

www.galaxyimrj.com

ISSN: 2278-9529



GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Vol. 8, Issue-I May 2019

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor: Madhuri Bite

About Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/about-us/>

Archive: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/contact-us/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/faq/>



Teachers Practices of Teaching Vocabulary through Co-operative Language Learning Strategy: Bodity Secondary and Preparatory School in Focus

Tesfaye Buche

Lecturer at Wolayita Sodo University
Department of English Language and Literature
&

Kefyalew Woreta Haile

Lecturer at Wolayita Sodo University
Department of English Language and Literature

Article History: Submitted-02/04/2019, Revised-30/05/2019, Accepted-02/06/2019, Published-05/06/2019.

Abstract:

This study intended to investigate English Language Teachers' Practices of teaching vocabulary through cooperative language learning in Bodit Secondary and Preparatory School. To conduct this study, descriptive qualitative research design was employed. The data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interview. All four grade twelve teachers teaching English in the study school and grade level were selected as participants of the study without any sampling method due to their limited number. The overall findings of this study revealed that teachers in the study school do not found having clear understanding towards the concept of teaching vocabulary through cooperative language learning strategy. Consequently, the study depicted that there was clear gap which implied that the teachers were not properly teaching vocabulary using cooperative language learning strategy. Besides, the data revealed that teachers are challenged in implementing cooperative language learning strategies in their vocabulary lesson. Among which, teachers large class size, lack of interest of students, shortage of textbook, lack of sitting materials, loss of confidence, shortage of time, irrelevant teacher student ratio, and language anxiety, influence of mother tongue, lack of vocabulary power, and lack of background knowledge are found. Hence, it can be concluded due to teachers' awareness and various challenges, implementing cooperative learning strategy has found ineffective in benefiting the students' vocabulary improvement. Therefore, the researchers recommend that teachers, school directors, Woreda, Zonal and Regional Governments should work together to provide practical training to teachers so as to empower their pedagogical skills.

Keywords: Practice, Challenge, Vocabulary, Cooperative Language Learning strategy.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary plays a central role in the teaching-learning process as they are considered as inputs that empowers students' communications skills. Students' word knowledge is strongly linked to academic success because students who have large vocabularies can understand new ideas and concepts more quickly than students with limited vocabularies. According, the high correspondence in the research literature of word knowledge with reading comprehension indicates that if students do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be affected (Chall & Jacobs, 2003).

Learning a language means learning its vocabulary. We use words both in spoken or written communication so as to send message, share information and ideas by using the language. Confirming this, Harmer, 1991 as cited in Richards, 2000) noted that the rich capacity of vocabulary is very important to make effective communication in any oral and written language. Without adequate knowledge of vocabulary, we cannot express ourselves appropriately even if we are rich in mastering the grammatical strictures. Richards further confirmed that vocabulary is the center of the language. It is the tool of thought, self-expression and communication. Hence, language teachers should be equipped with appropriate vocabulary teaching methods in order to enrich the capacity of students' vocabulary skills.

Consequently, numerous types of approaches and techniques have been introduced into the field of English language to teach vocabulary. Among which, cooperative language teaching strategies has been introduce to teach vocabulary in a more interactive and communicative manner. It is one of important strategies which create opportunity for learners to learn vocabulary in group so that students can practice new words in group and they can easily masters the new words. Besides, they enjoy the learning and sharing their ideas in group. In line with this, Eskay et al. (2012) noted that cooperative learning groups strategies work best when students of different abilities and levels work together so that high-achieving students can reinforce their understanding through the assistance of lower level students, while the lower level students can receive additional support from their fellow mates. Thus, the current study aims to explore English Language teachers' practices in teaching



vocabulary through cooperative learning. The study will focus on examining the practices of English language teachers in using cooperative language learning for vocabulary teaching.

2. Problem Identified

For many years, vocabulary was seen as supplementary to English language teaching particularly to teach grammatical structure. Nevertheless, researchers and linguists have increasingly paid their attention to vocabulary teaching strategy, by analyzing its important in language teaching and reassessing some of the ways in which it can be taught and learnt effectively (Harmer, 1991). However, from the researchers experience many of the students in the study school do not have the abilities of knowing the meaning of new words from different written materials. As a result, students do not express their ideas, thoughts and feelings in English correctly. Such incompetency is directly related to various variables. Among which teachers teaching strategies and experiences of teaching vocabularies seems to be the one. Teachers in the study setting are observed making an attempt to teach vocabulary via cooperative vocabulary teaching strategies. However, complains are heard from the school teachers and students about its practicality and effectiveness in which the researchers explore under this study.

Accordingly, in Ethiopian context, many researchers have conducted. For example, Girma Negire (2015) conducted a study on the Teaching of Vocabulary through Communicative Approach; Jimma town. The finding of the study was that EFL teachers of the targeted school were dominantly applied lecture. Besides, Getachew Bekele and Getachew Seyoum (2014) conducted a research on Vocabulary Learning Strategies used by EFL Students: the case of grade eleven at Jorgo Nole Preparatory School. The finding of the study indicated that the high achievers' perceptions about the importance of vocabulary learning to improve their English language achievement are higher than the low achievers' perceptions. Furthermore, Hailu Mulissa (2007) conducted a study on vocabulary teaching techniques via Plasma TV and students' attitude towards the techniques: a case of three government high schools in Addis Ababa with reference to grade nine. The finding of his study revealed that many of the vocabulary teaching techniques are not meant to help comprehension of words.

The above empirical studies are important to the current study in that they discussed the issues of vocabulary and vocabulary teaching methods. However, these studies are limited in their scope and concerns. The studies did not explore teachers' practices in teaching vocabulary via cooperative language learning. In addition to this, the aforementioned studies did not identify the challenges that teachers face while teaching vocabulary through cooperative language learning.

Above all, the general objective of this study is investigate grade eleven English language teachers' practices and challenges of teaching vocabulary through cooperative language learning strategy at Bodity Secondary and Preparatory School. Specifically, the researchers set the following as specific objectives:

1. To explore the practices of EFL teachers' in teaching vocabulary through cooperative language learning strategy.
2. To point out the challenges EFL teachers' facing while teaching vocabulary using cooperative language learning strategy.

To this end, the researchers are set the following research question which can be answered at some point in data analysis:

1. How do EFL teachers' implement cooperative teaching strategy in vocabulary lessons?
2. What types of challenges EFL teachers encountered in teaching vocabulary via cooperative teaching strategy?

3. Research Methodology and Design

This chapter presents an overview of the research design and methodology. Therefore, it describes the research design, research setting, participants, sample size and technique, data gathering instruments, methods of data analysis, data collection procedure and ethical considerations.

3.1. Research Design

One of the main objectives of this study is investigate grade twelve English language teachers' practices of teaching vocabulary using cooperative language learning strategy at Bodity Secondary and Preparatory School. For this reason, descriptive research design which accompanied by qualitative research approach. This design of research was mainly used because it is more likely to be appropriate method and technique in examining teachers'



practices in teaching vocabulary using cooperative teaching strategy. Moreover, qualitative approach helps to collect data through observation and interview from a natural setting (Creswell, 2002).

3.2. Population and Sampling

According to the information obtained from the administration office of the study school at the time of this study, there were four English language teachers. Due to their limited number, all English language teachers were selected using comprehensive sampling techniques for actual classroom observation and teachers face to face interviews.

4. Data Gathering Instruments

This research was conducted to explore EFL teachers' practices and challenges of teaching vocabulary via cooperative language learning. In order to collect data from the target population, classroom observation and Semi-structured interview were used as instruments of data collection.

4.1. Classroom Observation

Observation is one of the main data gathering tools to collect data about teachers' practical engagement of teaching vocabulary using cooperative language teaching strategies as it occurs in a natural phenomenon (Kumar, 2005). This helps the researchers to gather ample data about the physical environment and about human behavior that can be recorded directly by the researcher without having anticipatory accounts of others. Before the actual classroom observations conducted, the researchers were contacted the school principal and English language department head to ask for permission. After getting the permission, the classroom observation was made with four EFL teachers and each of them was observed three times based on the checklist prepared before hands.

4.2. Interview

Semi-structured interview was used with four teachers so as to gather data that can help the researchers to triangulate the collected data from actual classroom observation. Besides, it also gives the interviewee more freedom to express her/her ideas, perceptions, beliefs and experiences about the subject (Creswell, 2002).

5. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

After preparing the semi-structured interview and observation checklist as data gathering instruments, the researchers were get the consent of the participants from the selected school, and then based on their classroom lesson programs; each teacher was observed when they taught vocabularies as English lesson. After that, Semi-structured

interview was employed to explore English language teachers' perceptions and practices of teaching vocabulary via cooperative language learning strategies. Finally, data collected from the two tools were organized and tabulated under similar continuum and analyzed qualitatively using descriptive analysis techniques.

6. Results and Discussions

This part deals with the analysis, and interpretations of data gathered from classroom observation and teachers interview. For ethical considerations, the name of each teacher is codes as **T1**, **T2**, **T3**, and **T4**. Consequently, each teachers were observed three times each when the delivered different vocabulary lessons. The purpose of observing the teachers lesson presentation was to see whether or not teachers conduct vocabulary lessons using cooperative language learning strategy. With this regard, in the first day of classroom observation, **T1** and **T2** presented their vocabulary lesson by introducing that day's lesson content which was about '**increasing vocabularies by practicing phrasal verbs**'. Following this, they instruct the students about what they will do on **page 13** and **14**. After that they ordered the students to read the reading passage entitled '**My Family**' and do two exercise respectively. In the first exercise students were expected to match the phrasal verbs given under column '**A**' with their correct meaning given under column '**B**', and in the second exercise, they were expected to group the phrasal verbs that usually go after participle and object which do not take an object and writing sentences using phrasal verbs. Afterwards, students were organized into certain group based on their sitting arrangement to let them discuss on the two activities found in the students' textbook. After giving the students to discuss on the first and second activities respectively, **T1** was motivating the students to do the exercises individually. After some of the students finished in doing it, the teacher was observed in marking it to them. While **T2**, was observed motivating students to practice the exercises in group of three or four according to their seat. Finally, in the same fashion the two teachers summed up the lessons by doing the correct answers together with the whole students. In such lesson presentation, many of the students were observed passive participant in which the teachers emphasized on voluntarily participated students.

In contrary to **T1** and **T2**, **T3** and **T4** presented their lesson by motivating students to relate their prior knowledge to that particular lesson by introducing and asking oral questions. After that, they begun the lesson by reading the instruction on the students textbook and letting the students to do the two activities individually first and in groups after words in which students compared their answers with their groups. In this regard the two teachers



engaged by doing some of the exercises together with the students by encouraging the students to participate in answering the questions. At last, they also ended up the lesson by giving the students write sentences using phrasal verbs provide by the teachers as inputs.

Therefore, from the data analyzed above, almost all of the four teachers did not implement cooperative language learning strategies properly and structurally so as to improve students' vocabulary skills. Instead all of them have used traditional ways of group organization in which students did not benefited from the strategies of group formation. Thus, we can concluded that almost all of the teachers in that particular school practice traditional group organization in which students could not develop social and interdependent skills. Teachers, interview also proved that teachers do not have clear understanding about the concept of cooperative learning strategies rather they usually organized students to certain group works usually based on the students seating arrangement so as to save the lessons presentation time.

In the second phase of classroom observation, teachers were observed in conducting vocabulary lessons in which students are supposed to empower their vocabulary skill from the reading passage entitled '**Childhood Memories**' which is found on page **17**. The purpose of the lesson was to empower the students' vocabulary skill by practicing guessing techniques from the context of the reading passage. Accordingly, four of the teacher presented their lesson by letting the students to open their textbook and read the passage and practice guessing the meanings of the words according to the passage. In doing such exercise, students were organized into pair based on their seating arrangement. After students discussed on exercise one on page 17, T1 and T2 invited volunteer students who can read the passage. After students read the passage together, they encouraged volunteer students among each group members to tell them the contextual meaning of the passages. Whereas, T3 and T4 read the passage themselves in which students were reading silently together with their teachers. In the mean time, they read the vocabularies in which students answered accordingly. In this case, only active students were seen actively participated in which many of them made side talk irrelevantly. Moreover, the other vocabulary lesson presented was on page **18** exercises **B.1.6** in which students were expected to practice discourse markers. In presenting this lesson, T1, T2 and T3 were observed reading the meaning of discourse markers as it presented on the students' textbook. On the other hand; T4, invited students to tell him the meaning of discourse markers by encouraging them. Afterwards, four of the teachers were engaged students to practice vocabulary exercises' about which students were

supposed to group those discourse marks based on their function as presented in the table on the their textbook.

In the course of all teachers' lesson presentation, teachers were not observed giving students' sufficient time to practice the lesson cooperatively. What they did was reminding the students the remaining minutes for group works and whole class discussions. Consequently, students were observed rushing to finish the whole activities in which many of the students were frustrated and the middle, and low achiever students got discouraged in participating with their respective groups.

Therefore, we can say that due to shortage of time and handling various tasks in a single classroom period made the students not being benefiting from the presented lessons and sharing their ideas, views and experience in learning cooperatively. Hence, we can say that lack of sufficient time is observed as one of the teachers' challenges affecting the implementation of cooperative learning strategy. In consolidating this fact, teachers interview have found the same facts with that of classroom observation data in that teachers replied that shortage of time is believed affecting their teaching style. They justified that the due to the volume of the textbook and the students unmanageable number, they usually give much focus in covering the contents of the textbook than wasting much time in organizing students to certain cooperative group rather they tend to rush in covering the portion in the textbook. In concurrence to this, they put forwards in the interview that cooperative language learning is time consuming strategies in which they did not implement it usually.

In the third phases of classroom observation, the four observed teachers lesson presentation were to teach vocabulary from the listening text entitled '**How I communicate**' which was presented **on page 33; exercise 3**; in which the teachers read for the students. In line with this, T1, T2, T3 and T4 begin their lesson by revising and introducing that day's lesson topic. Even though, four of the teachers' styles were not observed similar. For instance, T1 and T4 have an almost similar teaching style in which they motivated the students towards the lesson by reminding the students to open their textbook on page on page 33 and do the activities about words used to express positive and negative feelings. Afterwards, they gave instruction about which students were expected to group the lists of words presented in the students' textbook in their right group by categorizing as positive and negative feeling presented under exercise **A.1.2** on the same page as stated above. In the



course of teaching this lesson, teachers were motivated the students and engaged them to do the activities individually first and then in pairs according to their seat. In this lesson, many of students were seen passive in the course of teaching learning process. On the other hand, T2 and T3 presented their lesson by letting students open their textbook on the same page as T1 and T4 presented. These teachers precede their lesson by reading the students the instruction on the ways how they can accomplish and practice the vocabulary exercises. In the course of their lesson presentation, they did not organizing students to certain cooperative groups. Instead, they observed letting the students do the activities individually which was followed by whole class discussions in asking and answering the questions of the exercises. Finally, after that the lesson presentation was summed up by giving the correct answer to the students.

Therefore, from the four observed teacher, T1 observed implementing cooperative learning strategies effectively in which the three teachers fails to do so. Hence, we can say that teachers are not prepared well before the lesson presentation in which they have different motivation implementing cooperative learning strategies. So we cannot say that teachers are effective in teaching students cooperatively.

In confirming the above data, interview data shows that teachers did not believe they are implementing cooperative teaching strategies effectively due to a number of reasons. Teachers replied that their teaching experience, awareness about cooperative learning, lack of training, shortage of time, teachers perception about teaching as a profession, s as shortage of text book, lack of movable desk, insufficient time allocation, classroom size, the absence of students' interest to be engaged in cooperative works students' interest, back ground knowledge, teacher's academic gap and lack of interest and few teachers' negative perception towards the strategy have been found the challenging variables hampering the effective implementation of cooperative learning strategy in their lessons.

Thus, the data which was observed through class room observation proved that almost all English language teachers at Bodit Secondary and Preparatory School did not implementing the cooperative learning strategy so as to improve students vocabulary and interdependence skill. This implies that they have information and practical skill gapes in providing cooperative language learning strategy when they were teaching vocabulary. However, they agreed that teaching students cooperatively can empower the students' language performance and vocabulary skills because students can get the chance to assist each other to understand the meaning of new words by using the word in a meaningful

context. After reading a passage, a cooperative group of students who have mixed abilities can discuss unfamiliar vocabulary with each other. As result, a student who explained the word's meaning elaborates his knowledge about the word; a student who received the explanation of the word meaning becomes able to decode the word (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Conclusions

According to the data analyzed above, the researchers draw these as conclusions. In teaching students vocabulary lessons through cooperative language learning strategies did not found effectively implemented by the teachers so as to improve students' vocabulary skill by motivating them learning cooperatively. Many of the teachers have observed, they have similar ways of lesson presentation and organizing students to certain group works. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers come across from similar teaching style and learning experience which still influence them not to be flexible in implementing cooperative learning strategies. Moreover, it can be concluded that teachers are still depending on traditional ways of teaching that does not benefits students to improve their language competencies in general and vocabulary skills in particular.

Furthermore, it has also been investigated that implementing cooperative learning strategies are influenced by a number of variables. Among which, teachers teaching experience, large class size, lack of students' interest towards the lessons, shortage, lack of movable seats, shortage of time, classroom size and student ratio, and students language anxiety, and students background knowledge about the English language are found some of them. Thus, from this data, one can infer that implementing cooperative language learning strategies by English language teachers in the study school is influenced by the aforementioned variables which need critical investigations.

7.2. Recommendations

On the bases of the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded. It was investigated that EFL teachers of Bodit Secondary and Preparatory School do not have clear understanding about cooperative language teaching strategies in which they didn't fully and effectively implemented cooperative learning strategy in a more organized and structured manners in teaching students vocabulary lessons. Thus, the concerned bodies such as Bodit Town Education Office, Wolaita Zone Education Department



and SNNPRS should give continuous professional training for teachers so as to capacitate pedagogically and create awareness about its importance and impacts on the students learning.

In addition to this, it was found and discussed that the majority of English language teachers' practical implementation of cooperative language learning strategy in teaching vocabulary lessons were influenced by different challenges. These are, lack of teachers clear understanding about strategy, lack of practical training, shortage of time, students classroom ratio, language anxiety, students' background knowledge of the language are few of them. Therefore, so as to motivate and tackle teachers' challenges, Bodit City Education Office, Wolaita Zone Education Department, SNNPR Education Bureau and NGOs should capacity teachers' pedagogical awareness by creating awareness and provide continues short term-training for teachers which would be more scientific and practical.

Moreover, teachers and school communities should work herder so as to create the awareness for students about the importance of cooperative learning strategies in improving their vocabulary and language skills. The school administrators, Bodit City Education Office and Wolaita Zone Education Department and other concerned bodies should create suitable situation by constructing additional class room to minimize large number of students, and vocabulary related reference materials and provide enough and suitable chairs to let students learn cooperatively to improve their language. Moreover, school facilities and appropriate inputs should be provided by ministry of education and other concerned bodies. If so, it would be easy for many of the teachers to accept cooperative learning strategy as one of the communicative teaching-learning approach which should be implemented practically with no or little difficulty. Otherwise, teachers become de-motivated, reluctant and stick to traditional ways of teaching the language.

In sum, teachers should attract students' attention and encourage them to actively involved in cooperative groups ,and should also analyze his lesson plans in which they can determine whether his/her lesson plans give learners a chance to use a variety of learning styles and strategies or not. Vocabulary teaching materials should also designed by textbook writers and syllabus designers in a ways that can attract and motivate the students' vocabulary learning cooperatively.

Works Cited:

Challa & Jacobs (2003). Reading and Writing Instruction in Upper grade level Students: SAGA Journals. [Retrieved in journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf).

Eskay et al. (2012). Use of Peer Tutoring, Cooperative Learning, and Collaborative Learning: *US-China Education Review*, ISSN 1548-6613 *US-China Education Review*, ISSN 1548-6613: [Retrieved in https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED538819.pdf](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED538819.pdf)

Getachew Seyoum & Getachew Bekele (2014). *Vocabulary Learning Strategies used by EFL Students: the Case of Grade Eleven at Jorgo Nole Preparatory School*. Pdf.

Girma Negire (2015). Teaching of Vocabulary through Communicative Approach: Jimma University: [Retrieved in https://www.ju.edu.et/cssl/?q=node/495](https://www.ju.edu.et/cssl/?q=node/495)

Hailu Mulissa (2007). Vocabulary Teaching Techniques via Plasma TV and Students' Attitude towards the techniques: a case of three government high schools in Addis Ababa with reference to grade nine.

[Retrieved in etd.aau.edu.et/bitstream/handle/123456789/2015/Hailu%20Mulissa.pdf](http://etd.aau.edu.et/bitstream/handle/123456789/2015/Hailu%20Mulissa.pdf).

Harmer, J. (1991). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*: New York: Longman Press

John Creswell (2002). *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*: Second Edition.

Johnson, D., Johnson, R., & Smith, K. (1998). *Cooperative Learning: Increasing College Faculty Instructional Productivity*: Washington, DC: The George Washington University Press. Available at: <http://www.tltgroup.org/resources/rmillis3.html>

Kumar, R. (2005). *Research Methodology: A Step by Step Guide to Beginners*, Stage Publishe

Richard, J., & T., Rodgers. (2000): *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.