ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN ACTIVE LEARNING: EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS, PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

The current study was mainly aimed at exploring teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges of implementing their role in active learning. The total population of the study were 37 English language teachers in Kambata Tembaro Zone, Ethiopia. Data for the study were collected via a questionnaire and focus group discussion. The data collected via a questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively by using statistical package for social science and qualitative method of analysis was applied for the data gathered via focus group discussion. The findings of the study revealed that teachers lack clear understanding of their role in active learning and they were not properly accomplishing it in teaching the English language. Knowledge, skill, and aptitude gaps among teachers and students and unsuitable school environments were reported as major challenges affecting the implementation of active learning. Awareness creation and capacity-building workshops were recommended for the teacher and students to improve the implementation of active learning in secondary schools in Ethiopia.
Keywords: *active learning; new challenges; teachers' role.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan utama untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi, praktik, dan tantangan guru dalam mengimplementasikan peran mereka dalam pembelajaran aktif. Jumlah populasi studi ini adalah 37 guru bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di Zona Kambata Tembaro, Ethiopia. Data penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan diskusi kelompok terpumpun. Data yang dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dianalisis secara kuantitatif dengan menggunakan paket statistik untuk ilmu sosial, dan metode analisis kualitatif diterapkan untuk data yang dikumpulkan melalui diskusi kelompok terpumpun. Temuan dari studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa guru-guru kurang memahami dengan jelas peran mereka dalam pembelajaran aktif, dan mereka tidak melaksanakannya dengan baik dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris. Kesenjangan pengetahuan, keterampilan, dan sikap di antara guru dan siswa, serta lingkungan sekolah yang tidak sesuai, dilaporkan sebagai tantangan utama yang memengaruhi implementasi pembelajaran aktif. Disarankan untuk mengadakan lokakarya untuk meningkatkan kesadaran dan kapasitas guru serta siswa dalam meningkatkan implementasi pembelajaran aktif di sekolah-sekolah menengah di Ethiopia.
Kata Kunci: *pembelajaran aktif; peran guru; tantangan terbaru*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there is a strong need among people in Ethiopia to master basic knowledge and skills of English. This is because the language has a growing role and popularity as a means of communication to actively participate in social, economic, cultural, and political affairs. As Ethiopia is a developing country, the language plays a significant role to facilitate the country's success in diplomacy, business, development, international relations, collaboration, technology, and modernization. As a result, currently, many governmental and private institutions are using English as a medium of their internal and external communications. For example, in all universities (both public & private) and different research centers, English is used as a language of publication and communication. Likewise, it is the medium of written communication next to Amharic in insurance companies, banks, telecommunications, Ethiopian Airlines, and private real estate (Birhanu, 2013; Ayele, 2017).

Regarding the introduction of the English language in the Ethiopian educational system, it has a long history. Various sources indicate that Ethiopia started using the English language for educational purposes from the period when modern education started in the country. The language has been used in varying levels of usage from 1908 to the present. But, following the establishment of the new Education and training policy of Ethiopia in 1994, English is taught as a subject from grade one onwards and it is a medium of instruction from primary school in some regions and from secondary school in other regions up to tertiary levels. Therefore, it is mandatory for students to have a good command of the language to be able to pursue their studies and be effective in areas which need English language proficiency. Furthermore, after completing their studies in higher education institutions, students are required to have effective oral and written communication skills in English to have wider access to employment in different fields requiring employees to possess a high level of language proficiency across any modern economy. Students are also required to have cultural as well as practical knowledge to be effective in communication which involves more than mere knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to meet different situations in their life or career (MoE, 2013; Eba, 2013, 2014).

The current policy of education in Ethiopia mandates the application of active learning approaches in its language curriculum. Active learning classroom has strong implications for the role of the teacher which is shifted from knowledge provider to that of a guide who gently directs the student's attention to key innovations along his intellectual journey. This is because the teacher does not have only an educational and vocational role but he/she is expected to establish a learning environment that encourages students. He/she should ask questions, probe, encourage critical reflection and provide necessary and adequate information for the students (Vighnarajah et al., 2008). According to Arbona (2016), the teacher in active learning, in addition to his/her educational and

vocational role is expected to be a designer, organizer, manager, innovator, researcher, and advisor of the teaching and learning process to have great success in helping students prepare for lifelong learning and making them more capable to work in fields where they must acquire new skills and knowledge regularly. Richards and Rodgers (2011), also forwarded that the teacher is an analyst, counselor, and group process manager. He/she facilitates learning conditions and gives students the chance to produce language, interact and make mistakes and errors; teachers had to develop a different view learners expectations to facilitate language teaching (Fredson et al., 2015). Therefore, the teacher in EFL classrooms is expected to perform several roles such as designing, programming, diagnosing, researching, organizing, managing, educating, assessing, participating, and advising to achieve the goal of teaching/learning English language (Brad, 2000; Gillies et al., 2008).

But, regardless of being taught in a learner-oriented learning approach, students' proficiency in both oral and written skills of the English language in Ethiopia is always questionable. Teachers, researchers, and employers at different positions are always noticed blaming secondary school students and even university graduates in Ethiopia. Research findings by different scholars in various corners concluded that students' level of performance in using the English language for communicative purposes in high schools, colleges, and universities is below the level expected of them (Tadesse & Daniel, 2016; Mulatu & Bezabih. 2018). Moreover, it is revealed that about two-thirds of high school and university students in Ethiopia suffer from moderate up to high levels of overall English classroom anxiety. Firew (2008), confirmed that 65.9% of secondary school students had displayed moderate to high levels of English language anxiety. Likewise, 64.1% of third-year English major students in Ethiopian universities were found anxious about speaking English in the classroom. Therefore, it can be clearly understood that most students at high school and university level have low English proficiency levels because foreign language anxiety has a negative correlation with language achievement including proficiency (Gerencheal, 2016).

1.2 Definitions of Active Learning

The term "active learning" does not have a single definition on which all its proponents agree. Different educators and researchers define it differently. In fact, almost all the definitions make their base on the definition of Bonwell and Eison (1991) which says "active learning is a term that is used to define numerous instructional approaches. Slavin (2014) defines active learning as a teaching method which is a broadly inclusive term used to describe several models of instruction that hold learners accountable for their learning. Active learning seeks to engage learners' higher-order thinking skills through the production and articulation of knowledge divergent to the passive approach. It was also defined by Carr et al., (2015) as an instructional approach that involves students' efforts to actively construct their knowledge together with a method used to measure

learning such as 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 from a course 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". Active learning requires students to think hard and practice using new knowledge and skills to develop long-term recall and a deeper understanding. This deeper understanding will also enable learners to connect different ideas and to think creatively which prioritizes students' abilities, needs, and interests to Cambridge Assessment of International Education (2019). Thus, course content, activities, materials, and pace of learning are based on the needs of students. The role of instructors is to provide structured occasions for pupils to learn independently or with peers, encouraging them to become fully involved in education and coaching them as they develop any skills they need (Mello, 2013). According to Slavin (2014) idea of some scholars, who emphasize that "active learning is a word to be intuitively understood than commonly defined. Most importantly, learners should be involved in higher-order thinking chores as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. (Bucharest, 2010; Sawyer, et al., 2017 and Mulatu & Bezabih, 2018).

1.3 Principles of Active Learning

To promote active learning, four measurements were advised by Michel et al., (2009). The first one is "context setting". It denotes creating an open and relaxed atmosphere for learning in the classroom. The second is "class preparation". This involves thought, planning, and creativity before the class session. The third one is "class delivery". Class delivery refers to the implementation of the planned lesson in the classroom. The fourth is "continuous improvement" which entails seeking and using feedback concerning the teaching approach.

To make the technics effective in learning, teachers should make use of them by starting small, starting early, and starting with activities that pose a low risk. The pause procedure, retrieval practice, minute papers, and the think-pair-share technique provide easy entry points to incorporating active learning approaches, requiring the instructor to change very little while providing students an opportunity to organize and clarify their thinking. As a teacher begins to incorporate these practices, it's a good idea to explain to his/her students why he/she is doing so. The teacher's talk to the students about their learning not only helps build a supportive classroom environment but can also help them develop their metacognitive skills and ability to become independent learners (Kovács, 2018; Wahyuningtyas & Savitri, 2022).

1.4 Teachers' Role in Active Learning

It is often said that parents and teachers are the two main contributors who can shape a life of a person. Parents are the primary teachers. They teach the basic things in life and teachers who come later give a person the knowledge that he/she possesses forever. As Paragae (2023) argue, the entire lives of teachers are devoted to educating young children and turning them into mature and independent individuals. Even though each teacher has a unique way of teaching, all teachers show their students the way to success and happiness. They always acknowledge students' good traits and nurture them. Teachers motivate students to take the right decisions and bring their hidden talents to the surface (Utami & Sulistyaningrum, 2022). In the current scenario of education, the role of the teacher has taken a different form from what it was before. Teachers were given a specific curriculum to follow, as well as instructions on how to go about teaching the curriculum. In today's world of education, the teacher's role goes beyond teaching and involves counseling students, mentoring students, being role models, and teaching students how to use and apply knowledge in their lives. Thus, teachers have to look for ways they can positively impact students' learning and inspire them to be and do more. Most importantly teachers are expected to share knowledge effectively, make learning a fun activity and draw a real-life connection. As students have diverse learning preferences, abilities, and interests, they need support from their teachers which is apart from teaching. So, teachers should always be ready to encourage, motivate, and guide their students and teach them in such a way that they enjoy and focus on learning by adopting a fun method of teaching which applies to their situation (Olusegun, 2015).

On top of the above points, English language teachers perform many other very significant roles to improve their students' learning of English in educational institutes because the teachers' roles determine the performances of their students in English as has been indicated in the first chapter of this study. English teachers are required to perform many roles simultaneously to fulfill the demands of their jobs as teachers. For instance, currently, teachers are expected to be mentors, facilitators, managers, guides, controllers, motivators, evaluators, and organizers (Yasmin & Muhammad, 2018). As Arbona (2016), the teacher is a designer, organizer, manager, innovator, researcher, and advisor of the teaching and learning process to have great success in helping students prepare for lifelong learning and making them more capable to work in fields where they must acquire new skills and knowledge regularly. According to Richards and Rodgers (2011), the teacher can also be assumed to be a: needs analyst; counselor; and group process manager. The teacher's role is to create learning conditions and gives students the chance to produce language, interact and make mistakes and errors; teachers had to develop a different view of learners' errors to facilitate language learning (Fredson et al., 2015; Arbona, 2016).

The roles of English language teachers perceived by theorists and researchers are benchmarks in the process of EFL teaching. They must learn how

to create an environment in which students feel free to openly express and share their ideas. It has been demonstrated that class discussions in which students actively participate and are encouraged to raise questions and pose problems themselves may greatly improve students' understanding. Thus, to fulfill their new roles, teachers are advised to shift their focus in the classroom from lecturing to assessing (Gómez-Puig, & Stoyanova, 2022).

The following five major roles of the teacher in active learning are suggested by Ian (2016).

Preparing learners: At this stage the teacher's role is to help students develop awareness of the approach which is referred to as learner training. This will generally involve the teacher making suggestions and providing students with information. The teacher has to help students to look at themselves and language learning openly and constructively. Teachers have different opportunities to play this role. If they have time and resources availability, they can conduct individual interviews and regular consultations with students. If time and resources do not allow, developing awareness among students may be done by arranging ongoing discussions and consultation between teachers and students based on day-to-day teaching activities (Chemir & Kitila, 2022; Paragae, 2023).

Analyzing learner needs: In analyzing learners' needs, a teacher can do two main things. The first is to assess how much students have to contribute, as this varies a lot between students. What students can contribute to goal-setting depends largely on how clear their learning goals are. Even if students have thought objectively about their communicative needs, they may lack the analytical categories to express them, or they may perceive their needs in terms of their prior learning experience which may or may not be helpful. In most cases, the teacher will need to provide some basic terminology and a few guidelines to get students thinking along useful lines. Depending on the type of student, a variety of other techniques can be used. Questionnaires can elicit information useful to the teacher as well as help students structure their experience. Learner diaries, where students record their language use over some time, can be extremely useful, though they demand a fair degree of commitment and training. Other techniques include the pooling of experiences among students, teacher-student consultation, and student-based simulations.

Selecting methodology: Adopting a learner-centered approach to the choice of methodology will generally operate in two stages. First, the teacher must get to know students on several counts, in particular concerning their preferred learning style and their attitudes to or experience of language learning. On this basis, the teacher must use his or her professional judgment to select a teaching-learning mode that seems likely to hit the right chord with students. The second stage involves students participating actively in the planning of their learning program. This, however, needs preparation. To begin with, the teacher has to encourage

students to think critically about their learning experiences and themselves as learners.

Transferring responsibility: In active learning, the teacher is not the one who decides on everything in the classroom. But he/she has to arrange decisions regarding the content and form of teaching being shared between him/her and students. This does not, however, mean that responsibility is wholly transferred to the students. In a learner-centered mode of teaching, as in any other, the teacher remains ultimately responsible for ensuring that effective learning takes place. Assessing how much, and which areas of responsibility to transfer to students is thus a key aspect of the teacher's role. Essentially, this involves the teacher evaluating main points like what students have to contribute, how this can make learning more effective, and how capable students are of assuming a constructive and responsible role in shaping their learning program. Language teaching is a complex social and cultural activity. The teacher, therefore, needs to understand students within their socio-cultural context, quite apart from accepting them as psychologically complex individuals.

Involving learners: At this stage, the teacher may simply involve students in thinking critically about what the teacher proposes: like the relevance of the materials, the objective of the material, and alternative way to the material presentation. In this respect, much can be learned from the suggestion that 'doing the same thing with a different awareness seems to make a bigger difference than doing different things with the same awareness'.

Generally, the aforementioned ideas clearly indicate that teachers' have a role which is immensely important for achievement of learning objectives in active learning methods above given by different scholars can be summarized as 'Active learning is a teaching style where students are required to take part in the lesson and are provided with opportunities to talk, listen, write, read, discuss, reflecting on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of classroom activities. Concerning students' ability in schools at Kembata Tembaro zone, different reports show that they score below the standard on classroom tests and regional and national examinations in the English language. This may be due to teachers' appropriate accomplishment of their role to implement the principles of the active learning approach. There are no or few researches conducted on "teachers' role in active learning" at national level. Thus, the current study mainly strives to bridge the gap in the literature by investigating EFL teachers' awareness, practice, and challenges of playing their role in active learning classrooms by finding answers to the following specific research questions.

1. How do EFL teachers perceive their role in active learning methods?
2. To what extent do EFL teachers play their role in active learning classrooms?
3. What major challenges do the teachers face in playing their role in an active learning classroom?

METHOD
Participants of the study
Participants of this study were Grade nine EFL teachers in Kambata Tembaro zone. Among twenty-four secondary schools in the zone, five 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.

Instruments of Data Collection
For the proper achievement of its objectives, data for this study were collected via a questionnaire and focus group discussion. The instruments were carefully adapted from Mebratu and Woldemariam (2018), Arruda and Silva (2021) and some items were designed by the researchers based on the literature and the specific questions of the study. The content, relevance, and clarity of the items in the instruments were first approved by an experienced supervisor of the study who is an associate professor in TEFL. After that, a pilot study was conducted to assure the reliability or consistency of items of the instruments.

Procedures of Data Gathering
Regarding specific procedures of data collection, the following steps were followed by the researchers. First, the reliability of items was ascertained via a pilot study. Thus, Chronbach alpha was calculated and acceptable values (.80 and .75) were found. The researchers then proceeded to the final process of collecting data by receiving all necessary consents from concerned bodies at zone and school levels. Then the researchers administered a questionnaire followed by the FGD.

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

FINDINGS
In this section, data collected via classroom observation, questionnaire and FGD were analyzed, interpreted and presented briefly on the bases of research questions.
1. **Teachers' Perception of their role in active learning methods**
Items 2, 4 and 8 say that "The teacher in a student-centered teaching is a facilitator of activities, it is my role to give a clear guidance to the students on how to improve their use of English language and I join groups as a co-learner to help group members who face difficulties", respectively. The mean values of the teachers' responses to statements were 4.27, 4.43 and 4.41 respectively. These mean values show that relatively large number of teachers reacted "strongly

agree" to the ideas. From this, facilitating, guiding and acting as co-learner is role of the in active learning classrooms. Likewise, items 1, 5, 6, 9, 13 and14 respectively state that "It is my role to plan activities on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis, I have to design relevant activities for my students to practice language skills in and out of the classroom, I have to organize different events to meet needs of all types of learners, I conduct different assessments to understand my students' backgrounds, I have to give my students an ungraded class works, quizzes, and assignments to check their understanding and I have to give continuous feedbacks to my student to check their progress in learning the language. Most of the teachers responded "agree" to the statements with mean values 4.14, 3.81, 4.14, 3.86, 4.19 and 4.14 respectively. The data tell us that teachers think that they are planners, designers, organizers, assessors, evaluators and feedback providers to their students in learner-centered classrooms. The participants said I am "not sure" about items 3, 11, and 12 that say, "I have to determine the way how to deliver the lesson and lead the overall teaching-learning process, It is my role to train students how to learn better and I have to conduct action researches to bring a method where most of the students learn better" respectively. The mean values of the teachers' responses were 3.22, 2.81 and 3.1. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that some of the teachers are not clear whether leading the whole system in the classroom, training learners how to learn and conducting research to find teaching methods where students learn better are their duty in active learning methods or not. On the other hand, for items 7 and 10, ("As a teacher, it is my role to provide my students different learning resources and I help students to practice learning by themselves through cooperation with their peers"), the teachers said "disagree" with the same mean values 2.59. From this, it can be said that teachers think that providing resources and helping students to learn by themselves is not their role in active learning methods. In conclusion, analysis of the teachers' responses revealed that most of the teachers believe that they should effectively accomplish their roles.

Table 1. Teachers' Perception of their role in active learning

No	Items	1		2		3		4		5		m
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	M
1	It is my role to plan activities on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual base	2	5.4	3	8.1	4	10.8	7	18.9	21	56.8	4.14
2	The teacher in student-centered teaching is a facilitator of activities	2	5.4	1	2.7	1	2.7	14	37.8	19	51.4	4.27
3	I have to determine the way how to deliver the lesson and lead the overall teaching-learning process	4	10.8	4	10.8	17	46	4	10.8	8	21.6	3.22

		1		2		3		4		5		Mean
4	It is my role to give clear guidance to the students on how to improve their use of English language	1	2.7	0	0	1	2.7	15	40.5	20	54	4.43
5	I have to design relevant activities for my students to practice language skills in and out of the classroom	1	2.7	2	5.4	10	27	14	37.8	10	27	3.81
6	I have to organize different events to meet the needs of all types of learners	1	2.7	1	2.7	7	18.9	11	27.7	17	46	4.14
7	As a teacher, it is my role to provide my students with different learning resources	10	27	12	32.4	5	13.5	3	8	7	18.9	2.59
8	I join groups as a co-learner to help group members who face difficulties	1	2.7	0	0	2	5.4	14	37.8	20	54	4.41
9	I conduct different assessments to understand my students' backgrounds	4	10.9	4	10.9	2	5.4	10	27	17	46	3.86
10	I help students to practice learning by themselves through cooperation with their peers	13	35	8	21.6	5	13.5	3	8	8	21.6	2.59
11	It is my role to train students how to learn better	8	21.6	12	32.4	5	13.5	3	8	9	24.3	2.81
12	I have to conduct action research to bring a method where most of the students learn better	4	10.9	7	18.9	14	37.8	5	13.5	7	18.9	3.11
13	I have to give my students ungraded class works, quizzes, and assignments to check their understanding	2	5.4	2	5.4	1	2.7	14	37.8	18	48.7	4.19
14	I give continuous feedback to my student to check their progress in learning the language	3	8	2	5.4	2	5.4	10	27	20	54	4.14

Key: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree 3= not decided 4= agree 5= strongly agree

2. Teachers' practice of playing their role in a student-centered classroom

In response to item 1 which says "I prepare a daily, weekly and annual plan to implement student-center learning" 32% and 43% responded 'always' and 'usually' respectively. From this, it can be said that most of the teachers (75%) prepare daily, weekly, and annual plans to implement active learning. Item 2 was used to assess if the teachers facilitate conditions in and outside of the classroom to make students learn better. In reaction to this, 28 (75.6%) of the teachers responded 'always'. This analysis shows that teachers play the role of facilitating conditions in and outside the classroom. Concerning item 3, the same number of respondents, 11(29.7%) said 'sometimes', 'rarely', and 'never'. The teachers' responses, expose that they do not play their role as leaders of the overall teaching and learning process. Item 4 was responded 'always' by 23(62%), and 'usually' by 11(29%) of the teachers. Thus, we can say that teachers give clear guidance to the students on how to improve their use of the English language. "I design relevant activities to help my students practice language skills in and out of the classroom". Was item 5 and 13 (35.1%) responded 'usually' and 14 (37.8) said 'sometimes'. Therefore, it can be decided that teachers sometimes design relevant activities to help their students. Item 6 was reacted 'rarely' by 16 (43.2%) and 'never' by 11 (29.7%) teachers. This reveals that teachers do not play their role as an organizer in active learning methods. Item 7 says "As a teacher, I provide different learning resources to my students", 18(48.6%) said 'always' and 15 (40.6%) said 'usually'. Thus from this, teachers play their role as resource providers for their students. In response to item 8, 28 (75.6%) of the teachers said 'always'. This indicates that teachers join groups as co-learner most of the time. Item 9 was also responded 'always' by 22 (59.5) of the respondents. Item 10 which says "I advise/help students to practice learning by themselves through cooperation with their peers", was responded 'sometimes' by 8 (21.6%), 'rarely' by 6 (16.2%) and 'never' by 11 (29.7%). In reaction to item 11, 12 (32.4%) said 'always' and 20 (54%) said 'usually'. From this, it can be conclude that teachers play the role of training learners how to learn. Item 13 which says "I give my students ungraded class works, quizzes, and assignments to check their understanding", 27 (73%) of the teachers responded 'always'. Therefore, we can say that most teachers give ungraded class works, quizzes, and assignments to check their students' understanding. The last item of Table 2, was item 14 and it was reacted 'always by 19 (51.3%) teachers and 'usually' by 16 (43.2%). The teachers' responses revealed that most of the teachers give continuous feedback to students to check their progress in learning the language most of the time.

Generally, from the above analysis and data presented in Table 2 blow, it can be said that the teachers assured that they accomplish most of the roles they are expected.

Table 2. Teachers' practice of playing their role in active learning

No	Items	1		2		3		4		5		M
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	M
1	I prepare a daily, weekly and annual plan to implement student-center learning	12	32.4	16	43.2	3	8.1	4	10.8	2	5.4	2.14
2	I facilitate conditions in and outside of the classroom to make students learn better	28	75.6	7	18.9	1	2.7	1	2.7	0	0	1.32
3	I determine the way how to deliver the lesson and lead the overall teaching-learning process	4	10.8	0	0	11	29.7	11	29.7	11	29.7	3.68
4	I give clear guidance to the students on how to improve their use of English language	23	62.1	11	29.7	3	8.1	0	0	0	0	1.46
5	I design relevant activities to help my students practice language skills in and out of the classroom	2	5.4	1	2.7	13	35.1	14	37.8	7	18.9	3.62
6	I organize different events to meet the needs of all types of learners	4	10.8	0	0	6	16.2	16	43.2	11	29.7	3.81
7	As a teacher, I provide different learning resources to my students	18	48.6	15	40.6	4	10.8	0	0	0	0	1.62
8	I join groups as a co-learner to help group members who face difficulties	28	75.6	8	21.6	0	0	0	0	1	2.7	1.32
9	I conduct different assessments to understand my students' backgrounds	22	59.5	11	29.7	2	5.4	1	2.7	1	2.7	1.59
10	I advise/help students to practice learning by themselves through cooperation with their peers	7	18.9	5	13.5	8	21.6	6	16.2	11	29.7	3.24
11	It is my role to train students how to learn better	12	32.4	20	54	3	8	1	2.7	1	2.7	1.89
12	I have to conduct action research to bring a method where most of the students learn better	12	32.4	7	18.9	14	37.8	3	8	1	2.7	2.30
13	I give my students ungraded class works, quizzes, and assignments to check their understanding	27	73	9	24.3	1	2.7	0	0	0	0	1.30
14	I give continuous feedback to my student to check their progress in learning the language	19	51.3	16	43.2	2	5.4	0	0	0	0	1.54

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

3. Major challenges that affect teachers' practice of accomplishing their role in active learning

In this part, the challenges were presented as being classified as teachers, students, and school environment-related challenges.

A. Teachers Related Challenges

Item 5 in Table 3 below says, "Lack of teacher maturity (professional) makes implementation of active learning more difficult". In response to this, 29(78.4%) of the teachers responded "strongly agree" with a mean value of 4.70. This clearly tells us that most teachers believe that teachers' professional maturity affects the implementation of active learning. Item 8 in the same Table says, "Active learning does not fit into the established academic culture". This was answered "strongly agree" by 28(75.7%). From this evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that the nature of active learning is a challenge for the teachers to implement the approach in their case. Item 6, says, "In active learning classes, it is difficult to manage the classroom discipline", 12(32.4%) of the teachers responded "agree" and 22(59.5%) of them responded "strongly agree" with mean value 4.41. This displays that classroom discipline was a challenge to implement active learning in the classroom. Likewise, item nine, which says, "In my classroom, some students are dominating others during group activities", was responded "agree" by 10(27%) of the teachers and "strongly agree" by 13(35%) with a mean value 3.51. Thus from this, some students dominating the class was a challenge to implement active learning. This shows us that the teachers are not skilled enough to manage the class in active learning approaches. Moreover, item 7 "Active learning takes too much class time and the coverage of content will suffer" was reacted as "agree" by 11(29.7%) of the teachers and "strongly agree" by 10(27%) of them. The mean value of 3.41 implies that time management was a challenge to implementing active learning in the schools where the study was conducted.

On the other hand, items 2 and 3, which say, "I have received training on how to implement active learning" and "I am clear with the implementation of active learning strategies" respectively, were responded "disagree" by 28(75.7%) with mean value 1.70 and 23(62.2%) with mean value 1.84 respectively. That means, most of the respondents disagreed with both statements. Therefore, it is rational to complete that most of the teachers are not trained on how to implement active learning and thus they are not clear with its implementation. 11(29.7%) teachers responded "undecided" and 16(43.2%) of them responded between "disagree" and "strongly disagree" for item 4, which says "Teaching with active learning techniques is safe to evaluate students". Hence, from the teachers' reaction to the item, we can say that evaluating students in active learning classrooms was a challenge for them. The statement, "Active learning is not suitable method to apply" which was item 1 in Table 1, was responded "strongly agree" by 18(48.6%) of the teachers and "disagree by 9(24.3%) of them. Thus, most teachers think that active learning is a suitable method to apply.

Table 3 Teachers-related factors

No.	Items	1		2		3		4		5		Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	Active learning is not a suitable method to apply	18	48.6	9	24.3	3	8.1	3	8.1	4	10.8	2.08

2	I have received training on how to implement active learning	28	75.7	3	8.1	0	0	1	2.7	5	13.5	1.70
3	I am clear with the implementation of active learning strategies	23	62.2	6	16.2	3	8.1	1	2.7	4	10.8	1.84
4	Teaching with active learning techniques is safe to evaluate students	8	21.6	8	21.6	11	29.7	6	16.2	4	10.8	2.73
5	Lack of teacher maturity (professional) makes implementation of active learning teaching more difficult	1	2.7	0	0	0	0	7	18.9	29	78.4	4.70
6	In active learning classes, it is difficult to manage the classroom discipline	2	5.4	1	2.7	0	0	12	32.4	22	59.5	4.41
7	Active learning takes too much class time and the coverage of content will suffer	5	13.5	6	16.2	5	13.5	11	29.7	10	27.0	3.41
8	Active learning does not fit into the established academic culture	2	5.4	1	2.7	1	2.7	5	13.5	28	75.7	4.51
9	In my classroom some students are dominating others during group activities.	7	18.9	3	8.1	4	10.8	10	27.0	13	35.1	3.51

Key (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree (5) strongly disagree

During focus group discussion, acteacher M sadly said that he would never hesitate to resign if they get any chance. The transcription is presented here under.

"If I get any chance of getting other jobs, I will never hesitate to resign from teaching because I and my children are greatly suffering from life situations. I can't fulfill their needs to the minimum level due to the condition of my current life and the amount of my salary. To your surprise, my friends who are at other work, including those who give transportation service by motorcycle, are by far better at fulfilling their family's expectations than me. Even the shoes I wear the ones which I bought two years ago and I am afraid to come in front of my students. Then why do I need to worry about being a good teacher where the students as well as their parents".

B. Students Related Challenges

Items 2, 3, and 6 say, "Students are not motivated to participate in activities used to promote active learning", "Divers students' backgrounds make active learning more difficult to implement" and "Students are not able to handle activities in active learning classes" respectively. In reaction to the items, 33(89%) with a mean value of 4.22, 33(89%) with a mean value of 4.19, and 30(81%) of the teachers with a mean value of 4.11 respectively, responded between "agree" and "strongly agree" to the statements which were negatively narrated. Responses of the teachers revealed that most of the teachers believe implementation of active

learning is affected by students' motivation, students' backgrounds, and ability to handle activities in the classroom.

Likewise, item 5 which says "Students are willing to be engaged in active learning", was responded "strongly disagree" by 14 (37.8) and "disagree" by 11(29.7). For item 1, "The students have no interest in active learning methods", 10(27%) of the teachers said "strongly disagree", 7(18.9%) of them said "disagree" and 5(13.5%) teachers responded undecided. The statement, "Students are matured enough to manage situations in active learning", which item 4 in Table 2 below, was responded "strongly disagree" by 9(24.3%) respondents "disagree" by 6(16.2%) respondents and "undecided" by 7(18.9%) respondents. From the analysis of items 5, 1, and 4 in Table 2, it is just to conclude that teachers believe that lack of interest and willingness to be engaged in different learning activities and immature behaviors among students affect the implementation of active learning methods.

Table 4 Students' related factors

No	Items	1		2		3		4		5		Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	The students are interested in active learning methods	10	27.0	7	18.9	5	13.5	7	18.9	8	21.6	2.89
2	Students are not motivated to participate in activates	3	8.1	0	0	1	2.7	15	40.5	18	48.6	4.22
3	Divers students' backgrounds make active learning more difficult to implement	3	8.1	1	2.7	0	0	15	40.5	18	48.6	4.19
4	Students are matured enough to manage situations in active learning	9	24.3	6	16.2	7	18.9	7	18.9	8	21.6	2.97
5	Students are willing to be engaged in active learning	14	37.8	11	29.7	3	8.1	5	13.5	4	10.8	2.30
6	Students are not able to handle activities in active learning classes	2	5.4	0	0	5	13.5	15	40.5	15	40.5	4.11

Key (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree (5) strongly disagree

To sum up, effective implementation of active learning was affected by factors related to students' lack of motivation and interest, diversified backgrounds, and inability. This was also assured by the teachers during focus group discussions. Respondents of the study reported that students prefer illegal migration and working in different activities which help them to get money to support and satisfy their needs than attending school. Denying to attend school among the students, according to the reporters, resulted from the unemployment of their elder brothers and sisters who graduated from higher institutions for a long period of time. Here under is the transcription.

"The other very worst problem in our school is the interest and motivation of the students. Let alone implementing active/student-centered learning, the students

are not interested to attend school regularly, After receiving their regional examination at the end of grade 8, some boys get their driving license and go to giving transportation services either by motor or bajaj. Some others choose illegal migration to neighboring countries and South Africa. Some girls migrate illegally to Arab countries. Some others in the group go to Addis Ababa (capital city of Ethiopia) to get employment as a home maid. Some very few female students who attend school are also engaged in part-time work such as working handcrafts and selling fruits so that they never attend school on market days like Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday".

C. School environment-related factors

In Table 5 below, five statements were employed and analyses of the data are presented as follows. The first statement elicits information on if a large number of students in a class were challenged to implement active learning in the schools. 27(73%) of the teachers responded "strongly agree" to the item with a mean value of 4.68. This implies that number of students is a factor that affects the implementation of active learning methods in schools. Item 2 of Table 3 was used to elicit data if the sitting arrangement of the students/chairs was a challenge or not in the schools. In reaction to this, 25(67.6%) of the teachers with a mean value of 4.62 said: "strongly agree". From this, the fixed setting arrangement was a factor that affects the implementation of active learning methods in the schools. In the same way, the third and the fourth statement were used to assess if a shortage of books (textbook and teachers' guide) and lack of teaching aids respectively affect the proper implementation of active learning methods in the schools. For these items, 35(94.6%) with a mean value of 4.86 and 21(56.8%) with a mean value of 4.54 respectively answered: "strongly agree". The last statement of this part says "High teaching loads per day/week is challenging to play my role in active learning". This was answered "agree" by 15(40.5%) and "strongly" agree by 15(40.5%) of the teachers with a mean value of 4.1. Thus, from the teachers' responses, it can be generalized that teaching loads of the teachers is a factor that affects the implementation of active learning.

Table 5 School environment-related factors

No.	Items	1		2		3		4		5		Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	A large number of students in the class hinders the use of active learning methods.	0	0	0	0	2	5.4	8	21.6	27	73.0	4.68
2	Fixed sitting arrangements in a classroom are not suitable to work in a group	0	0	0	0	2	5.4	10	27.0	25	67.6	4.62
3	I face a shortage of textbooks and teachers' guides in my	1	2.7	0	0	0	0	1	2.7	35	94.6	4.86

	school										
4	It is difficult to get teaching aids in or around my school to implement active learning	0	0	0	0	1	2.7	15	40.5	21	56.8	4.54
5	High teaching loads per day/week is challenging to play my role in active learning	1	2.7	2	5.4	4	10.8	15	40.5	15	40.5	4.11

Key (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree (5) strongly disagree

Data in Table 5 above showed that the implementation of active learning was greatly affected by a large number of students per class, unsuitable sitting arrangements, lack of teaching as well as learning materials, and a large teaching load on teachers. The teachers also confirmed the same during FGD.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study which were obtained from analysis of the data gathered via questionnaires and FGD to answer specific questions of the study are presented here:

Analysis of data collected to answer the first research question, (how do EFL teachers perceive their role in active learning methods?) indicated varying perceptions among the teachers concerning their role in active learning because data obtained from the questionnaire indicated that the teachers have positive perceptions concerning their role in active learning. On the other hand, during the FGD, the teachers explained that the roles assigned to teachers in active learning are exaggerated as conditions are not suitable to accomplish the roles. These findings are different from Mulugeta et al. (2021) and Teshome (2013) who investigated teachers' perceptions and concluded that teachers have positive perceptions of active learning. The findings of the current study are also contrary to the findings of Yusuk (2020) where data from questionnaires and classroom observations revealed positive perceptions of teachers on active learning. However. These findings were in line with Michael et al. (2023) who concluded that teachers lack to have an appropriate understanding of active learning and they teachers differ in their understanding, practices, and efficacy of active learning.

Concerning the accomplishment of their role in and outside of the classroom, the teachers provided data that shows they play most of the roles that are expected of them in active learning methods. But during FGD, they disclosed that they were not interested in their role. They reported that students' maturity, classroom conditions and the teachers' level of understanding about the roles do not invite them to effectively accomplish the roles assigned to them in active learning. There are plenty of studies whose findings agree with this point. For

instance: Girma (2013), Ayele (2014,) and Mulatu and Bezabih (2018) concluded that teachers were not properly implementing active learning in EFL classes.

Analysis of the data also affirmed that the teachers' role was affected by factors that belong to teachers, students, and the schools' environment. The same conclusions were reached by Dereje et al., (2022) and Baru (2021) that EFL teachers face a challenge in addressing their students' needs and adjusting their actual classroom practice. The finding also agrees with Kefialew (2021) and Ayele (2017) that lack of classroom facilities, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and lack of awareness of to how implement active learning, were the major challenges to implement active learning.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to assess English language teachers' perceptions and practices of accomplishing their role in active learning at secondary schools in the Kambata Tembaro zone, Southern Ethiopia. Data for the study were collected from 37 EFL teachers through questionnaires and FGD. The data collected via questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed and the FGD data was analyzed qualitatively.

In conclusion, the findings of the current study indicated that there are knowledge, attitude, and skill gaps among teachers and students concerning the implementation of teachers' role in active learning methods in teaching English. It was also divulged that there is a shortage of basic materials in the schools to apply active learning. As the topic is not well researched in the area at the local or national level, the findings greatly contribute to the field of study and it advised to conduct further research on the teacher's role and its implementation of teachers' training centers to help the teachers understand their role well and implement it properly to achieve the intended goal in teaching English language on the bases of active learning methods.

Based on the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data collected from the participants, the following basic points as preconditions for stakeholders at different levels. First, teachers should receive short and long-term training to update their knowledge of principles of active learning and skill of implementation. Second, it was strongly argued by the participant teachers that they were not fully engaged in their teaching due to an imbalance between their income and the current life situation in Ethiopia. Therefore, the Ethiopian government as well as the Ministry of Education in collaboration with regional state governments, should work strictly to improve the scale of teachers' salaries to satisfy at least the basic needs of teachers. Third, a lack of students' interest in attending school and participating in classroom activities was reported during the study. Thus, administrators in the education sector such as supervisors, school directors, unit heads, and parent and teacher associations around the schools should take part in creating awareness for the students about the worst history of illegal migrations.

Finally, it was revealed by the study that conditions in and around the classroom were not suitable for the implementation of active learning. Hence, all concerned bodies especially NGOs (none non-governmental organizations) in the zone support together with the governmental offices should support the educational system by providing specific and research-based capacity-building short and long-term training for the community (students, parents, teachers, and school administrators).

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