



## Assessing the Practices and Challenges of Communicative Grammar Teaching Approach: The Case of Abdisa Aga Secondary School Grade 10 in Focus

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### Abstract

The current study was aimed to assess the practices and challenges of communicative grammar teaching in Grade 10 at Abdisa Aga Secondary School in the North Shoa Zone. A descriptive survey design with a mixed-methods approach was employed. A total of 215 students were selected from a population of 465 using a lottery method and completed questionnaires, while all three available Grade 10 English teachers were interviewed. Frequencies and percentages were used to calculate and summarize the data from the student questionnaires. Three classes were observed twice during separate grammar lessons. The observations were analyzed descriptively, and the teachers' interviews were presented qualitatively. The findings revealed that communicative grammar instruction was not being applied effectively; learners were not actively engaged in communicative language learning. Teachers primarily presented grammar lessons focusing on rules and patterns, and lesson content was based solely on the textbook rather than real-life contexts. The interview data indicated that the textbook activities do not align with the principles of communicative language teaching. Teachers mainly rely on rule explanation, gap-fill exercises, and individual work, with limited use of communicative activities. Therefore, rather than using rule-based approaches, teachers should try to teach grammar in a communicative manner, and students should have the chance to practice and produce language grammar in communicative contexts.

**Keywords:** approach, challenge, communicative grammar, practice

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## 1. Introduction

Grammar refers to the way in which a language system represents the relationships among form, meaning, and use. In applied linguistics, grammar is understood as the use of language resources to achieve communicative goals in spoken and written discourse, rather than merely as the study of sentence-level syntax (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 2016; Halliday, 2014). Thus, grammar consists of an organized system of phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic rules that enables speakers to produce and interpret accurate and appropriate messages in specific contexts.

Over the past few decades, approaches to foreign language teaching have shifted from structurally oriented methods to communicatively focused instruction. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasizes learners' ability to use acquired grammatical knowledge effectively in real communicative situations. In contrast, earlier structural and audiolingual methods primarily focused on mastering isolated grammatical forms (Richards, 2017; Savignon, 2018; Littlewood, 2014). Language use is now conceptualized in terms of communicative competence, which encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, rather than grammatical accuracy alone (Littlewood, 2014; Taguchi, 2018).

From this perspective, grammar instruction should aim to enhance learners' communicative ability by linking form, meaning, and use. Rather than focusing solely on rule memorization, research on communicative grammar teaching emphasizes learners' engagement with grammatical structures through meaningful tasks, contextualized practice, and interaction (Ellis, 2015; Nassaji, 2017; Spada & Lightbown, 2020). Therefore, conversational ability alone cannot be considered evidence of effective language use unless it reflects appropriate discourse organization, awareness of social context, and the strategic ability to manage communication breakdowns.

Despite strong theoretical support for CLT, studies continue to reveal a gap between theory and classroom practice, particularly at the secondary school level. Some local studies conducted in the Ethiopian EFL context have identified challenges in teaching grammar and implementing communicative approaches in secondary schools (Tiglu, 2008; Girma, 2005; Bayissa, 2013). Similarly, recent studies from comparable EFL contexts indicate that teachers face numerous obstacles to applying communicative grammar instruction, including large class sizes, limited instructional resources, insufficient professional training, and exam-

oriented curricula (Borg, 2019; Farrell & Macaplinac, 2021; Nguyen & Newton, 2022). As a result, grammar instruction often remains predominantly form-focused, providing students with limited opportunities to use grammar for communicative purposes.

Existing studies in the Ethiopian EFL context have largely concentrated on teachers' attitudes, beliefs, or specific instructional strategies related to communicative language and grammar teaching (Hailemariam, 2011; Tiglu, 2008). While these studies offer valuable insights, they give limited attention to teachers' actual classroom practices and the challenges they encounter when attempting to teach grammar communicatively at the secondary school level. Moreover, a clear knowledge gap remains regarding how communicative grammar instruction is implemented in real classroom settings and the contextual factors that constrain its practice, as many previous studies relied on single research methods or focused narrowly on deductive or inductive instructional approaches.

The study "Teachers' Views toward CLT and Practical Difficulties in Its Implementation" was carried out by Lakachew in 2003. His research indicates that certain grammatical structures should be taught and practiced in learning-relevant and natural circumstances. Creating resources that facilitate the teaching of communicative grammar is crucial. To improve students' communication skills, grammar instruction should include games, role-plays, simulations, pair and group work, information-gap assignments, and problem-solving exercises (Alamirew, 1992; Haregewoin, 1993). Students can express their own emotions and interests through these activities. For second language learners to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, communicative grammar instruction is essential.

The present study differs from the aforementioned local studies in that it focuses on the practices and challenges of communicative grammar teaching. The methods and difficulties of teaching communicative grammar in English in Ethiopian secondary schools have not, as far as the researchers are aware, been studied. Consequently, the goal of this study is to close the current gap in the body of knowledge regarding this subject. This study, therefore, aimed to address this gap by concentrating on students in Grade 10 at Oromia's Abdisa Aga Secondary School. Accordingly, it sought to respond to the following questions:

1. What teaching techniques do teachers use to teach grammar?
2. What challenges are hindering the practice of communicative grammar teaching?

## 2. Research Methods

### 2.1. Study Setting

The study was conducted at Abdisa Aga Secondary School, which is located in the North Shoa Zone of the Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. In accordance with the national curriculum, the school provides secondary-level education. As communicative grammar instruction constitutes a crucial component of English language teaching at this level, the study focused on Grade 10 students.

### 2.2. Research Design and Approach

The study employed a descriptive survey design, which allows for a systematic description of current classroom practices to investigate secondary school EFL teachers' methods and challenges in teaching communicative grammar (Creswell, 2014). A mixed-methods approach was utilized, collecting quantitative data through questionnaires to determine the frequency of activities, and qualitative data through observations and interviews to explore implementation challenges and related issues. The integration of these methods enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

### 2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

For the present study, the target population consisted of Grade 10 students and their English teachers. Grade 10 comprised a total of 465 students, including 191 males and 274 females, and three English teachers responsible for the grade. The grade is divided into eight sections; therefore, all sections were considered for the study.

**Sample Size:** In the Ethiopian calendar year 2016, Grade 10 at Abdisa Aga Secondary School had a total of 465 students. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) simplified formula for sample size calculation. The researchers applied the formula to the total population of 465 students, selecting the sample purposively. A 95% confidence level and a 0.05 precision level (margin of error) were used. The formula is presented as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

In this case,  $n$  is the number of samples, and  $N$  is the total population.

$e$ : 95% confidence level, or error of tolerance = 0.05.

$$n = \frac{465}{1 + 465(0.05)^2}$$

$$= 215.028 \approx 215$$

At Abdisa Aga Secondary School, three English language teachers were assigned to teach Grade 10. Consequently, the study included all English teachers responsible for this grade.

## **2.4. Data Collection Instrument**

The study employed three main instruments to collect data: a questionnaire, classroom observations, and interviews.

### **2.4.1. Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was used to collect data from students, primarily adapted from Tiglu's (2008) research on communicative grammar teaching. The questionnaire comprised two sections, addressing teachers' methods, classroom practices, and challenges. To minimize language barriers, it was translated into Afaan Oromoo and Amharic. The items were presented as multiple-choice questions and designed to assess the influence of various factors on communicative grammar teaching. In total, the questionnaire included 11 items: seven items focused on students' participation in communicative grammar activities, while four items addressed contextual factors, such as textbook content, classroom environment, lesson time, and students' prior knowledge. Students' responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely, Never). The questionnaire aimed to identify both students' engagement in communicative grammar learning activities and the factors influencing such engagement. Prior to data collection, colleagues reviewed and validated the instrument.

### **2.4.2. Classroom Observation**

This study aimed to evaluate communicative grammar teaching practices and challenges in Grade 10 English classrooms. An observation checklist, adapted from Bayissa's (2013) classroom observation tasks, was used to gather data on teaching methods and techniques. The checklist included 16 aspects of a lesson, each rated as "yes" or "no." Three classes were

observed twice during separate grammar lessons, with instances related to grammar instruction recorded. To ensure the accuracy of the observations, follow-up interviews were conducted with the teachers. The primary objective was to understand how educators implement communicative grammar and how associated activities are delivered within the context of grammar instruction.

### **2.4.3. Interview**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all three Grade 10 English teachers. This approach provided the flexibility to explore teachers' instructional practices and challenges related to the communicative grammar teaching approach, while ensuring that key topics were consistently addressed across participants. The interview data offered qualitative insights that complemented the quantitative findings from the questionnaire, providing a more comprehensive understanding of classroom practices.

## **2.5. Method of Data Analysis**

The quantitative data from students' questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, to summarize the use of communicative grammar teaching techniques and to examine the influence of factors such as textbook content, classroom conditions, lesson time, and students' prior knowledge.

### **2.5.1. Procedure for Quantitative Data Analysis**

A questionnaire was used to collect the data. To facilitate analysis, the data were organized into tables presenting percentages, allowing for statistical and numerical evaluation of the findings. Most of the questionnaire items were developed based on a review of relevant literature (Tiglu, 2008).

### **2.5.2. Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure**

Data from classroom observations and teacher interviews were analyzed qualitatively to examine the practices and challenges of communicative grammar teaching in Grade 10 at Abdisa Aga Secondary School. The findings were then presented descriptively and interpreted to draw conclusions. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study involved only a small number of teachers, and the data needed to be described in words to capture its richness and depth.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Data analysis based on the study's research questions

##### 3.1.1. The techniques and activities the teachers use to present grammar lesson

To collect the data for this study, questionnaires were distributed to 215 students. The students completed the surveys during class, yielding a 100% response rate. The responses were organized and tabulated, and the data were analyzed using quantitative methods.

**Table1.** Responses from students regarding how frequently their teachers employ exercises and techniques in communicative grammar classes

Item	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. My teacher gives pair work on how to practice communicative grammar.	21 (9.8%)	36 (16.7%)	36 (16.7%)	57 (26.5%)	65 (30.2%)
2. My teacher provides writing exercises to practice communicative grammar.	18 (8.4%)	25 (11.6%)	36 (16.7%)	75 (34.9%)	61 (28.4%)
3. My teacher provides problem-solving activities to practice communicative grammar.	18 (8.4%)	36 (16.7%)	36 (16.7%)	54 (25.1%)	71 (33.0%)
4. My teacher provides games for practicing communicative grammar.	22 (10.2%)	35 (16.3%)	36 (16.7%)	50 (23.2%)	72 (33.5%)
5. My teacher uses role plays to help me practice communicative grammar.	18 (8.4%)	25 (11.6%)	25 (11.6%)	39 (18.1%)	108 (50.2%)

Item	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
6. My teacher gives group activities to practice communicative grammar.	65 (30.2%)	72 (33.5%)	35 (16.3%)	29 (13.5%)	14 (6.5%)
7. My teacher provides individual work as part of communicative grammar practice.	79 (36.7%)	57 (26.5%)	36 (16.7%)	29 (13.5%)	14 (6.5%)

The study revealed that, among the 215 student respondents, approximately 21 students (10%) reported that their teachers always employ pair work in grammar lessons, while 36 students (17%) indicated that it is usually used. Another 36 students (17%) stated that pair work is sometimes employed, whereas 57 students (27%) reported that it is rarely used. The remaining 65 students (30.2%) indicated that their teachers never employ pair work during grammar lessons.

Regarding writing exercises, 18 students (approximately 8%) reported that writing assignments are a regular part of communicative grammar lessons, while 25 students (12%) indicated that they are usually used. Another 36 students (17%) stated that writing exercises are sometimes employed, whereas 75 students (35%) reported that they are rarely used. The remaining 61 students (28%) indicated that writing activities are never used in communicative grammar classes by their teachers.

Twenty-two students (10%) reported that their teachers always employ games in communicative grammar sessions, while 35 students (16%) indicated that games are usually used. Another 36 students (17%) stated that games are sometimes employed, 50 students (23%) reported that they are rarely used, and the remaining 72 students (34%) indicated that games are never incorporated in grammar lessons.

Regarding the use of role plays to teach grammatical topics, among the 215 student respondents, 18 students (8%) reported that their teachers always use role plays, while 25 students (12%) indicated that they usually do. Another 25 students (12%) stated that role plays are sometimes employed, 39 students (18%) reported that they are rarely used, and the remaining 108 students (50%) indicated that role plays are never used in grammar lessons.

Regarding the use of group projects in communicative grammar instruction, among the 215 student respondents, 65 students (30%) reported that their teachers always use group work, while 72 students (33%) indicated that it is usually employed. Another 35 students (16%) stated that group work is sometimes used, 29 students (13%) reported that it is rarely used, and 14 students (7%) indicated that it is never used.

Table 1 shows the frequency with which teachers use individual work activities in communicative grammar lessons. Among the 215 student respondents, 79 students (37%) reported that their teachers always use individual work, while 57 students (27%) indicated that it is usually employed. Another 36 students (17%) stated that individual work is sometimes used, and the remaining 29 students (13%) and 14 students (7%) reported that it is rarely or never used, respectively.

In conclusion, Table 1 indicates that, in teaching communicative grammar, teachers infrequently use pair work, writing exercises, problem-solving activities, games, role plays, or group work.

### 3.1.2 The Challenges that Encountered While Practicing Communicative Grammar Teaching

The next section of the students' questionnaire focused on the extent to which various factors influence grammar instruction.

**Table 2.** Responses from students regarding the degree to which various factors influence communicative grammar learning

Variables	Very high	High	I do not know	Low	Very low
1. The contents of the textbook	78 (36.3%)	76 (35.3%)	47 (21.9%)	7 (3.3%)	7 (3.3%)
2. The classroom situation	56 (26.0%)	51 (23.7%)	36 (16.7%)	36 (16.7%)	36 (16.7%)
3. Time allocated to the lesson	51 (23.7%)	72 (33.5%)	22 (10.2%)	22 (10.2%)	48 (22.3%)
4. Students'	50 (23.3%)	54	50 (23.3%)	33	28 (13.0%)

Variables	Very high	High	I do not know	Low	Very low
background knowledge		(25.1%)		(15.3%)	
<b>Mean</b>	50.5 (23.5%)	50 (23.3%)	46.1 (21.5%)	34.4 (16.0%)	34 (15.8%)

*Note:* Values represent frequency (F) and percentage (%)

The students' responses presented in Table 2 indicate the extent to which various factors influence communicative grammar teaching. The study examined the impact of textbook content, classroom conditions, lesson time allocation, and students' background knowledge on communicative grammar teaching and learning. Textbook content was perceived as the most influential factor, with 36% of students reporting a very high impact and 35% reporting a high impact. Classroom conditions were also considered significant, with 26% of respondents indicating a very high impact and 24% reporting a high impact. Lesson time allocation was viewed as impactful, with 24% indicating a very high impact and 33% a high impact. Students' background knowledge produced mixed responses, with 23% reporting a high impact and 16% stating it had little or no effect on teaching and learning. In summary, textbook content, classroom conditions, lesson time allocation, and students' background knowledge all influenced communicative grammar teaching.

### 3.2. Analysis of Classroom Observation

To investigate the actual practices and challenges of teaching communicative grammar, the researchers conducted classroom observations using a checklist adapted from Bayissa (2013). Data gathered from questionnaires and interviews were cross-checked with classroom observations. Two sections of Grade 10 English grammar courses were observed while the three selected teachers conducted their lessons. Observations took place in April 2023, during the first and second weeks of the month. Each class session lasted forty minutes, and each teacher was observed twice, once during the first week and once during the second.

All teachers were observed teaching the same topics. On the first day, they taught "Cause and Effect" from Unit Six of the English textbook, and on the second day, they taught "The Past Simple Passive," also from Unit Six. The observation checklist, adapted for this study, focused on three main areas: classroom practices used to engage students, teaching approaches employed by the teachers, and activities related to communicative grammar lessons.

**Table 3.**Completed checklist about the observed sections while EFL teachers were teaching grammar

No	Items	Tr. 1		Tr.2		Tr.3	
		D1	D2	D1	D2	D1	D2
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Does the teacher explain rules of grammar by himself?	√	√	√	√	√	√
2	Does the teacher focus on teaching forms of grammar?	√	√	√	√	√	√
3	Does the teacher motivate the learners to practice the language?	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	Does the teacher teach grammar in context?	√	√	√	√	√	√
5	Does the teacher encourage students to discover grammar rules by their own?	√	√	√	√	√	√
6	Does the teacher integrate the grammatical patterns with language skills?	√	√	√	√	√	√
7	Does the teacher focus on fluency?	√	√	√	√	√	√
8	Do the teacher's grammar teaching techniques motivate students?	√	√	√	√	√	√
9	Does the teacher use different grammar teaching techniques such as games, role plays, pictures, storytelling etc.?	√	√	√	√	√	√
10	Does the teacher tolerate students' errors?	√	√	√	√	√	√
11	Does the teacher let the learners correct their errors?	√	√	√	√	√	√
12	Does the teacher encourage students to practice grammar activities in groups and pairs?	√	√	√	√	√	√
13	Does the teacher adapt activities to make the grammar lesson communicative?	√	√	√	√	√	√
14	Does the teacher focus on activities given only in the text book?	√	√	√	√	√	√
15	Does the teacher create situation to teach grammar in speaking skills?	√	√	√	√	√	√

16	Does the teacher use different Drills for grammar teaching?	√	√	√	√	√	√
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Key: Tr-Teacher, D1-Day One, D2-Day Two

As shown in Table 3, the observation checklist outlines the main tasks performed by instructors in grammar classes, as well as students' roles and classroom arrangements. To gain a detailed understanding of classroom dynamics in the three Grade 10 sections, the researchers recorded all activities and observed situations during two sessions in each class at different times, and then conducted the following analysis:

### 3.2.1. The teachers' classroom practices to engage students in grammar lesson

All three teachers focused on teaching grammar rules directly, emphasizing grammatical forms and guiding students in practicing these forms. None of the observed teachers employed contextualized teaching, nor did they encourage students to discover grammatical rules independently.

During the observations, the researchers found that all three teachers employed a deductive approach to grammar teaching. They began by presenting the rule or form of the grammar item on the blackboard, explained how the rule is formulated, provided example sentences, and highlighted how the examples illustrate the rule. Students were then asked to apply the rule and create additional examples. The teaching process was teacher-centered, and students did not have the opportunity to discover grammar rules independently.

### 3.2.2. Techniques employed by the teachers while teaching grammar

With this in mind, the researcher examined the grammar teaching strategies of the three instructors using guiding questions, such as: Do the teachers integrate grammatical patterns with language skills? Do the teachers encourage the learners to discover grammar rules by themselves? Do they use different techniques such as games, role plays, pictures, storytelling etc? Do the teachers encourage students to practice grammar activities in groups and pairs?

In this regard, all three teachers were observed beginning their lessons by writing the topic on the blackboard. They then used isolated sentence examples to explain the structure and usage of grammatical components. Students were not encouraged to discover grammatical rules independently; instead, they copied the sample sentences provided by their teachers. During the lessons, students remained passive listeners and showed little interest in participating. None of the teachers employed games, role plays, images, narratives, or other interactive methods to convey the lesson.

### **3.2.3 Activities used by the teachers in grammar lesson**

With this in mind, the actual classroom practices of the teachers under investigation were observed using three checklist questions specifically designed for this purpose. The questions are: Does the teacher adapt activities to make the grammar lesson communicative? Does the teacher focus on activities given only in the textbook? Does the teacher create situations to teach grammar and speaking skills?

As a result, none of the observed teachers adapted their activities to make grammar lessons more communicative. They relied solely on textbook exercises and did not create an environment in which grammar could be taught within the context of speaking skills.

The observed challenges in teaching grammar included the pupils' disinterest in taking part in role-plays, games, or dramas, which are communicative activities. Consequently, teachers were compelled to rely solely on rule-based instruction, presenting grammar on the chalkboard.

## **3.3. Interview Data Analysis**

Interviews were one method of gathering information with Grade 10 English teachers participating. It aimed to explore the methods teachers employ to teach grammar for practical language use, the strategies and activities used in grammar instruction, and the challenges associated with communicative grammar teaching. Interviews were conducted with the three subject teachers using a set of seven questions, which were divided into three parts according to their respective topics.

### **3.3.1. Teachers' responses on their practices of communicative grammar**

The researchers asked the teachers two questions to gain further insight into the approaches and grammar-teaching exercises they employ. The first question posed to the teachers was: what kinds of techniques do you use to teach grammar to enable learners to use the language

communicatively? To answer this question, Teacher 1 stated, *“I assist students using various techniques. For instance, I sometimes assign group work based on their interests, encouraging them to collaborate and make presentations, as well as assigning individual tasks to improve students’ communicative grammar.”*

Teacher 2 stated, *“I ask students to use the correct grammatical structures in their exercise books after providing examples.”* She further added, *“First, I explain the rules and write their forms on the board. Based on these rules, I instruct learners to complete exercises, as they generally rely entirely on the teacher.”* Teacher 3 remarked, *“Most of the time, I have students write the correct sentences according to the examples provided.”*

The second question posed to the teachers focused on the types of activities they use to help learners practice grammar. In response, Teacher 1 stated, *“I sometimes encourage my students to complete gap-fill exercises individually and participate in group work to improve their communicative grammar.”* Teacher 2 noted, *“I use different activities. For instance, I ask my students to complete gap-fill exercises, including tasks such as changing active sentences to passive.”* Teacher 3 added, *“I sometimes have my students complete gap-fill exercises to improve their communicative skills.”*

Thirdly, when asked whether the tasks and activities in the textbooks expose students to communicative grammar teaching, the teachers indicated that they do not. Teacher 1 noted, *“Most lessons rely on textbook examples, which are not fully communicative and require students to mainly follow teacher instructions.”* Teacher 2 remarked, *“Instruction often follows the textbook content directly, providing limited opportunities for meaningful language use.”* Teacher 3 added, *“Lessons are based on the textbook topic context, but they rarely allow students to practice grammar in real-life situations.”*

Overall, the data suggest that textbook activities do not align well with the principles of communicative grammar teaching. It can also be inferred from the teachers’ responses that most of them regularly rely on activities such as gap-fill exercises and individual work to help students practice grammar.

### 3.3.2. Teachers' responses about the challenges in applying communicative grammar teaching

To gain insight into the challenges of using communicative approaches in grammar teaching, teachers were asked about the obstacles they faced while implementing communicative grammar. In response, Teacher 1 stated:

*“The application of the communicative grammar teaching technique is hampered, in my opinion, by the size of the class. It is challenging to plan productive activities, offer fair opportunities for involvement, and provide timely and insightful feedback and evaluation when there are more than fifty students in each class.”*

Teacher 2 remarked: *“I think that students' prior knowledge is the most important issue affecting the implementation of the communicative grammar teaching approach. We are unable to teach communicative grammar efficiently due to low English proficiency. Because students are afraid of being made fun of when they make mistakes, they are frequently reluctant to participate in class activities.”*

Teacher 3 added: *“There is a lack of technology and facilities to support the implementation of communicative grammar teaching in the classroom. The school lacks contemporary teaching tools, including projectors, CD/VCD equipment, and tape recorders for listening practice. Furthermore, there is not enough time allotted for each session.”*

Overall, based on the teachers' responses, it can be inferred that the primary obstacles preventing the school from implementing communicative grammar teaching are large class sizes, students' limited English proficiency, inadequate classroom facilities, and insufficient lesson time.

## 4. Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate the practices and challenges of communicative grammar teaching in English classrooms, specifically among grade 10 students at Abdisa Aga Secondary School.

The findings from the questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews consistently indicate that grammar instruction in Grade 10 classrooms was predominantly teacher centered, form focused, and textbook driven, with minimal use of genuinely communicative

grammar activities. This tendency represents what Ellis (2006) and Long (2015) refer to as the persistence of classical explicit grammar instruction in many EFL situations, where meaningful language use is subordinated to precision. According to the students' comments, communication exercises such role plays, games; problem-solving exercises, writing assignments, and pair work were infrequently used. Even though group and individual work were more common, their uneven execution points to the predominance of traditional teaching methods over communicative ones; Littlewood (2014) and Spada and Lightbown (2020) have also noted this.

Classroom observations further confirmed this tendency, as all observed teachers employed a deductive approach to grammar instruction by presenting rules and isolated examples on the board, with limited opportunities for learners to infer rules independently or to interact meaningfully with grammatical structures. According to Ellis (2015) and Nassaji (2017), academics argue that these teacher-centered and deductive methods restrict student engagement and opportunities to link form, meaning, and use all crucial elements of communicative grammar instruction. The absence of discovery-based and interaction-oriented tasks in the observed classrooms supports Borg's (2019) claim that teachers' classroom practices often stay traditional despite their professed support for communicative principles.

Similarly, interview data revealed that teachers primarily relied on gap fill exercises, explicit rule explanation, and textbook based activities, while expressing the belief that the prescribed textbooks do not adequately support meaningful communication. This result supports the claims made by Richards (2017) and Tomlinson (2013), who point out that many EFL textbooks place a strong emphasis on controlled practice and structural accuracy, providing few opportunities for real-world communication. Because of this, teachers have a tendency to strictly adhere to textbooks, which promotes form-focused grammar instruction over communicative practice.

These patterns are in line with research from other EFL contexts, where teachers support communicative goals theoretically but fall back on structural and teacher-centered approaches because of contextual limitations like big class sizes, exam pressure, a lack of instructional resources, and a strong reliance on textbooks (Ibrahim and Ibrahim, 2017; Dore and Borano, 2025; Farrell and Macaplinac, 2021). Research has repeatedly demonstrated that these traditional methods restrict opportunities for learner autonomy, meaningful language use, and

interaction all of which are fundamental to communicative language teaching and crucial for the growth of communicative competence (Richards and Rodgers, 2014; Savignon, 2018).

## **5. Conclusions**

The study aimed to analyze teachers' practices and challenges of communicative grammar techniques in English classes. Findings revealed that most grammar lessons were not designed to be communicative, limiting student engagement. Teachers primarily relied on explanations and isolated sentence examples, and they rarely provided communicative activities or authentic contexts for applying grammar. Students identified textbook content, classroom conditions, lesson duration, and their own background knowledge as significant obstacles to implementing communicative grammar teaching. Overall, the results highlight the need for teachers to adopt more interactive and contextually relevant approaches to promote meaningful language use.

## **6. Recommendations**

Students are expected to practice language through meaningful tasks and activities, applying their grammatical knowledge to express thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. Integrating grammar instruction with the development of other language skills is essential. School administrations are likely to provide additional classrooms, comfortable seating, and modern teaching equipment to develop a more effective and stimulating educational setting. Limited prior knowledge of English is a key barrier to the successful implementation of communicative grammar instruction. Therefore, subject teachers, in collaboration with school administrations, should organize remedial or tutorial sessions to enhance students' English language proficiency.

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Regarding the research, writing, and/or publication of this paper, the author or authors declare that they have no possible conflicts of interest.

## Authors' Contribution

**Tibebu Bekele:** Data Collection, Conceptualization, Analysis, and Writing the Original Draft.

**Tsehay Ababu:** Data Collection, Data Analysis, Review, and Editing.

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