between students and teacher, c) They emphasize successful communication, especially that which involves risk taking, d) They emphasize minimal focus on form, including: Lack of emphasis on error correction, and little explicit instruction on language rules.

The discussion of quantitative data shows that EFL teachers in senior high schools in Ambon city use very kind of teaching approaches in which they teach grammar as inductively, deductively, implicit, explicit, focus on form and meaning. The results imply that in some occasions, they teach grammar as inductively or deductively but in other situation, they teach grammar as explicitly or implicitly and focus on form and meaning. Meanwhile, the result of classroom observation and interview, the selected teachers mostly use the inductive approach in which they start with the examples and using authentic language context. In this case, the teachers provide students with many examples to show how the concept is used, engage the students to use the target language and encourage them to generalize the rules. Some teachers focused on form while others focused on meaning. For instance, In ET' classroom, she teaches grammar as inductively and focused on meaning and it is proven that her approach can work well because the students can actively involve in the learning process because they can discover rules as competitive in playing a game as one her teaching method.

The results of this study showed that as quantitative data, most EFL teachers in Ambon City preferred to use deductive teaching grammar approach and the results of this study support the previous relevance study conducted [30]. Even though from qualitative data, the finding showed that most selected participants used inductive teaching grammar approach. Kubra Sik' findings reported that deductive grammar teaching was slightly more effective than inductive grammar teaching considering the academicals success of the students. Kubra Sik’ study showed that adult learners feel more relaxed while learning grammar deductively. Another main finding of his study is that lecturers feel better when they teach grammar deductively.

* 1. **The most and less frequently strategies and methods commonly used in their classroom practices**

In identifying the most and less frequently strategies and methods commonly used in teaching grammar, it is arranged based on the highest percentage around 90-100 % as the most common strategies, and the percentage around 70-76 % as the lowest percentage and less frequently as teaching grammar strategies and methods in their teaching practices.

From the quantitative data results, it is shown the most common strategies and methods used by the teachers are; 1) 62 teachers or 98 % of the teachers apply structural context strategy in terms extend an invitation over the telephone to someone to come to party when teaching would like…., verb word order, and interrogative pronouns. 2) Still, under structural context strategy, 61 teachers or 97 % of the teachers describe a past vacation, weekend when they teach simple past tense, question formation, form to a verb to do, word order in negation. 3) under structural context strategy, 59 teachers or 94 % of the teachers use answer information questions; name, address, phone number, etc. to teach present tense of a verb, to be, possessive adjectives. Meanwhile, 4) 58 teachers or 92 % of the teachers use stories in teaching grammar in terms of delivering the story for students as storyteller, and 5) under structural context strategy, 57 teachers or 90 % of the teachers apply role play a shopping trip to buy a gift for a family member or friend when teaching models, collective nouns, and quantifiers.

Referring the less frequently strategies and methods used by EFL teachers in their classroom, the quantitative data report that ; 1) 46 teachers or 73 % of the teachers use structural context strategy in terms of fill out the medical history then role play a medical interview on a visit with a new doctor, to teach present perfect tense, present perfect progressive, and 2) 48 teachers or 76 % of the teachers use a daily weather report and report daily schedules of people when teaching forms of verb to be and idiomatic expressions, habitual present, personal pronoun, and demonstrative adjectives.

Teaching grammar through structural context means that a situation which teachers set up in the lesson in order to generate several examples sentences of a structure. The situation serves as a means of contextualizing the language and this helps to clarify its meaning. At the same time, the generated examples provide students with data for induction of the rules of forms. So that students can be involved in the development of the presentation as well as in solving the grammar problem. Meanwhile teaching grammar through stories can be used for both eliciting and illustrating grammar points.

In line with quantitative data, the results of the interview and observation show that the selected teachers use very kind of teaching strategies such as structural context, text, and stories. The strategies can be included in the teaching methods such as contextual teaching and learning, cooperative learning, grammar-translation method, demonstration, Think pair share, total physical response, games, text, and storyteller, role play.

* 1. **The challenges faced by senior high school EFL teachers in teaching grammar.**

In terms of the challenges faced by senior high school EFL teachers in teaching grammar, from the qualitative findings show that the most challenging they still face in teaching English as general and in teaching English grammar as particular is the students' characteristics. All the selected participants pointed out that their students have different character and learning style and as results, it influences their attitude on learning English grammar. In teaching and learning process, the students sometimes lack attention and not serious, have no background knowledge of English grammar; they are demotivated in developing their grammar knowledge, lack vocabulary. Another challenging such as they limit of English teaching methodologies references and lack of training dealing with teaching grammar provided by the government. It can't be denied that most students perceive learning English grammar as the most bored learning activity when they learn it in a school. Even the teachers have already applied vary teaching strategies, sometimes they still produce unenjoyably teaching grammar atmosphere.

From the challenges above, then some expectations are proposed to be considered in designing teaching grammar such as following; 1) Students need to be taught grammar through various methodologies and approaches to cater to their individual styles of learning, and educators should consider students' attitudes and perceptions when making decisions about how to teach grammar. 2) EFL teachers would do well to understand and address their learners' concerns in planning their lessons and classroom activities and use supplementary materials, if necessary, to help learners cope with the difficulties. 3) The government, in this case, the institution who has the responsibility to produce teachers should design training programs in which should be planned in such a way that student-teachers and practicing teachers articulate the potential and actual difficulties and discuss ways of overcoming or at least coping with them, and 4). EFL Curriculum and material developers should show an understanding of learners' and teachers' difficulties, and provide sufficient guidance and help in the curriculum document and the teachers' book showing how the potential difficulties could be addressed in planning their classroom activities. Teachers may be given examples of mediating tasks, which would mitigate the difficulties [15].

1. **CONCLUSION**

From the result of this research, the researcher draws the following conclusions: 1) Teachers' perceptions of grammar teaching are based on their conceptual knowledge as they have experienced it in their classroom practices. The teachers' conceptual knowledge is rooted in grammar theories types such as prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar and traditional grammar. 2) The use of teaching grammar approaches is varied based on the content of grammar. The approaches such as teaching grammar as deductively (55 teachers), inductively (52 teachers), explicitly (49 teachers), implicitly (57 teachers), focused on form (53 teachers) and focused on meaning (52 teachers). In line with grammar teaching strategies, most teachers apply structural context strategy, texts, stories, grammar translation, and cooperative learning strategy. 3) The most strategy used in their classroom practices are structural context strategy and cooperative learning strategy and the less strategy used in their classroom practices is under structural context strategy in term of role-playing the situation. 4) The challenges faced by the EFL teachers in Ambon are the students' characteristics in terms of their learning style and attitude, limitation of English teaching methodology references and training.

The fourth conclusions above represent the facts of senior high school EFL teachers in Ambon city regarding their teaching grammar approaches, strategies, and challenges. Therefore from the conclusion, the expectations are proposed to be considered in designing English grammar classroom following; 1) Students need to be taught grammar through various methodologies and approaches to cater to their individual styles of learning, and educators should consider students' attitudes and perceptions when making decisions about how to teach grammar. 2) EFL teachers would do well to understand and address their learners' concerns in planning their lessons and classroom activities and use supplementary materials, if necessary, to help learners cope with the difficulties. 3) The government, in this case, the institution who has the responsibility to produce teachers should design training programs in which should be planned in a way that student-teachers and practicing teachers articulate the potential and actual difficulties and discuss ways of overcoming or at least coping with them. 4) EFL Curriculum and material developers should show an understanding of learners' and teachers' difficulties, and provide sufficient guidance and help in the curriculum document and the teachers' book showing how the potential difficulties could be addressed in planning their classroom activities. Teachers may be given examples of mediating tasks, which would mitigate the difficulties.

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