TEACHERS’ STRATEGIES IN TEACHING GRAMMAR TO SEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

- INSIDE COVER PAGE .................................................................................................................................. i
- PERNYATAAN TIDAK PLAGIAT .............................................................................................................. ii
- PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN AKSES ................................................................................................ iii
- APPROVAL PAGE ........................................................................................................................................ iv
- PUBLICATION AGREEMENT DECLARATION .............................................................................................. v
- COPYRIGHT STATEMENT ........................................................................................................................... vi
- TABLE OF CONTENT ................................................................................................................................. vii
- LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................................................................... viii
- ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................... 1
- INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................................... 1
- LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................................................................. 3
  1. Controversies of Teaching Grammar ........................................................................................................ 3
  2. Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered in Teaching Grammar .............................................................. 4
  3. Previous Studies ........................................................................................................................................ 7
- THE STUDY .............................................................................................................................................. 9
  1. Context of the Study ................................................................................................................................. 9
  2. Participants .............................................................................................................................................. 10
  3. Research Instruments ............................................................................................................................... 10
  4. Data Collection Procedures .................................................................................................................... 10
  5. Data Analysis Procedures ....................................................................................................................... 11
- FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ...................................................................................................................... 11
  A. Scaffolding Functions ............................................................................................................................ 12
  B. Feedback ................................................................................................................................................ 16
  C. Additional Finding ................................................................................................................................... 19
- CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................................................... 20
- REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................................ 24
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ............................................................................................................................... 26
- APPENDIX ................................................................................................................................................ 27
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Scaffolding Functions ................................................................. 13

Figure 2. Feedback .................................................................................. 17
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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated English teachers’ strategies in teaching grammar to seventh-grade students. The study attempted to answer the research question; “How do the English teachers teach grammar to seventh-grade students?” The participants of the study were two English teachers from different schools in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. The data of the study were collected by observing eight sessions of the two English teachers’ classrooms, and audio-taping the interaction between the teachers and the students. The audio-recorded data were then transcribed. The results show that both teachers successfully engaged the students in the interactive grammar discussions by giving scaffolding and feedback. First, the teachers applied questioning techniques which served the six functions of scaffolding by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), and it revealed that the function of recruiting interest in the task was frequently done by the teachers (82%). Second, the teachers used five corrective feedback types by Lyster and Ranta (1997) to correct the students’ errors, and it shows that explicit correction was frequently used by the teachers (17%). Third, the teachers used two different types of feedback; repetition of students’ response & explaining as confirmation. Repetition of students’ response was the highest feedback type used by the teachers (35%). The results show that one of the teachers also applied the deductive approach in teaching grammar occasionally.

Keywords: Teachers’ Strategies, Teaching Grammar

INTRODUCTION

There are different perceptions related to grammar. On the one hand, many people think that they do not need to pay attention to grammar if others can understand what they talk about. On the other hand, of course, others will probably
disagree with them, because they believe that grammar forms meaning of the
language, so grammar should be obeyed when they talk. The second belief indicates
understanding grammar of a particular language is essential for its language learners.
It is supported by Widodo (2006) who states “without a good knowledge of grammar,
learners’ language development will be severely constrained” (p.122).

Understanding grammar is important for the English learners, but some
experts still have different opinions related to whether grammar should be taught or
not. As Ayliff (2011) states,

There are competing theories of the second language (L2) learning and, while, on the one
hand, there are those who, like Krashen (2002), advocate that grammar should not be taught,
there are others, like Ellis (2006) who believe that some grammar should be taught. (p.397)

The statement indicates grammar teaching is still debated among experts. Yet,
by observing the results of the previous studies related to the importance of mastery
grammar, other researchers conclude that in second language (L2) learning, mastery
of grammar is an important component to differentiate proficient from non-proficient
L2 speakers (Antoniou, Ettlinger, and Wong, 2016). In other words, grammar
teaching and mastery grammar are necessary parts of English language learning.

Then, a new debated issue which appears related to grammar is how to teach it. The
strategies to teach grammar are already studied by some researchers. For example, a
researcher likes Gardoui (2016). His concern has been changed to investigate how to
teach grammar rules to EFL students.

Grammar teaching and mastery of grammar are complementary parts of
language learning. When the students can understand grammar and apply it in their
speaking or writing, it means that their language is meaningful. Besides that, they are considered as proficient speakers of the second language. By considering that, it is a task for the English teachers to make the students understand or master grammar rules. Definitely, each English teacher will have different strategies to make the students understand grammar rules, so it will be useful if the strategies are explored.

Based on the discussions in the paragraphs above, the purpose of the present study is to investigate strategies by the English teachers in teaching grammar to seventh-grade students. The study tries to answer the research question, “How do the English teachers teach grammar to seventh-grade students?” The results of the study would be useful for other English teachers because they can follow the various strategies to teach grammar to their own students. Besides that, it could be also useful for all students because they would easily understand particular grammar rules which are taught by different strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Controversies of Teaching Grammar

   English learning involves learning vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and others. Therefore, it cannot be neglected that grammar is one essential component of English. However, grammar teaching is still debated by some experts and researchers. There are two controversies related to grammar teaching. The first controversy is whether grammar should be taught or not. Some researchers like Krashen (2002, cited by Ayliff, 2011) believe grammar teaching is not important and other researchers...
believe grammar teaching is important (Ellis, 2006, cited by Ayliff, 2011; Celce-Murcia 1985; Celce-Murcia 1991).

Then, the next issue related to grammar is how to teach grammar. The controversy is: grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly. The traditional way of teaching grammar or teaching grammar explicitly usually begins with teachers’ explanation, a kind of deductive approach in which the teachers usually dominates the talk (Ko and Wang, 2008). Widodo (2006) agrees with the statement, but he argues that deductive approach is often used to teach adult learners and if the teachers teach grammar explicitly it means that the learners are ready to deal with exercises given.

In contrast, there are also different arguments related to teaching grammar implicitly. Widodo (2006) states that by applying this approach, learners learn grammar in the same way as children acquire their first or second language. However, Azad (2013) argues that because the EFL learners do not have enough exposure to the English language, so they cannot notice the form in the natural communication. Thus, Ozkan (2016) concludes

Having a look at the background of grammar teaching methods and models, there seems to be no best single model or method applicable to all diverse situations, instructors can encounter while they cater the service for learners of different preferences and styles. (p.642)

2. **Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered in Teaching Grammar**

In the classroom, there are two different discourses or styles for grammar teaching; teacher-centered and learner-centered. Teacher-centered discourse is still applied in the English language classrooms. Instead, according to Kimura, Nakata,
and Okumura (2001), teacher-centered discourse is more famous than student-centered discourse. Besides that, Matsuura, Chiba, and Hilderbrandt (2001) state that many students still prefer teacher-centered discourse or traditional styles of ELT. In teacher-centered, the role of the teachers is to select, determine, and evaluate the teaching and learning process (Duru, 2015).

Some researchers argue that grammar teaching discourse has shifted from teacher-centered to student-centered. It is like what Diaz-Maggioli (2015) states “most researchers agree that teaching styles operate along a continuum that ranges from teacher-centered to student-centered” (p.3). According to Anton (1999), learner-centered discourse through dialogue serves bigger opportunities for negotiation of form, content, and classroom rule of behavior; in contrast, teacher-centered discourse provides few opportunities for negotiation. Ko and Wang (2008) add, through interacting with adults or more skilled peers in society for students can also maintain students’ cognitive development. Then, according to Ko and Wang (2008), cognitive development takes place within what Vygotsky calls as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The meaning of ZPD is “the difference between the child’s developmental level as determined by the independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, cited by Ko and Wang, 2008, p.272). In the ZPD, the teachers provide scaffolding to the learners. According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), scaffolding involves the teachers take control of the tasks that are beyond the learners’ current level of
competence, thus it allows the learners to focus on the elements within his or her range of ability. The scaffolding help that the teachers provide to the learners is characterized by six functions (Wood et al., 1976):

1. Recruiting interest in the task is a teacher enlists the students’ interest to get involved in the discussion.

2. Simplifying the task is a teacher simplifies the size of the task or the question to the level where the students can recognize the solution.

3. Maintaining the pursuit of the goal is a teacher keeps the students in pursuit of a particular discussion’s objective.

4. Marking critical features and discrepancies between what has been produced and the ideal solution is a teacher marks certain features of the task that are relevant. The marking provides information about the discrepancy between what the students have produced and what the teacher recognizes as a correct production.

5. Controlling frustration during problem-solving is a teacher makes the discussion less stressful for the students.

6. Demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed is a teacher demonstrates or models the solution of the task.

Actually, in the ZPD, the teachers do not only provide scaffolding to the learners, the teachers can also provide feedback to the learners’ responses or errors. Anton (1999) states that “providing feedback on comprehension errors also leads to negotiation in a learner-centered classroom” (p.312). Thus, it can be concluded that
providing feedback on errors is important. According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), teachers react to learners' errors in six different ways:

1. Explicit correction is a feedback type that involves a teacher simply provides the correct answer.
2. Recast is a more implicit feedback type that involves a teacher’s reformulation of all or part of the students’ utterance, minus the error.
3. Clarification request is a feedback type in which a teacher asks a question indicating to the students that there is a problem with the language utterance.
4. Metalinguistic feedback is the teacher makes comments or indicates to the students that there is an error in language output.
5. Elicitation is a feedback type when a teacher asks for completion of the sentence by pausing and allowing the students to correct themselves; the teacher may also ask questions to elicit the correct form and help the students to reformulate an ill-formed utterance.
6. Repetition is a type of feedback that involves a teacher repeats the students’ error, and highlighting it with intonation.

3. Previous Studies

There are relevant studies on grammar teaching strategies. Grammar teaching strategies have been investigated by the researchers, such as Azad (2013), and Ko and Wang (2008).

1. Azad (2013) studied beliefs and attitudes of Bangladeshi EFL teachers regarding grammar and its teaching and learning. He collected the data by
distributing a questionnaire that included closed-ended questions and one open-ended question to 30 EFL teachers of seven private universities in the country. The findings of this study were the teachers viewed grammar could not be separated from language teaching and learning and thought that grammar teaching had a facilitative role in language learning. Then, the teachers also preferred to teach grammar explicitly for EFL students, taught grammar based on context within communicative activities and taught grammar implicitly for adult learners who had more cognitive abilities. Besides that, the teachers also viewed corrections of errors were considered effective and helpful by for the students. In addition, the teachers in this study suggested small-class size, using of audio-visual materials and flexibility in teaching grammar for better results.

2. Ko and Wang (2008) examined two grammar teachers’ classroom to understand how different teacher talks could make a difference in students’ learning. The data were collected by observing and audio-taping two grammar classes. The audio-recorded data were then transcribed to be analyzed from a sociocultural perspective. Results showed that one teacher was interactive while the other was not, and the interactive teacher employed various strategies such as questioning and recasting, which successfully engaging the students in interactive co-construction of meaning and linguistic forms. Her questioning techniques reflected Wood et al.’s (1976) six scaffolding functions like keeping interest in the task, simplifying the
task when the students had difficulty, highlighting the critical features and discrepancies between what students’ production and the ideal solution, and reducing students’ frustration. By contrast, the other teacher adopted an explicit approach to teach grammar. She usually provided direct grammar explanations and numerous skill-getting exercises, and seldom created opportunities for participation, interaction, and negotiation. The researchers concluded that a teacher had to adopt a dialogic approach to teaching, constantly gauging the students’ level and providing them with graduated assistance through interaction.

The studies above were conducted abroad. Then, the contexts of those studies were not in a secondary school. Thus, this study is different. The researcher investigates teachers’ strategies in teaching grammar to seventh-grade students.

THE STUDY

This research aimed to explore English teachers’ strategies in teaching grammar to seventh-grade students. This study tried to answer the research question: “How do the English teachers teach grammar to seventh-grade students?”

1. Context of the Study

Grammar is a necessary component of teaching English to Indonesian students. In other words, it is important for Indonesian students as non-native English speakers to learn grammar in order to be able to use English correctly. Thus, this study was done at SMP 2 Salatiga and SMP 7 Salatiga. Both Schools are located in
Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. Each English teacher of the schools was observed to have strategies in teaching grammar to make the students understood grammar. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate how the English teachers from both schools taught grammar to their students, especially to their seventh-grade students.

2. Participants

The participants of this study were one English teacher of SMP 2 Salatiga and one English teacher of SMP 7 Salatiga who taught seventh-grade students. All of the teachers were non-native speakers and their first language was Indonesian. Both teachers had had enough experience in teaching English. The selection of the participants was based on teachers’ willingness and accessibility to be observed.

3. Research Instruments

The instruments of collecting the data of the study were observation and audio taping. The observation was used to get information about the teachers’ strategies in teaching grammar to their seventh-grade students. The interaction between the teachers and their students was recorded by means of a high-quality recorder.

4. Data Collection Procedures

The observations were conducted in eight sessions in the two English teachers’ classrooms. It took 80 minutes for each meeting. As mentioned above, the interaction between the two teachers and their own students was recorded by a high-quality recorder. The audio-recorded data were then transcribed. The following abbreviations were used in all episodes:
T1= the first teacher, T2= the second teacher, Ss= more than one student, S= unidentified student, S1= the first unidentified student, S2= the second unidentified student, and S3= the third unidentified student.

5. Data Analysis Procedures

The data in the transcripts were coded to identify themes of teaching grammar strategies. The framework of scaffolding by Wood et al. (1976) derived from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, and Lyster and Ranta’s (1997) model were used to code the data. Then, initial themes or sub-themes were determined. The contents of each theme were interpreted descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, the strategies of teaching grammar to seventh-grade students in EFL context were found. Both teachers actively engaged the students in the interactive grammar items discussions. The questions given by the teachers served the six functions of scaffolding by Wood et al. (1976). Besides providing scaffolding, the teachers also gave different types of feedback to their students in the discussions. The teachers corrected the students’ error by applying five of the six corrective feedback types by Lyster and Ranta (1997). Then, the teachers also used two different types of feedback; repeating the students’ response, and explaining as confirmation.

It was found that one of the teachers also applied the deductive approach of grammar teaching for some occasional. Thus, the data will be presented into three
subheadings: scaffolding functions, feedback, and additional finding. The details of the findings and discussion were discussed below.

1. **Scaffolding Functions**

   According to Ko and Wang (2008), scaffolding means the teacher assists the students to solve a problem which the students cannot solve alone, and scaffolding help offered by a teacher is characterized by six functions (Wood at al., 1976, cited by Ko and Wang, 2008). The six scaffolding functions by Wood et al. (1976); recruiting interest in the task, simplifying the task, marking critical features and discrepancies between what had been produced and the ideal solution, maintaining the pursuit of the goal, controlling frustration during problem solving, and modeling an idealized version of the act to be performed were found in the study’s results. Figure 1 presents the percentage of the scaffolding functions. Among the six scaffolding functions, recruiting the students’ interest in the task was frequently done by the teachers (82%). In comparison to the other functions, controlling frustration during problem-solving, and modeling an idealized version of the act to be performed occurred the least (both 1%).
As it is clear in Figure 1, recruiting interest in the task took the highest amount of scaffolding functions which were provided by the teachers (82%). Considering the result, it might be influenced by a number of factors why the teachers more enlisted the students’ interest in the task. Yet, definitely, the factors were still related to students’ contribution. It was possible that the teachers wanted their students to get involved in figuring out the rules, by means to encourage the students to think. It was in line with Anton’s (1999) study, one of his findings presented that by inviting and challenging the students, it can make the students focus and reflect on the rules given. The question in turn 1 in both episodes below signaled the direct request for the students to get involved in figuring out the rule.
Episode 1

T1: Kalau misalnya saya mau tanya, apakah ayahmu seorang tukang roti? Saya bertanyanya harus bagaimana?
   (For example, if I want to ask, apakah ayahmu seorang tukang roti? So, how I should ask?)
Ss: Is your father …
T1: Ya, your father …
   (Yes, your father …)
Ss: A baker.
T1: Ya, be dulu.
   (Yes, to be comes first.)

Episode 2

T2: (A student wrote: a doctor check patient/sick people) Nah sekarang di periksa dulu kalimatnya. Sudah tepat atau masih ada yang kurang?
   (Well now, please check the sentence first. Is it already correct or is there something missing?)
S: Kurang.
   (Something is missing.)
T2: Kurang apa?
   (What is missing?)
S: S.
T2: S. Pada kata apa?
   (S. In what word?)
S: Check.
T2: Ya, pada kata check karena pelakunya satu.
   (Yes, in the word check because the subject is only one person.)

There is a similarity between this present study’s and Anton’s study’s (1999) results; there were a series of questions which were to help and not to help the students to reflect on the form being taught. The questions which were not to assist the students in reflecting the form being taught were to assess whether the students
knew the mother tongue equivalent of the English words that the teachers would use in their explanations. According to Anton, these questions still serve the function of keeping students’ interest. Yet, he also states that the type of the interaction is characterized as the deductive approach of grammar teaching: a grammatical explanation is given to the students. Turn 1 in the following episode was the example of a teacher’s question which was used to assess whether the students knew the mother tongue equivalent of the English word that the teacher would use in her explanation.

Episode 3

T1: (A student wrote: writer, his office, write a story) Okay, ini writer, writer itu apa to?
(Okay, this is writer, what is writer?)
Ss : Penulis.
T1 : Penulis, bekerjanya di mana?
(Penulis, where does a writer work?)
S1 : Di kantor.
(In the office.)
S2 : Di rumah.
(At home)
S3 : Di mana saja bisa.
(Anywhere.)
T1: Ya, his office, kantornya mau di rumah bisa, kantor redaksi bisa. Terus, his duty apa? Write, yang di kerjakan apa?
(Yes, his office, his office can be at home or at editorial office. Then, what is his duty? Write, so what is his duty?)
Ss: Write a story.
T1: Ya (yes), writes a story, then article, then novel (teacher adds s for write).
2. Feedback

Corrective feedback is defined by Lightbown & Spada (2003), “as any indication to a learner that his/her use of the target language is incorrect” (cited by Nikoopour and Zoghi, 2014, p.226). Figure 2 gave us the percentage of corrective feedback types which were given by the teachers to the students. Lyster and Ranta’s (1997) corrective feedback types which were applied by the teachers were explicit correction, recast, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition of students’ errors. Then, actually, the graph also demonstrated the percentage of other types of feedback, like repeating the students’ response, and explaining as confirmation. As the graph illustrated, repetition of students’ response was more frequently used by the teachers than explaining as confirmation (the percentages are 35% and 34%). Then, explicit correction as one of the corrective feedback types was mostly applied by the teachers (17%), whereas repetition of students’ error was a corrective feedback type that occurred the least (2%).
The result showed that the percentage of corrective feedback types was less than the percentage of other feedback types. Repetition of students’ response took the role as the highest feedback type used (35%). Repeating students’ response is to either acknowledged the students contribution or simply makes the entire class to hear (Ko and Wang, 2008). The statement could be the teachers’ reasons for why they frequently repeated what students said. The following episodes were the examples of how the teachers repeated the students’ response.
Episode 4

T1: (A student wrote: life guard, in the swimming pool, save the sink swimmer) Lifeguard in the swimming pool, does a lifeguard only work in the swimming pool?
Ss: At the beach.
T1: Ya, atau at the beach.
(Yes, or at the beach.)

Episode 5

T2: Ya, supaya ada kata sifat seperti ini. Bagaimana tadi? Saya tidak punya kakak laki-laki?
(Yes, in order to have an adjective like this. How was that? Saya tidak punya kakak laki-laki?)
Ss: I don’t have a big brother.
T2: I don’t have a big brother.

The greatest percentage of corrective feedback types used was only 17%, which went to explicit correction. Moghaddam and Behjat (2014) state that many learners want their errors to be corrected in this way is as a compelling reason and justification of why the teachers give explicit correction. The following episodes demonstrated the teachers clearly indicated that the students’ utterance was incorrect; the teachers provided the correct form.

Episode 6

S : My mother and my father is civil servant.
T1 : My mother and my father not is but are. Itu kan dua orang.
(My mother and my father not is but are. That is two people.)

Episode 7

T2: Jadi bagaimana kalau kita mengatakan, Ananda pergi ke sekolah setiap hari?
(So, how do we say, Ananda pergi ke sekolah setiap hari?)
Ss : Ananda go to …
T2 : Go nya tambahi apa?
   (What should added in the word go?)
Ss : S.
T2 : Tidak hanya s tapi es. Untuk kata go tambahi huruf es, berarti Ananda
goes to school to school every day.
   (It is not only s but es. The word go should be added es, so Ananda
goes to school every day.)

There were similarities among the present study, Lyster and Ranta’s (1997)study, and Nikoopour and Zoghi’s (2014) study. The first similarity was that repetition of students’ error in the present study and Lyster and Ranta’s study was as the least corrective feedback type used, although the total of the percentage was different. The percentage of repetition of students’ error in the present study was 2%, and repetition of students’ error in Lyster and Ranta’s study was 5%. Then, the second similarity was about the most frequent type of corrective feedback used. In both present study and Nikoopour and Zoghi’s study, explicit correction was recognized as the most frequent type of feedback used. The percentage of explicit correction in the present study was 17%, and explicit correction in Nikoopour and Zoghi’s study was 32%.

3. Additional Finding

As mentioned above, it was found that one of the teachers also applied the deductive approach in teaching grammar; the teacher directly explained grammar items and dominated the talks. The result showed that the frequency of directly explaining grammar items was low; it might be because the teacher considered the effectiveness of the approach. However, the researcher thought that it was important
to show one example of how the teacher positioned herself as the absolute possessor of grammar knowledge related to a sentence of simple present tense. It was clear that the teacher dominated the talk; she did not maintain the students to get involved in the grammar discussion.

Episode 8


((A student wrote "a mechanic damages vehicle repair.") Rivan, you have to see your sentence in the front, if you can correct it, please try to correct it. Rivan, you may still think that it is the same as A, right? That A is reversed because it makes a phrase, but if you make a sentence, repair the damaged car, the word car and damaged are reversed, the word repair is not reversed. The phrase that you apply in the graded exercise part A should be applied in the right place. A mechanic, the word repair should not be moved there. The word car and damaged should be reversed, damaged first then car. Rivan, the word repair should be moved, but the damaged vehicle is already correct.)

CONCLUSION

The question that the present study wanted to answer was “how do the English teachers teach grammar to seventh-grade students?” It was found that in teaching grammar, both teachers effectively engaged their students in meaningful
interaction through questioning and giving feedback. Yet, the researcher also found that one of the two teachers applied the explicit approach in teaching grammar for some occasional; directly explained some grammar items.

The questions given by the teachers served the six functions of scaffolding by Wood at al. (1976). This finding is consistent with Ko and Wang’s (2008) finding, which shows that there is an interactive teacher who uses questioning techniques which reflected to Wood et al.’s (1976) six scaffolding functions. The present study also showed that the scaffolding function which frequently provided by the teachers was recruiting students’ interest in figuring out the rule. Yet, in Ko and Wang’s (2008) study, the amount of recruiting students’ interest is not the highest, it means that the scaffolding function type is not the most frequent function of scaffolding used.

Giving feedback was an important aspect in teaching and learning grammar. The study found that explicit correction was as the corrective feedback type which was frequently provided by the teachers. The result is similar to with Nikoopour and Zoghi’s (2014) study’s result. Explicit correction is also recognized as the most frequent type of feedback in Nikoopour and Zoghi’s (2014) study. Yet, instead, the result showed that the percentage of corrective feedback types was less than the percentage of other feedback types. Repetition of students’ response which was not as one of the corrective feedback types took the role as the highest feedback type used.

One of the teachers also applied the traditional way of teaching grammar was found in the present study. Yet, the result showed that the frequency of directly
explaining grammar items without engaging the students in the grammatical items discussions was low. It was because the teacher frequently maintained the students’ participation. It is not in line with Ko and Wang’s (2008) study. It is clear that in Ko and Wang’s study, one of the teachers do adopt the deductive approach. The teacher usually provides direct grammar explanation with seldom creates opportunities for participation, interaction, and negotiation.

The present study aimed to discover pedagogical benefits, as methodological issues related to grammar teaching. What had been indicated by the study were the applied strategies and approaches in teaching grammar to seventh-grade students in EFL context. The study could make other teachers reflect on their own approaches and strategies in teaching grammar and their rationales. Then, the teachers could also apply the new strategies that the teachers gained from the study which were more comfortable and valid for the students to make the students learn grammar maximally.

The study only covered two teachers’ grammar teaching strategies in EFL context, so grammar teaching strategies reported here cannot be generalized. Another limitation of the study was no follow-up interviews with the teachers as the participants of the study after conducting the observations. Thus, it might decrease the reliability of the study’s findings.

It was suggested for further research to investigate the effect of giving scaffolding and feedback on the students’ grammar accuracy. Thus, the further
research would focus on the students’ side. A further study could be done in EFL seventh-grade classrooms or other classroom levels.
REFERENCES


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# APPENDIX

## Observation Protocol

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