Integrated or separated: Voicing Indonesian EFL teachers’ and student-teachers’ preferences in teaching grammar

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ABSTRACT
This research aimed at exploring the teachers and student-teachers’ views on teaching grammar and their preferences. Indeed, recognizing the teachers and student-teachers’ views on teaching grammar and their preferences become a worthy source in constructing and providing the effective teaching grammar. This research invited twelve participants consisting of six high school teachers and six student-teachers from English department. A descriptive qualitative research design using an in-depth interview was applied to find out their views and preferences. The findings revealed that both teachers and student-teachers had same views on valuing the terms of grammar. However, they opposed each other on viewing the teaching grammar process. In terms of their preferences in teaching grammar, both teachers and student-teachers had same tendencies in which grammar must done by applying integrated teaching grammar approach. By using the findings of this research, some implications for teachers were also stated to develop the integrated grammar teaching process within the classroom setting.

Keywords: Teaching grammar; Integrated teaching approach; Separated teaching approach

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1. Introduction

“Why does grammatical learning always be a boring part of learning English? Should it be fun, should not it?” Many students have been questioning and wondering about those two questions by joining grammatical learning in their class. Unfortunately, Lestari and Azizah (2020) found that grammatical learning in the Indonesian context is taught deductively: giving context or topic followed by drilling activities in discussing and predicting grammatical rules in the passage (present, past, future). Additionally, scholars point out that the most time-consuming and exhausting part to be taught and learned in language learning is grammatical teaching and learning (Ellis, 2005; Jalali & Dousti, 2012; Uysal & Bardakci, 2014).

In another sense, teachers have been trying to conduct and formulate grammatical teaching into various teaching techniques. Teachers sometimes applied eclectic combinations of several teaching techniques or disregarded all techniques. By far, the basis of grammatical teaching and learning can be understood as a scaffolding process where students are emphasized to be able in constructing and grasping rules in sentences to be used in some macro and micro-skills in English (Hidayatulloh & Murtiningsih, 2020; Incecay & Dollar, 2011; Mart, 2013).

Grammar portrays an essential role in the English language teaching and learning process. Grammar assists students in discovering the nature of language through a set of rules and regulations in speaking and writing activities (Azar, 2007). Thus, teachers should formulate sufficient grammatical learning to support students’ grammatical mastery. Besides since the essentiality and variety of grammatical learning, teachers are required to ensure the effectiveness of the teaching method.

Furthermore, some scholars argue that there are some variations of grammatical teaching methods. For instance, grammatical teaching methods presents as integrated and separated approach (Ellis, 2006), focus on form and focus on forms approach (Valeo & Spada, 2016), and deductive and inductive approach (Sik, 2015). Even though teachers are provided with those mentioned varieties, they are not promising alternatives to confirm the success of grammatical learning development among students. Indeed, there is no clear evidence on specific approach in teaching grammar (Sik, 2015). Thus, in facing this issue, identifying teachers’ and students’ preferences plays a significant role in solving the problem of finding effective teaching grammar approach. By doing so, grammatical learning can be constructed more effective since the practices are underpinned by both teachers’ and students’ preferences. However, Songhori (2012) stated that teachers often neglect students’ learning preferences since teachers use their method without any external consideration. Thus, this current research intends as an intermediary in viewing grammar teaching, especially between teachers and students.

Furthermore, research on teachers’ and student-teachers grammatical teaching and learning views has been carried out by some scholars. For instance, Valeo and Spada (2016) researched the teachers and student-teachers in two different contexts, EFL and ESL. The research finding revealed that both teachers and student-teachers in
two contexts tended to teach and learn grammar integrated with communicative activities. However, in some of the qualitative data findings, they also noted that both teachers and student-teachers valued the separated learning grammar from communicative activities in certain activities. Male (2011) investigated students-teachers’ tendency on explicit and implicit grammatical learning. The study found that student-teachers tended to have an explicit teaching grammar approach rather than an implicit one. Thus, grammar teaching would be found separated from communicative activities. Lastly, Toprak (2019) studied teachers’ beliefs in teaching grammar. In total, among ten teachers, most preferred the integrated teaching grammar approach to enhance students’ grammatical skills.

Given the previous research result, the researchers notice the lack of research area exploration since several sub-populations have not much been explored and studied yet. For instance, EFL teachers and student-teachers in the Indonesian context view grammar teaching and their tendencies. This study becomes worthy exploration since the result will give valuable information for teachers and curriculum designer. Indeed, to construct and provide practical teaching grammar, recognizing both teachers’ and student-teachers’ preferences notices is vital to gaining worthy fundamental information. Therefore, this study aims to explore EFL teachers’ and student-teachers’ preferences in teaching grammar in the light of integrated and separated teaching grammar approaches. Then, the research questions can be recognized as 1) what are EFL teachers and student-teachers’ preferences in teaching grammar? 2) To what extent do the distinctions among them?

2. Literature review

2.1. Grammar and teaching grammar

The term of grammar particularly in EFL contexts has been discussed by many scholars and also categorized into several types. For instance, grammar is a set of regulations in order to get correction at the sentence level (Nunan, 2003) and control the sentence structure (Sheen, 2007). In addition, Cook (2008) defined grammar into three types which are perspective, traditional, and structural grammar. Perspective grammar can be described as grammar that has been determined by terms of what people should or not said. Meaning that people will use grammar based on what they see and know. In addition, he also added that this type is an adequate step in grammatical learning. Then, traditional grammar is the way a teacher gives students concerned by giving them sentences with part of speech. Last, structural grammar means that how the sentences are made from the small step such as the phrases. In addition, this type will provide the learner how to breakdown a language as well. Above all, grammar plays a significant role in language learning, particularly in English. “Without grammar, we would have only individual words or sounds, pictures, and body expressions to communicate meaning” (Azar, 2007, p.2)
When it comes to teaching grammar, some researchers will argue that teaching grammar is teaching structural and order in language learning sentence. Ellis (2006) asserted teaching grammar as the process of instructional techniques that give leaners information about some specific grammatical form. Furthermore, Kalsoom and Akhtar (2013) stated that teaching grammar is debatable issue among language experts and teachers. In addition, Mart (2013) stated that teaching grammar is the way to show how a language works and the purpose of teaching grammar is to guide the learners use the language correctly. Furthermore, Sultana (2017) stated that teaching grammar is observed as an activity to practice grammatical rules. Those arguments come from the importance of grammar in language learning. In EFL, grammar plays an influential role to avoid communication breakdown. By recognizing the importance of teaching grammar, Ellis (2006) tried to explain grammatical learning that may occur in the classroom situation. He argued that there are three condition of grammatical lesson which are teachers give explanation about grammar, giving exercise to the students about grammar, and giving students an exposure about grammar.

2.2. Integrated and separated teaching grammar

The term of integrated teaching grammar approach has been accepted as the way to teaching grammar in EFL classroom. According to Iraji and Gholami (2018) “integrated teaching grammar approach which has been accepted as a legitimate option in EFL/ESL classes and the challenge in ESL/EFL is to find diverse options to operationalize and implement alternative ways of drawing attention to language in primarily meaning oriented activities.” (p. 137). Furthermore, Abdollahzadeh (2015) revealed that there are three claims of implementing integrated teaching grammar approach in teaching grammar. First, L2 learners will perceive new forms of a context where the main goal is meaning focus. Second, L2 learners may face the difficulties in focusing and producing the linguistic structures. Last, L2 learners will get benefits from the chance that happen during the interaction to give specific attention to form. The use of integrated teaching grammar approach also seems that can direct learners’ attention to linguistic elements within the context of meaning-based instruction, and such focus can happen in a variety of classroom activities, including when a learner provides corrective feedback in response to her conversational partner's L2 errors. “Teaching grammar can be conducted by means of corrective feedback on learner errors when these arise in the context of performing some communicative task” (Ellis, 2006, p. 84).

On the other sense, the terms of separated teaching grammar refer to grammatical learning without communicative activities and the focus is to emphasize learners’ accuracy level. Ellis (2006) stated that separated teaching grammar approach is the condition of grammatical learning that directed intensively at a single grammatical structure. In addition, Tsapikidou (2015) asserted that separated teaching grammar approach activity always be separated from communicative competence both activity and practices. Meaning that, in a situation of grammatical learning, learners will be put
in a class that focuses on discussing grammatical structure. By recognizing the terms of separated teaching grammar approach, some arguments raised as the differences between integrated and separated teaching grammar approach.

The differences between integrated and separated teaching grammar approach has been discussed to the teaching of grammar but those approaches can be adapted easily to grammatical learning. Integrated teaching grammar approach attends to lexical items (single words and multi-word units) within a communicative task environment, since these lexical items are necessary for the completion of a communicative or an authentic language task. Separated teaching grammar approach, on the other hand, teaches and practices lexical items in non-communicative, non-authentic language tasks. In the benefit side, some researchers argued that the use of separated teaching grammar approach in teaching grammar will give more positive impact to the learners. Laufer (2006) conducted a study in comparing those approaches, and the result finds that the learners given exposure English particularly in grammatical lesson have outperformed result rather than the one who use Integrated Teaching Grammar Approach. By knowing the pattern of separated teaching grammar approach, researchers argued that it also can be describe as teaching grammar explicitly, while integrated teaching grammar approach can be categorized as teaching grammar implicitly. Ling (2015) stated that teaching grammar implicitly is when the learners learn grammar through a scene and happen naturally in the classroom situation, and explicit means that teachers as the main actor in the classroom and the activity mostly grammatical lesson.

2.3. Teaching grammar in context

In conducting this study, researchers tried to jump in the discourse of teaching grammar by looking and analyzing several past studies that related to comparison study on views and/or beliefs about teachers and student-teachers about teaching grammar. For example, Ahmad et al. (2017) conducted a study about teachers’ and student-teachers’ views. The data were collected by spreading a questionnaire to 70 non-native EFL teachers and 80 pre-service teachers. The result revealed that both in-service teachers and pre-service teachers put strong emphasize to integrate teaching grammar with the other learning process in language learning especially in English lesson. Ahmad (2017)’s findings were harmonized with Underwood (2012) who found that that EFL teachers in Japan held positive beliefs about integration of grammar with communicative oriented teaching. Further, Deng and Lin (2016) investigated the status of beliefs about grammar of senior high schools’ students and their teachers in China. A mix method was used in their study. The data were collected using questionnaire to teachers and students, and interview session to the teachers. The result revealed that both teachers and student-teachers had a tendency on teaching grammar which integrated with the communicative activity. Another previous research was conducted to find the role of grammar in language class. It was done by Hos and Kekec (2015) conducting a study about the differences between teachers’ and student-teachers’ views.
about grammar in language class. A total of 17 tutors and 60 pre-service teachers at private university in Turkish partaken in this study. The outcome presented that between teachers and student-teachers had same preferences teaching grammar should be integrated with the other activities. Lastly, Valeo and Spada (2016) researched about the views of teaching grammar among teachers and student-teachers in Brazil and Canada. By developing the questionnaire and interview guideline, at the end, they revealed that both teachers and student-teachers valued the practice of integrated teaching grammar exist in the classroom rather than separated teaching grammar approach.

Providing the previous research above, the research of recognizing the teachers and student-teachers’ views in grammar and teaching grammar, also their preferences are needed. Particularly, in Indonesian context, little has been conducted this exploration. Indeed, as an EFL country, teaching grammar must be taught effectively. Thus, finding out the views and preferences of teaching grammar will provide a worthy source of finding the effective teaching grammar approach presented in the classroom. Besides, the findings also will be valuable for teachers to articulate their preferences in the form of teaching materials and methods.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

Since this research aims to know the view of teaching grammar, the researchers decided to apply the qualitative research method. Furthermore, by using a qualitative research technique, it is possible to discover the motive, opinions, and viewpoints of the participants. Consequently, the opinion, views, and fundamental reason would be gained thoroughly. Creswell (2012) mentioned that qualitative research explores and understands an individual or group towards a phenomenon or social problem. Therefore, we believe in teaching grammar problems; the qualitative approach is appropriate for finding out participants’ preferences.

Furthermore, the researchers applied the descriptive qualitative research design in this current research. This research was conducted to find out the life experience of the participants descriptively. Thus, the use of descriptive qualitative matched with the aim of this study. The objective of qualitative descriptive research is a wide-ranging summarization someone daily life pattern of specific events experienced by people (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Besides, Nassaji (2015) added that the aim of descriptive research is to reveal and define a phenomenon and its attributes. Thus, the use of descriptive would assist the researchers to achieve the aim of this current research.

3.2. Research participants

Moreover, this research was voluntary and involved by six teachers and six student-teachers in special territory of Yogyakarta. The teachers come from four high schools in Yogyakarta. In the other sense, student-teachers’ participant come from the English language education department in a private university in Yogyakarta. The
teachers’ participants were English teachers who have been teaching English minimally five years teaching experiences. All teachers came from both state and private high schools. The selected teachers in this study were teachers' partner from the department where the student-teachers came from. Thus, a bond is established between teachers and student-teachers’ participants in which student-teachers do internships under teacher participants' supervisory. Meanwhile, the chosen student-teachers’ participants were fourth years students in which; each of them had already done the teaching practicum and passed the fundamental subjects in the department.

To maintain the confidentiality, their names were labelled into T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6. The participants were labelled becoming ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, ST5, and ST6. Additionally, all student-teachers’ participants had varied level of experience, length of studying English, and fundamental grammar knowledge. Some background differences found in participants were expected to be able to give various and rich nuances of teaching and learning grammar preferences. Besides, the researchers believe that the involvement and length of study can give theoretical and experiential-based reasons and opinions on the ongoing topic being discussed deeply.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

In data collection, the researchers employed in-depth interviews for each participant. The length of each participant's in-depth interview was at least 20-30 minutes. By doing so, we could get specific and in-depth understanding information from participants. Besides, interviews can give detailed information based on participants' experiences. Cohen et al. (2011) stated that having interviews allows participants to converse their interpretations of the words they live and express how they regard situations from their point of view. After obtaining data, we conducted three steps of analysing data: transcribing, member checking, and coding. In member checking, all transcriptions were returned back to the participants to check whether there was mistake and error or not in transcribing. The results showed that all participants had no issues with the interview transcripts, thus the next process could be proceeded. Then, the coding results were drawn in the result and strengthened by existing theories in the discussion section. Firstly, the data were separated from each response. Then, the keywords were noticed using label. After that, all keywords were classified into pre-determined themes. All pre-determined themes then grouped into several big themes which were used to set the conclusion. Lastly, all conclusions were interconnected with the existing theories and previous research findings.

4. Findings

In deriving the finding of this current study, the researchers tried to present the views of grammar and teaching grammar and the preference of teaching grammar approaches. The arrangements were started with the teachers’ point of view, followed by the student-teachers’ point of view.
4.1. Teachers’ views on grammar and teaching grammar

4.1.1. Grammar is a set of rules

Questioning the teachers about what is “grammar” becoming a piece of vital information since it will underpin their views on teaching grammar and their preferences. The terms “rules” in defining grammar were most teachers’ findings. In total, four teachers stated that grammar could be understood as a rule of underlying construction of English sentences. The data were obtained from T2, T3, T4, and T5. For instance, T4 said that “Grammar is an order of language starting from the simply one such as noun until a phrase”. Furthermore, T5 tried connecting grammar in English with the terms of grammar in Arabic named Nahwu. T5 said that “In Arabic we also recognize it as Nahwu, the things that made a language readable and meaningful”. Further, they also argued that grammar was not flexible, meaning that the time sequences in grammar determined the changes of the verbs. It had been said by T2 that “Alike with Bahasa Indonesia, grammar in English had different view verb, in Bahasa Indonesia time sequences will not change the verb, but in English, it will be changed by following the time either present, past or future”.

4.1.2. Grammar is a pattern

While the majority teachers’ participants argued that grammar is a set of rules, there was a different view from other participants that recognize grammar as a pattern. As what T1 said that “Grammar for me is a pattern, pattern of a sentence, pattern of a vocabulary, and also the development of a sentence and vocabulary”. In short, teachers mostly saw grammar as the basic rule of sentencing in English, which they must follow to construct the sentences. Since grammar was a basic rule, teachers’ participants may notice it as the pattern in sentence construction in English. Thus, they saw grammar as a sentence pattern.

4.1.3. Not-independent teaching grammar

After recognizing the way teachers saw the grammar, the subsequent finding was dealing with the views of teaching grammar. The researchers noticed that teachers were divided into two types, in which those who see teaching grammar as a process of teaching sentence structure within and without ELT skills. In teaching grammar within ELT skills, they tried to combine teaching grammar with the macro skill of English. For instance, T2 argued that “If we look at the previous curriculum especially in English teaching grammar only teach grammatical rules and structure, but now it is combined with reading and writing”. In addition, T5 said that “Grammatical learning is a process that should be merged with other activities”. By noticing this finding, they tended to think that teaching grammar could not be independently taught to students.
4.1.4. Independent teaching grammar

Even though most of the teachers said that teaching grammar was a process of combining grammar and the other skills, the researchers also found that participants considered teaching grammar as only a teaching structure of grammar based on the established rules. For instance, T3 and T4 argued that grammatical learning only taught the structure of a language sentence. They said, “teaching grammar is teaching language structure in it”. Besides, T4 added that teaching grammar could be done directly and indirectly. It means that even though teaching grammar only taught about the structure of language, the implementation could be varied.

4.2. Teachers’ teaching grammar preferences

4.2.1. Integrated teaching grammar

In total, four teachers preferred to apply an integrated teaching grammar approach in their classroom setting. They argued that an integrated teaching approach would give students a general picture of using the grammar in the actual context. T2 supported it said that “Integrated approach will make them enjoy because it teaches along with listening skill such as song, so they will be able to know the pronunciation and the grammar”. The process of integration grammar can be done by combining grammar with some skills such as listening, reading, and writing. For example, speaking skills, students learn how to speak and the sentences of the creation of the sentences that they will speak. Furthermore, an integrated approach facilitates teachers to teach two topics or material simultaneously. As asserted by T6, “When teachers teach about a text, students can learn generic structure and grammar.” They also stated that grammar rules can be more understandable if students are given activities and grammar connected to the students’ daily lives.

4.2.2. Separated teaching grammar

However, in the other sense, T1 preferred to use separated teaching grammar approach. She argued that integrated teaching grammar will burden students because they must learn about the other material and the grammar. So, to gain their focus and good result, the use of a separated teaching grammar approach is the best way to teach grammar. Meanwhile, T5 preferred to combine the two approaches. With the sequence was integrated first followed by separated approach. Further, the use of integrated was to give the other material space to be learnt. The next was separated to make a deep understanding for students in a particular material, particularly grammar. Responding to T5, the researchers believed that was an integrated teaching grammar approach because there was a combination of communicative activities.

4.3. Student-teachers’ views on grammar and teaching grammar

4.3.1. Grammar is a rule
All the student-teacher participants described grammar as “order or rules”. Furthermore, the order or the rules they meant were rules in constructing a sentence in English. It had been said by ST3 that “grammar is a structure in English, I see grammar also the part of linguistic because both of them are connected in constructing the sentence”. In addition, they argued that there was a resemblance between grammar in Bahasa Indonesia and English which sentences in Bahasa Indonesia consist of Subject, Predicate, Object and Compliment like English did. An exciting finding in this research was that most participants argued that grammar was essential in constructing a good sentence. When making a wrong sentence, the first comment would be put in their grammar first, not in their pronunciation or vocabulary. It had been proven by ST4, “When I say or write a sentence, and my grammar is wrong, they will comment on my grammar even though it is understandable writing or spoken”.

4.3.2. Language construction learning in teaching grammar

Second, the definition of teaching grammar based on student-teachers was a process of teaching language structure. The result showed that four student-teachers agreed that teaching grammar taught language structure to the students. It was supported by the statement of ST3, “A process of teaching my students how to make right sentences and their sequences.”. However, they also added some topics to learn while teaching the students about language structure. Those topics are meaning and vocabulary. In addition, they also argued that the structure of teaching grammar could be done as a combined activity of teaching tenses and vocabulary.

4.4. Student-teachers’ teaching grammar preferences

4.4.1. Integrated teaching grammar

The teaching grammar preferences of student-teachers were that teaching grammar should be done using the integrated method and need to elaborate the activity in teaching grammar with the other activity, particularly communicative activity. As ST4 said that “It is more suitable if speaking combine grammar with writing activity so that I will be able to know students’ understanding”. The combination was not only with the writing activity but also could be combined with speaking and reading. As mentioned by ST6 that “When I teach grammar, I feel that I am not teaching them about grammar, but I do it along with storytelling”. Besides, those combinations also had been affected by the curriculum. For this case, ST3 argued that “If we look at the syllabus and curriculum, we cannot specialize grammar in one meeting, there must be another material”. Thus, teaching grammar using an integrated approach also contextualizes grammar into a real context and engages students’ learning activities.

4.4.2. Separated teaching grammar

In contrast, ST2 preferred to choose the separated teaching grammar approach. The majority reason said that separated teaching grammar approach would make
students focus on what they are learning. In the interview process, ST2 said, “Separated teaching grammar will give students a chance to focus on only material, which is grammar”. Meaning that when pre-service teachers used this method, they were only on particular topics about grammar, both the activity and the exercise.

5. Discussion

Since the participants assumed that grammar is a set of rules, it was in line Nunan (2003) who said that grammar as a set of regulations in order to get correction at the sentence level. Also, it was in a linking idea with Sheen (2007) who asserted that grammar is a control the sentence structure. Additionally, the findings were also in line with Cook’s (2008) that assuming about types of grammar that grammar is the terms of what people should or not said. By referring with the findings, the researchers assume that both teachers and student-teachers were having same views about the term of grammar which is a set of rules in a sentence.

The second discussion refers to teaching grammar. If we look at the teachers’ findings, we will see that four teachers assumed that ‘teaching grammar’ was process of teaching language structure along with the other skill. Furthermore, the most used skill in the teaching grammar based on the in-service teachers’ participants are reading, writing and listening. This finding interconnected with Mart (2013) who stated that teaching grammar is the way to show how a language works and the purpose of teaching grammar is to guide the learners use the language correctly. The finding also concluded that no matter the grammar is taught with, the most essential in the teaching grammar is the process of the use grammar in general or in daily life. Associated with this finding, it does not matter what the English skill that associated with the teaching grammar activity, but the way students’ practicing how the language works are more important. Another finding from the teachers was also supported by the scholars in which ‘teaching grammar’ is a process of teaching language structure, which is supported by Ellis (2006). He said that teaching grammar as the process of instructional techniques that give leaners information about some specific grammatical form. In addition, it had been also supported by Sultana (2017) that teaching grammar is observe as an activity to practice grammatical rules. Above all, the finding also revealed that between in-service teachers and pre-service teachers had a different term in defining the terms of teaching grammar.
The next discussion, teaching grammar method preferences based on the participants. In line with the teachers’ finding, student-teachers’ finding also revealed that they had same statement with the teachers in defining the terms of Integrated and separated teaching grammar approach. On the other hand, their preferences were same by arguing that grammar should be done using Integrated teaching grammar approach. This discussion revealed that between teachers and student-teachers had same preferences by arguing integrated teaching grammar approach was the most suitable teaching grammar approach. This last finding was supported by four previous studies who found that between teachers and student-teachers, they have same preferences in teaching grammar which is integrated teaching grammar approach (Ahmad et al., 2017; Deng & Lin, 2016; Hos & Kekec, 2015; Valeo & Spada, 2016).

6. Conclusion

To create an effective teaching grammar practices, teachers and curriculum developers are expected to be able to realize and recognize the preferences of both teachers and student-teachers. Thus, the provided teaching grammar can match with the expectations of teachers and student-teachers by articulating their preferences. Therefore, this study aims to find out and explore the views of teachers and student-teachers in teaching grammar practices. After taking the data through in-depth interview with twelve participants, some findings were found throughout the data analysis. Even though there was a cross view on seeing the teaching grammar process, however, both teachers and student-teachers had same views on how the grammar should be taught. By seeing the findings in their preferences, they agreed that grammar must be taught integrated with other skills in ELT.

Recognizing the finding of this research, teachers are recommended to be more evaluative in giving the grammatical learning in the classroom. They may try to integrate grammatical learning with the macro skill learning activities such as writing and speaking. Besides, the teaching materials for teaching grammar are suggested to be integrated, for instance, through a text, analysing song, and script writing for role play. By doing so, the integrated teaching grammar approach will be presented in the classroom. However, the result of this current result cannot be used to generate a big picture of the preferences of teaching grammar in a wide-range setting. The future researchers are suggested to conduct and integrate quantitative research to find out wide range of teaching grammar preferences. Lastly, the observation, to some extent is needed in this topic. Observation will assist to find out the manifestation of the teachers in the classroom teaching context.

References


