



Research Article

EFL Teachers' Awareness, Perceptions, and Practices of Implementing Active Learning Methods

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ABSTRACT

This study was mainly aimed at assessing English language teachers' awareness, perceptions, and practices of implementing active learning methods at Kambata Tembaro zone, Ethiopia. A descriptive survey method in a mixed approach was used to collect, analyze, and interpret data for the study. Instruments such as classroom observation, questionnaires, and focus group discussions were employed to collect valid data for the study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to analyze and present the data. Thus, data gathered via classroom observation and questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed by using SPSS, and data gathered via focus group discussion were qualitatively analyzed through narrations. The findings of the study revealed that teachers are not adequately aware of active learning methods. The findings of the study also revealed that teachers view/perceive active learning methods negatively. Likewise, the study ensured that the implementation of active learning methods in the zone was almost nonexistent. The researchers suggested that the teachers should take capacity-building pieces of training on a short and long-term basis.

Introduction

Ethiopia is a multilingual and multicultural country that has more than eighty languages under various language families (Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic, and Nilotic). According to the language policy of Ethiopia, all nations, nationalities, and peoples of the country have the right to use and expand their language (mother tongue) for

communicative, administrative, and educational purposes. Due to this reason, starting from lower primary (grade one), different languages are used as a medium of instruction to teach other subjects. Whereas, English is taught as a subject starting in grade one and it is a medium of instruction starting from grade five in some regions, from grade nine in some other regions, and at colleges and universities

in all regions in the country (MoE 2002). Currently, as a developing country, Ethiopia is expanding its dimension in economic, social, political, educational, diplomatic, and international relations aspects which need the ability to communicate in English. As a result, several people show a strong demand to master basic skills of the English language to get wider access to employment.

Even though the English language is used as a medium of instruction and there is a strong demand for its use and expansion in Ethiopia, scholars strongly argue that students at all levels of education and even university graduates face difficulties in expressing themselves as well as their environment using the English language.

The question “Why are the students not effective in learning the English language in Ethiopia”? This leads us to another question: that is, how do they learn the language? To begin with the latter, it is obvious that in most parts of Ethiopia learning the English language is entirely limited to the classroom contexts because students have few opportunities to practice it outside the classroom. Therefore, students solely acquire (learn) the knowledge and skills of the language in the classroom (Eba 2013). Different methods/approaches are applied in the classroom to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Among teaching and learning methods and approaches applied to language classes, active learning has gotten more attention from researchers and educators in the current curriculum of language all over the world (Fredson, 2015). Also in Ethiopia, as a result of educational reform, a significant shift of instructional approach from a traditional method to an active learning method was made following the 1994 policy of education and training. As a result, the English language curriculum of Ethiopia strongly emphasizes engaging students in learning through discussion, debate, dialogue, role-play, and so on in a way that encourages them to discuss ideas, form opinions, and apply their learning to life (Mulatu & Bezabih, 2018).

Currently, active learning is a dominant method at all levels of education in Ethiopia. (MoE 2002). Active learning methods involve active engagement of students in learning and put their learning at its

center focusing on how they learn rather than what they learn. Teachers are expected to encourage students to think hard and help them play an important role in their learning by building knowledge and understanding (Gillies et al., 2008; Arbona, 2016).

Theoretical framework

Active learning is an approach to learning which is based on a theory of learning called social constructivism. The theory of social constructivism emphasizes the fact that learners construct or build their understanding with the assistance of active interaction between individuals involved in the learning process. The interaction may be between one learner and another, between a learner and the instructor, and the assigned learning task (Keith & Taber 2016). Interaction between individuals and the learning tasks allows an optimal learning environment in which the learners possess the opportunity to construct their understanding from the presence of dynamic interaction. Here, three basic assumptions that underlie the premises of the social constructivism theory of learning are pointed out by (Alexendar et al., 2016). These are reality, knowledge, and learning. In the social constructivist approach, reality cannot be discovered: it does not exist before its social creation. It is constructed through human activity. In the knowledge perspective of social constructivism, knowledge is established as a human product and is constructed socially and culturally. In other words, individuals create the meaning of learning through their interaction with each other and with the environment that they live in. Learning is viewed as a social process by which individuals who are actively engaged in social activities bring about meaningful learning (Vighnarajah et al., 2008; Olusegun, 2015). Thus, the social constructivist approach puts deliberate attention on the learners' collaboration with others to bring about knowledge and understanding.

Constructivists claim that in the process of making meaning, students replace or adapt their existing knowledge and understanding with deeper levels of understanding and that learning happens as knowledge moves from short to long-term memory and is incorporated into progressively

more detailed and sophisticated mental models (Cambridge assessment of international education, 2019). Thus from a constructivist perspective, knowledge is not passively received from the world, from others, or authoritative sources. Rather, all knowledge is created as individuals adapt to and make sense of their experiential worlds (Vanderburg & Trotter (2021). Constructivism is a theory that is based on observation and scientific study, about how people learn. It says that people construct their understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Lantbeye Wudneh, 2021). When we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experience, maybe changing what we believe, or maybe discarding the new information as irrelevant.

As Alexendar et al. (2016), two important ideas rotate around the simple idea of constructed knowledge. The first is that learners construct new understandings using what they already know. The second notion is that learning is active rather than passive. Learners confront their understanding in light of what they encounter in the new learning situation. The constructivist learning theory argues that people produce knowledge and form meaning based on their experiences. Constructivist theory strongly argues that in learning, “concepts follow action than they precede it” and that new experience builds on an already existing knowledge and learning happens primarily through social interaction with others, such as a teacher or a learner’s peers (Brad, 2000; Kitaw, 2017; Mulatu & Bezabih, 2018).

Taber (2019) stated that as constructivist theory, active learning incorporates the following four points: The first one is the principle of active learning in which learners construct their meaning. That is, learners are not passive knowledge absorbers; they make knowledge meaningful and useful in a new situation. The second point is new learning builds on prior knowledge. That is, learners combine old and new information and make sense of it. The third point is, that learning is enhanced by social interaction. This means learners resolve conflicting ideas in social settings by participating in small group activities first and discussions within the entire class later. The last

point is that learning develops through authentic tasks. Learners’ activities should simulate experiences that will be encountered in their real life (Bucharest, 2010; Getachew, 2012)

Role of the teacher

As far as the learning and teaching process is concerned, Eba (2013) outlined three major factors upon which success or failure in learning depends. These are the teacher, the learner, and the curriculum. The teacher is relatively more important of the three because the teacher is the mediator between the learners and the curriculum. Dilekçi & Limon (2020) state that the students' way of thinking and doing things at school is mediated by their teachers’ ways of acting. Therefore, teachers need to have a strong sense of responsibility for their duties and a strong desire for professional improvement to fulfill their professional responsibilities which demand adequate knowledge and a positive attitude towards the profession as well as the learners. Teachers’ pedagogical and conceptual knowledge and attitude about language pedagogy could exert a considerable impact on their classroom application of the intended approaches and methods. What teachers think, know, and believe and the relationships of these mental constructs are the basis of what teachers do in the language teaching classroom to achieve the intended goal learning of the language (Fall, 2014; Richards, 2017; Archana & Usha, 2017; Vale & Barbosa, 2023). Therefore, English language teachers have to be knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally shaped in line with the knowledge that the globalized world requires.

Teachers’ pedagogical knowledge

The other very important point here is the teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and ability. It includes the teacher’s subject matter knowledge, the selection of techniques and activities that the teacher employs in teaching together with the theories, beliefs, principles, values, and ideas that are their source, sometimes referred to as pedagogical content knowledge, which Shulman suggested ‘represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized,

represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction' (Devira, 2020). Pedagogical knowledge and ability draw on content knowledge as well as other sources of knowledge but are in the process of transforming it since it is understood about the knowledge of the learners, the curriculum, the teaching context, and teaching methods. Richards (2017) describes it as entailing at least three areas: knowing about and how to use the target language, knowing about and how to teach in a culturally appropriate way, and knowing about and how to behave appropriately in the target language.

Teachers' beliefs and attitude

Teachers' beliefs, practices, and attitudes are important for understanding and improving educational processes. They are closely linked to teachers' strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional lives and to their general well-being, and they shape students' learning environments and influence student motivation and achievement (Aschalew, 2012). Furthermore, they can be expected to mediate the effects of job-related policies such as changes in curricula for teachers' initial education or professional development on students' learning (Richards, 2017). Generally, teachers' belief about teaching has more to do with their student's learning of language. They have to develop a positive perception towards their role as a teacher to facilitate students' inquiry for students learn best by finding solutions to problems on their own and students should be allowed to think of solutions to practical problems themselves before the teacher shows them how to solve.

In the above paragraphs, it was forwarded that teachers' knowledge of the content of the subject as well as the pedagogy and their attitude towards the pedagogy is crucial to making the process of teaching and learning meaningful. Thus, the current study strives to investigate the teachers' awareness, perception, and practice of implementing active learning methods by finding awareness for the following specific research questions.

1. To what extent do English language teachers understand active learning methods?

2. How do English language teachers perceive active learning?
3. Are English language teachers properly implementing active learning methods?

Methodology of the Study

Setting and method of the study

As mentioned earlier, the general objective of this study was to assess English language teachers' awareness, perceptions, and practices of implementing active learning methods in secondary schools in the Kambata Tembaro zone, Ethiopia. To achieve this objective successfully, a descriptive survey method in a mixed approach was employed to collect, analyze, interpret, and present the collected data.

Participants of the study

In this study, among 24 secondary schools in the zone, five were randomly selected for the study and all (100%) grade nine English language teachers in the selected schools were purposely taken for the study. Thus, data for the study were collected from 37 English language teachers through classroom observation, questionnaires, and focus group discussion.

Data collection procedures

The following specific procedures were employed to collect data from the participants.

Classroom observations

From each school, one teacher was randomly selected and observed three times by using a non-structured observation checklist (the observer goes to the classroom and records what the teachers and the students do in the classroom). Thus, during the current study, a total of 15 classroom observations were done to get valid data from the participants.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was the major data collection tool for the study. Thus, a close-ended questionnaire which was organized in two parts was administered to the participants. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of two sections which were used to assess the teachers' awareness and perceptions of active learning methods. The teachers were requested to respond by choosing

from the given alternatives which range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The second part had five sections consisting of 17 items which were used to elicit data on the teachers' practice of implementing active learning methods. The questionnaire was administered to 37 grade nine English language teachers and all of them were filled and collected.

Focus Group Discussion

The third instrument used to collect data for the study was a focus group discussion. As Focus group discussion is important to elicit a wide range of information from the participants about the phenomenon under investigation, it was held between 8 grade nine English teachers to generate relevant data on the teachers' awareness, perceptions, and practices of implementing active learning methods. The participants were given pseudo names like Teacher Belete, Teacher Alemu, Teacher Chala, Teacher Amare, Teacher Zenebe, Teacher Zerihun, Teacher Mulugeta, and Teacher Muluneh. The researchers used a semi-structured FGD guide which had five general and two probing open-ended statements to elicit valid information from the participants.

Techniques of data analysis

The data collected through the above instruments were analyzed differently by using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Therefore, the data collected via classroom observation and questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively by using SPSS version 26 to calculate frequency, percentage, and mean value. Whereas, data collected through focus group discussions were thematically analyzed by using qualitative methods.

Findings

1. Teachers' perception of active learning

It is stated in the preceding sections that the objective of this study was to investigate EFL teachers' awareness, perceptions, and practices of implementing active learning methods. In this section, analysis of the data collected via the aforementioned instruments to find answers to the specific research questions is briefly discussed as follows. To get answers to the first and second

research questions, the researchers collected data from the participants via questionnaires and classroom observations.

To assess the participant teachers' awareness and perceptions of active learning methods, the researchers employed 11 positively narrated and 10 negatively narrated statements. The respondents were asked to express their feelings using a scale ranging from 1 (strongly) disagree to 5 (strongly agree). The data were analyzed and presented by comparing means of the teachers' responses based on the criteria used by Sozen & Guven (2019) where:- 1-1.80= strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60= disagree, 2.61-3.40= undecided, 3.41-4.20= agree and 4.21-5.00= strongly agree. The positively narrated statements are discussed in Table 1 and the negatively narrated ones are discussed in Table 2 below. With this regard, Item 10 in Table 1 below which was positively stated as "Students are more responsible for their learning in active learning" was strongly disagreed by 13 (35.1%), disagreed by 8 (21.6%), undecided by 6 (16.2%), agreed by 8 (21.6%) and strongly agreed by 2 (5.4%) of the participant teachers with mean value 2.41. The mean value (2.41) shows that most teachers responded "disagree" to the statement. That means, most teachers think /believe that active learning methods do not help students to become responsible for their learning.

Likewise, the mean values of the teachers' responses for items 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, and 11, which were stated as "Active learning helps learners to grasp the content easily", "Active learning better serves all types of students in the classroom", "In active learning classes, students are actively engaged in learning activities", "Active learning helps Students' to develop self-confidence as they are exposed to different presentations", "Active learning creates smooth communication between teachers and students" and "Active learning helps students to develop learning autonomy", respectively were 3.03, 3.30, 2.62, 3.22, 3.22 and 2.78. These mean values which range between 2.61 and 3.40 according to the above-mentioned rule stand for a response "undecided". Therefore, most of the teachers' responses for items 1, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 11 were "undecided". The response "undecided" indicates that the teachers have no clear

understanding of whether active learning methods help learners grasp content easily, serve all types of students in the classroom, make students engaged in learning activities, help them develop self-confidence, create smooth communication between teachers and students and help students to develop learning autonomy.

Moreover, the teachers responded “agree” with mean values 3.51, 3.81, and 4.19 to the statements “Active learning allows the learners to express their ideas without difficulty”, “Active learning strategies are good tools to promote learning of English language” and “Active learning methods promote better social skills among students” which were items 2, 5 and 7 respectively in Table 1 below. From the teachers’ responses, it can be said that relatively more teachers think/believe that active learning methods allow the students to express their ideas without difficulty, and are good tools for

promoting English language learning and social skills among students. Finally, most of the teachers responded “strongly agree” to item 6 which says, “Active learning encourages the spirit of cooperation between students” with a mean value of 4.32. This response reveals that teachers think that active learning encourages the spirit of cooperation between students.

Generally, in the above analysis of the data presented in Table 1 below, among 11 statements that were positively narrated, most of the teachers responded “disagree” to 1 statement, “undecided” to 6 statements, “agree” to 3 statements, and “strongly agree” to 1 statement. From this, it can be concluded that most of the teachers do not clearly understand the strategies of active learning methods and their importance to help students achieve their learning objectives.

Table 1.

Teachers’ perception towards active learning methods (positively narrated)

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Active learning helps learners grasp the content easily	4	10.8	7	18.9	13	35.1	10	27.0	3	8.1	3.03
2	Active learning gives opportunity for the learners to express their ideas without difficulty	5	13.5	5	13.5	5	13.5	10	27.0	12	32.4	3.51
3	Active learning better serves all types of students in the classroom	7	18.9	6	16.2	4	10.8	9	24.3	11	29.7	3.30
4	In active learning classes, students are actively engaged in learning activities	8	21.6	12	32.4	7	18.9	6	16.2	4	10.8	2.62
5	Active learning strategies are good tools to promote learning of English language	3	8.1	2	5.4	7	18.9	12	32.4	13	35.1	3.81
6	Active learning encourages the spirit of cooperation between students			1	2.7	6	16.2	10	27.0	20	54.1	4.32
7	Active learning methods promote better social skills among students	2	5.4			7	18.9	8	21.6	10	26.3	4.19
8	Active learning helps Students develop self-confidence as they are exposed to different presentations	5	13.5	6	16.2	10	27.0	8	21.6	8	21.6	3.22
9	Active learning creates smooth communication between teachers and students	7	18.9	4	10.8	8	21.6	10	27.0	8	21.6	3.22
10	Students are more responsible for their learning in active learning	13	35.1	8	21.6	6	16.2	8	21.6	2	5.4	2.41
11	Active learning helps students develop learning autonomy	6	16.2	10	27.0	12	32.4	4	10.8	5	13.5	2.78

1, strongly disagree 2, disagree 3, undecided 4, agree 5, strongly agree

The researchers also employed 10 statements that were negatively narrated to assess the teacher's

perception/understanding of active learning methods. The statements are presented in Table 2

and analyzed as follows. Among the 10 negatively stated sentences, the teachers responded “undecided” to items 1, 4, 6, and 9 which respectively say, “Active learning brings the noise to the classroom. Thus I prefer the lecture method”, “When students are assigned in group activities, they do something else and lose concentration”, “Active learning is not suitable to maintain classroom discipline” and “Teaching English is easier when I apply lecture method than active learning” with mean values 3.35, 3.24, 3.24 and 3.27 respectively. This shows us that most of the teachers view active learning methods neither positively nor negatively. Thus, they have no clear understanding of active learning strategies and their importance for the students.

Whereas, the teachers responded “agree” to items 2 (In active learning classes only fast learners are promoted and it discourages slow and medium learners) with a mean value of 3.57, 3 (Active learning is not supported in large classes) with a mean value 3.46, 5(Active learning methods assess students difficult to the teacher) with mean value 3.78, 7(Classroom situations are not suitable for the implementation of active learning methods) with

mean value 4.05, 8(Teachers have no much responsibility in active learning methods. Thus learning outcomes are not satisfactory) with mean value 3.97 and 10(In active learning students do not get the necessary help from the teacher and learning objectives are not successfully achieved) with mean value 3.68. Thus, most of the teachers responded “agree” to items 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 which were negatively narrated. This implies that the teacher thinks that active learning promotes only fast learners, it is not supported in large classes, it makes assessment difficult for teachers, classroom situations are not suitable for implementation, it minimizes the teacher’s responsibility and it does not help students to get support from teachers.

Concerning items in Table 2 below which are negatively narrated, most of the teachers responded “undecided” to 4 statements and most of them responded “agree” to 6 statements. Therefore, from the above analysis of the data in Table 2 below, it can be concluded that most English language teachers think that active learning is not a good method and thus it does not apply to their situation.

Table 2.

Teachers’ perceptions towards active learning methods (negatively narrated statements)

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Active learning brings the noise to the classroom. Thus I prefer the lecture method	7	18.9	7	18.9	2	5.4	8	21.6	13	35.1	3.35
2	In active learning classes, only fast learners are promoted and it discourages slow and medium learners	6	16.2	6	16.2			11	29.7	14	37.8	3.57
3	Active learning is not supported in large classes	7	18.9	5	13.5	1	2.7	12	32.4	12	32.4	3.46
4	When students are assigned to group activities, they do something else and lose concentration	8	21.6	8	21.6			9	24.3	12	32.4	3.24
5	Active learning methods assess students difficult for the teacher	4	10.8	4	10.8	3	8.1	11	29.7	15	40.5	3.78
6	Active learning is not suitable for maintaining classroom discipline	5	13.5	8	21.6	7	18.9	7	18.9	10	27.0	3.24
7	Classroom situations are not suitable for the implementation of active learning methods	1	2.7	4	10.8	5	13.5	9	24.3	18	48.6	4.05
8	Teachers do have not much responsibility for active learning methods. Thus learning outcomes are not satisfactory	3	8.1	2	5.4	2	5.4	16	43.2	14	37.8	3.97
9	Teaching English is easier when I apply the lecture method than active learning	7	18.9	7	18.9	2	5.4	11	29.7	10	27.0	3.27
10	In active learning students do not get the necessary help from the teacher and learning objectives are not successfully achieved	4	10.8	5	13.5	3	8.1	12	32.4	13	35.1	3.68

1, strongly disagree 2, disagree 3, undecided 4, agree 5, strongly agree

2. Teachers’ practice of implementing active learning methods

A questionnaire consisting of 17 statements that express different active learning strategies was used to assess the teachers’ practice of implementing active learning methods in their teaching of the English language. The data were analyzed here by starting from items to which most of the teachers’ responses were “never” and going to statements to which the teachers' responses were “always”.

To this end, as can be seen in Table 3.1 below, a large number of teachers (14 (37.8%), 12 (32.4%), 13 (35.1%), 17(45.9%), and 21 (56.8%)), respectively responded “never” to items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 4 which were stated as “In the classroom I apply a think-pair-share method to help students in the classroom learn better, Students evaluate other student’s work in group and give feedback, Students discuss a given topic in large groups and one group evaluates the other group in the classroom, I give projects for the students to go to some offices, collect data and present it in the classroom and During a discussion in the classroom or the school, students are asked to write a minute” respectively.

From this information, it can be concluded that most of the teachers never implement think pair

share, self-evaluation, group evaluation, project works, and minute writing in teaching the English language.

Teacher Chala started the discussion and said, “As I think, active learning is a way of teaching by making students participate in all activities in the classroom by asking questions, giving classwork, putting them in groups, and making them communicate with each other.” Considering the strategies, we learned many activities as active learning strategies during my degree course such as brainstorming, discussion, debate, discussion, and pair and group work. The teachers also argued in detail on the importance of active learning to improve students' ability. Some of them said that “active learning is a good way to teach English because it helps the students to develop all skills at the same time. Some others said that it is not the chosen way to teach in our case because students’ achievement on regional as well as national examinations is lower these days than before. Students who stopped their educational journey in grade 6 or 8 in the previous policies are much better than those who are university graduates currently. So, the government needs to conduct a detailed investigation to fix the problem.

Table 3
Strategies to which the teachers responded “never”

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	In the classroom, I apply a think-pair-share method to help students learn better	14	37.8	3	8.1	4	10.8	9	24.3	7	18.9	2.78
2	Students evaluate other student’s work in groups and give feedback	12	32.4	7	18.9	10	27.0	3	8.1	5	13.5	2.51
3	Students discuss a given topic in large groups and one group evaluates the other group in the classroom	13	35.1	9	24.3	8	21.6	3	8.1	4	10.8	2.35
4	I give projects for the students to go to some offices, collect data, and present it in the classroom	17	45.9	10	27.0	10	27.0					1.81
5	During discussion in the classroom or the school, students are asked to write a minute	21	56.8	11	29.7	2	5.4	3	8.1			1.65

1, never 2, rarely 3, sometimes 4, usually 5, always

In reaction to the statement, (I let my students discuss in small groups the content of a topic and present it to the whole class) in Table 3.2 below, 10 (27.0%), which was the largest number among the

given options, responded “rarely”. This indicates that most of the teachers rarely give group assignments to their students.

Table 4.

Strategy to which the teachers responded “never”

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I let my students discuss in small groups the content of a topic and present it to the whole class	6	16.2	10	27.0	9	24.3	7	18.9	5	13.5	2.86

1, never 2, rarely 3, sometimes 4, usually 5, always

Likewise, as indicated in Table 3.3 below, concerning items (I make my students debate on a certain topic in the group, I make students review and comment on each other’s classwork and I pose a topic or a problem to the students and ask them to come up with the solution after deep discussion with others in or out of the classroom) respectively the same number of teachers 15(40.5%), which is the largest values among the options, responded “sometimes”. In the same way, items 4 and 5 (In my teaching, I make use of different puzzles and games

to make a topic clear to the students, and my students act out on some authentic issues such as a shop kipper and buyer, a doctor and a patient, etc in the classroom) in Table 3.3, were responded “Sometimes” by 11 (29.7%) and 14 (37.8%).

From this analysis, it is fair to conclude that most teachers sometimes implement active learning strategies such as debate, group evaluation, problem-solving methods, games and puzzles, and role-playing in English classes.

Table 5.

Strategies to which the teachers responded “never”

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I make my students debate on a certain topic in group	9	24.3	8	21.6	15	40.5	4	10.8	1	2.7	2.46
2	I make students review and comment on each other’s classwork	9	24.3	8	21.6	15	40.5	3	8.1	2	5.4	2.49
3	I pose a topic or a problem to the students and ask them to come up with a solution after deep discussion with others in or out of the classroom	5	13.5	5	13.5	15	40.5	7	18.9	5	13.5	3.05
4	In my teaching, I make use of different puzzles and games to make a topic clear to the students	3	8.1	5	13.5	11	29.7	9	24.3	9	24.3	3.43
5	My students act out on some authentic issues such as a shop kipper and buyer, a doctor and a patient, etc in the classroom	7	18.9	9	24.3	14	37.8	4	10.8	3	8.1	2.65

1, never 2, rarely 3, sometimes 4, usually 5, always

On the other hand, data in Table 3.4 shows that 15 (40.5%) and 10 (27.0) of the teachers responded “usually” to items (Students are asked to tell their own or someone /something else’s history to the whole class and Students are given a written

assignment on a certain topic and asked to present it two or more times by making corrections to help them evaluate themselves). From this data, we can say that teachers usually teach their students via history-telling and self-assessment techniques.

Table 6.

Strategies to which the teachers responded “never”

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Students are asked to tell their own or someone /something else’s history to the whole class			3	8.1	6	16.2	15	40.5	13	35.1	4.03
2	Students are given a written assignment on a certain topic and asked to present it two or	6	16.2	8	21.6	7	18.9	10	27.0	6	16.2	3.05

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	more times by making corrections to help them evaluate themselves											
		<i>1, never 2, rarely 3, sometimes 4, usually 5, always</i>										

On top of the above, from data in Table 3.5 items (I give peer works to help students develop their communication skills, during a lecture I pause at certain intervals and ask students if the topic/the lesson is clear and I make students select some students to evaluate their assignments and give

feedbacks) respectively, 17 (45.9%), 14 (37.8%) and 17 (45.9) teachers responded “always”. Therefore, the data assures that most of the teachers always apply peer work, interactive lectures, and group evaluation in teaching English.

Table 7.

Strategies to which the teachers responded “never”

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I give peer work to help student develop their communication skill	3	8.1	3	8.1	10	27.0	4	10.8	17	45.9	3.78
2	During a lecture, I pause at certain intervals and ask students if the topic/the lesson is clear	3	8.1	5	13.5	7	18.9	8	21.6	14	37.8	3.68
3	I make students select some students to evaluate their assignments and give feedback	0		0		4	10.8	16	43.2	17	45.9	4.35

1, never 2, rarely 3, sometimes 4, usually 5, always

Classroom observation data

Classroom observations were conducted by using an unstructured classroom observation checklist. That is, the observer entered the class recorded every activity of the teachers, and wrote a note after the observation. Thus, five teachers who were denoted by Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, teacher D, and Teacher E were observed three times each. All the observed teachers were male teachers. During the classroom observations, it was noticed by the observer (the researchers) that most of the teachers 3(60%) teachers A, D, and E had similar ways of teaching. That is, the teacher gets into the class and salutes the students and he asks what has been learned in the previous period. Very few students raise their hands and tell the answer. Then the teachers directly moved to the day's lesson by writing a long note on the blackboard. A few students were writing the notes and some students were doing other homework, some other students were talking to each other, and some other students were lying on their desks. After giving some time to the students, the teachers explained the notes. Teacher D gave class work during two

observations but no student did it at the given time, the bell rang and the teacher left the class. Teacher A gave homework during the second observation and he asked the students to submit their homework in the third observation but the students responded that they did not do the homework because they did not have textbooks. Teacher E left the class during all the observations after he explained the note he wrote on the blackboard. Teacher B wrote 5 examples of “active and passive voice after that, he asked the students to discuss in small groups and write 10 active and passive sentences each presenting it to the class turn by turn. He formed 8 groups each having 8 or 9 students and he was moving in the class asking the groups if all members were participating. Finally, three groups presented and time was over. Teacher C during one (33%) of the observation gave a class work and asked students to check their friends' answers and give feedback. Some students did the class work and exchanged their exercises books but many of the students did not even write the class work. The teacher did/said nothing to the students who were not doing the classwork periodically

asking who had finished doing the classwork. During the classroom observations, none of the teachers used daily weekly, and annual plans for their lessons. It shows that the teachers were not ready and motivated to teach. From the students' side, as the researchers were informed by one teacher during informal discussion, 90% of them did not have textbooks, many of them did not have exercise books and many of them came to school once a week or two weeks. Data obtained from the classroom observations assured that implementing active learning methods in the current situation in schools in the Kambata Tembaro zone is unthinkable. The teachers also strongly discussed during the focus group discussion that implementing active learning is too difficult for them due to different challenging factors including their lack of interest and motivation to take risks to change the present situations in their schools. For example, Teacher A said, that:-

“In our schools, it is not possible to implement active learning. Active learning needs knowledgeable and motivated teachers, motivated students, suitable classroom conditions, and available teaching materials. When we come to our case, the teacher himself/herself that means I am no longer interested in paying attention to my profession because a teacher's life is a life of struggle nowadays as the salary is not attractive. On the other hand, there is no on-the-job training for teachers on how to implement active learning methods. In addition to that, most students have no interest in participating in activities, and among 90 students less than 10 students have textbooks. There is also no single teacher guide in the school and the chairs and the desks are very heavy and some of them are even broken. Therefore, I teach my students through the lecture method.”

Discussion

The findings of this study agree with some previous study findings. Bedilu (2011) found that the main implementers of active learning (teachers) have a blurred perception of active learning as a result, their practices of active learning were low.

Among serious factors affecting the implementation of active learning are lack of interest and attitudinal resistance, poor instructional facilities and classroom settings, and lack of orientation. Finelli and Borrego (2020) have also come up with findings that teachers showed resistance to active learning methods, which support the findings of the current study. The study is also in line with (Madison et al., 2020; Andrews et al., 2020). The findings of this study also agree with the findings by Mohammed, Seid, and Abdurahman (2020) in which they concluded that teachers implement Lecture methods, discussion, cooperative learning, and question-answer methods on a low scale. The findings at a specific point (despite their good perceptions, their practices of active learning strategies were low), agree with (Amare & Dagne, 2020). Seid and Mohammed (2019) also found that active learning methods were not properly implemented in the schools.

On the other hand, the Findings of the current study are contrary to the study by Yusuk (2020) who concluded that teachers have a positive perception of active learning methods, and Amare & Dagne (2020). In their study, they stated that most of the respondents perceived active learning positively. The findings also disagree with Anang, et al., 2020; Puskas, 2021; Reister and Rook, 2021 and Nisiforou et al., 2021) who suggested teachers' preference for active learning methods.

Conclusions

This study investigated English language teachers' awareness, perception, and practices of implementing active learning methods in secondary schools in the Kambata Tembaro zone. Data for the study were collected from grade nine English language teachers via questionnaires, classroom observations, and focus group discussions. The instruments were organized in a way they can elicit data about the teachers' awareness and perceptions of what active learning strategies/methods are, why they are important, and how they are implemented in teaching the English language. Items in the instruments were also used to assess the teachers' actual classroom practice of implementing active learning methods by applying different learning/teaching strategies. The researchers

concluded the findings of the study as follows. Teachers lack the necessary knowledge or understanding of active learning methods and techniques for implementing the methods.

Thus, the teachers view/perceive active learning methods negatively because they think that active learning demotivates average and slow learners as it only promotes fast learners. They also think that the method makes assessment difficult and is not the preferred way of teaching their situation. Concerning the teachers' practice of implementing active learning methods in their teaching, it is almost nonexistent because the teachers said that they never implement active learning strategies such as think pair share, self-evaluation, group evaluation, project works, and minute writing in teaching the English language. Likewise, the teachers reported that they rarely give group assignments to their students to promote active learning. The findings of this study also revealed that teachers sometimes implement debate, group evaluation, problem-solving methods, games and puzzles, and role-playing methods in their English language classes. The findings also assured that in most of their teaching, they implement history-telling, self-assessment, peer work, group work, and interactive lectures method which are more activities carried out in a traditional method than active learning. Therefore, teachers' practice of implementing active learning methods in the above-mentioned zone is too low.

Recommendation

In this study, it was found that teachers are not adequately aware of active learning strategies and thus, they perceive active learning negatively. Moreover, Teachers' practice of implementing active learning methods in teaching the English language is almost negligible. The teachers confirmed that they tend to apply the lecture method than active learning due to mainly the interest and motivation the teachers themselves as well as their students have towards learning in general and active learning in particular. The reasons behind the teachers' lack of interest in teaching (applying active learning strategies) as reported are insufficient salary scale, the diversified background of students, scarcity of teaching

materials, and students' lack of motivation. The researchers strongly recommended that the government (Ministry of Education) should take serious and prompt actions to revise the scale for the teachers' salaries. On top of that, officials at all levels should modify their way of assessment and follow-ups to the basic implementers of the teaching-learning process (teachers and students). More specifically, textbooks, teachers' guilds, and supportive materials should be provided to the schools to ensure education quality in Ethiopia. Further investigations on the teachers' motivation and factors affecting their motivations should also be carried out to attract the attention of the government and non-government institutions towards the quality of education.

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