The Effects of Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementations Active Learning in EFL Classroom: *The Case of Three Selected Secondary Schools in Dawro Zone, SNNPRS, Ethiopia*

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Abstract- The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent and effects of EFL teachers' perceptions on the implementation of active learning in three selected secondary schools in Genna Bossa Woreda of Dawro Zone, SNNPRS. To conduct the study, descriptive survey research design was employed. A total of 12 teachers and 60 students from high, medium and lower achievers participated in the study through availability and purposive sampling techniques. The study was complemented by mixed method approach that employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools such as observation checklists, questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data, data collected through questionnaires, was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and grand mean, Pearson correlation coefficients, and simple linear regression. Data obtained through observation and interview (qualitative) were analyzed using textual analysis thematically. The findings of the study revealed that perceptions of teachers' affected their classroom implementation of Active Learning (AL). Specifically, positive perception of teachers is associated with effective implementation of active Learning Method in EFL class, whereas, negative perception is directly related to poor implementation of Active Learning Method.

Keywords: active learning, perception, practices.

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Abstract- The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent and effects of EFL teachers' perceptions on the implementation of active learning in three selected secondary schools in Genna Bossa Woreda of Dawro Zone, SNNPRS. To conduct the study, descriptive survey research design was employed. A total of 12 teachers and 60 students from high, medium and lower achievers participated in the study through availability and purposive sampling techniques. The study was complemented by mixed method approach that employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools such as observation checklists, questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data, data collected through questionnaires, was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and grand mean, Pearson correlation coefficients, and simple linear regression. Data obtained through observation and interview (qualitative) were analyzed using textual analysis thematically. The findings of the study revealed that perceptions of teachers' affected their classroom implementation of Active Learning (AL). Specifically, positive perception of teachers is associated with effective implementation of active Learning Method in EFL class, whereas, negative perception is directly related to poor implementation of Active Learning Method. The major factors affecting the effective implementation of active learning were large class size with fixed sitting, inadequacy teachers training on the application of Active Learning Method (ALM), teachers' and students' perception that means their tendency to focus on teacher- centered method and shortage of time were among the most influential factors hindering its implementation. Finally, EFL teachers should get regular training on the concept and implementation of ALM in English classrooms.

Keywords: active learning, perception, practices.

I. Introduction

The main objective of education is to enable learners develop knowledge, skills and attitude which are achieved through different methods. Methods are means of conveying ideas and skills to impart and acquire knowledge of different subject matters in a more concrete and comprehensive way. They are used to achieve the desired educational objectives. At different times, different methods of learning have appeared and being remained dominant for certain period of time such as teacher- centered methods, (Bethel, 2011). As an alternative way, active learning has become widely recognized as a desired strategy for teaching language since English language is being used as a medium of instruction from primary to tertiary levels in Ethiopia and the nature of language learning itself requires closed interaction of students with their teachers and peer groups with various exposures in the classroom and outside. This is basically true because the students' skill in using the language highly determines their academic success (Atkins et al, 1995). Therefore, students are expected to develop their English language proficiency through appropriate methodology as it is obvious that the language has been considered as one of the most vital area of focus in the school curriculum in our country (Taye, 2008; Girma, 2013; Ayele, 2014).

Similarly, Aschalew (2012:74) states that "we live in a dynamic world where everything is changing. As a result, what we think true today may be false tomorrow and what we think false today may be true tomorrow. Hence, we have to adjust ourselves to the changing world or modify it to fit our needs. It is education that enables us to do so." This means that education enables us to lead a better life in this dynamic world. In this respect, education has passed through continuous change. Due to the number of weaknesses with teacher centered approach, active learning method was researched and supported by many scholars. According to the constructivists learning theory, active learning is known by the name "discovery learning". Learning begins with the experience of the student. The social constructivists think that the concept follows the action rather than preceding it. In other words, the activity leads to the concepts. Moreover, the constructivists' learning theory is based on the principle that through their involvement in various activities students discover their way of learning (Aggarwal, 2006).

As Savignon (2002) points out that in recent years, a global consideration is being given to ALM which is very vital for the successful practice of English Language teaching in the belief that the key to success in responding the needs of language learners and

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teachers that it is appropriate for communicative needs of learners. This due attention is given due to the fact that active learning in language teaching is currently recognized as a method that is generally accepted norm in EFL teaching (Brown, 1994). Furthermore, designing or adopting an appropriate method by itself is not enough to satisfy the students' need. The most vital thing here is the commitment to put it into practice.

In relation to this, it is obvious that using English language for communicative purpose is not satisfactory in most high schools, Colleges and Universities in Ethiopia. Learners' proficiency in language use in the schools is much lower than the level required of them (ICDR, 1999). The researchers believe that this is due to the lack of practice of active learning method regularly in English lesson classes as they have noticed the problems from their experience in teaching English at different levels. This is because "until recently, education has been considered as a banking method in which the bank is a learner's mind and the possessor of the knowledge is the teacher. This idea is still widely felt by the people who think that knowledge can be pumped into the learner like petrol into a tank and that when he/she is full if he/she is educated. The error of this assumption is that learning is a passive process in which the teacher does the filling and the learner is filled (Aschalew, 2012:74)." However, the idea that students are passive recipients of knowledge and that teachers are the transmitters of that knowledge is giving way to the notion that students learn better when they are involved in the process of creating knowledge for themselves (Clark et al., 2008).

In spite of the number of years, the students are exposed to English language; their level of performance in using the language is very low. The researchers believed that one of the possible reasons for this may be the inappropriateness of the methods and techniques employed in teaching English. As Mackey (1965:138) says the teaching methodology can be "…the cause of success or failure in language learning; for it is ultimately the method that determines the 'what?' and the 'how?' of language instructions."

There were numerous studies that have been conducted in different corners of the world to solve problems in implementation of active learning in schools. For instance, Taye (2008) and Bethel (2011) conducted their research on practices and perceptions of AL in Dilla University and school communities in implementing active learning in Bulbula secondary school respectively and their findings revealed that even school communities have positive perceptions in the implementations of active learning; its implementation in English lessons still needs further investigation. In their finding, they disclosed that teachers and instructors have theoretical understandings about active learning. In relation to this, there were also other researchers who conducted their M.A thesis regarding student

centered/ALM; among them: Moges, (2007); Binyam, (2014); and Arikew, (2015) did in the same area. Their studies focused on large class size, shortage of time, awareness problems and readiness to implement active learning methodology are among the challenges affecting its implementation in English classes. In the same way, Girma (2013) and Ayele (2014) conducted their thesis on same issue and their findings revealed that active learning failed in to practice in schools due to scarcity of time to cover the portion, students attention on exam oriented topics and lack of adequate materials. As stated above, some of the problems have not been assessed until now. Therefore, this study tried to examine the effect of EFL teachers' perceptions of active learning on their classroom implementations and practices in English lessons at three selected schools (Woldehane, Dilamo and Ofa) secondary schools in Genna Bossa Woreda of Dawro Zone, SNNPRS.

II. Objectives of the Study

The general objective was to investigate the effect of EFL teachers' perceptions of active learning on their classroom implementations and practices in English lessons/classes at three selected secondary schools in Genna Bossa woreda of (Woldehane, Ofa and Dilamo) in Dawro zone, SNNPRS.

To achieve the general objective, the following specific objectives were set. These were:

1. To sort out the extent of influence of EFL teachers perceptions on their practices of active learning in EFL classes.
2. To distinguish challenges which limit EFL teachers in implementing active learning in EFL Classes.

III. Materials and Methods

a) Research Design

The study employed descriptive survey designs to collect, process, analyze and present the data. Thus, descriptive survey design was employed by using mixed method of data collecting and describing in 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 perceptions and practices of EFL teachers in implementing active learning in secondary schools of the research site.

b) Research Setting and sampling

The setting for this investigation was Genna Bossa Woreda, which is one of the rural Woreda in Dawro Zone, SNNPRS which is located at the distance of 300 km far away from Hawassa and 575 km from Addis Ababa. The target population of this study included of EFL teachers of Grade 9 and 10 and students those were from three selected secondary schools who were attending in the same grade level.

Teachers were considered as rich sources of data. Thus, all English teachers from three schools were included. Students were also selected purposively as additional source of data to get necessary information. To select the sample size for this study, two sampling techniques were employed (purposive and availability sampling). The Zone and Woreda were selected from others through purposive sampling method based on the prevalence of inadequacy practice of EFL teachers to implement active learning in the schools.

Again, among seven secondary schools in the Woreda, three schools were selected using purposive sampling technique because of the feasibility to the study, the familiarity to the researchers to have access of information. Based on this, the researchers believed that the sample size of 3 secondary schools would be representative and help to compose sound generalizations at the end of the study. Since it is difficult to employ all the population to investigate the problem with limited resource, the setting and the samples were delimited accordingly. Thus, the secondary schools selected as a sample encompass the population in Woldehane, Dilamo and Ofa secondary schools. In relation to teachers, all teachers in the three schools (Total= 12) were taken as a samples: 9 from Woldehane, 1 from Dilamo and 2 from Ofa using availability sampling, and 60 students were selected from those schools employing stratified sampling out of the total students. The students were selected grouping them in to strata based on their achievements: higher, medium and lower achievers. Then, the students which represent each stratum were selected through simple random sampling technique.

c) *Data Gathering Tools and Procedures*

Furthermore, the study employed mainly qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. The relevant data were collected through different instruments, such as, observation, questionnaires and interviews. Thus, the researchers preferred the qualitative method to describe the data that were collected by semi- structured interviews and the quantitative method to describe all close ended questionnaires and observation checklist. Classroom observations were conducted in order to check whether the teachers are practicing active learning and students participation based on the principles that it is to be implemented during teaching and learning process in the English classroom. Five teachers were selected by simple randomly for observation (three teachers from Woldehane and the rests 2 from Dilamo and Ofa secondary schools). The one of researchers was a non-participant observer who collected data without taking part in the teaching learning process, but the other researcher was a co-observer directly entered into the classroom with observation checklists and looking and collected data. Two observers were assigned

deliberately to collect data from the same context to minimize the subjectivity which comes from individual's bias.

Interview was also one of the selected data collecting instruments for the sake of assessing teachers' perceptions regarding AL. The researchers used tape recorder, video and photo camera while conducting the interview and it was conducted at their schools. It is clear that interview can provide data in-depth that is not possible with questionnaire. Data from interview were supplemented with other responses in the application of the study. Therefore, to support and cross-check the findings from the questionnaire, well-constructed semi-structured interview questions were prepared to collect and administer data in depth from 3 selected secondary school teachers by the researchers. Furthermore, two sets of questionnaires (one set for the teachers and the other for students) were adapted, designed and administered. The questionnaires were adapted from Moges (2007) and Taye (2008) based on the objectives of the study and review of related literature covered in this paper.

Regarding data gathering procedures, series of procedures were followed. Therefore, pilot study was conducted prior to the administration of the final questionnaires to all respondents. It was carried out by developing the adapted questionnaires. After ensuring the appropriateness of questionnaires, discussions regarding the purpose of data they were going to gather and how it would have been done were made with school directors, selected EFL teachers and students. First, the data was collected data through classroom observation and then interview was conducted with some selected EFL teachers more specifically to assess or examine their perceptions towards AL and challenges facing them to implement ALM in English classes/ lessons. Finally, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and data were collected. The reason behind sequencing the data gathering tools accordingly was that if teachers responded to questionnaires early, they might have arranged make up classes which they may not be practicing in the usual time. So, it helped the researchers to get valid and reliable information regarding practices of active learning in English classes. These all data gathering procedures ensure the reliability and validity of data in the study.

d) *Data Analysis Procedures*

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were employed in order to answer the research questions and to attain the objectives. The quantitative data were collected, coded, tabulated, analyzed, described and interpreted in a manner that it supports finding obtained from the study. First, the data gathered through close ended questionnaire by using a five point Likert Scales (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree) as

suggested by Best (2003) and Kothari (2004) were tabulated in terms of frequency, percentage and mean value (to compute the proportionality of individual response of the items) by assessing the scale value to each of the five scale responses.

Moreover, Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Simple linear regression were used to show the relationship between teachers' perception and the degree to what extent perception influence their AL practice in the classroom. As Stock and Watson (2007) notes, we use regression to estimate the unknown effect of changing one variable over another. In relation to this, there are two assumptions made when running a regression 1) there is a linear relationship between two variables (perception and classroom practice) and 2) this relationship is additive (which means that one variable can affect/influence the other either positively or negatively). Technically, linear regression estimates how much perception changes when classroom practice changes one unit. Thus, the data processing and analysis were employed by the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 computer manual to analyze the quantitative data. Next to that, data gathered through semi- structured interview were analyzed by using qualitative method with textual/thematic analysis. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were made based on the findings.

IV. Results and Discussions

The items for this section were used to assess the effect of EFL teachers' perceptions of active learning on their classroom implementations and practices in English classrooms.

Table 1: The Extent of Teachers' Perception and Its Influence on their Practices of Active Learning in English Lessons Classes.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.173[a]	.030	-.067	6.390	.030	.309	1	10	.590

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perception of teachers
b. Dependent Variable: Classroom Practice

Perception plays a great contribution in implementing AL in the classroom. If teachers perceive it positively, it should be implemented and if negative, it is difficult to say that it is being applied in the classroom. As the data collected through questionnaire revealed that some teachers in the schools did not have knowledge on the application of it. This implies that their low or approximately negative perception did not let them to apply it in the classroom. Even those who replied positively try to practice it sometimes and others not at all. As it was also confirmed in classroom observation that most of their perception was negative which points out that their perception affected more than other factors.

As it is indicated in table 1, the teachers' have reflected neutral perception on ALM in classroom practice. That means teachers who showed positive perception on their views about AL to some extent tends to practice it in the classroom even it is not satisfactory but those who rated as "undecided" completely immersed their method of teaching in to lecturing/explanation. This discloses that teachers' positive perception promotes the implementation of AL, but negative perception hinders teachers from implementing it. To ensure this, correlation coefficient and simple linear regression were used and described shortly as follows.

The Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression were used to identify the relationship between teachers' perception and classroom practice and also the extent to which teachers' perception influence the practice of AL in the classroom at 0.05 which is 95% confidence level. As it was proved by Pearson correlation coefficient and regression scale degree above in table 2, teachers' perception is directly correlated with classroom practice of AL in statistically significantly level in English lessons. This means, as teachers' perception is positive, they implement active learning method in classroom effectively. If their perception is negative, they implement it poorly.

Thus, the findings of the study showed that: the correlation coefficient for their relation which is symbolized as R= (.173[a]) for perception and 1 for classroom practice shows that they have slightly/significantly positive relationship according to the SPSS analysis. On the other hand, the extent to which teachers' perception influence their implementation of AL in the classroom was witnessed in simple linear regression that is represented in R^2 = (.030) which means teachers' perception influenced their practice of AL in the classroom by 3.0% that is their magnitude power is modestly fit. The other 97.0% was affected by unmeasured factors which were not included in this regression value.

Based on this, it can be concluded that most of the teachers perceived AL positively in theory but not in practice, thus, it affected the practices of AL in the classroom negatively. The perception of teachers' influenced the practice of AL in English classroom by 3.0% (which means .030 as yielded in the simple linear regression table) has statistically significant relation with those variables according to simple linear regression (that means according to the data measure, it is indicated that the relation existed between two sets; meaning teachers' perception and their practice of AL in the classroom falls between 3.0% which in short tells that they have significant linkage to each other.

Generally, in the Ethiopian education and training policy, it was mentioned that the primary reason for the poor quality of education in the past was the training as well as the overall perception towards teachers (MoE, 2002). Therefore, as collected data from questionnaires, observation checklist and interview of the study show that the level of in-service and short term training is insufficient. Hence, the absence of regular/continuous training negatively affected their perception and the implementation of active learning.

a) *Factors Affecting the Implementation of Active Learning*

The items for this section were used to assess certain problems that teachers face while putting different AL techniques into practice in English classrooms and scales were arranged from most serious to least factors influencing its implementation.

Table 2: Factors Affecting Teachers' Implementation of Active Learning

No	Factors Affecting Implementation of Active learning	Most serious		More serious		Serious		Undecided		Mean value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Inadequacy of teachers' training on the application of active learning method	6	50.0	6	50.0	-	-	-	-	3.50
2	The wider use of continuous assessment as evaluation technique hinders active learning by inviting unfair grade	-	-	-	-	7	58.3	5	41.7	1.58
3	Unavailability of instructional materials (reference text books, modules, teaching aids)	-	-	3	25.0	9	75.0	-	-	2.25
4	Shortage of time to practice active learning in classroom	5	41.7	3	25.0	4	33.3	-	-	3.08
5	Large class size	7	58.3	5	41.7	-	-	-	-	3.58
6	Teachers' belief and perception	-	-	6	50.0	6	50.0	-	-	2.50
7	Students' belief and perception	-	-	4	33.3	8	66.7	-	-	2.33
8	Diversity of students' interest	-	-	2	16.7	8	66.7	2	16.7	2.00
9	Some students dominance during group activities	-	-	-	-	6	50.0	6	50.0	1.50
10	The design of the teaching module	-	-	-	-	4	33.3	8	66.7	1.33
11	Load of class per a week	2	16.7	5	41.7	4	33.3	1	8.3	2.67
	Grand mean									2.40

What we recognize from table 2 is that there are numerous factors affecting the application of AL in English classroom. Among them, most respondents, which are 7 (58.3%), pointed out that large class size, were rated as most serious problem which hinders the implementation of ALM in the classroom. The other is inadequacy of teachers' training to apply AL, shortage of time to practice it and load of class per week rated with percentages 6 (50%), 5 (41.7%) and 2 (16.7%) respectively affected the practice of ALM most seriously next to large class size. Furthermore, items rated as factors which influenced the application of AL more seriously and seriously were teachers' perception, lack of training, load of class, large class size, students belief, shortage of time and lack of instructional materials with ranking percentages 6 (50%), 6 (60%), 5 (41.7%), 5 (41.7%), 3 (25.0%) and 3 (25.0%) respectively were also major factors that affected the practice of the strategies in the class more seriously and seriously according to the respondents reply in general.

Like any other educational practices in the teaching-learning process, it is also possible to think that AL obviously faces shortcomings/constraints during its implementation in the real classroom conditions. Of these constraints, the researchers had selected five most serious possible factors affecting the imple-

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mentation of AL in the schools. These factors are selected on the basis of their frequencies in the responses of the teachers. Based on the analysis of the data, it was found out that large class size, inadequacy of teachers' training on the application of ALM, shortage of time to practice it in the classroom and to cover all the content in the text, teachers' and students' belief and perception were the major factors that affected the implementation of active learning. It was also disclosed during in the interview and classroom observation.

b) *Analysis of Classroom Observation*

Classroom observation was also used to collect data to see whether teachers apply AL or not and how they apply active learning techniques in teaching English. It was confirmed that there is no enough sitting space, all the seats are not movable and the classroom layout was not arranged to facilitate active learning. This tells that class room situation is almost not suitable to implement active learning. In short, the inappropriateness of class size and immovability of desks (sitting) made AL not to be implemented besides to teachers' perception. It means that the classroom situation supported most of teachers practice of the strategies in English classroom negatively which implicitly means that their average perception towards AL with unsuitable classroom situation hindered them not to implement it in the classrooms. As indicated in the observation, we can indirectly deduce that almost all teachers in the schools are more dominant and active than learners which imply that they tended to use teacher centered instruction

V. Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to assess the challenges which affecting EFL teachers from implementing AL in English lessons particularly the case of three selected secondary schools namely (Woldehane, Dilamo and Ofa) in Genna Bossa Woreda of Dawro Zone, SNNPRS. All the subjects of this study were English teachers who were teaching from grades nine to ten (2nd cycle) and students in the referred schools. The data were gathered using questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews. The questionnaires were administered to all 12 English teachers in the three schools and 60 students from high, medium and low achievers (40 from grade 10 and 20 from grade 9). All teachers and students returned the questionnaire. The classroom observation was conducted with five teachers who were teaching grade 9 and 10 students. The interview was also conducted with four EFL teachers who were included in observation. The data obtained through questionnaires and classroom observations were analyzed in percentages, mean values and grand mean, Pearson correlation coefficients, and simple linear regression values and Based on the analysis of the data, the following findings

were obtained from the study. Teachers' perception towards AL affected their classroom practices negatively and key factors affecting the implementation on AL in the classrooms were: large classroom size and inadequacy of teachers' training.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. Concerning the key factors, the following are found to be negatively affecting the implementation of active learning; large class size with fixed sitting arrangement, inadequacy of teachers' training on the application of ALM, shortage of time to practice it in the classroom and to cover all the content in the text and finally, teachers' and students' belief and perception were the major factors that affected the implementation of active learning. Furthermore, teachers' perception towards AL and their classroom practice were correlated significantly shows that when teachers' perception increases, their classroom practice Also increases which means that teachers holding positive perception towards AL are better in imple-menting AL in the classroom in comparison to teachers having negative perception. Finally, teachers' perception towards AL in this study influenced their classroom practice by 3% but 97% of its practice was influenced by unmeasured factors. This finding is consistent with Moges (2007) who studied a research on the topic "The Assessment of the Techniques Practiced by EFL Teachers in Implementing Active Learning: Upper Primary Schools in Gondar Town in Focus" found out that large class size and English teachers traditional type or teacher-centered teaching methodology. The main reason for this similarity might be due to the fact that the existence of problems in both of the research settings and both of them being in the same education system.

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