

## English Teachers' Grammar Teaching Conceptions and Practices in Oromia High Schools: The Case of West Shoa Zone

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### *Abstract*

This study examines English teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods in secondary schools across West Shoa Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. Teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction significantly influence their lesson planning and instructional strategies. A total of 120 English language teachers from 18 government secondary schools were selected using a census technique. A concurrent mixed-methods research design was employed, utilizing questionnaires and interviews for data collection. The qualitative data were analyzed through verbatim transcription, while the quantitative data were examined using descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean, and percentage. Findings revealed that teachers predominantly adhered to traditional grammar teaching approaches, positioning themselves as the primary source of knowledge while treating students as passive recipients. This reliance on conventional methods suggests a limited integration of communicative and student-centered strategies in grammar instruction. The study highlights the need for pedagogical shifts toward more interactive and learner-centered approaches to enhance grammar teaching effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Classroom practice, Conceptions, EFL Teachers, Grammar Teaching Methods

### INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates high school English teachers' conceptions of 'grammar teaching methods' and their classroom teaching practices. The fact that teachers' beliefs influence their classroom behavior and pedagogical practices is well-established (Pajares, 2021; Raths, 2020). Beliefs help teachers to 'interpret and simplify' information (Zhang & Zhang, 2019), guiding decision-making by acting 'as a filter through which a host of instructional judgments and decisions are made' (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2020). For grammar teaching, the study of beliefs has particular relevance: recent studies suggest that beliefs are especially important in helping teachers navigate 'ill-defined' situations where they must manage competing demands in the

classroom (Borg, 2022). Grammar teaching is an example of such an ‘ill-defined’ and ‘contested’ domain, so the beliefs held by teachers are likely to have a particularly strong influence on their practice (Sachs & Cumming, 2023). Success in education requires students to develop effective communication skills in English. Achieving these communication skills involves active participation in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students are expected to read longer texts critically and take notes properly, as well as to listen to lectures and take notes accordingly. Effective oral and written presentations and the ability to write academic essays are essential academic tasks. Grammar plays a vital role in all of these communicative activities. In line with this, recent research (Baker & Lee, 2021) states that mastering these language skills strengthens communication abilities and contributes to success in both academic and professional contexts.

Language teaching, a teacher-centered activity, consciously merges teaching with learning. The outcome of teaching is realized through various classroom situations. Pedagogy, or the art of teaching, aims to establish teaching as a reflective and inquiring practice. Classroom activities reflect the theoretical principles that teachers need to incorporate to meet the demands of teaching. Any language teaching theory must be made explicit for its relevance to pedagogy to be effectively assessed; however, theories are abstractions, which are actualized through specific classroom techniques. The role of the individual teacher is critical in this process. The researcher develops a hypothesis and sets up experiments to test it. The results may support the hypothesis or lead to its reasonable rejection. In this case, the researcher has designed techniques to test and reformulate the hypothesis. Likewise, the principles adopted by language teachers are consistent with their hypotheses and their teaching techniques (Richards & Rodgers, 2023).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To deliver effective language teaching, teachers must determine which methodologies to implement and identify areas where adjustments are necessary to bridge the gap between abstraction and practical application. This shift converts language teaching into a problem-solving activity. At the core of pedagogy lies the task of identifying the most effective framework for learning, with language teaching methodologies distinguishing between approaches (philosophies) and procedure Brown, H. D. (2007). Classroom instruction varies because of different teachers' beliefs, knowledge, learning experiences, and assumptions. In English Language Teaching (ELT), beliefs about how language should be learned and taught significantly influence strategies, materials, media, and evaluation methods.

Scholars widely agree that teaching is a complex psychological action, and it is generally accepted that teachers' backgrounds influence their instructional choices. What teachers do in the classroom is shaped by their personal conception of teaching, which evolves from their beliefs, related experiences, school practices, and personality traits (Tilemma, 2000). Teachers' conceptions and perceptions are often used interchangeably (Kember, 1997), though more recent

studies distinguish between the two. Conceptions are more accessible and consciously formed, carrying personal meaning, while beliefs are more intangible, emotionally driven, and unconscious (Entwistle, Skinner, Entwistle, & Orr, 2000). A teacher's beliefs about the purpose of teaching profoundly impact their classroom practices, the strategies they adopt, and consequently, the learning outcomes of students (Gao & Watkins, 2010; Kember & Gow, 1994; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). The conceptions a teacher holds regarding teaching are often formed from a blend of personal experiences in a particular context (Pratt, 1992). These conceptions are mental frameworks that shape observable teaching practices and may not always be visible but can be inferred from a teacher's actions.

Understanding that teachers enter the classroom with not only teaching materials but also preconceived ideas about the world provides insight into how these beliefs shape their teaching activities. To contextualize these findings, we need to trace the historical development of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Ethiopia, which can offer valuable insights into EFL teachers' conceptions in this specific context.

English has a long-standing presence in Ethiopian education, with significant importance as outlined in the Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (NETP). According to the NETP, developing students' academic English skills from the primary school level is essential, underpinned by a learner-centered approach (NETP, 1994). Furthermore, policy changes, such as lowering the starting age for English language education, reflect the emphasis placed on early English language proficiency. The rationale behind this strategy is that students with strong English foundations at a lower grade level can transition to secondary and tertiary education with fewer challenges. As a result, significant attention has been placed on enhancing teachers' English proficiency, including both pre-service and in-service training programs supported by the Ministry of Education, the British Council, and regional governments. Additionally, reforms in curricula and textbooks have been made, inspired by the communicative language teaching approach (NETP, 1994).

Despite these efforts, research shows that English language teaching in Ethiopia faces significant challenges, especially in remote public schools where authentic input outside the classroom is scarce. English is taught as a subject from grade one through secondary school and serves as the medium of instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels. However, students still struggle to master the language effectively, often facing difficulties in attending to their academic studies in English (Birbirso, 2013). Even after years of English instruction, students' proficiency in academic English remains inadequate, resulting in a mismatch between the language skills students acquire and the academic requirements they must meet.

Several studies in Ethiopia have focused on English language instruction at different educational levels (Alemu, 2004; Amlaku, 2010; Berhanu, 2000; Birhanu, 2014; Eba, 2014; Adinew, 2015; Fasika, 2014; Haregewain, 2008; Tadesse, 2012; Tamene, 2000). However, the

persistent challenge of English language learning, particularly in rural and underserved areas, calls for further exploration of the teachers' conception of teaching grammar and how their beliefs influence classroom practices. Although teachers often claim to use methods that fit their students' needs, observations suggest that many are still limited in their ability to implement effective strategies for language acquisition, particularly in grammar instruction.

The research on the relationship between teachers' conceptions and actual teaching practices is still in its early stages in Ethiopia. For instance, Ganjabi (2011) examined effective English teaching from both students' and teachers' perspectives, revealing differences between what teachers and students believe constitutes effective teaching. However, the literature lacks in-depth studies on the connection between teachers' conceptions and their teaching practices, specifically in grammar instruction. According to Brown and Atkins (1988), what constitutes effective teaching in one context may not necessarily apply in a different educational setting.

From our observations of high school English teachers, we noticed that many continue to rely on traditional methods of teaching grammar, which do not fully engage students in active learning. This gap between teachers' intended and actual classroom practices has prompted me to investigate teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods in West Shoa Zone. The purpose of this research is to explore the alignment between teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching methods and their actual classroom practices. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research question: How do teachers in West Shoa Zone conceptualize grammar teaching methods, and how do these conceptions influence their teaching practices?

By addressing this question, this study will contribute to the growing body of research on teachers' conceptions of teaching and help identify areas where improvements can be made to enhance grammar instruction and language proficiency outcomes in Ethiopian secondary schools.

**RQ:** What is Secondary School English language Teachers' Conception of Grammar Teaching Methods?

This study examines teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods, focusing on how these mental constructs influence their actual classroom practices. Successful teaching is not only a product of developing an effective syllabus, textbooks, or policies but also of transforming teachers' conceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward the policies and curricula. Changing these conceptions is a critical step in improving educational quality. This research is particularly significant in the context of Ethiopia, where high school represents a crucial and determining stage in students' educational journey.

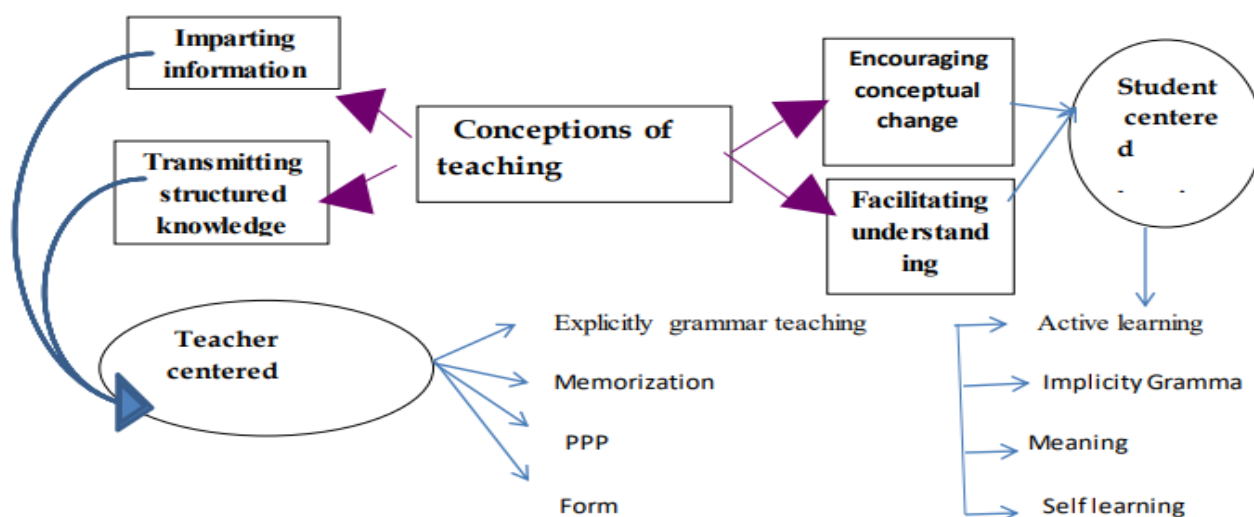
## Implicit Grammar and Explicit Grammar Teaching

In language teaching, two primary concepts of grammar are widely acknowledged and commonly discussed in linguistic studies (Alqurashi, 2021; Ellis, 2017).

The first concept is *implicit grammar*, understood as the system of form-combination that speakers intuitively command, allowing for both production and comprehension of language. Learning to speak a language involves acquiring these verbal elements and their combinations unconsciously. This notion aligns with the theory that children learn (or, some scholars argue, acquire) the grammar of their language naturally (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). This also applies to adults learning a second language in naturalistic settings, though the process of unconscious learning requires further clarification. The origin of this internalized grammar varies across linguistic schools of thought. Cognitive approaches, such as generative grammar, posit that grammar has an innate component, suggesting that the processes of pure thought (noesis) precede and are independent of the processes of semiosis, or meaning-making (Bronckart, 2008). In contrast, sociocultural approaches emphasize the construction of grammar through a progressive structuring of input that learners receive from their environment. This perspective asserts that while rules help explain how language functions, they do not constitute the origin of language itself (Hopper, 1998; Fontich, 2016).

The second concept of grammar pertains to explicit grammar, which refers to the study and description of language structures in a theoretical and systematic way (Harris & Taylor, 1989). This form of grammar is understood as the formalized science that analyzes and categorizes the components of a specific language, such as French or Spanish grammar, as well as the models of language analysis like structural, generative, or cognitive grammar. This systematized knowledge must be explicitly taught, as opposed to implicitly acquired grammar. Taylor (1997) emphasizes that this meta-discourse about language gives it an "external skeleton," allowing for the conceptualization and categorization of language structure. Unlike implicit grammar, which is acquired unconsciously, explicit grammar requires conscious effort and instruction.

In summary, teachers' conceptions of grammar—whether implicit or explicit—are likely to significantly influence their teaching practices and affect how grammar is taught in classrooms. The following conceptual framework illustrates how teachers' conceptions of grammar impact their pedagogical strategies teaching methods.



Adapted from Pratt's (1998) Teaching Perspectives Model.

## METHODS

### Research Design

The study used a concurrent mixed-research design to provide significant insights and thoughts of the participants regarding Teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods and classroom practice. A pragmatic worldview combines deductive and inductive thinking by integrating quantitative and qualitative inquiry. It provides a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry. It offers a method for selecting methodological mixes that assist researchers in addressing their research objectives in the best possible way (Anteneh, 2012). These epistemological assumptions rely on abductive reasoning by moving back and forth between induction and deduction. Therefore, it helps the current study crosscheck quantitative and qualitative data to arrive at valid and reliable conclusions. Besides, practitioners can use the conceptions of pragmatism as orienting perspectives for critical thinking and decision-making in real-life practice situations (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). In line with such a worldview, a mixed-methods approach was adopted to perceive that quantitative and qualitative methods can construct a complete picture of human behavior and experience. The philosophy of pragmatism thus frames the research approaches of the current study.

### Research participants and Sampling Procedures

#### Population and Sample Size

The population of the study comprises of –West Shoa Zone secondary schools grade 11 and 12 available samples of 120 secondary school EFL teachers were selected. The teacher samples were included using the census /complete enumeration technique in which the whole subjects were required to be included. These were the sample sizes for the survey questionnaire.

Sampling for qualitative design is an area of considerable confusion for researchers (Marshall, 1996). Some qualitative researchers state that there is no fixed way to determine the sample size of the population in a qualitative study; however, most qualitative researchers follow the widely accepted model of data sampling known as data saturation (Saumur and Given, 2008). Therefore, classroom observation and an interview were used as data-gathering instruments to substantiate the survey questionnaire. The interview and observation also help the investigators/ researcher understand a given population's deep feelings, perceptions, and values. As a result, a semi-structured interview and observation were employed to gather relevant information from teacher participants who filled in the questionnaire.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

### **Questionnaire**

In the present study, questionnaires were used as primary data collection tools. The questionnaire is a widely used data collection tool in educational research to obtain information about the views, attitudes and opinions of individuals or groups within a short period (Best & Khan, 2003). It's simple to complete, helps keep participants focused, is comparatively objective, and can be easily tallied and evaluated. The need to use the questionnaire as a research instrument in this study was related to the following reasons. First, the researcher enables to obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, personalities and intentions of the research participants; hence, different kinds of characteristics from the participant's perspective can be measured by questionnaire. Second, the questionnaire enables the researcher to collect data involving a large number of participants.

Finally, the five-point Likert Scale question was developed for the closed-ended questionnaire to elicit information about English Language Teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods. The need to use this scale stems from the high coverage of all significant aspects of the content and permits detailed and accurate comparability between sets of data (Sarantakos, 2005). The researcher developed the questionnaire to obtain information from teachers about their conceptual understanding of Effective Teaching Methods in EFL and actual practice in the classroom. The questionnaires were designed in such a way that Part I can help collect information on personal background of respondents, and part two items that describe how they feel about various aspects of Teaching Methods in EFL classrooms. Likert scale type with five options (strongly agree, =5 agree, =4 undecided, =3 disagree, =2 strongly disagree=1). The open-ended question items request overall suggestions from the teachers. In order to secure

the data through five points Likert scale measurement, each response category of positive items was assigned with scores 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, and reversed for the negative statements, respectively.

## **Interview**

An interview is a commonly used method that helps to gather the required information verbally and in a face-to-face manner, which in turn helps to get verbal and nonverbal communication through reading the interviewee's non-verbal expressions (Best and Kahn, 2003). Further explain that an interview permits a researcher to obtain data that cannot be acquired through other data collection instruments. Hence, with this understanding, face-to-face interviews were held with ten English teachers. Thus, ten teachers were selected for the interview. The interview was conducted based on corresponding research questions and interview guide items set.

To avoid anxiety and encourage the participants to provide honest responses, they were informed of the study's objectives and ensured absolute confidentiality. During the interviews, participants were asked to explain their conceptions on grammar teaching methods.

## **Methods of Data Analysis**

The quantitative data gathered using the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools. The latest version of SPSS (Version 26) available data analysis) was used to analyze the questionnaire data. In line with the guidelines suggested by Harry & Deborah (2012), frequency percentages, means, and grand means were used to report a series of questions that collectively measure a particular trait. The qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews and classroom observation were analyzed thematically in line with the phenomenon graphic approach advanced by Creswell (2012), Marton (1994) as well as Trigwell and Prosser (2004). According to the phenomenon graphic approach, the transcription of interviews should be done verbatim and their analysis iteratively (Marton, 1994; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). Hence, based on these guidelines, the data obtained using the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim, and their analysis was conducted iteratively. For easy analysis and anonymity, the participants were coded 1 to 10, using T1- T10. "T" stands for teacher, and the numbers stand for random numbers assigned to the 10 study participants who constituted the primary data sources for this study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Discussions**

This article focuses on the first specific objective of the study. The first specific objective of the study is to assess English teachers' conceptions about grammar teaching methods. The data for achieving this objective is obtained from both questionnaire and interview. The finding result of



data from these both instruments showed that English teachers have different understanding about conceptions of grammar teaching methods.

English teachers have different conceptions about grammar teaching methods as it is evident from their response to questionnaire and interview. The conception they have about teacher-centered methods of teaching grammar is greater than the conception they held about student-centered methods of teaching grammar. Most EFL teachers' attention is geared towards the traditional method of teacher-centered methods of teaching grammar through lecturing grammar rules to their students by using memorization of grammar rules directly and explanation of grammar rules explicitly which does not encourage students to use grammar in actual communication situations like writing and speaking activities in different contexts. The other disadvantage of this method is that it does not encourage students to actively participate in the teaching-learning activities which in turn does not encourage independent learning of the students by one's own efforts apart from their teachers' direct contributions. The English teachers' actual classroom practice is highly influenced by their conceptions they firmly held about grammar teaching methods which has a negative impact on students' learning in the actual classroom setting. The teachers have more exposure and experience in teaching grammar through teacher-centered methods than teaching grammar via student-centered methods. The conception they held is contrary to what the English textbook prescribes.

**Table 4. 1. Demographic Characteristics**

No	Variables		No	Percent
1	Sex	Male	106	88.3
		Female	14	11.7
2	Qualification	BA/BED MA	28	23.3
3	Service Years	1-11 months	92	76.7
		1-5 years		1.7
			2	20.8
			25	
		6 & above years	93	77.5

As in table 4:1 indicated about 88(%) of the respondents were male and the rest 12%) female. Regarding their qualification were about 24 % were BA/BED and about 77% of the participants were Masters, degrees. It is possible to have conclusion that most of the high school English teachers are master's degree holders

Regarding year of experiences only 1% of the respondents were under 1 year service and 20% of the total participants were year 1-5 teaching experience and the rest 77% were 6 and above teaching experience from this one conclude that majority of Teachers in secondary schools in the study area were more of experienced teachers. But the implementations of English teachers' Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods in Writing and their Classroom Practices in EFL context were below the level.

**Table 4.2. Teachers' Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods**

No	Items	SA		AG		N		DAG		SDA		Total	(X=Σ v× f)	Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
	Teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods in EFL											120		
1	I think Teaching English grammar is a manageable and a rewarding activity that anyone is interested and can do it.	28	23.3	37	30.8	16	13.3	26	21.7	13	10.8	120	401	3.34
2	I feel Students will learn grammar better if they understand grammatical Terms.	64	53.3	34	28.3	12	10.0	4	3.3	6	5.0	120	506	4.21
3	I feel that it is essential that students are familiar with the correct grammatical terminology	60	50.0	31	25.8	17	14.2	8	7.0	4	3.0	120	495	4.12
4	The main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point.	64	53.3	40	36.6	15	12.5	1	0.8	0	0.0	120	527	4.39
5	It is important to focus on grammar in all lessons.	45	37.5	60	50	9	7.5	6	5	0	0.0	120	220	1.8
6	Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how the structure works.	67	56	48	40.0	3	2.5	1	0.8	1	0.8	120	220	1.8

**Key: Scale: strongly agree (5); agree (4); neutral (3); disagree (2); strongly disagree (1) Grand mean=3.53**

Table 4.2, shows the description of the teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods based on the responses provided in the table. The table includes responses to six different items on teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods, and the data is categorized by frequency of responses for each option (Strongly Agree - SA, Agree - AG, Neutral - N, Disagree - DAG, Strongly Disagree - SDA). Accordingly, Three Items Based on Mean Scores: Item 4: The main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point. **Mean = 4.39** (over 90% of teachers agree) Item 2: Students will learn grammar better if they understand grammatical terms. **Mean = 4.21** (81.6% of teachers agree) and item 3: It is essential that students are familiar with the correct grammatical terminology. **Mean = 4.12** (75.8% of teachers agree) The mean score of these three items Indicate that the teachers favor teaching and explaining grammar and grammar elements without giving room grammar for communication. The high mean scores for these items suggest that teachers predominantly emphasize explicit grammar instruction, focusing on explaining grammatical rules and terminology rather than integrating grammar into communicative practice. On the other hand, **Item 5**: It is important to focus on grammar in all lessons. **Mean = 1.8** ( 12.5% of teachers disagree) **Item 6**: Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how the structure works. **Mean = 3.67** (Moderate agreement, not as high as the top items, though still positive)**Item 1**: Teaching English grammar is a manageable and rewarding activity. **Mean = 3.34** (Moderate agreement, but with a notable percentage of disagreement) These results suggest that teachers show comparatively less interest in these aspects of grammar instruction, particularly in making grammar the central focus of all lessons or viewing its teaching as inherently rewarding.

To sum up, the data shows that most teachers strongly believe in the importance of understanding grammatical terms and feel that explaining grammar points is the main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson. However, there is less consensus regarding the necessity of focusing on grammar in all lessons, with a significant portion of teachers not fully supporting this idea. Teachers generally agree that grammar lessons should start with an explanation of the structure but are somewhat divided on whether grammar should be emphasized in all subjects

**Table 4. 3. Teachers' Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods**

No	Items	Always (5)		Often (4)		Sometimes (3)		Rarely (2)		Never (1)		Total no. participants	$(\bar{X} = \frac{\sum V \times f}{n})$	Mean $\bar{X} = \frac{\sum v \times f}{N}$
	How teachers explain language teaching methods	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	N		
1	I devote time to memorizing grammar rules (on syntax, morphology, orthography, etc.).”	20	16.7	60	50	20	16	15	12.5	5	4.2	120	435	3.3.625
2	I finish my explanations by asking the students to sum up through a metalinguistic grammar phenomenon we have worked upon.	15	12.5	46	38.1	33	27.5	15	12.5	11	9.2	120	399	3.325
3	Attention to grammar ensures that students become aware of how the language works	17	14.2	39	32.5	29	24.2	29	24.2	6	5.0	120	392	3.26
4	I ask questions to stimulate discussion in my teaching than giving information	7	5.8	34	28.3	42	35.0	30	25.0	7	5.8	120	364	3.03
5	I give students the opportunity to work out rules from examples.	3	2.5	27	22.5	36	30.0	32	26.7	22	18.3	120	317	2.64

#### Analysis of the Descriptive Survey - Teachers' Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods

The table 4.3 presents the teachers' conceptions of grammar teaching methods, based on responses to five items. The survey uses a scale from

1 (Never) to 5 (Always), where the frequency of each response is reported for each item. The mean score for each item is calculated using the formula  $X = \frac{\sum(v \times f)}{N}$ , where “v” is the value corresponding to the response (from 1 to 5), and “f” is the frequency of that response.

Breakdown of Items and Analysis of the mean of the top three items and the two low mean score of the items:

Accordingly, the table above shows Item 1, 2, and 3 are the area of teaching methods more frequently practiced by the teachers in the classroom. Whereas, item 5 and 4 are with the low mean score which show that the teacher rarely practice.

Item 1 is the highest mean scores showing that most teachers prioritize memorizing grammar rules, reflecting a traditional, rule-based teaching approach. Item 2. Teachers occasionally incorporate metalinguistic summaries at the end of their lessons, suggesting a thoughtful and reflective method of grammar instruction and in item 3 teachers generally agree that focusing on grammar helps students understand language structure, although the practice is not universally consistent.

On the other hand, Item 5 is with the lowest mean score showing that a limited use of inductive grammar teaching, where learners derive rules from examples and item 4 relatively low mean score suggesting that while discussion-based teaching is practiced, it is not a dominant approach in the classroom.

In summary, The survey findings indicate that grammar instruction in the observed classrooms mainly focuses on explanation and memorization of rules. Teachers tend to favor direct instruction, while giving less attention to metalinguistic reflection or encouraging student-led discussions. The least utilized approach is allowing students to discover grammar rules on their own, highlighting a preference for more traditional, teacher-led methods. To enhance student learning, incorporating more learner-centered techniques—such as guiding students to infer rules from examples—could foster deeper understanding and greater engagement with grammar.

**Table 4.4. Teachers` Self-report Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods**

No	Items	Always %	Often %	Sometim es	Rarely	Never	Total.	$(X = \frac{\sum V \times f}{N})$	Mean $X = \frac{\sum v \times f}{N}$
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1	I present information to students in lecture format.	38	31.7	50	41	17	14	13	10.8	1	.8	120	468	3.9
2	I use my knowledge of grammar rules to explain complex English sentences to students	18	15.0	51	42.5	32	26.7	18	15.0	1	.8	120	427	3.55
3	I present patterns in English language for my students to deduce grammar rules on their own	12	10.0	35	29.2	40	33.3	23	19.2	10	8.3	120	376	3.13
4	I do not impede student learning through over use of mother tongue	28	23.3	39	32.5	39	32.5	8	6.7	6	5	120	435	3.62
5	I get students to self-correct their errors	24	20.0	36	30.0	45	37.5	15	12.5	0	0	120	429	3.575
6	Explain the grammar structure; make students participate; and then practise by using the structure.	47	39.2	55	45.8	10	8.3	8	6.6	0	0	120	501	4.17
7	I base my work on problems found in students' productions (e.g. related to morphology syntax orthography punctuation, etc.).	53	44.2	47	39.2	12	10.0	6	5.0	2	1.7	120	503	4.10
8	I help my students to practice language learning skills and strategies.	62	51.7	43	35.8	43	35.8	6	5.0	0	0	120	623	5.19
9	I modify the textbook activities whenever I feel appropriate and necessary for students' learning	17	14.2	29	24.2	57	47.5	15	12.5	2	1.7	120	404	3.36
10	I use the textbook as the primary source of activities for the class.	45	37.5	35	29.2	30	25.0	10	8.3	0	0	120	475	3.95

### Analysis of Teachers' Self-Reported Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods

The data in Table 4.4 presents teachers' self-reported conceptions of grammar teaching methods. The survey was based on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), and the responses for each item were converted into a mean score using the formula:  $X = \Sigma(v \times f)$  where  $v$  represents the value of the response (from 1 to 5), and  $f$  stands for the frequency of that response. The table includes ten items, each with a corresponding set of response frequencies. The purpose of this analysis is to identify which teaching methods teachers report using regularly and which ones they report using less frequently.

Based on the analysis of the table, it is evident that some teaching methods are more commonly practiced than others. The three highest mean scores indicate the methods that teachers use most frequently. The highest mean score is found in **Item 8**, with a value of **5.19**. This very high score shows that the majority of teachers (87.5%) “always” or “often” help students practice language learning skills and strategies. This suggests that strategy-based instruction is a central part of grammar teaching in the observed context. **Item 7** follows, with a mean score of **4.10**. This indicates that teachers frequently base their grammar instruction on problems identified in students' written work, such as issues with morphology, syntax, punctuation, and other language features. This reflects a responsive and practical teaching approach focused on addressing real learner needs. The third-highest mean score is found in **Item 6**, which scored **4.02**. This shows that teachers often encourage students to separate grammar from writing activities. It suggests that grammar is treated as a distinct instructional focus, possibly to improve accuracy through targeted practice.

On the other hand, the data also point to teaching methods that are less emphasized. **Item 3** has the lowest mean score of **3.13**, indicating a limited use of inductive methods, where students deduce grammar rules from patterns. This suggests a preference for more direct and explicit instruction. The second-lowest score appears in **Item 9**, with a mean of **3.36**. This shows that teachers only occasionally modify textbook activities, suggesting limited flexibility in adapting materials to students' needs. Finally, **Item 2**, with a mean score of **3.55**, is the third-lowest. While slightly higher, this score still indicates a moderate use of grammar rule explanations, possibly favoring more practical, example-based teaching approaches over detailed theoretical explanations.

To sum up, the findings show that teachers tend to favor practical, student-centered grammar teaching methods. The most emphasized practices include encouraging language learning strategies, addressing common student errors, and treating grammar as a separate area of focus to maintain instructional clarity. In contrast, less emphasis is placed on inductive approaches, frequent textbook adaptation, and detailed rule explanations. Overall, the data suggests a balanced, yet somewhat traditional, approach to grammar instruction—where direct teaching and practical engagement are prioritized over discovery-based or flexible instructional techniques.



**Table 4. 5. Instructional Dimensions**

No	Items	Always (5)(f) %		Often (4) %		Sometim es (3) %		Rarely (2) %		Never (1) %		Total no. participa	(X=ΣV×f )	Mean X=ΣV×f N
1	In my teaching I encourage participati on from the students.	20	16.7	.14	11.7	41	34.1	45	37.5	0	0	120	369	3.075
2	I present activities that require applica tion of grammar content as previously introduced.	40	33.2	53	44	10	8.3	15	12.5	3	2.5	120	475	3.95
3	I encourage my students to consider so lutions to problems without my help.	26	21.6	30	25	62	51.6	2	1.6	0	0	120	512	4.26
4	I am a resource person in English, pri marily in terms of giving and sharing information	31	25.8	43	35.8	16	13.3	17	14.2	13	10.8	120	422	3.51
5	I feel responsible for providing and co ntrolling the flow of content and stude nts should receive it.	25	20.8	35	29.2	45	37.5	15	12.5	0	0	120	430	3.58
6	I act as a role model by demonstrating skills and processes and then as a coac h/guide in helping students develop and apply skills and knowledge	20	16.7	49	40.8	32	26.7	18	15.0	1	8	120	429	3.575
7	I follow up each student's individual p rogress in writing grammar	21	17.5	29	24.2	47	39.2	20	16.6	3	2.5	120	453	3.775
Key: Scale: Always (5); Often (4); Sometimes (3); Rare (2); Never (1) Grand mean=3.57														

## **Analysis of the Descriptive Survey: Instructional Dimensions in Grammar Teaching**

Table 4.5 summarizes various instructional strategies employed by teachers in their grammar teaching practices. Teachers were asked to self-report their use of different strategies, using a five-point scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The responses were then converted into mean scores, providing an overview of how often each strategy is implemented in the classroom.

The analysis of the descriptive survey on instructional dimensions in grammar teaching reveals key insights into the strategies employed by teachers. Among the highest mean scores, Item 3, "I encourage my students to consider solutions to problems without my help," stands out with a score of 4.26, indicating that teachers frequently promote student independence in problem-solving, fostering critical thinking and autonomy. Item 7, with a mean score of 3.77, highlights that teachers often follow up on individual student progress emphasizing personalized support and monitoring. Additionally, Item 2, scored 3.95, showing that teachers consistently reinforce grammar concepts through practical application, which helps solidify students' understanding.

On the other hand, the lowest mean scores suggest areas where instructional strategies are less emphasized. Item 1, received the lowest mean score of 3.08, reflecting that while teachers do encourage participation, it may not be as consistently or frequently integrated into their teaching. Item 6, with a score of 3.58, indicates that while teachers occasionally model skills and processes and coach students, this approach is not as central to their teaching. Finally, Item 4, had a mean of 3.51, suggesting that while teachers do assume the role of a resource person, it may not be as frequently prioritized as other instructional strategies.

Overall, the results demonstrate that teachers place significant emphasis on student independence, practical application of grammar, and individualized feedback, but there is room for improvement in encouraging more active student participation and enhancing the role of demonstration and coaching in grammar instruction.

## **Analysis of Teachers' interview**

The analysis of interview data, consistent with questionnaire findings, highlights that teachers recognize the importance of student-centered teaching methods for grammar instruction. A semi-structured interview was conducted with ten teachers, using seven key questions.

- *Q1: Do you think teachers should present grammar to learners before expecting them to use it?*

Seven teachers (70%) responded affirmatively, stating that students should first learn and understand grammar before using it in communication. The remaining three teachers

(30%) preferred starting from the students' existing knowledge, allowing them to guess or discuss grammar concepts, thereby fostering learner autonomy.

- *Q2: How do you see grammar teaching in developing language skills?*  
All ten teachers (100%) emphasized that grammar is essential for developing both oral and written skills. They believed that understanding grammatical elements, such as parts of speech, is crucial for students to acquire language correctly. Some teachers saw grammar as foundational for communication, while others suggested that grammar should be integrated with skills practice.
- *Q3: How do you think the practicability of grammar teaching in your classrooms?*  
One teacher noted that separating grammar lessons from other language skills led to mechanical and boring sessions, with students memorizing rules without applying them. Four teachers (40%) acknowledged that while grammar is important for exams, it is often not practical in developing other language skills. They mentioned the exam-oriented nature of teaching limiting the focus on practical language use.
- *Q4: What do you think should be the role of the teacher in grammar teaching?*  
All ten teachers (100%) agreed that teachers play a critical role in grammar instruction. They highlighted responsibilities such as providing language structures, facilitating learning, offering feedback, and motivating students. Four teachers (40%) emphasized the teacher's controlling role, while one teacher (10%) stressed the importance of the teacher as a presenter and facilitator of communication.
- *Q5: Would you mention some of the techniques and activities you used in grammar class?*  
All ten teachers (100%) reported using both inductive and deductive approaches, depending on the lesson presented in the textbook. The choice of method was also influenced by students' exam orientation, shaping the grammar teaching approach.
- *Q6: What is your opinion on traditional grammar and communicative grammar teaching?*  
One teacher (10%) stated that traditional grammar teaching, which is teacher-centered and form-focused, differs significantly from communicative grammar teaching, which is student-centered. This teacher also noted that, while the curriculum promotes communicative methods, students' low proficiency and exam-focused learning often make this approach challenging.
- *Q7: Do you try to make your class participatory/student-centered?*  
All ten teachers (100%) agreed that student-centered teaching could be highly beneficial, fostering social interaction, motivation, and self-confidence. However, they expressed doubts about its feasibility due to challenges like large class sizes, student dependency on others, noise, seating arrangements, and the rigid, exam-oriented system.

Overall, the interview data indicate that while the teachers recognize the importance of student-centered methods, practical constraints such as large class sizes, exam pressures, and student proficiency often hinder their implementation. Most teachers use a deductive approach for

grammar teaching, but a more communicative, participatory classroom remains largely unattainable in their current teaching context. These findings align with the questionnaire results.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from this study clearly demonstrate a significant reliance on traditional grammar teaching methods among English language teachers. These methods, often characterized by lecture-based instruction and rote memorization of grammatical rules, are in stark contrast to the communicative and student-centered approaches advocated by the current English language curriculum and national education policies in Ethiopia. Despite ongoing curricular reforms aimed at promoting active language use and communicative competence, actual classroom practices remain largely teacher-centered.

In practice, many teachers prioritize the explicit explanation of grammar rules over interactive and contextualized grammar use. This approach restricts students' opportunities to engage with grammar in meaningful, communicative situations, which are essential for developing both fluency and accuracy in language use.

Interestingly, although teachers express awareness of the benefits of student-centered methods—such as increased learner engagement, deeper understanding, and improved communicative competence—they continue to rely on traditional practices. This disconnect between belief and practice is shaped by several persistent challenges. These include:

- Textbook limitations that emphasize rule-based instruction,
- Students' low proficiency levels, which make communicative activities more difficult,
- Examination-focused curricula that prioritize grammar knowledge over communicative ability,
- Physical classroom constraints, such as rigid seating arrangements and overcrowding, which make interaction and group work difficult to manage.

These challenges create a persistent gap between the theoretical ideals promoted in policy documents and curriculum guides, and the actual instructional approaches implemented in classrooms. The continued dominance of traditional methods, despite policy shifts, suggests that structural and contextual factors within the school environment significantly shape instructional decision-making. Ultimately, this disconnection affects not only the quality of grammar instruction but also limits students' ability to apply grammar in real-life communication, thereby impeding the broader goals of English language education.

Suggestions for Further Research: First, studies could explore the belief-practice gap among teachers by examining the cognitive and emotional dimensions of their instructional choices and

how these evolve over time with experience, training, or curricular reform. Investigating the impact of both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs is also vital to determine how effectively these programs prepare educators to implement communicative and student-centered grammar instruction. Additionally, exploring students' perspectives—such as their attitudes toward grammar teaching methods, their preferences, and their perceived learning outcomes—would provide a more holistic view of classroom dynamics and inform more effective instructional practices. Research into the alignment between textbooks and curriculum goals is also necessary to identify any discrepancies that may contribute to teacher resistance or instructional inconsistency. Furthermore, practical studies are needed to design and test innovative strategies for implementing interactive grammar teaching in large, resource-constrained classrooms. Investigating how national language education policies are interpreted and enacted at the local level could shed light on systemic barriers and support better policy-practice integration. Finally, comparative studies across regions or countries facing similar challenges would offer valuable insights into the broader applicability of effective grammar teaching strategies and help identify contextually adaptable solutions.

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**Appendix-1:**

Questionnaires to be filled by Public Secondary School English Teachers

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire is mainly designed to make a survey of English language teachers' conceptions of effective English language teaching methods and the actual teaching practices that teachers apply in their classrooms. The questionnaire has three sections: background information, English Language Teachers' conceptions of effective teaching methods and teachers' self-reported classroom practices. Your honest response to each statement helps the researcher increase his confidence on the collected data.

Therefore, I kindly request you to give a genuine reply to each question asked as your contribution plays a very important role for the success of this study. The researcher would also like to make sure that all your responses will be kept confidential and used only for the research purpose. As a further assurance, you don't need to write your name.

**Thank you in advance for your kind cooperation,**

**The researcher, Haile Mekonin Wayesa**

**E-mail ID wayesa59@gmail.com**

### Teachers' Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods

No	Items	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (AG)	Not known (N)	Disagree (DAG)	Strongly Disagree
1	I think Teaching English grammar is a manageable and a rewarding activity that anyone is interested and can do it.					
2	I feel Students will learn grammar better if they understand grammatical Terms					
3	I feel that it is essential that students are familiar with the correct grammatical terminology					
4	The main role of the teacher in a grammar lesson is to explain the grammar point.					
5	It is important to focus on grammar in all lessons.					
6	Teachers should begin a grammar lesson by explaining how the structure works.					

No	Items	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
1	I devote time to memorizing grammar rules (on syntax, morphology, orthography, etc.)."					
2	I finish my explanations by asking the students to sum up through a metalinguistic grammar phenomenon we have worked upon					
3	Attention to grammar ensures that students become aware of how the language works					
4	I ask questions to stimulate discussion in my teaching than giving information					
5	I give students the opportunity to work out rules from examples					

Teachers' Self-report Conceptions of Grammar Teaching Methods

		Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
1	I present information to students in lecture format.					
2	I use my knowledge of grammar rules to explain complex English sentences to students					
3	I present patterns in English language for my students to deduce grammar rules on their own					
4	I do not impede student learning through over use of mother tongue					
5	I get students to self-correct their errors					
6	Explain the grammar structure; make students participate; and then practise by using the structure.					
7	I base my work on problems found in students' productions (e.g. related to morphology syntax orthography punctuation, etc.).					
8	I help my students to practice language learning skills and strategies.					
9	I modify the textbook activities whenever I feel appropriate and necessary for students' learning					
10	I use the textbook as the primary source of activities for the class.					