

# EFL Teachers' Perspectives on Integration of the Brainling Model into Grammar Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges

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**Abstract:** This study examined English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perception of using the Brainling Model to teach grammar. While traditional methods are likely to emphasize memorization and rules, they have been criticized for fostering low motivation and poor retention. Based on principles of brain-based learning, the Brainling Model supports emotional involvement, multisensory activities, and pattern recognition in order to learn languages. Using a qualitative descriptive design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 EFL teachers in Tehran. The analysis revealed the following opportunity-related themes: increased student engagement, improved retention of grammar, multisensory learning benefits, and a more positive classroom environment. Teachers also reported major challenges: lack of institutional support, insufficient training, time constraints, and students' initial resistance. The findings indicate that, although the Brainling Model may improve grammar instruction, its effectiveness depends on systemic support and teacher training. The research contributes to brain-based pedagogy by highlighting teachers' voices and offers implications for teacher education and curriculum design.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Brain-based teaching methodologies are becoming popular in EFL, particularly in teaching grammar. Traditional methods of grammar teaching, relying on rote memorization and rule-based instruction, have

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been increasingly questioned for low learner engagement and poor long-term retention. On the other hand, brain-compatible practices such as the Brainling Model aim to align instruction with how the brain learns and processes language naturally (Sousa, 2017). The Brainling Model is designed to enhance language learning outcomes through heightened emotional engagement, multisensory input, and pattern recognition.

Although theoretically appealing, such models are not widely adopted in real classrooms, particularly from the perspective of teachers who are directly responsible for their implementation. Teachers' perceptions are critical to the successful implementation of a paradigm shift because of the changes in teaching practice that the approach can bring (Borg, 2015). With grammar still one of the core components of the EFL syllabus, it is critical to investigate how teachers perceive the Brainling Model of grammar teaching.

### *1.2. Statement of the Problem*

Although theoretical and experimental studies have examined the Brainling Model, its practical potential within the EFL classroom remains underexplored. Little is known about how EFL instructors view this model in terms of its implementation, advantages, and challenges. In the absence of this information, attempts to use brain-compatible strategies may be implemented incorrectly or not at all. In curriculum development, teachers' views are frequently disregarded, despite the fact that these educators are pivotal to the successful execution of changes. Thus, this research aims to fill the qualitative gap regarding the Brainling Model's integration into grammar teaching by focusing on EFL teachers' perspectives. This study is framed within the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' perspectives on the opportunities presented by integrating the Brainling Model into grammar instruction?
2. What challenges do EFL teachers face when implementing the Brainling Model in grammar teaching?

### *1.3. Significance of the Study*

The results of this study enhance the existing literature on brain-based language teaching by addressing the gap in understanding how EFL teachers regard the Brainling Model. These perspectives can shape training programs, curricula, and policies in EFL teaching and learning contexts. In addition, the findings may support the development of more effective brain-compatible strategies for grammar instruction that truly

reflect teachers' needs and practical teaching contexts. This research also highlights both the possibilities and the difficulties that inform more rational and enduring pedagogical innovation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Theoretical Framework***

This study is grounded in the brain-based theory of learning, which indicates that effective instruction is in line with how the brain functions (Caine & Caine, 1991). The Brainling Model, a brain-compatible instructional approach, draws on this theory by incorporating movement, music, emotional engagement, and multisensory activities in grammar teaching. This framework helps explain how instructional methods influence cognitive processing as well as learners' motivational and emotional responses. This study also draws on constructivist learning perspectives, which emphasize active engagement, prior knowledge, and relevant experience (Vygotsky, 1978). Collectively, these theories support the idea that learning grammar may be more effective and engaging when brain-based methodologies are used.

#### **2.1.1. Brain-Based Learning and the Brainling Model**

Brain-based learning theories emphasize the need for instructional strategies to align with how the brain naturally learns. According to Jensen (2008), effective learning takes place when instruction is emotionally engaging, multisensory, and meaningfully contextualized. Educational neuroscience also highlights how neural mechanisms dynamically interact with pedagogical strategies, offering new pathways for instructional design (Pradeep et al., 2024). Guided by these ideas, the Brainling Model has been proposed as a brain-compatible approach to language instruction. This model integrates neuroscience-informed techniques such as rhythm, movement, color, music, and storytelling to improve student engagement and retention (Sousa, 2017). Despite limited research on the Brainling Model, its fundamental brain-based principles suggest that it could complement other approaches to language teaching.

#### **2.1.2. Grammar Instruction in EFL Contexts**

Grammar teaching remains controversial in EFL instruction. While communicative approaches prioritize fluency over accuracy, most researchers argue that grammar should be taught for learners to achieve linguistic competence (Ellis, 2006). Traditional approaches favor the explicit presentation of rules and mechanical practice, often causing learners to disengage. Cognitive approaches to grammar teaching promote

learners' awareness of grammatical elements, influenced by factors including attention, practice, and metalinguistic awareness (Ulyasari, 2023). Rafiei Sakhaei et al. (2023) reported that explicit instruction was valued for clarity, whereas implicit input enhancement and guided discovery methods promoted deeper engagement and long-term retention among Iranian EFL learners. On the other hand, research has shown that more dynamic, stimulating approaches to grammar teaching lead to improved retention and transfer (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). The adoption of new pedagogies, such as the Brainling Model, however, involves rethinking long-standing assumptions in grammar instruction.

### 2.1.3. Teachers' Roles in Educational Innovation

Teachers are key determinants of the success or failure of educational innovation. Fullan (2016) states that all instructional change depends on teacher beliefs, experiences, and willingness to adapt. In the EFL context, however, most teachers face institutional, curricular, and cultural barriers when attempting to implement new practices (Borg, 2015). It is therefore important to investigate teachers' perceptions to assess the feasibility and sustainability of employing models like Brainling. Previous studies have shown that educators' attitudes towards innovation depend on various factors, including perceived student benefit, training and support, and compatibility with current practices (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019).

## 2.2. Empirical Studies

Although limited in scope, some empirical research has explored the effects of brain-based approaches on language acquisition. Tokuhama-Espinoza (2015), for example, conducted a review of several experimental studies and established that students who learned through brain-compatible approaches performed better than those in traditional classrooms in terms of motivation and retention. Similarly, Alrabi (2016) established that integrating rhythm and movement into EFL grammar classes significantly affected the grammatical accuracy of learners. Most of these studies, however, have focused on students' outcomes, with comparatively little emphasis placed on teachers' voices. Relatively few analyses have looked at how teachers perceive the practicality, constraints, and opportunities for applying brain-based models like Brainling in real classrooms. This makes qualitative studies important because they place more emphasis on the perspectives of teachers, especially in local contexts like Iran, where conceptions of education and the expectations of teaching can be quite different from those in Western contexts.

### **3. Method**

#### ***3.1. Design of the Study***

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. The design was used to explore EFL teachers' opinions about integrating the Brainling Model into grammar teaching. The basic qualitative approach allows researchers to capture participants' experiences, opinions, and perceptions through open-ended inquiry (Tisdell et al., 2025). As the research aimed to identify perceived challenges and opportunities based on the teachers' perspectives, this was deemed to be a suitable design.

#### ***3.2. Participants***

The participants comprised 12 EFL teachers (8 women and 4 men) who were employed at various private language institutes in Tehran, Iran. They were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience in teaching grammar and a minimum of three years' overall teaching experience. The participants held at least a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching, English Literature, or any other related field. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and confidentiality of responses was ensured.

#### ***3.3. Instruments***

Semi-structured interviews were the primary instrument for data collection. The interview questionnaire comprised open-ended questions, designed to elicit detailed information from teachers regarding their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to the Brainling Model of grammar instruction. Two applied linguistics experts were consulted to ensure that the questions were highly relevant and clear.

#### ***3.4. Data Collection Procedure***

The data collection took four weeks. Participants were interviewed in person or via video conferencing platforms, depending on availability. Each Interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim to facilitate accurate analysis.

#### ***3.5. Data Analysis***

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the transcribed interview data, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. NVivo 12 software was used to assist in organizing and coding data in a systematic way. Themes were inductively drawn from responses that reflected

common patterns representing teachers' perceptions of the opportunities and challenges in implementing the Brainling Model for grammar teaching.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Result of the First Research Question

**RQ1:** What are EFL teachers' perspectives on the opportunities presented by integrating the Brainling Model into grammar instruction?

Thematic analysis revealed four major themes: increased student engagement, improved retention of grammar rules, multisensory learning benefits, and fostering a positive classroom atmosphere.

**Table 1.** *The Frequency and Percentage of Themes*

Theme	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased Student Engagement	25	35.7
Improved Retention of Grammar	20	28.6
Multisensory Learning Benefits	15	21.4
Positive Classroom Atmosphere	10	14.3

As Table 1 shows, "Increased Student Engagement" was the most frequently cited theme, with an emphasis on how movement, music, and storytelling stimulated students' interest. Teachers remarked that students were "much more willing to engage" when grammar lessons included Brainling strategies. "Better Retention of Grammar" was another dominant theme, with respondents noting better long-term recall. Example quotations include:

*"When I use songs and movement for teaching grammar, my students remember the rules weeks later."*

*"The Brainling Model transforms a boring grammar class into an exciting experience."*

### 4.2. Result of the Second Research Question

**RQ2:** What challenges do EFL teachers face when implementing the Brainling Model in grammar teaching?

The four most prevalent challenge themes identified were lack of institutional support, insufficient training, time constraints, and resistance from students accustomed to traditional teaching techniques.

**Table 2.** *The Frequency and Percentage of Themes*

Theme	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Institutional Support	22	33.3
Insufficient Training	18	27.3
Time Constraints	16	24.2
Student Resistance	10	15.2

“Lack of Institutional Support” was cited most often, as teachers reported limited resources and inadequate administrative support. “Insufficient Training” was another significant obstacle, as many respondents stated that they were not trained well enough to implement Brainling methods effectively. “Time constraints” due to overloaded curricula, and “Student Resistance” occurred when students at first refused to accept new pedagogical methods. Sample quotes are:

*“I wish I had been formally trained on how to implement all Brainling activities in an organized manner.”*

*“Some students feel that grammar has to be taught in a conventional, formal way, so they resist at first.”*

## 5. Discussion

The data were analyzed to address two research questions regarding the opportunities and challenges of integrating the Brainling Model into grammar teaching. The results provide valuable insights into how EFL teachers view this brain-based learning approach. Below, the findings are compared with existing research, and the similarities and differences are addressed.

Regarding the first research question, the most salient opportunity-related theme was increased student engagement, followed by improved retention of grammatical rules, benefits of multisensory learning, and a more positive classroom environment. These findings are consistent with Jensen (2008) and Sousa (2017), who highlight that brain-compatible learning promotes emotional involvement and active participation. In a similar vein, Nassaji and Fotos (2011) reported that comparable findings, showing that interactive, dynamic grammar instruction increases learners’ motivation and long-term retention.

Similarly, the present study is consistent with Borg and Alshumaimeri (2019), who found that teachers valued innovative approaches when they perceived tangible benefits for students. However, unlike studies focusing on communicative language teaching, the present study demonstrates how the Brainling Model’s multisensory strategies (e.g., movement, music, storytelling) create a richer sensory environment that enhances grammar retention.

Concerning the second research question, the leading challenges were lack of institutional support, insufficient training, time constraints, and student resistance. These findings are consistent with Borg (2015) and Fullan (2016), who note that organizational and systemic challenges are often the significant barriers in applying pedagogical innovations. Similarly, teachers in this study reported that it is difficult to sustain



Brainling-based grammar instruction without administrative support and material resources.

The issue of insufficient training is in line with Richards and Farrell (2005), who showed that limited professional development of teachers reduced their ability to implement student-centered methods. Time constraints also correspond to evidence in Ellis (2006), who noted that overloaded curricula limit the use of interactive teaching methods. Student resistance—less frequently reported in prior literature—emerged in this study as a salient theme, indicating that pedagogical change relies not only on teacher readiness but also on learner adaptability.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications**

This study investigated EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the opportunities and challenges of using the Brainling Model in teaching grammar. It was revealed that even though the model promotes students' motivation, retention of grammar knowledge, and a positive classroom environment, several challenges, including lack of institutional support, insufficient training, time constraints, and learner resistance must be addressed for effective implementation. In general, the study confirms the applicability of brain-based principles to teaching grammar and emphasizes the necessity for the alignment of pedagogical innovation with classroom conditions.

From a practical perspective, the research suggests that educational policymakers and school administrators should provide specialized professional development courses that equip teachers with the skills necessary for successful adoption of Brainling approaches. Ensuring adequate resources, revising curricula to include sufficient time for multisensory activities, and building a school climate that allows experimentation with new teaching approaches are critical measures. Teachers may benefit from introducing Brainling elements step by step, thereby reducing learner resistance and fostering long-term acceptance.

Future research can explore the long-term impacts of Brainling-based grammar instruction on students' performance and motivation, as well as institutional and cultural barriers to implementation. Cross-study comparisons in different educational contexts may clarify how local conditions influence the success of implementation. Through continuous investigation into the pedagogical potential and practical limitations of brain-based models, researchers and practitioners can work toward more inclusive and effective approaches in EFL grammar instruction.



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