

A Phenomenological Study of EFL Teachers' Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges of Speaking Skills Instruction: Tewodros General Secondary School Grade Ten in Focus

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges of speaking skills instruction. A phenomenological research design was employed. A total of six (6) English language teachers who were teaching grade 10 students at Tewodros General Secondary School, Debre Tabor were comprehensively selected. Semi-structured interview and classroom observation were used to collect data. The data were analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers' perceptions towards speaking skills instruction were positive. Hence, most teachers viewed that the purpose of speaking skills instruction is to enhance students' speaking performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. The results discovered that the practice of speaking skills instruction was not adequately accompanied with active learning methods. Hence, most of the teachers were using the lecture method than various active learning methods such as group works, find the different activities, role play, information gap activity, brainstorming, storytelling, and picture description. The findings uncovered that the speaking skills instruction was affected by various challenges including inability to use various active learning methods, lack of conducive learning environment, lack of students' learning motivation, and unsuitable curriculum and textbook. As a result, students' speaking performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation was inadequately developed. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers, school directors, curriculum and textbook designers, and students should work together in various regards such as using various active learning methods, increasing students learning motivation, creating conducive learning environment, and revising the curriculum and the textbook to minimize the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of speaking skills.

Keywords: Perception, practice and challenges

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The goal of language teaching and learning is commonly defined in relation to the four language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. When teachers are deficient in methods of implementing speaking activities, learners lack opportunities to practice different speaking activities that are presented in the student textbook because learners can follow directions, perform different activities in the classroom, and overcome challenges if and only if they were properly instructed and supported by their teachers. Activities in the textbook should be carefully implemented by EFL teachers, and how these activities are implemented should be investigated over time (McKay, 2002).

People learn English primarily so that they can communicate with one another, regardless of their first language. However, most of them lay a big focus on speaking which is one of the four major language skills. Speaking is the means through which learners can communicate with others to achieve certain goals or to express their opinions, intentions, hopes, and viewpoints. In addition, people who know a language are referred to as speakers of that language. Furthermore, in almost any setting, speaking is the most frequently used language skill. Speaking is used twice as frequently as reading and writing in communication. Speaking and writing are sometimes compared because they are both "productive skills" as opposed to "receptive skills" like reading and listening. As two interrelated techniques of conducting communication, speaking is likewise intimately related to listening (Rivers, 1981).

Every speaker is also a listener, and every listener has the capacity to become a speaker. Even though speaking is important for language learners, it is difficult to teach and learn, particularly when the language being studied is a second or foreign language. Because English is not Ethiopia's first language, teaching speaking is difficult. It is proving to be a challenging subject for students to grasp. Teachers must play a role in encouraging students to speak up and express themselves in the classroom in order to bring the lesson to life (Oprandy, 1994 and EL Menoufy, 1997).

According to Brown and Yule (1983), "spoken language production," i.e., teaching to speak in a foreign

language, is often regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of language teaching. This concept is also discussed by Bygate (1987:1) in detail. One of the basic problems in foreign language teaching is preparing learners to be able to use the language. Since English is a second language for Ethiopians, it is no miracle if many Ethiopian teachers face great problems in using the language.

With regard to this, Melkamu (2003) observed that many English-language learners have certain problems in speaking. In addition to this, he further stated that the instructions used by many Ethiopian teachers are not very clear and effective. Therefore, an investigation into teachers' perceptions of speaking and teachers' instruction of speaking is significant. This is because teachers can teach speaking skills effectively and students can also learn them effectively only if they have a clear and correct perception and practice of speaking skills.

In the classroom, there are two types of EL speaking skills practice activities: "practice activities concentrating fluency" and "practice activities focused on accuracy." Speaking skills practice exercises concentrate on fluency, which reflects natural language use, focuses on communication, requires meaningful language use, and produces unpredictable language. Speaking skills practice activities, on the other hand, emphasize accuracy, which reflects classroom language use, focuses on the production of proper examples of language, practice language outside of context, or controls language choice (Richards, 2006).

Furthermore, Richards (2006) also distinguishes between three types of practice in EL speaking skills instruction: mechanical practice, meaningful practice, and communicative practice. Mechanical practice, on the other hand, refers to a regulated practice exercise that students can complete well without necessarily knowing the language they are employing. Meanwhile, meaningful practice is an activity in which students are given language control but are also required to make meaningful choices when practicing. Furthermore, communicative practice refers to activities that emphasize language practice in a real-world setting, where genuine information is exchanged, and where the language employed is unpredictable. Functional communication activities and social interaction activities are the two most common forms of EL speaking skills practice activities in communicative language instruction.

Learners comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures; discovering missing features in a map or picture; one learner communicating behind a screen to another learner and giving instructions on how to draw a picture or shape, or how to complete a map; following directions; and solving problems from shared information are all examples of functional communication activities, according to these authors. Conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role plays, simulations, skits, improvisations, and debates are all examples of social interaction activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The teaching and learning of English language in Ethiopia are classroom dependent, and learners do not have exposure to practice all language skills, and of all skills, students do not have exposure to one of the macro language skills which is the speaking skill. It is indicated that there is a gap of knowledge and practice in using various techniques from different stakeholders, specifically from EFL teachers, on how to apply speaking skill activities and also on which techniques should be used while implementing speaking activities. Therefore, the current study investigated teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

This study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' perception, practice and challenges of speaking skills instruction. Learning how to speak is a challenging task for non-native speakers. In this regard, previous studies conducted on speaking skills instruction revealed that most students are less effective in their English language communication in general and speaking ability in particular. For instance, Abu-Ghararah (2014) conducted research on Problems with Speaking Activities in the Saudi EFL Classroom and found that teachers stopped and corrected students every time they made a mistake while implementing speaking activities in EFL classes. Mistakes were not tolerated and were considered a serious problem and a source of shame. Likewise, Gudu (2015) also conducted a study to determine the classroom activities used by teachers to promote learners' active participation in speaking lessons in eight secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. The findings showed that there was a variation in the use of classroom activities. The lecture method was mostly used in speaking classrooms over other active learning methods like role play, picture description, and gap filling activities.

In Ethiopia, most of the teachers and learners at secondary and preparatory school levels have problems with speaking English. Concerning this, the research findings by the MoE stated that it is a widely held belief that the status of English is low in Ethiopian schools at all levels. Accordingly, the problem is common for all language skills, and speaking is one of the areas, which needs attention. Local studies showed that most students in Ethiopia faced problems with communicating in English language orally. In line with this issue, Sisay (2012) conducted a descriptive survey on learner autonomy in EFL speaking skills class room using the instrument questionnaire, observation and interview in Addis Ababa. The focus of the study was on methods of teaching speaking skills. The result revealed that teachers are more responsible regarding decision making in the learning

process of speaking skills.

Besides, studies found that inappropriate instructional methods and procedures were used in Ethiopian schools. Hence, teachers used traditional way of teaching speaking, reading model dialogues allowed with paying little or no time given for modern methods of speaking skill instructions like group and pair discussions, oral reports, drama, panel discussions and interviews. Amanuel (2015) investigated problems that affect students' speaking skills and reported that speaking classes were mostly teacher-centered. Besides, there were also problems related to teachers, such as negative beliefs about language teaching, lack of training, and employing inappropriate methods to teach speaking skills. Hoang (2015) conducted a study on factors affecting speaking skills in Vietnam. The results indicated that students spoke very little or not at all, used their native language during group and pair work, fear to speak, and lack time to complete speaking activities.

In addition, Negash (2011) also investigated the causes and prevalence of EFL anxiety in the practice of speaking skills in Tigry Regional State Eastern Zone Irob Wereda in Dawhan Preparatory School and revealed that the causes of anxiety were fear of negative evaluation, inadvertent topics given for discussion, and poor background. Genet (2017) conducted on teachers' perception and practices of EFL speaking skills assessment in the North Wollo Zone at Habru, Kobo, and Woldia Woreda General Secondary and Preparatory Schools, grade 10 in focus. The result revealed that teachers have a highly favorable perception of the principles of EFL speaking assessment. There was little practice of the EFL speaking skills assessment. The result also revealed that teachers face several challenges, like time constraints, emphasizing on grammar, large class size, taking matriculation as a model and a lack of very useful training.

Likewise, Melkamu (2003) found that there were problems with high school students' speaking performance. Zenebe (2004) discovered the factors that affect students' speaking skills including lack of interest, lack of motivation, the method of instruction used by the teacher, interference of the mother tongue, fear of making errors, and shortage of teaching aids. Lakew (2004) also conducted on the extent of teachers' involvement in improving students' speaking skills, and found that there was low teacher involvement in improving learning speaking skills. In addition to this, a survey of teachers' and students' challenges in an EFL speaking classroom was conducted by Jenenew (2006) and reported some challenges like large class sizes and a lack of teaching aids. Endalew (2011) also investigated teachers' perception of speaking skills, speaking instruction, and students' perception of speaking skills and found that both teachers and students have negative perceptions towards speaking skills and that speaking instructions were not practiced properly.

The literature, in general, indicated that students' speaking performance was below the expectation. Besides, the current researcher's teaching experience also showed that oral skills have not always been viewed as a central issue in English language pedagogy in Tewodros General Secondary School. Moreover, it has been found that majority of learners have troubles with speaking, especially organizing their ideas in an appropriate way, delivering an oral report in front of audience, accuracy and fluency. Though various studies were conducted on speaking skills, the present study is different from the aforementioned studies in its focus. In other terms, the current study has focused on investigating teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction while previous studies were focused on the general speaking ability of teachers and students. The study employed a phenomenological research design to investigate teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction.

However, as far as the current researcher's knowledge is concerned, there are no local studies conducted to investigate teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction at Tewodros General Secondary School. Hence, the present researcher has assessed locally available documents and internet sources and understood that there are no adequate local researches conducted in the study area addressing the issue. Therefore, the present study investigated teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction. Thus, this study was conducted to fill this research gap by investigating teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction at Tewodros General Secondary School grade ten in focus.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objective

This study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction at Tewodros General Secondary School grade ten in focus.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study was designed to:

1. find out teachers' perceptions on speaking skills instruction
2. explore teachers' practices in speaking skills instruction
3. investigate challenges that affect speaking skills instruction

1.4. Research Questions

Based on the above research objectives the following research questions were formulated.

1. What are teachers' perceptions on speaking skills instruction?
2. What are teachers' practices in speaking skills instruction?
3. What are the challenges that affect speaking skills instruction?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Conducting research on teachers' perception, practice and challenges of speaking skills instruction is very important for EL teachers, students, textbook writers, and curriculum designers for several reasons: To begin with, it collects information on teachers' perception, practice and challenges of speaking skills instruction. Second, it encourages teachers to put EL speaking skills instruction ideas into practice in their EL classes. Third, it investigates the elements that influence how EL speaking skills are taught and practiced in EL classes. Fourth, it discusses the relationship among EL speaking skills instruction, perception, practice and challenge. Finally, it is used as a resource for other researchers interested in investigating the subject of speaking. All of these help teachers apply their speaking skills in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and in their future career.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to teachers' perception, practice and challenges of speaking skills instruction in the English classroom at Tewodros General Secondary School, grade ten in focus. The school is located in Debre Tabor town, South Gondar Zone, Amhara National Regional State. This school was selected because it was the researcher's nearest place and it was accessible to get information. Also, grade ten teachers were selected because grade ten students were taking the matriculation exam at the end of the academic year.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

Although the researcher tried to control the limitations that he faced and persuaded the teachers by emphasizing the study's value, the researcher faced some limitations, such as the department's curriculum, the war between the two regions, and the EL teachers' unwillingness to be interviewed and observed using audio-video recordings. The audio and video recordings of the six teachers who had been interviewed and observed were to be used by the researcher. The study only looked at one school. Tewodros general secondary school was located in Debre Tabor town, in the South Gondar zone. The study's findings were limited to language sessions rather than addressing other subjects because it focused on real speaking skills practiced during an EL session.

1.8. Operational Definition of Terms

Teacher Perception: The way in which a teacher gains understanding or an impression of information in the educational setting (Ross & Calhoun, 1995).

Practice: It is to do something again and again in order to become better at it (Ericsson, 2013).

Speaking: It is the action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings (Channey, 1998).

Skill: The ability to do something well (Knapp, 1963, p. 4).

Speaking skill: The ability to speak well, accurately and proficiently (Putri, 2014).

Instruction: It is the action or process of teaching (Hunter, 1982).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this part of the report, the research design, setting of the study, participants of the study, sampling technique and sample size, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods are presented.

2.1. Research Design

This study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' perception, practice and challenges of speaking skills instruction. This study employed qualitative approach because it was intended to provide a full account of the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative research approach was suited for this study since it focused on teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction as a widespread phenomenon. Besides, the study used the phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that focuses on the shared characteristics of a group's lived experiences. The main purpose of this design is to come up with a description of the nature of the occurrence in question (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology is the study of conscious experience from a subject or first-person perspective.

2.2. Setting of the study

This study was conducted at Tewodros general secondary school grade ten in focus, which is located in the Amhara region in the southern part of Ethiopia, conducting research entitled "investigating teachers' perception, practice and challenges of EL speaking skills instruction." This school was selected because it was the researcher's nearest place and it was accessible to get information.

2.3. Participants of the study

The participants of this study were grade ten six English language teachers in Debre Tabor Town at Tewodros general secondary school in 2014 E.C. The reason is that this grade level enables the students to be ready for preparatory and higher education that needs independent work for using the language. Then, in my teaching experience students were not given opportunities. Students must be exposed to use the language in the classroom. It helps them to be beneficial in their education and future carrier as practice makes them efficient user of the target language.

2.4. Samples and Sampling Techniques

In this study, a total of six teachers who were teaching English language in 2014 E.C in Debre Tabor Town at Tewodros General Secondary School were selected. While the school was selected using simple random sampling technique, the teachers were selected through comprehensive sampling technique because different text books suggest different sized samples for phenomenological research, but in reality, a sample of between 6 and 20 individuals is sufficient (Ellis, 2016).

2.5. Data Gathering Instruments

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, primary data collection instruments including semi-structured interviews and classroom observation were employed to investigate teachers' perception, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction. These instruments were selected because of their suitability for gathering important data for the study.

2.5.1 Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interview was used to collect adequate data from the participants. According to Creswell (2013) semi-structured interview is used to gather further information from research participants. Interview is an ideal method for extracting information, such as personal experiences, in-depth information, and knowledge or beliefs (Lecompte & Schensul, 2010). The interview, in this study, was conducted with the six English language teachers in order to get relevant information concerning their perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction. The interview items were focused on teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction.

2.5.2. Observation

The researcher employed a non-participant classroom observation where the researcher watch the subjects of the study with their knowledge, but without taking an active part in the situation under scrutiny. The researcher is not need to participate actively like practicing as the learners did in class, but takes notes and made other necessary observation issues as well (Jamali & Heidari, 2014). The researcher used classroom observation to obtain direct data using checklists in order to see how teachers practice speaking skills instruction. The researcher adapted this observation questions in 2014 E.C. So, classroom observation had a number of clear advantages for researcher so as to gather ample data about the physical environment and about human behaviour that can be recorded directly by the researcher without having to rely on the retrospect or anticipatory accounts of others. The classroom observation was helped to understand how teachers practice speaking skills instruction in EFL classrooms. Accordingly, the researcher, in this study, has observed six English language teachers while they taught speaking skills in classrooms. The researcher observed each participants the twice to gain comprehensive data on their practice of speaking skills instruction and the researcher observed each participants within co-observer the name of co-observer is Tewachew Endalew.

2.6. Data collection procedure

Before starting the data collection process, the data gathering instruments including the interview items and the classroom observation checklist were prepared. Then, the data gathering instruments were shown to the research advisor and English language teachers for feedback. Based on the feedback, the necessary modifications, like merging and deleting some redundant items, were made to the data gathering instruments. Afterwards, the data were collected from the teachers who were teaching English language at Tewodros general secondary school, Debre Tabor. To collect the pertinent data the researcher met the school principals and introduced the purpose of the study. Then, the researcher with the school principals arranged the time and place to get the participants. After that, the researcher created awareness for the participants to the purpose of the study and procedures of data gathering instruments i.e., interview and observation. Accordingly, to carry out classroom observation, the researcher asked permission. After getting the teachers' consent, classroom observations were conducted based on the check list that was prepared. The classroom observations were supported with a checklist that focused on teachers' perception, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction. Finally, the semi-structure interviews were conducted in individual base. Conducting the interviews lastly were advantageous both to prevent contamination of the data and give the researcher a chance of raising question from the preceding classroom observation.

2.7. Validity and Reliability

The adapted instruments were given to professionals in the area such as educational researchers and experienced teachers for comments. Then, they were given to the advisor to get valuable comments. Hence, content validity, face validity, and clarity of the items were primarily checked. Based on the comments obtained, necessary modifications were made and were given to the advisor for further comments, criticisms and evaluation. Following the comments, improvements were made in both the interview items and observation checklist like analogous questions, unclear instructions, ambiguous items were improved.

2.8. Data Analysis Methods

The data which were gathered through interview and classroom observation were analysed using qualitative data analysis method. Hence, the data which were obtained through teachers' interview and classroom observation were analysed thematically through descriptive method. Finally, based on the results of the study, the conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

2.9. Ethical Considerations

In the current study, the necessary ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, no harm to participants, no invasion of privacy, and no deception were addressed. Accordingly, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and they were provided with the opportunity to make autonomous and informed decisions regarding whether to participate in the study. Hence, based on this information, the participants took part in the study voluntarily. They were reassured that their responses were treated as confidential and used for this research purpose only. Accordingly, anonymity and confidentiality of the given information concerning recordings and data were ensured. Finally, the sources used in this study were acknowledged appropriately, and facts and opinions were made clear. Therefore, in this study, necessary ethical issues were carefully considered and addressed at each phase of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results and discussions of the collected data are presented. The data were gathered through interview and observation on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of speaking skills instruction, and the challenges that affect speaking skills instruction.

3.1. Results of the Study

In this particular section, the results on the teachers' perceptions, practices and challenges of speaking skills instruction which were gained through the interview and classroom observation are presented. The collected data were categorized in several themes including teachers' perceptions on the essence of speaking skills instruction, purposes of teaching speaking skills for grade ten students, objectives of teaching speaking skills, teaching methods used to improve students' speaking skills, practices of speaking skills instruction, challenges that affect speaking skills instruction, and solutions for challenges that affect speaking skills instruction.

3.1.1. Teachers' Perceptions of Speaking Skills Instruction

This sub section presents the teachers' perceptions on speaking skills instruction that were gathered through the semi-structured interview.

Teachers' Perception on the Essence of Speaking Skills Instruction

The interview data on the teachers' general perception towards speaking skills instruction revealed that most of the teachers have positive perceptions towards speaking skills instruction. For instance, Teacher-1 perceived that while speaking instruction is a teaching-learning procedure that teachers and students perform in the classroom, it is needed for students to improve their English language speaking skills. In the same manner, Teacher-2 also reported:

Speaking skills instruction is a plan and delivery of speaking teaching and learning activities. Speaking skills instruction helps students to enhance their English language performance in general and speaking skills in particular.

Likewise, Teacher-3 viewed that speaking skills instruction is a systematic process in which teachers, students, learning materials, and the environment take place for the improvement of students' speaking skills. These elements assist students to learn speaking skills better. To achieve students' speaking performance, the students need to learn how to rehearse, encode, and process information.

Besides, Teachers-4 also replied that speaking skills instruction is the process of teaching that engage students with speaking activities. He also said that it is how a teacher organizes tasks, manage the given time and activities while implementing a certain speaking content. Furthermore, he assured that the purpose of speaking instruction is to help students learn, and its main goal is to make speaking easier and enjoyable.

In addition, Teacher-5 described his perception of speaking skills instruction as the act of teaching speaking skills to students in a formal manner. Finally, Teacher-6 voiced that speaking skills instruction is the activity of

educating students who needs to improve their speaking skills. He, further, elaborated that his experience of instruction as the creation and implementation of purposefully developed plans for guiding the process by which learners gain knowledge and understanding and develop skills, attitudes, appreciations, and values. Speaking skills instruction is associated with the "curriculum" which incorporates the teaching-learning methods and activities that teachers use to deliver the instruction.

In sum, it can be understood that the teachers perceived as speaking instruction is a teaching-learning procedure that teachers and students perform in the classroom, it is needed for students to improve their English language speaking skills. It is a plan and delivery of speaking teaching and learning activities. Speaking skills instruction is a systematic process in which teachers, students, learning materials, and the environment take place for the improvement of students' speaking skills. Speaking skills instruction is about how teachers organize tasks, manage the given time and activities while implementing a certain speaking content.

Teachers' view on the Purposes of Teaching Speaking Skills

In line with the purposes of teaching speaking skills, most of the teachers pointed out that the objective of speaking skills instruction is to enhance students' speaking skills performance including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. For instance, T1 said that English lessons in grade 10 are primarily used for reinforcement. While he taught speaking skills he paid more attention to vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency which are the elements of speaking skills.

Teacher-2 reported that teaching speaking skills is important to increase students' vocabulary knowledge. As he explained, Vocabulary development is where students understand the meanings and pronunciations of words necessary for communication. Vocabulary knowledge is needed to increase ones word power. Vocabulary development begins when students are infants, as they learn to describe worlds around them and communicate with people. It progresses from a single word into sentences. When they understand what a word means, they can check what the word or sentence means. This is important to keep up in conversations. If they understand what the other person is saying and they know what vocabulary to use to say it back, they are halfway there to communicate effectively.

Besides, Teacher-3 also viewed that speaking skills instruction helps to empower the students' knowledge of grammar which is essential in spoken language. Grammar helps us to convey information in a way that the listener will recognize and understand. Likewise, Teacher-4 reported that understanding how to pronounce words correctly is another important element achieved through speaking skills instruction. Students learn how to pronounce words and phrases through speaking instruction. This involves understanding the small units that make up spoken language.

When Teacher-5 and Teacher-6 explained about the purposes of speaking skills instruction they said that fluency is something that naturally develops as children go through school, as they are using and practicing speaking skills every day. Reading out loud is a good way to improve fluency as it introduces students with new vocabulary and reinforces their knowledge of spoken language. It is the ability to hear words and understand them straight away. The more the students are fluent in English, the more speaking is interesting, exciting, and insightful.

Generally, it can be deduced that most teachers view as the objective of speaking skills instruction is to enhance students' speaking skills performance including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency.

Teachers' Perception: The Role of Speaking Skills Instruction to Improve Student' Speaking Performance

In relation to the role of speaking instruction to improve students' speaking performance, Teacher-1 said: "I think that the goals of teaching speaking skills focus on pronunciation, fluency, dialect, intonation, stress rhythm, interaction, practice and communication". He mentioned that the goal of teaching speaking skills is to communicative efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understandable, using their proficiency to the fullest. As he stated, the students should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation.

In the same manner, Teacher-2 also claimed that the objective of teaching speaking skills is to improve students' language ability in terms of grammatical structures like verb tenses, interrogative and negative statements, pronunciation including sound system, stress, intonation, and conversational strategies turn-taking, and negotiating meaning.

Similarly, Teacher-3 also confirmed: "I think that the objective of teaching speaking skills is initiating exchanges and responding appropriately". Expressing is a range of functions to satisfy social and future needs that incorporates giving opinions, greeting, and showing anger. Learning speaking skills also helps to practice presenting and seeking full autobiographical details, telling events in temporal sequence, giving short presentations on familiar topics, expressing ideas on everyday topics, forming a range of questions, and asking for and giving information about everyday life situations like giving directions, describing a process, and describing people.

In the same manner, when Teacher-4 reported his point of view in this regard, he said that the objectives of teaching speaking skills is to improve the students' grammatical knowledge, discourse and pragmatic

competencies sub-skills as well as fluency. As he stressed, learning speaking skills enhances learners' grammatical competence such as demonstrating intelligible pronunciation.

Besides, Teacher-5 also said that the objective of teaching speaking skills is to develop students linguistic competence including pronunciation, accurately, using relevant, adequate and appropriate range of vocabulary. In addition, it increases students' discourse competence like structuring discourse coherently and cohesively managing conversation and interacting effectively to keep the conversation going. At the same time, it helps to empower learners' pragmatic competence like expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately according to the context.

In the same manner, Teacher-6 also reported: "I think that the objective of teaching speaking skills is to improve students' fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation". He also said that if students learn speaking skills they know the four elements in communicative competence which are grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

Therefore, from this data we can understand that the goals of teaching speaking skills focus on pronunciation, fluency, dialect, intonation, stress rhythm, interaction, practice and communication. The objective of teaching speaking skills is to improve students' language ability in terms of grammatical structures like verb tenses, interrogative and negative statements, pronunciation including sound system, stress, intonation, and conversational strategies turn-taking, and negotiating meaning. It improve the students' grammatical knowledge, discourse and pragmatic competencies sub-skills as well as fluency. it helps to empower learners' pragmatic competence like expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately according to the context.

Teachers' Perceived Knowledge on Speaking Skills Instructional Methods

Most of the teacher-participants perceived that communicative language teaching is the main method of speaking skills instruction. Teacher-1 elaborated his argument that communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. By using this method, students get the opportunity of communicating with each other with the target language. Hence, English language teachers need to create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. This can occur when students collaborate in groups to complete tasks.

Teacher-1 further explained that various active learning methods including drilling, storytelling, picture description, and debating can be used in speaking skills instruction. He said: "I used these teaching methods to develop speaking skills". He replied that the students aim is to arrive at a conclusion, share ideas about an event, or find solutions in their discussion groups. For example, students can become involved in agree/disagree discussions. He elaborated:

"In these methods, I form groups of students, preferably 4 or 5 in each group, and provide controversial issue, Then, each group works on their topic for a given time period, and presents their opinions to the class. At the end, the class decides on the winning group who defended the idea in the best way. Such activity fosters critical thinking and quick decision making, and students learn how to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with the others. It means, the purposes of the active learning methods, in speaking skills instruction, are to encourage students ask questions, paraphrase ideas, express support, and check for clarification".

In addition, Teacher-2 also reported that he used a responsive task like an oral question and answer including pair work. However, as he stated most of the time, students are not willing to practice speaking skills in the classroom. He conformed: "I used the teaching methods to develop speaking skills are picture narrating and picture describing". He said that picture narration activity is based on several sequential pictures. Students are asked to tell the story taking place in the sequential pictures by paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher as a rubric. Rubrics can include the vocabulary or structures they need to use while narrating. And he said picture describing speaking activity is to give students just one picture and having them describe what it is in the picture. When Teacher-2 expanded his speech, he explained that in such activity, students form groups and each group is given a different picture. Students discuss the picture with their groups, then a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class. This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

In the same way, Teacher-3 reported:

I assess my students by providing tasks such as describing people, pictures, objects, debates, and role play. Then, I ask students if speaking is part of our overall instruction, and I give grades for some speaking activities. I always let for everyone to know when I am going to give grades for speaking activities and I also occasionally call students by their names in front of the class, either in pairs or individually, by giving them a short speaking test.

Similarly, the fourth participant, Teacher-4 also supported this view and confirmed: "I told students to read and speak out on what they understood from their reading; I also ordered my students to speak orally what they

saw; I asked questions orally; and I gave a chance for the students to respond orally". Likewise, Teacher-5 reported that he would like to use group discussion and role play in the instructional process. Lastly, Teacher-6 reported that he used group work in speaking classes.

Based on these data, thus, one can conclude that teachers perceived that communicative language teaching is the main method of speaking skills instruction. The teachers often need to create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. They claimed that employing drilling, storytelling, picture description, and debating are appropriate learning methods for speaking skills instruction.

3.1.2. Teachers' Practices of Speaking Skills Instruction

The data, in line with the teachers' practices of speaking skills instruction, showed that most of the teachers often used the lecture method than various active learning methods. For instance, both Teacher-1 and Teacher-2 reported that even though they tried to use different speaking skills instructional methods, their efforts were not effective to develop the students speaking performance. As a result, they mostly used the lecture method in speaking classes for the classroom situation, and the students interest were not convenient to actively teach speaking skills as to the standard.

In a similar fashion, Teacher-3 replied:

Though I understand that information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, story completion and reporting speaking activities should be used in speaking classrooms, I did not often use them due to various reasons.

When Teacher-3 further reason out the factors for not using the active learning methods, he mentioned that the students were not willing and able to take part in different active learning methods like role play and jigsaw.

Based on the interview results, therefore, it can be deduced that speaking skills instruction was not adequately practiced by the teachers due to various reasons.

In the same manner, the results gained through the classroom observation also confirmed that the teachers rarely used active learning methods in their speaking classrooms. For instance, Teacher-1 was mainly using the lecture method instead of engaging students in more active learning methods. In other terms, the teacher rarely employed group work, role play, and storytelling learning methods in his speaking classes. Nevertheless, he did not use other methods active learning methods like finding the difference activities, information gap activity, brainstorming, and picture description to teach speaking skills. He was trying to make speaking activity instructions clear for the students. However, the teacher was not about to help the students when they face difficulties.

In the same manner, Teacher-2 also tried to lead students to brainstorm on a given issue, but the students were not able to speak out based on the brainstorming activity. Nonetheless, the teacher was not using different active learning methods such as finding the difference, role play, information gap activity, storytelling, and picture description while teaching speaking skills. Besides, the data gained through the classroom observation showed that Teacher-3 and Teacher-6 were using the lecture method most than the other teaching speaking methods like group works, find the difference activities, role play, information gap activity, brainstorming, storytelling, and picture description. Likewise, Teacher-4 and Teacher-5 were mainly advising their students to work together, but the students did not performed the required task rather most of them were talking with their mother tongue and laughing on some other issues. In addition, they tried to encourage their students to practice speaking activities. Likewise, they also tried to motivate the students to speak in English. However, the students were not that much encouraged to take part actively in the speaking activities.

In general, it can be deduced that speaking skills instruction was not adequately practiced with active learning methods due to various reasons. Most of the teachers were using the lecture method than various active learning methods such as group works, find the difference activities, role play, information gap activity, brainstorming, storytelling, and picture description. Besides, most of the teachers tried to encourage their students to practice speaking activities. They also tried to motivate the students to speak in English. However, the students were not that much encouraged taking part actively in the speaking activities.

3.1.3. Challenges that Affect Speaking Skills Instruction

The participants in their interview reported that they faced various challenges in speaking skills instruction which are related to students' low performance, learning environment, lack of time, resources, technology. This result is substantiated with Teacher-1's response. He stated that he is hesitant to teach speaking skills due to the difficulties he faced in teaching speaking include students' lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, lack of motivation, and the usage or interference of the mother tongue. As a result, students do not desire to practice their speaking skills.

Likewise, Teacher-2 also confirmed that among the various challenges that hindered him from effective practice of speaking skills instruction were the students' low vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation problems, lack of motivation and mother tongue interference. Teacher-2 underlined that as long as speaking skills do not given due attention in grade 10th metrical exam, he teach the theoretical aspect of speaking skills rather than to

led students into practical speaking activities.

Teacher-3 also confirmed that grade 10th students are expected to pass their metrical examination, so the teachers often focus on grammar and vocabulary because grammar and vocabulary covered vast portions in the examination. As a result of this, he said: “speaking is the forgotten skill in English language learning classrooms”. As a result of this neglect of speaking skills, students have difficulty speaking English outside of the classroom. Hence, having this misconception about the role of speaking skills, some teachers have continued to teach speaking skills as the repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues.

In addition to the aforementioned participants, Teacher-4 mentioned that the students’ background has also negative impacts on the practice of speaking skills instruction. In line with this perspective, Teacher-5 also claimed that students’ background influenced their desire to use various active learning methods in the teaching learning process.

In the same manner, Teacher 6 also forwarded that the curriculum was a hindrance since it inadequately addressed the speaking portion. He is also dissatisfied with the way the textbook was designed, claiming that it did not place adequate emphasis to real-world speaking practice and instead focused on teaching grammar. As a result, the majority of activities do not advocate for learner-centred approaches.

Having these data one can conclude that the teachers faced various challenges in speaking skills instruction which are related to students’ low performance, learning environment, lack of time, resources, technology. Hence, students’ lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, lack of motivation, mother tongue interference, and inadequate emphasis given to speaking in the curriculum and the textbook.

Similarly, the data gained through the classroom observation also confirmed that there were various challenges that affect the implementation of speaking skills instruction. Hence, based on the classroom observation, it was understood that the students’ were inadequately participated in speaking activities. They also lack confidence to speak out in English language in front of their friends. Similarly, the students were not motivated to involve in speaking activities. Besides, time constriction was also a challenge for the teachers and students to complete speaking activities. For instance, though Teacher-1 led his students to discuss in groups, he stopped the discussion soon by saying “time is up; it is enough”, and that was due to lack of time. The other challenge that negatively affects the implementation of speaking skills instruction was large class size. The number of students in each section was unmanageable to involve them in various active learning methods such as role play activities.

Finally, the students were in difficulty to make speech in the target language. Hence, their fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation was in question. Since they were in difficulty to speak out in English, they were mostly using their mother tongue, Amharic, in the classrooms.

In sum, lack of active participation, confidence, time constriction, and motivation, large class size, and the interference of mother tongue were the very challenges that hinder the effective implementation of speaking skills instruction. As a result, the students, speaking performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation was inadequately developed.

These challenges, however, should be alleviated with appropriate solutions. Hence, the teachers have forwarded the solutions that they perceived to be implemented to minimize the speaking instruction challenges. For example, Teacher 2 and Teacher-3 reported that teacher’s strategy to overcome speaking problems should be creating a good atmosphere for the students in order to make them active in learning speaking process. So, the students can involve in teaching and learning speaking process in the classroom. The teacher has the authority to manage teaching and learning process. Teacher is also the facilitator that should help the students in learning speaking English by giving practice and giving correction.

Furthermore, Teacher-4 and Teacher-5 also claimed that teachers should employ a variety of learning methods to help students overcome their problems with speaking at Tewodros General Secondary school, through using role play activities as a way for pupils to develop their own thoughts. Using discussions as a method for increasing students’ English proficiency is as a strategy for increasing students’ comprehension of the subject at hand, and games as a strategy for increasing students’ English vocabulary. Teacher-6 also reported that language teachers ought to use cooperative learning, creative tasks, role play, and encourage students to speak, increase their motivation to speak, watching videos, use storytelling, and games. The teacher faced several barriers in teaching speaking in the classroom, such as reluctant students, missing pronunciation, and lack of vocabulary, but the teacher could overcome those barriers through using various techniques.

Therefore, it can be deduced that using various active learning methods, increasing students learning motivation, creating conducive learning environment, revising the curriculum and the textbook are expected to minimize the challenges faced by teachers when teaching speaking skills.

3.2. Discussions

The findings of the study revealed that teachers’ perceptions towards speaking skills instruction were positive. Hence, most teachers viewed that the purpose of speaking skills instruction is to enhance students’ speaking

performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. In line with this research finding Sisay (2012), Semagne (2006), Birhanu (1999) and Alemu (2004) reported that the main factors of students' poor speaking performance were teachers' perception and practice of speaking skills instruction. Similarly, Genet (2017) also conducted a study on teachers' perception and practices of EFL speaking skills assessment in the North Wollo Zone at Habru, Kobo, and Woldia Woreda General Secondary and Preparatory Schools, grade 10 in focus, and found that teachers had favorable perceptions of the principles of EFL speaking assessment.

However, the present findings were not congruent with Endalew (2011) who investigated teachers' perception of speaking skills, speaking instruction, and students' perception of speaking skills and found that both teachers and students have negative perceptions towards speaking skills.

The results of the current study also discovered that the practice of speaking skills instruction was not adequately accompanied with active learning methods. Hence, most of the teachers were using the lecture method than various active learning methods such as group works, find the difference activities, role play, information gap activity, brainstorming, storytelling, and picture description. This finding was in line with Gudu (2015), Amanuel (2015), Genet (2017), and Lakew (2004). For example, Gudu (2015) conducted a study to determine the classroom activities used by teachers to promote learners' active participation in speaking lessons in eight secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. The findings showed that there was a variation in the use of classroom activities. The lecture method was mostly used in speaking classrooms over the other active learning methods like role play, picture description, and gap filling activities. Besides, Amanuel (2015) investigated problems that affect students' speaking skills and reported that speaking classes were mostly teacher-centered. Hence, teachers used traditional way of teaching speaking, reading model dialogues allowed with paying little or no time given for modern methods of speaking skill instructions like group and pair discussions, oral reports, drama, panel discussions and interviews. In the same vein, Genet (2017) also uncovered that there was little practice of the EFL speaking skills assessment. Finally, Lakew (2004) also conducted on the extent of teachers' involvement in improving students' speaking skills, and found that there was low teacher involvement in improving learning speaking skills.

The current study uncovered that the speaking skills instruction was affected by various challenges including unable to use various active learning methods, lack of conducive learning environment, lack of students' learning motivation, and unsuitable curriculum and textbook. As a result, students' speaking performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation was inadequately developed. This research finding was similar with Hoang (2015), Genet (2017), Zenebe (2004), Jenenew (2006). For instance, Hoang (2015) conducted a study on factors affecting speaking skills in Vietnam. The results indicated that students spoke very little or not at all, used their native language during group and pair work, fear to speak, and lack time for to complete speaking activities. Likewise, Genet (2017) also discovered that teachers faced several challenges, like time constraints, emphasizing on grammar, large class size, taking matriculation as a model and a lack of very useful training. Zenebe (2004) found the factors that affect students' speaking skills which includes lack of interest, lack of motivation, poor method of instruction, mother tongue interference, fear of making errors, and shortage of teaching aids. Finally, Jenenew (2006) reported that large class sizes and a lack of teaching aids were the challenges that hindered the effective implementation of speaking skills instruction.

It is, therefore, recommended that teachers, school directors, curriculum and textbook designers, and students should work together in various regards such as using various active learning methods, increasing students learning motivation, creating conducive learning environment, and revising the curriculum and the textbook to minimize the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of speaking skills.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study drawn from the major findings.

4.1. Summary

The study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges of speaking skills instruction. Specifically, the study found teachers' perceptions on speaking skills instruction, explored teachers' practices in speaking skills instruction, and investigated challenges that affect speaking skills instruction. A phenomenological research design was employed. A total of six English language teachers who were teaching grade 10 students at Tewodros General Secondary School, Debre Tabor were selected through comprehensive sampling technique. Semi-structured interview and classroom observation were used to collect data. The data were analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis.

The findings showed that the teachers' perceptions towards speaking skills instruction were positive. Most teachers viewed that the purpose of speaking skills instruction is to enhance students' speaking skills performance including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. The findings of the study revealed that

the practice of speaking skills instruction was not adequately accompanied with active learning methods due to various reasons. The results showed that the speaking skills instruction was affected by various challenges that hindered from its effective implementation. However, possible solutions were forwarded to the challenges that hindered the effective implementation of speaking skills instruction.

4.2. Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges of speaking skills instruction. The study questions were first, what are teachers' perceptions on speaking skills instruction? Second, what are teachers' practices in speaking skills instruction? And third, what are the challenges that affect speaking skills instruction?

The study focused to find out teachers' perceptions on speaking skills instruction, explore teachers' practices in speaking skills instruction, and investigate challenges that affect speaking skills instruction. The data on teachers' perceptions towards speaking skills instruction were collected through semi-structured interview and analyzed qualitatively using thematic data analysis method. The findings showed that the teachers' perceptions towards speaking skills instruction were positive. Accordingly, the teachers perceived that speaking skills instruction is a teaching-learning procedure that speaking teachers and students perform in the classroom. It is needed for students to improve their English language speaking skills. It is a plan and delivery of speaking teaching and learning activities. They viewed that speaking skills instruction is a systematic process in which teachers, students, learning materials, and the environment take place for the improvement of students' speaking skills. The teachers claimed that speaking skills instruction is about how teachers organize tasks, manage the given time and activities while implementing a certain speaking content.

Most teachers viewed that the purpose of speaking skills instruction is to enhance students' speaking skills performance including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. In their view point, the goals of teaching speaking skills focus on pronunciation, fluency, dialect, intonation, stress rhythm, interaction, practice and communication. The teachers understood that the objective of teaching speaking skills is to improve students' language ability in terms of grammatical structures like verb tenses, interrogative and negative statements, pronunciation including sound system, stress, intonation, and conversational strategies turn-taking, and negotiating meaning.

Teachers perceived that speaking skills instruction improve students' grammatical knowledge, discourse and pragmatic competencies sub-skills as well as fluency. It helps to empower learners' pragmatic competence like expressing a range of functions effectively and appropriately according to the context. Teachers sensed that communicative language teaching is the main method of speaking skills instruction. The teachers believed that speaking teachers need to create conducive classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. They claimed that employing drilling, storytelling, picture description, and debating are appropriate learning methods for speaking skills instruction.

On the other hand, the data on teachers' practices in speaking skills instruction were collected through semi-structured interview and classroom observation, and analyzed qualitatively using thematic data analysis method. The findings of the study revealed that the practice of speaking skills instruction was not adequately accompanied with active learning methods due to various reasons. Hence, most of the teachers were using the lecture method than various active learning methods such as group works, find the difference activities, role play, information gap activity, brainstorming, storytelling, and picture description. Besides, the teachers tried to encourage their students to practice speaking activities. They also tried to motivate the students to speak in English. However, the students were not that much encouraged to take part actively in the speaking activities.

Besides, the data on the challenges that affect speaking skills instruction were collected through semi-structured interview and classroom observation, and analyzed qualitatively using thematic data analysis method. The results discovered that the speaking skills instruction was affected by various challenges that hindered from its effective implementation. Hence, the teachers faced various challenges in speaking skills instruction which are related to students' low performance, lack of conducive learning environment, and lack of time, resources, and technology. Besides, students' lack of vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, lack of motivation and confidence, large class size, time constriction, mother tongue interference, and inadequate emphasis given to speaking in the curriculum and the textbook were also the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of speaking skills instruction. As a result, the students, speaking performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation was inadequately developed.

Finally, the findings uncovered that using various active learning methods, increasing students learning motivation, creating conducive learning environment, revising the curriculum and the textbook are forwarded to minimize the challenges that hindered the effective implementation of speaking skills instruction.

4.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- The findings revealed that teachers' perceptions towards speaking skills instruction were positive. Hence, most teachers viewed that the objective of speaking skills instruction is to enhance students' speaking performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. Accordingly, it is recommended that teachers should keep their positive perception towards speaking skills instruction and make it happen in their English language classrooms.
- The findings of the study revealed that the practice of speaking skills instruction was not adequately accompanied with active learning methods. Hence, most of the teachers were using the lecture method than various active learning methods. It is, thus, recommended that teachers should employ different active learning methods such as group works, find the difference activities, role play, information gap activity, brainstorming, storytelling, and picture description.
- The results discovered that the speaking skills instruction was affected by various challenges including unable to use various active learning methods, lack of conducive learning environment, lack of students' learning motivation, and unsuitable curriculum and textbook. As a result, students' speaking performance that incorporates fluency, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation was inadequately developed. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers, school directors, curriculum and textbook designers, and students should work together in various regards such as using various active learning methods, increasing students learning motivation, creating conducive learning environment, and revising the curriculum and the textbook to minimize the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of speaking skills.

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