

Teachers' knowledge: Teachers' perceptions and their sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated EFL teachers' perceptions and their sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction at the secondary school level in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. To fulfill this purpose, an explanatory research design and mixed data analysis methods were employed. The study involved thirty-six English teachers from three representative secondary schools. Data was collected from the participant teachers through a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The findings show that participants in the study generally have positive perceptions about vocabulary teaching and learning. According to the participants' perspectives, vocabulary is central to language and it is important to language learners in their language learning. This thought was affirmed by participants in both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study. The finding also revealed teachers' sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction. These knowledge sources include teachers' teaching experience, their disciplinary background, apprenticeship of observation, and others. The discussion of these findings suggests implications for practices and recommendations for future research to improve vocabulary instruction in secondary schools.



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1. Introduction

Teachers' knowledge and how they implement their knowledge is central to the process of teaching and learning (van Leeuwen, Hornstra, & Flunger, 2023). Teachers' knowledge refers to the total knowledge and insights underlying teachers' actions in practice. According to Borg (1999), teachers' knowledge implies "the beliefs, knowledge theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold about all aspects of their work" (p. 9). Research in teacher cognition also demonstrates that teachers' knowledge is an important element that has the potential to provide insights into teachers' innate ability to make images and interpretations about what they are teaching, who they are teaching, and the context in which teaching takes place (Carter, 1990; Freeman, 2002; Meisani, 2023).

The investigation into teachers' knowledge in terms of 'what' teachers know about what they do in the classroom has become a core interest in typical educational research since the mid-1970s. At this time, the significance of teacher cognition inquiry has increased and the center of attention in L2 research education has immensely changed from studying teachers' observable behaviors to studying teachers' knowledge and beliefs (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1999; Soifah & Pratolo, 2020).

In the early 1990s, research in language education also shifted to focus on the cognitive aspects of teaching, and attention was seriously paid to the central role of teachers' knowledge in helping to

improve language teaching (Prabhu, 1990). Within the EFL context as well, there has recently been an increasing interest in research on teachers' knowledge in the field of English language teaching. To this end, Shulman (1987) argued that teachers' knowledge is essential for effective language teaching. Here, what deserves special attention is "the influence of teachers' mental lives or the hidden side of teaching" on their instructional decisions (Freeman, 2002).

In the same way, researchers have viewed vocabulary as an important part of a language on which teachers' knowledge of research is required to be made. Borg (2003) points out that L2 teachers' knowledge needs more focused research on different curricular aspects of language teaching, particularly those unstudied areas such as the teaching of vocabulary, speaking, and listening. Thus, referring to the studies on L2 teachers' knowledge in various curricular areas, the researcher investigated perceptions and sources of EFL teachers' knowledge in vocabulary instruction at the secondary school level in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

1.1. Statement of the Research Problem

Teachers play an important role in students' vocabulary development as they prepare learners for strategies that increase their vocabulary knowledge (Windiarti et al., 2019). However, Borg (2009) indicates that vocabulary as an area of study has been sidelined from a teacher's knowledge perspective, and there is insufficient understanding of this curricular area of second language teaching. The researcher also agrees with Borg's idea that studies of vocabulary teaching, which aim to investigate teachers' knowledge of vocabulary teaching and how these affect classroom practices, are rare in our context, and he believes that more research needs to be done on teachers' perceptions and their sources of knowledge in EFL classes.

Although worldwide there is a large body of literature documenting research findings about teachers' perceptions and their sources of knowledge with regard to different curricular areas (Van Driel, Beijaard and Verloop, 2001; Tsui, 2003; Borg, 2004; Arioğul, 2007; Gao, 2007) it seems less attention has been paid to such kinds of research in our context. As a result, the development of teachers teaching English in general and vocabulary instruction in particular remains unchanged. Therefore, this study filled the gap by exploring teachers' perceptions and their sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction in an EFL secondary school context in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Based on the preceding analysis, this study thus attempted to answer the following basic research questions:

1.2. Research Questions

- i. What perceptions do secondary school EFL teachers have about their knowledge and practice in vocabulary instruction?
- ii. How do secondary school EFL teachers develop their sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the above research questions, the study has the following general and specific objectives:

1) General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions and their sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction.

Based on this general objective, the study focused on the following specific objectives:

2) Specific Objectives

- i. To investigate secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and practice in vocabulary instruction.
- ii. To find out secondary school EFL teachers' sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction.

2. Materials and Method

2.1. Research Design and Methodology

The study adopted an explanatory mixed-method design by combining quantitative and qualitative methods as complementary strategies appropriate to the research questions. Explanatory design sets

out to explain information and seeks to ask "why" and "how" questions those go on to identify the actual reasons a phenomenon occurs (Creswell et al., 2003). This design starts with the collection and analysis of quantitative data. The second, qualitative phase of the study is designed so that it follows from (or connects to) the results of the first quantitative phase. The reason behind the sequence of the explanatory design is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth (Creswell et al., 2003). Consequently, in the first phase of data collection, the researcher conducted a questionnaire, followed by semi-structured interviews in the second phase. Based on some of the findings from the first phase, integration of the two phases was carried out, and further investigation of secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions and sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction was conducted.

2.2. Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were EFL teachers who were teaching English at randomly selected secondary schools. For the study, thirty-six English teachers from representative secondary schools took part in filling out the questionnaire. As well, for semi-structured interview, four purposefully selected teachers from these representative secondary schools were engaged.

2.3. Data gathering instruments

Two instruments were employed in order to gather the necessary data for the study undertaken. These instruments are questionnaire and semi structured interview.

1) Questionnaire

In this research, questionnaire aids in gaining a preliminary understanding of the phenomenon under study. This is supported by Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009) that first, a questionnaire helps to obtain a general overview of the research. Secondly, if the strategy of data collection is sequential (similar to the research), findings from the questionnaire pave the way for the development of other qualitative data-gathering tools such as interviews and others.

In the same way, certain aspects of teachers' perceptions and sources of knowledge in vocabulary teaching arising from the findings of the questionnaire were further investigated, and certain issues generated by the first investigation were addressed through the participants' views and understandings. As Morse (2003) maintained, by employing more than one method within a research design, the researcher is able to obtain a thorough understanding of human behavior and experience. The principal aim of this questionnaire was to obtain an overview of perceptions and sources of knowledge secondary school teachers of English have about their vocabulary teaching.

2) Interview

This study employed face-to-face semi-structured interview, which was guided by a list of interview questions and was designed to put interviewees at ease and allow them to express themselves.

The semi-structured interview in this study served a number of purposes. First, it dug deep into the minds of the interviewees to explore EFL government secondary school teachers' perceptions and sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction. Second, it provided further insight into justifying the claims made by the respondents to the questionnaire. Third, it allowed the researcher to ask questions that were not in the guide and the researcher could use prompts to encourage the participants to elaborate on the original response. Such a distinctive feature helped the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of teachers' perceptions and sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction. In the light of the research questions and aims, the semi-structured interview questions of this study were formulated with the help of the relevant literature in the area and based on the findings from the questionnaire. It was conducted after a purposive selection of four teachers from representative secondary schools was made.

2.4. Data Collection Procedures

In this study, data was collected sequentially in two phases. The first phase of data collection was the administration of the questionnaire. In the second phase, the researcher used his time to conduct qualitative data, i.e., the semi-structured interview, with purposely selected teachers at representative government secondary schools, respectively.

3. Findings and Discussion

This section provides a discussion of research findings with reference to each of the two research questions. In each of these two sections, the quantitative and qualitative findings were analyzed and concisely discussed, followed by an interpretation of the results with reference to the literature reviewed and existing relevant research evidence.

3.1. What perceptions do secondary school EFL teachers have about their knowledge and practice in vocabulary instruction?

This section of the questionnaire contains seven items designed to elicit teachers' perceptions on teaching English vocabulary. Table 1 below shows the frequency and percentages of the responses with reference to each item.

Table 1. Frequency and percentages of responses to teachers' perceptions

No	TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS	SA		A		CD		D		SD		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning new vocabularies.	8	22.2	14	38.9	2	5.6	8	22.2	4	11.1	36	100
2	Teaching vocabulary learning strategies to students should be the primary role of an EFL teacher.	13	36.1	10	27.8	2	5.6	7	19.4	4	11.1	36	100
3	Vocabulary is best learned naturally through meaningful communication.	9	25	14	38.9	5	13.9	6	16.7	2	5.6	36	100
4	Vocabulary teaching has to be given prime consideration in EFL classes.	8	22.2	12	33.3	5	13.9	6	16.7	5	15.9	36	100
5	Teaching vocabulary is more important than teaching grammar.	8	22.2	11	30.6	5	13.9	7	19.4	5	13.9	36	100
6	Teachers should use an explicit instruction technique more than an implicit one when they teach English vocabulary.	7	19.4	13	36.1	6	16.7	6	16.7	4	11.1	36	100
7	Teachers should use students L1 when they teach new words.	7	19.4	12	33.3	3	8.3	8	22.2	6	16.7	36	100

Based on their perceptions, teachers involved in the survey reported a variety of responses they considered helpful to their vocabulary teaching.

As Table 1 shows, 61.1 % of the respondents confirmed that 'Learning English is the same as learning new English words. However, 33.3 % of the respondents disagreed (4 teachers) and strongly disagreed (8 teachers) with the item respectively. It is clear from the majority of the respondents' views that participant teachers believed the importance of new English words to learn English language. The rest 2 respondents didn't decide to the item.

In response to the second item, a large percentage of the respondents (63.9 %) confirmed that teaching vocabulary learning strategies to students should be the primary role of an EFL teacher. This entails the teacher's role in an EFL class is to provide students with a variety of strategies and let the students choose these strategies and make them independent learners. However, 30.5 % of the respondents opted to disagree (19.4%) and strongly disagree (11.1 %) with the statement, thinking teaching vocabulary learning strategies to students should not be the primary role of an EFL teacher. The remaining respondents (5.6 %) chose to not decide on the item.

As far as the statement "Vocabulary is best learned naturally through meaningful communication" is concerned, the data in Table 1 shows that 22.2 % of the respondents disagree (16.7 %) and strongly disagree (5.6 %) with the statement, respectively. However, 63.9 % of those polled preferred strongly agree (25%) and agree (38.9%). This suggests that teachers have positive (strong) attitudes toward developing vocabulary knowledge through meaningful communication. Thus, respondents believed vocabulary teaching should expose students to interactive activities rather than learning only the forms of new words.

Regarding 'Vocabulary teaching has to be given prime consideration in EFL classes', 55.6 % of the respondents replied: "strongly agree" (22.2 %) and "agree" (33.3 %) to the item, respectively. The data in the table shows that participant teachers have positive attitudes towards giving prime consideration to vocabulary teaching. However, 30.6 % of the respondents held negative feelings towards the statement, and the remaining respondents (5 teachers) chose to un decide the item.

When teachers responded to the statement "Teaching vocabulary is more important than teaching grammar", 52.8 % of the respondents replied "strongly agree" (22.2 %) and "agree" (30.6 %) to the statement, respectively. The responses of this percentage (52.8%) of teachers actually revealed that teaching vocabulary is more important than teaching grammar. Compared to grammar, vocabulary plays an important role in expressing ideas and thoughts. However, 33.3% of respondents chose to disagree (19.4%) or strongly disagree (13.9%) with the claim that teaching vocabulary is more important than teaching grammar. The remaining 13.9% of the respondents could not decide which language element was important. The fact that these teachers preferred not to decide might show that some teachers found it hard to rank vocabulary and grammar according to their importance.

As seen in Table 1, more than half of the respondents (55.6 %) perceived vocabulary should be taught explicitly in EFL class situations. This entails an explicit method of vocabulary learning promises the greatest opportunity for the acquisition of vocabulary by virtue of direct attention to it. However, 27.8 % of the respondents chose to disagree (16.7 %) and strongly disagree (11.1 %) with the item, considering teachers should use an implicit way when they teach English vocabulary. Yet, 4 respondents preferred to choose undecided, arguing the use of neither explicit nor implicit instruction techniques in vocabulary teaching classes.

Finally, the data in the survey reveals that more than half (52.8%) of the participant teachers have strong beliefs in the use of students' L1 when students find it hard to express key concepts and notions in English. However, 38.9% of respondents disagreed with the statement, believing that students' L1 should not be used in vocabulary instruction because they may develop the habit of frequently waiting for translation in class, which is not good for learning a foreign language and is not required in vocabulary instruction. The remaining 3 teachers opted to undecided the statement.

In the previous section, the findings of the questionnaire provided a preliminary understanding of teachers' perceptions of vocabulary instruction. The next section discusses research findings from an in-depth study (semi-structured interview), followed by an interpretation of the results with reference to the literature reviewed and existing relevant research evidence.

Teachers' Perceptions of Vocabulary Instruction

Underscoring the importance of vocabulary learning, all participants acknowledged the importance of vocabulary in learning English as a foreign language. As T1, who teaches English at a secondary school, pointed out, words *are the bricks that can have the cohesive, sensible thought of ideas for holding a lot of concepts, and they are very important in foreign language learning (teacher1's interview)*. Much to the same thought, T3 added, "Vocabulary is very important as cells are very important for our body. The basis for our body is a cell, and the basis for language is vocabulary (teacher 3's interview)". Besides, based on the analysis of the findings in the quantitative parts, it is clear from the majority of the respondents' view that vocabulary is central to language and important to language learners. In the study, most participants confirmed that "learning a second language is the same as learning the vocabulary of the language." In this regard, Gass (1999) states that learning a second language means learning its vocabulary, as vocabulary skills make a significant contribution to almost all aspects of second language proficiency. This means that vocabulary knowledge is central to communicative ability and to learning a second language. Generally, vocabulary is a core component of a language and it provides much for language proficiency and for how well learners learn to speak, listen, read, and write in an EFL class.

In order to teach, English teachers have to develop knowledge of vocabulary teaching strategies (Pratolo, & Hafizhah, 2022). This thought was affirmed by most participants in both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study. According to Nation (2001), teacher awareness of vocabulary teaching strategies has a direct impact on EFL teachers' practice in the teaching and learning of vocabulary. Since, without having sufficient awareness of the principles and purposes of vocabulary teaching strategies, it is difficult to effectively practice them in the classroom. So, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency, teachers should not only understand the students' difficulties with word study but also know and use some useful strategies and methods in their classroom teaching (Nugraheni & Rokhyati, 2022). Only in this way can they help to improve the students' vocabulary knowledge and their ability to use English freely in communication. Besides, teaching words is a crucial aspect of learning a language, as languages are based on words. Therefore, it is essential for the teacher to have knowledge of vocabulary teaching strategies in order to make their students grasp new concepts in their vocabulary learning.

Participants in the study supported the idea that "Vocabulary is best learned naturally through meaningful communication" and they believed vocabulary exercises should expose students to interactive activities rather than learning only the forms of the new words. This positive perception of the use of CLT in teaching vocabulary is conducive to the actual classroom practice. In connection to this idea, Richards and Rodgers (2001) pointed out that vocabulary teaching focuses on meaning rather than form to achieve effective communication. Thus, having a good knowledge of vocabulary is necessary to make students effective in different communication settings and help them express their ideas and feelings effectively. From this angle, about 64% of the quantitative survey respondents supported the idea and believed vocabulary exercises should expose students to interactive activities rather than learning only the forms of the new words.

As a matter of fact, learning vocabulary is one of the most important domains in the process of learning a language. Regarding its significance in learning a language, it can be said that limited knowledge of English vocabulary may affect the performance of English language learners at school. To this end, with positive feelings towards vocabulary teaching, teachers prefer the idea that "prime consideration should be given to vocabulary teaching in EFL classes." As Zhang Jianmin (2003) underscored, "Vocabulary is to the learner as building materials are to the architect, and without a large English vocabulary, no one can claim a good command of the language" (p.53). This shows that vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Lewis (1993) went further to argue that *Lexis is the core or heart of a language, and a human being's language is based on the vocabulary of that language. Vocabulary is the basic material to put even the grammar into patterns because there is no sentence, no essay, and even no language without vocabulary* (p. 89). The survey results expressed in the questionnaire were seen with most teachers' interview responses that acknowledged the importance of vocabulary in learning English as a foreign language. As T1, who teaches English at a secondary school, pointed out, "vocabularies are the bricks that can have the cohesive sensible thought of ideas for holding a lot of concepts and it is very important in foreign language learning" (SSI). Much to the same thought, T3 added, "Vocabulary is very important as cells are very important for our body. The basis of our body is a cell. The basis for language is "vocabulary" (SSI). This implies that vocabulary is one of the significant components of language learning and it has to be given prime consideration in EFL classes.

Respondents actually considered teaching vocabulary more important than teaching grammar. I think that vocabulary plays an important role in expressing ideas and thoughts. From this angle, McCarthy (1990) states that the single biggest component of any language course is vocabulary. No matter how well students learn grammar or how well they master L2 sounds, communication in an L2 cannot take place in any meaningful way unless they have words to express a wide range of meanings. Thus, if students do not have a vocabulary to work with, they cannot even learn grammar. From this point, we can understand that to acquire a language, learning vocabulary is more compulsory than learning grammar. To this angle, one of the participants replied: "For me, vocabulary is more important than grammar since without vocabulary we can't teach other language skills and even grammar" (teacher 4's interview). This was also expressed in T2's comment, "it is impossible to teach a language without the knowledge of vocabulary" (teacher 2's interview). It is clear from these respondents' views that vocabulary is more important to acquire a second language compared to other language skills and language elements. From this angle, 52.8 % of quantitative survey respondents

disclosed that teaching vocabulary is more important than teaching grammar, and respondents thought vocabulary plays an important role in expressing ideas and feelings compared to grammar.

It is worth noting that a difference existed between the findings in the questionnaire and in an in-depth study (semi-structured interview) in line with using explicit and implicit ways of vocabulary teaching. In the questionnaire, more than 55% of the respondents prefer an explicit method of vocabulary teaching, whereas in an in-depth study, most teachers prefer the integration of both methods (explicit and implicit) in their vocabulary teaching. For example, teachers who respond to an interview appeal that vocabulary should be taught both explicitly and implicitly. Evidently, one of the participants articulates that *vocabulary should be taught using different ways of teaching. For example, if teaching involves the direct presentation of a lesson, I use an explicit method of teaching. If teaching promotes incidental vocabulary learning, I use implicit techniques and let students read it outside of class. Thus, I didn't have any specific way of teaching vocabulary (teacher2's interview).* This implies teachers do not prefer explicit vocabulary teaching to implicit teaching of vocabulary or the other way around. Hence, it is perhaps impossible to put the two concepts of explicit or implicit teaching against each other, and it is hard to claim that one method is better than the other, which is also what many researchers of second language acquisition promote (Chacón-Beltrán et al., 2010). It is clear from this evidence that both approaches to learning vocabulary have been shown to be beneficial.

Teachers have a strong belief in the use of students' L1 when they find it hard to express key concepts and notions in English or feel students would be unable to understand the meaning of new words easily. In short, these teachers held the view that L1 could be used as a "scaffolding tool" in teaching English words. Thus, ignoring student L1 would decrease the cognitive level of that learner. Swan (1985) believes that "when learning a new language, learners habitually attempt to find ways to comprehend the new structures in the L2 by trying to find the equivalents in their L1". This is logical for taking L1 reference, and teachers should find a balance and decide if the use of L1 is excessive or not. However, as the data in the survey reveals, some respondents reflected that students' L1 should not be used in teaching vocabulary because students might develop the habit of waiting for translation in class now and then, which is not good for learning a foreign language and was not a must in vocabulary instruction. However, this finding also reveals that about 53 % of the participant teachers have a strong belief in the use of students' L1 when students find it hard to express key concepts and notions in English. Thus, the use of student L1 cannot be ignored nor overused in EFL classes when teachers teach new words.

Results and discussion of the findings about respondents' perceptions of vocabulary instruction were presented in the previous section. In the following section, teachers' sources of knowledge development in vocabulary instruction were analyzed first, and then the results of the findings were discussed with literature related.

3.2. How do secondary school EFL teachers develop their sources of knowledge in vocabulary instruction?

In order to address the responses to the items about teachers' sources of knowledge development for vocabulary teaching, the responses were first counted; the percentages were calculated in the following table, and then they were analyzed and discussed beneath the table.

Table 2. Frequency and percentages of responses on teachers' sources of knowledge development

No	Source items	Response	Percentage
1	Teaching experience (the knowledge teachers themselves generate as a result of their experiences as teachers).	29	80.6
2	Teachers' disciplinary background (the knowledge teachers possess at college or university in their teacher education programme).	26	72.2
3	Apprenticeship of observation (prior experience of teachers as learners).	22	61.1
4	Peer learning	6	16.7
5	Instructors' advice.	5	13.9
6	Teachers training or seminar held by the ministry of education or zonal education bureau.	3	8.3
7	Students' feedback	17	47.2
8	Doing research or reading research articles in the area.	19	52.8
9	Other (specify)	2	5.6

As the data in Table 2 revealed, the sources noted most frequently were: teaching experience (the knowledge teachers themselves generate as a result of their experiences as teachers, 80.6%), teachers' disciplinary background (the knowledge teachers possess at a college or university in their teacher education program, 72.2%), and apprenticeship of observation (prior experience of teachers as learners, 61.1%), respectively.

Participants also reported that their knowledge is developed from the research they are doing or reading research articles in the area (52.8%) and students' feedback (47.2%), respectively. Some respondents as well stated that their knowledge about vocabulary teaching originated from peer learning, instructors' advice, and seminars held by the ministry of education or zonal education bureau, which covered 16.7%, 13.9%, and 8.3% respectively. Additionally, a very small percentage (5.6%) of the participants indicated that their knowledge about vocabulary instruction is derived from other sources, including their use of emerging technologies such as mobiles, computers, and others.

In sum, teachers' teaching experience, their disciplinary background, and teachers' apprenticeship of observation contributed a lot to teachers' knowledge about vocabulary teaching. Besides, sources such as research they are doing in the area and students' feedback also play an important role in developing teachers' knowledge in vocabulary instruction.

In the preceding section, the findings of the questionnaire provided a preliminary understanding of teachers' sources of knowledge developments quantitatively. The next section discusses research findings from an in-depth study (semi-structured interview), followed by an interpretation of the results with reference to the literature reviewed and existing relevant research evidence.

Sources of Teachers' Knowledge Development in Vocabulary Instruction

In order to recognize teachers' classroom practices and the knowledge embodied in these practices, it is important to understand the sources of influence that shape teachers' conceptions of knowledge and practice (Tsui, 2003). To this end, EFL teachers' knowledge of vocabulary teaching is developed from a variety of sources.

The result of an in-depth study (a semi-structured interview) showed that the participants are mainly reliant on their own experience of teaching English. It is clear that experience is an important source of influence on the development of teachers' knowledge in teaching English. From this angle, T1, who taught English for more than ten years in secondary school, said, "My knowledge regarding English teaching is not from my college or university education, rather it is from my teaching experience" (teacher1's interview). T4 also supported this view and showed his position by saying, "Basically, I give attention to experience because the experiences that I have passed through make me feel like a full teacher now" (Teacher 4's interview).

The findings regarding the role of experience in shaping and developing teacher knowledge replicate existing research evidence supporting experience as an indispensable source for the development of teacher knowledge. For example, Grangeat (2008) highlighted that professional knowledge is shaped by professional lived experience at work. Thus, relevant EFL work experience as an English teacher could make the teacher good at teaching language skills and language elements, including vocabulary, in an EFL classroom.

The data presented in the above excerpt indicates that the participant is mainly reliant on his own experience of teaching English. It is clear that experience is an important source of influence on the development of teachers' knowledge in teaching English.

The responses in the questionnaire were almost the same as the results from the interviews; with most teachers (80.6%) saying teaching experience was their major source of knowledge in vocabulary instruction. Participants explained that by teaching, they gained more knowledge about how to teach vocabulary and assess vocabulary learning. As regards their content knowledge (mainly referring to their English proficiency), the participants tended to reveal that with an increase in teaching experience, their vocabulary size increased since they could develop some words through teaching the textbooks or other supplementary materials. Besides, the experience of teaching different language skills in English in one way or another developed teachers' vocabulary teaching techniques.

The questionnaire results also showed most teachers (72.2%) agreed with the teachers' disciplinary background as the second most important source of knowledge development in vocabulary instruction. However, interviews revealed the teacher participants did not seem to value the course

works of EFL teacher education as an important source of their vocabulary knowledge. The teachers' views expressed in the interviews were inconsistent with their questionnaire responses. As one of the interviewed participants said, "The teacher training course has no influence on my vocabulary teaching because we didn't take any specific courses regarding how to teach vocabulary" (teacher 3's interview). In the participants' views, the major reasons for this perception as reported by these respondents include: The teacher education program aims to develop teachers' disciplinary knowledge in linguistics, language teaching approaches, and other related courses. They argue this stage of education has less impact on their vocabulary teaching. However, T2 conceived that the courses he took had some impact on his vocabulary instruction. As he underscored, the *methodology courses play an important role in how to teach English in general. Even if there are no specific courses on how to teach vocabulary, the general methodology course has importance for vocabulary teaching (Teacher 3's interview)*.

The data from the interviews also show that the participants' formal high school education and undergraduate education influenced the development of the teachers' English teaching in general, and vocabulary instruction in particular. For example, one of the participants stated that almost all the techniques that they shared to teach vocabulary were based on their apprenticeship of observation in formal education. One example worth mentioning is T2's perception of vocabulary teaching. In the interview, T2 clearly said that: *I had an excellent teacher when I was a student at Yekatit 12 senior secondary school. This teacher was giving us lots of activities using different vocabulary teaching techniques so as to build our vocabulary knowledge. For example, he was presenting many vocabulary-developing exercises by telling a story and presenting vocabulary-building drills. This assisted the way I taught vocabulary today (teacher2's interview)*. Similarly, T4 in his part stressed, "The first important point is that I would like to appreciate my former teachers." I have got the very important skill of teaching English and teaching vocabulary as well from my former preparatory school English teachers"(teacher 4's interview). These revealed teachers developed knowledge of teaching English language skills or language elements from their former schooling in their EFL class learning. The data in the questionnaire also revealed that more than 61% of the respondent's acknowledged apprenticeship of observation (prior experience of teachers as learners) helped a lot in developing their vocabulary instruction knowledge in EFL classes.

There were other sources revealed to be useful for the development of the various areas of teachers' knowledge in teaching English vocabulary. To this end, teacher participants' stated research they are doing in the area and students' feedback as an important source of their knowledge development. On the other hand, most teacher participants did not seem to value training or seminars held by the ministry of education or zonal education bureau as a source of their knowledge. It seems that those seminars were not relevant to their teaching and research interests, or that they were quite general and not specific about how to teach English vocabulary. Besides, it is important to note that in the interviews, teachers' own sources of knowledge in teaching English also impacted their knowledge development in vocabulary instruction. For example, T2 recalled his experience of how to teach English and how this source helped him with his vocabulary teaching, saying, "*Your teaching depends on your sources of knowledge. The more knowledge sources you have, the better your classroom teaching will be. Thus, getting various knowledge sources has an impact on your vocabulary teaching (teacher 2's interview)*."

Generally, the three most frequently mentioned contributing sources for teaching English vocabulary were: teachers' teaching experience (the knowledge teachers themselves generate as a result of their experiences as teachers), teachers' disciplinary background (the knowledge teachers possess at college or university in their teacher education program), and apprenticeship of observation (prior experience of teachers as learners). This finding echoed other researchers' studies concerning ESL teacher knowledge (Tsui, 2003) and EFL teacher knowledge (Gao, 2007). Besides, the participants agreed these sources have an impact on their vocabulary knowledge development and contributed to the consistent relationship between knowledge and practice in vocabulary instruction.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Participants in the study generally have positive perceptions of the teaching and learning of vocabulary. According to the participants' perspectives, vocabulary is central to language and is important to language learners. In this study, most participants confirmed that 'learning a foreign

language is the same as learning the vocabulary of the language. This thought was affirmed by participants in both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study.

Professional knowledge is developed or shaped by professional experience at work. Participant teachers revealed that experience is an important source of influence on the development of teachers' knowledge in teaching English vocabulary. Besides, teachers' disciplinary background (the knowledge teachers possess at college or university in their teacher education program) and apprenticeship of observation (prior experience of teachers as learners) are considered the most frequently mentioned knowledge sources for vocabulary teaching.

Teachers are the main personalities in an EFL class, and they need to be effectively involved in the process of teaching and learning. The researcher would suggest that teachers should be aware of the role of constructive perceptions (views) necessary for the development of their knowledge and practice in vocabulary instruction. They should also know about their students' different abilities, learning styles, and backgrounds in their vocabulary teaching. Besides, teachers should know about potential knowledge sources that serve them in their vocabulary teaching.

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