Examining EFL Teachers' Perceptions and their Classroom Practices in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners Using Various Instructional Strategies: The case of Selected Primary school Teachers in the Dawro Zone, Tercha Town, and its Surroundings

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Abstract

Vocabulary is an integral part of language, and EFL teachers are responsible for bringing what is new into the ELT classroom; their opinion in practice becomes a critical issue. Therefore, this study focused on the perceptions and teaching practices of EFL teachers when teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners (TVYLs) in Ethiopia, the South-Western Regional State (SWRS), Dawro Zone, Tercha Town, and its surroundings. To conduct the study, a descriptive survey research design was employed. A total of thirty EFL teachers of junior, intermediate, and senior levels, based on their experience, participated in the study through purposive and stratified sampling techniques. The study was complemented by a mixed-method using data collection tools (classroom observation, questionnaires, and interviews): four teachers were observed three times, and generally, twelve lessons were observed. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with those teachers. The collected data were analysed both quantitatively using narration and thematically. The data analysed revealed individual differences in teachers' theoretical perceptions of TVYLs and their teaching practices. Teachers' perceptions indicated that they knew about the importance of TVYLs. However, these stated perceptions were not consistent with their teaching practices in the classroom. The most commonly used vocabulary teaching techniques were the use of verbal explanations, word definitions, translations, oral questions and answers. Finally, recommendations to minimize the problems and maximize the effective practice of TVYLs were made based on the key findings that continuous professional development programs need to be developed for primary school teachers to teach vocabulary.

Keywords: perceptions, practices, vocabulary, strategies, techniques, young learners

Introduction

Throughout history, foreign language teaching and learning has always been a crucial concern; English is accepted as the most widely studied foreign language in the world, and the importance given to teaching English as a foreign language has increased massively (Sühendan Er, 2014). Relatedly, inquiring about the underlying premises on which the introductions of learning English at an early age are predicated in particular is also highly critical. Garton, Copland, & Burns (2011) argue that teachers of young learners (YLs) around the world must fulfil the tasks of instructing their students daily and must persuade their students of the value of learning English vocabulary to pu-

pils. Thus, as Orosz (2009) argues, ELT could be factual when both teachers and students have sufficient vocabulary size in the target language (TL) and their perceptions of teaching-learning vocabulary by using various strategies determine its success. Syed and Mohammad (2021) logically argue that vocabulary in a language is similar to the stones in a Pyramid. This infers that the pyramid cannot be built without stones; likewise, the language cannot be learned without vocabulary. It is one of the three essential competencies of linguistic competence, which is the basic and the foundation of communicative competence; however, without learning and developing vocabulary, pupils will never be able to improve their skills or build the pyramid of communicative competence, including in other subjects in their education.

As teachers frequently face some challenges in teaching EFL vocabulary and thus solving the problems and achieving its purpose, investing much in teachers and YLs and shaping teachers' perceptions of teaching are paramount because the success of any education system depends largely on teachers (Kenyon Sen, 2015). They are the catalysts of the learning process, and the whole system mainly rests on them. They are therefore crucial in the strategy to achieve a more effective and responsive education system in general and English vocabulary in particular. The psychological term Young Learners (YLs) used in this study implies those pupils who are aged between 7-12 years old as Willis (2001) & Cameron (2001) but in the context of this study, they are school children between the ages 9-12 years as its focus is Grade four and 'YLs' encompasses all pupils in their Grades 1-6 in the context of Ethiopia who is expected to begin their Grade one at the age of seven and complete First Cycle (Grade six) at the age of 12.

Statement of the Problem

Rendering English vocabulary lesson sufficient to the pupils is an appropriate decision viewed from the fact that the pupils of elementary school have a period called the golden age and they have a critical period in which their brains are flexible and able to learn anything easily, including languages (Gürsoy, 2011). This stage of development is a milestone for the latter development. In addition, their attitudes towards other languages and cultures are open, and these attitudes help them learn English vocabulary easily. As Eba (2014) indicated, therefore, highly competent and skilled primary school teachers make use of this potential and build on it in TVYLs, and thus to achieve it, teachers' favorable perceptions of TVYLs play a pivotal role so that probing their perception is paramount.

Concerning our context, vocabulary is the most important element in the acquisition of a foreign language, yet researchers in the field of ELT in Ethiopia have not paid enough attention to its practice. EFL vocabulary teaching begins in public primary schools; grade one is dominated by word translation, repetition, and memorization of the English alphabet (Manendante, 2018). In addition, the new students' textbook of Grade 4 English for Ethiopia is full of unfamiliar words, and the teachers do not have enough time to introduce the whole vocabulary lessons, especially for pupils with low exposure to the language. These problems have received little attention in previous local research, so examining EFL teachers' awareness of vocabulary and its teaching techniques daily is critical. Although numerous studies have been conducted in different corners of the world to solve problems related to TVYLs in primary schools, there are scant local studies conducted by combining the various aspects of the variables considered in this study: teachers' perceptions and classroom practices in TVYLs using various techniques and strategies and challenges they face to practice it. Dereje, (2012), the study entitled "Primary EFL Teaching in Ethiopia: Policy and Practice" and the finding conclude that the inadequate and inappropriate curriculum policy the Ministry has enacted for target teachers' training seems to take the major responsibility for primary students' weak mas-

tery of English and Eba (2014) titled "Practices and Impeding Factors in TEYLs in the first Cycle Public Primary Schools at Nekemte town, Western Ethiopia". His study examined the practices and related impeding factors in the TEYLs in the 10 first-cycle (grades 1-4) public primary schools, and the findings indicated that English is taught through L1.

Furthermore, Shewa (2017), Manendante (2018), and Dr. Kitaw (2020) conducted the study in the same area. For instance, Shewa (2017) conducted an experimental study on **"Teachers Voca-bulary Teaching Strategies: The Case of Selamber Primary School, Benshangul-Gumuz Region, As-sosa"** and a study aimed at identifying and analysing teachers' preferable vocabulary teaching strate-gies, and Manendante (2018) conducted a study on the "Effects of Vocabulary Games on Students' Vocabulary Learning in Ethiopian Primary Schools". His study confirms that studies conducted in Ethiopian EFL classrooms found that students' vocabulary learning has been problem-bound and widespread over time. A study by Dr. Kitaw (2020) focused on "The Perception and Practice of EFL Teachers in Teaching Vocabulary Using CLT", which aimed to investigate EFL teachers' perception and practice of using CLT in teaching vocabulary in an Ethiopian secondary school. The results in-dicated that EFL teachers have a positive perception of teaching vocabulary using CLT, although their actual classroom practice does not match their perceptions.

In sum, none of the earlier mentioned studies seems this one and made a comprehensive in-vestigation into the teachers' perceptions and classroom practices towards TVYLs using teaching techniques and challenges they face in the implementation process in lower grade levels. Even though some of them conducted their work similar to this one in lower grades, their work is different from this in that they focused on vocabulary games, how English is taught in general and impeding factors that hamper its implementation, such as curriculum policy, etc. Hence, none of the studies investigated EFL teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges towards TVYLs using various strategies and techniques at the primary school level in SWRS, Ethiopia, which makes them entirely different from this study. Nevertheless, all of the earlier stated studies have been crucial in that all of them have served as steppingstones for the present study. Thus, examining teachers' perceptions to-wards TVYLs could provide both a new focus for potential in teacher or language education pro-grams that do not exist yet and an understanding of the effect that method courses have on teachers' perceptions.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the teachers' perceptions and classroom practices of TVYLs using diverse strategies in Ethiopia, SWRS, particularly in some selected prima-ry schools of the Dawro zone, Tercha town, and its surroundings. Specifically, (1) the study is meant to examine teachers' perceptions of TVYLs in Grade four; (2) assess whether teachers implement what they reported about their perceptions of teaching vocabulary in actual classrooms; and (3) identify the most frequently used teaching techniques and strategies employed by teachers when teaching vocabulary for grade four students.

Methodology

Research Design

To answer the research questions, a descriptive survey design was employed to collect, process, analyse and present the data of the study. Thus, it was employed by using a mixed method of data collecting and describing in an organized way, including the characteristics, features, or facts about the given population in this study, to make the obtained data more feasible and preferable to examine the present situation on the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers in TVYLs in primary

schools of the research site. From a wider perspective, Creswell (2008) suggested a mixed method research approach in which it is possible to mix quantitative data to measure trend patterns of a large number of people with qualitative data to obtain more detailed and specific information and, in turn, strengthen the quantitative data. From the reviewed research approaches, a mixed method approach was chosen in the current study for its own strengths. In this way, the numerical data on a large population could be quantitatively collected and technically processed for both objectiveness, universality and reflect their implications of teachers' perceptions. To capture natural and realistic teaching behaviours in real classes and to make sure that their teaching practice was not governed by the questionnaire, video recorded observations were conducted, descriptively transcribed with coding and check listed for both comparative quantitative and qualitative data analyses followed with teacher interviews for further qualitative investigations into reflections. Furthermore, the study employed a constructivist research paradigm.

Research Setting, Population, and Sampling Techniques

The setting for this study was the Dawro Zone, Tercha town, and its surroundings in the SWRS, which is located at a distance of 362 km from Hawassa and 589 km from Addis Ababa. Among twelve public primary schools in the Dawro Zone, Tercha town, and its surroundings, six schools were purposefully selected to examine how the EFL vocabulary teaching-learning processes for the YLs are implemented to promote students' language learning. The site was selected due to the feasibility of the study, the reliable data source, the familiarity of the researcher, and easy access to information. The target population of this study consisted of department heads and EFL teachers in the selected schools purposely because teachers are the key actors in achieving the teaching process in the education system. Thus, among 90 EFL teachers at the study site, 30 grade four EFL teachers from chosen schools were selected using stratified sampling based on their experiences ranging from junior, intermediate, and senior. Public first cycle primary schools, i.e., grades 1-6 from grade four were selected in this study as sources of information since the grade is between the lower and upper levels, and it is the stage where pupils lay the foundation for their next ladders of education.

Data Gathering Instruments

This study employed mainly qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. The relevant data were collected through classroom observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Thus, the researchers preferred the qualitative method to describe the data that were collected by classroom observation field notes and semi-structured interviews and the quantitative method to describe all close-ended questionnaires and observation checklists. Classroom observations were conducted to check whether teachers were practising what they reported about their perceptions of TVYLs in classrooms. Four grade four EFL teachers were selected purposively for observation (three teachers from Tercha town administration, i.e., two from Sore and one from Fana and one from Gena Woreda, Woldehane primary schools. The researchers collected data as nonparticipant observers from the same context to minimize the subjectivity from individual bias.

The interview was conducted using a tape recorder, video, and photo camera. As interviews can provide in-depth data that are not possible with a questionnaire, it was used to supplement and triangulate information gathered from observations and questionnaires and aimed to raise detailed thoughts on teachers' perceptions, classroom practices, and challenges they face while TVYLs. Therefore, well-constructed semi-structured interviews were prepared to collect and administer data from four selected primary school teachers based on their experience and willingness. Furthermore, the questionnaires were adapted, and content modification and panels of experts were made based

on the literature review and objectives of the study from Eba's (2014) and Dr. Kitaw's (2020) questionnaires that have been used for similar research intents. Close-ended Likert's 5-point-scale, i.e., ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, a questionnaire was prepared to measure the extent of teachers' perceived classroom practices in teaching vocabulary. An internal consistency reliability estimate was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaires to determine the level of difficulty of the items and ensure their reliability. It was found that the coefficient of alpha ($\alpha = 0.934$) indicates the highest reliability scale. As a result, the value of each item was above .70, and their total coefficient was alpha ($\alpha = 0.934$).

Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers followed a series of data gathering procedures during the study. Therefore, a pilot study was conducted before the administration of the final questionnaires to all respondents; thus, questionnaires were distributed to the voluntarily invited colleagues to comment on the initial wording and phraseology of the tools. It was carried out by adapting questionnaires that were submitted to experienced colleagues, teachers and advisors for the sake of comment. After ensuring the appropriateness of the questionnaire by the advisors, discussions were made with school directors and selected EFL teachers regarding the purpose of data they were going to gather and how it would have been done. First, the researchers collected data through interviews and then questionnaires from EFL teachers, and finally, classroom observation was conducted. The reason for sequencing data gathering tools accordingly is that first, it is essential to know teachers' opinions towards TVYLs early through interviews and questionnaires; then, it is possible to examine whether they implement what they perceived about TVYLs in actual classrooms through lesson observation. Thus, it ensures the reliability and validity of the data in the study.

Methods of Data Analysis

As Kothari (2004) states, data after collection must be analysed; thus, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were employed to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives. The quantitative data were collected, coded, tabulated, analysed, described, and interpreted in a manner that supports the findings obtained from the study. First, the data gathered through questionnaires and observation checklists using 5-point Likert scales as suggested by Kothari (2004) were tabulated in terms of frequency, percentage and mean value to compute the proportionality of individual responses to the items. Thus, the data processing and analysis were employed by the SPSS version 22 computer manual to analyse the quantitative data followed by narration. Next, data gathered through classroom observation field notes and semi-structured interviews were transcribed, edited, coded, classified into themes, tabulated, and then finally analysed thematically. Thus, the data were analysed more thematically and less numerically since they were supplemented with an embedded mixed method. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were made based on the findings.

Results

In analysing the perceptions of teachers towards TVYLs, the results of a questionnaire entitled "perceptions of EFL teachers towards TVYLs" and classroom practices that were cross-checked by observation checklists were presented using frequency, percentage and mean value in the following tables.

Table 1. Results of Teachers' Perceptions of the Importance of TVYLs

No.	Items	5= strongly agree		4=Agree		3=Neutral/ undecided		2= dis-agree		1= strongly disagree		Mean value
A	**Teachers' perceptions of the importance of TVYLs**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	
1	Vocabulary is the most important language component in learning English so I usually focus teaching on vocabulary in the classroom to the pupils.	18	60.0	12	40.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.6
2	Vocabulary building assists pupils in their English studies as well as their overall language proficiency.	22	73.3	8	26.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.7333
3	Vocabulary knowledge has much impact on the pupils when they use four language skills	12	40.0	18	60.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.4
4	Teachers should create an exposure & anxiety-free environment for children to learn vocabulary	6	20.0	18	60.0	6	20.0	-	-	-	-	4
5	Teaching vocabulary funnily and enjoyably enhances pupils' active involvement in learning the language	8	26.7	20	66.7	2	6.7	-	-	-	-	4.2
6	My students face challenges to pronounce, spell, write, and reading words correctly while learning vocabulary due to mother tongue influence so I help them during they face difficulty	8	26.7	18	60.0	4	13.3	-	-	-	-	4.1333
7	I provide short and clear exercises to pupils to let them practice vocabulary structures & develop fluency in the English language	16	53.3	14	46.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.5333
8	Translating new vocabulary when it is an incidental or new concept to pupils is necessary for better understanding & save children guessing time	14	46.7	10	33.3	-	-	-	-	6	20.0	3.8667

No.	Items	5= strongly agree		4=Agree		3=Neutral/ undecided		2= dis- agree		1= strongly disagree		Mean value
A	**Teachers' perceptions of the importance of TVYLs**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	
9	Using L1 (mother tongue) as a resource necessary to teach new words is important in TVYLs	16	53.3	14	46.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.5333
10	Offering students with clear and explicit vocabulary instruction helps them to learn new words easily	16	53.3	14	46.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.5333
11	Children must memorize English vocabulary to succeed the communication effective	-	-	22	73.3	8	26.7	-	-	-	-	3.7333
12	Teachers for YLs should conduct a need analysis and develop learners' profiles related to TL vocabulary	6	20.0	8	26.7	10	33.3	4	13.3	2	6.7	3.4
	Grand mean											**4.23**

Table 1 designates the responses of teachers to their perceptions of the importance of TVYLs. Regarding this, the majority of the teachers, i.e. 22 (73.3%) and 8 (26.7%) disclosed strongly agree to agree that they have awareness of item 2, which states "vocabulary building assists pupils in their English studies as well as their overall language proficiency". Next, 18 (60.0%) and 12 (40.0%) respectively strongly agreed with item no. 1, which dictates "vocabulary is the most important component in language learning" because, without vocabulary, nothing can be communicated. Next, 16 (53.3%) strongly agreed with items 8, 10, and 11, respectively, for the stated idea that they provide short and clear exercises to children to let them practice vocabulary structures and develop fluency in English, use their mother tongue as a resource were necessary to teach new words and they are aware that it is important to offer students unambiguous vocabulary instruction while TVYLs. However, as demonstrated in classroom observation, it was not similar, as they reported that English was taught in traditional mode using L1, which was opposite to their report.

Table 2. Results of Teachers' Perceptions towards Using Different Techniques and Strategies in TVYLs

B	Items	5		4		3		2		1		mean value
		f	**%**	**f**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	
13	Using objects such as realia, visual aids, & demonstrations help pupils in remembering vocabulary better because their memory for objects & pic-	24	80.0	6	20.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.8

B	Items	5		4		3		2		1		mean value
		f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	
	tures is very reliable											
14	Objects in the classroom or things brought to the classroom can be used to teach vocabulary & assist children to feel relaxed.	12	40.0	16	53.3	2	6.7	-	-	-	-	4.4
15	Vocabulary should be taught using real-life objects & other visual materials to children in the classroom because it makes the session entertaining & engage pupils.	18	60.0	12	40.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.6
16	Using word games to teach vocabulary supports maximizing the learning capacity, and brings relaxation & fun for YLs & thus helping them learn & remember new words more easily	14	46.7	16	53.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.4667
17	Teachers should effectively apply various strategies for both motivating & managing classroom-based language activities to teach vocabulary	13	37.3	15	56.0	2	6.7	-	-	-	-	4.3667
18	Dictionary use is an important tool in vocabulary teaching as it gives in alphabetical order the meaning of words of a language including words' spelling, syllables, pronunciation, origin, meaning, etc.	6	20.0	20	66.7	4	13.3	-	-	-	-	4.0667
19	Drawing objects on the blackboard or flashcards can help children easily understand & realize the main points that they have learned in the classroom	24	80.0	6	20.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.8
20	Using illustrations & pictures such as posters, flashcards, wall charts, magazine pictures, board drawings, stick figures & photographs are excellent means of making the meaning of unknown words clear to pupils	18	60.0	12	40.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.6
21	Teachers should create an exposure & anxiety-free environment for children to learn vocabulary	16	53.3	14	46.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.5333

B	Items	5		4		3		2		1		mean value
		f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	
22	Teachers should teach vocabulary to YLs using all senses (what they see, hear, touch & interact with rather than explanation) to satisfy all their needs	12	40.0	18	60.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.4
23	Teaching vocabulary through Miming, Expressions & Gestures such as hand gestures, facial expressions, body movements, etc.) Capture attention & make the lesson more dynamic.	14	46.7	12	40.0	4	13.3	-	-	-	-	4.3333
24	Vocabulary should be taught integrated with other language skills to pupils to save time & expand their language learning	4	13.3	8	26.7	18	60.0	-	-	-	-	3.5667
	Grand mean											**4.42**

Concerning the teachers' perceptions towards using different techniques and strategies in TVYLs, almost all teachers, i.e. 24 (80.0%) strongly agreed on items 15 and 21, in that using objects such as realia, visual aids, & demonstrations helped pupils remember vocabulary better because their memory for real objects/pictures was very reliable. Additionally, drawing objects on the blackboard or flashcards helped children easily understand and realize the main points that they had learned in the classroom. Furthermore, 18 (60.0%) reported that they agree with items 17 and 22, which state that vocabulary should be taught using real-life objects and other visual materials to children in the classroom because it makes the session entertaining and engaging pupils and using illustrations and pictures such as posters, flashcards, wall charts, magazine pictures, board drawings, stick figures and photographs are excellent means of making the meaning of unknown words clear to pupils. Very few, i.e., 4 (13.3%) said that they strongly agreed that vocabulary should be taught integrated with other language skills to save time and expand their language learning, but 18 (60.0%) reported that they felt neutral. This indicates that most of them did not teach vocabulary in the classroom by integrating with other micro-skills of languages, which is necessary for pupils to understand the concepts easily.

Results of Analysis of Classroom Observation Data

Classroom observation was conducted to cross-check whether teachers practice what they reported in the survey regarding TVYLs and whether they employ appropriate techniques and strategies in TVYLs in the classroom. To this end, it was conducted with four volunteer teachers using a checklist and field notes three times each, and the results of the observed cases were presented and analysed in the table as follows.

Table 3. Results of Activities Provided and Pupils' Engagement in the Tasks in the Classroom

No	Focus Area and Activity	5=Strongly Agree		4= Agree		3= Neutral		2= Disagree		1=Strongly Disagree		Mean value
A.	**Child Task Orientation/Engagement**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	
1	Pupils appear fully engaged in learning vocabulary activities.	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	6	50.0	-	-	2.75
2	Children are active participants in learning the lesson in the class.	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	6	50.0	-	-	2.75
3	Children are engaged with peers and/or materials.	-	-	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	2
4	Pupils' attention to the lesson is evident	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	2.5
5	Child sharing of answers to vocabulary items is frequently observed.	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	2.5
B.	**Support in Learning Activities**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	
6	Lessons and materials are suitable for vocabulary task orientation.	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	-	-	3
7	Vocabulary teaching methods promote children's engagement.	-	-	3	25.0	-	-	6	50.0	3	25.0	2.25
8	The teacher shows openness/responsiveness to active participation and student engagement in vocabulary learning.			-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	2
9	Individual attention to children is evident.	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	-	-	3	25.0	2.75
10	Extra help is provided to children when needed in TVYLs	-	-	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	6	50.0	1.75
11	Activities provided consistently engage children's vocabulary learning.	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	-	-	3
12	Varieties of activities are provided to arise pupils' vocabulary learning.	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	-	-	3
13	There is a blend of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities.	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	-	-	3
14	Teaching vocabulary is sup-			3	25.0	3	25.0	6	50.0	-	-	2.75

No	Focus Area and Activity	5=Strongly Agree		4= Agree		3= Neutral		2= Disagree		1=Strongly Disagree		Mean value
	ported with real-life objects to children											
15	Frequent usage of teaching aid is evident while TVYLs or pupils	-	-	-	-	6	50.0	6	50.0	-	-	2.5
16	Student understanding and participation in the lesson are evident	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	6	50.0	-	-	2.75
17	Teachers' support of the lesson with classroom resources is evident	-	-	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	6	50.0	1.75
18	Teachers' usage of body language (miming, facial expressions, and gestures) to conduct vocabulary lesson is evident in TVYLs	-	-	2	17.0	5	41.5	5	41.5	-	-	2.75
19	Teachers' usage of verbal explanation (analytical definition, putting words in defining context & translating into L1) is evident	6	50.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	-	-	-	-	4.25
20	Using dialogue and role-playing is evident in the classroom	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	-	-	3
21	Techniques like objects, pictures, etc., are frequently used to TVYLs	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	-	-	3
22	Translating words to L1 (mother tongue) is frequently conducted	6	50.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	-	-	-	-	4.25
23	Using word/language games to teach vocabulary is evident	-	-	-	-	6	50.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	2.25
24	using all senses by touching, seeing, hearing, and smelling collective (audial, visual, kinesthetic) is evident in the class	-	-	3	25.0	-	-	6	50.0	3	25.0	2.25
25	Questioning and answering on enjoying topics conducted by teachers	5	41.5	5	41.5	2	17.0	-	-	-	-	4.25
26	Teachers often use the dictionary to teach vocabulary in the class	-	-	6	50.0	6	50.0	-	-	-	-	3.5
27	Using synonyms and antonyms	-	-	-	-	2	17.0	5	41.5	5	41.5	1.75

No	Focus Area and Activity	5=Strongly Agree		4= Agree		3= Neutral		2= Disagree		1=Strongly Disagree		Mean value
	clues are evident regularly											
28	Using objects in & around the classrooms environment is evident while teaching vocabulary	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	2.5
29	Teachers frequently draw objects on the board, flashcards, and charts to teach vocabulary	-	-	3	25.0	-	-	6	50.0	3	25.0	2.25
30	Teachers use different instructional methods to teach vocabulary	-	-	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	-	-	3
31	Teachers use TL to describe vocabulary in the classroom	-	-	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	3	25.0	2.5
32	Using Illustrations and Pictures in the class for children is evident	-	-	3	25.0	-	-	6	50.0	3	25.0	2.25
	Grand mean											**2.72**

Table 3 depicts the consecutive lesson delivery observations, which are conducted 12 times a month. Frequencies and percentages in the table denote the repetition of classrooms observed. Although the observation data should be presented thematically, it is sometimes necessary to mix the numerical figures to supplement the data as the study employed embedded mixed methods. As indicated above, there was almost a mismatch between what teachers perceived towards TVYLs in the survey and their actual classroom practices. For instance, it was assumed that most of the teaching-learning process of English vocabulary was carried out using verbal explanation, definition, and translation into L1 followed by questioning and answering which lies in the lecture method in which the teacher dominated all classroom procedures. In most classes, conducting English vocabulary lessons in the mother tongue was frequently observed. Very few teachers, i.e., (25.0%) used resources in the class and brought teaching aids to support vocabulary, but the majority of them did not use realia and other resources that can be easily accessible to teach vocabulary for pupils. It is surprising that using word or language games to teach vocabulary, which is one of the interesting methods in TVYLs, was not practiced in the classrooms. This infers that most of the teachers lack enough knowledge on the implementation of suitable strategies for TVYLs and that the teaching techniques employed to teach vocabulary in the classrooms did not promote pupils' engagement. This means that there is less exposure for pupils to the TL vocabulary, which limits their opportunity to learn it.

Results of Analysis of Interview Data

Data collected through the interview were analysed thematically. The interview was conducted with four volunteer (three EFL & one department head) teachers based on their knowledge and teaching experience since the researchers believed that they could provide valid data on the practice of TVYLs that were taken from three schools. Three from the Tercha town administration of Sore and Fana, and the remaining one is from the Woldehane primary school of Gena Woreda. For validity and reliability of data, digital photos, audio, and a video camera were used to record and

document their responses and keep the secret. Teachers were coded as T1, T2, T3, and T4. Even though the discussion of the interview was made thematically related to all items sequentially, only the main points were analysed in this section as follows.

Regarding their awareness of TVYLs, almost all of them felt that they were conscious about TVYLs, although there were variations in the allocation of time to teach vocabulary, ranking from 5-15 minutes in each lesson. In addition, the majority of them reported that they had not received any training in TVYLs, which hindered them from practicing it as needed; however, it is possible to use various resources that can be accessible, seen, and touched by pupils nearby in the class, such as duster, chalk, board, chair, wall, floor, roof and window. to teach new words using locally available resources. They suggested that teachers should teach vocabulary lessons using fun and joyful activities that can easily catch YL's attention and interest. As they stated, their students failed to spell, pronounce and tell the meaning of new words.

Discussion

Discussions of the findings of the study were made in line with the three basic research objectives: (1) Teachers' perceptions towards teaching vocabulary to grade four students in SWRS, Dawro zone, Tercha town, and its surroundings; (2) Teachers' implementation of what they reported about their perceptions towards teaching vocabulary in the actual classrooms and (3) Teaching techniques and strategies employed by English teachers when teaching vocabulary for grade four students.

Related to the first objective, which entails teachers' perceptions of teaching vocabulary to grade four students, data summarized and triangulated from teachers' questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations revealed that almost all EFL teachers feel comfortable with the items in the survey regarding TVYLs. In line with this, it is believed that to be effective in TVYLs, teachers must hold a positive perception of TVYLs, meaning that they should feel comfortable teaching them. Concerning this, Woldemariam Bezabih and Hailu Wubshet (2022) state that TVYLs are not only a set of procedures, forms, and activities but also a perception on the part of the teacher that makes learning effective. Based on the analysis of the data, the following findings were obtained. The majority of EFL teachers had a favorable opinion of TVYLs, but some of them lacked consciousness about the best mechanisms for how to teach vocabulary. However, their classroom practice differs from their perceptions as triangulated in the classroom lesson observation. This is consistent with Salmeen's (2021) study, as his finding argues that language teachers have complex beliefs about teaching and learning a new language. These beliefs have a strong influence on classroom actions. Teachers' beliefs have a strong influence on their consciousness, teaching attitude, teaching methods, and teaching policy behavior and, finally, influence the pupils' development.

Regarding the second objective, which tests whether teachers implement what they reported about their perceptions towards TVYLS in the classrooms, the majority of teachers did not teach vocabulary to pupils as they reported in the questionnaire. As data triangulated from three tools, almost all teachers conducted the teaching-learning process differently from what they said that their teaching of vocabulary to the pupils was conducted through oral explanation and word definition, which is fully supported by translation (mother tongue). Some teachers did not even give feedback, while pupils wrongly pronounced and spelled words when they read and wrote. (Wrongly pronounced words in the class during reading passage were access, books, came, come, wage, etc.). Furthermore, it was depicted that the interaction between teachers and pupils was less. Pupils had no

exposure to learning the language and communicating with their teachers. Most interactive teaching techniques were not implemented as intended in the classroom.

In line with this, this is consistent with Kenyon's (2015) findings showing that while the teachers felt that their teaching reflected their beliefs, there was a significant difference between the value assigned to particular teaching behaviors and practices and the extent to which these were reported to occur in teachers' work. In explaining the reasons for this mismatch, teachers felt that student factors, institutional factors, and teacher factors were influential. In addition, Salmeen (2021) argues that a gap exists between their beliefs and actual practices in the class and that they are also well aware of this. More help and guidance for pupils is needed from teachers, as children at that age always have a clean and fresh mind to catch what is new and learn best to cultivate them to be productive so that teachers' perceptions play a pivotal role in shaping children to acquire a new language in TVYLs.

Concerning the final objective, which aimed to assess the most frequently, used teaching strategies employed by teachers when teaching vocabulary for grade four students, the substantiated data from classroom observation revealed that translating words to L1, oral explanation, word definition, questioning and answering and using dictionary were among the frequently used techniques in teaching vocabulary in most schools. This shows that the delivery of lessons was dominated by the teacher, which limited the exposure of pupils to learn TL through interacting in pairs and groups with their classmates. Vocabulary and word games were not employed in the classes. This ensures that the majority of teachers lack consciousness of the implementation of suitable methods in TVYLs. Generally, the strategies employed to offer vocabulary lessons in the classroom for pupils were not used regularly. This finding is supplementary to Azubuike (2018), who found that young pupils learn with all their senses at once. The best way to know and understand something is by touching, seeing and exploring it. They establish the meaning of the messages conveyed to them mostly from the gestures, intonation and facial expression of the person speaking to them.

Conclusion

It is vital to recognize the effect of teachers' perceptions in their classroom practice. Similarly, it is essential to consider the role of vocabulary in teaching EFL, as it is one of the skeletons of the language that pupils are expected to learn at an early age. Thus, the present study has tried to examine teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices in TVYLs using suitable techniques at the primary level in some selected primary schools in the Dawro zone, Tercha town and its surroundings, SWRS, Ethiopia. Thus, the conclusion is derived from the findings and discussions. The findings show that the majority of teachers were in favor of ideas toward TVYLs; however, there is a mismatch between their perceptions and classroom practices (the study demonstrated that teachers' perceptions and their practice of teaching vocabulary are loosely correlated). The major techniques used by the teacher in TVYLs were oral explanations, questioning and answering and techniques of presentation, which consist mainly of the use of meaning definition and translation.

Hence, based on the findings of the present study, which are consistent with many earlier studies, such as Manendante (2018) and Mohammad (2021), it has been noted that teaching English vocabulary to children is not. Thus, teachers need to find the appropriate technique to teach students based on their needs, interests and characteristics of YLs. Teachers need to use techniques such as real objects and flashcards in presenting new words. It makes students motivated and enjoys learning vocabulary. In-service teachers' training must be taken up regularly. The creation of a resource center with the latest materials and the availability of experienced teachers to guide the younger lot

should be encouraged on institutional premises. Peers should be encouraged to observe and help their colleagues plug the loopholes. Innovation and creativity should be rewarded and encouraged among teachers. For further studies, the researchers suggest that future experimental studies be conducted on the same issue, yet more on the exploration of teachers' perceptions, classroom practices and vocabulary teaching techniques at different levels in the EFL context. Further studies are also suggested to focus on the students' side rather than the teacher.

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