

Teachers' Perception and Practice of Implementing Active Learning Strategies in Teaching English Language: The Case of Secondary Schools in Kambata Tambaro Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to assess EFL teachers' perception and practice of implementing active learning strategies. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 37 teachers via Classroom observation, questionnaire and FGD. Quantitative part of the data was analyzed using SPSS to calculate percentage and mean and qualitative part of it was analyzed thematically. Findings of the study revealed that teachers have positive perception towards active learning strategies but practice of implementation was not at a satisfactory level. Teachers implemented activities such as brain storming, asking and answering questions, discussion and group works. The researchers recommended short and long term trainings for the teachers and active involvement of all concerned bodies to facilitate active learning in the schools.

Keywords: Active Learning; Learning strategy; Teachers' Perception; Teachers' Practice

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1. Introduction

The concept of active learning was emerged during the late 1970s and early 1980 and got more attention by instructional designers, teachers and researchers of language curriculum all over the world (Bonwell, 2000; Fredson, 2015). It is a broadly inclusive term of several models of instruction that support learning by holding learners responsible for their own learning. The method seeks active engagement of students' higher order thinking skills through the production and articulation of knowledge as opposed to the passive transmission of facts and ideas. In active learning classes, students are required to be actively involved in the lesson and are provided with opportunities to listen, write, read, discuss, or be engaged in problem solving and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of classroom activities. The choice of activities and tools in active learning is determined by the learning goal and other factors including level of students' skill, time available, materials at hand, class size and others that are specific to a certain learning environment (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Meyers & Jones, 1993).

It is evident in the literature that students in active learning classes outperform their counterparts in traditional classes in learning English. According to Sarason and Banbury (2004), adopting active learning method in language teaching is significantly more fun and exciting since it goes beyond just reading and listening as everyone is expected to engage and actually do something either individually or as a group. Learners are expected to share their thoughts, opinions, and conclusions about certain topics rather than simply reviving information from a single source. Moreover, active learning creates an environment where learners are pulled out of their regular ways of learning and show great improvement in developing their ability of critical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking, collaboration and interpersonal skills. Students in active learning classrooms are engaged and motivated because the method enhances students' motivation and interest in language learning. Students' motivation in turn results in increased enthusiasm for both learners and facilitators by improving learners' perception and attitude towards information mastery (Prince, 2004; Freeman et al., 2014). Scholars suggest various teaching structures, systems, methods, techniques, procedures and processes which collectively are called "active learning strategies", to be applied in active learning methods (Hanson & Moser, 2003; Jones & Bartlett, 2010; Craig, 2015). Teachers have to apply numerous types of strategies in their teaching. Among them, discussion, clarification pauses, minute writing, self-assessment, group work, think-pair-share, cooperative groups in class, peer review, group evaluations, brainstorming, case studies, interactive lecture and role playing are some strategies which are given due attention in the current study. Thus, in this study, EFL teachers' perception and practice of implementing active learning strategies were investigated to find answers for the following specific research questions.

1. What is EFL teachers' perception towards the use of active learning strategies?
2. To what extent do teaches implement active learning strategies in their EFL classes?
3. Which active learning strategies do EFL teachers frequently implement?

2. LITRATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is active learning?

The term “active learning” does not have a single definition up on which all its proponents agree. Different educators and researchers define it differently. But most of the definitions make their base on the definition of Bonwell and Eison (1991) which says “active learning is a term that is used to describe instructional strategies such as hands-on activities, brief writing and discussion assignments, problem solving tasks, information gathering and synthesis, question generation, and reflection-based activities which may promote students’ active participation in knowledge construction processes”. Carr et al. (2015) also define the term as, an instructional approach that helps students to construct their knowledge through working with other students on projects during class, making a presentation, asking questions or contributing to discussions, participating in a community-based project as part of a course, working with other students outside of class on assignments, discussing ideas with others outside of class and tutoring peers. Active learning is also defined as “doing things and thinking about what is being done to intentionally construct skills, abilities, or knowledge through participation or contribution of students” (Derrick & Ecclestone, 2008; Zewdu, 2012; Mello, 2013). Active learning requires students to think hard and practice using new knowledge and skills in order to develop long-term recall and a deeper understanding. This deeper understanding will also enable learners to connect different ideas together and to think creatively which prioritizes students’ abilities, needs, and interests. Thus, course content, activities, materials and pace of learning are determined by the needs of students. Role of instructors is providing structured opportunities for students to learn independently and from their peers, encouraging them to become fully involved in their own learning and coaching them as they develop any skills they need. In active learning students must do more than just listen; they must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. This claim is also supported by (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Meyers & Jones, 1993; Bucharest, 2010;; David & Colleen, 2013; Fall, 2016).

2.2. Forms of Active Learning

There are many other terminologies which are associated with active learning because the approach can take many forms, follow different models and serve many different instructional goals. Many of these approaches have areas of overlap with each other and draw on similar pedagogies that focus on student-centered instruction and course learning (Creswell, 2012). According to Dewey who advocated a child-centered approach (1859), the following are some of the terminologies related to active learning.

- a. **Student-centered or learner-centered learning:** where students play an active role in their learning, with the teacher as an activator of learning, rather than an instructor.
- b. **Experiential learning:** Experiential learning is an associated concept in which students learn from relevant experiences provided in the course of instruction (Kolb, 1984).
- c. **Participative learning:** Participative learning is defined as engaging students in the learning process by giving them an opportunity to take part in selecting activities and assignments in the class. For example, students may be allowed to choose elements in the syllabus, write exam questions, participate in grading of some class projects to help them take responsibility and become accountable for positive outcomes in the class (Mills-Jones, 1999).
- d. **Cooperative learning:** In cooperative learning, students are required to work together in small groups and class discussions. In order for small groups to develop cooperative learning, five basic elements are necessary: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual and group accountability, social skills, and group processing or feedback (Johnson, Roger & Smith1991). When the five elements are present, cooperative learning in small groups can maximize each student’s learning as one helps the other. Creating a cooperative learning setting, therefore, entails active participation of heterogeneous members in terms of interaction and negotiation when engaged in tasks. Each group member, therefore, is required to both learn from and contribute to others’ work (Kheladi, 2021).
- e. **Collaborative Work:** Collaborative active learning emphasizes structured group work, sharing and project coordination to solve an academic task to learn or develop a new skill. This group work can take the form of pair work, small groups of students, or all class collaboration. Many of these approaches draw on the use of partnerships and targeted working groups in the classroom environment and leverage the community building energies that the groups foster. The effect can be increased student engagement, student accountability for their participation and group contributions and enhanced class cooperation. Some teaching approaches that can work well with collaborative work activities are: inquiry based teaching, peer feedback or evaluation strategies, independent project assignments and student-driven pedagogies.
- f. **Problem & Inquiry based Learning:** Problem and inquiry based learning activities have a flexible format but typically follow a pattern of diagnosis and evaluation of a challenge or problem. The students would be asked to define or identify the problem or challenge, diagnose potential reasons for this problem,

brainstorm and evaluate alternative solutions or options and choose the most appropriate solution and justify the reason for their choice. Problem- and inquiry- based learning asks the students to assume responsibility and higher level of engagement with their learning process while also encouraging critical assessment, inquiry, and skillful analysis of course materials and topic content. These types of activities can often be very interactive and deeply rewarding for the students since they frequently feel a sense of accomplishment while completing and sharing their findings. In its very essence, a problem-solving approach to teaching originates from the belief that learning must be an active constructive process within which students are encouraged to assume active roles (Hung, 2015; Kingsland, 1996).

- g. **Visual-based learning:** Pun (2014) endorses the use of media technologies, such as films and videos and consider them a valuable tool for promoting active learning and attaining educational objectives. He also praises the role of multimedia technologies in creating favorable contexts for reforming and modernizing English language studies by improving learning activities and teaching initiatives. Another prompt for the incorporation of such technologies is their motivational effect on students' learning. Their implementation is likely to empower students' responses to and attitudes towards teaching inputs. This claim branches from the interactive aspect of visual-based learning. Some teaching approaches that can work well with problem- and inquiry based learning activities are: discovery or self-exploration activities or processes, technology enhanced role simulations, case centered instruction, and model scenario training. Disciplines like physics, economics, nursing and medicine, and sociology often rely on problem based learning strategies (Michel et al., 2009).

2.3. What are Strategies that promote Active Learning?

Active learning strategies are instructional activities that help students to be actively involved in doing things and think about what they are doing (Bonwell & Eison 1991). As Michel et al. (2009), active hands-on teaching strategies and learning activities are designed to take students some times out of their books, out of their seats, out of their classes, out of their schools and sometimes out of their familiar way of thinking. Active hands-on teaching strategies and learning activities are intended to make students active participants in their own learning. Here are the two important terms frequently used:

1. **Teaching strategy:** refers to structure, system, method technique, procedure and process that a teacher uses during instruction. These are strategies the teacher employs to assess students learning.
2. **Learning activities:** refer to the teacher guided instructional tasks or assignments for students. These are student activities.

According to Cusea (1992), most active learning strategies fall into one or more of three general categories: collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and problem based learning strategies. Collaborative learning strategies and cooperative learning strategies are similar. Both focus upon the importance of interactions between students who are members of small groups. The goal of collaborative and cooperative learning strategies is to shift learning from a solitary activity performed by students in isolation to students engaged in a group activity. Typically, members of such groups collaborate or cooperate in an effort to complete a specific instructor assigned task or goal. These instructional strategies share the key characteristic of promoting a relatively high level of student interaction. In cooperative learning, however, less emphasis is placed upon student competition, and more emphasis is afforded to the achievement of the cooperative group as a whole. On the other hand, problem based learning strategy is an instructional strategy where the material to be learned is first couched as a problem at the outset of the instructional process, apparently to provide motivation and context for subsequent instruction (Prince, 2004).

- a. Researchers suggest that teachers must be knowledgeable of alternative techniques and strategies for questioning and discussion and must create a supportive intellectual and emotional environment that encourages students to take risks (McKeachie et al., 1986; Arikew, 2015; Fall, 2016; Tadesse & Daniel, 2016). Among many strategies employed in active learning classes, some are presented as follows.
- b. **Discussion:** Discussion is one of the most common strategies promoting active learning with good reason. If the objectives of a course are to promote long term retention of information, to motivate students toward further learning, to allow students to apply information in new settings, or to develop students' thinking skills, then discussion is preferable to lecture.
- c. **Clarification pauses:** Throughout a lecture, particularly after stating an important point or defining a key concept, the teacher stops presenting and allows students time to think about the information. After waiting, the teacher asks if anyone needs to have anything clarified, tells students to review their notes and ask questions about what they've written so far.
- d. **Self-assessment:** Students receive a quiz (typically ungraded) or a checklist of ideas to determine their understanding of the subject. Concept inventories or similar tools may be used at the beginning of a semester or the chapter to help students identify misconceptions.
- e. **Minute Writing:** At an appropriate point in the lecture, the teacher asks the students to take out a blank

- sheet of paper, state the topic or question he/she wants students to address.
- f. **Group work:** Students discuss a topic in class based on reading, video, or problem. The teacher may prepare a list of questions to facilitate the discussion.
 - g. **Think-pair-share:** The teacher makes students work individually on a problem or reflect on a passage. Students then compare their responses with a partner and synthesize a joint solution to share with the entire class.
 - h. **Cooperative groups in class:** The teacher poses a question for each cooperative group while he/she circulates around the room answering questions, asking further questions, and keeping the groups on task. After allowing time for group discussion, the teacher asks students to share their discussion points with the rest of the class.
 - i. **Peer review:** Students are asked to complete an individual homework, assignment or short paper. On the day the assignment is due, students submit one copy to the teacher to be graded and one copy to their partner. Each student then takes their partner's work and, depending on the nature of the assignment, gives critical feedback, and corrects mistakes in content and/or grammar. Peer review sessions in which students receive introduction with which they their classmates' learning provide opportunities for students to make their thinking explicit and obtain informal feedback. The purpose of feedback in such cases is to provide students with information on their understanding or performance that can guide them towards a desired learning goal.
 - j. **Group evaluations:** Similar to peer review, students may evaluate group presentations or documents to assess the quality of the content and delivery of information.
 - k. **Brainstorming:** The teacher introduces a topic or problem and then asks for student input, gives students a minute to write down their ideas and then records them on the board for farther discussion.
 - l. **Case studies:** The teacher uses real life stories that describe what happened to a community, family, school, industry, or individual to prompt students to integrate their classroom knowledge with their knowledge of real world situations, actions, and consequences.
 - m. **Interactive lecture:** The teacher breaks up the lecture at least once per class for an activity that lets all students work directly with the material. Students might observe and interpret features of images, interpret graphs, make calculation and estimates.
 - n. **Role playing:** Here students are asked to act out a part or a position to get a better idea of the concepts and theories being discussed. Role playing exercises can range from the simple to the complex.

Active learning strategies involve a mixture of individual and collaborative tasks, giving students chance to reflect or predict outcomes, and then to share and discuss their ideas with peers. Activities can last anywhere from mere minutes to large segments of a class period; the point is simply to activate learners' cognitive processes while they are learning.

2.4. Why are Active Learning Strategies Important?

Several studies have shown that active learning strategies have powerful impact on students' learning of English language. For example; As Freeman et al. (2014), active learning strategies boost knowledge retention, create assessment opportunities, foster skill development, encourage creativity, increase motivation and promote collaboration among students. Amburgh et al. (2007) also suggest three core benefits active learning strategies have on students' learning. First, active learning strategies help students meet their learning objectives by making the students develop the knowledge and skills that they are expected to acquire in a given course. Second, active learning strategies encourage students' participation and provide an ease to learning and invite involvement among all students. Third, active learning strategies provide opportunities for feedback and reflection. Moreover, Moges (2007) in his study concluded that students are engaged in learning English when various active learning strategies are applied than traditional lectures. Birhanu (2010) also found that strategies promoting active learning are comparable to lectures in promoting the mastery of content but superior to lectures in promoting the development of students' skills in thinking and writing. Furthermore, according to Binyam (2014), a significant number of students have learning styles best served by active learning strategies than lecture method. Harris and Bacon (2019) claim that effective implementation of active learning strategies in the classroom creates better learning outcomes for students. According to the authors, active learning strategies tend to place some emphasis on students' explorations of their own attitudes and values and focus more on developing students' skills than on transmitting information and require students to do something. When teachers adapt active learning strategies in their instruction, they can promote deep learning among students by spending greater proportion of time helping learners develop their understanding and skills than spending (Eison, 2010). Thus, active learning strategies have a significant role in promoting learning in general and learning of language in particular. Teachers are expected to select teaching strategy which suits to the students' level of knowledge and the content being studied. Therefore, the current study is intended to find out grade nine EFL teachers' perception and practice of implementing active learning strategies in their teaching in five selected secondary

schools in Kambata Tambaro zone.

3. METHODE

3.1. Participants of the study

Participants of this study were Grade nine EFL teachers in Kambata Tembaro zone. There were twenty four secondary schools in the zone and five schools namely (Durame, Shinshicho, Hadero, Donga-Tunto and Mudula) were randomly selected for the study and thirty seven teachers who were 100% of teachers teaching grade nine English in the selected schools participated in the study.

3.2. Instruments of data Collection

For the proper achievement of its objectives, data for the study was collected via classroom observation, questionnaire and focus group discussion. The instruments were carefully adapted from Taye (2008) and Mebratu and Woldemariam (2018) and some items were designed by the researchers on the bases of the literature and the specific questions of the study. Content, relevance and clarity of the items in the instruments were first approved by experienced supervisor of the study who is associate professor in TEFL. After that, a pilot study was conducted to assure reliability or consistency of items in the questionnaire.

3.3. Procedures of data Gathering

Regarding specific procedures of data collection, the following steps were followed by the researchers. First, reliability of items in the questionnaire was ascertained via pilot study. Thus, Chronbach alpha for the first and second parts which were used to assess the teachers' perceptions and practices of implementing active learning strategies respectively were found to be .80 and .75 respectively which were acceptable values. The researchers then proceeded to the final process of collecting data by receiving all necessary consents from concerned bodies at zonal, woreda and school level. Then the researchers conducted classroom observations followed by administration of questionnaire and finally focus group discussion was conducted.

3.3.1. Classroom observations

Classroom observations were conducted using observation checklist. The checklist consisted of 17 close-ended items which were used to assess the teachers' practice of implementing active learning strategies in the classroom. For the classroom observation, one teacher from each selected school was randomly selected and each teacher was observed three times. Therefore, total of fifteen classroom observations were conducted during the study

3.3.2. Questionnaire

The other instrument used to collect data for this research was a questionnaire. A questionnaire was administered to thirty seven grade nine EFL teachers in the selected schools. It was organized in two parts. The first part consisted of twelve items, which were aimed at assessing teachers' perception towards active learning strategies. The second part of the questionnaire had fourteen items which were designed to assess the teachers' practice of implementing active learning strategies in their EFL classes.

3.3.3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The third instrument used to collect data for the study was a focus group discussion. As Focus group discussion is important to elicit wide range of information from the participants about the phenomenon under investigation, it was held between 10 grade nine English teachers to generate relevant data on the teachers' perceptions and practices of implementing active learning strategies in their teaching. 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.

3.4. Techniques of data analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques of data analysis were employed in this study. Thus, the data gathered through classroom observation and questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively by using SPSS version 26 to calculate frequency, percentage and mean value. Whereas, data collected via focus group discussion was thematically analyzed by using qualitative method. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were made based on the findings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Results

In this chapter, statistical analysis of the data gathered via classroom observations, questionnaires and FGD to answer specific research questions of the study was presented.

4.1.1. What is EFL teachers' perception towards importance of active learning strategies?

To answer the first research question, data were collected via questionnaire and FGD.

4.1.1.1. Analysis of Questionnaire

Questionnaire which consisted of twelve detailed statements about relevance of implementing active learning strategies to promote students' active involvement in learning English was administered to 37 EFL teachers. The teachers were requested to express their level of agreement with the statements by using scale ranging from 1 (strongly) disagree to 5 (strongly agree). The data was analyzed and presented by comparing means of the teachers' responses based on the criteria used by Sozen & Guven (2019):- 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. Statements related to importance of active learning strategies to enhance English language learning are presented in Table 1 below to assess the teachers' perception. Thus, items 3, 4, and 6 were used to assess the teachers' perception about the use of active learning strategies to enhance students' level of understanding and involve them in problem solving, help teachers to engage students in learning and create the opportunities to share experiences and encourage friendship among students respectively. In response to the items, 67%, 54% and 54% of the teachers with mean values 4.57, 4.59 and 4.30 respectively responded "strongly agree". From this, it can be said that most of the teachers believe that; active learning strategies enhance students' level of understanding and involve them in problem solving, help teachers to engage students in learning and create opportunities to share experiences and encourage friendship among students. On the other hand, items 2 and 11 were used to assess whether active learning strategies scale up the quality of education and whether implementing them gives opportunities for progress of students in language use respectively. The mean value of the teachers' response for both items was 4.03 which indicates the teachers' level of agreement between "agree" and "strongly agree". This implies that EFL teachers think that use of active learning strategies has great contribution to scale up quality of education and that they give opportunities for progress of students in language use. Likewise, items 1, 5 and 8 say "Teaching EFL is better facilitated if teachers apply active learning strategies, active learning strategies are good tools to promote effective learning and active learning strategies promote self- confidence and independent learning among students respectively. 76%, 78% and 70% of the teachers respectively responded agree to strongly agree to the items with mean values 4.19, 4.11 and 4.00 respectively. From this it is safe to conclude that most of the teachers think that teaching EFL is better facilitated if teachers apply active learning strategies, active learning strategies are good tools to promote effective learning and active learning strategies promote self- confidence and independent learning among students. In response to items 7, 9, 10 and 12 (active learning strategies enhance active involvement of students in learning instead of passive listening, use of active learning strategies makes communication easy between students and the teacher, active learning strategies help students to be responsible for their own learning and active learning strategies prepare students for active participation in the lesson) respectively, 62%, 62%, 73% and 65% of teachers with mean values 3.81, 3.57, 3.86 and 3.89 respectively responded between "agree" and "disagree". From the above analysis of data in Table 1 below, it can be concluded that most of the teachers have positive perceptions on the importance of active learning strategies to help students learn English language better.

Table 1. Teachers' perception towards active learning strategies to promote learning

Key: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Undecided, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree

No.	To what extent do you agree to the following items?	1		2		3		4		5		M.
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Teaching EFL is better facilitated if teachers apply active learning strategies			4	11	5	13	8	22	20	54	4.19
2	Use of active learning strategies has a great contribution to scale up the quality of education	3	8	2	5	4	11	6	16	22	60	4.03
3	Active learning strategies enhance students' level of understanding and involves them in problem solving.					3	8	10	27	24	67	4.57
4	Active learning strategies help teachers to engage students in learning							17	46	20	54	4.54
5	Active learning strategies are good tools to promote effective learning			4	11	4	11	13	35	16	43	4.11
6	Active learning strategies create the opportunities to share experiences and encourage friendship among students.			3	8	3	8	11	30	20	54	4.30
7	Active learning strategies enhance active involvement of students in learning instead of passive listening.			9	24	5	13	7	19	16	43	3.81

No.	To what extent do you agree to the following items?	1		2		3		4		5		M.
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
8	Active learning strategies promote self-confidence and independent learning among students.	2	5	2	5	7	19	3	8	23	62	4.00
9	Use of active learning strategies makes communication easy between students and the teacher	5	14	4	11	5	13	11	30	12	32	3.57
10	Active learning strategies help students to be responsible for their own learning.	4	11	1	3	5	13	13	35	14	38	3.86
11	Use of active learning strategies give opportunities for progress of students in language use.	3	8	2	5	4	11	9	24	19	51	4.03
12	Active learning strategies prepare students for active participation in the lesson.	2	5	3	8	8	22	8	22	16	43	3.89

4.1.1.2. Analysis of FGD

During the FGD, one teacher argued implementing active learning strategies wastes time and he said that he is interested in uniform way of teaching to use time effectively during lesson. But most of the teachers who participated in the FGD confirmed that applying different active learning strategies during instruction helps to catch students' attention and make them motivated in the lesson. They also said that implementing different types of teaching strategies is important to identify students' learning abilities as high, medium and low achievers. On top of that, the teachers confirmed varying strategies in English lesson helps the students to improve their skill of interaction with each other as well as with the teacher and therefore students can develop self-confidence. Thus, analysis of FGD data assured that teachers have a positive perception towards active learning strategies.

4.1.2 Teaches' practice of implementing active learning strategies in the classroom.

The second research question was aimed at investigating EFL teachers' practice of implementing active learning strategies in their classes during instruction. To achieve this goal, the researchers collected data through classroom observation, questionnaire and FGD. Thus, the researchers first conducted 15 classroom observations using checklist, then a questionnaire was administered and finally FGD was conducted. The data gathered via classroom observations, questionnaire and FGD respectively was analyzed as follows.

4.1.2.1 Analysis of classroom observation

To assess whether the teachers were implementing active learning strategies in their teaching, a checklist consisting of seventeen active learning strategies was used during the observations as shown in tables 2.1 and 2.2 below. The classroom observation data was analyzed in terms of frequency and percentages of their occurrence under "yes" or "no" category. Classroom observation data was analyzed being categorized in two parts. Thus, active learning strategies which were implemented more frequently during the observations are discussed under "A" and active learning strategies which were implemented less frequently are discussed under "B".

A. Active learning strategies which were implemented more frequently

As can be seen in Table 2.1 below, the observed teachers most frequently implemented active learning strategies such as brain storming, cooperative groups in class, discussion, individual work, group work and asking and answering questions. For example, among 15(100%) observations, the teachers conducted asking and answering questions at 12(80%), individual work at 11(73%), brain storming and group work at 10(67%), cooperative groups in class at 9(60%) and discussion at 8(54%) of the observations. That means, each individual teacher, who was observed three times, conducted brain storming, discussion, individual work and group work at least two times. Thus, from this it can be concluded that brain storming, cooperative groups in class, discussion, individual work, group work and asking and answering questions are active learning strategies which were more frequently implemented by the teachers during classroom observations.

Table 2.1 Active learning strategies which were implemented more frequently

No	Do teacher implement the following strategies in their instruction	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	Brain storming	10	67	5	33
2	Cooperative groups in class	9	60	6	40
3	Discussion,	8	54	7	46
4	Individual work	11	73	4	27
5	Group work	10	67	5	33
6	Asking and answering questions	12	80	3	20

A. Active learning strategies which were implemented less frequently

Data in Table 2.2 below shows that, minute writing was performed at 6(40%), think-pair-share, clarification pause and puzzles and games were conducted at 5(33%), debate and problem based activities were conducted at 4(27%), group evaluation, case study and peer review were conducted at 3(20%) and interactive lecture and self-assessment were conducted at 2(13%) of the classroom observation. Thus active learning strategies such as think-pair-share, debates, peer reviews, puzzles and games, clarification pauses, problem solving activities, interactive lecture, minute writing, self-assessment and case studies were conducted less frequently by the teachers who were observed.

Table 2.2 Active learning strategies which were implemented less frequently

No	Do teacher implement the following strategies in their instruction	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	Think-pair-share	5	33	10	67
2	Debates	4	27	11	73
3	Peer review	3	20	12	80
4	Puzzles and games	5	33	10	67
5	Group evaluation	3	20	12	80
6	Clarification pauses	5	33	10	67
7	Problem-solving activities	4	27	11	73
8	Interactive lecture	2	13	13	87
9	Minute writing	6	40	9	60
10	Self-assessment	2	13	13	87
11	Case study	3	20	12	80

4.1.2.2 Analysis of questionnaire

Teachers’ practice of implementing active learning strategies was also accessed via a questionnaire. The questionnaire was presented to the teachers by explanation of the activity than naming the strategy to avoid misunderstanding and help the respondents be clear with the strategy. The questionnaire had 14 detailed statements which represent different active learning strategies such as clarification pause, self-assessment, group work, think-pair-share, asking and answering questions, peer review, group evaluation, brain storming, case studies, interactive lecture, role playing and puzzles and games respectively. The teachers were asked to respond based on the frequency of implementing the Strategies. The frequency options ranged between 1= never and 5= always. The findings are presented by comparing frequency and mean on the bases of criteria: - (1-1.80= never, 1.81-2.60 = rarely, 2.61-3.40 = sometimes, 3:41-4:20 = usually and 4:21-5:00 = always).The questionnaire was analyzed in three parts based on the teachers’ responses. Thus, strategies for which the teachers responded “usually” and “always” with mean value between 3:41 and 5:00 were discussed first under “activities performed more frequently” (Table 3.1), those for which the teachers responded “sometimes” are discussed next under “activities performed less frequently” (Table 3.2) and items for which the teachers responded “never” and “rarely” (Table 3.3) were discussed last under “activities performed least frequently”.

A. Activities which were performed more frequently

According to the teachers’ reactions to the statements which represent specific active learning strategies, group work, think-pair-share, asking and answering questions, case studies and role playing were strategies which were responded as they were “usually” and “always” performed by the teachers during instruction. When we put them individually, the mean values of the teachers’ responses for statements, “I give questions to students to work in groups and present it to the class, I make students work individually on a problem, compare it with a partner and share it with the entire class, I encourage students to ask and answer questions at any part of a lesson, I use real life stories to help students integrate their classroom knowledge with their knowledge of real world situations and I ask students to act out a part of the content of a lesson being discussed”, which stand for group work, think-pair-share, asking and answering questions, case studies and role playing respectively, were 4.46, 3.41, 3.89, 4.08 and 4.43 respectively. The mean values show that group work, think-pair-share, asking and answering questions, case studies and role playing were activities which were performed with a frequency ranging between usually and always. From this it can be concluded that EFL teachers more frequently implement group work, think-pair-share, asking and answering questions, case studies and role playing in their instruction.

Table 3.1 Activities which were performed more frequently

Key: 1= never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4= usually 5= always

N	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I give questions to students to work in groups and present it to the class					7	19	6	16	24	65	4.46
2	I make students work individually on a problem, compare it with a partner and share it with the entire class.	3	8	5	14	10	27	12	32	7	19	3.41
3	I encourage students to ask and answer questions at any part of a lesson	2	5	5	14	6	16	6	16	18	49	3.89
4	I use real life stories to help students integrate their classroom knowledge with their knowledge of real world situations	3	8	2	5	4	11	8	22	20	54	4.08
5	I ask students to act out a part of the content of a lesson being discussed			2	5			15	41	20	54	4.43

B. Activities which were performed less frequently during instruction

Data in Table 3 above, indicated that statements (I make students take their partner's work, correct it and give feedback, I introduce a topic or problem and then ask student to add an input, I Pose a question for each group and ask students to share their discussion points with the rest of the class after allowing time for discussion and I break up the lecture at least once per class for students to observe and interpret different features of the course content), which represent peer review, brainstorming, cooperative groups in class and interactive lecture respectively, were responded as they are performed 'sometimes' with mean value 3.16, 3.19, 3.24 and 3.30 respectively. From the data it is fair to conclude that EFL teachers implement self-assessment, peer review, brainstorming, cooperative groups in class and interactive lecture during some of their instruction.

Table 3.2 Activities which were performed less frequently during instruction

Key: 1= never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4= usually 5= always

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I make students take their partner's work, correct it and give feedback	5	14	7	19	6	16	9	24	10	27	3.16
2	I introduce a topic or problem and then ask student to add an input,	3	8	8	22	9	24	10	27	7	19	3.19
3	I Pose a question for each group and ask students to share their discussion points with the rest of the class after allowing time for discussion	2	5	5	14	17	46	8	22	5	14	3.24
4	I break up the lecture at least once per class for students to observe and interpret different features of the course content	4	11	7	19	8	22	10	27	8	22	3.30

C. Strategies which were least frequently performed during instruction

The teachers response in Table 3 above revealed that statement such as "I give my students an ungraded quiz to determine their understanding at the beginning of a course, I stop speaking and ask students to review their notes and ask questions, I make students choose a controversial topic and debate for and against the idea, I ask students to evaluate group presentations or documents to assess quality of the content and delivery of information and I ask some questions regarding the topic being taught and tell the students to write the answers on a sheet of paper and discuss about it", which represent self-assessment, clarification pause, debate, group evaluation and minute writing respectively, were responded by the teachers as they were performed "rarely" and "never" with mean values 2.38, 2.16, 2.08, 2.43 and 2.35 respectively. Thus, based on the analysis of data in Table 3, it can be said that EFL teachers rarely implement self-assessment, clarification pause, debate, group evaluation and minute writing in their instruction.

Table 3.3 Strategies which were least frequently performed during instruction
 Key: 1= never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4= usually 5= always

No	Item	1		2		3		4		5		Mea.
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	I give my students an ungraded quiz to determine their understanding at the beginning of a course	10	27	13	35	7	19	4	11	3	8	2.38
2	I stop speaking and ask students to review their notes and ask questions,	13	35	14	38	4	11	3	8	3	8	2.16
3	I make students choose a controversial topic and debate for and against the idea	15	40	11	30	6	16	3	8	2	5	2.08
4	I ask students to evaluate group presentations or documents to assess quality of the content and delivery of information	2	5	18	49	16	43	1	3	3	8	2.43
5	I ask some questions regarding the topic being taught and tell the students to write the answers on a sheet of paper and discuss about it	10	27	16	43	3	8	4	11	4	11	2.35

4.1.2.3 Analysis of FDG

During FGD, most of the teachers argued that they sometimes implement active learning strategies such as asking and answering questions, brain storming, discussion, and group work. Whereas, some of the teachers said that they rarely implement ‘debating’ and ‘peer review’. But all teachers agreed that they were not effectively implementing different active learning strategies in their instruction and they tend to prefer lecture or teacher centered teaching method than active learning due to various reasons.

4.1.2.4 Active learning strategies which were commonly implemented by teachers

Analysis of data in the preceding sections revealed that there are some active learning strategies which were being implemented by the teachers more frequently than the others in. As data gained through classroom observation showed, group work, think-pair-share, asking and answering questions, case studies and role playing were implemented more frequently. Moreover, data collected via questionnaire divulged that teachers implement brain storming, cooperative groups in class, discussion, individual work, group work and asking and answering questions. It was also disclosed during FGD that asking and answering questions, brain storming, discussion, and group work were implemented. From this, it is safe to conclude that asking and answering questions, group work, brain storming and discussion were active learning strategies which were implemented most frequently by the teachers.

5. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Discussion

Findings of the study which were obtained from questionnaires, classroom observations and FGD to answer the research questions were discussed as follows:

1. What is EFL teachers’ perception towards the use of active learning strategies?

To answer this question, different data were gathered and analyzed. Analysis of data gained from both questionnaire and FGD indicated that almost all teachers who participated in the study had positive perceptions towards active learning strategies to help students learn better because most of the teachers strongly agreed that using active learning strategies contributes to scale up the quality of language teaching by enhancing students’ level of understanding and involving them in problem solving activities. The same findings were obtained by Mulatu and Bezabih (2018). They concluded that teachers in three secondary schools had positive perceptions on implementing active learning to enhance students learning of English language. The findings also agree with findings of study conducted by Yusuk (2020) on “perceptions and practices of EFL teachers on implementing active learning in Thai English language classrooms” and the findings revealed that most of the teachers had positive perception on implementing active learning in language classes. Mulugeta et al. (2021), investigated English major students’ and teachers’ perception and practice of active learning in Kabridahar University Ethiopia, and found a result that agrees with the findings of the current study. They concluded that students and teachers had perceived active learning in a good way” (p. 97). Nhat Vinh (2022) also found that participants of the study had positive view on the role of active learning. Thus, it is in line with the findings of the current study. Similarly, Binyam (2014) and Arikew (2015) in their studies on teachers’ and student’ practices and perceptions of implementing active learning in upper primary schools in Gondar, found that teachers and students had good or positive perceptions towards active learning.

2. To what extent do teaches implement active learning strategies in EFL classes?

3. Which active learning strategies do teachers frequently implement in their EFL classes?

To answer these two questions, data from the participants were collected via classroom observation, questionnaire and FGD. The obtained data were analyzed and the findings revealed that teachers were frequently implementing active learning strategies such as asking and answering questions, brain storming, discussion and group work in their EFL classes. This findings agree to some extent with findings of Yusuk (2020,) who concluded that, “group work, cooperative learning, and giving homework, were among the most frequently implemented active learning techniques in the classrooms” (p.50). Mulugeta, et al. (2021) also found that active learning was sometimes practiced in the EFL classes in Kabridahar University. It was also disclosed by a study by Melaku (2020) that questioning method, group work, gap lecture, cooperative learning, and individual work were methods commonly used by teachers. (Hakulinen et al., 2015). However, giving homework and lectures were among the frequently used techniques. The findings of this study on this specific point are in contrary with the findings of Girma (2013), Ayele (2014,) and Mulatu and Bezabih (2018) who concluded that teachers were not implementing active learning methods in in their instructions due to various factors.

5.2. Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to assess EFL teachers’ perception and practices of implementing active learning strategies in five selected secondary schools in Kambata Tembaro Zone, SNNPRS Ethiopia. Subjects of the study were Grade nine English teachers. To collect data for the study, a questionnaire was administered to 18 EFL teachers, 12 classroom observations were conducted and FGD was held with 6 teachers. The data collected via questionnaire and classroom observations were quantitatively analyzed and the FGD data was analyzed qualitatively. Findings of the study revealed that teachers perceive ‘using active learning strategies to improve students’ learning,’ positively. The teachers assured that active learning strategies are powerful tools to make students actively involved in learning and take responsibility of their own learning. Despite EFL teachers’ positive perceptions towards active learning strategies and their attempt to implement strategies such as brain storming, discussion, asking and answering questions and group work, they were not implementing much of the strategies such as cooperative groups in class, think-pair-share, debates, group evaluation, interactive lecture, case study, clarification pauses, self-assessment peer review, problem-solving activities, puzzles and games and minute writing. Thus, it can be concluded that EFL teachers’ practice of implementing active learning strategies in their instruction was not at a satisfactory level.

5.3. Recommendations

Literatures confirm that active learning strategies are powerful tools to hold students motivated in learning. If students are highly motivated in learning, they create sense of confidence and start to take responsibility of their own learning. As they start taking responsibility of their own learning, Students will become lifelong learners and can successfully achieve their learning objectives. To realize this in the schools where this study was conducted, the researchers highly recommend the following solutions. The government of Ethiopia should work intensively to provide teachers with basic facilities to bring change in the education sector. Regional, zonal and woreda education sectors and school community (supervisors, directors and department heads) should arrange short and long term capacity building trainings for teachers. Teachers should be provided with clearly narrated modules to help them to update their knowledge and skill of teaching by implementing various learning strategies.

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