

**ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS' CONCEPTIONS AND  
APPLICATIONS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN GRAMMAR  
LESSONS: THE CASE OF FOUR PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN ETHIOPIA**

**By**

**ALAMIREW KASSAHUN TADESSE**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR. TP SHANDU-PHETLA**

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## **DECLARATION**

Name: Alamirew Kassahun Tadesse

Student Number: 64070875

Degree: Doctor of Language, Linguistics & Literature

Title: *English as a Foreign Language Instructors' Conceptions and Applications of Communicative Language Teaching in Grammar Lessons: The Case of Four Private Universities in Ethiopia*

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



Signature

April 2021  
Date

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ix
DEDICATION .....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. The Context of the Study .....	1
1.3. Teaching English in Ethiopia: A Brief Historical Overview .....	3
1.4. Background to the English Language in Ethiopia’s Education Policies.....	6
1.5. Background to Private Universities .....	7
1.6. Rationale of the Study.....	9
1.7. Problem statement.....	10
1.8. Aims and Objectives .....	13
1.8.1. Aim of the study.....	13
1.8.2. Objectives of the study.....	13
1.9. Research Questions and sub-questions .....	13
1.9.1. Basic Research Question.....	13
1.9.2. Sub-questions .....	13
1.10. Scope of the Study .....	14
1.11. Definitions of Key Terms .....	14
1.12. Ethical Considerations .....	17
1.13. Chapter outline.....	18
1.14. Conclusion .....	20
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	21
2.1. Introduction.....	21
2.2. A Brief Historical Survey of Language Teaching Approaches and Methods .....	21
2.3. Theoretical Orientations to L2 Methods and Approaches .....	21
2.3.1. The Grammar-Translation Method.....	23

2.3.2. The Direct Approach.....	24
2.3.3. The Audio-lingual Method .....	24
2.3.4. Community Language Learning .....	25
2.3.5. The Silent Way .....	26
2.3.6. Total Physical Response .....	27
2.3.7. The Natural Approach.....	28
2.4. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).....	33
2.4.1. The Concept of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) .....	33
2.4.2. Principles of CLT.....	36
2.4.3. Historical Development of CLT .....	39
2.4.4. Recent Trends in CLT.....	39
2.4.5. Syllabus in CLT .....	40
2.4.6. CLT-related Misconceptions .....	46
2.4.7. Adoption of CLT in EFL Contexts .....	47
2.4.8. Criticisms of CLT .....	54
2.4.9. The Place for Grammar in CLT.....	56
2.4.9.1. What is Grammar?.....	58
2.4.9.2. Debates Surrounding Grammar .....	60
2.4.9.3. The Importance of Grammar .....	63
2.4.9.4. Methods of Teaching Grammar .....	64
2.5. Empirical Review of Local and International Studies on CLT.....	67
2.5.1. Strengths and Benefits of CLT in Previous Studies.....	68
2.5.2. CLT-related Challenges, Weaknesses and Controversies in Previous Studies.....	69
2.5.3. The Relevance of CLT-related Challenges, Weaknesses and Controversies to the Current Study .....	70
2.6. Research Gap .....	70
2.7. Theoretical Framework.....	73
2.7.1. Brief Overview of the Socio-cultural Theory .....	73
2.7.2. Application of Socio-cultural Theory: Previous Research .....	74

2.7.3. Application of Socio-cultural Theory: Current Study .....	75
2.8. Conclusion .....	79
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	81
3.1. Introduction.....	81
3.2. Ontology and Epistemology .....	81
3.2.1. Ontology .....	81
3.2.2. Epistemology .....	83
3.3. Study Setting.....	84
3.4. Research Design.....	88
3.5. Research Participants .....	92
3.5.1. Profile of the Study Participants .....	93
3.6. Research Procedures .....	96
3.7. Data-collection Tools.....	97
3.7.1. Interview .....	97
3.7.2. Questionnaire .....	100
3.7.3. Classroom Observation.....	102
3.8. Methods of Data Presentation and Analysis .....	104
3.9. Validity and Reliability.....	106
3.10. Conclusion .....	107
CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS.....	108
4.1. Introduction.....	108
4.2. Findings from Interviews.....	108
4.2.1. The Methodological Assumption Held by Private Universities about Language Teaching.....	109
4.2.2. The Goals of Language Teaching and Learning in CLT .....	110
4.2.3. The Role of the Teacher in a CLT Classroom .....	114
4.2.4. The Role of Learners in a CLT Classroom.....	117
4.2.5. Classroom Activities or Tasks in a CLT Classroom.....	119
4.2.6. Materials and Resources used in a CLT Classroom .....	121

4.2.7. The Role of Grammar in the Academic and Non-academic Lives of Students.....	124
4.2.7.1. The Role of Grammar in the Academic Lives of Students.....	124
4.2.7.2. The Role of Grammar in the Non-academic Lives of Students.....	127
4.2.8. The Place for Grammar in CLT.....	130
4.2.8.1. Grammar’s Central Role in CLT.....	130
4.2.8.2. Grammar’s Peripheral Role in CLT.....	131
4.2.9. The Specific Strategies Employed by EFL Instructors to Teach Grammar Lessons.....	135
4.2.9.1. Context-based (Inductive) Approach.....	136
4.2.9.2. The Rule-based (Deductive) Approach.....	140
4.2.9.3. The Hybrid Approach.....	148
4.2.10. The Assessment Modalities EFL Instructors Employ to Assess their Students’ Performance in Grammar Lessons.....	151
4.2.10.1. Instructors who employ Continuous Assessment.....	152
4.2.10.2. Instructors who employ Non-continuous Assessment.....	157
4.2.11. The Suitability of CLT in Ethiopian Context.....	160
4.3. Findings from the Classroom Observation.....	167
4.3.1. Findings from the Semi-structured Observation.....	168
4.3.2. Synthesis of Findings from the Structured Classroom Observation.....	188
4.3.2.1. Form-focused Grammar Teaching.....	189
4.3.2.2. Meaning-focused Grammar Teaching.....	191
4.3.2.3. The Hybrid Approach to Grammar Teaching.....	192
CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS.....	197
5.1. Introduction.....	197
5.2. EFL Instructors’ Conceptions of CLT.....	197
5.3. EFL Instructors’ Conceptions of the Importance of Grammar, and the Place for Grammar in CLT.....	204
5.4. Techniques Employed by EFL Instructors in Teaching Grammar Lessons.....	208
5.5. Factors Affecting the Application of CLT in Teaching Grammar Lessons.....	217

5.6. Conclusion .....	223
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS .....	224
6.1. Introduction.....	224
6.2. EFL Instructors’ Conceptions of CLT .....	224
6.2.1. The Goal of Language Teaching in CLT.....	225
6.2.2. The Role of the Teacher in a CLT Classroom .....	230
6.2.3. The Role of the Learners in a CLT Classroom .....	231
6.2.4. Classroom Activities or Tasks Used in a CLT Classroom .....	233
6.2.5. The Teaching Materials and Resources Used in a CLT Classroom .....	233
6.2.6. The Role of Grammar in the Academic and Non-academic Lives of.....	234
6.2.7. The Place for Grammar in CLT.....	238
6.2.7.1. Debates Surrounding Grammar.....	238
6.2.7.2. Grammar’s Central Place in CLT.....	239
6.2.7.3. Grammar’s Peripheral Place in CLT .....	240
6.3. EFL Instructors’ Current Classroom Practices in Grammar Lessons.....	241
6.3.1. The Use of the Deductive Approach.....	242
6.3.2. The Use of the Inductive Approach .....	243
6.3.3. The Use of the Hybrid Approach.....	243
6.3.4. The Assessment Modalities Used by EFL Instructors .....	245
6.4. The Relationship between Instructors’ Conceptions of CLT and Their Classroom Practices.....	246
6.4.1. Consistencies between EFL Instructors’ Conceptions and Classroom Practices ..	246
6.4.2. Inconsistencies between EFL Instructors’ Conceptions and Classroom Practices.	252
6.5. Factors Affecting the Implementation of CLT in Grammar Lessons .....	256
6.5.1. Factors Affecting the Implementation of CLT in Ethiopia.....	257
6.5.1.1. Teacher-related Factors .....	257
6.5.1.2. Student-related Factors.....	260
6.5.1.3. Institutional Factors .....	263
6.5.1.4. System-related Factors .....	268

6.5.1.5. Curriculum-related Factors.....	270
6.6. Synthesis of the Relationships between the Findings and Results from the Data Sources.....	274
6.7. Conclusion .....	276
<b>CHAPTER 7: SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>277</b>
7.1. Introduction.....	277
7.2. Synthesis of Findings.....	278
7.2.1. Research question 1 .....	278
7.2.2. Research question 2 .....	283
7.2.3. Research question 3 .....	288
7.2.4. Research question 4 .....	291
7.3. Significance of the Study .....	295
7.3.1. Methodological Contributions of the Study.....	296
7.3.2. Theoretical Contributions of the Study: Guidelines for Implementing CLT in Grammar Lessons in EFL Contexts.....	297
7.4. Limitations of the Study.....	300
7.5. Recommendations.....	302
7.5.1. Policy Alignment with Practice .....	302
7.5.2. Opportunities for Experience Sharing .....	302
7.5.3. Opportunities for Structured on-the-job Training.....	302
7.5.4. Institutional-level Strategies .....	303
7.5.5. EFL Instructors' Commitment.....	304
7.5.6. Future Research .....	304
7.6. Conclusion .....	305
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>309</b>
Appendix-A: Interview .....	341
Appendix B: Questionnaire.....	342
Appendix C: Classroom Observation Checklist .....	351
Appendix D: Ethical Clearance Certificate.....	354



## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

### LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.3: Synthesis of Language Teaching Approaches and Methods .....	30
Table 3.5: Profile of the Study Participants .....	94
Table 4.2: Synthesis of Themes that Emerged from The Interview Data.....	166
Table 4.4.1(A): Synthesis of Sample Observation I .....	172
Table 4.4.1 (B): Synthesis of Sample Observation II .....	175
Table 4.4.1 (C): Synthesis of Sample Observation III.....	177
Table 4.4.1 (D): Synthesis of Sample Observation IV .....	181
Table 4.4.1 (E): Synthesis of Sample Observation V .....	184
Table 4.4.1 (F): Synthesis of Sample Observation VI.....	187
Table 4.4.2: Synthesis of the Findings from the Structured Classroom Observation.....	193
Table 6.4.1: Consistencies between EFL Instructors' Conceptions and Classroom Practices ...	250
Table 6.4.2: Inconsistencies between EFL Instructors' Conceptions and Classroom Practices.	255
Table 6.5.1: Synthesis of the major factors affecting the implementation of CLT in Ethiopia in an EFL context .....	272
Table 6.6: Synthesis of the Relationship between the Findings and Results from the Three Data Sources .....	274

### LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 7.2: Syntheses of Main Findings of the Study.....	295
Figure 7.3.2: Understanding the major factors affecting the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in an EFL context .....	300

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## **DEDICATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been adopted in various countries in the world. This is especially true in an EFL context in Ethiopia where it has received considerable attention both at policy and classroom levels. This study aimed to investigate English as Foreign Language (EFL) instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in private universities in Ethiopia. Due to the nature of the issues addressed in the study, the mixed-methods approach was employed. The data for the study were collected from 25 EFL instructors teaching in four private universities through semi-structured interviews, quantitative questionnaire, and classroom observation. The qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observation were analysed thematically, using deductive thematic analysis. The quantitative data garnered through the questionnaire were analysed using the latest version of SPSS (Version 20) available at the time of data analysis.

While the study highlighted four major EFL instructors' misconceptions stemming from the discrepancies in understanding the term communicative, it revealed that the majority of the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT were consistent with the CLT literature. To that effect, the study illuminated the EFL instructors' conceptions of grammar and CLT concerning the teacher's role, the learners' role, the types of teaching materials, the place for grammar in CLT as well as the methods of teaching grammar lessons and assessing the learners' performance in grammar lessons.

Nevertheless, the classroom practices of the majority of the EFL instructors were inconsistent with their conceptions of CLT because they predominantly employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. The study also found various socio-cultural and economic variables practically affecting the application of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in private universities in Ethiopia. Consequently, the study identified teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors, and system-related factors as the main difficulties of implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The study recommends that measures that align policy with practice should be taken to ensure that the instructors' conceptions are realised in classroom situations, thereby minimising the discrepancies between their conceptions and their classroom practices.

**Key terms:** *communicative language teaching; conceptions; application; mixed-methods approach; deductive thematic analysis; phenomenographic approach; communicative competence; grammar; authentic materials; explicit grammar teaching; classroom practices; continuous assessment.*

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Introduction**

This chapter introduces the thesis by presenting the context of the study as well as the background to the English language in Ethiopia's education policies and the background to private universities. It then discusses the problem statement, followed by the aim, and objectives, research questions and sub-questions. After presenting the rationale and scope of the study as well as the definitions of key terms, the chapter concludes by outlining the structure of the thesis.

### **1.2. The Context of the Study**

This study was carried out in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It is one of the countries in the Horn of Africa, bordered in the north by Eritrea, in the east by Somalia, and Djibouti, in the west by South Sudan and Sudan, and in the south by Kenya. It has an area of 1,104, 300 square kilometres. Recent unofficial figures estimate that it is home to more than 100, 000, 000 people, ranking third on the African continent. It is often described as the melting pot of Africa since it is home to more than 80 nations, nationalities and peoples, residing in ten regional states. Although the country has been a victim of a series of droughts and famines, its contribution to founding regional, continental and global organisations is notable. In this regard, its role in founding the League of Nations (Now United Nations), the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union), the Pan African Chamber of Commerce, the Non-Allied Movement-G77, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Standby Force (Worldatlas, 2017; Nations Online Project, 2019) is worth mentioning.

Ethiopia enjoys international recognition because of its strategic location in the Horn of Africa and its alliances with global superpowers such as the United States of America and China. Mention can be made of the security, military and economic ties that Ethiopia has with the USA. Although there are several areas on which this relationship hinges, the Horn of Africa is one of the regions where global terrorism can be ignited once again through the Al Shabab. Ethiopia has contributed tremendously to the fight against terrorism in the world in general and terrorism in the Horn of Africa in Particular. The peace-keeping troop the country has been sending to several African countries is an additional evidence of its pivotal roles in global affairs (Melaku, 2014). Thus, improving international communication is one of the areas that the country needs to work on aggressively to boost its global importance in the social, economic, political, and military

activities. This need for international alliance and communication suggests the instrumentality of English since it is a tool for smooth and timely communication. The main actors in the social, economic, and political activities of the country are expected to have a better proficiency in English. The country's road to growth and development mainly hinges on improving the education sector, and one of the most important aspects of this sector is language education. Concerning this, Metaferia (2016) highlights: "Policymakers, diplomats, economists, business actors, social workers, educators, lawyers, researchers, media personnel, military officers, police officers and tourist guides who use English fluently and appropriately are highly needed." He also suggests that there is a need "to improve the quality of English language teaching/learning in the country" (p. 10).

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) recognised this demand and formulated a new training and education policy in 1994 and revised it as recently as 2018. The policy institutes that learner-centred approaches should be employed in and outside classroom situations to ensure that learners in the entire education system participate actively in these situations, entailing that they will do so in the country's socio-political and economic activities when they graduate. Regarding English language education, there is a clear recognition by the Ministry of the role that English plays in the lives of students especially at tertiary level since it is used as a medium of instruction. In this regard, the policy further stipulates that *communicatively*-oriented approaches and strategies should be employed in classroom situations to help learners use the language for academic and communicative purposes. To implement this, *communicative* syllabuses were designed and English language teachers given continuous training on communicative language teaching (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2002; 2015; 2018). The Ministry of Education duly recognizes the role of English in the global arena. This is because the policy document articulates that English is used global in business settings, in diplomatic relations, sports competitions and global relations, among other areas. It is believed that the education system should prepare students to use English smoothly for business and international communications, when the need arises (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2002; 2015; 2018).

The constitution of the FDRE allows for the use of local languages in primary education (first cycles: grades 1-4). Following this provision, many regional states have adopted their respective

local languages in primary education. For example, in Oromiya Regional State, Afan Oromo (the Oromo language) is used. Amharic is used in Amhara Regional State, and Tigrinya is used in Tigray Regional State. Various instructional languages are also used in kindergartens; however, regional languages are used in the first cycle education (Amharic in Amhara Regional State, Afan Oromo in Oromiya Regional State, and Tigrigna in Tigray Regional State). However, Amharic (the federal government's working language) is the instructional medium in primary schools in the Southern Peoples, Nations and Nationalities' Regional State. This decision was made for linguistic and other practical reasons. In some regional states, the instructional medium in primary education, the second cycle (grades 5-8) is either their respective local languages or English. For example, Addis Ababa City Administration and the Amhara Regional State have adopted English as an instructional medium, whereas Oromiya and the Tigray Regional States respectively use Afan Oromo and Tigrigna as the media of instruction in the second cycle of primary education. Where there are linguistic complexities, the language of instruction is Amharic at this level. This is evident in some first cycle primary schools in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. English is the instructional medium in the second cycle, primary education in some regional states and secondary, preparatory, technical and vocational training and education as well as in higher education (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2002; 2015; 2018). It is also noteworthy that private schools mainly use English as an instructional medium even though they are required to adhere to the policy requirements described above. All higher education institutions especially universities use English as their medium of instruction. The private universities in Ethiopia in which this study was conducted also use English as their medium of instruction, and this study was initiated to assess the conceptions and classroom practices of EFL instructors in the private universities.

### **1.3. Teaching English in Ethiopia: A Brief Historical Overview**

The recognition and incorporation of English in the education system of Ethiopia dates back to 1908 when modern education was introduced. At the time, English was among other foreign languages such as Italian and French that the then government introduced, marking the beginning of modern education. Regarding the importance of these languages, Heugh et al. (2007) note: "These languages would be important to keep the country sovereign by providing the country with elites which could negotiate the interests of the country through the international tongues" (pp. 42-43)

The competition among the three foreign languages took another direction following the defeat of Italy in the Second World War. Following this, English and French competed for dominance. Both languages were taught in mission schools, and the British and French governments respectively extended their support to the schools. Regarding this, Engidaye (1998) noted: “While the Roman Catholic missions were vehicles for the French language, the protestant missions were vehicles for the English language” (p. 47).

Following the defeat of Italy, the Ethiopian government requested and obtained material, financial, personnel, and technical assistance from the British government. This induced the adoption of English as a language of bureaucracy for the Imperial Regime and as an instructional medium in school systems (Pankhurst, 1976). This marked the beginning of the use of English as an instructional medium starting from the elementary schools onward (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1986). This continued until 1962 when Amharic became the language of instruction in elementary schools. During the Military Regime which ruled the country from 1974-1991, English was taught as a subject in elementary schools and served as a medium of instruction in junior secondary and senior secondary schools. It was also the instructional medium in higher education institutions (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1996; Wartenberg, 2001).

The education and training policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia introduced in 1994, instituted the use of nationality languages in elementary and junior secondary schools. English is taught as a subject at this level, and it is a language of instruction in senior secondary schools and higher education institutions. The policy recognises the critical role that English plays in educational settings. More specifically, it underlines that students should be able to develop their command of English at primary level to face the challenges they might face when their mother tongue is replaced by English as an instructional language in post-primary schools (FDRE, The Ministry of Education 1994; 2001; 2018).

The policy states that proficiency in English has long been important in the out-of-school lives of students since there are several opportunities that they can exploit when they complete their college and university studies (FDRE, The Ministry of Education 1994; 2001; 2018). As a long-time resident in the city, I have come to observe that Addis Ababa is the seat for many international and regional organisations that use English as their working language. Graduates with better English proficiency are likely to win employment opportunities in these



organisations. Furthermore, the current political environment in the country is attracting foreign investors who will recruit graduates with better proficiency in English.

The education and training policy was formulated in response to public disappointment in the deterioration of the quality of education. One of the areas affected by the deterioration in the quality of education is English language teaching especially at the tertiary level. Past and present studies have confirmed that students' proficiency in English has been declining from time to time. This problem has been aggravated by the low quality of teaching materials and the inefficient or teacher-centred teaching methodology (Amlaku, 2010; Adinew, 2015; Alemayehu & Asrat, 2018; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018).

Consequently, the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia instituted the policy in 1994. It also oversaw the design and preparation of new textbooks for primary and secondary schools. More specifically, the textbooks replicated the principles and assumptions of CLT (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2001; 2015; 2018). The Government's interventions mainly focused on organising training programmes for teachers. To that effect, the Ministry organised workshops to improve teachers' language proficiency and their modes of delivery (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2001; 2015; 2018).

Despite the measures the Ministry of Education has taken, students' struggles in English have continued. Several past and present studies into the language-related problems of students confirmed this situation (Mesfin, 2004; Amlaku, 2010; Alemayehu & Asrat, 2018; Bezabih, 2018; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018). These studies have shown that students' struggles in English is a glaring problem in higher education institutions, where English is the medium of instruction. The studies have also shown the link between the students' struggle in English and the lecture-fronted strategies employed by their teachers to teach the target language. They have further demonstrated that various teacher attributes shape their classroom practices or teaching strategies. One of these attributes is the conceptions they hold about teaching and learning. The conceptions of teaching that teachers hold are powerful in shaping their classroom practices and several decisions they make regarding the instructional process (Kember, 1997; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Adinew, 2015). The main reason behind this study was directly related to investigating the conceptions that EFL instructors in private universities in Ethiopia hold regarding CLT and its application in teaching grammar lessons.

#### **1.4. Background to the English Language in Ethiopia's Education Policies**

The education and training policy of Ethiopia introduced in 1994 and revised subsequently recognises the importance of English. This is because English plays a crucial role in students' academic and non-academic lives. To that effect, the English language syllabus of the secondary, first cycle (grades 9 and 10) and the secondary school, the second cycle (grades 11 and 12) underscore that students should get continued practices in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and basic study skills (note taking, note making, summary writing, etc) . This implies that by exposing the students to English mainly in classroom situations, it is possible to develop their communication skills and strategies which they can employ to succeed in educational settings and everyday situations (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2001). The syllabus further highlights that the students in the second cycle of secondary schools need to further develop their proficiency in English and study skills, without which they cannot succeed at the tertiary level (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2001).

Cognisant of the vital role that English plays mainly in academic settings, past and present regimes of Ethiopia decided that it should be taught as a subject in primary schools (grades 1-6) and junior secondary schools (grades 7 and 8) and used as an instructional medium in secondary schools (grades 9-12) and higher education institutions (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2001; 2015; 2018). Despite these policy directions articulating the crucial role that English plays, students' command of the language has been worsening from time to time. This is more so regarding their knowledge and use of grammar (Amlaku, 2010; Abebe & Deneke, 2015; FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2015; Wondifraw, Alemayehu & Asrat, 2018). The decision to formulate and implement the education and training policy in 1994 emanated from an understanding of this reality. The policy document states that the majority of students find English one of the most serious challenges in the instructional process (FDRE, The Ministry of Education 1994, 2001; 2018).

The Ministry has confirmed that several students are still struggling with English and, therefore, started taking steps in the right direction. The Ministry has further confirmed that classroom teachers mainly employ the lecture method. The language syllabuses for secondary schools and tertiary level have been designed considering the precepts of CLT; however, teachers still allocate much class time to the explicit teaching of grammar lessons as opposed to the integrated and contextualised presentation and practice of the major language skills (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2001; 2015; 2018). The Ministry concluded that the instructional techniques

that teachers employed as well as their deficiencies in English itself are among the explanations behind the continued deterioration in learners' English proficiency. Hence, it formulated and implemented English Language Improvement Programme (ELIP) in 2002 in cooperation with the British Council and the College of St. Mark and St. John of the United Kingdom. The primary objective of ELIP was to develop the English language competence of elementary and secondary school teachers throughout the Ethiopian education system (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2002; 2015).

Despite the measures that the Ministry of Education has taken, the majority of students' struggles in English in general and English grammar in particular, especially those at the tertiary level, are glaringly evident. Past and present studies have ascertained this problem (Alamirew, 2015; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017; Woldemariam & Bezabih, 2018; Wondifraw, Alemayehu & Asrat, 2018). Typically, they have demonstrated that the students are unable to construct meaningful and grammatical sentences. The sentences they compose lack subject-verb agreement, contain misplaced and dangling modifiers, faulty parallelisms and comparisons. The paragraphs and essays they compose lack clear structure and fail to convey the required messages due to the specific problems mentioned above.

### **1.5. Background to Private Universities**

There is a dearth of research into private universities in Ethiopia. The available literature deals with private schools in stead of private higher education institutions. It is, therefore, important to review the empirical data on private schools to see its implications for private higher education institutions and gain a better understanding of their relative standing and explain why this study was conducted. Some studies compared private schools and public schools in Ethiopia, especially in terms of quality of education; however, there is limited research that examined the practices in private schools, colleges and universities. Even so, the data on private and public schools have implications for private higher education institutions since many of the privately run higher education institutions have primary and secondary schools that feed students to their colleges and universities.

In light of the above background, it is important to review the available empirical evidence. To this effect, Amogne (2018) compared private and public schools in Dessie Administrative Town, North Central Ethiopia, in terms of their students' academic achievement in regional examinations. He concluded that the scores of the students in private schools are better than that

of those in public schools, attributing the better performance of the private schools to their well-equipped libraries, laboratory facilities, student-centred methods of teaching, and parents' involvement in the schools' activities (Amogne, 2018).

Supporting the above finding, Teshome (2017) reported: "As compared to public schools, private schools provide more access to classrooms and teachers, attractive work environment, sufficient facilities, qualified teachers, enriched curricula and school management focused on results" (p. 100). This implies that there is suitable environment for private school students to do well at their studies than those in public schools.

However, Asefa (2017) compared public schools and private schools in Adama City in terms of quality of education and concluded that statistically there was no difference between them in terms of managerial aspects and infrastructure and physical facilities. In contrast to the findings reported by Amogne (2018), Asefa (2017) reported that the students in public schools performed better than [that of] private schools, further exemplifying that private schools focus on generating profit instead of providing quality education to their students.

Kebede (2014) compared private and public higher education institutions (HEIs) in terms of their quality assurance practices and affirmed that top managers in private higher education institutions are more committed than their public counterparts. More specifically, the author reported that the managers conducted self-assessments which fostered teamwork among their staff and enhanced staff accountability. The managers also used: "self-assessment reports to identify their weaknesses and strengths and to build capacity from within which improved the teaching and learning process, entrenched the concept of quality in the minds of policymakers, quality managers, and academic staff" (Kebede 2014, p. 292).

The empirical evidence above (Kebede, 2014; Asefa, 2017; Amogne, 2018) illustrated that private schools have well-equipped facilities such as libraries, laboratories, and qualified teachers. The institutional support extended to the academic staff as well as to the students and the demands posed by parents have had positive impacts on the students' academic performance in general and their language proficiency in particular. However, evidence from other studies does not support the above findings: that private schools offer better quality education to their students. Hence, contrary to the findings above, there is an increasing concern that a sizable number of students in colleges and universities are still struggling in English, and their poor

grammar is an illustration of this reality (Abebe & Deneke, 2015; Alazar & Alamirew, 2015; Meshesha & Endale, 2017; Moges, 2019).

Even though several stakeholders are responsible for the worsening problem, past and present studies have established that teachers both in senior high schools (preparatory schools) and universities are predominantly employing the lecture method in language classrooms. This is as opposed to the learner-centred, communicatively-oriented language teaching approaches the Ministry of Education has adopted (Adinew, 2015; Tessema & Davidson, 2016; Wondifraw, Alemayehu & Asrat, 2018). There are several attributes of teachers that should be studied; however, based on the empirical evidence, the conceptions they hold about teaching and learning are critical in shaping their classroom practices (Kember, 1997; Kember & Kwan, 2000). Hence, this study sought to examine private university EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT, given the inconsistencies between policy imperative for learner-centred approaches in general and CLT in particular, and the lecture-fronted language classrooms.

### **1.6. Rationale of the Study**

When I was a secondary school and college student, the lecture method, in which teacher talking time was notably higher than student talking time, was predominant. This was mainly true for grammar rules which our teachers had to explain. Our role, as learners, was to copy lecture notes from the blackboard and complete form-based exercises. I had to exert extra efforts at college to meet the requirements stipulated since I found it challenging to use English in communicative contexts, attributable to the rule-oriented lessons I had gone through. Moreover, I had to compete with the students who had come from private schools with better proficiency in English. However, I must highlight that since then, a shift of paradigm has taken place both locally and globally. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia introduced the education and training policy in 1994. The policy adopted learner-centred approaches. It highlighted that there should be a shift in paradigm from lecture-dominated teaching methods to learner-centred ones. To this effect, the policy document indicates that CLT-oriented language teaching methods /strategies should be employed in language classrooms (FDRE, The Ministry of Education 1994; 2002; 2015; 2018).

Nevertheless, university instructors are still over-reliant on the lecture method despite the shift in paradigm and the changes in the philosophy of education and the methodology of language teaching (Bezabih, 2018; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Wondifraw, Alemayehu & Asrat,

2018). Now that I am a lecturer at a university, my students' language struggles have been evident as I interact with them in classrooms; as I mark their non-continuous and summative assessment activities and as I observe the presentations that they have to make in classroom situations. The action research that my colleague and I conducted into my students' language-related problems attested to their struggles (Alamirew, 2015; Alamirew & Alazar, 2015). For example, subject-verb disagreements were pervasive in their sentences; they could not use the English tense system correctly; their sentences contained faulty parallelisms, misplaced modifiers, and faulty comparisons. In short, the evidence not only contributed to my personal development, but it also guided the initial steps towards practical solutions to my students' language difficulties. Part of the motivation behind this study was directly related to these findings. In other words, while the action research provided guidelines for practical solutions, it pointed to a need to retrace my steps and examine the methods of teaching grammar, focusing on university instructors.

### **1.7. Problem statement**

Empirical evidence shows that Ethiopia's education has been suffering from a lack of quality. Although there are various reasons behind this problem, the government's pre-occupation with expanding access to education in the country (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2015; 2018). Although the adverse effect of the educational expansion is evident at all levels of education, it is more glaring at the tertiary level where students should be more responsible for their learning. Language teaching is one of the areas where the effect is apparent (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2015; 2018). My observation demonstrated that English plays a vital role in the academic lives of tertiary-level students since it is the medium of instruction. However, their struggle in the language in general and its grammar, in particular, is conspicuous. Hence, several tertiary-level students fail to construct grammatical sentences, use the tense system correctly and meaningfully, use the parts of speech correctly and meaningfully as well as deliver formal speeches (Meshesha & Endale, 2017; Zeleke, 2017).

As a lecturer with more than eighteen years of teaching experience at the tertiary level, I also observed that the lecture method permeated several aspects of language classes. My observation is consistent with what local research has established: "Teaching in Ethiopian universities is still under the influence of the traditional or the teacher-centred instruction despite its ineffectiveness" to develop students' knowledge, skills and attitude (Adinew 2015, p. 8). The widespread adoption of the lecture method at the tertiary level contradicts the learner-centred

approaches highlighted in the country's education and training policy (Abebe & Deneke, 2015; Meshesha & Endale, 2017; Zeleke, 2017; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018).

In response to the critical problems in the country's education system, the Ethiopian government adopted an innovative educational philosophy and paradigm. Consequently, in 1994, it instituted a new education and training policy stipulating learner-centred approaches throughout the country's education system. The rationale behind formulating the policy was to improve the quality of education, thereby ensuring students' active participation in academic settings and the country's overall development. Regarding language teaching, the policy enunciated communicatively-oriented approaches within the general pedagogical framework of learner-centred approaches. This policy was revised in 2018, where the emphasis on CLT was articulated afresh (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2018).

The policy pronounced language classes should be interactive or communicative. To this effect, the Ministry organised various types of training, workshops, and seminars for language teachers, and indicated directions for the selection and recruitment of competent university instructors. The Ministry also oversaw the revision of school and university curricula and the preparation of relevant teaching materials (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2015; 2018).

The lecture method has continued to pervade many language classes at the tertiary level and students' struggle in English abode despite the measures that the government has taken to improve the quality of education in general and that of language teaching in particular. A past study conducted by Amlaku (2010) reflects the current status of the students' language competence and that of language teaching methods. Hence, Amlaku (2010:10) argues: "Learners' proficiency remains always poor, and the effectiveness of English language teaching remains always questionable despite the efforts being undertaken by the Ethiopian government and concerned institutions". Recent studies also support the above concerns and imply that there is a need to address students' language-related deficiencies and teachers' pre-occupation with the lecture method (Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Meshesha & Endale, 2017; Zeleke, 2017; Moges, 2019).

Local empirical inquiries thus far focused on examining tertiary-level students' language-related struggles. They also concentrated on examining the nature of language teaching methods (Abiy, 2013; Dereje, 2013; Ebissa, 2015; Harris, 2015; Miller, 2015). Despite the gaps between policy imperative and classroom practices (Adinew, 2015), local research has made little or no attempt

to establish why the lecture method is yet the most preferred teaching method in language classes (Adinew, 2015). There is, therefore, a paucity of research into why this is so.

While there is a plethora of empirical evidence in other EFL contexts, research linking classroom strategies and learners' performance in the Ethiopian context is scanty. However, the limited available data have demonstrated the link between learners' poor performance in language classes and the teacher-fronted methods employed to teach the major language skills in general and grammar in particular (Adinew, 2015; Mihretu, 2016; Meshesha & Endale, 2017; Zeleke, 2017; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018).

Although the success of what happens in the teaching-learning process depends on the cooperation of many stakeholders in school systems, arguably, the role that teachers play is of paramount importance. The country's education and training policy acknowledges this role (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994, 2002; 2018). Thus, any empirical inquiry into why teachers regularly employ the lecture method should explore their personal and professional attributes. Previous research has established that several teachers' attributes shape their classroom practices and the specific decisions that they make in classroom situations. This particularly holds for their choice of teaching methods. One of the most influential attributes of classroom teachers shaping their classroom practices is their conceptions of teaching (Kember, 1997; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Adinew, 2015; Moges, 2019).

As discussed above, the education and training policy of Ethiopia instituted communicatively-oriented language teaching approaches (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2001; 2015; 2018). In the Ethiopian context, there is a dearth of research that links teachers' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices. This link is important because CLT is a government directive for the teaching of English. This study, therefore, sought to fill the gap by investigating the conceptions that private universities' EFL instructors held about CLT and how these conceptions translated into teaching grammar lessons in an EFL context in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, local researchers who thus far investigated teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards CLT mainly employed self-reporting mechanisms (interviews and questionnaires) as the main tools of data collection with limited access to the teachers' classrooms. Thus, the second aim of this study was to fill the methodological gap in local research by gaining sufficient access to university instructors' classes. It is also noteworthy that most empirical inquiries into language



teaching in Ethiopia almost exclusively focused on public universities. Thirdly, the current study sought to fill this gap by considering four private universities in Ethiopia.

## **1.8. Aims and Objectives**

### **1.8.1. Aim of the study**

The study aimed to investigate English as Foreign Language (EFL) instructors' conceptions and applications of *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)* in teaching grammar lessons by focusing on four private universities in Ethiopia.

### **1.8.2. Objectives of the study**

More specifically, the study sought to

1. Investigate private universities' English language instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context;
2. Examine private universities' English language instructors' current practices of the applications of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context;
3. Determine the relationship between private university English language instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices in grammar lessons in an EFL context;
4. Analyse the factors that affect the application of CLT in grammar lessons in the classroom contexts; and
5. Formulate guidelines for the use of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context.

## **1.9. Research Questions and sub-questions**

### **1.9.1. Basic Research Question**

The basic research question this study aimed to answer was: "What are private university EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in grammar lessons?"

### **1.9.2. Sub-questions**

The specific research questions this study aimed to answer were

1. What are private universities' English language instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context?
2. What are private universities' English language instructors' current practices of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context?
3. What is the relationship between private universities' English language instructors'

- conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context and their classroom practices?
4. Which factors affect the applications of CLT in grammar lessons in classroom contexts?
  5. Based on the findings to the questions above, what guidelines should be employed for the effective use of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL university context?

### **1.10. Scope of the Study**

The main aim of this study was to investigate EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in an EFL context in Ethiopian private universities. Consequently, while it dealt with various aspects of CLT, it focused on two aspects. First, it investigated the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT. This included their conceptions of the goal of language teaching, the role of teachers, the role of learners, the teaching materials and resources in CLT, types of classroom tasks in CLT, the role of grammar in students' academic and non-academic lives, the place for grammar in CLT, and assessment methods in CLT. Second, it examined the EFL instructors' classroom practices to determine if their conceptions of CLT were consistent with their classroom practices.

There is a gap in our understanding of private universities instructors' conceptions and their implementations of CLT in an EFL context in Ethiopia. Subsequently, research into the practices in private higher education institutions was a worthwhile one. The study sites were four private universities in the country which have adopted learner-centred approaches: Admas University, Rift Valley University, St. Mary's University, and Unity University.

The study considered the branch campuses of the private universities based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This decision stemmed from the understanding that the policies, guidelines, rules and regulations governing the branch campuses of the selected universities draw from their major campuses based in Addis Ababa. In addition, my ability to travel to regional branches was restricted due to financial constraints. It was also due to time constraints since I had to teach several hours a week besides my administrative duties and responsibilities. Hence, the branch campuses of the private universities in Addis Ababa were thought to be representative of the university systems.

### **1.11. Definitions of Key Terms**

This section provides the operational definitions of the terms that are essential in the thesis.

**Academic and non-academic Lives of Students:** these terms are used to refer to the use of English for academic and non-academic purposes. Accordingly, in the academic lives of students, English is used to help them study, carry out studies/research and serve as the medium of instruction for the courses they take at higher education institutions. More specifically, students listen to lectures and take notes, they make notes from references for the respective courses they take, they take part in seminars and tutorials, they read textbooks, articles and other materials and they also write essays, examination answers, dissertations and reports (Hyland, 2006). In the non-academic lives of students, English is used mainly outside school contexts and in general life situations to accomplish a variety of purposes. For example, there are everyday situations where English is often used: in restaurants, in supermarkets and at other public places. It can also be used in employment settings to get jobs done: report writing, business correspondence and organizing minutes. This is called English for Occupational Purposes (Hyland, 2006).

**Conceptions and Conceptions of Teaching:** According to Pratt (1992), “conceptions” is an umbrella term that describes people’s beliefs, perspectives, intentions, and perceptions which in turn influence their actions or behaviours. Kember (1997) also agrees that conceptions are the specific meanings that people, for example, teachers attach to phenomena, and they influence how we respond to such phenomena. Trigwell and Prosser (1996) as well as Ho et al. (2001) support this view. In this study, the term “conceptions” is, therefore, defined as the meanings that EFL instructors attach to CLT (including its main manifestations such as the goal of language teaching, the role of a teacher, the role of learners and related aspects) and how these meanings shape their classroom practices or the decisions they make concerning what should happen in classroom situations.

The phrase "conceptions of teaching" is an extension of conceptions, and it refers to beliefs, mental images, propositions, actions, intentions and preferences that teachers hold about teaching in general (Thompson, 1993; Kember, 1997). Given the above descriptions, throughout this thesis, "conceptions of teaching" relates to the conceptions that EFL university instructors hold concerning CLT in general and its applications in teaching grammar lessons in particular.

**Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):** There is a consensus among various writers and theorists that CLT is an approach rather than a method (Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014). Hence, it is: “a set of principles about language teaching, how learners learn a language, the

kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning and the roles of teachers and students in the classroom” (Richards, 2006:10). It is an approach which aims at developing learners’ communicative competence, a term popularised by Hymes (1972) and refers to the theoretical knowledge and practical skills in using the target language for various communicative purposes and in different communicative contexts.

While there are various definitions of CLT in the literature, this paper uses the definition that Richards (2006) offered since it captures CLT comprehensively. Hence, CLT is an approach which outlines a set of principles about several aspects of language teaching, including the goal of language teaching, the teacher’s role, the learners’ role, the instructional activities as well as teaching materials and resources, which are presented in detail in the second chapter of the thesis.

**Instructor:** The term “instructor” is a neutral term denoting university lecturers in the Ethiopian context. The word “teacher” is reserved for primary and secondary school teachers, while the word “instructor” is used to refer to university lecturers irrespective of their academic rank. Assistant lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and full professors are collectively referred to as instructors. The phrase “EFL instructors” as used in this thesis includes English language instructors whose academic ranks range from assistant lecturers to associate professors.

**Grammar:** Grammar is a term frequently used in the literature, but to date, there is no consensus among past and present language theorists and researchers about how it should be defined. A comprehensive definition should be one that combines aspects of rule and meaning. Ur (1988), Cook (2001), Crystal (2004) as well as Burns and Richards (2014) support this conception of grammar. Hence, grammar is a means through which different communicative functions are accomplished: greeting, introductions, asking for directions, giving or declining invitation (Bloom & Bloom, 2004). Throughout this thesis, the term *grammar* refers to both the rules governing how smaller units of language are combined and how they are used to convey different messages.

**Communicative Grammar:** Even though the term “communicative grammar” can refer to a type of grammar emphasising the functional aspects of a language, it is better understood as an “approach to grammar teaching in which its goal is to explore and formulate the relation between

the formal events of grammar such as words, phrases and sentences and their categories and structure) and conditions of their meaning and use” (Bygate & Tornkyn 1994, p. 19). The approach draws our attention to the meaningful teaching of grammar by integrating both the form and meaning of the target language.

**English as a Foreign Language (EFL):** “English as a Foreign Language” describes a context where English is not the dominant language (Stern, 1983). Students learning English in such contexts do not have real opportunities to learn the language since it is not the native language for the majority of people in that country (Stern, 1983). In EFL contexts, English is used as a medium of instruction, or it is given as a school subject (Stern, 1983; Sullivan, 2009). Since the use of English in Ethiopia is limited to school environments and international organisations, students’ exposure to it is limited to classroom situations and the opportunities the students create for themselves (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2001; 2015; 2018). Ethiopia is an EFL teaching context.

**English as a Second Language (ESL):** “English as a Second Language” is a term describing a situation where English is the dominant language, picked up as a native language by the majority of the people of a certain country. Like EFL students, the students need the language for practical purposes, but unlike the EFL students, they have ample and real opportunities to practise or use it since they have the exposure to a community which speaks the target language (Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Sullivan, 2009).

### **1.12. Ethical Considerations**

Various moral principles guide researchers while conducting and reporting research that involves human participants. Ethical research helps report valid and reliable results (Deborah, 2003; Warren, 2011). One of the most important objectives of research ethics is to protect human participants in a study. In this regard, Warren (2011, p. 225) notes: “There is an obligation not to inflict harm on others.” This is called the principle of nonmaleficence. The researcher should protect the participants against any suffering, pain, incapacitation, or offence (Warren, 2011). The other objective of research ethics is beneficence which involves: “moral obligation to act for the benefit of others” (Warren 2011, p. 225). According to Warren (2011), beneficence has two implications. First, it should provide benefits to the participants. Second, it should protect the participants against any harm.

I took various measures to meet the university's ethical standards. Firstly, I obtained ethical clearance from the University of South Africa. Then, I contacted the officials from the private universities, explained the purpose of the study, and sought their staffs' willingness to participate in the study. When I obtained the assurance of the officials, I contacted the participants of the study to whom I explained its aim and its being low-risk category research. As part of ensuring beneficence, I held discussions with the participants the benefits they would get as a result of being part of the study: that they were contributing to the understanding of the research problem and that they would be communicated the findings of the study to learn about their conceptions and practices and take their own actions, if any. As part of ensuring nonmaleficence, I highlighted that there would not be any physical and psychological harm they were likely to encounter due to their participation in the study. In this regard, I pointed out that the study was a low-risk category. Following this assurance, I obtained their written consent. These steps assisted me in ensuring one of the pillars of ethical research: "Individuals are voluntarily participating in the research with full knowledge of relevant risks and benefits" (Deborah 2003, p. 56). Deborah (2003) states that researchers should inform the research participants about the objective, anticipated duration, the procedures, their rights to participate or withdraw from the study, and the effects of such an action. Deborah (2003) further states that researchers should inform the participants about the significance of the research, the incentives for their participation, the confidentiality of their identity while reporting results, and whom they should contact in case of questions. I followed these guidelines to guarantee the effective and smooth collection of the data for this study.

### **1.13. Chapter outline**

This study is comprised of seven chapters, and a synopsis of each chapter is provided below:

**Chapter one** is the introduction and it mainly introduces the topic and purpose of the study, while describing the context of the study, Ethiopia. The chapter further presents an overview of the Ethiopian education system in general and English language teaching in particular. It also describes the rationale of the study, the research problem and research questions that the study addressed. This chapter also presents the aim and objectives of the study, the scope of the study, the definitions of key terms, ethical considerations, and the chapter outline.

**Chapter two** critically reviews literature that is related to the study. The literature review sub-sections comprise a synthesis of theoretical issues and concepts on CLT, the teaching of grammar, and the role of conceptions in shaping teachers' decisions of which teaching strategies to employ over others. This section also reviews studies conducted into CLT, the teaching of grammar, and conceptions of teaching relevant to the teaching of grammar. To that effect, the review includes both local and international studies. Based on the theoretical and empirical review of CLT literature, the chapter identified and discussed the gaps that the study sought to fill. The chapter concludes by discussing the theoretical framework underpinning the current study.

**Chapter three** is concerned with the methodology used for this study. Sub-sections included in this chapter are study setting, research design, research participants, the procedure for data collection, tools of data collection, methods of data presentation and analysis, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations.

**Chapter four** presents qualitative findings. The chapter presents the qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews and classroom observation, using the major themes identified in the analysis. The preliminary sections of the chapter highlight the profile of the study participants.

**Chapter five** is devoted to the analysis of quantitative results. The chapter begins by analysing EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT. It then deals with their conceptions of the importance of grammar in general and its place in CLT in particular. The next section of the chapter is concerned with EFL instructors' applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. In the end, the chapter highlights the factors affecting EFL instructors' applications of CLT in grammar lessons.

**Chapter six** discusses the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study in light of the research questions, previous studies, and CLT literature. The first section of the chapter is devoted to the discussion of private university EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context. The next part of the chapter deals with private universities' English language instructors' current practices of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context. The third part of the chapter is concerned with the relationship between EFL instructors' conceptions and

classroom practices. The chapter concludes by discussing the factors that affect the application of CLT in grammar lessons in classroom contexts.

**Chapter seven** draws upon the entire thesis, tying up various theoretical and empirical strands to synthesise the main findings, draw conclusions and forward recommendations. More specifically, it includes a discussion of the implications of the findings to future research on this area. The conclusion gives a summary and critique of the findings. Finally, it identifies areas for further research.

#### **1.14. Conclusion**

The first chapter of the thesis introduced the study. It mainly introduced the topic and purpose of the study, while describing the context of the study, Ethiopia. To create an understanding of the context within which English is taught, the chapter outlined the education policies in Ethiopia, particularly against the backdrop of university education. It also described the research problem and research questions. This was done to highlight the main aim of the study, and the specific research questions it addressed. Towards the end of the chapter, the motivation behind the study was presented and discussed. The discussion of the scope of the study, the definitions of key terms, and the chapter outline constituted the last three sections of the chapter.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter critically reviews empirical and theoretical literature on CLT. The chapter has two main sections, with the first section detailing the empirical and theoretical literature, and the second one discussing the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Under the first main section, it defines important concepts and describes the principles of CLT, highlighting the major language teaching approaches and methods. Since the aim of this study was to investigate EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons, some sections of this chapter describe the concept of conceptions and their role in shaping teaching strategies. Moreover, this chapter highlights the role of grammar in general and communicative grammar in particular. It also critically reviews previous studies, thereby fleshing out the research gaps that this study sought to fill. The second main section deals with the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

### **2.2 A Brief Historical Survey of Language Teaching Approaches and Methods**

Underpinned by different philosophical, theoretical, and practical assumptions, several language teaching methods and approaches have been developed. Their discussion will contribute to our understanding of and the relative standing of CLT. The first part of this section discusses the major theoretical orientations of language teaching methods and approaches. The next section presents a synopsis of the major methods and approaches. The discussion of the theoretical orientations is relevant because the similarities and differences among the various language teaching methods and approaches are rooted in these theoretical orientations. The various language teaching methods and approaches discussed below emerged in reaction to the social and geopolitical circumstances of the time (Cook, 2003).

### **2.3. Theoretical Orientations to L2 Methods and Approaches**

Four general orientations underpin modern second-language teaching methods and approaches. One of the most common orientations is the structural approach. The linguistic language teaching programmes that adhere to this orientation stress the de-contextualised and isolated presentation and teaching of grammar items (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Language teachers that subscribe to this orientation teach different grammar items inductively or deductively. Language classes that are founded this orientation devote much class time to drills and helping learners memorize the rules of the language in general and that of grammar in particular in stead of helping them use

the rules for communicative purposes. A major weakness of this orientation is that it focuses on teaching about the language, instead of facilitating opportunities for learners to employ the target language in authentic communicative contexts (Adamson, 2004).

According to Hall (2011), cognitive orientation derives from theories of learning. Based on this orientation, language teaching contents are selected using techniques and contents that engage learners in generalisation, memorisation, and competence, thereby leading to overall positive performance. Like the structural approach, this orientation approaches the language deductively. The core assumption of this orientation is that language use reflects conceptual structure, and that therefore the study of language can inform us of the mental structures on which language is founded (Hall, 2011). In general, language classrooms that are founded this orientation try to attract the attention of the EFL language learner to the topic. This way it tries to enhance and facilitate the comprehension of grammar and language, boost the motivation of the learner and assist the learner to memorize new structures and vocabulary (Hall, 2011).

The third orientation, the affective or interpersonal orientation, attempts to identify learners' psychological and affective predispositions to determine the extent to which they foster or hinder the learning process (Hall, 2011). The focus of this orientation is on the learner. Teaching methods that acquiesce to this orientation give due attention to student-student interaction, teacher-student interaction, and an instructional environment that facilitates learning. It is worth noting that learner's motivation to learn a language is one of the concerns of the methods that are subservient to this assumption. The major assumptions of this orientation are adapted from social and counselling psychology (Grundy, 2004).

The fourth orientation is called functional or communicative. Its tenets come from first language acquisition theories called the natural approach, which emulates the way children learn their mother tongue in a natural context (Crooks, 2009). According to this orientation, the selection, design, and presentation of language contents are made to ensure that students can use the language to realise various communicative intents (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Classroom procedures help learners to develop their communicative competence which they can exploit in authentic communicative contexts using a variety of communicative strategies. The practical utility determines the selection of grammatical units. Thus, grammatical unity should help learners accomplish various communicative purposes (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

As the subsequent discussion illustrates, the above orientations foreground the teaching methods that have evolved over the years.

### **2.3.1. The Grammar-Translation Method**

The Grammar Translation Method was originally employed to teach Greek and Latin (Cook, 2006). Students' mother tongue was used to teach the target language; that is, little emphasis was given to experimenting with the target language in the instructional process (Cook, 2006). In this regard, Cook (2008, p. 239) indicated that the Grammar-translation Method "does not directly teach people to use the language for external purposes," as the pre-occupation is with the direct teaching or explanation of grammar rules. Richards and Rodgers (2001) highlight that the development of learners' intellectual abilities permeated classrooms that employed this method. They further highlight that grammar has become the purpose of learning in itself (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This method is mainly criticised for lacking clear linguistic, psychological, and educational theories as to its foundations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) as well as Cook (2008) notes that the classroom teacher who employs this method provides a detailed explanation of the selected grammar items. The presentation of the forms and inflections of words permeates the instructional process. In this method, the role of context is minimal in the presentation of language skills and grammar items. Students in the grammar-translation class should translate sentences to and from the target language. The teaching of vocabulary was no exception because the focus was on the isolated presentation of word lists. Another distinctive feature of this method was that it gave no or little attention to the teaching of pronunciation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Cook, 2008).

Even though the Grammar-translation Method lacks communicative activities, it has not gone out of favour because many language classes in various parts of the world still employ it (Thornby 2006; Cook 2008). Cook (2008) strongly argues: "Students continue to believe that this (the explicit teaching of grammar by a classroom teacher) will help them. This method carries with it the seriousness of purpose (which may not be present in other teaching methods)" (p. 239). Also, Thornby (2006) stressed that it is relatively easy to implement in large classes, and that has largely contributed to the continued survival of the method.

### **2.3.2. The Direct Approach**

One of the criticisms of the Grammar-translation Method was that it did not allow students to use the language communicatively, and the direct approach came into being to cater to this deficiency. The direct approach encouraged students to use the language directly in the instructional process. One of the theoretical foundations of the direct method is that foreign language learning should emulate processes that are involved in first language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Hall, 2011).

In this method, dialogues are the major instructional materials marking the beginning of lessons. Pictures or actions assisted the presentation of dialogues. One of the tenets of this approach was that the students should not use their mother tongue, implying that there was no place for translation as a strategy to teach the target language (Stern, 1983). Students were encouraged to answer questions based on the dialogues, and this encouraged the direct use of the target language. The inductive teaching of grammar dominated the classroom situation and students had to generalise rules from the exercises. The direct method also allowed students to learn the target culture inductively as culture was considered an integral part of learning the target language. Students at an advanced level read literature for comprehension and pleasure, implying that there was no room for the grammatical analyses of the literary texts in the teaching-learning process (Brown, 2001; Thornby, 2006).

One of the criticisms of the direct method is that it is ideal for small classes, which suggests that it is not easy to employ it in EFL contexts due to large class size (Weihua, 2004). The other criticism of the direct method was the students' overdependence on their teacher as the major source of the target language (Brown, 2001).

### **2.3.3. The Audio-lingual Method**

Founded on several contextual and theoretical factors, this method emerged to cater to the weaknesses of the direct method, especially the lack of skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It came into being in the 1950s in the wake of the Second World War when the US army wanted to teach its soldiers foreign languages to help them to communicate with the people and allies whom they had to meet, and the focus of the teaching was on aural work and pronunciation (Hall, 2011). Rivers (1964) argues that its techniques replicate the principles of behavioural

psychology, and structured drills were the major instructional activities in classroom situations to improve students' speaking skills. Dialogues were used to present new materials. It borrowed the principle of habit formation from behavioural psychology, and it encouraged the memorisation of words and phrases, mimicry, and over-learning. Students had to memorise structured grammar items in strict sequence one at a time (Byram, 2004). Repetition was the most common teaching strategy. This suggests that grammar was not taught explicitly. The dialogues and repetitive drills helped to contextualise grammar items. The major language skills were presented sequentially. Explicit vocabulary teaching was limited, and it was presented contextually (Rivers, 1964; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Language laboratories, visual aids, and tapes were used extensively. Pre-reading activities were extensively treated (Byram, 2004). Students were expected to adopt native-like pronunciation, given the teaching aids and materials, and the strictly sequenced drills at their disposal. They were discouraged from using their mother tongue although the teacher used it when the need arose (Byram, 2004; Hall, 2011). Another principle of behavioural psychology, reinforcement was evident in the instructional process, and it was used when the students' responses were correct, and a great care was taken to prevent students from committing errors (Byram, 2004; Hall, 2011). One of the criticisms of this method was that it was mechanical since it hugely relied on the formation of habits through repetitive drills, and the students had to memorise the structures of the target language (Byram, 2004). One of the ardent critics of this method is Chomsky (1966) who argued that people generate sentences innately and that language learning is the property of the human mind. Chomsky (1966) discredited the role of habit formation as a method to teach people to learn the target language.

#### **2.3.4. Community Language Learning**

Like the audio-lingual method, community language learning, which was created by Curran (1972), also traces its origins to psychology in general and counselling psychology in particular. The method is based on counselling techniques. The anxieties, threats, other personal and language problems that a person faces in learning a foreign language are addressed using counselling techniques (Curran, 1972). This method essentially treated a student, not as a student, but as a client. Likewise, teachers were considered language counsellors who were trained in counselling techniques to deal with their clients (Curran, 1972).

According to Curran (1972), the learner's confusion and conflict regarding the language marked the beginning of the language-counselling relationship between the teacher and the learner. The role of the language counsellor/the language teacher was to express his/her empathy for the client and then to extend the necessary linguistic aid. As the relationship and the aid grow stronger, the client or the learner overcomes his or her language inadequacies and begins to use the language independently. The counsellor is there to forge understanding, warm and approving relationship and becomes the client's 'other-language self'. Through such a process, the target language serves as a key medium. The client reports the client-counsellor relationship to group members using the target language as a medium. The reporting takes place in the presence of the client who extends the required support when the need arises. As this process repeats itself, the client begins to feel at ease and confident while developing the required knowledge and skills in using the language (Curran, 1972; Hall, 2011).

Community Language Learning was criticized on several grounds. Although it tried to create relationships between teachers and students (by being humanistic in its approach, the appropriateness of this relationship for language learning was questioned. More specifically, critics asked if there was any parallel between psychological counselling and language learning in classroom situations. In addition, the approach was criticized on the need to provide training to classroom teachers on counselling techniques. Another criticism was whether it could be applied universally since language learning contexts are affected a number of social, economic and political variables (Hall, 2011).

### **2.3.5. The Silent Way**

This method was created by Gattegno, and it is an integral part of the humanistic approaches that recognise the centrality of learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The use of coloured rods and verbal commands is typical of this method. These tools assist in encouraging the full use of the target language in classroom situations; that is, they discourage students from using their first language in classroom situations (Gattegno, 1972). Teachers are responsible for creating simple linguistic context that they have complete control over, and this environment enables the students to produce utterances regarding objects in display or to perform verbal commands (Gattegno, 1972).

According to Gattegno (1972), the other objectives of this method include helping learners pronounce words properly while at the same time keeping their flow; facilitating an environment where what the teachers do and utter are the same; that is, their gestures are given meaning by students; and creating a conducive environment in which students participate in the teaching-learning process, through the timber, pitch and intensity, thereby reducing the impact that one voice has and encouraging student's individual production of their version of the required sounds. This facilitates the shift from teacher-dominated classes to student-centred ones (Gattegno, 1972; Harmer, 2007).

There are various teaching materials which help to achieve the above objectives. They include wooden rods of different colours, wall charts containing functional vocabulary, discs or tapes, pictures, drawings, worksheets, storybooks and transparencies (Harmer, 2009). The Silent Way encourages creativity, discovery and increased intelligent potency. It is also important to mention that the minimal role of the classroom teacher encourages students to take responsibility for their learning since they are the central figure in the teaching-learning process. However, the approach is criticized on certain aspects. For example, the learner is highly isolated and this does not encourage meaningful communication or interaction. In addition, the support extended to the learner by the teacher so limited that the learner's opportunity to pick up the language is limited. The coloured rods used as teaching materials are not likely to help teach all aspects of the target language (Brown, 1987).

### **2.3.6. Total Physical Response**

According to Asher (1979), the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is a method combining information and skills using the kinaesthetic sensory system and this combination can help students to assimilate information and skills quickly. When the student succeeds, he or she will be motivated to exert more efforts to learn the language (Asher, 1979).

Asher (1979) and Cain (2004) highlight that one of the tenets of this method is the ability to understand the spoken language before producing it. In this method, imperatives are used to transfer information. The method allows students the time to get ready instead of forcing them to speak. This results in the students being able to begin speaking spontaneously. This implies that the students should feel comfortable and confident to be able to understand and produce the required utterances (Asher, 1979).

Asher (1979) underlines that the TPR is a method that combines skills and information using kinaesthetic sensory system, making possible students' rapid assimilation of the skills and information. Asher (1979) further underlines that the assimilation engenders a greater degree of motivation among students. The following techniques illustrate a typical classroom based on this method. To begin with, a teacher utters commands and performs them; the teacher then utters the commands, and he or she as well as the students perform the actions together; thirdly, the students perform commands, whereas the teacher utters them; subsequently, individual students are commanded to perform certain actions; at some point the students and teachers reverse their roles; the activity culminates with the expansion of commands or production of new sentences (Asher, 1979; Cain, 2004).

Although this method encourages learners to speak or use the language spontaneously, it has certain limitations. It is mainly based on imperatives and this apparently limits or restricts learner's use of the language. This also implies that the method does not seem to encourage the learners to express their ideas and thoughts creatively. The method is more suited to beginners; however, it is difficult to use it for more advanced students. In addition, whether this method can be applicable to EFL contexts is questionable since it was originally used to teach native speakers of the language who have the support of the environment to pick up the language with less effort (Cain, 2004).

### **2.3.7. The Natural Approach**

According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), there are various hypotheses that underpin the natural approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The discussion in the subsequent sections demonstrates that CLT shares certain theoretical, philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of the natural approach.

According to the *acquisition-learning distinction* hypothesis, there is much greater similarity between the way adults learn their mother tongue and the way they learn a second language. Both processes involve informal, implicit and subconscious learning (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Krashen, 1985). Given this hypothesis, possessing explicit linguistic or structural knowledge of the second language does not constitute the learning process (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).



The *natural order of acquisition* hypothesis states that learners' acquisition of linguistic forms happens in a predictable fashion, the same way this process happens in learning the grammar and syntax of their mother tongue (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

According to Krashen (1985), the *monitor* hypothesis is based the premise that it is the acquisition process that results in fluency development in the second language. Through the learning process, the performance of learners is monitored by paying attention to the time, focus on form and knowledge of the rule (Krashen, 1985).

Krashen (1985) argues that the *input* hypothesis is based on the "i+1" concept ("i" refers to the stage of acquisition). It postulates that learners need comprehensible input to acquire language (Krashen, 1985). Accordingly, if a second language learner is at some stage of the language acquisition process, and if the learner comprehends some item that includes a structural item from the subsequent stage of the process, this is more likely to assist the learner in picking up the required structure (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Krashen & Terrell (1983) highlight that second language learners learn better than others because of their unique motivations and personalities. This is the basic premise of the *affective* hypothesis. The first premise of this hypothesis is that people who have high self-confidence and self-worth or esteem learn a second language faster than the people who lack those qualities (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The second premise of this hypothesis is that language learning situations with low anxiety facilitate the acquisition process (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

The *filter* hypothesis states that mental block or affective filters block inputs from "getting in" (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Krashen and Terrell (1983) contend that when a teacher engages activities that lower the affective filter or the mental block, there is an increased likelihood for the acquisition process to take place. The presence of relaxation, low anxiety and non-defensiveness prompt low filter (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

The *aptitude* hypothesis makes a distinction between general learning aptitude and language learning aptitude. The hypothesis highlights that it is possible to measure language learning, and there is a strong correlation between language learning aptitude and general learning aptitude (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). The hypothesis further highlights that aptitude is mainly associated

with learning, whereas attitude is mainly related to language acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), the basic precept of the *first language* hypothesis is that a second language learner can naturally substitute his or her first language competence for that of the second language. Therefore, the learner should not be forced to use the first language to generate second language performance. If there is a mistake such as first language transference to the second language and moment of silence in this process, the teacher should tolerate it because this is how learning takes place naturally (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

*The textuality* hypothesis states that experience is naturally textual, and syllabus experts and textbook writers should consider this principle in preparing texts for instructional purposes. In line with this hypothesis, the syllabus experts and textbook writers should follow principles of story writing and sound linguistic analysis in designing teaching materials for second language instruction (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Krashen, 1985).

According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), the *expectancy* hypothesis underlines that ‘cognitive momentum’ is inherent in discourses, and this assists in enhancing processing text structures in a predictable fashion. Thus, language teachers should assist second language learners to develop native-speaker ‘intuitions’ that help to predict discourses (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

In summary, the discussion in this section has cast light on various theoretical, philosophical, and pedagogical underpinnings of the various language teaching approaches and methods. This broadens our understanding of the extent to which language pedagogy has changed and has been adapted to the dynamics of the socio-political contexts in which it is set. It also assists in understanding the pros and cons as well as the differences and similarities among these methods and approaches. The above and subsequent discussions demonstrate that CLT emerged in response to its predecessors that emphasised the explicit teaching of grammar instead of the development of the communicative competence of students. Since CLT is the focus of the current study, it is discussed below under a separate heading.

The following table synthesises the discussion in this section by highlighting the method/approach, when it was dominant, its key characteristics and the role of grammar.

**TABLE 2.3: SYNTHESIS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACHES AND METHODS**

Name of method or approach	Year	Key characteristics	Role of grammar	Critique of the method
Grammar Translation Method	1840-1940(Richards & Rodgers, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Explicit teaching of grammar(Richards &amp; Rodgers, 2001)</li> <li>→Development of learners' intellectual ability(Richards &amp; Rodgers, 2001)</li> <li>→Translation being used as a key teaching strategy(Richards &amp; Rodgers, 2001)</li> <li>→Teachers' role being central (Richards &amp; Rodgers, 2001)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Grammar being the purpose of learning(Richards &amp; Rodgers, 2001)</li> <li>→Focus on forms and inflections of words (Richards &amp; Rodgers, 2001)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Focus on form rather than on meaning</li> <li>→Limited learner roles</li> <li>→Encourages memorization</li> </ul>
Direct Method	Invented in 1900, but gained popularity in 1970's (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Direct use of the target language(Thornby, 2006)</li> <li>→Learning should mirror first language acquisitions/no translation(Thornby, 2006)</li> <li>→Dialogues being the main instructional activities (Thornby, 2006)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Grammar was taught inductively through dialogues (Hall, 2011).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Not suitable for large classes</li> <li>→Learner's overdependence on the teacher</li> </ul>
Audio-lingual Method	1950s and 1960s(Richards & Rodgers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Focus on aural work and pronunciation (Byram, 2004; Hall, 2011).</li> <li>→Emphasis being placed on communication (Byram, 2004; Hall, 2011).</li> <li>→Structural drills and dialogues being the dominant instructional activities (Byram, 2004; Hall, 2011).</li> <li>→Memorisation, mimicry and rote-learning being specific classroom strategies (Byram, 2004; Hall, 2011).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Grammar was taught inductively through repetitive drills and dialogues (Byram 2004; Hall, 2011).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Focus on aural work and pronunciation</li> <li>→Being mechanical as it focuses on drills and habit formation</li> </ul>
Community Language Learning	1970's (Curran, 1972)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Learners' anxieties, fears and language problems should be addressed through counselling techniques (Curran, 1972).</li> <li>→Learners being treated as clients, instead of being as learners, and teachers being conceived as counsellors (Curran, 1972)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Emphasis being placed on interaction but not grammar (Richards &amp; Rodgers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→Counselling techniques not applicable to language classroom as intended</li> <li>→Its being inappropriate in all language learning contexts</li> <li>→Might require</li> </ul>

		→Language being used as a medium between the client and the counsellor(Curran 1972)		teachers to take training on counselling techniques
The Silent Way	1970s (Gattegno, 1972)	→Students produce utterances using objects displayed and perform verbal commands (Gattegno, 1972). →Proper pronunciation being expected (Gattegno, 1972) →Based on humanistic approach that places learners at the centre of attention, the role of the teacher is creating simple linguistic context (Gattegno, 1972)	→No clear place for grammar	→Lack of communication as learners work in isolation →Minimal help extended to the learner by the teacher →Materials may not appropriate for all language aspects
Total Physical Response	Late 1960s (Richards & Rodgers)	→The use of kinaesthetic and sensory system to combine information and skills(Cain, 2004) →Founded on the premise that learners should first understand the spoken language before producing it(Cain, 2004). →Based on performing commands in classroom situations(Cain, 2004) →Its ultimate objective being the production of new sentences or the expansion of commands (Cain, 2004)	No explicit teaching of grammar	→Limited language input (mainly to imperatives) →Limited learner creativity →Questionable appropriateness to advanced learners
The Natural Approach	Late 1970s and early 1980s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)	→Based on the premise that there is much similarity between the way adults learn their first language and the way students learn they second language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). →Implicit or subconscious learning is involved in first language acquisition and second language learning (Krashen, 1983) →Grammar is taught implicitly (Krashen, 1983; Krashen & Terrell, 1983).	→Grammar should be taught implicitly (Krashen & Terrell, 1983)	→Limited applicability in EFL contexts where learners lack natural settings →Questionable if the way adults learn a second language is similar to the way children learn their first language →Questionable whether all the hypotheses can be tested and applied in real language learning contexts

## **2.4. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

### **2.4.1. The Concept of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative language teaching has capitalised on the strengths and weaknesses of its predecessors and incorporated various theoretical, philosophical, psychological and pedagogical considerations to generate a comprehensive language teaching approach. For instance, it has considered learners as individuals who have unique needs and interests that should be an integral component of syllabus design and the preparation of teaching materials. These aspects were central to the Direct Method and humanistic approach to language teaching (Crooks, 2009). In addition, CLT attempted to address the mere focus on grammatical structures and highlighted the development of both fluency and accuracy, especially in its weaker version. This was in reaction to the grammar translation method, whose focus was the isolated and de-contextualised teaching of grammar and vocabulary (Savignone, 2004). The following sub-sections discuss various aspects of CLT.

Despite the terminological differences among language theorists and researchers, there is a consensus that CLT places emphasises the development of what Hymes (1972) called ‘communicative competence’. The ultimate objective of teaching ESL or EFL is to develop the learners’ communicative competence. This involves deciding which language is appropriate in any given communicative contexts and students’ readiness to exploit pertinent communication strategies to cope with the demands of various communicative situations (Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 1997; Richards, 2006). Elaborating communicative competence, Richards (2006) points out that the development of communicative competence implies:

*Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes; knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants; that is, knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication; knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (i.e. narratives, reports, interviews and conversation); and knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one’s language knowledge, for example, through using different kinds of communicative strategies (p. 3).*

Richard’s (2006) description emphasises communicative competence, but it does not reject grammatical competence. In this regard, Wilkins (1972), Stevick (1982) and Stern (1983) argue that it is difficult to think of communicative competence without linguistic competence. This conception of CLT seems to strike a balance between communicative competence and linguistic

competence. Further, supporting this, Littlejohn and Hicks (1987) strongly argue: “The broadening of the concerns of language education suggests that learners not only need to be provided with opportunities to manipulate the formal system of the language, but also to make use of communicative abilities” (p. 69).

Richards (2006) who synthesised the approach from historical, research and practical points of view offered a comprehensive definition of CLT. He described it in terms of “a set of principles about language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom” (Richards 2006, p. 5) The components of this definition are discussed in the latter parts of this section.

Since CLT derives from various theoretical, educational and philosophical considerations, it is multi-disciplinary. Regarding this, Savignon (1997) indicated that CLT has multi-disciplinary foundations including linguistics, philosophy, educational research and psychology. Furthermore, Richards and Rodgers (1986), Brown (1994) and Savignon (1997) pinpointed that CLT is an approach, not a method. Brown (1994) highlights: “Communicative language teaching is a unified but broadly-based theoretical position about the nature of language and language learning and teaching” (pp. 244-245). This implies that it is not a set of specific strategies that classroom teachers can readily employ in the teaching-learning process.

Savignon (1997, p. 272) also underlines: “Communicative competence is functional language proficiency, the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more persons belonging to the same speech community.” Savignon (1997) identifies four of components of communicative competence. These are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Unlike one of the misconceptions about associating CLT mainly with speaking or oral skills, Savignon (1997) argues that grammatical competence is one of the aspects of communicative competence worth noting.

According to Savignon (1997), grammatical competence is concerned with the knowledge and skills a language speaker needs to understand and express exactly the literal meaning of utterances. This aspect of communicative competence involves the recognition of sentential grammar and the ability to identify the phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactical features of a language (Savignon, 1997). It also involves the ability to employ these aspects in interpreting and forming words and sentences (Canale, 1983; Savignon, 1997).

Sociolinguistic competence is the students' ability to use language appropriately in meaningful social contexts (Savignon, 1997). This goes beyond the literal meanings of sentences and understanding utterances in specific social contexts. The third component of communicative competence, discourse competence, refers to students' ability to combine grammar and meaning sequentially to meet various genre requirements (Savignon, 1997). The last component of communicative competence is strategic competence which involves how students command verbal and non-verbal strategies that are required for communication (Savignon, 1997). According to Canale (1983, p. 10), this competence helps to: "to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence, and to enhance the effectiveness of communication."

In light of the above discussion, it is not possible to provide a straightforward, an overarching definition for CLT. Given this, Brown (1994, pp. 244-245) underlines that CLT should be understood in terms of the following interconnected features: that classroom targets are paying attention to every mechanism of authentic communication, and they are not limited to grammatical forms; that language teaching methods should engage students in the practical, meaningful and functional use of language for momentous objectives. Linguistic structures are not the essential part of attention instead of featuring language which enables the learner to achieve the above objectives; that fluency and accuracy are fundamental to CLT; that it is important to emphasise fluency, given students' needs, to ensure the students engagement in the authentic use of the language; that language classrooms should allow students to make use of the language in meaningful situations (Brown, 1994).

The discussion above has highlighted that the area CLT derives its principles from various disciplines and, most importantly, it places learners at the centre of attention. From a broad pedagogical point of view, it adopts a learner-centred conception of teaching and learning which is similar to Kember's (1997) learner-centred conceptions of teaching, and it is also consistent with the learner-centred approaches pronounced in Ethiopia's education and training policy (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2002; 2015; 2018).

In summary, researchers who examined the literature in the area have identified two versions of CLT. One such writer is Howatt (1984) who pointed out:

*There is, in a sense, a 'strong' version of the communicative approach and a 'weak' version. The weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years (the early days of CLT), stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider programme of language teaching.... The 'strong' version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as 'learning to use' English, the latter entails 'using English to learn it' (p. 279).*

Given the available empirical evidence and literature, the tendency to associate CLT with communication or oral skills is, therefore, a misconception. Furthermore, the argument that grammatical competence does not have an important place in CLT is also a misplaced one because the scope of CLT is broad. Conceived properly, it has far-reaching consequences in various language teaching contexts.

Ethiopia's education and training policy (and the 2018 education roadmap) adopted learner-centred approaches (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2015; 2018). Within the general pedagogical framework, communicatively-oriented language teaching has been introduced. Consequently, language teachers have undergone various types of training, workshops and seminars on various aspects of the approach. New teaching materials have been developed. Nevertheless, local research has established that there is a glaring gap between policy and practice. This is evident from the lecture-dominated classroom practices of second school teachers and university instructors. This is more so in language classes (Adinew, 2015; Moges, 2018). Hence, one of the objectives of this study was to assess if the CLT-related conceptions of university EFL instructors was consistent with the policy imperative and CLT literature.

#### **2.4.2. Principles of CLT**

Various language theorists and researchers have described the principles of CLT. Since Brumfit's (1986, pp. 92-93) offered a comprehensive description of the principles, this study sought to highlight them in relation to the specific context of the current study. Hence, CLT is founded on several major principles. According to Brumfit (1986), in CLT-based classrooms students exert conscious and unconscious efforts to learn. The language textbook should allow for these versions of learning. In light of this, the focus of teaching can either be accuracy or fluency. (He claims that) learning is promoted when more emphasis is placed on fluency. This also implies that making mistakes is a natural part of learning. Therefore, it is not advisable to



dwell on much error correction. Highlighting the holistic nature of language, Brumfit (1986) emphasizes that language is processed from top-down, not from bottom-up. Hence, it is more logical for meanings to be understood as “wholes” first. They are then analysed into component parts.

One of the debates dominating language teaching has been whether classroom activities should be organized around functions or structures or both. According to Brumfit (1986), the design of tasks does not rely on specific linguistic or functional aspect of language. It is rather to be chosen on the basis of its communicative relevance in the context of whole activity. In this regard, authentic exercises/activities are more likely to promote learning than their linguistic counterparts.

A principle that other scholars (Richards, 2006; Nagalakshmi & Rajaram, 2016) share relates to integrating major language skills in order to reflect real communication. This principle is an attempt to reflect what happens in real-life where language users’ manipulation of the language demonstrates the natural integration of the language skills in naturalistic contexts.

An examination of the principles summarised by Brumfit (1986) illustrates that learners should be the focus of the teaching-learning process in CLT-based classrooms. This can be seen from the following principles: more responsibility should be given to students to foster their autonomy or independence; it is possible to increase learner’s employing problem-solving activities that call on the engagement of the learner’s cognitive and effective resources; language tasks and activities should allow students to be analytical and creative thinkers., and students should be able to see the immediate relevance of classroom language, which should be embedded in the tasks they do in classroom situations (Brumfit, 1986).

Given that it is the language of instruction in higher education institutions in Ethiopia, it is important to detail the specific purposes that EFL students accomplish using the English language. The studies in the subsequent reported that students prepare various terms papers and assignments. This is one of the academic skills the students need to succeed at their studies. Besides, they present their assignments to their classmates and teachers. They also work in pairs and groups to do interactive activities in classroom situations. This involves language as well as other classes. For example, in *Communicative English Language Skills I and II*, students are

often required to engage in pair and group work activities. They also make formal presentations on topics of their choice. In marketing and management classes these academic skills are also among the major requirements for their success.

As the action research my colleagues and I conducted demonstrated, many of the students struggle to carry out the above activities to the satisfaction of their instructors mainly due to their language deficiencies (Alamirew & Alazar, 2015; Adinew 2015; Moges, 2018). In other words, all the activities require the knowledge and correct use of English in general and its grammar in particular (Alamirew & Alazar, 2015; Moges, 2018). One of the ways through which this can be achieved is by integrating the above principles in syllabus design and classroom tasks. Given my observation and evidence from previous studies (Amlaku, 2010; Abiy, 2013; Dereje, 2013; Meshesha & Endale, 2017), the lecture-fronted methods that university instructors employ did not seem to enable the students to develop the required academic writing and speaking skills. The above principles, therefore, seem to be lacking in English language classrooms where the talk-chalk-method is the most dominant mode of instruction (Adinew, 2015; Alamirew & Alazar, 2015; Meshesha & Endale, 2017; Moges, 2018).

The above principles imply that attention should be focused on helping learners to use the language to accomplish various communicative purposes. Regarding the communicative purposes for which a language is used, it is important to highlight Halliday's (1973) theory of communication in which several language functions are described: instrumental function, regulatory function, interactional function, personal function, imaginative function and representational function, whose details are discussed under *2.4.5 Syllabus in CLT* ). Given the various functions of language, it is important to teach the major language skills in integration (listening, speaking, reading and reading including grammar and vocabulary). This helps learners to realise the goal of CLT which is to achieve communicative competence (Richards, 2006). This study was initiated because most of the CLT-related principles listed and described above were missing from language classes in general and grammar lessons in particular in the private universities in Ethiopia. This was evidenced by the lecture-dominated classes that EFL learners had to endure (Bezabih, 2018; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Wondifraw, Alemayehu & Asrat, 2018).

### **2.4.3. Historical Development of CLT**

Several applied linguists contributed extensive theories that were responsible for the emergence of CLT. Textbook writers, curriculum developers and even governments contributed to the national and international prominence of these theories and advocated for their application in educational settings (Richards, 2006).

The origin of CLT dates back to the late 1960s when the British language teaching tradition underwent notable changes (Richards, 2006). Prior to that, the British adopted Situational Language teaching as the most dominant approach to teaching English as a foreign language (Richards, 2006). The proponents of this classic form of CLT thought that language instruction should give emphasis to enabling learners to use the language creatively and meaningfully rather than commanding linguistic structures (Richards, 2006). Therefore, “Grammar was no longer the starting point in planning language courses within a communicative approach. New approaches to language teaching were needed” (Richards 2006, p. 9). Historically, Wilkins (1972) who was among the pioneers to the development of CLT underscored that rather than describing the major aspects of language using traditional linguistic structures and vocabulary, it is logical to show the systems governing meanings in real language use.

In addition to the above motives, another important necessitating factor for CLT was the dynamism of the philosophy of education in Europe (Savignon, 1997). Savignon (1997) as well as Richards and Rodgers (2014) indicated that there was an increased interdependence among countries in Europe, and there was a need to teach adults the most dominant languages in the continent at the time. This gave rise to the need for developing various language teaching methods to accommodate the dynamism at the time (Savignon, 1997; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

### **2.4.4. Recent Trends in CLT**

There are no agreed-upon principles that describe CLT since it “draws on [several] diverse sources... [its principles should be] applied in different ways, depending on the teaching context, the age of the learners, their level, learning goals, and so on” (Nagalakshmi & Rajaram 2016, p. 572). Richards (2006) pointed out that content-based instruction and task-based instruction are the outgrowths of CLT. While they essentially adhere to the principles of CLT, they have added

new dimensions to it. Richards (2006) underlined that they take different routes to develop learners' communicative competence. Because they give attention to classroom processes that facilitate student learning, they are collectively called process-based CLT approaches. According to Krahnke (1987, p. 65), content-based instruction refers to: "the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teaching the language itself separately from the content being taught." This definition highlights that content is the message that students learn or use to communicate with one another; it is not the language used to convey it.

Task-based instruction, on the other hand, assumes that learners learn best when instructional tasks are carefully designed, and this methodology relies on tasks as the primary unit that facilitate student teaching (Richards, 2006). Recent studies reveal that despite the disappointment with CLT, its principles are evident in many school curricula and syllabuses. In this regard, Anastasia, Didenko and Pichugova (2016, p. 4) argue: "CLT impact can still be felt globally and locally in the present teaching context. Nowadays, the notion of competence is an inalienable part of language syllabuses. Assessment procedures and teaching materials have been modified to include communication-oriented activities."

Even though some writers and researchers argue that CLT seems to be a dated approach, it has not gone out of favour. Several research outputs are published in international journals about the various aspects and controversies surrounding it. This is especially true for EFL contexts (Thamarana, 2015; Didenko & Pichugova, 2016; Shirzad, 2016; Alamri, 2018; Noori, 2018; Wei, Lin & Litton, 2018; Ghazi & Noor, 2019). The current emphasis on this approach by Ethiopia's Ministry of Education also emanated from this understanding and the practical demands of school and out-of-school realities that "highlight the importance of communicativeness" in the teaching-learning process (Didenko & Pichugova 2016, p. 4).

#### **2.4.5. Syllabus in CLT**

The syllabus of CLT is notional-functional, and its organising units are 'notions' and 'functions'. This suggests that grammatical structures are not the organising principles of the design although they can be an integral part of it. Yalden (1983) pointed out that there are various types of CLT syllabus. These include structural, functional, and instrumental; structure plus functions;

interactional; task-based and learner-generated. There are various theories of learning and teaching that underpin CLT syllabus design.

### **A. Theory of Language**

Based on Hymes' (1972) conception of CLT, the ultimate objective of language teaching is to develop learners' communicative competence. Hymes' theory of language emerged in response to Chomsky's (1965) theory of linguistic competence. On the one hand, Chomsky's (1965) theory postulated that the abstract abilities that speakers possess can help them to generate grammatically correct sentences. On the other hand, Hymes (1972) argued: "Such a view of linguistic theory was sterile, that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture." Hymes (1972) based his theory of communication on four pillars: first, acquiring communicative competence means acquiring both the knowledge and ability for language use. This implies deciding whether something is formally possible; second, acquiring the knowledge and ability for language use involves deciding whether something is feasible in terms of the available vehicle of implementation; third, it involves making decisions about whether something is appropriate in a given situation. The fourth pillar highlights whether people should perform something and what the performance implies (Hymes, 1972).

CLT had also theoretical support from Halliday's linguistic theory of communication (Halliday, 1973). According to Halliday (1973, p. 145), "Linguistics ... is concerned... with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus." His theory identified various functions of a language. Halliday (1973) argued that the functions are relevant in explaining how children learn their first language. According to Halliday (1973), language has an instrumental function which means using it to acquire something, while the regulatory function involves controlling people's behaviour using language. The interactional function involves using language to create interactions (Halliday, 1973). The personal function highlights that people use a language to express their feelings and convey meanings (Halliday, 1973). The heuristic function, which is the fifth one, involves learning and discovering things using language as a vehicle (Halliday, 1973). The sixth function that he identified is the imaginative function that involves employing language to create an imaginative world (Halliday, 1973). The

last function of language is the representational function, and it involves using language to transfer information (Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens, 1964). Brumfit (1979) and Savignon (1997) share many of the assumptions underlying Halliday's theory of language.

The above discussion suggests that language teaching programmes that have communicative orientation should consider the pillars of communication that Halliday (1973) suggested. These considerations should apply to the classroom situations, the teaching materials design and preparation, and language teachers' training.

### **B. Theory of Learning**

Various writers assert that CLT is rich and eclectic theoretically. Its theory of learning base has not been emphasised although it is possible to discern its underlying learning principles. This mainly holds for the classical versions of CLT. In this regard, Johnson (1982) identified three major principles: first, the communication principle posits that authentic communication is a tool that promotes learning; second, the task principle postulates that language is a useful vehicle that helps to perform meaningful tasks; third, the meaningfulness principle suggests that meaningful language use promotes learning. Given that, the design and delivery of learning activities should reflect the extent to which students engage in meaningful language use instead of the manipulation of mechanical language patterns (Littlewood, 1981).

CLT trends after Johnson (1982) had a rich base in theories of learning. Savignon (1997) examined various studies and highlighted the importance of linguistic, cognitive, social, and individual variables in language acquisition. Moreover, Littlewood (1984) stressed that a skill-learning model of learning is compatible with CLT. According to this model, acquiring communicative competence means skills development, which integrates aspects of language at cognitive and behavioural levels (Littlewood, 1984). In summary, the theories of learning imply that learners should practise the target language in meaningful communicative contexts.

### **C. Teacher Roles in Communicative Classrooms**

Although CLT is a learner-centred approach to language teaching, the role of the teacher is also critical to accomplish learners' full engagement in communicative activities. The teacher's main role in the teaching-learning process is to facilitate student learning (Richards, 2006; Dörnyei, 2013; Fan, 2016). This can translate into several roles for the teacher both inside and outside

classroom situations. According to Hedge (2000), the teacher in a CLT classroom plays multiple roles in and outside classrooms: activities setter, an organiser, a guide, a contributor, a monitor of activities and a diagnoser. Breen and Candlin in Richards and Rodgers (2001) described the role of the teacher comprehensively:

*The teacher has two main roles in CLT. First, (he/she should) facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and text. Second, (he/she should) act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group. Other roles assumed for teachers are needs analyst, counsellor, and group-process manager (p. 167).*

Despite the terminological differences, various scholars agree that the teacher plays diverse roles in CLT classrooms. Harmer (1991), Nunan and Lamb (1996) as well as Richards (2006) indicated that the communicative language teacher is an organiser, a promoter, an assessor, a researcher, a controller, an active participant, a resource person, a tutor, and an investigator. Nunan and Lamb (1996) pinpointed that the role that the teacher plays as an organiser is the most challenging one, especially regarding classroom management. This is because it requires competence in classroom management, entailing relevant pedagogical training. Contrary to the authoritative roles of the teachers in knowledge-based classrooms, the teachers in CLT classrooms are more of a facilitator than a dictator. This places learners at the centre of attention (Nunan & Lamb, 1996).

#### **D. Learner Roles in Communicative Classrooms**

As discussed above, CLT is guided by one important principle “self-direction for learners” (Oxford, 1990:10). This suggests that CLT encourages the development of learner autonomy, which further implies that learners take more responsibility for their learning especially outside classroom contexts where the teacher is not at their disposal (Richards, 2006; Dörnyei, 2013; Larsen-Freeman, 2015; Fan, 2016). The literature indicates that there are no fixed learner roles in communicative classrooms because their roles can vary depending on the nature and variety of learning tasks and contexts. Hence, students can play multiple roles in the learning-teaching process: active listeners, processors, contributors, analysers, researchers, participants, and problem-solvers (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Richards, 2006).

#### **E. The Role of Instructional Materials**

CLT literature demonstrates that task-based materials, text-based materials, and realia should be used in communicative classrooms (Richards, 2006). Text-based materials, also called, genre-based materials are intended for the mastery of different kinds of texts by students. Texts are structurally sequenced language items used in specific ways in specific contexts. As Richards (2006) explains:

*In the course of a day, a speaker of English may use spoken English in many different ways including a casual conversational exchange with a friend; conversational exchange with a stranger in an elevator; telephone call to arrange an appointment at a hair salon; an account to friends of an unusual experience; and discussion of a personal problem with a friend to seek advice (p. 36).*

According to Nunan(1989), while these texts have a clear organisation: beginning, middle, and ending, and students are expected to master these and use them when the need arises, task-based materials rely on carefully designed tasks, ensuring the development of learners' communicative competence through the interactions made possible through these tasks. Examples of task-based materials include games, simulations and role-plays which could be presented to students in the form of exercise handbooks, cue cards and pair or group work communication materials. While using these materials, students assume varied roles (Nunan, 1989).

The third major type of material advocated by CLT theorists and practitioners is realia (Richards, 2006). This involves the use of real or authentic materials in the teaching-learning processes. Examples of these might include graphics and visuals, magazines, newspapers, maps, pictures, and symbols. The assumption here is that the instructional process should be the reflection of the external world in which the students live, and as such, students should be given authentic, life-like materials they can work with because the major purpose of language learning is to enable them function in life meaningfully (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

In congruence with the above materials, Larsen-Freeman (1986), Nunan (1989), and Richards & Rodgers (2001) advocate using authentic materials in the instructional process. Regarding the authenticity of teaching materials, Clarke and Silberstein (1977, p. 51) cited in Richards (2006, p. 20) argue: "Classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible since language is a tool of communication, methods, and materials should concentrate on the message and not the medium."



In addition to helping develop learners' communicative competence, authentic materials contribute to the liveliness of the instructional process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). For example, students will have heightened motivation to involve in communicative tasks. They can also see the link between classrooms and the outside world, and they can develop their creativity (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

## **F. Classroom Activities and Tasks in CLT**

By definition, a communicative task is an activity carried out through language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Map reading, giving directions, telephoning and letter writing are a few examples of communicative tasks (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). A detailed definition of a communicative task is provided by Ellis (2003):

*A task is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically to produce an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills and also various cognitive processes (p. 16).*

Examining this description, we can argue that communicative tasks are mainly intended to develop learners' communicative competence, the major objective of language teaching in CLT. Although different writers produced a list of different communicative tasks, Richards (2001) categorised them comprehensively as "real-world tasks" and "pedagogical tasks". On the one hand, real-world tasks help learners to employ the target language beyond the confines of classroom situations. Pedagogical tasks, on the other hand, are tasks that occur in classrooms (Richards, 2001). According to Richards (2001), there are five sub-categories within pedagogical tasks: opinion-exchange tasks, information-gap tasks, decision-making tasks, jigsaw tasks, and problem-solving tasks.

Littlewood (1981) categorised communicative tasks into two as "pre-communicative activities" and "communicative activities". Pre-communicative tasks focus on language form than on its meaning. Littlewood (1981) cites structural activities and quasi-structural activities as typical examples of pre-communicative activities. However, communicative activities help learners to use the target language in communicative contexts. Social interaction activities and functional communicative activities are sub-categories of the communicative activities (Littlewood, 1981).

Even though there are terminological differences among scholars, there is a consensus that there is a need to expose learners to various communicative and structural tasks, especially in EFL contexts. This helps the learners to develop both their fluency and accuracy.

#### **2.4.6. CLT-related Misconceptions**

The controversies and misconceptions surrounding CLT in the Ethiopian context emanate from the differing interpretations of the term “communicative”. Hence, for some teachers, “communicative” means “speaking”. Those who adhere to this conception tend to employ pair and group work activities to develop their students’ speaking skills; for others, it suggests that there should be a balance between speaking and writing. This holds for teachers who have to integrate the skills and thus face practical difficulties in implementing the approach in classroom situations.

Thompson (1996) examined various studies on CLT and identified four major misconceptions. According to Thompson (1996), one of the misconceptions relates to linguistic competence. Regarding this, applied linguists underline that its teaching should be minimised in CLT-based syllabuses. This emanates from the assumption that teaching grammar explicitly is less likely to help learners function in meaningful communicative contexts. However, CLT does not abandon grammar teaching, but it proposes the presentation and practice of grammar items in meaningful/authentic communicative contexts. In this regard, Thompson (1996) argues that teachers should use the discovery method to help learners identify the rules for themselves. Rodgers and Richards (1986), Ellis (1992), and Richards (2006) support this view.

The other misconception that Thompson (1996) highlighted is that CLT focuses on speaking skills. Supporting this, Wang (2017, p. 3) reported: “Communicate equals talk”. However, communication can take place not only through speaking and listening but also through reading and writing.

The third misconception that Thompson (1996) identified relates to pair work. This misconception is the result of conceptualising pair work as a role-play. Even though role-play is one of the most important ways through which learners can develop their communicative competence, it is not the same as pair and group work, which is a more complex organisational pattern. Role-play is not as flexible as pair and group work, which allows students to work cooperatively to problem-solve, analyse a reading text, prepare presentations, create stories, and carry out several activities. These tasks are not suited to role-play (Thompson, 1996).

The fourth misconception is about the teacher's role in CLT classrooms (Thompson, 1996). Empirical evidence reveals that teachers in CLT classrooms do much as opposed to what they do in traditional grammar-translation methods. CLT demands that teachers interact with students in meaningful ways and be skilful in dealing with numerous classroom management issues (Wang, 2017). However, students should understand that they should not expect much from their teachers because the roles of the latter are to facilitate the teaching-learning process.

The CLT-related misconceptions discussed above are relevant to this study at least at two levels. Firstly, there seems to be a tendency to liken "communicative" to "speaking", one of the misconceptions identified by Thompson (1996) and Wang (2017). The other misconception in local contexts relates to the association teachers draw between specific classroom strategies such as "pair/group work" and CLT. This contradicts with what the literature highlights: that CLT is a set of principles informing several aspects of language learning and teaching: the goal of language teaching, the role of learners, the role of teachers, teaching materials assessment, etc (Richards, 2006). This study sought to investigate if the participants of this study, EFL instructors in private universities in Ethiopia, had similar or different misconceptions regarding the various aspects of CLT the literature has identified.

#### **2.4.7. Adoption of CLT in EFL Contexts**

Although the 1970s marked the beginning of CLT, the approach is being implemented in several EFL contexts, and arguments that it is a dated approach, therefore, are not defensible in EFL contexts. There is a plethora of research illustrating that CLT is still the preferred language teaching approach in several EFL contexts. This section outlines recent research in EFL contexts about the adoption and implementation of CLT.

The Middle East, including countries in northern Africa such as Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, is one of the regions where CLT has been implemented for several years. Farooq (2015) examined Saudi teachers' perceptions of CLT. One of the most notable findings highlighted that CLT is a learner-centred approach that allowed students to participate actively in the teaching-learning process. The study also highlighted that 98% of the participants confirmed that CLT can develop learners' communicative competence (Farooq, 2015).

Pathan et al. (2016) found that teachers who implemented CLT reported that it promoted oral communication in the classroom. Similarly, Asma and Tsenim (2017) examined secondary school teachers' perceptions of CLT in the Tunisian context and found that the teachers had a

positive attitude towards CLT despite the difficulties surrounding its implementation in classroom situations.

Hanan's (2018) study: "Troubleshooting Prospective Problems Associated with the Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching in EFL Context" on the one hand, acknowledges: "In this era of practical language learning, the communicative language teaching (CLT) appears to be the perfect teaching model" (Hanan, 2018: 380). On the other hand, it outlined the major challenges that classroom teachers faced in implementing CLT. In this vein, Hanan (2018) indicated that the students' lack of intrinsic motivation to communicate in the foreign language, the conflict between CLT and the structure of placement tests, the incompatibility of CLT with local cultures, and the lack of adequate training and professional development for EFL teachers were the major difficulties to the successful implementation of CLT in EFL context. Furthermore, Hanan (2018) asserted that these challenges can be addressed if computer-mediated communication (CMC) is implemented, analysis of learners' needs is conducted, ongoing teacher training is conducted, and teaching methods compatible with the EFL context are planned and implemented.

Showqi (2012) who investigated the current status of CLT in the Arab Gulf region found that CLT has had huge impacts on several aspects of language teaching in the EFL context. He reported: "the enormous impact that communicative approach has had on various aspects of EFL teaching in the region including syllabuses, teaching materials, and methodology since its introduction about four decades ago" (Showqi 2012, p. 446).

Research outputs from the same region that highlighted the above findings include Mansour and Masoume (2013), Vaezi and Abbaspour (2014), Majed (2016), Soozandehfar and Adeli (2016), Alamri (2018) as well as Ali and Samran (2018).

Asia is also one of the EFL continents where CLT has been adopted widely as can be evidenced by the numerous studies published internationally addressing its potential and actual benefits and the practical difficulties that teachers and students faced in the classroom. Ruffia and Muhammad (2017) explored the beliefs of Pakistani teachers and students concerning the grammar-translation method and CLT and concluded that both students and teachers believed that CLT is learner-centred and that it encourages meaningful interactions between teachers and students. Raffia and Muhammad (2017) further ascertained that the teachers' favoured the use of L1 and teacher-centred methods are the major challenges of implementing CLT in the classroom.

Huang (2016) reported the practical benefits and the challenges of implementing CLT in rural EFL classrooms in Taiwan. Like the previous study, Huang (2016) concluded that there are promising outcomes in implementing CLT in classrooms. However, Huang (2016, p. 186) pinpointed: “Students’ low L1 cognitive resources, parents’ indifferent attitudes towards communicative-English education, and the assortment of students of heterogeneous language skills into the same class” are the major problems the teachers faced in teaching the target language communicatively in classroom situations.

Wang (2017) reported CLT-related misconceptions in China and attributed the low implementation of CLT to these misconceptions. Wang (2017) identified four major misconceptions: CLT is seen as a specific teaching method; “communicate equals “talk”; CLT pays little attention to language forms, and CLT ignores the teaching environment. Wang (2017, p. 5) argues that such misconceptions can be addressed if teachers spend more time and energy in “digging the essence of classic theories. Only based on the comprehensive understanding of the teaching approach or method can it be correctly and effectively put into practice.”

Sri (2014) reported the widespread espousal of CLT in Indonesia; however, like a study by Wang (2017), it exemplified that its success was hampered partly by the misconceptions held by teachers. Sri (2014) identified four major misconceptions. One of the misconceptions was that the teachers believed that CLT was mainly concerned with developing students’ speaking skills, and they, therefore, placed more attention on these skills in classroom situations. Sri (2014) further pointed out that since the role of the teachers is to facilitate student learning, they became inattentive to monitoring learners’ performance. They also lacked a clear understanding of whether fluency or accuracy should be the goal of language teaching (Sri, 2014).

Evidence from Bangladesh asserted: “Due to the importance and necessity to communicate in English in many EFL/ESL countries including Bangladesh, (Bangladesh) adopted Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach for teaching English” (Fariya 2016, p.1). The evidence further demonstrated that CLT was not implemented successfully due to several internal and external factors: the power of exams, learner’s phobia of the English language, lack of facilities, and the actual classroom environment. In the same vein, Thamarana (2015), Nguyen (2016) and Abdullah (2018) confirmed the practicalities of CLT while at the same time sharing the concerns discussed above.

The espousal of CLT is also evident from the various research outputs from different countries in Africa. Emmanuel and Erasmus (2017) concluded that most Tanzanian EFL secondary school teachers had a positive attitude and perceptions towards CLT; however, their classroom realities were not reflective of these favourable attitudes and perceptions since they used traditional methods of language teaching. Nitrenganya (2015) assessed the major difficulties faced by Rwandan university EFL lecturers in implementing CLT. The study illustrated that large class size, students' lack of opportunities in using English outside classroom contexts, students' use of their native language in classroom discussions and their passive learning styles, their over-reliance on their teachers, the limited time allocated to English and teachers' being overly work loaded were found to be the major challenges to teaching English communicatively.

Recent research into CLT in Ethiopia is scarce. Ebissa (2014), for example, examined teachers' perceptions and practices of CLT in two Ethiopian public universities. According to the study, the majority of teachers had a positive attitude to CLT; however, their classroom practices were not consistent with their views: the teachers mainly used the lecture method to teach the target language.

Likewise, Mihretu (2016) investigated secondary-school teachers' beliefs and perceived difficulties in implementing CLT and concluded that the teachers did not have any serious CLT-related misconceptions. The study also reported: "Their classroom practices are entangled with CLT implementing difficulties in their endeavor of developing students' communicative competence in the target language" (Mihretu 2016, p. 118). The study highlighted that large class size and the lack of resources discouraged the teachers from teaching the target language as communicatively as possible (Mihretu, 2016).

Concurring with the findings of the above studies, Ebissa and Bhavani (2017) corroborated the lack of implementation of CLT in Ethiopia. They highlighted that CLT has been a government directive for language teaching programmes. However, they pointed out that one of the most notable factors that hindered its success is the underlying educational theory which favours a teacher-dominated teaching strategy. Ebissa and Bhavani (2017) suggested that it is indispensable to consider local empirical evidence to ensure the successful implementation of CLT.

Mothudi and Bosman (2015) assessed teachers' perceptions of the extent to which CLT was implemented in junior secondary schools in Botswana. This study is unique in that it is set in

ESL (English as a second language) context, unlike most EFL studies discussed thus far. Mothudi and Bosma (2015) highlighted that CLT has been adopted in Botswana for over fifteen years, but “Educators and commentators often refer to an inadequate mastery of English at tertiary institutions and in the workplace, indicating a potential disenchantment with the implementation of CLT in English in Botswana” (Mothudi & Bosman 2015, p. 105). It must be pointed out that students who learn in situations where English is a second language should have exhibited better mastery of the language as they have additional exposure to the target language outside classroom contexts (Sullivan, 2009). The teachers who participated in the study argued: “CLT does not necessarily lead to improved English proficiency among their learners” (Mothudi & Bosman, 2015, p. 105). The authors further highlighted that there were inconsistencies among the teachers’ perceptions, their theoretical knowledge of CLT, and their views of the practical benefits of CLT for English in Botswana, thus calling for the conduct of further studies to better understand the situation (Mothudi & Bosman, 2015).

Studies into CLT from South American countries highlighted the practical benefits of the approach, although they also acknowledged that there were challenges to its successful implementation. Galante (2015) argues that it is important to examine the socio-cultural contexts in which CLT is implemented before it is used in classroom situations. Articulating the benefits of adopting CLT, Galante (2015, p. 36) argues that the integration of intercultural communicative competence, one of the most refined goals of language teaching in communicatively-oriented syllabuses, “prepares them (students) to communicate with people from other cultures in English, understand, respect, and value others’ cultural identities, as well as their own.” This study is unique in that it draws our attention to a specific aspect of CLT from a socio-cultural perspective, one of the aspects of the approach is criticised for not taking into account (Noori, 2018; Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

In Ecuador, Ochoa et al. (2016:39) examined the effect that communicative activities had on learners’ motivation in an EFL context and ascertained: “Students feel highly motivated when participating in communicative activities because these enhance their fluency, pronunciation, and performance in the use of English realistically and enjoyably.” The study further asserted that due to the motivating nature of the communicative activities, the students helped one another in classroom discussions, in activities involving pair work, games, role-plays, and group oral presentations. The participating teachers ranked the above activities as highly motivating not only to their students but also to them as well (Ochoa et al., 2016). Likewise, another study in

Ecuador found that students' communicative competencies were improved as a result of employing modelling, pair work, and group work even though they were not used as frequently as they should be. The study recommended that more strategies should be used by EFL teachers to give students additional opportunities to produce the language orally (Toro et al., 2018).

A study from Colombia is another evidence of the currency as well as the practical benefits of CLT. In this regard, Butrago (2016) conducted action research intended to improve 10<sup>th</sup> graders' communicative competence in English. Accordingly, a task-based learning approach, a more recent version of CLT (Coyle, 2008), was employed to teach different aspects of the target language in a public school in Colombia. The study revealed that there was a notable improvement in learners' communicative competence due to "a series of tasks and the definition of four thematic units consistent with the syllabus and the students' interests and needs" (Butrago 2016, p. 95). The study reported that fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and an increase in the stock of vocabulary were the major areas in which the students showed progress (Butrago, 2016).

There are also studies into CLT in many European countries in an EFL context. A noteworthy example is Takkakoski (2015) who assessed the application of CLT in teaching English pronunciation in a Finnish school and curriculum for grades 7-9. The study exemplified that although it is difficult to design pronunciation tasks that emulate the precepts of CLT, the interventions conducted yielded positive outcomes. Accordingly, in addition to improving students' pronunciation, the communicative pronunciation tasks helped to create learner autonomy and increased learner motivation, which are among the most important goals of CLT (Takkakoksi, 2015).

A Turkish study by Yilmaz (2018) established that pre-service teachers held positive views of CLT. They attributed their favourable views to their adoption and implementation of the defining characteristics of CLT in classroom situations (Yilmaz, 2018). The specific aspects of CLT assessed by this study included group and pair work, the contribution that students made in the instructional process, and the teachers' roles in the process (Yilmaz, 2018). The study further highlighted that despite this assertion, the participants of the study "held views that ran counter to communicative language teaching principles" (Yilmaz 2018, p.101).

Research outputs from Belgium are also additional evidence of the current interest in CLT in EFL contexts. One such instance was that of Khan (2016) who analysed secondary education textbooks for linguistic, communicative, and creative exercises. More specifically, the study



compared the balance between linguistic and communicative exercises. The findings of the study showed that more communicative exercises foster creativity and participation. Furthermore, there was an attempt to strike a balance between communicative and linguistic exercises (Khan, 2016).

A comparative study set in Europe placed the significance of communicative competence in a global context and asserted: “Due to the globalised society we live in, the importance of communicating in English in various fields such as business, travel, science, and technology is now higher than ever before” (Papst 2015, p.1). Within this context, the study analysed the extent to which CLT was implemented in secondary schools in Austria and Spain. The study exemplified that although the teachers perceived CLT positively, a few of them implemented it in their classrooms. This limitation was explained by several variables: the CLT-related misconceptions held by the teachers, the learners’ low proficiency in the language and their unwillingness to use it, weak CLT materials, and exam-oriented teaching methods employed in the instructional processes (Papst, 2015).

Kapurani (2016) analysed the impact of CLT in teaching English to nine elementary schools in Albania. Kupurani (2016) compared the impacts of using traditional language teaching methods and a contemporary learner-centred approach (CLT). The results of the experiment revealed: “Using CLT is a successful method in both learning and teaching compared with other traditional methods” (Kapurani 2016, p. 56). The results of the study further depicted the positive impacts that CLT had on improving learners’ foreign language acquisition and their performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Kapurani, 2016).

In summary, the above review is significant for the current study in various ways. Firstly, it highlights that CLT is still widely espoused at policy and classroom levels in several EFL contexts including Ethiopia. This further implies that investigating the conceptions and classroom practices of teachers is a worthwhile endeavour. Secondly, there are debates and controversies surrounding its implementation. Some of these debates and controversies are pertinent to the contexts in which it is applied and whether there should be special arrangements for its success. The others relate to the practical challenges that classroom teachers face in implementing CLT at classroom level in the face of large class, resource constraints, and lack of institutional support and commitment of teachers and students to engage in communicative tasks. This is more relevant because empirical evidence above shows that the lecture-fronted teaching

method is pervasive in the country's education system, making it difficult to implement more learner-centred teaching approaches and methods including CLT.

#### **2.4.8. Criticisms of CLT**

Whereas the proponents of CLT argue that it helps to develop learners' communicative competence, there are several criticisms against it from theoretical and practical viewpoints. One such criticism is from Sheen (2003) and Swain (2005) who challenged that there is no evidence to suggest that CLT is more effective than its predecessors (structural approaches) in developing students' abilities to communicate freely in authentic contexts. Further, Swain (2005) questioned that the proponents of structural approaches who themselves were taught through these methods have been able to use the target language successfully, contrary to the claims made that traditional methods are ineffective. In addition to attacking its empirical and theoretical foundations, Swain (2005) also criticises the classroom procedures suggested in this approach. Accordingly, a learning-by-doing approach that CLT stresses is no guarantee that students can develop their communicative competence without acquiring the requisite knowledge of grammar first. Swain (2005) exemplifies this by referring to how students in aviation and medicine learn to be pilots and surgeons respectively. Thus, he emphasises that the students in these practical professions are first given theoretical knowledge before they are exposed to practical activities. Swain's (2005) and Sheen's (2005) criticisms are especially relevant to the stronger version of CLT, which accords more prominence to communicative competence than to linguistic or grammatical competence.

Earlier criticisms of CLT by Seedhouse (1999) and Sheen (2003) are also of relevance to the stronger version of CLT. Seedhouse (1999) and Sheen (2003) were critical of the minimal attention that accuracy development has received in CLT. They argue that the knowledge and correct use of grammar facilitates meaningful communication. The nominal attention that accuracy development has received in CLT is more evident in more recent versions of CLT: task-based approaches (Swain, 2005; Carless, 2007).

Another criticism of CLT is that it is difficult to execute it in various learning contexts (Bax, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Carless; 2007). According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), context encompasses the socio-cultural conditions in which language teaching takes place. It also involves classroom conditions as well as the needs of students and teachers. Further, it encompasses whether CLT is appropriate in ESL or EFL contexts. Regarding the importance of

context, Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 68) claims: “Language learning and teaching needs, wants, and situations are unpredictably numerous.” This implies that teachers find it difficult to use this approach in general ways suggested in the literature. Bax (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2006) and Carless (2007), therefore, recommend that it is indispensable to consider context-specific variables in designing and implementing CLT.

Other scholars have questioned if CLT is appropriate for learners at lower grade levels. Littlewood (2007) pointed out that some teachers and scholars had concerns about the suitability of this approach for beginners. This is because learners at lower grade levels find it difficult to engage in continuous communicative activities. They usually resort to their mother tongue as a tool for communication. This implies that it is difficult to ensure that the learners at the lower grade levels use the target language as a normal and expected means of interaction (Littlewood, 2007).

Nevertheless, other scholars have defended CLT from theoretical and practical viewpoints (Harmer, 2003; Sheen, 2004; Littlewood, 2007; Ellis, 2009; Norris, 2009; 2013; Ortega, 2012). They argue that teachers are responsible for modifying and applying the approach with due regard for their specific instructional contexts and needs of their students. Illustrating this, Littlewood (2007) argues:

*There is now widespread acceptance that no single method or set of procedures will fit all teachers and learners in all contexts. Teachers can draw on others’ ideas and experiences but cannot adopt them as ready-made recipes (p. 248).*

In summary, despite its criticisms, there is a large volume of published studies providing evidence that CLT is currently the preferred language teaching approach in many EFL contexts. Recent empirical inquiries into the approach are proof of the fact that the educational impacts of the approach are far-reaching (Didenko & Pichugova, 2016; Nagalakshmi & Rajaram, 2016; Noor, 2018; Ghazi & Noor, 2019). In Ethiopia, the Ministry of Education has adopted a communicatively-oriented language teaching methodology throughout the educational system, and there is also a renewed interest in the approach (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2015; 2018). Since the focus of this study is communicative grammar, it is important to discuss the place for grammar in CLT and use the discussion in subsequent chapters to describe the conceptions held by EFL instructors regarding CLT in general and communicative grammar in particular.

#### 2.4.9. The Place for Grammar in CLT

The adoption of the communicatively-oriented language teaching approach emanated from the research-based evidence that the lecture-dominated language classrooms to-date have not contributed to learners' proficiency in English (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2015; 2018). Empirical evidence further suggests that students' struggles in the language are apparent in higher education institutions where English is the language of instruction. Tertiary-level students' language skills in general and that of grammar, in particular, have been reported to be alarmingly poor. A study conducted by Meshesha and Endale, (2017, p. 4) reported: "More than 90% of the first-year students of Wolaita Sodo University make tense errors in their written paragraphs. Among these, 392 (98%) of the students made errors in the usage of the present tense." The study further reported that 93% of the students who "used passive voice in their written paragraphs made errors. The more frequent error among this category is the missing of the verb to be when students write passive form with past participle form of intransitive verbs in their writing" (Meshesha & Endale, 2017, pp. 4-5). Similarly, Zeleke (2017) found that 62.04% of the students who were English majors were described as "very poor" in using accurate grammar in their writing.

Consistent with the empirical evidence informing Ethiopia's adoption of communicatively-oriented language teaching, the proponents of CLT stress that language skills should be taught in communicative contexts to allow students' to use the target language meaningfully (Bygate & Tornkyn, 1994). They recognise the importance of grammar and propose that it should be integrated with other skills and treated communicatively if the goal of language teaching is to help learners use the language in real communicative contexts. More specifically, Bygate and Tornkyn (1994) underline:

*Communicative grammar is an approach to grammar teaching in which its goal is to explore and formulate the relation between the formal events of grammar (words, phrases, sentences, and their categories and structure) and conditions of their meaning and use. In linguistic terminology, this means relating syntax and morphology to semantics and pragmatics (p. 19).*

This approach discourages the isolated and de-contextualised teaching of grammar. Supporting this, Celce-Murcia and Hills (1988) propose that any meaningful attempt made to teach grammar should aim at helping learners understand the relationships between formal structures and the social, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions of language. They further recommend that this can be achieved when grammar is presented in realistic situations, using authentic materials and visual stimuli that appeal to students (Celce-Murcia & Hills, 1988).

Similarly, Ur (1991) argues that grammar lessons should integrate the form and meaning of the target language. This is because changes in grammar entail changes in meaning, and the classroom process should reflect this reality. Likewise, cognisant of the importance of grammar in language instruction and its meaningful instruction, Nunan (1991) recommends three decisive strategies on how it should be presented and practised. One of the strategies is that it should focus on the development of procedural knowledge instead of declarative knowledge. Nunan (1991) defines procedural knowledge as the process-oriented knowledge which helps learners to use the language for real communication. The second strategy, according to Nunan (1991), is that it is important to ensure that the relationships between grammatical and functional aspects of the language should be understood clearly. This does not support teaching grammar in isolation and de-contextualised sentences. His third strategy advocates combining deductive and inductive methods to teach grammar lessons. This can address the needs and interests of students and their differing learning styles. It can also add a variety to the strategies employed in classroom situations (Nunan, 1991).

Sharing the above views regarding the place of grammar in CLT, Thompson (1996) claims:

*It is now fully accepted that an appropriate amount of class time should be devoted to grammar, but this does not mean a simple return to traditional treatment of grammar rules. The view that grammar is too complex to be taught in that over-simplifying way has had an influence, and the focus has now moved away from the teacher covering grammar to the learners discovering grammar (p.11).*

Not only does Thompson (1996) put grammar in a communicative context, but also he argues that teaching grammar helps learners to develop their communicative competence. On the other hand, this conception of communicative grammar teaching addresses the misconception that grammar does not have an important place in CLT. Thus, a point noteworthy is not whether grammar should be taught but how it should be presented and practiced in the instructional process. In line with, Rodgers and Richards (2001) recommend exposing learners to communicative tasks to help them discover the rules of grammar by themselves.

Other writers have examined the place for grammar in CLT from the two versions of CLT. The shallow-end version postulates that there is a need to teach grammar explicitly. This is based on the premise that students need to be exposed to the grammar of the language before they apply it in communicative situations (Thorbury, 2008). This approach is consistent with the explicit teaching of grammar in many EFL contexts (Thorbury, 2008). By contrast, the deep-end version highlighted that grammar should be presented in context. This implies that the acquisition of

grammar occurs unconsciously as a result of being immersed in communicative activities (Thornbury, 2008). This is based on the language acquisition theory of Krashen (1985) which postulates that second language learning should mirror the processes involved in first language acquisition.

Post-CLT approaches to language teaching include task-based teaching, content-based teaching, and focus-on-form teaching (Nunan, 2007). The weak version of task-based teaching incorporated structural exercises in the teaching-learning process. This is done in communicative contexts especially in the later stages of communicative activities after students have received the necessary authentic input. This approach integrates grammar into the instructional process without harming the focus on communicative activities (Nunan, 2007). In content-based classes, it is possible to focus on the form, provided that the focus of communicative activities is on the contents or topics. This approach also integrates grammar into communicative activities (Coyle, 2008). Focus-on-form, unlike traditional form-oriented methods, attempts to draw learners' attention to the grammatical errors that they should have addressed already (Coyle, 2008). Like the above approaches, this also happens while students are engaged in communicative activities. The approach posits that classroom teachers can correct their students' grammatical errors without interrupting the flow of the communicative activities in which their students are engaged (Coyle, 2008).

In summary, the various versions of CLT have recognised the role of grammar. However, they differ in their emphasis and how it should be incorporated in communicative activities. Harmer (1997, p.7) commented: "At this stage, it is enough to say that grammar teaching-of both the overt and covert kind- has a real and important place in the classroom." While Harmer (1997) remarked this several years ago, his remark illustrates the current recognition that grammar has enjoyed, especially in EFL contexts.

#### **2.4.9.1. What is Grammar?**

Informed by different linguistic theories, different writers define grammar differently. For Chalker and Weiner (1994, p. 177), grammar is: "the entire system of a language, including its syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology." Other writers exclude semantics, vocabulary, and phonology from their definition of grammar. One notable instance is Ur (1988) who articulates that grammar is a means through which people can manipulate and combine the words of a language to form longer units of meaning such as sentences. Ur (1988) further underlines

that a person who “knows grammar” knows how to use its rules acceptably in various communicative contexts. Ur (1988) points out that vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking are aspects of a language that are inextricably linked to its grammar. Hence, it is difficult to communicate meanings to the target audience without adequate knowledge of grammar. Ur’s (1988) description not only highlights what constitutes grammar but it also articulates the indispensable role that grammar plays in communication. Ur’s (1988) description of grammar is consistent with communicative grammar.

Like Ur (1988), Cook (2001) defined grammar comprehensively. Consequently: “Grammar is sometimes called the conceptual system that relates sound and meaning insignificant in itself but it is impossible to manage without it” (Cook 2001, p. 20). Cook’s (2001) definition encompasses two important aspects of grammar: that it is a set of rules and that these rules are useful tools to communicate messages. Similarly, Harmer (1987, p.1) argues: “Grammar is [how] words change themselves and group together to make sentences.” Harmer (1987) details what constitutes grammar and indicates that grammar is a means for combining smaller units of language to produce bigger ones. The definition suggests that the ultimate objective of combining the smaller units is to convey meanings. For Celce-Murcia (1988, p.16), “Grammar is a system of rules of syntax that decides the order and patterns in which words are arranged together to make a sentence.” Like Harmer (1987), Celce-Murcia (1988) emphasises that grammar is a system that helps to combine smaller units of a language to create longer structures. The intention behind combining the smaller units is also to convey meanings.

Although the above definitions pronounce the rules for combining the smaller units of a language, the intention behind this combination is also inherent in them. Hence, grammar is more than a set of rules for combining smaller units of language. The combination is helpful to convey meanings or messages. In this regard, Bloor and Bloor (2004, p. 247) pointed out that grammar helps people to accomplish different communicative purposes: “stating facts, introductions, accepting or declining invitation, asking for or giving directions and advising.” Atkins, Hailom, and Nuru (1995) also argued that grammar is a medium through which various actions take place using the tense system and words that indicate time.

In the context of this thesis, grammar includes not only the rules of a language but also the varied meanings that the rules convey in various communicative contexts (Burns & Richards, 2012). In light of the above definitions, it is important to outline the most common topics under the

grammar sections of *Communicative English Skills*: the English tense system, correcting grammatical errors, active/passive voice, conditional sentences, direct and reported speeches, placement of adverbs in sentences and subject-verb agreement.

#### **2.4.9.2. Debates Surrounding Grammar**

Grammar (whether it should be taught, how it should be taught, and what role it plays in students' lives) has been one of the hotly contested topics in language teaching.

Historically, grammar was at the heart of language teaching programmes. For instance, the grammar-translation method prescribed explicit grammar instruction. Classroom teachers explained grammar rules to their students. Translation exercises occupied a central place in such classes. Besides, grammar was taught systematically and sequentially with the help of students' first language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

According to Richards (2006), when the direct method came into being in the 1920s, the focus shifted from teaching reading and writing skills to teaching listening and speaking skills. The direct method encouraged learners to infer grammar rules from the communicative exercises that they had to do. Classroom teachers mainly employed an inductive approach to teach grammar. The audio-lingual method focused on pronunciation and structures. It neglected reading and writing skills (Richards, 2006). According to Simensen (1998), teachers employed the presentation-practice-production principle to teach grammatical structures and new sentence patterns. Teachers used dialogues to present a new language to their students. The audio-lingual method borrowed the principles of the behaviourist approach and it mainly relied on repetition and drills. Habit formation was central to this method. The method focused on habit formation rather than helping learners to produce a new language in a natural setting (Drew & Sorheim, 2006).

The 1970s marked the beginning of CLT where there was a shift of focus from grammar and vocabulary to using the target language in communicative contexts (Brown, 2007). Hymes' (1972) "communicative competence" was central to CLT. Although CLT did not reject grammar, it was no longer the organising principle (Canale & Swain, 1980). Instead of accuracy, the functional use of language or fluency received considerable attention (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).



The place for grammar in language teaching programmes began to be challenged with the introduction of CLT, and this necessitated additional debates regarding whether it should be taught, how it should be taught, and what roles it plays in students' lives (Ellis, 2014).

Supporting the argument that grammar should be taught, various writers have suggested alternative strategies of how it should be presented in classroom situations. Krashen (1983) argues that direct grammar instruction rarely helps learners to use the language communicatively. Consequently, learners should be provided with comprehensible input and meaning-focused tasks. Contrary to Krashen's (1983) view, Swain (2000) argues that learners benefit from the provision of both input and output. According to Swain (2000, p. 99), "Output pushes learners to process language more deeply-with more mental effort-than does-input." In support of this view, Thornbury (2001, p. 42) maintains: "Learners need to notice features of the input-specifically the way that the choice of form impacts on meaning."

The explicit teaching of grammar, which focuses on form, has received considerable attention from several writers. Ellis (2006) argues that the explicit teaching of grammar rules helps learners to improve their knowledge of the language and their ability to use it communicatively. Ellis (2006) further argues that learners who are exposed to explicit grammar instruction are likely to develop higher levels of grammatical competence than those who are not. Empirical evidence also suggests that the teaching of grammar, regardless of whether it is taught explicitly or implicitly, offers several benefits to learners. Myhill, Lines, and Watson (2012) confirmed that the teaching of grammar helps to improve students' writing skills. Supporting the teaching of grammar, Flognfeldt and Lund (2016) found that both input and output are important components of language teaching programmes. They further argue that grammar is a crucial tool that helps learners to convey meaningful messages (Flognfeldt & Lund, 2016).

There are arguments for and against explicit grammar teaching. Explicit grammar teaching (the deductive approach in which the focus is on accuracy development) is concerned with the deliberate teaching of grammar rules. However, the implicit teaching of grammar (the inductive approach in which fluency development is the focus) is pre-occupied with exposing students to context-based grammar exercises, making possible the natural acquisition of the grammar of the target language (Ellis, 2014).

Cummins (2007) makes a distinction between BICS and CALP which highlights the above arguments for or against the explicit teaching of grammar. In line with this, one of the debates in

language teaching the accuracy-fluency debate, which is evident in the views expressed by the various writers cited in this section. BICS stands for *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills* or basic language skills in everyday English. This is the level of language a person has when communicating in everyday life or class situations and is used particularly in informal communications. When this is brought to classroom situations, it seems more aligned to fluency development as the focus is mainly on transmitting or communicating messages. According to Cummins (2007), the key elements of BICS include *context-rich*: topics are concrete and they make sense; *cognitively undemanding*: easy to understand everyday language and the use of simple structures; *takes 2 to 5 years to achieve as a second language*; *it mainly deals with listening and speaking skills*.

CALP stands for *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*. CALP is the language necessary to understand and discuss content in the classroom or at University (or other Academic environments). This suggests a more formal, structured language use which appears to be more aligned to accuracy development. Its key elements include: *context-reduced*: topics are more abstract and require prior knowledge; *cognitively demanding*: specialised vocabulary and more complex language structure; *requires 5 to 7 years to achieve (as second language)*; *employed with all language skills*. Some of the most common situations in which CALP is applied include essay writing, understanding a scientific paper or reading content area textbooks (Cummins, 2007).

The debate has been in existence in earlier works on language teaching and learning and applied linguistics. For example, Krashen (1983) proposes the implicit grammar teaching. The teaching of language including its grammar should follow the natural process of acquisition. Students, therefore, benefit less from the explicit teaching of grammar. Dahl (2015), however, argues that since the implicit teaching of grammar does not offer sufficient grammar inputs to students, it is necessary to introduce the explicit teaching of grammar to fill this gap. Although Dahl (2015) does not oppose the provision of inputs to students, he questions whether the inputs are in the right amount to guarantee the mastery of the target language's grammar.

Thornbury (2008) highlighted that the inductive and deductive approaches to teaching grammar have their advantages and disadvantages. According to Thornbury (2008), when students are exposed to inductive grammar exercises, they find it more exciting to work out the rules of grammar for themselves. This ensures the development of their cognitive abilities and their

active involvement in the teaching-learning process (Thornbury, 2008). Thornbury (2008), however, argues that the inductive method may give students the impression that the focus of language learning is identifying the rules of the language, instead of being a means to an end.

Regarding the deductive approach, Thornbury (2008) contends that it is time-saving and more effective. However, one of its major drawbacks is the lack of student involvement. It might also give students the impression that learning the grammar of a language is the same as learning the language itself (Thornbury, 2008).

Various writers propose the use of the eclectic approach to teach grammar lessons (Ellis, 2006; Kumar, 2013; Richards, 2020). This view arises from the inadequacies of its constituents. Ellis (2006) suggests that since the grammar of a language is a complex system, it is difficult to approach it using only one method of teaching. Within this context, grammar is not only the formal aspect of the target language but also a tool to convey meanings in various communicative contexts (Ellis, 2006). Thus, it is important to combine the inductive and deductive approaches to teach grammar lessons depending on the specific language teaching contexts and the needs of students.

#### **2.4.9.3. The Importance of Grammar**

Despite the controversies surrounding grammar, one of the motivations behind this study was related to the recognition of the role that grammar plays in learners' success in academic and employment settings. This holds for EFL contexts because the syllabuses and teaching materials, regardless of whether they are communicative or structural, acknowledge that grammar plays an instrumental role in facilitating students' academic success (Ellis, 2006). This statement has two implications. First, grammar is an integral content of language courses. Thus, there is a need for students to have the knowledge and correct use of grammar to pass language courses and to facilitate classroom interactions and discussions. Second, English is the instructional language at the tertiary level in many EFL contexts including Ethiopia. This further implies that the knowledge and correct use of grammar is one of the determinants of EFL students' success in academic settings.

The private universities in Ethiopia, the sites of this study, have adopted learner-centred approaches as their overarching methodology. This is consistent with the national curriculum (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2015; 2018). Within this pedagogical framework, the universities require their language instructors to implement CLT or active learning methods in

teaching language courses. This arose from the need to respond to the current situation in the country. Primarily, since English is the instructional language, especially at higher education institutions, students should meet this challenge by using correct and meaningful language. For example, the presentation they make for various major areas courses, the assignments and term-papers they submit for the various major courses, the essay examinations they have to answer and the senior essay papers they have to produce before they graduate require the correct and meaningful use of English (Abiy, 2013; Meshesha & Endale, 2017).

While there are arguments for and against how grammar should be taught, there is a consensus regarding the role it plays in students' lives in general and their academic success in particular, especially in EFL contexts. Many writers emphasise grammar is the organising principle of every language, implying that communication and meaning are inseparable from the grammar of the language in question (Cook, 1994; Frodesen & Holten, 2003). Illustrating this, Norris (2016:2) pinpoints: "Without grammar, there is no way to fully express one's thoughts and ideas to others. This is because grammar provides the necessary structure to organize one's message to share ideas." In the same way, Cook (1994) remarks:

*Grammar is at the heart of the activity. As it is at the heart of all human activity, declaring war, writing a love poem or a prescription, sentencing a prisoner to life imprisonment, advertising soap powder, praying, whatever their difference of motivation or seriousness, all would be effectively be impossible without grammar (p.1).*

The above description places grammar in a general context. In academic settings, grammar plays a vital role. Concerning this, Allen (2003) and Celce-Murcia (2015) view grammar as a fundamental component of communicative competence and highlight that it helps learners to engage in meaningful and comprehensible communication. There is, therefore, a need to allocate enough time to grammar in the teaching-learning process, given its role in students' school and out-of-school lives.

#### **2.4.9.4. Methods of Teaching Grammar**

Various applied linguists, teachers, and researchers argue that grammar holds a central position in students' lives both in and outside classroom situations; however, how it should be taught has been a source of controversy. As a result of these controversies and the differences in understanding teaching grammar, several methods have been suggested and implemented in classroom situations. The most common methods of teaching grammar documented by the

literature are the deductive method, the inductive method as well as the exploration, explanation, and expression method.

### **A. The Inductive Method**

Bastone (1994) and Larsen-Freeman (2015) emphasise that this method encourages learners to discover grammar rules from the variety of examples provided to them by their teachers or the teaching materials they use. Bastone (1994) and Larsen-Freeman (2015) underline that this can be done by asking students to identify the similarities they recognise in the examples provided. A teacher who employs this method does not explain the grammar rules directly to his or her learners, but rather encourages them to work cooperatively to work out the grammar rules from the materials provided to them. Brown (1972), Wright (1989) and Bastone (1994) contend that this method encourages learners to discover the target language's grammar implicitly, without direct instruction from their teachers. They indicate that learners can work out basic grammar rules from the examples provided based on the model. Likewise, Larsen-Freeman (2015, p. 5) notes: "A discovery learning approach would favour induction, with the added benefit that students learn how to figure out the rules on their own." Pedagogically speaking, this method is learner-centred since learners are engaged in the learning process and they take more responsibility for their learning in the instructional process (Richards, 2006).

Other writers argue that the inductive method is suited to the teaching of grammar at the beginner level. In this regard, Harmer (1987) argues for the use of this method at this level because language teaching aims to ensure that help learners can use the language meaningfully. Harmer (1987) further argues that there will be a shift in balance as the learners progress to the intermediate level. Hence, there will be less grammar teaching and more communicative activities. This method of teaching grammar is more suited to helping learners' develop their communicative competence, the core of CLT. This assertion is complemented by Cunningsworth (1995) and Rott (2000). The teacher who uses this method is expected to assist his or her students in observing, comparing, and analysing the language until they can find a definite form (Humboldt, 1974).

### **B. The Deductive Method**

As its name implies, a teacher who uses this method may write a rule on the board, present one or many examples and then draw the learners' attention to the basic rule. This method involves abstractions and verifying the rule or the correctness of the grammar item with the help of some

examples (DeKeyser & Botana, 2014). Rules are, therefore, deduced from examples (Harmer, 1987; Humboldt, 1974). The teacher who uses this method explains both the rules and meanings to the students who are then expected to produce their sentences (Cook, 2001; DeKeyser & Botana, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). The writers advise that this method is more suited to adult learners who are capable of abstract reasoning and critical thinking. They also stress that it is time effective (Cook, 2001; DeKeyser & Botana, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015).

Scholars who recommend the use of this method argue that it allows learners to notice the input they receive in the form of teacher-talk and make that part of their acquired knowledge (Cook, 2001; Ellis, 1991). They further point out that this can happen when the teacher presents the grammar item in a clear and simple language. Nachiengmai (1997) strengthens this assertion by pointing out that second and foreign language learners can internalise the form of the target language through this method.

### **C. Exploration, Explanation and Expression Method (EEE Method)**

This method combines aspects of the two methods discussed above. Byrne (1972) introduced a method called PPP (presentation, practice, and production). In line with the tenets of this method, teachers can present grammar inductively or deductively. At the initial stages of the lesson, students practise the grammar item in a controlled situation. Hence, the teacher presents the lesson, and then allows his or her students to practise it in a controlled situation before they finally move to a freer stage, where they can use the grammar in realistic situations (Byrne, 1972).

Many applied linguists and teachers embraced this method since it integrates aspects of the deductive and inductive approaches. EEP method (Exploration, Explanation and Production) came out of a study conducted by Sysoyev (1999) who used the term “integrative grammar teaching” to describe this method. In line with his conception, this method combines the rule of a language with a meaning-based focus. The first stage of this method, exploration, is inductive by nature since the teacher helps learners to work cooperatively to discover grammar rules from the examples provided. An explanation is the second stage and it is deductive by its nature. It involves the explicit teaching of grammar. He strongly argues: “Students feel safer when they know the grammar rules and have some source to go back to in case of confusion or for future reference” (Sysoyev 1999, p. 4). The last stage, expression, is a stage at which students are

expected to apply the grammar they have learned by producing meaningful sentences (Sysoyev, 1999).

As the above discussion reveals, there are different methods that classroom teachers can use, given the level and their students' needs and the goal of language teaching. This suggests that the overdependence on a single method cannot address the heterogeneity in classroom situations. Consequently, the inductive method is more suited to young learners, while the deductive one to adult learners (Harmer, 1997). The use of an integrative method is a reliable option, taking into account the level of learners, their needs, learning styles, and the goal of language teaching. Regardless of which method teachers employ, the outcome of the teaching-learning process should be to help learners use the language in general and grammar, in particular, to accomplish different communicative activities in classroom situations and beyond.

### **2.5. Empirical Review of Local and International Studies on CLT**

This section highlights the nature of the studies carried out thus far locally and internationally regarding the implementation, the benefits and the challenges of CLT. A detailed discussion of plethora of studies that has been carried out in other EFL contexts on several aspects of CLT has been made under *2.4.7: Adoption of CLT in EFL contexts*. The studies conducted in Ethiopian contexts are limited in number as well as in their focus. For instance, the small survey that I carried out in the online repository at Addis Ababa University showed that approximately 30 doctoral studies were conducted between 1993 and 2010, and one of them assessed the implementation of CLT in teaching the major language skills. However, 71 studies were carried out since 2010, and most of them focused on classroom students' and teachers' perceptions of CLT in general. They did not address the conceptions and classroom practices of EFL instructors, especially of those in private universities. For example, Daniel (2010), Belay (2012) and Geza (2012) examined the implementation of CLT in public schools. Even though they had similar focus areas as the above studies, various local studies were conducted into the implementation of CLT at the masters' level. Daniel (2010), Bayissa (2013), Mihretu (2016) as well as Ebisa and Bhavani (2017) explored teachers' and students' perceptions of the importance of CLT. My survey demonstrated that no study into CLT was set in private higher education institutions since the change of government in Ethiopia in 1991.

Nevertheless, the section on the adoption of CLT in EFL context (*2.7.4 Adoption of CLT in EFL Contexts*) demonstrated that several studies were carried out into diverse aspects of CLT in other

EFL contexts. The first group of studies which included Vongxay (2013), Mothudi (2015), Ntireganya (2015), Huang (2016), Majid (2016), Soozandehfar and Adeli (2016), Asma and Tsenim (2017) as well as Ndulia and Msuya (2017) had similar focus areas. They analysed teachers' and students' perceptions of CLT and their classroom practices. On the one hand, they reported that both students and teachers had positive views that CLT is beneficial. Illustrating this, they collectively asserted that CLT helped students to develop not only their communicative competence but also their grammatical competence in authentic ways. Furthermore, the nature of the interactions in classroom contexts and the variety of exercises that emulated real life increased the students' motivation. They also highlighted that CLT encouraged the students' independence. On the other hand, they outlined some of the most common difficulties that teachers faced while implementing CLT in their classrooms. They reported that large class size, the lack of facilities or infrastructure, the lack of administrative support and the knowledge-oriented examinations that students have to sit for were notable challenges (Huang, 2016; Majid 2016; Soozandehfar & Adeli, 2016; Asma & Tsenim, 2017; Ndulia & Msuya, 2017).

Although the second group of studies mainly deal with the socio-cultural contexts in which CLT was applied, they also examined the implementation of CLT. Mustapha and Yahaya (2013), Gizem and Ozlem (2015), Nguyen (2016), Soozandehfar and Adeli (2016) as well as Ruffia and Mohammud (2017) concur that students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders can benefited from CLT. Further, they underscored that it is critical to understand the socio-cultural context before using CLT in classroom situations. They outlined the importance of understanding teacher and student-related factors in designing and implementing the CLT-based syllabus. They also pinpointed that resource requirements are instrumental in CLT-syllabus design and implementation. They further highlighted that crowded classes, lack of infrastructure and lack of institutional support were superficial impediments that committed teachers can address successfully (Mustapha & Yahaya, 2013; Gizem & Ozlem, 2015; Nguyen, 2016; Soozandehfar & Adeli, 2016; Ruffia & Mohammud, 2017). This suggests the need for adapting CLT to the sociocultural contexts in which it is implemented.

### **2.5.1. Strengths and Benefits of CLT in Previous Studies**

Irrespective of the differences in their focus areas, the two groups of studies reviewed above highlighted the strengths and benefits of CLT. Some of them were experiments that tested whether CLT could yield positive results in classroom contexts. Xia (2010) concluded that



communicative vocabulary exercises increased students' motivation level. The experiment further asserted that the application of CLT in vocabulary lessons promoted learner autonomy and team spirit among the students. Another study conducted in Korea (Kim, 2015) found that both teachers and students embraced CLT positively. The findings of the study exemplified that communicative activities reduced students' anxiety since they emulated real-life situations. Overall, the study concluded that the students became active learners. The study also demonstrated that these were benefits due to the carefully designed and implemented language classes along the precepts of CLT (Kim, 2015).

Although other studies outlined the challenges of implementing CLT in the face of crowded classes (Mothudi, 2015), lack of infrastructure and teaching materials (Gizem & Ozlem, 2015; Mothudi 2015), they concluded that teachers, students, parents, and educational institutions had positive attitudes towards CLT. In addition, Belay (2012), Daniel (2010), Gizem and Ozlem (2015), Mothudi (2015) as well as Ruffia and Mohammud (2017) reported that CLT contributed to the enhancement and liveliness of the instructional process in higher education institutions.

### **2.5.2. CLT-related Challenges, Weaknesses and Controversies in Previous Studies**

The above evidence indicated that there were several challenges surrounding the implementation of CLT. Primarily, the evidence from the public universities in Ethiopia ascertained that the weekly teaching loads of teachers, large class size and poor infrastructure were the major difficulties in its implementation (Daniel, 2010; Geza, 2012; Gadisa, 2013; Nitrenganya, 2015; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017).

Majed (2016) reported similar implementation-related challenges in addition to those pertaining to context-specific variables. More specifically, Majid (2016) confirmed that the major challenges of communicative classrooms were explicit grammar teaching and the marginalisation of students in classroom interactions. The evidence from Vietnam, Turkey, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Taiwan questioned the appropriateness of CLT notwithstanding the uniqueness of the socio-cultural contexts in which it was adopted. The evidence ascertained that the way the society and the education system are set up discourages teachers from implementing CLT although their respective governments incorporated it in their education policies (Gizem & Ozlem, 2015; Hunag, 2016; Nguyen 2016; Majed, 2016; Soozandehfar & Adeli, 2016).

### **2.5.3. The Relevance of CLT-related Challenges, Weaknesses and Controversies to the Current Study**

The challenges, weaknesses, and controversies that surround CLT are relevant to this study. This study mainly investigated private university EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their applications of its precepts in teaching grammar lessons. Since the attitudes, perceptions and conceptions of teachers shape their classroom practices, it is important to examine them theoretically and practically (Kember, 1997; Kember & Kwan, 2000). The other objective that this study sought to achieve was to assess the relationship between EFL instructors' conceptions and their classroom practices. Thus, it examined if the instructors' conceptions of CLT were consistent with the precepts of CLT and if they faced the challenges, weaknesses, and controversies reviewed above.

### **2.6. Research Gap**

For more than two decades, there has been a public discontent with the deterioration in the quality of education in Ethiopia. This is more so regarding the English language proficiency of students, especially after they have joined higher education institutions (Solomon, 2015). This is often the case in EFL contexts where the medium of instruction is English. Ethiopia is no exception in this regard. The major gap worth mentioning is exhibited in many university students' failure to produce grammatically correct sentences and compose paragraphs as well as essays that are the requirements at this stage of their educational life (Meshesha & Endale, 2017).

University students are required to write well-organised paragraphs and essays, make presentations of the required standards, and eventually produce senior essays. The ability to accomplish these activities requires the mastery of the target language, especially its grammar since empirical evidence suggests that this is one of the most critical areas in which the gap is notable (Abiy, 2013; Bayissa, 2013; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017). Studies conducted thus far provided evidence that the grammar-related problems students have are multi-faceted: failure to construct grammatical and meaningful sentences; being unable to use the tense system correctly and meaningfully; problems with the subject-verb agreement; failure to distinguish among and use parts of speech as required and being unable to organise ideas coherently (Abiy, 2013; Meshesha & Endale, 2017).

Various writers and researchers agree that grammar plays an indispensable role in the academic lives of students. For example, Muncie (2002, p. 183) argues: "Grammar is just as important as an instrument of communication as content, and a text cannot be written cohesively without attention being paid to how meaning is being expressed through grammar." Likewise, Nunan (1983), Allen (2003) and Dereje (2013) recognise the importance accorded to grammar, especially in language mastery in general and helping learners realise academic success in particular.

Empirical evidence has also established that one of the possible explanations behind the deterioration in the grammar ability of the students, especially those in higher education institutions is the strategies that the teachers employ to teach grammar lessons. There seems to be an over-reliance on the lecture method, which is mainly a teacher-centred teaching method (Alamirew & Alazar, 2015; Zeleke, 2017; Moges, 2019). Much class time is allocated to explaining grammar rules, and students remain passive listeners in the instructional process. Furthermore, the students are forced to memorise grammar rules to pass knowledge-based examinations. Consequently, the students fail to use grammar in meaningful communicative situations. Several recent local studies support this finding (Dereje, 2013; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017; Zeleke, 2017; Moges, 2019).

Considering the critical problems in the country's education sector, the government of Ethiopia has taken several measures. One of them is the formulation and implementation of the education and training policy in 1994, which adopted learner-centred approaches. The CLT-oriented language teaching approach was also adopted. As part of the education and training policy and introduction of CLT, teachers were given training, workshops, and seminars. School and university curricula were also revised (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2002; 2015).

Nevertheless, the lecture method still permeates several aspects of language teaching (Adinew, 2015; Zeleke, 2017; Moges, 2019). As discussed above, several factors can explain the mismatch between the claims made by the country's education and training policy and the existing classroom practices. A major factor worth mentioning is the conceptions that teachers, especially university instructors, hold regarding teaching language in general and CLT in particular. Hence, on the one hand, research has established that the conceptions teachers hold shape the approaches or instructional techniques they adopt both within and outside classroom contexts (Kember & Kwan, 2000; Adinew, 2015; Alamirew & Alazar, 2015). On the other hand, the

realities of teaching in Ethiopian contexts, coupled with how teachers are defined by the society, have had huge impacts on the major roles that they have to play in the instructional process (Adinew, 2015; Mihretu, 2016).

To date, several studies have been carried out on various aspects of CLT, ranging from teachers' and students' perceptions and factors affecting its implementation. Empirical evidence from other EFL contexts demonstrated that researchers explored the issue from various methodological points of view, employing interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation, and analysis of teaching materials. However, few local writers have been able to draw on any systematic research into teachers' perceptions and classroom practices, with limited access to their classrooms (Tigist, 2012; Bayissa, 2013; Ebissa & Bhavanni, 2017). This was, therefore, one of the gaps that the current study sought to fill: the methodological gap by employing various data-gathering tools and capturing the conceptions and classroom practices of EFL instructors in private universities in Ethiopia. Besides, while some research has been carried out on teachers' perceptions and classroom practices in public higher education institutions (Tigist, 2012; Bayissa, 2013; Ebissa & Bhavanni, 2017), no single doctoral study exists which investigated EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices in private universities in Ethiopia. Our understanding of how private universities' EFL instructors conceive and implement it is, therefore, limited. The current study is one of the first endeavors to examine the practices in private universities in Ethiopia.

The above theoretical and empirical reviews illustrate that CLT has far-reaching consequences. The principles, the roles envisaged for teachers and students, the specific strategies, the instructional activities, and the teaching materials have various implications for language classrooms in EFL contexts. The pronouncement of learner-centred approaches and communicatively-oriented language teaching methods in the country's education and training policy (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2002; 2015; 2018) emanated from the research-based and practical benefits of this approach. With respect to this, although there are several stakeholders in the education sector, the role that teachers play can have immediate impacts on learners' language proficiency. In addition, teachers have various personal professional attributes that need to be understood. Research has shown that the conceptions they hold of teaching affects their classroom practices either positively or negatively (Kwan & Kember, 2000). In the Ethiopian context, there is a dearth of research that links conceptions and practices concerning CLT. This link is important because CLT is a government directive for the teaching of English.

Also, most empirical inquiries into language teaching in Ethiopia were almost exclusively set in public universities. This study, therefore, sought to fill this gap by investigating the conceptions that private universities' EFL instructors held about CLT and how their conceptions translated into teaching grammar lessons in an EFL context in Ethiopia.

## **2.7. Theoretical Framework**

From a theoretical point of view, the socio-cultural theory, which is a social constructivist theory, is suitable for explaining conceptions that manifest themselves through beliefs, attitudes, values, and intentions (Wertesch, 1994; Cross, 2010). This section briefly outlines the historical development of the socio-cultural theory, describes its application across disciplines, and explains why it is the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

### **2.7.1. Brief Overview of the Socio-cultural Theory**

The socio-cultural theory postulates that individuals that belong to groups are the result of the interactions that they have in social contexts; that is, social interaction or socialization shapes how cognition or conceptions, perceptions and behaviour develop (Lantolf & Appel, 1994). Illustrating the theme of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Lantolf and Appel (1994: 7) pointed out: "Human consciousness is fundamentally a mediated mental activity." The concept of mediation is further explained by Wertesch (1994) as:

*....the key to understanding how human mental functioning is tied to cultural, institutional, and historical settings since these settings provide cultural tools that are mastered by individuals to form this functioning. In this approach, the mediational means are what might be termed as the carriers of socio-cultural patterns and knowledge (p. 204).*

Vygotsky (1978, cited in Cross 2010, p. 164) postulates: "Higher mental functions are internalised social relationships." He further exemplifies that the history of behaviour is a means through which behaviour can be constructed and appreciated. He uses: "Genetic terminology" to refer to the "origin of the phenomenon". The concept of the history of behaviour or genetic analysis is the key precept of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. According to Vygotsky (1978), there are four levels of analysis: phylogenetic, cultural-historic, ontogenetic, and micro-genetic. The first level is the phylogenetic level and it is defined as human development, as a natural species, over the course of evolution. The second level, the socio-cultural or socio-historic level, is concerned with how humans develop over time in a specific cultural context. The third level, the ontogenetic level, refers to the individual's development over life, and the fourth level, the

micro-genetic level, refers to individual's development over a short period, and it is the result of specific interactions in specific social contexts (Cross, 2006; 2010).

### **2.7.2. Application of Socio-cultural Theory: Previous Research**

As stated above, the major premise of the socio-cultural theory is that human learning and the subsequent development of cognition is largely a social process. In this vein, Vygotsky (1978) underlined that the social, economic, and political environments in which an individual grows shape the individual's understanding of reality, attitudes to others as well as the behaviours the individual exhibits both alone and in the presence of others.

Although this theory has been criticised for not being universal (Rogoff, 1999), various past and present researchers and writers have used it as a sound way of explaining the cognition and behaviour of individuals (Cross, 2010; Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2000; Lantolf & Apel, 1994; Wertesch, 1994). One of the most unique attributes of Vygotsky's theory is that it amalgamates all available relevant factors in its attempt to explain human behaviour, cognition, and conceptions of the realities surrounding them. It accommodates the cognitive, affective, social, and contextual factors shaping people's cognition and behaviour (Shabani, 2016).

The socio-cultural theory has made various contributions to understanding the explanations behind teachers' behaviour. One of the areas in which it has received considerable attention is teachers' professional development. Research evidence suggests that the role of social context in shaping teachers' understanding, competence, skills, and attitudes towards students and various aspects of the teaching-learning is instrumental (Wenger, 2007). According to Wenger (2007), there is a need to consider the existing contextual factors to design professional development programmes for teachers.

The application of the socio-cultural theory in information and literacy is also evident from various studies. Wang, Bruce, and Hughes (2013, p. 296) argue that the socio-cultural theory has enabled "the establishment of collaborative partnerships between information professionals and academic and teaching support staff in a community of practice for information literacy integrations."

Researchers in identity formation based their analyses on the socio-cultural theory. To that effect, William and Wertsch (2010) indicated that identity researchers use the different elements of the socio-cultural theory to study identity formation in local settings, in situations where participants are actively involved. The study further showed that cultural and historical resources

explain the roots of identity formation. These resources can be empowering or constraining tools in identity formation. Also, identity research considers Vygotsky's mediated action as a unit of analysis (William & Wertsch, 2010).

The relevance of the socio-cultural theory is also evident in education in general and second language acquisition in particular. A review of the various studies conducted into the application of the theory in second language acquisition reveals: "The idea of Vygotsky is very important in second language learning because he introduced the concept of language learning in social interaction" (Pathan et al. 2018, p. 232). The review further highlights: "His sociocultural theory stresses the role which is played by social, cultural and historical artefacts in the child's mental development" (Pathan et al. 2018, p. 232). The above review implies that meaningful language learning takes place in a socio-cultural environment where the impacts of the elements of cooperation and interactions are profound. The socio-cultural theory postulates that cooperation and interaction that facilitate language acquisition are better understood in specific social, cultural, and economic environments (Pathan et al., 2018).

In summary, recent evidence suggests that the socio-cultural theory has been widely applied in educational research, research into identity formation, language acquisition, and globalisation of learning. The concepts that Vygotsky developed "have transcended time and geographical boundaries (Vasileva & Balyasnikova 2019, p. 1). Besides: "Today, his work is widely applied to many fields of inquiry ranging from psychology and language education" (Vasileva & Balyasnikova, 2019:1).

### **2.7.3. Application of Socio-cultural Theory: Current Study**

The current study subscribes to the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), which is a social constructivist theory, postulating that an individual is the product of the sociocultural context in which he or she lives (Lantolf & Apel, 1994). According to the sociocultural theory, the unique environment in which an individual lives and interacts shapes the formation and development of the individual's perceptions, conceptions, and attitudes. This implies that there is no single reality as individuals make sense of this reality based on the inputs they receive from their social, political, and cultural environments (Wertesch, 1994). In the context of research, its actors construct multiple realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Hence, research that is underpinned by the socio-cultural theory subscribes to a relativist ontology rejecting the existence of any possible correct reality (Cross, 2010).

Regarding the relevance of Vygotsky's genetic approach to studies of conceptions and practices, Cross (2010) argues that this approach sets a framework for analysing how teachers' thought processes and cognition affect their practices. Furthermore, Cross (2010) remarks that it can explain the genesis behind the relationships between conceptions and practices. Cross (2010) strongly argues:

*Through such a framework, we can not only focus on the immediate aspect of teachers' thought but also go beyond that to see how teachers' trajectory could explain their practice in the socially and culturally constructed contexts, i.e. the cultural-historic level of analysis. The ontogenetic aspect plays a mediatory role in the relationship between the micro-genetic level and the broader cultural-historic context, as teachers bring into the micro-genetic level their trajectory-the ontogenetic level. Moreover, this approach brings the threads of inquiry on historicity, context, and practice into a single, unified framework for analysis (p. 439).*

The theory is an interpretive framework which individuals employ to gain an understanding of their world and develop their particular meanings corresponding to their experiences. Hence, individuals' attitudes, values, beliefs, or conceptions are socially constructed (Cross, 2010; Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). In this regard, Vygotsky (1978) stresses that the cognition and development of individuals, which teachers are a part of, are influenced and shaped by culture. Vygotsky (1978) further argues that the daily lives of individuals are better understood socially and culturally as human beings are social actors in their respective environments. In the context of this study, therefore, EFL instructors operate in contexts where social, economic and cultural factors, among others, shape their day-to-day lives. In line with this theory, socially and culturally learned variables affect the daily decisions they make in syllabus design, strategies they use in classroom situations and the assessment modalities they use to gauge their learners' performance.

The sociocultural theory is a fitting theory to the current study. More specifically, the conceptions that EFL instructors form regarding language teaching methods and approaches in general and CLT in particular are arguably the result of several variables: the training they went through, the interactions they have with their colleagues, the institutional demands they have to meet, the resource constraints they have to deal with in and outside classroom situations and the individual financial situations they have to work in. As stated above, all of these variables play an important role in shaping their conceptions and practices.

At a more specific level, the sociocultural theory also informed the motive behind conducting this study. To that end, on the one hand, the "conceptions" of the EFL instructors can explain



their overdependence on the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. On the other hand, the socio-cultural contexts of the instructors can shape their conceptions. Within this general framework, the precepts of the theory also shaped the formulation of the specific research questions. Concerning this, next to the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT, the second research question was pertinent to EFL instructors' classroom practices. These practices were also thought to be influenced by socio-cultural variables such as their views and the views of their students concerning language teaching and learning as well as other resource-related constraints.

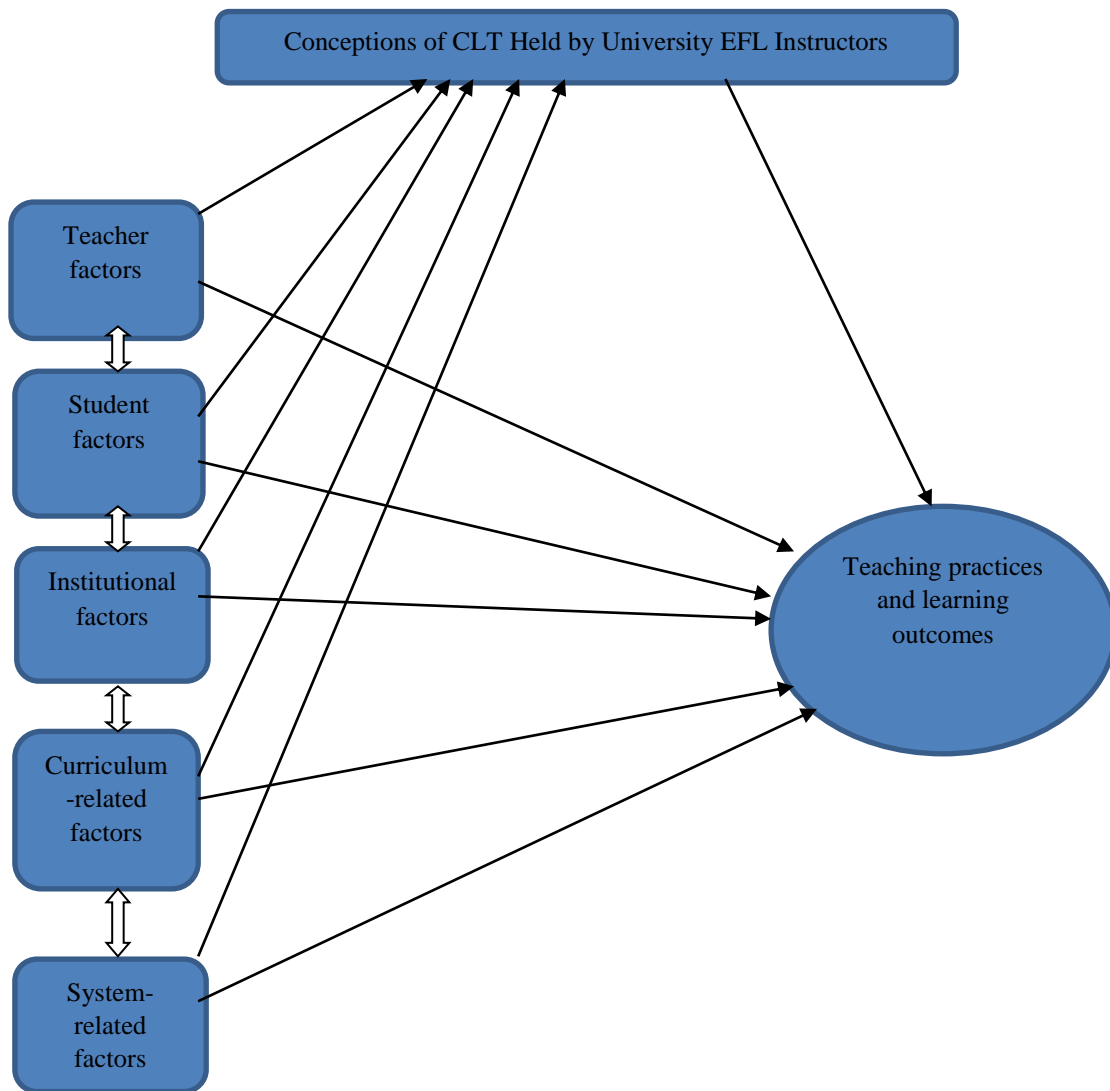
The theory is also relevant as it can explain the relationships between the EFL instructors' conceptions and their classroom practices, which are shaped by socio-cultural variables and take place in a socio-cultural context respectively. As is the case with most EFL contexts, Ethiopian EFL instructors work in a socio-cultural context that dictates their personal and professional lives. Personally, they are responsible for their families and relatives and people in their locality. This imposes social responsibilities on the instructors. Furthermore, they have to behave in socially acceptable manners both in and outside school situations. Professionally, there are institutional requirements imposed on the instructors, which are still better understood in socio-cultural contexts because higher education institutions are required to uphold the values and norms of the society they are established to serve. The socio-cultural theory is a fitting theory since it recognizes the importance of socio-cultural variables in understanding and interpreting the personal and professional attributes of instructors. This view is shared by proponents of the theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2008; Cross, 2010).

The conceptualization of the study was, therefore, done in a socio-cultural context partly described above. The theory shaped the conceptualisation of the study and the analysis of the data. This is because the data analysis considered the socio-cultural context in which the study was conducted. To this end, the views that the EFL instructors had regarding CLT in general and communicative grammar in particular were analysed from sociocultural perspective. In addition, their classroom strategies were analyzed from this perspective. Their assessment modalities are no exception in this regard. In analysing the relationships between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices, the theory was more specifically used. As the findings of the study demonstrated, these relationships were bi-fold: CLT-related conceptions held were translated in classroom situations, and CLT-related conceptions held were not translated in classroom situations. Both relationships were explained in Ethiopian socio-cultural context. Thus

institutional factors, teacher-related factors, student-related factors and system related factors were used to do so.

Given this theory, various socio-cultural factors have shaped the cognition and practices of EFL teachers. Concerning the relevance of socio-cultural factors in shaping conceptions and classroom practices, Richards (1998) offered a comprehensive list. These factors include institutional factors, teaching factors, teacher-related factors, and student-related factors. Richards (1998) asserts that teachers' prior knowledge, their belief system, and their professional experiences shape their daily decisions in their classrooms.

In keeping with the above factors, Hall (2011) notes that conceptions influence and are influenced by academic researchers, colleagues, trainers, educators, co-researchers, institutional environment, and their practical experiences of success and failure. Within the framework of sociocultural theory, this study adapted the factors that Kember (1977), Richards (1998) as well as Kember and Kwan (2000) outlined. For ease of analysis, the study sought to merge teaching and teacher factors as teacher-related factors. Hence, the study employed teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors, and system-related factors as the conceptual framework to investigate private universities' EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in grammar lessons. Below is a concept map that depicts the interaction among these factors:



**Figure 2.15:** The relationships between conceptions of teaching and teacher factors, student factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors and system-related factors and learning outcomes (Adapted from Kember, 1997; Richards, 1998; Kember & Kwan, 2000).

## 2.8. Conclusion

Based on the key concepts in this study, the chapter began by presenting a brief historical overview of the teaching of English in Ethiopia. It also traced the historical origins of the major language teaching methods or approaches. Then, the chapter delved into the concept of CLT, its characteristics, principles as well as its theoretical and philosophical foundations. Since one of the specific objectives of the study was to examine EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT, the chapter also discussed the role of grammar in students' lives, and the place for grammar in CLT. By reviewing various local and international studies and highlighting the adoption of CLT in

EFL contexts, the chapter established the research gap and the rationale behind conducting the current study. In the end, the chapter described the theoretical framework that underpinned the current study, in light of which it fleshed out its conceptual framework.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology of the study. The chapter begins by explaining the research ontology and epistemology. The chapter then briefly describes the study setting, the private universities in Ethiopia. The chapter also describes the research design of the study. Next, the chapter outlines the research procedures followed in the study. Towards the end, it fleshes out in detail the tools of data collection and methods of data presentation and analysis. The chapter concludes by highlighting the validity and reliability of the study.

### **3.2. Ontology and Epistemology**

Ontology and epistemology are among the main components of the philosophy of education (Scotland, 2012). In research or educational research: “It is vital for researchers to have an underlying philosophy and to shape their studies in the borders of framework” (Keser & Kosal, 2017, p. 295). This is because the ontological and epistemological views that researchers hold are: “the key factors affecting the process of research design” (Keser & Kosal 2017, p. 295). The following sub-sections discuss the research ontology and epistemology in light of the above understanding.

#### **3.2.1. Ontology**

Ontology is concerned with the nature of being, becoming or existence and the similarities as well as the differences among them (Bryman, 2004). It aims at answering basic questions that begin with “What”. Questions such as: “What does it mean to be a thing?”, “How do things persist over time?”, and “How do things change over time?” are the domains of ontology (Scotland, 2012).

Applied to research works, ontology informs the assumptions that researchers make regarding reality, the forms in which it exists and what is there to know about this reality. Using ontology, researchers want to know the kind of reality that exists. In this regard, the basic question that they ask is whether “A single, verifiable reality and truth or... socially constructed multiple realities” exist (Patton 2002, p.134).

Ontologically, the fundamental question that researchers ask is: should social reality be perceived subjectively or objectively? Based on this conception, there are two ontological

positions in social science research, objectivism and subjectivism (Amakiri & Juliet, 2018; Bryman, 2004). Accordingly, subjectivism (which is also called constructivism/interpretivism) postulates that a social phenomenon is the result of the perceptions and subsequent actions of the agents dealing with their presence. In other words, it is an ontological position that postulates that social actors continuously process social phenomena and their meanings (Bryman, 2004). The objective of the interpretivist researcher is to understand and interpret the meanings of human behaviour without being pre-occupied with generalisability or establishing cause-effect relationships. Interpretivist researchers mainly rely on qualitative methods to gather and interpret human behaviour (Andrew, 2016).

Objectivism postulates that social entities exist independent of the social actors who are concerned with their existence. Ontologically, researchers who subscribe to this position assume that there is single reality and it should be studied objectively. This means that the researcher's belief or perspective should not interfere in the research activity and the role of the researcher is to study "how things are" and "how things really work" as objectively as possible (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p.108). Researchers whose study is founded this assumption are engaged in proving or disproving theories using well-thought out hypotheses, controlled variables and experimental procedures. They usually employ quantitative research methods to generalize research results and replicate other works (Andrew, 2016).

Ontologically, this study is interpretivist. On the one hand, this study assumed that the socio-cultural environments in which the EFL university instructors were working had shaped their conceptions of CLT. On the other hand, their conceptions shaped their classroom practices and vice versa. This further implies that various socio-cultural variables explain the conceptions of the EFL instructors. The most relevant variables were their training, their classroom realities, the underlying theory of education or the philosophy of education in Ethiopia, their students' learning styles, and their students' social and economic backgrounds. Hence, this study adopted a constructivist or relativist paradigm since reality is constantly re-negotiated, debated, and interpreted. Accordingly, the most suitable method to employ is one that solves the existing problem (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Taking into account this ontological foundation, the study employed a survey research design, and the mixed-methods research approach to collect, analyse and interpret data.

### 3.2.2. Epistemology

According to Hallebone (2009), epistemology deals with the nature and limits of knowledge. This definition highlights that there are two domains of epistemology. Firstly, the nature of knowledge refers to what it means when a person says that he or she knows something. It also implies what a person means when he or she says that he or she does not know about a particular thing (Auerswald, 1985). Secondly, the limits of knowledge relate to the extent of human knowledge. Through this method, researchers determine the scope of knowledge and attempt to know if knowledge is limitless (Hallebone & Priest, 2009).

Similarly, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 7) highlight that epistemology deals with “the nature and forms of knowledge, how it can be acquired and ...communicated to other human beings.” Epistemologically, researchers ask basic questions pertinent to objectivity: “the possibility and desirability of objectivity, subjectivity, causality, validity and generalisability” (Patton, 2002, p. 134). When researchers subscribe to one ontological belief system either explicitly or implicitly, they are directed to some epistemological assumptions. Given this, on the one hand, if the researcher makes assumptions about a singular verifiable reality referred to above, then he/she objectively detaches himself/herself from the item being studied and strives to conduct value-free research. This is what Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.108) highlighted as “how things are” and “how things really work”. On the other hand, if the research subscribes to the belief in the existence of multiple realities, especially those that are socially constructed, he/she does not accept the notion that people should be studied like objects in the natural sciences. In other words, the researcher is involved with the participants of the study and strives to understand the phenomena being studied in their respective contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Amakiri & Juliet, 2018). In view of this discussion, the current study subscribes to the assumption that there is no single verifiable reality that can be studied objectively since the participants of the study, EFL instructors in private universities in Ethiopia, construct/form their conceptions and practices of CLT based on the social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which they are working.

The above description further implies that there are diverse sources of knowledge that researchers can utilise. Concerning this, Renaud (2017) outlines four different sources of knowledge. The first source of knowledge is intuitive knowledge that exists in the form of beliefs, faith, and intuition. Its foundations are feelings rather than hard, cold facts. The second source of knowledge is authoritative knowledge. People form knowledge through the

information they receive from books, people, a supreme being, and other sources. The strength of the sources determines the strength of this type of knowledge. Logical knowledge is the third source of knowledge. According to this method, people construct new knowledge by reasoning from something that is generally accepted. The fourth source of knowledge, according to Renaud (2017), is empirical knowledge. In this type of knowledge, verifiable and objective facts are the primary sources of knowledge. Renaud (20017) argues that observation or experimentation or both methods are helpful in determining the reliability and validity of empirical knowledge.

Arguably, despite the differences in their degree of application, research employs all ways of knowing. Thus, in this study, I used intuitive knowledge to formulate my research idea: *EFL Instructors' Conceptions and Applications of CLT in Teaching Grammar Lessons: The Case of Four Private Universities in Ethiopia*. I used authoritative knowledge to review relevant literature on CLT. I used logical knowledge to reason from the findings of the study to its conclusions. I also used empirical knowledge to engage in the procedures that lead to the findings of my study. As is the case with other scientific studies, this study sought to establish empirical knowledge.

### **3.3. Study Setting**

This section briefly describes the four private universities selected as the study sites. The description was limited to the discussion of the data of relevance to this study.

#### **A. Admas University illuminate**

The official website of the university illuminates that Admas University was founded in 1998 as *Admas Business Training Centre*. The training centre was upgraded to a college in 1999, given the needs for higher education at the time. It was in 2007 that it was upgraded to University College. It was granted full university status in 2014 (Admas University, 2019).

The university runs both undergraduate and graduate regular and distance-learning programmes in various fields of study. In its undergraduate programme, it offers courses in Marketing Management, Accounting, Information Technology, Management, Hotel Management, Office Administration Technology Systems, Computer Science, Sociology, Economics, Rural Development, Agricultural Economics, Educational Planning and Management, and Social Works. The fields of specialisation in the graduate programme include Human Resources



Management, Business Administration, Development Economics, Accounting and Finance as well as Project Planning and Management (Admas University, 2019).

Admas University has more than five campuses in Addis Ababa. In addition, it has campuses in the regional cities of the country: Adama, Adwa, Bishoftu and Mekele. It also has a branch campus in Hargiesa, Somaliland, making it the only private university with a branch outside of Ethiopia (Admas University, 2019).

In addition to running the above training programmes, the university is also undertaking research and community services. As part of its commitment to research, it thus far organised nine research conferences, and it disseminates its research outputs through different journals: *Journal of Business*, *Journal of Informatics*, and *Admas Development Journal*. The university renders various community services through the office dedicated to this purpose (Admas University, 2019).

The university's website states that it has graduated more than 39,000 students so far, and that it has been awarded several certificates of appreciation for the quality services it has been providing to the nation at large (Admas University, 2019). This has implications for the current study since the study was conceived with the understanding that private universities are better disposed to providing quality language teaching to their customers.

### **B. Rift Valley University (RVU)**

Rift Valley University is the first private university that has the largest student population and branch campuses in Ethiopia. Rift Valley University started its operation in 2000 as Rift Valley College in response to the demand for higher education, especially in regional towns and cities of Ethiopia. The University's website states that it has campuses in all regions of the country. The website further states: "Rift Valley University was conceived with the core values of *excellence*, *service*, *integrity*, *professionalism* and *innovation*, parallel with the nation's development goals" (Rift Valley University, 2019).

The university first started its operations in 2000 in Adama, a regional city 100 km from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. It opened branch campuses in 2003 and 2004 in Addis Ababa and other regional towns. Currently, the University has more than 47 campuses in all regions of the

country, making it the largest private university in the country. According to the university's website, currently, it has over 46, 000 students (riftvalleyuniversity.org, 2019).

The university runs undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in different fields of study in its regular and distance-education modes. Its undergraduate programmes include Medicine, Midwifery, Public Health, Nursing, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Technology, Business Management, Human Resources Management, Human Nutrition, Economics, Marketing Management, Accounting and Finance, Global Studies, Computer Science, Information Technology, Surveying Technology, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Construction Technology Management. Its graduate programmes include Public Health, Accounting and Finance, Business Administration, Project Management, Rural Development Studies, Sociology, Development Economics and Marketing Management (Rift Valley University, 2019).

The university's activities are aligned to teaching, research and community services. Hence, the University has been organising research conferences to encourage the culture of conducting research among its staff members. It has also been rendering varied community services to those in need (Rift Valley University, 2019).

### **C. St. Mary's University**

St. Mary's University started its operations in 1998 as St. Mary's College responding to demand for tertiary-level education at the time. The college status lasted for fifteen years, and it was granted the status of University College in 2008. It was in September 2013 that it was granted a university status by the Ministry of Education (St. Mary's University, 2019).

The University's regular programmes, in more than four branch campuses, are mainly limited to Addis Ababa with regional branch centres and coordination offices throughout the country for its distance education wing. The University has *General Education Programme*, which serves as a feeder to the undergraduate programmes it is running, especially in Addis Ababa (St. Mary's University, 2019).

The university offers short-term training in computer science and business fields. Its undergraduate programmes are in Computer Science, Accounting and Finance, Management, Marketing Management as well as Tourism and Hospitality Management. The University has six graduate programmes: Rural Development, Agri-Business, MBA, Accounting and Finance,

HRM and Agri-Economics. Some of its graduate programmes are run in collaboration with Indian Universities. In addition to the above programmes, the University has a centre for Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL IBT, internet-based), a variety of recruitment tests and Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) (St. Mary's University, 2019).

#### **D. Unity University**

Unity University was the first private higher education institution granted the status of a university in Ethiopia. According to the official website of the university, it began its operations as a language school in 1991 and started offering certificate training at a diploma level in 1993. It was accredited as Unity College by the Ministry of Education in 1998 and launched various degree programmes in 1999. The college was granted the status of "University College" in 2002. It was in 2008 that it was granted the status of a full-fledged university (Unity University, 2019).

The University has four campuses in Addis Ababa and two campuses in regional cities. Currently, the university runs both regular and distance-education programmes. It has seven graduate programmes: MBA-General, MBA-Marketing, Development Economics, Business Economics, Organisational Leadership, Project Management, and Architecture and Urban Planning (Unity University, 2019).

It offers fourteen undergraduate programmes in its campuses in Addis Ababa and regional cities. These programmes are run under four colleges: Health Sciences; Business, Economics and Social Sciences; Graduate Studies, and Computational and Engineering Sciences. The fields of study run under these colleges are Accounting and Finance, Marketing Management, Management, Information Systems, Computer Science, Economics, Sociology and Social Anthropology, Management Architecture and Urban Planning, Civil Engineering, Construction Technology Management, Nursing and Laboratory Technology (Unity University, 2019).

The University's website states that the university also offers short-term "Executive Training Programmes" and special training programmes, testing and consultancy services. In order to feed its university system with students, the University established a KG-primary and secondary schools in 2005 (Unity University, 2019).

The University has more than 150 academic staff and more than 20, 000 students majoring various fields of study in the person-to-person and correspondent-education programmes towards the qualifications of a first degree and a second degree (Unity University, 2019).

In summary, the private universities selected as the study sites have adopted learner-centred approaches in general and CLT in particular. This is in line with the learner-centred methodological assumption inherent in the national curriculum adopted in 1994 and revised subsequently by the Ministry of Education of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

### **3.4. Research Design**

This study subscribes to the constructivist or relativist research paradigm which postulates that a social phenomenon is the result of the perceptions and subsequent actions of the agents dealing with their presence (Guba, 1994). More specifically, the conceptions held by EFL instructors and their classroom practices are socially constructed and are better understood in a socio-cultural context, which is one of the tenets of this paradigm. This is because attempts to study human cognition and their actions are beyond numbers. The meaning that people or actors in social situations attach to their actions and the way they interpret them are, therefore, more suited to the interpretivist paradigm (Bryman, 2004). The following section details the specific research design used within the interpretive research paradigm.

Research design involves: “[The] plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis” (Creswell 2009, p.3). In light of this definition, research design entails making various decisions with regard to the logical and coherent integration of the various components. This helps to address basic questions in the research process: methods of data collection, ways of measuring research data, and methods of interpreting research data (Patton, 1994; Creswell, 2008; 2012).

Given the research problem, a researcher can choose a suitable research design. Creswell (2009; 2012) identifies three types of research design: qualitative research design, quantitative research design, and mixed-methods research design. The first approach, the qualitative approach, helps to: “answer questions about experience, meaning, and perspective from the standpoint of the participant” (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey 2016, p.499). The experiences of people, the meanings they attach to events and their perspectives on an array of topics are not measurable in quantitative terms (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016). In the same way, Creswell (2009, p. 4) highlights that qualitative research is: “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”

The qualitative approach allows researchers to capture various issues through open-ended and broad inquiry, without being limited to only quantifiable aspects of human behaviour (Choy,

2014). Second, it assists researchers in understanding the research problem in light of the experiences and events affecting research participants (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016). Third, it is a flexible approach that allows the researchers to shape their research questions as the study progresses since it is not based on a pre-determined set of questions, which is often the case in quantitative research (Choy, 2014). The qualitative approach, however, has its drawbacks. Unlike its quantitative counterpart, it is not possible to objectively verify its findings since non-numeric data are used. Moreover, its success depends on the skills and resources that researchers or interviewers have at their disposal (Choy, 2014).

The second approach, the quantitative approach is a “means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures”(Creswell, 2009, p.4). In keeping with definition, Hammarberg, Kirkman and Lacey (2016) argue that the quantitative research method is more suited to finding factual data. More specifically, they point out that this method is appropriate “when general or probability information is sought on opinions, attitudes, views, beliefs or preferences; when variables can be isolated and defined; when variables can be linked to form hypotheses before data collection; and when the problem or question is known, clear and unambiguous” (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey 2016, p. 298).

The quantitative approach has its strengths and weaknesses. One of its strengths is that if is designed it carefully, it is more likely to produce reliable and verifiable results. Furthermore, it is relatively less time-consuming during administration, analysis, and reporting because of the pre-determined set of questions (Creswell, 2012; Choy, 2014). Unlike the qualitative approach, despite its being expensive, it is suitable for a larger sample size, which in turn increases its reliability and validity (Creswell, 2012; Choy, 2014; Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016). However, it is not without drawbacks. Unlike the qualitative approach, it is not flexible as it employs pre-determined questions, methods of analysis, and interpretation (Choy, 2014; Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016).

The third approach, the mixed-methods research approach combines aspects of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Creswell (2009, p. 4) points out: “It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study.” Since it combines aspects of both approaches, it is possible to address the weaknesses in one approach by the strengths of the other approach (Choy, 2014; Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey,

2016). Similarly, Johnson et al. (2007, p. 123) underline: “Mixed-methods research is the type of research in which a researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches (e.g. the use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.”

Based on the nature of the research problem, the specific research design that the current study adopted was the mixed-methods research approach.

This is in line with Creswell’s suggestion that the nature of the research problem determines the choice of either the qualitative approach, the quantitative approach, or the mixed-methods approach. To that effect, Creswell (2009, p. 18) articulates: “If the problem calls for (a) the identification of factors that influence an outcome, (b) the utility of an intervention or (c) understanding the best predictors of outcomes, then a quantitative approach is best.” Creswell (2009) further argues that this approach can assist in testing a theory or an explanation. Explaining the relevance of the qualitative approach Creswell (2009, p. 18) states: “If a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach.” He also underlines that this approach can help researchers to explore important variables for further quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2008; 2009; 2012).

In light of the discussion above discussion, there are aspects of the current study suited to qualitative and quantitative treatment. The mixed-methods approach is, therefore, a fitting design for the current study. On the one hand, the qualitative approach assisted in exploring the conceptions of EFL instructors regarding their conceptions of CLT in general and that of communicative grammar in particular. More specifically, the various principles of CLT: its goal, role of learners, role of teachers, teaching materials, specific classroom strategies, assessment and resources were captured qualitatively. This was done because the qualitative approach is suitable for analysing conceptions which manifest themselves through understanding, thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes (Kember, 1997; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Creswell, 2012). On the other hand, since aspects of the EFL instructors’ conceptions, their classroom practices, and practical difficulties in implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons were also suited to the quantitative approach, the quantitative approach was used. Apart from assisting in gathering and analyzing the data on the above aspects, the quantitative approach was also used to triangulate the data gathered through the qualitative approach, the details of which are discussed in subsequent sections.

The mixed-methods approach is useful when each of its constituents is not sufficient to help researchers understand a research problem, and “the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research can provide the best understanding” (Creswell 2009, p. 18). In addition, the use of the mixed-methods approach helps to secure “added-value” and to arrive at valid results that may not be possible if a researcher employs only one of these methods to collect, analyse and interpret research data (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2012). Bryman (2006) argues that the approach contributes to the credibility of the research. Applied to the current study, the qualitative data collected on EFL instructors’ conceptions and classroom practices were complemented and triangulated by the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire and classroom observation. This suggests that integrating the approaches enhances the integrity of research findings.

Given the mixed-methods research approach, the data on the first research question pertaining to EFL instructors’ conceptions were collected and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The data relating to the second research question (EFL instructors’ classroom practices) were collected and analysed predominantly qualitatively and secondarily quantitatively. The data on the relationship between the EFL instructors’ conceptions and their classroom practices were collected and analysed predominantly qualitatively and secondarily quantitatively. The fourth research question on the challenges of implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons was mainly approached qualitatively and secondarily quantitatively. Hence, the integration of the tools of data gathering as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data assisted me in understanding the research problem comprehensively, which is in line with the guidelines suggested by Bryman (2006) and Creswell (2009; 2012; 2012).

Even though there are different types of mixed-methods research approaches depending on how they are combined and sequenced, the current study employed Creswell’s sequential exploratory design (Creswell, 2009; 2012). This design postulates that a researcher first explores the research topic qualitatively and then quantitatively which is aimed at testing or generalising results obtained initially. According to Creswell (2009), the sequential exploratory design is a two-step design in which data for research purpose is first gathered using one data-gathering tool and later verified, triangulated or generalised using data from another data gathering tool. In keeping with the design, the data on the EFL instructors’ conceptions of CLT were first gathered using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were also used to explore additional issues which were incorporated in the questionnaire design. Then, the data was corroborated using the data

from lesson observation and questionnaires respectively. The details of how this design was used are discussed under *3.6 Research Procedures*.

As stated above, in addition to addressing the weaknesses of adopting a single approach, using the mixed-methods approach helps to ensure triangulation. This suggests that it is possible to corroborate the research data by employing multiple data-collection tools (Newman & Benz, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Brewer & Hunter, 2006). Within this framework, the three tools of data collection used in this study (the semi-structured interview, questionnaire, and classroom observation) complemented one another. Hence, the quantitative data helped to verify the qualitative data. Furthermore, the classroom observation data corroborated the qualitative data gathered on the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT using the semi-structured interviews.

### **3.5. Research Participants**

The participants of this study were EFL instructors in four private universities in Ethiopia: St. Mary University, Unity University, Rift Valley University, and Admas University. Since the main campuses of all the private universities are in Addis Ababa, these campuses were the main research sites. It is worth mentioning that there are other campuses of these universities in various parts of Addis Ababa. All the same, the same instructors teach various English courses at these branch campuses. Hence, the participants of this study were EFL instructors in the main campuses of St. Mary University, Unity University, Rift Valley University, and Admas University.

Concerning the selection of the study sites, all the private universities in Ethiopia participated in the study. This decision was made to capture representative data. It was also due to the manageable number of the EFL instructors (the study participants) they hosted. Therefore, the selection of the study sites was done purposively.

As discussed above, since the number of EFL instructors in these universities was relatively manageable (25), all of them participated in this study. However, the interview included 18 EFL instructors because of information saturation. Furthermore, all 25 instructors completed the questionnaire. However, 7 out of the 25 EFL instructors were not willing to allow me to their classrooms for lesson observation and their wishes were respected. Since the majority of the EFL instructors had given me access to their classrooms, the unwillingness of the seven instructors discussed above did not affect the study.



Corresponding to the original number of the EFL instructors in the private universities, which was relatively small, the census method was used to select them. According to Subrhi (2016), the census method refers to the complete enumeration of a universe. The universe can be a place, a specific locality or a group of people from which we gather research data. Subrhi (2016) also points out that although it is difficult to study all universe, the census method is fitting when the universe is not large; when enough time is available to collect data; where the target is a higher degree of accuracy and where there is enough finance available. However, this method is not without its drawbacks. Hence, it is expensive to use since it requires much time, money, and energy. Despite this, however, careful planning and implementation can yield reliable results (Subrhi, 2016).

The following steps were followed to conduct the census. First, as indicated under *1.11. Ethical Considerations*, the list and contact addresses of all the research participants were obtained from the four private universities. Then, all the 25 participants were contacted, and the purpose of the research explained. Once their informed consent was obtained, a mutual schedule that fit both the researcher and the participants was drawn to conduct the interviews, administer the questionnaires, and conduct the classroom observations. After obtaining their informed consent and agreeing on mutual meeting schedules, data was collected from all participants using the data-gathering tools designed for this study. The following sub-section presents the profile of the study participants.

### **3.5.1. Profile of the Study Participants**

This section presents the profile of private university EFL instructors who participated in the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. Table 4.1 below presents biographical information on the participants' gender, qualifications, academic rank, the field of specialisation, teaching experience, courses taught, average weekly teaching load, and the average number of learners in classes taught. These attributes are instrumental in shaping the views of classroom teachers (Richards, 1998; Hall, 2011). With regard to this, Richards (1998) and Hall (2011) argue that several factors shape classroom teachers' conceptions, thereby determining the courses of their actions. Richards (1998), in particular, asserts that the prior knowledge of teachers, their belief system, and their professional experiences are the means through which they pass daily decisions in the teaching-learning processes.

**TABLE 3.5: PROFILE OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Attributes /Characteristics</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of instructors</b>
1.	Gender	Male	24
		Female	1
		Total	25
2.	Qualification	PhD	2
		MA	23
		Total	25
3.	Academic Rank	Associate professor	1
		Lecturer	24
		Total	25
4.	Field of specialisation	TEFL	23
		Linguistics	2
		Total	25
5.	Years of teaching experience	1-5	1
		6-10	3
		>10	21
		Total	25
6.	Courses taught	<i>Communicative English Skills</i> and <i>Basic Writing Skills</i> (All instructors teach these courses either in the same semester or at different semesters)	
		Total	25
7.	Average teaching load per week (number of hours taught per week)	9	1
		>18	24
		Total	25
8.	Average number of students in class	20-40	5
		41-60	13
		>60	7
		Total	25

Table 3.5 above depicts that the number of private university EFL instructors who participated in this study was 25. Concerning gender, there was one female instructor when the study was conducted, whereas there were 24 (96%) male instructors, reflecting the gender imbalance in Ethiopia's education system in general and higher education institutions in particular (Adinew, 2015). Out of the 25 EFL instructors who participated in the study, 2 of them (8%) hold Ph.D., whereas the majority of them (92%) have MA degrees. A corresponding attribute of these instructors is their academic rank. The data in Table 4 above exemplify that one of the instructors has the academic rank of an associate professor, while 24 of them that constitute the majority (96%) have the academic rank of a lecturer. The majority of these instructors have MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), while 8% of them hold an MA in Linguistics, with a Bachelor of Education (BED) degree background.

The above table further shows that 21 EFL instructors have more than ten years of teaching experience in secondary schools and higher education institutions, whereas 1 and 3 of them have 1-5 and 6-10 years of teaching experience, respectively. All the instructors have been teaching *Communicative English Skills*, a course of relevance to this study since grammar is an integral part of its contents. As shown in Table 3.5 above, the average weekly teaching load for the majority of the instructors (96%) is greater than 18 hours. It is only one instructor who reported that he had to teach 9 hours weekly, on average, as the head of the department at his university. From the data in Table 3.1, it is apparent that the average number of students per class for 13 of the instructors is 41-60, while for 5 and 7 of them the figures are 20-40 and greater than 60 respectively, reflecting one of the classroom realities that the instructors had to face daily.

### **3.6. Research Procedures**

As briefly described under research design, the mixed-methods research approach was used in this study. One type of mixed methods research approach is sequential exploratory design. According to Creswell (2012), the sequential exploratory design is a two-step design in which data for research purpose is first gathered using one data-gathering tool and later triangulated or generalised using data from another data-gathering tool. Hence, this study employed the sequential exploratory design to address the research objectives.

Following the tenets of the sequential exploratory design, collecting qualitative data constituted the first phase of the data-gathering process. Accordingly, the data on EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT were first garnered through semi-structured interviews. Then, classroom

observation was used to assess EFL instructors' classroom practices and determine if their conceptions of CLT were consistent with their classroom practices.

The second phase involved the quantitative data gathering, in which the questionnaire was used. This approach was used to investigate the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and identify their classroom strategies in teaching grammar lessons as well as the challenges they faced in teaching grammar lessons communicatively. Also, it was used to triangulate the data from the interview and the lesson observation. Hence, the interview data on the instructors' conceptions of CLT were verified through the data on the same aspects gathered through the questionnaires.

As described above, following Creswell's sequential exploratory design (2008), first, data on the instructors' conceptions of CLT and classroom practices were collected qualitatively using semi-structured interviews and classroom observation respectively. Given the qualitative data obtained from the instructors, phenomenology was employed as a research design. According to Kember (1997) and Creswell (2012), phenomenology helps to gain an understanding of phenomena as described by research subjects, instead of the researcher doing it on their behalf.

Second, additional data on instructors' conceptions, grammar teaching strategies, and the practical challenges of implementing CLT were collected using the questionnaires designed from the literature, incorporating the salient aspects of CLT: its precepts, its theory of teaching and learning, the role of learners, the role of teachers, instructional materials and resources, specific classroom techniques and assessment methods, the role of grammar and the place for grammar in CLT. The questionnaire was also used to gather data on EFL instructors' conceptions that were quantifiable especially their conceptions of CLT collected initially using the semi-structured interviews. Hence, since questionnaires are important data-collection tools suited to gathering quantifiable data, the survey research design was employed (Creswell, 2008; 2012).

### **3.7. Data-collection Tools**

#### **3.7.1. Interview**

The study employed three data-collection tools to address the specific objectives outlined in the first chapter of the thesis. Hence, the first data-collection tool was a semi-structured interview with private university EFL instructors. This tool helped to investigate the instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. Illustrating the importance and relevance of interviews, Berg (2007, p. 96) pointed out that interviews enable participants to: "speak in their voice and express their thoughts and feelings." Likewise, Kvale (2003) and

Dörnyei (2007) exemplify that interviews are important tools to generate narrative data that allow researchers to study the views of people in great depth. Highlighting the importance of interviews, Kvale (1996, p. 174) further argues that an interview is: “A conversation whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee [regarding] the described phenomena.” One of the peculiarities of interviews is that they allow researchers to capture information that is not accessible through observation and questionnaires (Blaxter et al., 2006).

Unlike observation and questionnaires, interviews are an effective way of ensuring mutual understanding since the interviewer has the chance to rephrase and simplify questions that interviewees may misunderstand (Dörnyei, 2007). Dörnyei (2007) further stresses that interviewing ensures the accurate recording using an audio recorder, especially when the interviewee consents to the recording of his or her voice. This in turn facilitates data transcription, analysis, and interpretation (Berg, 2007).

While it is possible to capture rich data using interviews, they are not without drawbacks. In this vein, Walford (2007, p. 147) cited in Hamza (2014) questions: “Interviews alone are an insufficient form of data to study social life.” According to Walford (2007, p. 147), this is because both “the interviewer and the interviewee may have incomplete knowledge or faulty memory” of the research topic. Brown (2001), Creswell (2012) and McNamara (1999) also indicate that interviews are time-consuming, and interviewees might provide false information to please researchers.

Despite these criticisms, interviewers are advised to take advantage of interviews to “highlight the baggage they get out of the interview” (Scheurich 1995, p. 249 cited in Hamza, 2014). Moreover, researchers are advised to use interviews together with other data-gathering tools such as observation and questionnaires to make sure the reliability and validity of the data they gather (Robson, 2002; Ho, 2006). In the context of this research, the semi-structured interviews, which were designed to garner EFL instructors’ conceptions of CLT, their classroom practices, and the practical difficulties of implementing CLT, were complemented by two data-gathering tools: questionnaire and classroom observation. In light of the benefits of interviews outlined above, semi-structured interviews or a general interview guide method was designed, based on CLT literature. According to McNamara (1999):

*This method is designed to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this allows more focus than the conversational approach [where there are no*

*predetermined questions], but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the interviewee (p.1).*

Based on this guideline, the following aspects of CLT were included in the semi-structured interview to guide the EFL instructors to describe their conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The semi-structured interview, therefore, incorporated the most salient aspects of CLT to which the EFL instructors expressed their views or conceptions: the concept of CLT and the goal of language teaching in CLT, roles of learners, roles of teachers, types of teaching materials, types of classroom activities, classroom resources and facilities, specific classroom techniques and assessment modalities, the importance and place of grammar in CLT and challenges of implementing CLT in EFL contexts (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Littlewood, 1981; Canale, 1983; Howatt, 1984; Nunan, 1987; Savignon, 1999; Widdowson, 1990, 1996; Richards, 2006).

Concerning the number of EFL instructors who participated in the interviews, the information I obtained from the study sites showed that, on average, there were six EFL instructors in each university. This roughly aggregated to 25 EFL instructors. According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), information or knowledge saturation determines the selection of additional interviewees. Information saturation refers to an occasion where information begins to repeat itself. Although putting a number on information saturation is not always a straightforward issue, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) also note that in a homogenous group of interviewees, it is possible to reach the saturation with 12 interviewees. The research participants were homogenous since all of them were university EFL instructors. Since their number was relatively small, the original plan was to include all of them in the semi-structured interview. Whereas information saturation was reached around 15 interviewees, 3 more interviewees were included to increase the depth of information from additional participants. In line with the guideline suggested by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), the decision to include 18 EFL instructors was to increase the depth of information gathered. It was also to increase the belief that I had as far as the defensibility of my study was concerned.

Seidman (2006) suggests that optimally a series of three face-to-face interviews should be conducted. Seidman (2006) further indicates that several considerations determine the length of a single interview session. These include the participant's experience of involvement in interviews, the number of questions to ask, and the availability of the participant. Seidman (2006) proposes that multiple interviews can allow increased methodological rigour. This allows the researcher to

have more time to engage with participants and develop deeper relationships that help to generate rich data (Seidman, 2006). Two interview sessions of approximately 50 minutes each were planned. This took into account the instructors' busy schedule and weekly teaching load. I had conducted a pilot interview with four part-time instructors at Unity University, and each interview session roughly took 40 minutes. Since all the EFL instructors who participated in the interview completed the questionnaire, the two-session interview was justifiable. The rationale behind the second interview session was to share the transcripts of the interview with the EFL instructors and confirm if their views were consistent with the transcripts. Moreover, I used the pilot interview to elicit the instructors' comments on its contents. This exercise assisted me in merging similar questions, eliminating redundant items, and re-writing some of them for directness and precision. While all the instructors consented to be audio recorded, 5 of them were not willing to do so during the interview sessions. Alternatively, I resorted to taking notes (on the aspects of CLT outlined in this section).

### **3.7.2. Questionnaire**

The sequential exploratory approach recommended by Creswell (2008) proposes that qualitative data should be garnered first while gaining familiarity with the research problem. This step helps to design the subsequent quantitative data-gathering tools based on the familiarity with the research problem. This can be followed by quantitative data gathering to verify or corroborate the qualitative data (Creswell, 2008; 2012). Primarily, the questionnaire as a data-gathering tool is suitable for collecting quantitative data which in turn can support qualitative data from other tools of data collection such as interviews and classroom observation (Ho, 2006; Creswell, 2008; 2012; O'Leary, 2014). In line with the sequential exploratory design, the data on EFL instructors' conceptions, classroom practices, and challenges of implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons were gathered quantitatively using questionnaires. The questionnaire was prepared based on CLT literature and adapted from studies conducted into CLT.

This study employed a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data. This type of questionnaire helps to generate quantifiable empirical data, especially if it is designed and tested carefully (O'Leary, 2014). All the 25 EFL instructors completed the questionnaire for this study. It used a five-point Likert scale which is a scale that helps to measure degrees of opinion and understanding on latent constructs such as conceptions, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs (McLeod, 2008). In other words, such a scale assists in measuring opinions, attitudes or behaviours. Lovelace and Brickman (2013, p. 5) remark: "Likert scales and their varieties are the



most common response formats used in attitude scales. They offer multiple response categories that usually span a 5-point range of responses, for example, A=strongly agree to E= strongly disagree, but may span any range.” They further argue: “Internal-consistency reliability is increased and sufficient variables obtained when more than four response options are used” (Lovelace & Brickman, 2013:5). According to Lovelace and Brickman (2013), the most common number scales are five or six since too many scale points might become a source of unreliable data as some research subjects may fail to assign the right value to some of the items (Lovelace & Brickman, 2013).

The study participants were EFL instructors whose undergraduate as well as postgraduate degrees are directly related to Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), and the questionnaire was prepared in English. Because of the specific objectives of this study and biographical information about the participants, the questionnaire comprised of five sections: the first section garnered relevant biographical information of the participants; the second section measured EFL instructors’ conceptions of CLT; the third section measured their conceptions of the importance of grammar in general and its place in CLT; the fourth section gauged their applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons; the fifth section gathered data on the factors affecting EFL instructors’ implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons.

The specific items of the sections of the questionnaire were adapted from various local and international studies conducted into CLT (Spada, 1990; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Spada & Lyster, 1997; Li, 1998; Razmijo & Riazi, 2000; Eveyik, 2003; Hiep, 2007; Jeon, 2009; Tigist, 2012; Nitrenganya, 2015). They were also cross-checked if they were in tandem with the literature on CLT (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Littlewood, 1981; Canale, 1983; Howatt, 1984; Nunan, 1987; Widdowson, 1990; 1996; Savignon, 1999; Richards, 2006).

I administered the questionnaire in person. This method allowed me to explain the purpose of the study clearly and unambiguously. It also increased the probability of receiving completed questionnaires in return (Bell, Waters & E-books Corporation, 2014). The department heads in the respective private universities facilitated the time and venue for my meeting with the participants of the study. This assisted me in meeting all the instructors in their respective universities. Before administering the questionnaire, I piloted it on four part-time and full-time instructors at my university (Unity University). The pilot testing helped in revising and refining the different sections of the questionnaire. For example, I reduced the number of questionnaire

items by merging similar items, removing redundant ones, and re-writing others for directness and clarity. Besides, the comments from the participants helped me to align the questionnaire items with the research objectives. The length and clarity of some statements were also revised. All the revisions contributed to the reduction in the time it took (from 45 minutes to 25 minutes) for the participants to complete it.

### **3.7.3. Classroom Observation**

Classroom observation was also used to gather qualitative and quantitative data on university EFL instructors' classroom practices. Patton (2002) proposes that conducting classroom observation is important because what people claim they do and what they actually do in classroom situations might be different, and it is, therefore, a practical tool through which the consistencies or inconsistencies between their conceptions and practices can be cross-checked. Kane, Sandretto and Heath (2002, p. 195) also emphasise that "what instructors report they do in surveys may not necessarily be what they actually do." Hence, "Observation can give a 'you-are-there' point of view to readers not possible from other types of data" (Patton 1990, p. 203). Given this, classroom observation was used to determine the relationships between EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices.

Although the classroom observation formed the second part of the qualitative data collection, both structured and semi-structured classroom observation checklists were employed to capture the classroom reality in its entirety.

During the classroom observation, the aspects of grammar lessons that corresponded to the items in the checklist were checked for their presence or absence, whereas other qualitative aspects not readily quantifiable were recorded as notes. Also, upon the consent of the instructors, their whole sessions were audio-recorded. Post-observation sessions were held with the EFL instructors to hear their views regarding the decisions they made in the classroom situations in light of the views they expressed during the interview. As stated above, semi-structured and structured observation checklists were used to record the aspects of the teaching of grammar lessons in terms of their absence or presence. Even though there are several structured observation instruments in second language research, this study adapted the instruments developed by Spada (1990); Spada & Lyster (1997); Razmijo & Riazi (2000); Eveyik (2003); Tigist (2012) as well as Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2017).

Following the suggestions of Griffiee (2018), a proforma (which is a grid or a form) was used to note the qualitative data under pre-determined categories. The pre-determined categories were the instructional activities, the teacher's role, the learners' role, the instructional materials, the feedback, the resources in classrooms, the physical setup of classrooms, and any relevant unique features occurring in classroom contexts. Further, the proforma assisted in recording the qualitative aspects of the grammar lessons that did not form part of the proforma, but that occurred naturally (Griffiee, 2018). This proforma formed part of in-class observation notes. The in-class observation notes served as data sources for later analyses. Since this study focused on EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons, the observation protocol was consistent with the characteristics of communicative grammar adapted from Spada (1990); Spada and Lyster (1997); Razmijo and Riazi (2000); Eveyik (2003); Tigist (2012) as well as Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2017).

The above checklists trace their origins to the works of pioneer linguists and writers who have researched into CLT (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Littlewood, 1981; Canale, 1983; Savignon, 1983; 2002, 2003; Howatt, 1984; Nunan, 1987; Widdowson, 1990; 1996). Accordingly, the major contents of the checklist were instructional activities, teacher's role, learner's role, instructional materials, feedback, resources in classrooms, the physical setup of classrooms and features occurring spontaneously in classroom contexts.

Prior to commencing the classroom observation, the willingness and the written consent of the research participants were obtained. This also involved informing research participants (including students) in advance about the observation to prevent the confusion or uneasiness that might be created as a result of the presence of a stranger in their classrooms. As discussed above, 25 EFL instructors participated in the study, and the observation was originally intended to include all of them; however, although all of them expressed their written consent to being observed, 5 of them were unwilling to do so for reasons they did not disclose. To reduce the longer duration it might have taken, two professional colleagues who have MA and PhD in TEFL and who have more than 10 years of teaching experience were involved in the observation sessions. These colleagues were oriented properly on the purpose of the study in general and that of the classroom observation in particular.

To achieve objectivity during classroom observation, the following measures were taken. Firstly, prior to the observation, clear checklists (discussed above) were prepared based on CLT

literature. Secondly, the checklists were pilot-tested on the classes of a few willing EFL instructors, and the feedback was used to refine the checklists. Thirdly, EFL instructors with better teaching and research experience further commented on the checklist and took part in the classroom observation. Fourthly, open feedback sessions were held with the other observers to check if the data gathered using the checklists reflected the desired outcomes (which they did). Fifthly, the interactions between the EFL instructors and their students were audio-recorded, reducing the subjectivity of the observers. Finally, prior to the classroom observation, the observing EFL instructors were given a half-hour orientation/training on the aim of the study and how the classroom observation should be conducted.

The English language course offered in the study sites (private universities) of relevance to this study was *Communicative English Skills*. The course aims at developing learner's language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing including grammar and vocabulary. This course was offered in two sessions. Each session lasted 100 minutes or 1:40 hrs. All the instructors were observed twice. While many of the EFL instructors consented to the audio-recording, a few instructors did not. The semi-structured and structured observation protocols were used to check the activities that took place during the assigned sessions. *Communicative English Skills* is usually offered in the first or second semester of the academic calendar of the universities. The classroom observations were conducted in the first semester of the 2018/19 academic year.

### **3.8. Methods of Data Presentation and Analysis**

The data garnered through the data-collection tools were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data gathered using the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistical tools. The latest version of SPSS (Version 20, available at the time of data analysis) was used to analyse the questionnaire data. In line with the guidelines suggested by Harry & Deborah (2012), percentages, means, and grand means were used to report a series of questions that collectively measure a particular trait.

The qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews and classroom observation was analysed thematically in line with the phenomenographic approach advanced by Creswell (2012), Marton (1994) as well as Trigwell and Prosser (2004). According to the phenomenographic approach, the transcription of interviews should be done verbatim, and their analysis iteratively (Marton, 1994; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). Hence, based on these guidelines, the data obtained using the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim, and their

analysis conducted iteratively. For ease of analysis and anonymity, the participants were coded 1 to 25, using P1- P25. “P” stands for *Participant* and the numbers stand for random numbers assigned to the 25 study participants who constituted the primary sources of the data for this study.

Following the guidelines of the phenomenographic approach described above, after coding the transcripts, the researcher and three experienced university EFL instructors who had the academic rank of Assistant Professor read and re-read the transcripts. The purpose of this exercise was to extract statements which were relevant to the specific research objectives. The next exercise involved seeking patterns to group the most salient conceptions of the EFL instructors to the categories of conceptions highlighted in the CLT literature. Then, extracts from the transcriptions were used to substantiate the categorisation of the instructors based on their conceptions.

Deductive thematic analysis was employed to categorise the EFL instructors based on their conceptions of CLT. According to Boyatzis (1998) as well as Braun and Clarke (2006), the deductive thematic analysis uses a structure or a pre-determined framework to analyse research data. This approach involves the researcher imposing his or her own structure on the data and then using the pre-determined structure to analyse the data. It is relevant when the researcher “has specific research questions that already identify the main themes or categories used to group the data and then look for similarities and differences between the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:17). Previous literature has identified the most salient aspects of CLT (listed under 3.7.1. *Interview*), so they were used to conduct the deductive thematic analysis of the qualitative data, which were collected using the semi-structured interviews and classroom observation.

Given deductive thematic analysis, the most salient aspects of CLT recurrent in the CLT literature were used as general categories: *goal of language teaching, role of the learner, role of the teacher, instructional activities/tasks, teaching materials, specific classroom strategies and assessment modalities*. Using these categories, recurring themes were sought/identified in the responses of the study participants. Regarding the goal of language teaching, the interview data revealed that the phrase *communicative competence* was recurrent in the responses of the EFL instructors. The themes *active participants/independent learners/autonomous learners* and *facilitators/organizers/coordinators* were recurrent in the discussions of the roles of learners and teachers respectively. In describing instructional materials in CLT, the terms *authentic*,

*interactive* and *meaningful* were the themes that emerged from the responses of the EFL instructors. *Pair and group work* were the most repeated themes in describing the organisational patterns that EFL instructors highlighted with regard to specific language teaching strategies in CLT. Finally, phrases such as *informal assessment*, *classroom presentations*, *pair and group work activities* were among the recurring themes in the responses of the EFL instructors concerning the assessment modalities employed to assess learners' performance in CLT classes.

### **3.9. Validity and Reliability**

Several measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of this study. First, the mixed-methods approach was used to circumvent the drawbacks inherent in either of its constituents. Using a mixed-methods approach helps to integrate different tools of data collection and methods of data analysis (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2012). For example, quantitative approaches that employ questionnaires and structured interviews have limited options such as “yes” or “no”. The explanations or justifications for this type of answer can be captured accurately using qualitative approaches in which research subjects have the freedom to express their views, attitudes, and perceptions (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2012).

Second, the decision to mix the quantitative and qualitative approaches was one of the measures that researchers take to ensure methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). By definition, methodological triangulation refers to: “the use of more than one kind of method to study a phenomenon. It is beneficial in confirming findings, more comprehensive data, increased validity, and enhanced understanding of the studied phenomena.” (Bekhet & Zauszniewski 2012, p. 40). Based on this guideline, first, the data gathered from EFL instructors using the semi-structured interviews were crosschecked against those gathered through the questionnaire. Second, the data gathered using the self-reporting mechanisms (the semi-structured interview and questionnaire) were verified through the data gathered through the classroom observation.

Third, the data-gathering tools were pilot tested to confirm if they were relevant and designed in line with the study's objectives. Four EFL instructors took part in the pilot testing. Such a test also helped me to estimate how much time it took the EFL instructors to complete the interviews and questionnaires. The pilot testing was in line with the arguments advanced by Bell and Waters 2014 as well as O'Leary (2014) who claim that pilot testing helps to ensure if data collection tools are effective. In the same way, Hassan, Schattner, and Mazza (2006) illustrate that piloting data-gathering tools will help to determine if the study protocol is feasible by identifying its

weaknesses. Hassan, Schattner, and Mazza (2006) further argue that it will help to determine if the data-gathering tools are asking the intended questions, and if they are the most suitable tools to collect the required data. They also stress that pilot testing the data-gathering tools assists in testing the whole process of data collection by estimating the time it takes to complete questionnaires and interviews as well as to determine if people are willing to participate in the study (Hassan, Schattner & Mazza, 2006).

Hence, these suggestions helped me to reduce the length of some of the questions in the interview and questionnaire. In addition, they helped me to merge redundant items and remove irrelevant ones. This exercise also contributed to a reasonable reduction in the time it took the EFL instructors to complete the interviews and questionnaires. Considering these advantages, the pilot testing was conducted at the beginning of the 2019 Academic Year when the first semester began and *Communicative English Skills* was offered.

### **3.10. Conclusion**

The purpose of the third chapter was to discuss the methodology of the study. The chapter began by highlighting the ontology and epistemology of the study. It then described the study setting briefly. In the next sub-section, it accounted for in detail the mixed-methods approach that the study adopted as its research design. The chapter also discussed the research participants, the other component of the methodology. In the procedures for data collection, the chapter explained the sequential exploratory design that the study employed. Towards the last part, the chapter outlined and explained in detail the data-collection instruments. Then, it presented a brief discussion of the methods of data presentation and analysis. The chapter concluded by outlining the measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS**

### **4.1.Introduction**

This chapter analyses the qualitative findings of the study. The qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. The first part of the chapter presents and interprets the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews, while the second part presents and interprets the qualitative data collected through classroom observation. The semi-structured interview data mainly addressed one of the research questions of the study related to private university EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT as applied to the teaching of grammar lessons. Part of the data from this tool was also used to answer the other research question about the factors affecting the application of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The research questions relating to private universities' EFL instructors' applications of CLT in the teaching of grammar lessons and the relationships between their conceptions and classroom practices were addressed by the data from the lesson observation.

In designing the semi-structured interviews, care was taken to include questions that addressed the study's main aim and its sub-questions. The semi-structured interview included eleven theoretical and practical questions. They were used to investigate private universities' EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in grammar lessons. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and taken back to the participants. This was done to check if their views were captured in the transcription correctly. In instances where there was a lack of clarity, the participants were requested to clarify their views, which were then recorded by the researcher.

### **4.2.Findings from Interviews**

The qualitative data of the study were collected using semi-structured interviews and lesson observation. This section presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with 18 (out of 25) private university EFL instructors in Ethiopia. For ease of analysis and anonymity, the participants of the interview were coded using P1-P18. The interview data assisted in addressing the objective of the study that related to the conceptions private university EFL instructors held regarding CLT and its implementation in teaching grammar lessons. The semi-structured data was transcribed verbatim. Their analysis was conducted iteratively in line



with the guidelines suggested in the phenomenographic approach described under 3.8: *Methods of data presentation and analysis*.

The subsequent sub-sections are concerned with the analysis of the qualitative data from the semi-structured interview by presenting them under each interview question.

#### **4.2.1. The Methodological Assumption Held by Private Universities about Language Teaching**

**Interview question 1: What is the methodological assumption held by your university about how language should be taught?**

To align the interviews and the methodological orientations of the universities with the objective of the current study, the instructors were first asked to account for the methodological assumption that their university, college, or department held about language teaching.

In response to the first interview question, P2 highlighted:

*In my department, even though there is no open discussion/common ground on methodological assumptions held on language teaching, I can guess every instructor in the department is in favour of CLT. I hear instructors claiming the use of CLT in language teaching; they are using the assumptions/principles underlying CLT in the teaching of English as a foreign language.*

Likewise, P6 acknowledged:

*Although our department encourages the implementation of CLT and the teaching materials are designed communicatively, the lecture method is the most applied in the university, and modules are provided to the students by their instructors.*

The views of the two instructors are evidence of the adoption of CLT in their respective universities. Despite the explicit claims for the adoption of CLT to teach the target language, the instructors reported that language classrooms are still teacher-centered.

In the same vein, P3 confirmed that CLT-oriented language teaching was the methodological assumption held by his department. He also underlined the unwillingness of instructors and students to implement CLT in classroom situations. P3 comments:

*The methodological assumption held in the university to conduct language teaching looks like somewhat CLT, so CLT goals have been implemented as much as possible. Teachers are expected to play their role as a teacher. But the goals of CLT are not implemented as expected*

*from the university, the teachers, and other concerned bodies. Lack of successful implementation of CLT is traced to the lack of understanding of the usefulness of CLT. It also forces the students to neglect this language teaching as if they are forced to learn through this method. Due to this reason, the teachers and students do not want to implement CLT in the classroom.*

P4 seemed to share the same view about the methodological assumption held by the university or the department about how language teaching should be conducted. The instructor pointed out:

*Our University has adopted learner-centred approaches in general. Language teaching is also part of this system. The instructors in my department try to teach 'Communicative English Skills' and 'Basic Writing Skills' through the communicative teaching methodology. Even though the number of students is very large, we try to help our learners to use the language for different communicative purposes in addition to helping them succeed in their major-area studies. For example, group works, public speaking, and problem-solving activities are included in the teaching materials for these courses.*

The above instructors (P2, P3, P4, and P6) from four private universities confirmed that their respective universities have adopted learner-centred methodology in general and CLT in particular. Their accounts verified the learner-centred and communicatively-oriented language teaching approaches the Ministry of Education has adopted nationally.

#### **4.2.2. The Goals of Language Teaching and Learning in CLT**

##### **Interview question 2: What are the goals of language teaching and learning in CLT?**

Although the instructors' articulated their views in various ways, the majority of those who responded to this item felt that the development of communicative language skills is the most salient goal of language teaching and learning in CLT.

Sample transcriptions from the interviews are presented subsequently. For instance, P4 worded it as the "development of students' communicative competence", which is the same as the phrase coined by Hymes (1972) to describe the major goal of CLT. Explaining the phrase "communicative competence", P4 pointed out:

*By communicative competence, I mean that CLT will help them to use the language for real communication purposes in different social contexts. For example, students who have developed communicative competence know what kind of language to use in specific situations. They*

*change their vocabulary and grammar depending on the context. They employ different communication strategies based on communication contexts.*

The instructor provided an extended account of the goals of CLT, and his conceptions of the goals of language instruction can be explained by the instructor's continuous action research on CLT to improve his teaching strategies and help his students to develop their communicative English skills.

P1 expressed the same conception as that of P4. However, the instructor's views were peculiar in that he drew an association between the goals of language learning and teaching in CLT and the academic lives of the students although they are generally reflective of the goals of language learning and teaching of a communicatively-oriented syllabus or programme. The instructor reportedly indicated that the goal of language learning and teaching in CLT is "to help students to meet the demands of their academic life; that is, to help them develop and use the target language/skills in pursuing their academic careers and beyond effectively and appropriately." Explaining this view further, the instructor underlined: "Emphasis is on the teaching of the target language rather than being pre-occupied merely with student mastery of grammatical rules or structures could contribute to that end." The latter view he accentuated is consistent with one of the major reasons why this study was initiated: teachers' pre-occupation with the teaching of grammar rules, instead of helping their students develop "communicative competence", a competence that can be exploited in various communicative contexts (Hymes, 1972).

According to P9, the goal of language learning and teaching in CLT is to:

*Enable learners to use the language for real-life communication purposes. It is an approach or methodology that is aimed at making the learners use the target language for communicative purposes; it is the way of teaching in which emphasis is given to fluency than accuracy. Thus, the students are encouraged to experiment with the language in different situations that have a direct relation with real-life situations.*

P9 likened "approach" to "methodology" in describing the goal of CLT; however, the literature on CLT employs "approach" to describe CLT since the latter is not a specific language teaching methodology, but a set of principles informing how language learning and teaching should be conducted (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Brown, 1994; Savignon, 1997; Richards, 2006).

The same view was also highlighted by P16 concerning the goals of language learning and teaching in CLT. P16 spelled out the specific objectives that are addressed in CLT. The goals of

language teaching and learning in CLT are, therefore, “to improve students’ effective communication skills, especially in language skills; to improve students’ interpersonal skills, negotiation skills, conflict-resolution skills, grammar skills, pronunciation skills, etc.” Illustrating this view further, the instructor indicated:

*Students have to prepare for the challenges that await them in real life. Schools are one of the places where preparations are made to face the challenges of real life. The most important aspect of life in the information age is the ability to communicate in different socio-economic and political contexts. I believe if students are taught communicatively, they can succeed in real-life.*

As can be seen from the excerpt above, P16 is strongly in favour of CLT. The instructor believes that CLT is a means through which students can prepare for the challenges in real-life.

Nevertheless, P8, P9, P13, and P15 expressed a slightly different view about the goals of language learning and teaching in CLT. Their views seemed to have been formed from the term “communicative”. For instance, P15 said: “The goal of language teaching in CLT is enabling the learner to speak the language as fluently as possible. The current demand of the outside world is the ability to communicate well which can be achieved by communicative language teaching.”

Even though the “current demand of the outside world” sounds a logical argument, the view that CLT is mainly pre-occupied with the development of speaking skills might be a misconception, because CLT encourages the integrated presentation of the major language skills and that teachers should strike a balance between the productive and receptive skills in the instructional process (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2015; 2018; 2019).

The instructor further noted:

*Students should be able to express their views orally in classrooms as well as outside of classrooms. Many employers are looking for employees who can speak and convince potential customers, so language classes should give due attention to developing students speaking skills.*

In discussing the relevance of speaking skills, P15 stressed that students who can express themselves orally have better chances of employment upon completing their studies. Though oral expression is one of the requisites to succeed in employment settings, the ability to write coherently is also another important skill, especially in situations where report writing is imminent.

P13 supports the views of P15 described above:

*I believe CLT is a new teaching methodology. The goal of language teaching and learning in CLT is to develop the spoken English ability of students. Speaking is one of the most important and neglected skills in language teaching, especially in the Ethiopian context. Since communicative language teaching gives more emphasis to spoken English, it is appropriate in Ethiopian contexts. Teachers should give more time for students to practice the language in pairs and groups. Further, students should be encouraged to develop the skills of public speaking.*

The instructor was asked to comment on the emphasis that should be given to other language skills. Responding to this, the instructor indicated: “I am not saying that the other language skills should not be taught in class, but many of our students, even teachers, have poor speaking skills. Vocabulary, grammar, and writing should be taught as much as possible.” As the above excerpt depicts, the instructor prioritised the teaching of speaking skills although he did not deny the importance of other major skills including grammar and vocabulary. The strength of the instructor’s views can be evidenced by the teaching strategies he reported he often used in classroom situations: “I often use communicative methods such as pair and group work and tell them to practice guided dialogues first, followed by free discussions on selected topics.” In principle, his views and the description of his classroom practices were in accord.

One of the most striking findings from the views expressed by P13 is that he described CLT as a “new teaching methodology”. This is in contrast to the description of CLT as an “approach” in the literature (Richards, 2006). Like P9’s, P13’s misconception can be evidenced from the association he explicitly drew between CLT as a “new teaching methodology” and the pair and group work “methods” he often used to teach speaking skills.

Like P9 and P13, P8 also had the same conception of the goals of language learning and teaching in CLT:

*We have been teaching English to our students using the lecture method for many years, but they are not able to communicate well. With the use of this up-to-date strategy, we have been focusing on the teaching of vocabulary and grammar. Our students were not able to speak the language well. I believe communicative language teaching is a good solution for this since it gives due attention to speaking skills. The method can be used to teach students to speak in a meaningful context. The only problem is large class size; otherwise, it is possible to improve the communication skills of students using communicative language teaching method.*

P8's conception of the goals of CLT arose from his dissatisfaction with the lecture method, which he describes as an ineffective method that does not help to produce good speakers of the target language. Like P9 and P13, he indicated that CLT is an "up-to-date strategy, which is inconsistent with the notion that CLT is an approach instead of being a methodology or a specific teaching strategy (Richards, 2006). He also believes that CLT "... reduces the load of teachers and gives more responsibility to students to use the language in communication."

As can be seen from the above excerpts, three misconceptions can be drawn from the views expressed by P8. First, he indicated that CLT is pre-occupied with developing learners' speaking skills; this is not consistent with the literature because the literature pronounces that CLT encourages the integrated teaching of the major language skills (Brumfit, 1986). Second, he reiterated that CLT is a specific teaching method, instead of being an approach specifying several theoretical and philosophical underpinnings about language learning and teaching (Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014). Third, he reported that CLT is: "an easier teaching methodology". Although he noted that learners in communicative classes have more responsibilities, this does not suggest that CLT is an easier teaching "methodology". A possible explanation for this might be his lack of understanding of the various roles that the communicative teacher plays in the teaching-learning process. The teacher is a facilitator, an input provider, an organiser, an independent participant, and an assessor (Harmer, 1991; Fan, 2016).

#### **4.2.3. The Role of the Teacher in a CLT Classroom**

##### **Interview question 3: What do you think is the role of the teacher in a CLT classroom?**

The semi-structured interview data revealed that all the EFL instructors seemed to have the same conceptions regarding the role that the teacher plays in a CLT classroom.

In response to the above question, P12 stated: "The teacher in a communicative classroom plays the role of [being] a facilitator to student learning by employing a balanced approach-a mix of form and meaning-based tasks, thereby promoting accuracy and fluency of students." The keyword in his description is "facilitator", a role that characterises CLT-based classrooms (Harmer 1991; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Fan, 2016). As can be seen from the excerpt above, the instructor exemplified the facilitative role of the teacher by detailing the specific activities the

teacher carries out in classroom situations. This role implies helping learners to be independent, balancing meaning-based activities with form-based exercises, and, most importantly, promoting accuracy and fluency development, one of the salient objectives of language teaching in higher education institutions in Ethiopia (FDRE, The Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2019). The instructor further highlighted:

*The teacher gives guidance in the direction of meaningful exchange between students and teachers as well as among students. [He/She] uses the integration of basic language skills, providing positive feedback to students' work. [He/She] promotes students' autonomous learning to a reasonable degree-a shift from teacher-centred routines and excessive talks and form-focused instruction thus required. It is also the responsibility of teachers to prepare teaching materials or supplement existing teaching materials so that students get enough language practice.*

P12's description of the roles of the teacher in CLT is wide-ranging. He mainly puts the role of the teacher in a general pedagogical context, which conforms to that learner-centred approach adopted nationally (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2018). He then outlines the specific roles that the teacher plays in classroom situations. According to the instructor, the most notable roles of the CLT teacher are to be a facilitator, an input provider, a guide, an assessor, an organiser, and a promoter of autonomous learning. These roles also have theoretical and practical support from the CLT literature (Harmer, 1991; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016).

While responding to the same question, P2 drew an analogy between the roles of the CLT teacher and the traditional language teacher. However, his conceptions are comparable to that of P12. According to P2:

*In CLT, the roles of the teachers are mainly facilitating [the] learning environment for the learners. The teachers do not dominate in language classrooms. In other words, the teachers who effectively implement CLT have a guiding role than merely transmitting knowledge to students as passive recipients. The teachers give some inputs to students; the students are expected to use the language and practice it. The teacher also prepares exercises and searches for supplementary exercises to facilitate the teaching-learning process.*

The excerpt illustrates that the teacher's main role in CLT is to facilitate student learning. This means that the teacher should provide the necessary inputs to his or her students and allow them to experiment with the target language in context. It also suggests that the teacher should not dominate in classroom situations. It is also important to note that preparing supplementary exercises is an integral part of the facilitative role of the teacher. While explaining the teacher's

role in CLT, P2 makes indirect references to the grammar-translation method, where the teacher's role is predominant and that of the students is being passive recipients of knowledge (Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Thornby, 2006; Cook, 2008).

Despite the terminological differences, P6's conception of the teacher's role in CLT is similar to that expressed by P12 and P2. The instructor named four major roles that the teacher plays in and out of classroom situations:

*[The teacher] prepares supplementary materials that will be used alongside textbooks; he organises classes in groups while teaching; he encourages students to participate in any activities in the classroom. Furthermore, where possible, the teacher participates in classroom activities and acts as a role-model.*

It is evident from this extract that in addition to preparing teaching aids, the teacher in a CLT classroom should play the role of being an organiser, a motivator, and an independent participant. Although the views of P6 were similar to that of P2 and P12, he highlighted that while facilitating the teaching-learning process, the teacher can act as an independent participant. This has two implications. First, by participating independently, the teacher motivates his or her students. Second, he or she acts as students' role model. The role that the teacher plays as an independent participant is also a view shared by Richards and Rodgers (2001), Richards (2006) and Dörnyei (2013).

The remaining EFL instructors (P8, P10, P14, P15, and P17) had comparable conception to that of P2, P6, and P12. They underlined that the teacher is a "facilitator" (P8), a "co-ordinator" (P10), an "organiser" (P14), an "assessor" (P15), and a "manager and [an] authority" (P17). However, P17 expressed his views uniquely:

*In addition to being a facilitator, the teacher should have managerial skills and authority. This helps to make sure that the teaching-learning process is conducted smoothly. This means that the teacher should maintain discipline; otherwise, his role as a facilitator is meaningless. I believe that as an authority, the teacher should explain things to students, for example, certain grammar items require explanations by the teacher. The other important point is the discipline of students is deteriorating from time to time. Hence, unless the teacher acts as an authority in class, it is very difficult to make the class communicative.*

P17 noted that the teacher's role is to facilitate student learning. Unlike the other instructors, he outlined two additional roles of the CLT teacher. The term "authority" can explain the two additional roles that the teacher outlined. First, the teacher should maintain discipline. This



suggests that the instructor is highlighting issues of student discipline that negatively affect the teaching-learning process. Second, the teacher should provide inputs to the students by explicitly explaining the rules of the target language. Not only did P17 put the role of the teacher in a communicative context but also in a broader pedagogical context since he was affected by the students' ill-discipline.

#### **4.2.4. The Role of Learners in a CLT Classroom**

##### **Interview question 4: What do you think is the role of the learners in communicative language classrooms?**

The fourth interview question explored the instructors' conceptions of the role of learners in communicative language classrooms. In responding to this question, P2 stated:

*Learners play an active role in the teaching-learning process, for if it is the student himself/herself who should learn. Teaching does not necessarily mean student learning will take place. A shift from heavy dependence on teacher spoon-feeding to taking responsibility for their learning will be called for.*

According to P2, learners should take "responsibility for their own learning" in communicative classrooms. On the one hand, the notion of learner autonomy is fundamental to his conception of the learners' role in communicative classrooms. On the other hand, he is critical of learners' heavy overdependence on their classroom teacher because independent learners can make their decisions about what, where, and how to learn with their teacher playing a facilitative role. His views are in line with the literature on CLT that notes learner autonomy or independence is one of the most distinct learner roles in communicative classrooms (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Richards, 2006).

Concerning the learners' role in CLT, P11 stressed: "The roles of students in CLT are mainly participating in group work, asking and answering questions, using the target language where necessary in the classroom and outside of the classroom." His views about the role of learners in CLT classrooms align with his description of teacher roles in communicative classrooms; thus: "The teacher in communicative classroom should facilitate the teaching-learning process by organising students in pairs, group, and whole-class arrangements, making sure that the students can participate actively in the learning tasks."

P11 further outlined:

*Students can be dependent and independent in classrooms in general and language classrooms in particular. This is because there are situations where the teacher is expected to explain things and transfer knowledge. In such situations, students depend on their teachers. When it comes to doing exercises, making presentations, asking and answering questions, students work on their own. This also works when they are outside of classrooms because learning takes place not only in classrooms but also outside of classrooms.*

The instructor was asked to explain what he meant by “transfer knowledge”. Responding to this, he underlined that there are several language aspects, especially grammar and vocabulary, which require the provision of inputs from the teacher. Illustrating this, he pointed out that rules of grammar should be explained by the teacher, where necessary. The explanations given by the instructor seem to imply the debate on whether fluency or accuracy should be the focus of the teaching-learning process. He was further asked to comment on which of these should be given more emphasis in the teaching-learning process. He spelled out that there is no strict rule dictating which one should predominate, but the classroom teacher should understand the needs of his students and act accordingly, without compromising the objectives of the language course he or she is teaching. His descriptions of learner and teacher roles in communicative classrooms are rich and context-specific.

A similar view to that of the two instructors (P2 and P11) above was expressed by P3 who illuminated:

*As clearly indicated in the principles of CLT, students are expected to be active participants. They are there to learn by themselves; their active engagement in the learning and teaching process is mandatory. The interests and ambitions of the students need to be considered in the teaching-learning process; there should be learner-centred approach in implementing CLT in EFL teaching. The students are expected to construct their language through their active involvement.*

His accounts contain important terms that the literature on CLT and general pedagogy promote. For example, students as “active participants”, “student engagement”, the “interests and ambitions” of students, “learner-centred approach”, and “construct their language” are some of the pillars on which CLT is founded (Littlewood, 1981; 1984; Savignon, 1997; Richards, 2006). Although his discussion is centred on learner roles in communicative language classrooms, his use of the terms “interests and ambitions”, “engagement” and “learner-centred”, have implications in the general educational context of the country since the country’s education

roadmap advocates for the adoption of learner-centred approach throughout the education system (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2019).

The terms used by P1: “independent participant”, P3: “responsible learner”, P4: “active participant and contributor”, P5: “like an active citizen”, P6: “independent human being”, P8: “autonomous learner”, P12: “active communicator”, and P17: “independent thinker” are evidence of the shared views that the EFL instructors had regarding learner roles in communicative language classrooms. They held the same belief on the development of “learner autonomy or independence in communicative language classrooms, one of the most important learners' attributes lacking in most traditional classrooms”, according to P8.

The literature on CLT outlines several flexible roles that learners in CLT classrooms can play, depending on the nature and variety of learning tasks and contexts. For example, Richards (2006), Dörnyei (2013), Larsen-Freeman (2015) and Fan (2016) noted that learners can be active listeners, processors, contributors, researchers, problem-solvers and active participants in CLT classrooms. Although there are slight terminological disparities, the findings of this study also show that learners play various flexible roles in CLT-based classrooms: independent or autonomous learners, active participants, active citizens and communicators.

#### **4.2.5. Classroom Activities or Tasks in a CLT Classroom**

##### **Interview question 5: What do you think are the classroom activities or tasks used in CLT?**

Like the responses to the interview questions above, the EFL instructors shared similar conceptions about this item. P10, for example, underlined that he did not adhere to specific activities all the time. He remarked: “There [are] no special materials I can use for CLT. It is up to the instructor to use any materials. It is the approach of the teacher that matters to the materials to be used. Most of the time, what is recommended is authentic teaching materials.” Explaining what he meant by “It is the approach of the teacher that matters on the materials to be used,” he suggested that teachers have a decision to make about what type of teaching materials or learning tasks to design and use, depending on the nature of the specific topics they deal with:

*Teaching grammar [for example] requires a bit of lecturing about the forms; therefore, lecture notes and gapped lecture [a lecture that is different from the traditional one since it creates meaningful communicative contexts for learners to engage with the teacher to a certain extent] are required. If the teacher is teaching speaking skills, he or she is expected to design controlled*

*dialogues first, to help students master the intended language forms. He can then allow them to engage in free exchanges of ideas.*

According to P10, despite the flexibility and variety of classroom tasks used in the instructional process, emphasis should be placed on the use of authentic materials to make it reflective of “real-life situations”. Reportedly, he indicated that he usually uses newspapers, magazines, and true stories from different sources to help his students practise and use the target language meaningfully. Although his views on the challenges to the implementation of CLT are discussed under *Interview Question 11*, he indicated that the teacher: “is faced with the challenges of covering course syllabus on the one hand, and allowing the students to practise the target language with the help of authentic materials designed by the teacher besides the textbooks prescribed for specific courses, on the other.”

Another instructor (P2) held the same view to that of P10, but he had doubts about the practicality of CLT in classroom situations. This is treated under *Interview Question 11*. P2 expressed his conception of the types of activities or classroom tasks in CLT as follows:

*As much as I understand, the types of activities in CLT are interactive and allow students to work from their own experience, and it also allows them to work together to be good communicators. Accordingly, the teaching materials and resources can be their textbook, hand-outs, and even their life experience (if it is suitable as a discussion point or agenda). Such kinds of resources let the students actively interact and grasp the intended knowledge; however, the assumptions of teaching CLT mismatch the actual situation in the ‘CLT’ classroom.*

As the excerpt above demonstrates, P2 sounds unconvinced about the implementation of CLT in classroom situations, considering the realities both within and outside of classrooms. He pointed out: “What teachers claim they do in principle and what they do in classroom situations are contradictory.” His views were also shared by the other participants. Most importantly, the terms he used to describe the types of teaching materials or classroom tasks such as “interactive”, “allow students to work from their own experience”, and “allow them to work together to be good communicators”, are in line with the literature that the teaching materials should be authentic, interactive, meaningful, relevant and motivating (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Clarke & Silberstein, 1977; Ellis, 2003; Richards, 2006).

Responding to the same item, P16 indicated: “There are various tasks in CLT classroom. All the tasks have to make the learner practise the language in the classroom and his/her real-life situations. The most common ones are filling charts, dramatisation, debating, and presentation.”

The instructor further indicated: “Life is full of realities,” and the classroom situation should mirror these realities and prepare the students to face them. He further emphasised: “Lecture-fronted language classrooms, especially on grammar items are not worth the investment.” He expressed the belief that the “lecture method” should be integrated with learner-centred approaches; otherwise, it is difficult to produce students “who can succeed in their academic studies and who can function successfully” in their community.

The same view was held by P1 who maintained that communicative tasks are needed to realise the objective of CLT. He recommended that students should be provided with “a mix of grammar and meaning-based communicative activities.” Although the terms they used varied, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P14, and P15 had the same conception of the types of activities or classroom tasks in CLT. Unlike the preceding instructors who described the types of activities in terms of their characteristics such as being interactive, authentic, and creative, the latter outlined the specific activities that should be used in CLT classrooms. “Jigsaw exercises”, “information-gap activities”, “exercises based on problem-solving”, “role-plays”, “sentence games”, “class survey”, and “crossword puzzles” are the most common types of classroom tasks in CLT as reported by P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P14, and P15 respectively.

#### **4.2.6. Materials and Resources used in a CLT Classroom**

##### **Interview question 6: What do you think are the teaching materials and resources used in CLT-based classrooms?**

Some of the instructors already discussed their views to this item when they described the types of instructional activities or classroom tasks in CLT. P5, for example, gave more emphasis to “utilising appropriate materials addressing the students’ differences and appealing to their interests, needs, especially their communicative needs.” He mentioned that the teaching materials should address the communicative needs of the learners. He also stated that teachers should adapt reading and listening texts from such authentic sources like newspapers and story-books to teach grammar lessons and major language skills interactively. He further exemplified:

*Such types of materials create student-student and student-teacher and teacher-student interactions. They are also the base for further exercises in the four language skills and language areas such as vocabulary and grammar. In our discussion earlier, I talked about*

*authentic materials responding to one of your questions. I believe that these are some of the authentic materials that the teacher can use to improve students' language skills in general.*

P5 outlined various types of interaction occurring in classrooms: student-student interaction, teacher-student interaction, and student-teacher interactions. This implies that he has a comprehensive understanding of one of the qualities of communicative language teaching materials: that they are interactive (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Clarke & Silberstein, 1977; Ellis, 2003; Richards, 2006). The instructor also illuminated that language skills should be taught in integration using well-designed texts. This is additional evidence of his conception of one of the precepts of CLT: that the major language skills should be presented in integration in classroom situations to reflect real-life communication (Brumfit, 1986).

The interview data illustrated that P3, P5, P7, P9, P11, P14, P16, and P17 held similar views concerning the types of teaching materials in CLT. For example, P3 draws our attention to: “course modules which include several communicative activities like self-introduction, describing objects and things, tackling vocabulary and grammar exercises using reading passages.” He underlined that teaching materials that motivate the students to engage in meaningful communication among themselves should be used in communicative classrooms. He further reported: “The availability of physical resources is an additional benefit. For example: Recorded dialogues between real people can be presented in a classroom situation to help learners notice both the forms and the different strategies they employ when they involve in a genuine exchange of ideas.”

P3 was asked to comment on the problems relating to the lack or shortage of electronic resources. He remarked: “The best resources are the teacher and students themselves. By the way, almost all students carry cell phones, and the teacher can use these tools to his or her students' advantage.” Unlike some of the instructors whose views are discussed below, P3 strongly argued that teachers should not use “the absence of electronic resources such as tape-recorders, TVs and interactive boards as an excuse not to implement communicative language teaching approach in language classrooms.” As the above excerpt demonstrates, although P3 indicated that CLT can be successfully implemented in classroom situations in the absence of electronic resources, his views about “almost all students carry cell phone” is interesting because classroom teachers can exploit this gadget to teach grammar lessons and other language skills.

Another instructor (P5) remarked: “Tape recorders, audiovisuals, charts, televisions, and any materials or resources which expose the learner to the target language should be used. Authentic materials either in electronic or print forms are more recommended.” He further stated: “Students should be given the chance to practice the target language in language laboratories.” However, the instructor stated: “I am not referring to complex laboratories, but from what I know, simple language labs can be established using desktop computers, speakers, and other cheap equipment.” His views are in contrast to those expressed by P3 who strongly argued that teachers and students are rich resources that can be exploited to students’ advantages. Regarding the availability of the resources he mentioned, he emphasised that private universities generate income and their customers are their students; therefore, they are expected to furnish their classrooms with more up-to-date resources.

Unlike P5, P7 commented that CLT-based classrooms do not require special equipment or teaching materials:

*I do not believe that there is any difference between teaching materials that are used for language classrooms and others. Teaching materials like books, teacher’s guide, and student’s book, chalk, duster, aids like pictures, magazines, and newspapers, tape-recording and cassettes.*

He reiterated that these materials are not unique to language teaching. Illuminating his views further, he stated:

*What makes the teaching materials in use in language classrooms unique is the way they are designed to teach language skills. For example, pictures can be used to teach vocabulary or speaking skills. The same can be used to teach numbers in mathematics classes. That is why I said it is how they are designed and used that makes them unique. Otherwise, the teaching materials in language classrooms and other classrooms are not essentially different.*

Although the instructor expressed his views differently, he proposed using authentic teaching materials like the majority of the instructors who shared his conceptions.

As stated above, most of the instructors had the same conceptions of the types of teaching materials that should be used in CLT-based classrooms. Their description focused on the nature of the materials rather than on their specific versions: P9, P11, P14, P16, and P17 respectively pointed out the teaching materials used in communicative language classrooms should be “authentic”, “interactive”, “life-like”, “engaging” and “meaningful”. The EFL instructors’ description illustrates that they seem to have a better understanding what instructional materials

should be like: that they should be authentic, interactive, life-like, engaging and meaningful. This description of the instructional materials in CLT is in line with the characteristics highlighted in the literature. To this effect, Littlewood (1981), Richards (2001), Richards and Rodgers (2001) as well as Ellis (2003) indicate that instructional materials in CLT should be authentic, interactive, meaningful and appropriate.

#### **4.2.7. The Role of Grammar in the Academic and Non-academic Lives of Students**

**Interview question 7: What is the role of grammar in the academic and non-academic lives of students?**

##### **4.2.7.1. The Role of Grammar in the Academic Lives of Students**

Whereas all the instructors agreed on the crucial roles that grammar plays in students' academic life, they differed on how it should be taught. P5 noted:

*Grammar has its role in the academic lives of the students because it provides [them] with different types of tasks and activities that help them to practise the language. This will result in accuracy development. It is a major tool that can be used by the students to accomplish different things; for example, they can succeed in their studies if they have good grammar knowledge.*

The above excerpt illustrates that P5 focuses on accuracy development rather than on fluency development, which is one of the hotly contested areas in CLT (Thornbury, 2008; Ellis, 2014). He further noted: "Without grammar, it is difficult to express messages; without correct grammar, it is very difficult to express clear messages." Although he noted that grammar is a means through which meanings are conveyed, he strongly favours "correctness" of university students' grammar in school contexts. He further explained his view by stressing:

*Schools are places where students learn the formal language and other aspects of formality. As such, they have to use correct grammar to succeed in their academic studies. The focus of the teaching of grammar should be on form, without neglecting the communication aspect.*

Even though he remarked that the communication aspect should not be disregarded, he seemed to favour "correctness" in teaching grammar. In the literature on the role of grammar, the relative importance of grammar has been subject to considerable debate, and the views expressed by the instructor are no exception (Thornbury, 2008; Ellis, 2014).



P6 indicated that he had “positive” views of the role of grammar in the academic lives of students. By “positive”, he meant: “Grammar helps them to overcome their lacks and make improvements accordingly. In their day-to-day interactions with others, it repairs their deficiency regarding their knowledge of the formal system of the language.” Like P5, P6 appeared to place more emphasis on the formal aspects of grammar, especially in school contexts. He reiterated that university students are adults, and they should be able to use correct grammar. The use of “broken grammar may apply in informal contexts. A very good example of this is text messaging, which has contributed negatively to the deterioration of the English language ability of our students.” He is convinced that the informal language in text messaging has contributed negatively to the teaching-learning process since many students tend to use informal words in paragraphs and essays they submit for assessment. He cited the “frequent use of *u, w/c, b/se, cuz, pc, how is you, she have*, and the inattention and insensitivity to tenses and other aspects of grammar in the texts have an extra burden on the classroom teacher.”

P6 also shared his doubts about the sensitivity of students to the role that grammar plays in their academic lives. He argued:

*My expectation about students’ understanding of this issue is somewhat negative since the students leave behind all the grammar they have learned in classes. They do not realise if grammar can be used outside classroom situations. They do not care about engaging in additional reading and practice of their grammar. They are concerned with passing examinations. Changing their attitude is also another challenging job that teachers have to deal with.*

According to P6, students’ insensitivity to their education, especially to English courses, is a “nation-wide issue that the government is trying to address.” It is apparent from the above excerpt that P6 thinks that classroom teachers are faced with the challenges of covering course syllabuses and dealing with the negative attitudes towards education in general. Despite these constraints, he still emphasised that if “All stakeholders put in place workable systems and ways of maintaining discipline, the issues can be addressed. Students tend to realise the importance of education when they are faced with the challenges of real-life employment settings.”

The instructor shared his personal experiences, which exemplified the accounts he provided above:

*I had the chance to meet one of my former students in a certain NGO. The discussion with her was very genuine. She told me that she was experiencing problems with report writing, one of the topics I often teach in one of the English courses at my university. She said that she is still struggling with how reports are written. She acknowledged that they did not care about what our teachers were doing to help us with their language. She even said that she and her friends used to download assignments from the internet and hand them into their teacher for correction.*

It is apparent from what P6 reported that he was humbled to hear such genuine confessions from one of his students. He strongly argued for the incorporation of continuous awareness-raising sessions in the teaching-learning process so that students can see the “links between what happens in the classroom and what happens outside of classroom situations.” In pedagogical terms, the instructor is calling for strengthening university-industry linkages, a means through which students get a hands-on experience about what happens when they commence their lives as employees.

Supporting the views of P5 and P6, P9 indicated that grammar plays an indispensable role in the academic and non-academic lives of students. He noted: “Grammar is important, but in my opinion, it must not be always mandatory. In the academic environment, grammar is mandatory. On the contrary, grammar should not be mandatory in the non-academic world because the focus has to be on communication.” He made a distinction between the role that grammar plays in and outside of school contexts. Illuminating his views of the role that grammar plays in academic contexts, the instructor argued that if students can use “correct” grammar, they can easily express their ideas. This will also help them to “score better grades not only in English courses in which grammar topics are taught but also in other academic subjects where they are required to submit and present numerous assignments, term papers, and projects.”

P9 also shared his observation of the “disappointment” of other university instructors concerning the “students’ poor language proficiency in general and that of grammar in particular.” He reported that the discussions he often holds with his colleagues about the “deteriorating language command of the students, has even forced other instructors to shift to the use of students’ mother tongue to conduct lectures.” His views regarding the role of grammar are wide-ranging and are not course-specific. He highlighted the challenges that other instructors are facing due to the students’ language deficiencies. He stressed: “Grammar and other language skills should be taught aggressively since they determine students’ success in their school lives as well as in their real lives.”

P8, P12, P15, P16, and P18 concurred that grammar plays a vital role in students' academic lives. Like P5, P6 and P9 favoured the formal aspects of grammar that should be given more emphasis not only by students but also by their teachers. This is attributed to the grammar-related problems discussed above. Sharing the views of P5, P6, and P9, P8, P12, P15, P16, and P18 pointed to the multi-faceted problems that students are facing as a result of their "deficient grammar" (P12). Many of the students "repeat courses" (P8); some of them "drop out of schools for lacking the basic skills, one [of which] is grammar" (P16); "the majority of them are unable to construct grammatical sentences" (P15); and "they cannot use correct grammar to conduct public speaking" (P18).

The observations highlighting the grammar-related problems of the students are evidence of the instructors' conceptions of the role of grammar, especially that of correct grammar. The above instructors seemed to favour accuracy over fluency. Their conceptions seemed might be explained by the severity of the students' deficiency in grammar, as the above excerpts illustrate. Their conceptions are consistent with the explicit teaching of grammar recommended by some language theorists and researchers (Myhill, Lines & Watson, 2012; Dahl, 2015).

#### **4.2.7.2. The Role of Grammar in the Non-academic Lives of Students**

The instructors were also requested to describe their conceptions of the role of grammar in the non-academic lives of students.

Responding to this item, P5 expressed different strands of conception. On the one hand, he felt that if students are using the target language in informal situations, the focus of the exchange "should be on conveying meaning, which can be accomplished without correct grammar." On the other hand, if students, "are employed in public or private organisations, formality, correctness, and accuracy are often the requirements." Moreover, he pinpointed:

*We know that certain organisations give language proficiency exams to screen potential employees, and they tend to focus on accuracy as well as fluency. Students who do not have better command in the target language are unlikely to get employment opportunities in such organisations. Formality or correctness is an essential requirement at workplaces.*

The views of P5 are context-specific. He gave more attention to the use of "correct" or formal grammar in situations such as in schools and employment settings, whereas he stressed that the conveying of meaning should be prioritised in informal settings, which require the use of spoken

English. He further remarked: “Problems about correctness or accuracy, especially with the written language are not tolerable formally since they have serious consequences for the image of the entire organisation.” Considering the views he strongly expressed concerning the role of grammar, the instructor accorded more attention to teaching “correct” grammar. His accounts of the teaching strategies he employed in teaching grammar lessons are depictive of the attention he accorded to “correct grammar”. His views of the teaching the strategies employed in grammar lessons are discussed under *Interview question 9*.

Commenting on what role grammar plays in students’ non-academic lives, P9 made another distinction between formal and informal contexts. By formal contexts, he meant: “the use of the target language for official purposes.” He exemplified this with the challenges students are facing in writing letters of application to be sent to employment agencies or potential employers. The following excerpt is an additional illustration of his conception of grammar’s role in students’ out-of-school lives:

*I know from experience that although students have learned the English language for more than ten years, they are still struggling to express their ideas grammatically and meaningfully. They usually request other able students to write letters of application on their behalf. This is very disappointing. What is going to happen to [such] students if they get the employment opportunity they apply [for]? It is going to be a disappointment not only for them but also for the employer, especially if the students are unable to succeed at workplaces.*

P9 remarked that in such contexts learners should exhibit the ability to express their ideas grammatically and meaningfully. Regarding the role of grammar in informal contexts, he argued:

*Informality is defined by context. For example, talking to an elderly person from abroad might involve being formal in informal contexts. The use of certain informal structures might offend people. Therefore, students should be careful about the selection of their words and the way they arrange them to produce sentences. If they are communicating with their friends, I do not think that correct grammar is a big deal. For instance, we see the language our students are using on social media platforms. Although some of their language items are embarrassing, they somehow express their ideas.*

P9’s extended discussion of issues of formality and informality highlights several interesting aspects of his views of the target language in general and that of grammar in particular. The distinction that the instructor made within the informal context itself is evidence of his strong views about the role that accuracy plays over fluency. This is because much of his discussion centred on the use of correct grammar to convey messages or meanings.

Although P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13, P14 and P17 agreed that grammar plays a positive role in students' academic and non-academic lives, they seemed to differ from the other instructors since they tended to favour fluency over accuracy. The excerpts below substantiate their views. For instance, P1 noted: "Grammar is an important tool which helps students to exchange information. In different communicative contexts, students can use their grammar to communicate their ideas with the people they are communicating." The instructor highlighted that grammar is a useful tool for communication.

While expressing his views on the role of grammar in the non-academic lives of students, P2 remarked: "Grammar is a mechanism that people can use to exchange their ideas, feelings, emotions, troubles and so on. It helps people to make themselves clear to other people." His use of the terms "to exchange ideas, feelings, emotions..." and "to make themselves clear to other people" show that he is in favour of fluency over accuracy. He further said: "A language is a tool for communication and grammar which is one part of language is a more specific tool useful for communication which happens in different contexts." He also mentioned: "As teachers, we should help our students to express their ideas as fluently as possible." Although he prioritised fluency over accuracy, he noted: "I am not saying that grammar should not be taught at all, but it should be taught in context to realise the objective of fluency in our students. Form-based grammar exercises may be helpful for students, but teachers should not overdo it."

In the same way, P3 articulated:

*Students' accurate use of the grammar of the language is something that can be developed gradually. By the way, it is very simple to teach students the rules of grammar and ask them to produce rules or accurate sentences. However, it is very difficult to make the students use the language fluently by simply teaching forms or structures. That is why due attention should be given to fluency.*

Although P3 did not neglect the importance of the explicit teaching of grammar, he strongly argued that students' control over the accurate use of the language in communication is a skill that they can develop over a long time, highlighting that skills development is a gradual process. He further argued: "If students are given continuous practices in the language, they can improve their form-based knowledge of the target language in general." The instructor suggests that students should be engaged in communicative grammar exercises to learn the formal aspects of the target language in meaningful contexts.

As stated above, P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13, P14, and P17 had the same conception concerning the role of grammar in the students' non-academic lives. Like the other instructors in the group favouring fluency development, they stressed that the role of grammar in the non-academic lives of the students is to help them “transmit ideas” (P4), “exchange ideas” (P7), “transfer information” (P8), “convey meanings and messages” (P10), “facilitate communication” (P11), “a tool for the transmission of ideas and feelings”(P13), “bring people together by helping them to exchange ideas” (P14), and “is used as an instrument for the expression of feelings, emotions, and ideas” ( P17).

The terms they used show that grammar plays an important role in realising various communicative intentions of the language users. The instructors emphasised that the main objective of the teaching of grammar should be helping learners to use the language in real-life. They argued that attention should be given to helping the students become “fluent speakers of the language” (P7, P10, and P17). The views expressed by this group of EFL instructors have empirical support from the proponents of the weaker version of CLT who emphasise the acquisition of the target language through everyday communication, without much direct or explicit teaching of grammar (Nunan, 2007; Coyle, 2008).

#### **4.2.8. The Place for Grammar in CLT**

##### **Interview question 8: What do you think is the place of grammar in CLT?**

The place for grammar in CLT is one of the interview questions that elicited conflicting views from private university EFL instructors: the instructors who argued that grammar holds a central position in CLT and those who claimed that it occupies a peripheral position in CLT.

##### **4.2.8.1. Grammar's Central Role in CLT**

The instructors who adhered to the view that grammar holds a central position in CLT underlined that the goal of grammar teaching is to facilitate fluency development. P5, P6, P9, P15, and P18 fall into this category. The following excerpts illustrate their conceptions:

*Grammar occupies a central position in CLT as it is the means by which students could organize messages or information in any communication activity as effectively and efficiently as possible or in enhancing their ability to use the target language: grammar for communication, and academic purposes in combination with other language skills (P5).*

*It [Grammar] has an important role in communicative language teaching. Like any other language skill, it is treated properly. This is because the language skills [listening, speaking, reading and writing] are meaningless without grammar. I must emphasize that the teaching of grammar may differ from context to context, but it is the backbone of any language learning process (P6).*

*As a language sub-skill, grammar has a big role in CLT. It can be taught inclusively with the four major language skills [listening, speaking, reading and writing (P9).*

*Grammar is actually given crucial emphasis in CLT. The problem is we, EFL teachers, do not carry out the teaching effectively. Either way, it is designed to be taught (P15).*

*In EFL contexts, it is difficult to think of CLT without grammar because if our objective is to develop our students' language skills, it is necessary to treat grammar well. We know that our students are facing different kinds of problems especially concerning grammar. Therefore, it should be given due consideration in the teaching learning process (P18).*

Although the instructors differed on the methods of teaching grammar, they concurred that it has a central place in CLT. They maintained that it is among the critical aspects of language teaching in EFL contexts. Some of the EFL instructors in this category attributed this to the multi-faceted grammar problems of their students, and the most logical way to deal with this is “by integrating it in the language teaching programme” (P9). The other instructors pointed out that it is “one of the aspects of language learning that determines students’ success” (P6), and “an aspect that deserves enough class time” (P18).

The conceptions of the above instructors are better understood in light of communicative grammar. The proponents of communicative grammar argue that grammar should be a vital aspect of the instructional process (Bygate & Tornkyn, 1994; Thompson, 1996; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Chen, 2003). The instructors and writers seemed to agree that grammar should be taught adequately communicatively. Moreover, they stressed that grammar should be integrated with the major language skills to help learners to practise and use the target language in meaningful contexts.

#### **4.2.8.2. Grammar’s Peripheral Role in CLT**

The second group of instructors reported that grammar does not hold a central position in CLT. They did not embrace the view that CLT abandons grammar or the teaching of grammar altogether; however, they disputed that the contents of teaching and learning in CLT are not

organised around grammatical units. Out of the 18 instructors who participated in the interview, 11 of them fall into this category: P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13, P14, and P17.

Elucidating his conceptions of the peripheral place for grammar in CLT, P1 noted: “CLT does not give much emphasis to grammar; this does not mean that grammar is not taught in CLT. The way it is to be taught in CLT is different from the way it is taught in the traditional approach or grammar-translation method.” The instructor acknowledged that grammar does not hold a central position in CLT. He also did not believe that it is neglected. An interesting aspect of the instructor’s conception is related to the way grammar should be taught in CLT. Although he differed in his conception of the place for grammar in CLT, he still argued that it should be taught communicatively. According to the instructor, this is one of the characteristic features that distinguish CLT from other “traditional methods” [methods he described as lecture-fronted or teacher-centred].

P1 further argued that grammar it is difficult to think of language skills without grammar since it is the “rule governing the way we put letters into words, words into sentences, and sentences into other bigger units of language.” However, P9 also remarked: “The explicit teaching of grammar has been a controversial issue in language teaching. Communicative language teaching, I believe, tries not to give it importance, unlike traditional methods. It tries to integrate [grammar] with other language skills.”

Contrary to the views that he has expressed above, P9 indicated that there are instances where the explicit teaching of grammar is worth considering:

*With adult learners, the deductive and inductive approaches can be mixed. It is also possible to explain the rules of grammar at length because of their experiences and maturity. I believe that this does not apply to young learners at lower grade levels. I used to be a teacher at primary school and young learners want to learn through interaction, and giving them explanations about the rules of grammar is meaningless.*

One possible explanation for P9’s wide-ranging views of the place of grammar in CLT might be his long years of teaching and research experience on an array of topics, one of which is the application of CLT in classroom situations. Despite the controversies surrounding the place for grammar in CLT, he underscored that whether it is presented alone, or integrated with other language skills, grammar plays a crucial role in the lives of students. He further noted: “Specific teaching contexts and the needs of our students should be taken into account before we decide



matters such as how, when, and why grammar should be taught.” He outlined the factors that should be taken into consideration before specific decisions are made concerning what type of grammar should be taught, why it should be taught, and what specific classroom strategies should be employed.

P2 who held the view that CLT does not accord prominence to grammar explained:

*As its name suggests, the syllabus of communicative language teaching is organized around communicative functions, instead of grammar items. I think grammar is also one of the topics in communicative language teaching even if the syllabus is not organized around grammatical units. Grammar is treated as part of reading passages, dialogues, and other exercises. Since the focus is on the development of the communication skills of students, grammar is treated inductively.*

Like P1, P2 felt that grammar is treated inductively in CLT and that it is not the major language item around which the syllabus is organised. The instructor also highlighted that students are directed to using the language in context, and through that process, they develop not only their communicative competence but also their grammatical or linguistic competence. The instructor exemplified his views as follows:

*Communicative language teaching allows students to pick the target language in a natural setting. While reading passages, doing speaking exercises, writing sentences and paragraphs, and doing vocabulary exercises, students develop not only their language skills but also the grammar of the target language. They can learn grammar by doing other exercises.*

The instructor argued that grammar does not hold a central position in CLT. It is not the theme or topic around which the syllabus is organised. In his view, students learn the grammar of the target language inductively. However, the instructor strongly argued that grammar should be taught properly, especially in EFL contexts because the students are required to demonstrate more developed language skills and knowledge.

P3 is also among the EFL instructors who believed that grammar holds a peripheral position in CLT. As the following excerpt illustrates, the instructor thinks that grammar teachers should allocate a sufficient amount of time to grammar lessons, especially in EFL contexts: “The place of grammar in CLT is not noticeable unlike the case in traditional language teaching methods. I think CLT gives equal emphasis to language skills, grammar, and vocabulary in principle. The emphasis that should be given to grammar or the other language aspects is something that the classroom teacher decides.”

Even though P3's conceptions of the place of grammar in CLT are comparable to that of the other instructors in this group, he underlined that the classroom situation presents teachers with different realities. Substantiating his view, he remarked that although the students at the same grade level are required to develop the syllabus-bound skills, knowledge, and attitude, their differences force classroom teachers to take several measures. He suggested that instructors should understand their students' language proficiency level before they design activities or use those in the textbooks.

According to P3, the classroom teacher can increase grammar's prominence in the instructional process if students' "desperately need grammar, and if the students have the basic grammar knowledge but are unable to use it in real communication, the teacher should help them to achieve this objective." In general, the instructor underlined the importance of context-specific factors in deciding the extent to which grammar should be taught, although he acknowledged that grammar's place in CLT is not as prominent as it is in non-communicative language teaching methods such as the grammar-translation method.

P4's account of the place of grammar in CLT is similar to the EFL instructors whose conceptions were discussed above. However, his views are better described as misconceptions since he bases his description on the link he draws between "communicative" and "speaking skills:

*Since communicative language teaching methodology [approach] tries to develop the communicative language skills of students, I don't think that it gives more emphasis to grammar than the other skills. More attention is given to developing students' speaking skills, but the other skills are also treated properly. If it has to give more emphasis, I think it is on fluency. The method [approach] is a reflection of the natural environment.*

The above excerpt shows not only the instructor's conception of the place of grammar in CLT but also his misconception of the goal of language teaching in CLT. This is contrary to the integrated presentation and practice of the major language skills (Ellis, 2014; Littlewood, 2014). According to the instructor, the target-language syllabus founded on CLT aims at developing students' speaking skills. He mentioned that fluency is given more emphasis than accuracy, hence reducing the prominence of grammar in CLT. He illustrated the phrase "the natural environment" as follows. In a natural setting, people speak to each other without worrying about the "correctness" of their grammar; they aim at exchanging their ideas, information, and feelings.

However, like P3 and many in this group, the instructor proposed that grammar should be treated properly in classroom situations. Hence, he argued:

*In EFL contexts, students have limited opportunities to use the language outside of classroom situations. Speaking of our contexts, university students in Ethiopia have very poor language proficiency. Since the medium of instruction is English, their success is affected by their language ability. One of the areas that should be treated well is their grammar. By the way, instructors teaching English as well as other subjects are complaining about the deterioration of the language of students from time to time. The problem is more serious as far as their grammar is concerned. Hence, in principle, I understand that CLT may give more emphasis to fluency but grammar in our context should be taught adequately and meaningfully because our students need it.*

His views are supportive of one of the rationale behind this study: the multifaceted problems that students are facing due to their deficient grammar. He also highlighted the far-reaching consequences of these problems since other instructors teaching major-area courses have also found it difficult to conduct the teaching-learning process smoothly.

In summary, the above discussion has revealed that many EFL instructors shared the view that CLT does not give more prominence to grammar. Therefore, it is important to note that P7, P8, P10, P11, P13, P14, and P17 respectively pointed out: “little emphasis”, “minimal emphasis”, “limited attention”, “inadequate attention”, “slight attention”, “minor emphasis”, and “not enough attention” is given to grammar in CLT.

#### **4.2.9. The Specific Strategies Employed by EFL Instructors to Teach Grammar Lessons**

**Interview question 9: What are the specific strategies you employ to teach grammar lessons?**

As part of this interview question, the instructors described the teaching materials they used, their specific classroom techniques, their major classroom organisation patterns, the time they allocated to lectures and student-to-student interaction, student-to-teacher interaction and teacher-to-student interaction. The purpose of this item was two-fold: first, it was to examine the methods of teaching grammar that the instructors employed in classroom situations; second, it was to use their responses to crosscheck them against the observation results; that is, if what private university EFL instructors claimed they do and what they did in classroom situations were consistent.

Three key themes or categories emerged, examining the responses given to this interview question by the instructors: the context-based (inductive) approach, the rule-based (deductive) approach, and the hybrid approach (the use of both the inductive and deductive approaches).

#### **4.2.9.1.Context-based (Inductive) Approach**

The first category of the EFL instructors comprised P5, P6, P8, P9, P12, P15 and P16 who adhered to the inductive approach. The excerpts below illustrate the views of the instructors in this category. P5, for example, pointed out:

*I try to teach grammar communicatively. I don't give emphasis to structure. I try to make the learners use the structure or grammar I discuss in class. Mainly, I make the learners to have their own views on the grammar. I employ inductive approach to the teaching of grammar. I don't directly discuss the structure. I try to give a lot of examples which have direct or indirect connections to the learners' experiences. Finally, I make them deduce the rules underlying the grammar discussed in class.*

The instructor insisted that he mainly employed the inductive approach to teach grammar lessons. He explained that he did not directly discuss grammar rules. As the above excerpt shows, he, instead, emphasised providing examples of the contexts or sentences in which the grammar items to help his students deduce the grammar rules by themselves. His description also exemplifies the efforts he exerts to link the grammar lessons and the learners' experiences. He further indicated that he used cue cards and exercises from the textbook and supplementary materials to teach grammar lessons.

According to P5, his most preferred classroom organisation patterns were pair and group work, which he varied depending on the nature of the grammar exercises in the textbook and those he prepared himself. He reported that he mainly encouraged student-to-student interactions, although he also allowed teacher-to-student interactions to clarify certain grammar items and provide feedback, and student-to-teacher interactions to allow his students to present their views and ask questions. The instructor reported that he did not teach grammar explicitly, whereas, in his additional description of his teaching strategies, he acknowledged that he usually took a few minutes at the end of the grammar lessons to discuss grammar rules and check his students' comprehension of the grammar rules.

P6 who reportedly employed the inductive approach described his classroom as follows:

*Of course, teaching grammar is not different from the others [language skills such as speaking and writing]. Maybe, what makes it different is the techniques and methods to be employed for each language skill. Mostly, while I teach grammar, I start not from the structure of the language, but I usually tell my students, for example, to write what they did once upon a time, what they are doing now or what they plan to do in the future. They try to construct simple sentences. Then, I forward it [them] to the class and ask them for feedback.*

As the above excerpt depicts, although the instructor did not explicitly state that he used the inductive approach, the specific attributes of the approach are inherent in his description. The approach adheres to the principle that students learn grammar and other language skills through the interactions in which they engage with their classmates, the activities they do, the sentences they construct, or the texts they read (Richards, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Like P5, he usually used the textbook, exercises from supplementary materials and the suggested references for the course. He also stated that he prepares his teaching materials to teach the grammar items covered in the course syllabus. His classroom organisation patterns were also pair and group work in addition to whole-class discussions that he used to give feedback on students' works. The time he allocated to grammar lessons is consistent with the syllabus; however, he indicated that he allowed his students additional practise time, especially when he felt that the students had obvious weaknesses regarding the specific grammar rules.

P6 further reported that he usually employed various interaction patterns while teaching grammar lessons. Accordingly, he flexibly used individual work, pair work, group work and whole-class discussions. He also pointed out that he varied the group work patterns that he used in teaching grammar lessons. In his description, he outlined:

*I employ conventional group work pattern where students do exercises as a group and report their answers to the class through their representatives. I also use cross-group arrangements where the students work in one group and then mix with members of other groups to get additional practice on the grammar topic I teach.*

From his description, it is evident that student-student interaction is the most common interaction pattern in teaching grammar lessons. Regarding the time that he allocated to grammar lessons, his views are similar to that of P5. However, he emphasized that he gave his students additional practice exercises in grammar "to fill the deficiencies that the students have". He also stated that he asked his students to consult him outside of classroom situations concerning the additional grammar exercises "although very few students use this opportunity". The instructor was asked to comment on the frequency with which he employed the strategies he described. He reported

that he employed them as frequently as possible; however, he acknowledged that large class size was the major difficulty he faced in teaching grammar lessons communicatively.

P8, who also adhered to the inductive approach, remarked that if the goal of teaching grammar is to help the students to use it in different communicative contexts, it is advisable to present it contextually. He also noted that the explicit teaching of grammar encourages “memorization or rote learning which cannot be translated to real communication”. To illustrate this, he recounted a personal story of his experience as a high school student. He reported that his English language teachers lectured on the grammar rules which he and his classmates had to memorize. He further reported that he and his classmates were unable to communicate with tourists who were visiting historical sites in his hometown. The instructor used his personal experience to explain his views on the importance of using the inductive approach to teach grammar lessons. He believes that the approach helps learners to practise the target grammar in context, a view which is consistent with the literature (Richards, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2015).

In his further description of the strategies he used to teach grammar lessons, P8 indicated that he regularly asked his students to read relatively longer texts and underline the grammar item which was the focus of the classroom discussion. He also reported that he told his students to “read dialogues and identify mistakes in the use of the grammar item”. According to the instructor, the intention behind such exercises was to draw the attention of the students to the form of the grammar rule that he was teaching. He reported that he employed this technique, instead of explaining the grammar rule directly to his students. His description further revealed that he organised his students to work in groups and as a whole class. His description of the techniques he employed implies the progression of individual work through group work to whole class organisation patterns.

According to P8, EFL students “should be given ample time and exercises to learn and use the grammar items in the syllabus. It is also important to study the needs of the students and introduce additional grammar items.” He, however, articulated that the “excessive number of students in the classrooms is very challenging to implement my techniques. As much as possible, I try to do what is good for the students. I try to create chances for the students to use the language in meaningful contexts.” In addition to describing his major teaching strategies, the

instructor also highlighted the most commonly mentioned challenges (large class size) in language classrooms. All the instructors who participated in this study shared his concern.

P9 had the same view of how grammar should be taught. The instructor explained his strategies as follows:

*The specific strategies I use to teach grammar are first, exemplification by providing context for the grammar topic I teach. Next to the context and exemplification, I try to create a story or find a reading passage which helps me in creating more contexts for the topics of the grammar taught. Finally, I prepare and use exercises for the grammar topic.*

The above excerpt explicates that the most outstanding aspect of his teaching strategy is the creation of a context for his students to experiment with the grammar topic. By “context” he means the provision of meaningful sentences in which the grammar item is used. This is his conception of the “simplistic” environment in which his students can practise the rules of grammar. According to the instructor, stories or reading passages give the learners the chance to use the language in meaningful contexts, which he described as “a sophisticated context”. Although his wording might be debatable, his conception of the inductive method is consistent with the literature which articulates creating meaningful communicative context is fundamental to the inductive approach (Ellis, 1991; Cook, 2001).

P9 also provided an additional thorough description of his strategies:

*In grammar lessons, the major classroom organisation method I use is arranging my students in pairs. I also use a group of three and four students where possible. I may use very limited time to lecture the grammar rule and check my students’ understanding. I use different classroom interaction patterns, but the major one is the interaction between students. I encourage self-correction and peer correction. Regarding time allocation, I believe that the syllabus has allocated enough time, but if I feel that my students need additional practice, I do not hesitate to use more time. I feel that time should not be an issue because teachers have the freedom to use their discretion and adjust things depending on the needs of their students.*

While P9 reported he mainly employed the inductive approach to teach grammar lessons, he indicated he also used the deductive approach sparingly, especially to explain grammar rules and, most importantly, to check his students’ comprehension of the grammar lessons. Like all the instructors in this category, teacher-to-student interaction is evident in his classroom, but pair and group work was his preferred classroom organisation pattern. It is also evident from the above extract that his preferred organisation pattern is student-to-student interaction [based on

the pair and group work patterns he used]. He used self-correction to help his students to identify and correct their grammar errors by themselves. Peer correction is also part of the student-to-student interaction, which the instructor preferred to use in the teaching-learning process.

Regarding time allocation, P9 underscored that he is “flexible”. By contrast, some of the instructors in this category stressed that the shortage of time was one of the challenges of teaching grammar communicatively. P9 reported that university instructors have the freedom to adjust the time allocated to the contents of the course, considering the needs of their students. He also indicated: “The focus that should be given to other language aspects should not be compromised just for the sake of grammar.”

The remaining EFL instructors labelled P12, P15 and P16 reported that they adhered to the view that the inductive approach should be employed to teach grammar lessons. This is evident from the following excerpts: “employing [an] inductive approach” (P12), “providing contexts for the students’ use of the target language” (P15), and “teaching grammar in context using pair and group work” (P16).

#### **4.2.9.2. The Rule-based (Deductive) Approach**

As the subsequent excerpts from the interviews revealed, eight instructors in the second group of favoured the deductive approach to the teaching of grammar lessons. This group comprised P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P10, P11 and P18. The accounts they provided corresponded to their adherence to the deductive approach. They ascribed their choice of the method to their students’ grammar deficiency. They remarked that by teaching grammar lessons deductively, it is possible to create awareness in their students to help them use the target language when required. They also argued that since university students are adults, they can use other resources to improve their grammar knowledge, based on the explanations from classroom discussions. Although the instructors evidently favoured the deductive approach, they were not totally opposed to using the inductive approach. They claimed that following their explicit explanations of the grammar items, the learners should be allowed sufficient time to practise the grammar items in context. Their descriptions, however, seemed to show that most class discussions focussed on form or rule-based exercises that the students had to do.



With respect to his preference for the deductive approach, P1 stated:

*Lecturing is the most dominant strategy I use in teaching grammar. This is because it gives me the chance to discuss the grammar topics in detail and allow my students to do many exercises. Many of the sentences written by our students are full of grammatical errors. This shows that they have serious problems with grammar. That is why, I usually explain the grammar rules and ask my students to write correct sentences, correct grammatical mistakes at sentence and paragraph level. I also give examples of the situations in which the grammar item is used. I believe that when the grammar of sentences is changed, their meanings are also changed.*

The description above shows that the instructor mainly relies on the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. The focus of his teaching is on the rules of grammar rather than on how these rules are used in communicative contexts. This contradicts the communicative focus of the grammar exercises in the courses syllabuses (FDRE, The Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2019). The instructor further pointed out that he gives more emphasis to error correction, sentence construction and other form-based exercises, which are typical of the deductive approach to the teaching of grammar. The above extract further illustrates that the teacher usually assigns his students to do sentence-level examples to show how they can use the grammar rules being taught in communicative contexts, although the time he allocated to this activity was reportedly negligible. Although his statement: "...when the grammar of sentences is changed, their meanings are also changed" suggests the meaning-based conception of grammar (Thornbury, 2008; Ellis, 2014), much of his class time was used to explain the rules of the grammar to his students.

Like the instructors who employed the inductive approach, he also reported that he usually used pair and group work as an additional ways of organising his students to do form-focused grammar exercises. Unlike the instructors who adhered to the inductive approach, those in this category used the pair and group work arrangements to allow their students to compare their answers to the sentence and paragraph-level grammar exercises and to provide feedback. Moreover, these arrangements did not form a major part of the instructional process. From his description, it is apparent that student-to-student interaction is limited. The teacher employed teacher-to-student interaction frequently and student-to-teacher interaction sometimes. The former was used to lecture the rules of grammar to his students, while the latter to elicit "correct sentences from students on grammar exercises." Although the instructor reported that he allowed student-to-student interaction and student-to-teacher interaction, he allocated much class time to

explain the formal aspects of the language and to instruct his students to do form-based exercises.

As the course objectives, contents and activities in the textbook depict, it is designed in line with the precepts of CLT. The textbook is designed to help the learners to use the grammar items for communicative purposes while at the same time highlighting the formal aspects to a certain extent. To establish whether the instructor used the textbook, he was asked to comment on it concerning its relevance to teaching grammar lessons. In response to this question, P1 indicated: “I use the textbook sometimes. I also design my exercises and use grammar books written locally to teach grammar lessons.”

Although all the EFL instructors have to use the textbook or the course module for Communicative English Skills, they have the freedom to use the resources at their disposal, without compromising the objectives and contents of the course. P1 seemed to be exploiting these opportunities. However, he selected form-focused activities from other sources. He also prepared similar exercises, illustrating his adherence to the deductive approach.

P2 also reported his preference for the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons. With respect to this, he reported:

*Most of the time, I use the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons. For example, when I teach past perfect tense, first I write the rule on the board and give two or three examples and underline the forms in the sentences. Then, I tell my students the meanings of the sentences. Sometimes, I ask my students to tell me the meanings of the sentences or even the form of the tense without writing it first. Using this strategy, I attempt to create awareness in my students before asking them to do more exercises. I think this is what I usually do as well as many teachers do.*

His description of the deductive approach is consistent with the literature. For example, Humboldt (1974), Harmer (1987), Ellis (1991) and Cook (2001) underlined that the deductive approach gives more attention to abstractions and verifying the correctness of a grammar rule with the help of a few examples. Concerning the nature of the grammar exercises or activities he used, P2 indicated that he usually designed the exercises or adapted them from other sources. The exercises included multiple-choice items, gap-fill items, matching exercises and sentence-level error correction exercises. His description highlights that although he allowed his students to do various grammar exercises, they were mainly intended to create awareness among his the rules of grammar.

Regarding the classroom arrangement pattern he employed, P2 reported that he frequently asked his students to work individually first and in pairs next. He mentioned that the purpose of this was to allow every student to “know the grammar well” before doing other meaning-based exercises with his or her classmates. He also reported that he regularly organised his students to work in pairs. According to the instructor, the purpose of this was to allow his students to compare their answers and give feedback on each other’s work. The instructor reported one peculiar classroom activity that he used. Thus, his students took turns to read their answers to the exercises in front of their classmates and received feedback from the whole class. He argued: “This helps my students to understand that they can learn not only from their teachers but also from their classmates.” He also stated that this strategy is a means through which “students can boost their confidence.”

P3’s portrayal of his classroom teaching strategies is also in congruence with the characteristics of the deductive approach. He highlighted: “lecturing, giving notes, explanations, providing classroom activities and feedback” are the major techniques he employed to teach grammar lessons. The instructor was asked to illustrate the above strategies. Hence, he said: “Students should know grammatical rules very well. Once they have the basic awareness, it is logical to engage them in practical exercises.” He further stated: “Asking our students to extract the rules at this stage is not sensible since our regular students are young learners who have just joined universities.” The instructor supported his view by referring to his students’ immaturity. Although most students are 18 and above, he said that they are not mature enough to work out grammar rules from context. That is why he often “relies on the lecture method to explain grammar rules” to his students. The lecture notes he provided to his students are additional evidence of the prominence he accorded to the deductive approach. Concerning this, he further noted: “The lecture notes are usually explanations of the grammar rules which are followed by examples and practical exercises.”

Notably the views of P3 are contrary to the characteristics of the inductive approach. Harmer (1987) and Humboldt (1974) argue that this approach is more suitable for young learners who are not mature enough to understand extended grammatical explanations. By engaging in communicative activities, students can use the language meaningfully without worrying about the rules of grammar. Through such activities, learners can internalize grammar rules (Harmer, 1987; Cunningsworth, 1995; Rott, 2000).

P3 reported that he might employ the inductive approach, especially when he is assigned to teach evening students whom he described as “adults in the real sense of the term”. However, as the following extract implies, he believes that all his students should have “awareness about the rules of the language before they use it for practical [communicative] purposes.” From the description offered by the instructor, it can be deduced that much class time was allocated to lectures and explanations of grammar rules. The instructor reported that he usually told his students to do “individual exercises on the grammar items”. He also reported that there were particular instances in which he employed group work and whole-class discussions to allow his students to experiment with the grammar rules in communicative contexts. The instructor said, “[I] usually hold question-answer sessions to check [my] students’ understanding of the grammar lessons.” He indicated that students should be given feedback after every grammar exercise “to put them on the right track”. His descriptions are evidence of his employment of teacher-to-student interaction [the lecture method] as the most dominant teaching strategy. The instructor also offered an additional explanation regarding the emphasis he placed on form-focused grammar lessons. He argued:

*Our students can express their views in spoken form. I know that many of them watch movies and listen to music in English, but their writing skill is very poor. They write the way they speak. Therefore, emphasis should be given to the formal aspects of the target language. Grammar is one of the aspects that should be taught adequately and effectively.*

The instructor’s description draws our attention to one of the most common problems that EFL instructors and other subject-area instructors are facing. Although P3’s use of the phrase “our students” does not indicate what proportion of the students can express their views in spoken form, they have serious gaps in writing skills and grammar.

P4, who adopted the deductive approach, describes the background to why he was forced to do so:

*Our educational system has failed as a whole. Many of our students are not interested to learn. Their results are not good. Parental control is very loose. Students are addicted to different kinds of drugs including khat [a green addictive leaf that is chewed and often results in ‘mirkana’, an Amharic word meaning the subsequent weird excitement]. Coming to your question of language teaching, the problem is very serious because as [a] language teacher I always observe them. I know the students in private schools have better language ability. Even they have serious problems with grammar because I think schools give more emphasis on speaking skills.*

P4's response to the interview question begins with a general description of the problems in the educational system of the country. The instructor stated that the problems that the students are facing are not specific to language classes. According to the instructor, part of this failure is attributed to addiction and the lack of parental control. The instructor then goes on to explain the better language proficiency that private school students have over their public counterparts. Towards the end of the excerpt, the instructor points out that grammar is one of the difficult areas that the students. The instructor believes that private schools give more emphasis on speaking skills. Filling the skill gaps between the students from private schools and those from public schools is additional challenge university instructors often face.

P4's classroom strategies for teaching grammar are described as follows: "I use the deductive approach to teach grammar." The instructor ascribed this preference for the deductive approach to "the problems that students have regarding grammar." As the following excerpt shows, the students' problems regarding grammar are multi-faceted:

*There are huge gaps between our students. Some of them cannot construct even correct sentences using correct grammar. It is not logical to ask them to write paragraphs and essays. Others have very good writing skills and grammar knowledge. I feel that some of them are even taking the wrong course. To overcome the problems the students have, I usually explain the grammar rules to my students and give them sentence-level exercises to improve their accuracy. If students can write sentences correctly, it can help them when they are asked to write paragraphs and essays. I usually assign better students with weaker ones so that they help one another. I have used this method many times and it has helped my students very well.*

One of the explanations given by P4 regarding the choice of the deductive approach is the notable grammar deficiency of the students in classroom situations. P4 referred to the students who "cannot construct sentences using correct grammar." The instructor believes that grammar rules should be explained to the students to help them understand the rules and use them to express their ideas or views in sentences, paragraphs and essays. The instructor's assignment of better students with the weaker ones, as one of classroom organisation patterns, is justified by the help that weaker students can elicit from the better ones. The instructor mainly relied on the textbook provided by the university, although the grammar exercises often used in the teaching-learning process were selected from grammar books which "are useful to fill the gaps in the students".

The other classroom reality that P4 mentioned and one that strengthened the preference for the deductive approach is large class size. The instructor mentioned: “The number of students in one class is sometimes unmanageable. For example, it is very challenging to teach 60 students in one class.” The instructor further highlighted that the suffocation in classroom situations is very difficult to involve the “students in interactive grammar activities.” According to the instructor, “I sometimes dismiss classes and leave my students with homework for their next classes due to the suffocation.” In general, students’ struggles with grammar and the classroom realities seemed to have forced the instructor to adopt the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons.

The remaining instructors-P7, P10 and P11- also prefer the deductive approach to the inductive approach to teach grammar lessons. Their differences lie in the specific classroom arrangement patterns they used to allow their students to practise grammar items or do grammar-based exercises. For instance, P7 mentioned:

*I usually ask my students to work in pairs and then groups so that they can use the grammar they are taught for different communicative purposes. For instance, when I teach the simple past tense, I first explain the rules of the tense and then give at least two examples for each function of the tense. I then ask all the students to compose their sentences and share them with their classmates. I also use more communicative exercises to involve my students in real communication. For example, I ask my students to work in groups and talk about what they did the previous day, their past habits, and so on. This way I create opportunities for students to use the language in a meaningful context.*

The instructor used a specific instance to explain how he usually teaches grammar lessons. In line with the characteristics of the deductive approach (Humboldt, 1974; Harmer, 1987; Ellis, 1991; Cook, 2001), the instructor begins the grammar lessons with an explanation of grammar rules, which is followed by a few examples. He also indicated that he begins the practice session by giving his students guided sentence-level exercises about the grammar topic being taught. As the class progresses, he engages his students in more relaxed or free grammar exercises which allows them to express their personal experiences, using the grammar item being taught. Unlike the other instructors in this group, his teaching strategy allows the students to do freer grammar exercises that allow them to talk about their experiences using the grammar item being taught. The instructor reported that he usually allocated the last 10 minutes of his class to hear from individual students and give feedback to the grammar exercises his students did.

P7 further indicated that he did not depend much on the teaching materials provided by his respective university, although he reported that he did not deviate from the course objectives or the course contents incorporated in the course syllabus. Illustrating this, he stated:

*I use the course module [textbook] as a starting point. Until I have a better knowledge of my students' language ability, I usually use the exercises in the course module. If my students need more or less challenging grammar exercises, I use other resources such as the internet and grammar books. I sometimes design [prepare] my grammar exercises.*

Regarding how much time he allocated to grammar lessons, the instructor indicated that he attempted to stick to the number of hours allocated to each grammar lesson in the textbook for the course. He indicated that the time allocated to the grammar lessons took into account the “weakness students have in grammar.” Besides, he reported that he compiled grammar exercises from different sources, which he provided to his students as a worksheet.

P10 and P11 pointed out that they mainly taught grammar lessons deductively, as evidenced by the excerpts extracted from their respective interviews. P10 explained:

*...for example, when I teach reported speech, I first explain the difference between reported and direct speech. Then I explain the rules that should be observed in changing direct speech into reported speech. I use examples to explain how the tense, pronoun and time indicators change when direct speech is converted into indirect or reported speech. I then ask my students to do exercises which involve changing direct speech into indirect speech.*

P11, on his part, remarked:

*I think that the grammar lessons in the course books [textbooks] are important for our students since they should be able to use acceptable grammar not only in English classes but also in other classes. Since English is the medium of instruction, their academic success can be affected by their language ability. It is difficult to listen to classroom lectures and take lecture notes and do other activities in the teaching-learning process...I have seen that the course books [textbooks] give more emphasis to communication, but less attention is given to grammar rules even though many different grammar lessons are included. Therefore, I introduce different grammar rules and explain to my students before students do the exercises. I usually assign the exercises in the course book [textbook] as homework and give feedback to the next class.*

Although the excerpts are of different versions (practical example and theoretical explanation of the deductive approach), they depict that both the instructors teach grammar lessons deductively. P10 used a specific grammar topic to explain how he teaches grammar lessons. His illustration revealed the emphasis he places on the explanation of grammar rules or forms before allowing his students to do communicative grammar exercise. P11 explained that the textbook in his

university is “communication-oriented” [communicative grammar activities] and lacks form-based exercises or explanations. Thus, the instructor shifts the emphasis to form-focused explanation or exercises to help the learners recognise the rules of English grammar.

#### **4.2.9.3. The Hybrid Approach**

P13, P14 and P17 are the three instructors who reported that they combined the deductive and inductive approaches to teach grammar lessons. Unlike the instructors in the first two groups, they did not express their adherence to one of the approaches: either the inductive or deductive approach. P13, for example, illustrated his teaching techniques as follows:

*I teach grammar either implicitly [inductively] or explicitly [deductively] depending on the objectives of the specific lesson. For example, there are lessons in which I give more emphasis to grammar rules. There are also lessons in which I give more attention to the communicative aspect. In some lessons, I teach the grammar lessons implicitly and explicitly. From experience, I have learned that there are different students with different learning styles and needs, so to satisfy these styles and needs, it is important to vary my teaching techniques. Some students ask for explanations of grammar items. Some students enjoy the communicative exercises instead of listening to explanations about grammar rules.*

Not only does his explanation suggest the use of the hybrid approach to the teaching of grammar lessons, but it also underscores the importance of considering the needs and styles of students in choosing language teaching strategies. He recognises that students come with different needs and interests and learning styles, and using only one teaching strategy does not address the heterogeneity in a language classroom. His adherence to the hybrid approach is also apparent from the specific teaching strategies he described as follows:

*I use the grammar-based and communicative exercises in the course books [textbooks] for ‘Communicative English Skills’ course at my university. Since our department has mandated us to use other teaching materials which are in line with the objectives of the course, I usually adapt exercises from different sources. To achieve the objectives of the course, I organize my students in a multitude of ways depending on the objectives of the grammar lesson. For instance, I ask my students to listen and take lecture notes when I explain grammar rules. When I intend to make my students do more guided and free grammar exercises, I ask them to sit in pairs and groups. There are also exercises in which students work as a whole class. For example, when I want to check my students’ understanding of grammar rules, I organize question-answer sessions.*

The instructor indicated that he used the textbook in addition to adapting exercises from the suggested references to teach grammar lessons. This highlighted the discretion that the EFL instructors in his department have concerning how they can use the teaching materials. He also



draws our attention to the variety of classroom organisation techniques he employed given the nature of the grammar lessons he taught. It is obvious from his illustration that individual work, pair and group work and whole-class arrangements are the classroom organisation patterns he employed. Student-to-student interaction, teacher-to-student interaction and student-to-teacher interaction are the interaction patterns evident from his descriptions of his classroom situations.

P14 who was also in favour of the hybrid approach expressed the same view about how he taught grammar lessons:

*I employ an inductive approach to the degree possible and a deductive approach as well when the situation in class so requires. I use the inductive approach to allow my students to meaning or message-based grammar exercises. I use the deductive approach to create awareness of the grammar rules. Like any other teacher, I use the teaching materials suggested by the university including my supplementary materials. We are not obliged to use the teaching materials strictly, but we have to make sure that the course's objectives are achieved. I usually ask my students to work individually first and then in pairs and groups. At the end of every grammar lesson, I give feedback to the whole class. I also give feedback on individual student's exercise while they are doing the grammar exercises... I use the time allocated in the textbook properly. When I feel that students need more practice, I give them additional time to practice grammar topics.*

The above account illustrates that like P13, P14 varied his teaching strategies, given the objective of the lesson and the needs of his students. He argued that the inductive approach should be used when the focus of the grammar exercises is on meaning; however, when the focus shifts to rules, the deductive approach should be employed. He also expressed similar views to that of P13 and many others outside this group about the freedom the instructors have in using the textbook and supplementary materials. His description illustrates that individual work, pair work and group work are the most common classroom organisation patterns he employs while teaching grammar lessons. His comment on the time allocated to grammar lessons is also similar to that of the majority of the instructors. He indicated that whenever there is a need for allowing his students to do additional exercises, he is not constrained by the time allocated in the textbook to the specific grammar lessons.

Although P17 did not use the phrase deductive or inductive approach, his illustration of the teaching strategies he usually employs to teach grammar lessons is suggestive of his use of the hybrid approach. In response to which teaching strategy he employed, he said:

*When I teach grammar I look at the objectives of the lesson, the nature of the exercises in the teaching material and the ability and needs of my students and decide what teaching method*

*[strategy] I use. I think some grammar topics should be explained. Therefore, I use the lecture method. Before I do this, I ask my students about the grammar item. If I think that my students have a better understanding of the grammar item, I focus on pair and group work [communicative exercises]. If I think that my students do not know much about the grammar lesson, I explain it very well using examples before they do the exercises in the teaching materials.*

P17's use of the phrases "the lecture method" and "focus on pair and group work", and the additional explanation he provided below demonstrated his use both the inductive and deductive approaches. Highlighting the need to vary teaching strategies, he commented:

*I think that it is boring for students to use the same method to teach grammar and other language skills. Besides, the classroom is like a mosaic. There are different kinds of students from different backgrounds and with different needs, interests and potential. It is therefore important to use different teaching methods to try to satisfy the students in one classroom.*

P17 argued that the reliance on a single teaching technique results in students' boredom. Moreover, he likens the classroom to "mosaic" to pronounce the presence of different types of students with a different family, economic, academic and social backgrounds, interests and needs. To this end, he suggested that teaching strategies should be varied. His conception of the classroom reality is similar to that of P13 and many others outside this group who stress that the individual, academic, economic, social and ability differences in language classrooms should be the basis for the selection of a variety of suitable teaching strategies.

Like the instructors in this group and beyond, P17 mainly employed pair and group work as the most dominant method of organizing his students to allow them to do grammar exercises. He expressed his appreciation that the time allocated to grammar lessons was agreeable although he underlined that there was a need for more practice time for the students "since students [they] have serious problems concerning grammar".

In summary, the conceptions of the three groups of EFL instructors showed their differences in how grammar lessons should be taught and what specific classroom arrangements should be made. Although they expressed their adherence to different but sometimes inter-related teaching strategies, they shared the conception that their students' problems regarding grammar are multi-faceted and need to be addressed properly. Despite their differences in their choice of the inductive, deductive or hybrid approach, all of them employed pair and group work as the most prominent ways of organising their students to do grammar exercises.

The conceptions of the three groups of the EFL are better understood within the accuracy-fluency debate: whether one of the two should predominate or both should be the focus of the teaching-learning process. On the one hand, the EFL instructors who favoured the deductive approach focused on accuracy development, where they prioritised direct or explicit instructions of grammar items in classroom discussions (Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014). On the other hand, the EFL instructors who favoured the inductive approach focused on fluency development, with no explicit instructions of the grammar of the target language, by engaging their students in communication-oriented activities (Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014). The descriptions they offered and their classroom practices showed that the instructors attempted to address both fluency and accuracy development. They accomplished this by combining the deductive and inductive approaches.

#### **4.2.10. The Assessment Modalities EFL Instructors Employ to Assess their Students' Performance in Grammar Lessons**

**Interview question 10: What are the assessment modalities you employ to assess your students' performance in grammar lessons?**

The tenth interview question required the instructors to describe the assessment modalities they employed to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. The responses they provided depicted two strands of conception. The first group which comprised a few instructors adhered to continuous assessment modalities which are in line with the learner-centred approaches and CLT adopted by The Ministry of Education (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2018; 2019).

The second group that comprised the majority of the instructors favoured formal, rule-based assessment modalities, contrary to the learner-centred conception they expressed for their choice of the classroom strategies to teach grammar lessons. It must be noted that the excerpts taken from the official documents of the universities (cited towards the beginning of this chapter) reveal their adoption of learner-centred methodology in general and continuous assessment in particular. Within this methodology, continuous assessment is officially adopted, as the heads of the language departments in the universities confirmed.

#### 4.2.10.1. Instructors who employ Continuous Assessment

The first group comprised P2, P3, P6, P8 and P12. Their responses to this interview question illustrated that they employed continuous assessment modalities to assess their students' performance in language skills in general and grammar lessons in particular. Almost all the private universities have allocated 50% for continuous assessment and 50% for final examinations. One of the universities has allocated 40% for continuous assessment and 60% for the final examination. According to the interview data, the instructors in this group reported that they assessed their students' performance continuously, without having to rely heavily on formal tests.

In response to this interview question, P2 explained:

*Assessment for learning [an alternative term to continuous assessment] is the first assessment type I usually use. The general modalities of assessment are set by the university, but we are given the freedom to prepare specific assessment modalities to assess our students' understanding of grammar lessons. For example, I use individual presentations of reading assignment, pair presentation and group work to assess my students' use of the grammar lessons I teach. I use formal written tests on grammar just to check my students' awareness of the grammar rule. This takes only 5 % of my assessment modalities. In general, I do not depend on formal written tests. I give my students different kinds of exercises such as role-plays and presentations. As much as possible, I give immediate feedback to my students' on their works.*

Although the literature on CLT does not spell out the specific assessment tools to assess learners' performance in grammar lessons, it generally highlights that learner-centred assessment modalities should be used (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003; Richards, 2006). The instructor's account reflects this general understanding of how learner progress should be assessed in a communicatively-oriented syllabus. He reported that he did not rely on formal tests to assess his students' performance in grammar lessons. The specific modalities that he named showed that his assessment techniques were learner-centred. The individual presentations of reading assignments, the pair presentation and group work reflected important aspects of CLT. This is because the activities required the students to use grammar in communicative contexts. The lower percentage of marks he allocated to form-based exercises is another depiction of his attempts to assess his students' progress continuously. One of the major characteristics of continuous assessment is the immediacy with which students are given feedback on their work to learn from their mistakes if any (Sadler, 1998; Black & William, 2009). The instructor indicated that he tried to provide immediate feedback to his students.

P3's account also exemplifies his adherence to continuous assessment:

*The assessment I use in my English class is continuous assessment. In teaching grammar or other skills, I employ continuous assessment to know the progress of the learner. I also use continuous assessment in order to know the difficulty my students are encountering regarding language skills and grammar. I sometimes use quizzes and tests to test the grammatical accuracy of my students.*

The above extract demonstrates that the instructor used continuous assessment to assess his students' performance in language skills and grammar lessons. It also shows that the instructor used continuous assessment to identify the grammar-related problems his students faced, to modify his teaching strategies, and to prepare remedial exercises. His description is consistent with what the literature articulates regarding the purposes of continuous assessment (Sadler, 1998; Black & William, 2009). Although his account showed his adherence to continuous assessment modalities, he indicated that he sparingly used highly structured assessment modalities such as quizzes and tests to assess his students' mastery of grammatical accuracy. He outlined the test types he used as follows: "I provide sentences with verbs in brackets so that students use the correct tense forms and construct grammatically correct sentences."

With regard to the importance of continuous assessment, P3 further commented:

*CA [continuous assessment] aids students' learning by identifying their strengths and weaknesses and even shaping the teaching methodology of the teacher. I think formal mid-term and final examinations may tell us students' general understanding, but they are not reliable ways of assessing students' performance. They might reduce the workload of the teacher, but they are simply used to pass or fail students, not to facilitate the teaching-learning process.*

The instructor commented that assessing students' performance using mid-term and final exams does not create a comprehensive picture of their progress; it only tells part of the story. Continuous assessment, he believes, is useful to "keep track of the students" progress and help them in the instructional process. If it is used properly, it satisfies not only the students but also the teachers, their parents [students' parents] and the school administration." In addition to highlighting that it serves as an aid to the teaching-learning process, the instructor felt that continuous assessment has implications beyond the confines of the classroom situation.

P3 was asked to explain the relationship between continuous assessment and CLT. According to the instructor, continuous assessment aims at helping students to learn and to show gradual progress. The students are, therefore, the nucleus of the instructional process. In the same way,

he stressed that CLT is a “learner-centred approach that attempts to develop the communicative skills of students.” Hence, “If the teaching-learning process is communicative, the assessment should also be communicative because teaching and assessment are like the two sides of the same coin.” In addition to highlighting that it aids student learning, the instructor argued that the teaching-learning process and assessment are inextricably intertwined. This is evident from the phrase he used: “...the two sides of the same coin”.

P6 was also among the instructors who favoured continuous assessment to assess their students’ grammar performance. The specific modalities that he mentioned and those that the textbook outlined confirmed his claims. He stated: “I use in-class individual and group works and home-take reading and writing assignments, presentations, projects, tests and quizzes to evaluate my students’ performance in this course.” He noted that when these modalities are combined, it is “very simple to know who is who in classroom situations.” He also highlighted the differences among students in terms of ability, interests and learning styles. He further commented: “Continuous assessment helps to address the needs and interests of various students in one class. It is also possible to assess their performance and separate [the] strong from [the] weak.” Since classroom situations accommodate different students with different needs, interests and learning styles, he stressed that continuous assessment’s varied modalities are accommodative of these differences.

One of the distinctiveness of P6’s views is related to: “the fact that students are now aware their performances are evaluated when these techniques are used unless we tell them. In other words, the assessment can be carried out while the teaching-learning process is going on.” His view illustrates another dimension to continuous assessment: the integration of the teaching-learning process and the assessment. Although his views were expressed uniquely, they are comparable to that of P3 who stressed that the teaching-learning process and assessment are “the two sides of the same coin.”

Like P3, P6 also stated that there is a strong relationship between CLT and continuous assessment “since both of them are student-centred”. The instructor differed in his view of the challenges relating to the implementation of continuous assessment in classroom situations.

While P3 reported: “Even if a continuous assessment is a good method to assess students’ performance continuously, it is difficult to implement because it is a time-consuming activity where there are more than 50 students in one class”, P6 remarked:

*If the teaching-learning process and the assessment are conducted together, implementing continuous assessment is not a challenging task. It can even reduce the work burden of the teacher. Other teachers think that giving mid-term and final examinations are not time-consuming. Identifying students’ problems and giving them feedback on the spot has multiple purposes. I have already explained that [assessing students’ progress, identifying their weaknesses and strengths, preparing exercises and adjusting one’s teaching methodology].*

The above extract demonstrates P6’s conviction that by incorporating continuous assessment in the learning process, it is possible to assess the learners’ performance continuously, regardless of the number of students in a class. He further suggested: “All teachers should prepare a clear plan about their teaching and assessment. If this is done well, it is possible to implement a continuous assessment successfully.”

P6 draws our attention to the importance of planning, in implementing continuous assessment in communicative language classrooms. The instructor said that if the teaching-learning process is student-centred [communicative], the assessment process “which is an important aspect of the instructional process” should reflect this reality. Moreover, he pointed out that the course syllabus and the textbook indicate that continuous assessment should be implemented by the instructors. Based on these modalities, “It is up to individual instructors to prepare more feasible plans considering the classroom conditions.” The instructor stressed the uniqueness of classrooms, and every instructor should understand his or her classroom reality and act accordingly.

P8 and P12 who adhered to continuous assessment stated that CLT is a learner-centred language teaching approach. Both instructors argued that classroom realities, especially the number of students, might affect not only the instructional process but also the assessment. However, learners’ performance in the target language should be assessed continuously and regularly.

P8 articulated his conception of continuous assessment as follows:

*Many universities including mine try to implement continuous assessment and active learning methods. I think this is based on the understanding that continuous assessment method and*

*active learning methods are student-centred approaches. I believe that communicative language teaching is also mainly a student-centred language teaching approach.*

The instructor recognises that continuous assessment and active learning methods are mainly learner-centred in their approach. He also mentioned that CLT is learner-centred. Therefore, “[In assessing] learners’ performance in grammar lessons, we should apply continuous assessment. I believe that continuous assessment is an explicit assumption in communicative language teaching.” The instructor underlined that the performance of EFL students’ performance in grammar lessons should be assessed continuously.

In the following excerpt, the instructor enumerated the major assessment modalities that he uses to assess his students’ performance in language skills in general and that of grammar lessons in particular:

*I try to encourage my students to make presentations individually and collaboratively. I also give them projects and assignments on report writing which should be done by collecting data from different people. Quizzes, tests and reading assignments are also part of my assessment.*

The specific modalities the instructor listed above align with his general description of employing continuous assessment to assess his students’ progress in grammar lessons. In his description, he highlighted the importance of learner-centredness and the specific assessment modalities that he mentioned place his students at the centre of attention. The majority of the assessment modalities require the learners to work individually and collectively and report their work to the whole class as well to their instructor.

Like P8, P12’s views depict his use of continuous assessment to assess his students’ performance in grammar lessons:

*Assessment is a teaching-learning tool, so it should be part of the teaching-learning process. The activities we give to our students should make them learn something; it should not be used to judge students’ performance. As much as possible, I implement the continuous assessment modalities set by the university. I also include my own assessment methods to strengthen the given methods...I use presentations, assignments, pair and group-work exercises, report writing, quizzes and tests to evaluate my students’ language abilities.*

The specific assessment modalities P12 outlined are similar to those indicated by the other instructors in this group. He pointed out that continuous assessment is the assessment method adopted by his university. He also remarked: “It is a suitable assessment method in



communicative language teaching, which gives due attention to the students.” He likened CLT to continuous assessment since both favour learner-centredness.

#### **4.2.10.2. Instructors who employ Non-continuous Assessment**

The second group, which comprises the majority of the EFL instructors, adheres to non-continuous assessment, although they favoured learner-centred, communicative language teaching approach. Their accounts depicted that their choice of non-continuous assessment methods emanated from the context-specific realities in the teaching-learning process. All of them acknowledged the importance of continuous assessment, although they resorted to formal assessment methods such as quizzes, tests and final examinations to assess their students’ progress in the language skills in general and that of grammar lessons in particular.

This group comprised P1, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17 and P18.

P1, for instance, underscored the importance of integrating the teaching-learning process and the assessment; however, he also pointed out: “It is extremely difficult to implement continuous assessment methods in our situation.” The instructor argued that large class size, the lack of institutional support and teacher-related factors were the major obstacles to the implementation of continuous assessment.

Commenting on the difficulties of implementing continuous assessment, P1 mentioned:

*My institution [university] has adopted active learning and continuous assessment methods, but I find it very de-motivating to implement it in a classroom of 70 students. It would be a lie if I said I implement continuous assessment. Regarding the teaching-learning process, I try to engage my students in communicative activities in pairs and groups, but the assessment is difficult to implement in this situation. Assessing all the students continuously is also very time-consuming. I am required to submit assessment results regularly and in this kind of situation, implementing learner-centred modalities is a luxury.*

Although P1 held the view that EFL students’ grammar performance in grammar lessons should be assessed continuously using learner-centred, continuous assessment modalities, large class size was a major impediment to its implementation. He indicated that he attempted to teach grammar lessons communicatively, but he preferred to use highly-structured written tests to assess his students’ performance in language skills and grammar lessons. He also pointed out that his university required its staff to submit assessment results regularly and that this was a

time-consuming process. He, therefore, resorted to “objective types of tests to evaluate [his] students’ performance in grammar.” He reported that multiple-choice items, gap-fill exercises, matching items and identifying odd-man-out were the most common test items that he used to assess his students’ performance in grammar lessons.

The question types that P1 outlined above are less time-consuming not only while correcting but also while setting. It is possible to understand from his account that the instructor was mainly working to meet the deadline, instead of meeting the objectives of the course and implementing continuous assessment modalities.

P4 and P9 expressed the same view concerning the assessment modalities they employed to assess their students’ performance in grammar lessons. P4 reported: “I use mid-term and final exams.” In the same way, P9 said: “I usually give my students enter-semester and final examinations.” The terms “mid-term” and “enter-semester exams” are synonymous. They shared the same view regarding the final examinations since they were prepared centrally at department levels. Both instructors acknowledged that their universities adopted continuous assessment method to assess their students’ performance for all the courses. However, they argued that they found it difficult to assess their students’ performance continuously in the face of “crowded classes” (P4) and “a large number of students” (P9).

Both instructors (P4 and P9) were dubious about their universities' commitment to implementing learner-centred approaches and continuous assessment methods, even though they claim to do so. In this regard, P4 commented:

*My institution in general and my department in particular have adopted continuous assessment methods to assess the students’ progress. However, I do not think that they are genuine because they usually assign over 60 students in one section. This is practically impossible. If they are really committed, they have to reduce the number of students in one section; this way we can be held responsible if we are not able to meet the standards set. How can I assess my students continuously in such situations?*

The views of P9 are also noteworthy in this respect:

*It is a contradiction to claim one thing and implement another thing. Many educational institutions including my university claim that they have adopted student-centred approaches and CA [continuous assessment] as their unique teaching and assessment philosophies. I believe student-centred teaching and assessment methods should be applied, but how can classroom teachers implement them? The owners of the universities know the situation in the classroom, but*

*they are not willing to be part of the solution. I really find it difficult to assess my students' grammar performance communicatively and continuously bearing in mind the number of my students, my teaching load and the lack of educational facilities.*

As his description above shows, the instructor is doubtful of the practicality of continuous assessment in light of the realities surrounding the teaching-learning process. He indicated that his university's lack of commitment, large class size, the lack of educational facilities and his teaching loads were impediments to the implementation of continuous assessment. Due to these factors, he preferred to use "objective written tests to evaluate [his students'] understanding and performance of grammar lessons."

The views of the remaining instructors in this group can be represented by those given above. This is because although they recognised the importance of continuous assessment in principle, they expressed the same concerns about its implementation. The following are excerpts taken from their interviews:

*I don't think CA is practical in extremely large classes. I usually use tests to evaluate my students' grammar knowledge. (P5)*

*Although continuous assessment is a good assessment method, it is difficult to apply in our case because of the number of students and the shortage of time. (P7)*

*My colleagues and I usually give common grammar tests to our students. I think expecting us to implement continuous assessment is not fair because many of us teach more than 50 students in one class. (P10)*

*Most of the time, I administer tests to evaluate the language skills including grammar. I cannot implement continuous assessment the way it is described in the textbook because of the number of students in my classes and my teaching loads. (P16)*

*Continuous assessment is a student-centred assessment mechanism, but it requires limited number of students to make it practical. (P18)*

On the one hand, the above instructors' are critical of the implementation of continuous assessment to assess students' performance in grammar lessons. On the other hand, explicitly or implicitly, while they appreciated the importance of continuous assessment, they resorted to using formal written tests to assess their students' progress in grammar lessons. They cited large class size as the most common challenge to implementing the continuous assessment. The specific test questions they used are additional evidence of their reliance on non-continuous assessment modalities as opposed to the continuous assessment modalities stipulated in the

course syllabuses for the English language courses offered in their respective universities. The instructors reported that objective-type questions (multiple-choice, true-false, items, gap-fill items and matching items) are the most commonly used test formats as opposed to the more subjective, student-centred assessment modalities indicated in the course syllabuses or textbooks.

In summary, the views expressed by the two groups of instructors are not essentially contradictory since they shared the same conception of the importance of student-centred approaches in general and continuous assessment in particular. Their differences lie in its implementation. The first group argued that continuous assessment can be applied even where there is large class size. They believe that the assessment and the teaching-learning process should be integrated. They also argued that a careful plan that integrates the teaching-learning process and the assessment can solve many of the problems in classroom situations. The second group of instructors seemed to favour more formal, test-based assessment modalities as opposed to those indicated in the course syllabuses or textbooks for the English courses taught in the private universities. Almost all of the EFL instructors attributed their choice of formal, test-based assessment modalities to large class size and other context-specific factors such as the lack of institutional commitment.

#### **4.2.11. The Suitability of CLT in Ethiopian Context**

##### **Interview question 11: What do you think about the suitability of CLT in Ethiopian Context?**

Question 11 was designed to examine the instructors' views of whether CLT is suitable in the Ethiopian context and the specific problems they faced in implementing it. Although the instructors had differing views about the various aspects of CLT addressed in the previous interview questions, they appeared to have the same conception regarding the suitability of CLT in the Ethiopian context and the specific problems encountered in classroom situations. All the instructors pointed to the idea that CLT can be applied in Ethiopian context if all the stakeholders in the system work cooperatively. A striking view in this regard is one that was expressed by those instructors who did not seem to implement it in teaching grammar lessons.

The instructors who reportedly adhered to form-based teaching of grammar lessons explained their choice of this method not only in light of their perception that highlighted the significance

of form-based grammar but also in terms of the specific classroom factors that discouraged them from teaching grammar communicatively. Like the other instructors, they indicated that CLT can be applied in EFL contexts properly, although large classroom size, the students' low motivation to learn English and the lack of institutional support were the major difficulties in the teaching of communicative grammar.

In response to the above question, P2 remarked: "CLT is suitable in the Ethiopian context. We know that it is implemented in other EFL contexts. What matters is the commitment of classroom teachers, the students, the institution and the Ministry of Education." According to the instructor, the successful implementation of CLT in general and that of communicative grammar teaching, in particular, should not be the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher. He felt that all the stakeholders (teachers, students, parents and the institution) should work cooperatively to materialise that CLT is implemented as required.

Expressing his view on the specific problems affecting the successful implementation of communicative grammar teaching, P2 outlined: "Classroom size, the lack of authentic materials and poor environmental support are the main factors affecting CLT in addition to the curriculum." Concerning the curriculum, the majority of the instructors commented that it is communicative, while P2 did not think that it is as communicative as it should be. Another relevant factor he mentioned is the lack of authentic teaching materials. He remarked that unless the students have exposure to authentic teaching materials, it is unfair to expect them to use the language in different communicative situations. He further reiterated: "If there are authentic teaching materials, it is possible to engage the students in meaningful communicative activities. It is also possible to increase their motivation." By reiterating the importance of authentic teaching materials, the instructor suggested that the challenges related to the students' lack of motivation and inattentiveness in classroom situations can be addressed.

Supporting the views of P2, P10 stated: "It is really difficult to teach 50-70 students communicatively." In addition to large class size, "the lack of equipment or teaching aids" is another impediment to the teaching of grammar lessons communicatively. Although P10 used the phrase "lack of equipment", his illustration of the phrase coincides with the lack of authentic teaching materials reiterated by P2. To that effect, he said: "Tape recorders, videos, newspapers,

magazines and similar other teaching aids” should be made available by the university if the “teaching-learning process should be communicative.”

P6, P7, P8, P12, P15, P16, P17 and P18 reported that instructors should not be given the additional workload of preparing or looking for authentic teaching materials. They argued that authentic teaching materials should be made available by the respective universities to help them teach grammar lessons communicatively. Although they agreed that the teaching materials used in these universities were communicative, they suggested that more communicative, authentic teaching materials should be available in classrooms as well as in libraries. Like the remaining instructors, they underlined that large class size was the most dominant factor affecting the implementation of CLT or communicative grammar.

Regarding class size, P12 pointed out:

*I usually teach 50, 60 or even 70 students in one section. This is a headache. This is unlike the 30-40 students in one section in government universities. By the way, this problem is not unique to language teaching. Every teacher in the university is complaining about the large number of students. The management of university is not committed to solving the problem even if it is aware of the problem. I believe that this negatively affects the teaching-learning process.*

In addition to pointing out that large class size is among the practical impediments to implementing CLT, the instructor expressed his disappointment with the management of his university since they did not take any measures to solve the problem. The institutional lack of commitment was also shared by P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, and P14.

Although teacher-related factors are implicit in many of the instructors’ descriptions of the factors affecting the implementation of CLT and that of communicative grammar teaching, the instructors who reportedly taught grammar lessons communicatively noted that much of the responsibility should go to the instructors. For example, P12, P13 and P15 argued that the instructors should try to teach grammar communicatively in the face of several factors affecting the teaching-learning process. P12 outlined the major challenges of implementing CLT as follows:

*The institution [university], students and other factors might affect the teaching- learning process, but the teacher is the most important in all of these. If the teacher is creative, he or she can address the problems well, but if the teacher does not act, I think it is the teacher who is the major problem in the teaching- learning process. It is very important to emphasize that*

*classroom teachers should also have good proficiency of the language to be role models to their students.*

According to P12, the instructor is to blame for the lack of implementation of CLT, although the students and the university have their own roles. The above extract shows that the classroom teacher should address the problems creatively. The instructor also underlined that university teachers or instructors should be proficient in English to win the attention of their students. P13 shared views of P13 although he incorporated additional factors in his description below:

*As teachers, we should not wait for other people to solve problems in the classroom situation. The university assigns many students in one class. The students are de-motivated to learn. The teaching materials are not that communicative. The university is after profits, but the students are there to learn, so we have to work cooperatively with the students to help them learn in and outside classroom contexts. I think the teacher is trained to work under several circumstances, and work hard to improve his skills as well his students'.*

The excerpt above depicts that the university, the students, the teaching materials and the teachers [instructors] are the explanations behind the limited implementation of CLT in classroom contexts. More specifically, it demonstrates that the learners are less motivated to learn; the university is concerned about income generation, and the teaching materials are not as communicative as they claim to be. However, the instructor recommended that the teacher should take appropriate measures to address the challenges creatively.

As the excerpts below show, P18 did not disregard the role of the instructors, the universities and the teaching materials, but he argues that the student-related factors are the major challenges that classroom teachers have to deal with in teaching grammar lessons communicatively:

*Student beliefs of rule-based grammar learning, lack of appropriate teaching materials and activities, lack of student motivation or reluctance of students to participate actively in the teaching-learning process, students' fear of making mistakes, students' beliefs about the traditional role of teachers being changed now, classroom environment, especially the wide gap in students' communicative competence, etc. are some of the most common factors hindering the implementation of CLT in classroom situation.*

According to the instructor, the belief that the students hold regarding the importance of rule-based grammar teaching is one of the factors detrimental to communicative grammar teaching. He further explained: "Many students expect the teacher to explain the rules of grammar instead of them engaged in communicative activities. The best teachers for the students are those who can lecture well. This also applies to other teachers who teach major-area subjects." The views

expressed by the instructor have empirical support since there seems to be an underlying theory in the Ethiopian context as well as in other EFL contexts which favour the lecture method. Such a view seems to be systemic (Adinew 2015; Alamirew & Alazar, 2015; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017; Noor, 2018; Wei, Lin & Litton, 2018; Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

Another aspect of the student-related factors that P18 described was their lack of motivation and the resulting inattentiveness and unwillingness to participate in communicative activities. The instructor also noted the gaps in students' communicative competence have become "a serious challenge to implement communicative language teaching." Like the instructors who favour the inductive or context-based grammar teaching, P18 pointed out that although the instructors were not responsible for all the problems in the instructional process, they are expected to address the problems and help their students' develop their communicative competence.

P18 also pointed out that university instructors are becoming "money mongers", a view that also P12, P15 and P16 support. Illustrating this, he argued:

*Blaming only the students and the universities is not fair. These days, it is very common to hear university instructors teaching 60 -80 hours per week. I surely know that it is not practically possible to teach this much in one week. The only option they have is to miss classes, use the lecture method and grade students randomly. By the way, this is becoming commonplace not only among language teachers but also [among] other subject teachers.*

The instructor's revelation of the unethical and unprofessional practices of the EFL instructors is quite astounding. As the head of the department at my university, I also share the concern that P6 voiced. The number of instructors' missing classes, the repeated student complaints concerning the quality of education and the grading practices of some EFL instructors were among the issues that were brought to the attention of the university management.

In addition to the above factors, P18 pinpointed institutional and curriculum-related problems, contributing negatively to communicative grammar. Regarding the institutional factors, he indicated: "There are many aspects of the university that should be improved if CLT is to be implemented properly. For example, the university should not force teachers to teach many hours per week. This affects the quality of education in general." The instructor underlined that instructors' weekly teaching load is not manageable, implying that the instructors resort to the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. In his additional comments, the instructor remarked: "The University has adopted learner-centred methodology, but its follow-up of whether it is



implemented in classroom situations is not encouraging”. Furthermore, he commented: “The University does not give on-the-job training, especially for language teachers. The training that is given once or twice a year focuses on general pedagogy.”

Discussing the importance of the on-the-job training, P18 mentioned: “Training makes our understanding of the methodology or approach [CLT] uniform. This helps us to implement it uniformly in classroom situations.” The instructor’s observation of the lack of training emanated from the gap in understanding CLT among the language instructors in the university. This view was also shared by P12 and P15 who said that continuous training helps to build the capacity of the instructors and encourage them to implement CLT.

P18 also explained the gap in understanding of CLT among instructors was not only specific to his university, but also several other higher education institutions. According to the instructor, some academic staffs have a better understanding of CLT because “they were either given on-the-job training or their major area study [their first or second degree] involved communicative language teaching”. He thinks that such instructors are better equipped with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of implementing CLT in language classrooms. On the contrary, he observed: “Instructors with little or no understanding of the approach [CLT] are likely to use the lecture method to teach grammar in classroom situations.” The instructor felt that it was very difficult to expect the teaching of grammar to be communicative in light of such gaps in CLT knowledge.

In summary, the interview questions about the suitability of CLT in the Ethiopian context and the specific factors affecting its implementation in classroom situations elicited similar responses. The instructors agreed that CLT can be applied in the Ethiopian context if it is carefully designed and implemented. They also agreed that various factors were responsible for its low implementation. The major factors they identified included teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors and system-related factors.

The following table synthesises the themes that emerged from the interview data. This is presented in light of CLT literature.

**TABLE 4.2: SYNTHESIS OF THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEW DATA**

Interview questions	Themes that emerged from the analysed interview data	Pertinent literature	Remarks
1. Goals of language teaching in CLT	Communicative competence; using language communicatively; language for authentic communication; interpersonal negotiation and conflict resolution.	Hymes, 1972; Brown, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Richards, 2020	Match between conceptions and literature on CLT.  Misconceptions include:  Misconception 1: CLT is a language is a teaching method.  Misconception 2: CLT is aimed at developing speaking skills.  Misconception 3: CLT is an easier teaching methodology
2. Roles of teachers in CLT	Facilitator; independent authority; organiser; participant;	Harmer, 1991; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016	The views of the participants of the study and CLT literature seem to concur.
3. Roles of students in CLT	independent participant; responsible learner; autonomous learner; active independent thinker	Richards & Rodgers 1986; Larsen-Freeman, 1996; Richards, 2006	The views of the instructors are in congruence with that expressed CLT literature.
4. Classroom activities or tasks used in CLT	Dramatisation; presentations; exercises; information-gap activities; problem-solving activities; form-based exercises; debating; jigsaw role plays; activities;	Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2001; Ellis, 2003	The conceptions of the instructors are in line with what the literature on CLT articulates about the types of activities or classroom tasks.
5. Teaching materials and resources used in CLT-based classrooms	-Appealing; life-like and integrates all language skills; authentic and interactive; cell phones, audio visuals, television	Nunan, 1989; Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014	There is a match between the literature and the views of the instructors.
6. The role of grammar in the academic and non-academic lives of students	-Accuracy and fluency development in school contexts  - tool for communication in informal contexts  -indicator of success at work places	Weaver, 1996; Nachiangmai, 1997; Blyth, 1998; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Frodesen & Holten, 2003	Grammar is a very important aspect of language that students need in their academic as well as non-academic lives.
7. The place of grammar in CLT	-Grammar's critical role in CLT in EFL contexts  -A determinant of academic success in EFL context.  -Grammar's peripheral role	Bygate & Tornkyn 1994; Chen, 2003	<b>Misconception 4:</b> Because grammar items/topics are not the organizing principles in CLT-based syllabuses, the prominence given to grammar items is reduced in CLT-based syllabus.

	in CLT. -Communicative functions, not grammar, are the organising principles in CLT-		
8. The specific strategies you employ to teach grammar lessons	-The use of inductive approach/context-based classroom strategy -The use of deductive approach - The use of the hybrid approach.	Ellis, 1991; Cook, 2001; Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015	-The EFL instructors' adherence to the inductive method, the deductive method and the hybrid method highlighted the accuracy-fluency debate regarding which of the two aspects should be the focus of classroom discussions.
9. The assessment modalities you employ to assess your students' performance in grammar lessons	-The use of continuous assessment or assessment for learning -The use of non-continuous assessment.	Sadler, 1998; Black & William, 2009	The over-reliance on non-continuous assessment/formal written tests (mid-term and final examinations) reportedly due to context-specific, socio-cultural factors.
10. The suitability of CLT in Ethiopian Context	- CLT is suitable in Ethiopian context. - Socio-cultural variables were the major difficulties in implementing CLT in Ethiopian context.	Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Carless, 2007; Hall, 2011	There were inconsistencies between the conceptions of the participants and their classroom realities.

### 4.3. Findings from the Classroom Observation

This study employed classroom observation as the second qualitative data-collection tool. It was mainly used to gather data on private universities' EFL instructors' classroom practices. It was also used to determine the relationship between the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices. By so doing, an attempt was made to corroborate the findings of the self-reporting mechanisms. This was done taking into account the guidelines suggested by Creswell (2008; 2009; 2012). Creswell's sequential exploratory design highlights the use of a two-step design. The first step involves gathering data using one data gathering tool. The second step involves verifying or triangulating the data using data from another data gathering tool. This process assists in ensuring reliable results (Creswell, 2009).

Out of the 25 instructors who participated in this study, 7 of them were not willing to allow me to their classrooms, although they completed the questionnaire. I respected their decision given the written consent form (which was part of the ethical clearance) they signed at the beginning of the

study. The consent form had provisions for their withdrawal from the research at any stage. The classroom observation, therefore, involved 18 instructors (corresponding to the number of instructors who were involved in the interview). Out of the 18 instructors, 5 of them were not willing to be audio-recorded; hence, notes were taken as their classes were being conducted. As indicated in the data collection section, post-observation sessions were held with the EFL instructors to note their views regarding the decisions they made in the teaching-learning process in light of their conceptions of CLT captured using the semi-structured interviews.

The purpose of this section is to present the findings of the study from the instructors' classroom practices, and excerpts from the sample lessons are used to provide evidence of those practices. The excerpts selected are representative of the instructors' typical classroom practices in light of their conceptions of CLT in general and that of communicative grammar teaching in particular. Based on the nature of their classroom practices, these categories of the instructors' emerged from the classroom observation: those that adhered to non-communicative grammar (form-focused grammar lessons: P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P15, P16 and P18), those that adhered to communicative grammar (P5, P6 and P9) and those that adhered to hybrid grammar (both communicative and non-communicative grammar: P13, P14 and P17).

As mentioned in the data collection section, the observation protocol involved semi-structured and structured versions, and the first sub-section below presents the findings from the semi-structured version. The second sub-section presents the findings from the structured version of the classroom observation protocol. In the semi-structured version, instructor's roles or activities in grammar lessons, students' roles or activities in grammar lessons, classroom resources for grammar lessons (textbooks, books, audio-visuals, and LCD) and classroom conditions (seating arrangement, classroom size, space between seats, and room ventilation) were the salient features of the teaching-learning process that were observed. The structured version involved similar aspects, but they were checked for their presence or absence.

#### **4.3.1. Findings from the Semi-structured Observation**

##### **Sample Classroom Observation I**

### ***Classroom setting***

The first-round observation of this class lasted two hours. Since the instructor (P1) used the same teaching strategy in both sessions, one of them is presented here as a sample. One difference between the two observations was the number of students present. There were 56 students during the first-round observation, while there were 52 students in the classroom during the second-round observation. The chairs were arranged randomly. There was a narrow space between the front rows and where the instructor stood. The classroom did not have sufficient ventilation. The raised windows of the classroom were welded, and airflow was restricted. This is because several students were sweating, feeling discomforted and fanning themselves using their exercise books. In the two-hour lesson that I observed, the instructor excused himself more than 6 times to go and get fresh air.

### ***Lesson observation***

The instructor greeted his students and wrote the lesson topic on the whiteboard: Talking about the Future (Future Tenses). The instructor then asked his students to tell him an example of a sentence that referred to the future. A student raised her hand and said: “I will see you tomorrow.” The instructor praised the student for her sentence and then started writing (on the whiteboard) his sentences that illustrated various ways of referring to the sentence:

- *I will come tomorrow.*
- *I am coming tomorrow.*
- *I will be teaching tomorrow.*
- *The exam starts on June 15, 2020.*
- *I will have graduated by 2025.*

Following the written sentences, the instructor asked his students to tell him the tenses of the underlined items. The students answered the first (simple future), the second (present continuous), the third (future continuous) and the fourth (present simple) tenses correctly. Regarding the last item, the instructor asked the whole class if they knew the tense, but almost all of them shook their heads that they did not. Hence, the teacher indicated it as a “future perfect”.

As the audio-recorded excerpt below shows, the instructor went on to explain the meanings of the tenses:

*As you can see, there are different ways of talking about the future. The examples on the board indicate five different ways. The first sentence is the simple future tense; the second sentence is the present continuous tense; the third sentence is the future continuous tense; the fourth sentence is the present simple and the last sentence is the future perfect tense.*

The instructor then asked his students the meaning of each of the sentences. He drew their attention to a pair of sentences. He told them to compare sentences 1 and 2, sentences 3 and 4, and look at sentence 5 alone. The students were silent. The instructor then looked at a student who sat in the front row. The student said that sentences 1, 3 and 5 referred to future events, but the remaining referred to current events. The instructor nodded and said that she was correct about sentences 1, 3, and 5. Even though she was correct about the tenses in the remaining sentences, the teacher indicated that they referred to the future.

He finally explained the meaning of each of the sentences. The excerpt from the audio-recording below depicts his explanation of the meanings of the sentences:

*We use 'will or shall' to give prediction about the future. So, when I say, 'I will come tomorrow', I am making prediction about the future. Am I coming tomorrow? Maybe yes. Maybe no. It's just a simple prediction. The second sentence is written using the continuous tense but it talks about the future. It indicates future event based on current plan, so it is a pre-planned future activity.*

*The third sentence is similar to the first sentence, but it is continuous. The next sentence is written in the present simple tense. Like the second sentence it is a planned activity, but there is a difference between them. When we use the present simple tense, we give attention to events that are limited by timetable or calendar. The last sentence is called the future perfect tense. There are two things you should understand about this tense. One is there is a future event; for example, graduation; the second one is this future activity takes place before the stated time, so in this sentence, 'by 2025' means any time before 2025. It doesn't include 2025.*

The instructor's explanation took almost 47 minutes, which is equivalent to half of the two hours, as it is conventionally called [one period is 50 minutes. Hence, a two-period session which is 100 minutes is often referred to as a two-hour session]. While the instructor was explaining the future tenses, some of the students were listening attentively and taking notes; some of them were listening to the instructor, while others were fanning themselves to deal with the suffocation.

The next activity set aside by the instructor was a ten-sentence form-based exercise that he wrote on the whiteboard. The instruction written on the board was as follows: *Use the verbs in brackets in the future, future continuous, future perfect, simple present or present continuous tenses to complete the following sentences.*

- *As I told you yesterday, I (come) Saturday.*
- *By 2030, Ethiopia (become) a middle-income country.*
- *The plane (take off) at 3 o'clock.*
- *Tomorrow I (teach) from 8.30 to 10.30 a.m.*
- *Do you see the clouds? I think it (rain).*
- *By the end of this week, I (submit) the assignment.*
- *My sister told me that she (visit) her sick uncle on Saturday.*
- *Don't wait for me. I (not come) tomorrow.*
- *The exhibition (take place) on October 26, 2019.*
- *What (happen) if I touch a bare electric wire?*

The instructor told the student to complete the exercise and compare their answers in pairs within ten minutes. The instructor then drew their attention to the exercise and started eliciting answers from them. When the students failed to provide correct answers, he interfered and suggested the correct ones. He praised the students who provided the correct answers. It is noteworthy that the instructor skipped over the grammar exercises in the textbook under the same topic: "Talking about the future". He told the students to do the exercises on their own to get additional practice. The first two exercises in the textbook required them to work in pairs and answer personal questions about the things that they "will do", "are doing", and "will be doing" in the future. These exercises were more interactive than those of the teacher. The form-based exercise in the textbook asked the students to read a passage and underline the verb forms that refer to the future. The instructor ended the class approximately ten minutes before the official class-end time and left the classroom after announcing the exercises that the students should do to get more practice. The subsequent activities in the course material required the learners to work in pairs, groups and as a whole-class and do communicative grammar activities on the topic of the day.

The post-observation session that I had with the instructor revealed that he usually employed the same strategies while teaching grammar lessons, especially when the number of students was "unmanageable". In response to the question of whether he provided feedback on the exercises that he set as homework, the instructor remarked: "It is the learners' responsibility to do the exercises and get more practice with the language. Since we have limited time, it is difficult to ask the students to do all the grammar exercises in the textbook."

In summary, this sample observation showed that teacher talking time was greater than student talking time. The instructor used approximately 67 minutes out of the 100 minutes to explain the grammar topic and give feedback on the students' answers. The students used approximately 15

minutes out of the 100 minutes. The lecture method was the most dominant strategy that the instructor employed. The students' role was limited. They listened to the instructor while he was lecturing the grammar topic and took lecture notes. They also did the form-based exercises the teacher assigned. The discomfort that the students were feeling was evident from their fanning themselves to overcome the suffocation in the classroom. The seating arrangement and the classroom condition were not suitable for the teaching-learning process. The teacher did not mainly use the textbook for this grammar lesson except when he told his students to do the exercises in it to get additional practice.

The following table synthesises Sample Observation I in terms of the major aspects being observed.

**TABLE 4.4.1(A): SYNTHESIS OF SAMPLE OBSERVATION I**

**Lesson Topic: Talking about the Future (Future Tenses)**

<b>Observation Item</b>	<b>Activities Observed</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Classroom setting</b>	56 students in attendance; classroom not well ventilated; students sweating and fanning themselves; the instructor excusing himself several times to get fresh air	Classroom condition was not suitable
<b>Role of the instructor</b>	Introducing lesson topic; motivating students for their participation; providing feedback; writing exercises and examples on the white board; organising the students to work together; telling the students to do form-based exercises; providing lengthy grammatical explanations	The lecture method was the most dominant strategy used by the teacher.
<b>Role of the students</b>	Listening to the lecture and taking notes; copying the lecture notes from the white board; answering questions; doing form-based exercises	The lecture method restricted the active role of students.
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>	Question and answer; sentence completion	Students were given little time to complete even the form-based exercises.
<b>Teaching materials and resources in use</b>	Textbook; supplementary material (for the form-based exercises)	No audio-visuals or equipment aiding the teaching-learning process

**Sample Classroom Observation Lesson II**

*Classroom setting*

The second sample observation also lasted two hours. The lesson topic was “Reported or Indirect Speech”. There were 54 students in the class. This observation was set in a different university. The classroom was comparatively well-ventilated and spacious. The instructor (P3) greeted his



students and indicated to them which page numbers they should look at in their textbook. The instructor drew their attention to the examples in the textbook to distinguish between “Direct and Indirect Speech”. He then asked them to tell him the difference between direct and indirect speeches. He was satisfied with the answer that one of his students provided, as it was apparent from the words that he used to praise the student: “very good”.

### **Lesson observation**

The instructor then started explaining the difference between direct and indirect speeches. He used additional examples which he wrote on the whiteboard to do so. His next explanation focused on how to turn direct speech into reported speech. The extract below exemplifies the approach that he used to teach grammar lessons.

The teacher started by stating: “There are different rules you have to follow when changing direct speech into direct speech.” He then started writing the first rule on the whiteboard: “Rule 1: There is a change in the tense of the sentence. This means that since we are reporting what happened in the past, the tense goes one step back in time.

#### ***Example:***

*Direct speech: Sifen said, I am sitting here.”*

*Indirect Speech: Sifen said that she was sitting there.”*

The instructor used the same example to explain additional rules used to turn direct speech into indirect speech. The notes which he wrote on the board were as follows:

*Rule 2: There is a change in pronoun. This means that the subject outside the quotation should match with the subject inside the quotation. In this example, Sifen is a female so, ‘I’ becomes “she” to agree with it.*

*Rule 3: There is a change in adverbs of place. In this example, “here” changes to “there” since the subject is no more “here”.*

*Rule 4: This one is an exception about the change in tense. If the tense in the original sentence expresses universal or general truth, the same tense is used in the reported speech. This is true for the simple present tense which is used to talk about general truth. Example: Direct speech: the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Reported speech: The teacher said that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west.*

While the instructor was explaining and writing the rules on the whiteboard, the students were copying the lecture notes. Then, the instructor gave the students the opportunity to ask questions. The students remained silent. Hence, he told them to do the activity in the course material. The activity drew the students' attention to the changes that they should observe. It required them to underline the changes they should make. This was the third exercise in the textbook. The first two activities in the textbook required the students to work in groups to narrate their previous days' events. Based on the instruction, half of the group had to talk about how they spent the day before, while the other half had to listen and write down the sentences that their group members uttered and then report what they had done the previous day. Although this exercise created more communicative contexts, the instructor skipped it and told them to do the form-based exercises.

After approximately 20 minutes, the instructor started eliciting answers from the class. Based on the answers that the students provided, the instructor wrote the correct answers on the whiteboard. He also underlined the changes that they should make when turning direct speech into reported speech. The feedback session took approximately 20 minutes. The instructor summarised the major rules once again and left the room.

As the instructor in the first sample observation, the amount of time that the instructor used in this observation was comparatively higher than that of the time he allocated to the students to practise the specific grammar item. One main distinction between the two observations lied in the use of the exercises in the textbook. The latter relied more on exercises from the textbook, unlike the former. However, the strategies that the two instructors employed and the amount of time they allocated to grammatical explanations demonstrated that they adhered to teacher-fronted grammar teaching strategies to teach the grammar lessons.

The post-observation session that I had with the instructor showed that the instructor was concerned about course coverage, so he preferred resorted to the lecture method to teach the grammar lessons. He indicated that the students sat for the same final examination and that he had to cover the major grammar lessons in the textbook. He also indicated: "Even if I believe that the remaining exercises in the course book [textbook] are essential, they are time-consuming. I believe that the students should do them to get a better understanding of the grammar lessons." Overall, the instructor focused on explaining the rules of changing direct speech into reported speech. The students' roles were limited to note-taking and doing form-

based exercises. The instructor mainly relied on the textbook for the course, especially to give exercises to his students. Finally, classroom conditions were relatively better.

The following table presents a synthesis of the Sample Observation II in terms of the major observed items.

**TABLE 4.4.1 (B): SYNTHESIS OF SAMPLE OBSERVATION II**

**Lesson topic: Reported or Indirect Speech**

<b>Observation Item</b>	<b>Activities Observed</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Classroom setting</b>	54 students in attendance; relatively ventilated and spacious room	The classroom setting was conducive, although there were several students.
<b>Role of the instructor</b>	Explaining the rules of grammar; tell students to do form-based exercises; organising the students to work in groups; providing feedback to whole class	Teacher talking time was greater than student talking time.
<b>Role of the students</b>	Listening to the lecture; taking the lecture notes; doing the form-based exercises; doing the communicative exercises in group	The teaching-learning process was mainly teacher-centred.
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>	Recognising the rules on how to turn direct speech into indirect speech	The students did only one form-based exercise.
<b>Teaching materials and resources in use</b>	Textbook; lecture notes prepared by the instructor	The textbook was the major teaching material.

**Sample Classroom Observation III**

*Classroom setting*

The third sample lesson observed took 2 hours. The lesson topic was: “Talking about what is happening now”. There were 58 students in the class. The room was suffocated, and the students used their exercise books and pieces of papers to fan themselves. Moreover, because of the suffocation, some students at the back were making noises, to which the instructor reacted. He told them to stop talking. Unlike the two classrooms above (which are in two different universities), the students were sitting on three-seater, wooden desks, instead of armchairs. The instructor (P5) brought in a flip chart of various pictures.

### *Lesson observation*

He introduced the lesson topic and wrote it on the whiteboard. Without taking much time, he asked for five volunteers from the class. He asked them to stand in lines, facing their classmates. He gave them cards on which action verbs were written. He then asked them to look at the verbs and act them out, without having to use spoken words. As each student demonstrated the action, the remaining students were required to tell the instructor what was happening. The instructor allocated about 45 minutes for this and another similar activity which included seven action verbs selected from the textbook for the *Communicative English Skills* course he was teaching.

The flip chart he brought in was used to practise the “present continuous tense” like the first exercise in which he used volunteer students. He hung the flip chart on the whiteboard and told the students to work in pairs, look at the hanging pictures and compose sentences describing what was happening. The flip chart contained 16 pictures, which meant that the students were required to write 16 sentences. Then, the instructor requested eight volunteer students to write their answers on the whiteboard. Each student was requested to write two sentences, while the remaining students were asked to comment on the answers. The instructor did not say much about the answers, except when he nodded to give them approval.

After the volunteer students wrote their sentences on the whiteboard, the instructor invited the rest of the class to raise their hands and make corrections on the sentences, if there were any. Finally, he underlined the verb forms in the continuous form to highlight the form of the present continuous tense. Following this, he drew their attention to other communicative exercises in the textbook. Since the time left was around 15 minutes, the instructor told the students that they would do an exercise that would fit into the time that was left. This exercise first required the students to work in pairs and describe orally what was happening in classroom situations. It then required them to write down their answers and report them to their classmates, as reflected in the textbook. The instructor listened to the answers provided by the students and, in instances where the sentences constructed by the students did not show what was happening, he asked the other students to give their feedback on the answers. The instructor finished the day’s lesson by revising how the present continuous tense was used in various contexts to express different meanings. He told his students to do the remaining three exercises as homework.

The second-round observation of the same instructor revealed that the instructor employed similar classroom strategies that placed the students at the centre of attention. A peculiar aspect observed in the second-round observation related to the roles that the instructor played as an independent participant in the group-work activities involving the present continuous tense. For instance, in one of the exercises, the students were required to think of things happening around the present time, but not necessarily at the moment of speaking. He went to different group settings and sat and gave them his views of what was happening. The students used him as models to come up with their descriptions of what was happening.

The time the instructor took to explain the grammar topic was comparatively lower in this lesson, unlike that of the two sample observations above. The students were participating actively individually and collectively. Furthermore, the use of additional resources such as flip charts and cue cards contributed to the liveliness of the teaching-learning process. The students played different roles in the teaching-learning process as active listeners, participants, role players and assessors.

The post-observation discussion that I had with the instructor showed that the instructor usually employed similar strategies in grammar lessons. He pointed out that he relied on the lecture method and learned that students were usually inactive. He stressed that he did not feel comfortable when the class “died”, so he decided to engage his students in the instructional process. He remarked: “When grammar is presented interactively, it helps to catch the learners’ attention. The students learn well when they are involved in the process. Personally, it gives me great pleasure when all the students participate actively in the teaching-learning process.”

Table 4.4.1 below synthesises the major aspects of the lesson being observed for *Sample Observation III*.

**TABLE 4.4.1 (C): SYNTHESIS OF SAMPLE OBSERVATION III**

**Lesson Topic: Talking about what is happening now/present continuous tense**

<b>Observation Item</b>	<b>Activities Observed</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Classroom setting</b>	58 students in attendance; poorly ventilated room; three-seater wooden desks; noise at the back of the class	The classroom was not conducive for the teaching-learning process.
<b>Role of the instructor</b>	Organising pair work; being Role model; independent participant; being input provider	The class above was student-centred.

<b>Role of the students</b>	Playing various roles; providing feedback; being active listener	The class was lively.
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>	Demonstration/miming; describing pictures or what is happening in the pictures; sentence construction; describing what was happening in classroom situations	More meaning-based exercises were used.
<b>Teaching materials and resources in use</b>	Flip chart; cue cards; textbook	The teaching aids contributed to the liveliness of the class.

## Sample Classroom Observation IV

### *Classroom setting*

The lesson topic was: “Talking about what was happening” (Past continuous tense). There were 56 students in the class. Some students, especially the backbenchers were sweating since the room was not well-ventilated although it was relatively wide. The students were sitting on armchairs.

### *Lesson observation*

The instructor (P8) started the lesson by greeting his students and writing the topic on the whiteboard. He then asked for six volunteer students. He told them to go out of class and go round the campus and observe what was happening and report the same to their classmates. The students took about fifteen minutes to complete the exercise. In the meantime, the students in the class were told to talk to one another on many topics which the instructor had written on the whiteboard: global warming; economic recession, election, movies, the English Premier League, historical heritages, physical exercise and balanced diet.

The instructor then interrupted them now and then, to ask them what they were discussing. Some of the responses from the students were:

*We were discussing global warming.*  
*We talked about the English Premier League.*  
*We were talking about historical heritages.*  
*We have talked about a balanced diet.*

To draw their attention to the past continuous tense, the instructor asked the whole class if they finished their discussion. One of the students replied: “No, we did not. Sir, you interrupted us.” The instructor asked the student why he was interrupting them now and then. The student replied: “Because you are teaching us.” The instructor then asked the student: “If something was going and if you were interrupted, how would you respond regarding what you were doing?” The

student said: “I would say the things I was doing”. The instructor elicited some of the things the student was discussing with her classmate and wrote them on the whiteboard:

*Betel and Hannah were discussing global warming.  
They were talking about cultural heritage.  
They were exchanging ideas regarding a balanced diet.*

Next, the instructor underlined the continuous verb forms to draw the students’ attention to the verb form for the past continuous tense. He elicited more responses from the classroom until he was sure he obtained the correct verb forms for the tense being discussed.

Turning his attention to the students whom he sent out of class, he asked them to report what they saw happening. He told two of the students to write on the whiteboard the things they saw happening outside of the classroom situation. One of the students wrote:

*Two students are talking to each other.  
Some students are playing football.  
The security guards are checking people.  
Some students are sitting and reading their modules.*

The second student wrote:

*Some students were playing games on their mobile phones.  
Some students were sitting and chatting on their mobile phones.  
Some students were reading their exercise books.*

The instructor asked the first student the difference between his sentences and that of his classmates’. The student could not tell the difference except saying that some of the sentences were about the same topics. The instructor turned to the other students and asked them to tell him the difference between the sentences written by the two students. Many of the students indicated the difference in the tenses of the sentences. Afterwards, he turned to the student who wrote those sentences and asked him: “Do you think the students are still there?” The student replied: “I am not sure. Maybe if they have class, they will go.” The instructor said: “Very good!” He told the student to make corrections to the sentences, which he did correctly.

By underlining the verb forms, the instructor highlighted that the students were aware of the form of the past continuous tense while allowing them to use the form to express meaning. He told them to do the activities in the course book/textbook. The exercises required them to work alone first and cooperatively next. The instructor rephrased the directions from the textbook and clarified what the students were expected to do. In the individual exercises, the students were required to enumerate the things they started doing the day before but did not finish for any reason. The instructor gave them a couple of examples about what he was doing himself:

*Yesterday, I was correcting your test papers.*

*Yesterday, I was watching a sci-fi movie.*

The students used his examples and produced a list of ten sentences which they then shared with their classmates. This activity took almost 45 minutes of the whole session. Before this, the instructor's attempt to contextualise the form of the tense took approximately 30 minutes. In the remaining 15 minutes, the instructor requested volunteer students to talk about what they were doing the previous day. He selected six students, three females and four males. He told the rest of the class to forward questions to the students who were talking about what they were doing the previous day.

The second round observation of the same class revealed that the instructor continued helping the students to practise the various functions of the past continuous tense. He used a sequence of pictures to create a story, making sure that the students used the past continuous tense to describe the events that were taking place. He hung the pictures on the whiteboard for approximately 15 minutes. He then removed the pictures and told his students to write a description of what was happening in the story. Once the students wrote individual stories, he told them to sit in groups and compare their stories. Then, he told the students to narrate orally in their respective groups. The students took turns to do this exercise. He requested two volunteer students to present the story to their classmates orally. The students did this, and the rest of the class gave their comments on what the two students had presented. Following that, the instructor told the students to do an activity from the textbook which required them to make up a sequence of events in which the past continuous tense was mainly used. The students took 70 minutes to complete this activity. The instructor used the last 10 minutes of the session to summarise the grammar lesson and provide them with feedback as a whole class.

In summary, the instructor played various roles in the teaching-learning process: an authority when he briefly explained the rules and meanings of the grammar topic; an independent participant in one of the activities; and an assessor when he provided feedback on the exercises that the students had done. The roles of the students were also as varied: they were active participants when some of them were sent out of class to find out what was happening; others worked individually to construct true sentences related to their experiences; still, others commented on their classmates' work. The context that the instructor created and the resulting enthusiasm of the students contributed to the liveliness of the class, unlike the classes in the first



two observations. Overall, the instructor created meaningful contexts and used the textbook, pictures and the students as classroom resources to teach the grammar lesson.

The following table presents a synthesis of the major aspects of the lesson observed in Sample Observation IV.

**TABLE 4.4.1 (D): SYNTHESIS OF SAMPLE OBSERVATION IV**

**Lesson Topic: Talking about what was happening/past continuous tense**

<b>Observation Item</b>	<b>Activities Observed</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Classroom setting</b>	56 students in attendance; classroom not well-ventilated	The teaching-learning process was interactive.
<b>Role of the Instructor</b>	Creating communicative contexts; explaining the formal aspects of the target language briefly; being independent participant; being an organiser; being an assessor	The class was communicative.
<b>Role of the students</b>	Being active listeners; being active participants and assessors	The students played multiple roles in the teaching-learning process.
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>	Outside-classroom visits and reporting what was happening; group discussion on an array of topics; question and answer; sentence construction; describing pictures and story telling	The combination of activities contributed to the liveliness of the class.
<b>Teaching materials and resources in use</b>	Textbook; pictures; students	Varied teaching materials were relatively used.

### **Sample Classroom Observation V**

#### *Classroom setting*

This observation took 100 minutes (2 hours). The lesson topic was: “Talking about the present/The present simple tense”. There were 54 students in the class. The room was much suffocated, and the students were fanning themselves. The instructor (P13) greeted his students before beginning the day’s lesson.

#### *Lesson observation*

The instructor started asking individual students questions pertinent to the form and meaning of the present simple tense. From the answers the students provided, it was evident that the students had been told to do a reading assignment on the grammar lesson. One of the questions he forwarded to the students was: “How is the present simple tense formed?” to a student

responded: “Depending on the subject, we can use the verb as it is or add ‘s’, ‘es’ or ‘ies’”. The instructor then told the student to write example sentences on the whiteboard, which they did as follows:

*I do physical exercise every two days.*

*My friend does physical exercise everyday.*

*My sisters do physical exercise twice a week.*

*My younger brother cries every now and then.*

The instructor added five sentences to the ones provided by the student and drew his students’ attention to the form of the present simple tense, while at the same time explaining the meanings suggested by some of the sentences. Following, the instructor wrote a group of sentences on the whiteboard and explained the meaning that these sentences expressed in common. He wrote five groups of sentences that were used to illustrate five functions of the present simple tense. In the first exercise, the instructor told the students to match the sentences written in the present simple tense with the meanings suggested by these sentences. The exercise contained five functions of the present simple tense:

*a. It is used to express routines or habits*

*b. It is used to express an immediate sequence of events as in story telling*

*c. It is used to express general truth.*

*d. It is used to refer to future events bound by calendar or timetable.*

*e. It is used to express an unfulfilled wish in the present.*

The instructor provided the students with eight sentences:

*I usually go to the church.*

*Fish live in water.*

*She opens the door and hurries to the bathroom.*

*The plane takes off at 9 o’clock in the evening.*

*I wish I had a swimming pool.*

*My brother goes to school every week.*

*The sun rises in the east and sets in the west.*

The feedback session involved the instructor providing additional explanations on the functions of the present simple tense. All these activities took approximately 35 minutes. The remainder of the session was allocated to the exercises in the textbook. Three of the exercises required the students to work individually first and collectively next to share their answers. One of these exercises required all the students to write down at least two examples for each of the functions of the present simple tense. They then worked in groups to share their answers and give feedback on the sentences produced by the members of their group. The second exercise required them to imagine what two of their classmates would do every day. The instructor provided them with two examples: “I think Hanna usually watches romance movies. I guess Hanna helps her mother with household chores.” The students replicated the examples to imagine what their classmates would usually, rarely, seldom and always do. The students were required to do this orally.

In the last exercise, the students were required to complete a table with their weekday and weekend routines or habits and use the information from the table to compose a paragraph or two on “My Weekday and Weekend Routines”. The exercise guided the students by providing them with the topic sentence for the paragraph which they were going to write. Since the students did not manage to complete the exercises within the time allocated, the instructor assigned it as homework.

This sample observation and the second one revealed that the instructor used similar strategies to teach the grammar lessons. He first drew his students’ attention to the form of the grammar topic and then engaged them in more communicative tasks which were drawn from the textbook and other sources. The post-observation session I had with the instructor confirmed this finding. To that effect, the instructor combined the form-based and meaning-based exercises so that his students could learn both the form and meaning of the grammar topic being taught. Explaining this, he indicated:

*I do not make assumptions about students’ knowledge of grammar. I do what is best for them. I explain the rules of grammar properly. I also engage my students in meaningful communicative activities. This balanced approach helps to give my students good knowledge and skills of the grammar topic in the syllabus.*

The instructor explained his adherence to the “balanced approach” in terms of his classroom realities. He believes that the students that he usually meets lack not only a better understanding of the grammar of English but also its corresponding communicative functions. He remarked the: “gaps that the students have” is one of the factors on which they base their decisions about how much time they should allocate to the teaching of grammar.

The table below presents a synthesis of the major aspects being observed in *Sample Observation V*.

**TABLE 4.4.1 (E): SYNTHESIS OF SAMPLE OBSERVATION V**

**Lesson Topic: Talking about the Present /Simple Present Tense**

<b>Observation Item</b>	<b>Activities Observed</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Classroom setting</b>	54 students in attendance; The room was not well-ventilated as the students were fanning.	Not conducive classroom situation
<b>Role of the instructor</b>	Explaining the formal aspect of the language; facilitator individual and pair work; providing feedback	The lecture method and communicative grammar were combined.
<b>Role of the students</b>	Listening to lectures; participating actively in pair work; providing feedback	The roles of the students varied, depending on the roles of the instructor.
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>	Question and answer; matching functions of the tense with example sentences; sentence construction using the tense; guessing exercise ; guided writing exercises about weekday and weekend routines	A combination of form-based and meaning-based exercises were used.
<b>Teaching materials and resources in use</b>	Lecture notes; textbook	

**Sample Classroom Observation VI**

*Classroom setting*

This lesson, too, took two hours. The lesson topic was: “Talking about what is happening now”. There were 52 students in the class. The classroom was not well-ventilated, and the students were fanning using things at their disposal. The students were sitting on armchairs.

*Lesson observation*

The instructor (P17) wrote the lesson topic on the whiteboard. He then wrote five examples in which the form of the present continuous tense was highlighted:

*We **are discussing** the present continuous tense now.*

*These days, many people in Africa **are dying** of Ebola.*

*My sister **is visiting** her friend tonight.*

*He **is studying** for a degree in architecture and urban planning.*

*My friend **is always** coming late to classes.*

*You **are listening** to me.*

The instructor requested the students to tell him the meanings of each of the sentences that he had written on the whiteboard. Two students tried to do so. However, he was not satisfied with their answers because they indicated that the sentences generally referred to the present. Hence, he started explaining both the form and meaning of the present continuous tense using these examples. The following excerpt illustrates how he explained the form and meaning of the grammar item:

*As you can see in these examples, the present tense is formed by “**be**+ **-ing** form”. For example, if the subject is “**I**”, “**am**” is used before the “**-ing**” form. If your subject is “**he**”, “**she**”, or “**it**” or names that replace these pronouns “**is**” is used before the “**-ing**” form. If you have “**you**”, “**they**” and “**we**” and names that replace these pronouns, “**are**” is used before the “**-ing**” form.*

Following this, he explained the meanings suggested by each of the sentences briefly. He then wrote five functions of the present continuous tense and asked the students to match them with the given sentences. The rules which he wrote on the whiteboard were as follows:

*To describe what is happening at the moment of speaking*

*To describe what is happening around the present, but not necessarily at the moment of speaking*

*To describe a temporary state*

*To describe anger over a repeated activity*

*To describe a future social arrangement or a pre-planned activity future activity*

The students matched the rules and the sentences correctly. In the next exercise, the instructor told the students to write two true sentences for each of the functions of the present continuous tense. He allowed them 15 minutes to complete this exercise. When they finished the exercise, he

told them to give feedback on each other's sentences. He used five minutes to give feedback to the whole class. The instructor allowed the students to use the remaining time to do the exercises in the textbook. These exercises were more communicative than the exercises that the instructor introduced. For example, one of the exercises required the students to select at least ten items from a list of activities and then mime them. Working in groups, the students did the miming until their group members correctly described what was happening. Before that, the instructor asked a volunteer student and gave her a list of five items which she had to mime. He asked her classmates to describe what she was doing while the student was miming.

In the next exercise, the instructor hung a picture that showed a sequence of events. The picture that the instructor used was the same picture that another instructor used it to teach the same grammar lesson: the present continuous tense. The students had to describe to their classmates what was happening in the picture. The instructor told them to work in pairs orally. He then told them to make up a story in writing of what was happening. He used the last five minutes of the session to give feedback on the exercise. During the post-observation interview, the instructor expressed the same view to that of the instructor in *Sample Classroom Observation V*. He highlighted that the students should get enough practice not only in the form of the grammar item but also in how it is used in communicative contexts. He seems to advocate the “balanced approach”, like the instructor in *Sample Classroom Observation V* adopted in teaching grammar lessons.

Table 4.4.1(F) below is used to provide a synthesis of Sample Observation VI in terms of the major aspects being observed.

**TABLE 4.4.1 (F): SYNTHESIS OF SAMPLE OBSERVATION VI****Lesson Topic: Talking about what is happening now/present continuous tense**

<b>Observation Item</b>	<b>Activities Observed</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Classroom setting</b>	52 students in attendance; room not well-ventilated	Classroom not conducive for the teaching-learning process
<b>Role of the instructor</b>	Being an authority/lecturer; an organiser; proving feedback	A combination of the lecture method and communicative was used.
<b>Role of the students</b>	Being active listeners; being note-takers; proving feedback provider; participating in group work	The roles of the students were varied.
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>	Matching exercises; sentence construction; miming; describing pictures	A combination of form and meaning-based exercises were used.
<b>Teaching materials and resources in use</b>	Lecture notes; pictures; textbook	

In summary, this section analysed the classroom observation data for 18 EFL instructors. The data assisted in categorising the instructors into three groups based on their adherence to the deductive, inductive or hybrid approach.

The analysis of the sample classroom observations revealed that the conceptions of some of the instructors (labelled P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P10, P11 and P18) were reflected in the teaching-learning process. This group of instructors expressed the view that grammar should be taught deductively and their classroom practices demonstrated their adherence to the form-based teaching of grammar lessons. Even though some instructors (labelled P12, P15 and P16) reported that they subscribed to communicative grammar, the observation of their classrooms revealed otherwise: they, too, adhered to the form-based teaching of grammar lessons. They reported that the inconsistencies between their conceptions and their classroom practices were attributed to various context-specific factors: large class size, students' low motivation and the lack of authentic teaching materials.

The other group of instructors (labelled P5, P6 and P9) reported that grammar should be taught communicatively. As the data from the classroom observation illustrated, their conceptions and their classroom practices were consistent: they taught grammar lessons communicatively, confirming the communicatively-oriented conceptions that they held. The last group of instructors (labelled P13, P14 and P17) indicated that they adhered to the hybrid approach, and the classroom observation data exemplified this. Thus, they combined the inductive and deductive approaches to teach grammar lessons. As they reported, they felt that students should get enough practices both in the form and meaning of the grammar rules.

#### **4.3.2. Synthesis of Findings from the Structured Classroom Observation**

Although the contents of the semi-structured and structured versions of the classroom observation are the same, the latter was designed to check if the specific aspects of CLT were either present or absent from the grammar lessons taught by the EFL instructors. The main headings under which the specific activities were categorised included instructors' roles/activities in grammar lessons, students' roles/activities in grammar lessons, instructional activities in grammar lessons, instructional materials used in grammar lessons and classroom conditions and assessment modalities used for grammar lessons. (Please refer to Appendix C: Classroom Checklist/Proforma-structured version) for the specific activities under each category mentioned above. The following sub-sections present the discussion of the above categories under three sub-heading: form-focused grammar teaching, meaning-focused grammar teaching and the hybrid approach to grammar teaching.



#### **4.3.2.1. Form-focused Grammar Teaching**

The data from the structured classroom observation revealed that 12 (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P10 and P11, P12, P15, P16 and P18) out of the 18 instructors did not carry out the specific activities included under the major headings listed above.

##### **A. The instructors' roles/activities in grammar lessons**

The above instructors mainly carried out activities that showed their adherence to form-focused grammar teaching. The data from the classroom observation demonstrated that they conducted lectures or used much of their class time to discuss grammatical rules, and they mainly relied on the textbook as their major teaching resource. Authentic materials that the CLT literature suggests were not evident in their grammar lessons at the time of the observation. The post-observation session I had with the instructors also confirmed this result. Since their classrooms were mainly form-focused, the instructors were pre-occupied with error correction.

##### **B. The students' roles/activities in grammar lessons**

The students listened to the lectures, took lecture notes and did form-focussed exercises from the textbook. There were certain elements of communicative tasks that were realised through pair and group work; however, in such contexts, the students compared and contrasted the answers to the form-focused activities they were doing, instead of engaging in the meaningful exchange of ideas. The students' use of their first or second language (mainly Amharic-the official language of the country) was one of the most notable features observed during the grammar lessons. The students used the language to discuss their answers to the grammar activities they were doing.

##### **C. The instructional activities in grammar lessons**

The instructional activities that the above instructors used were mainly those that reflected their adherence to form-focused grammar teaching. The major activities that they employed to teach grammar lessons were form-based exercises that the students had to answer correctly. Most of these exercises focused on sentence construction. CLT classrooms are characterised by such communicative tasks as role-plays, games, information-gap and problem-solving activities (Ellis, 2003; Richards, 2001). These activities did not feature during the classroom observation. The

instructors reported that large class size and the classroom conditions did not allow them to use these activities in teaching grammar lessons.

#### **D. The instructional materials used in grammar lessons**

The above instructors mainly used the textbook or course module prepared for the courses they were teaching. They did not use references, audio-visuals and authentic materials (such as magazines, newspapers and maps pictures) in teaching grammar lessons, unlike the instructors who adhered to communicative grammar.

#### **E. The classroom conditions**

Although there are differences among the EFL instructors concerning their conceptions and classroom strategies, except for a few instances, their classroom conditions were the same. All the EFL instructors reported that they had to teach more than 50 students in one section, and the classroom observation data confirmed this reality. Additionally, because of the large class size, the classrooms were suffocated, and the students were feeling discomfort. In most of the classrooms, the instructors found it difficult to move freely to monitor or facilitate their students' engagement in the grammar lessons. They found it difficult to flexibly arrange their students, especially when the grammar lessons required organising the students in pairs and groups.

#### **F. The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons**

Consistent with their adherence to form-focused grammar teaching, the instructors used form-focused exercises to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. The instructors reported that it was difficult to incorporate communicative grammar activities in their assessment modalities since their classroom realities did not allow them to do so. Hence, meaning-focused grammar activities, problem-solving exercises, and information-gap exercises were not featuring in their assessment modalities. This contradicts the learner-fronted assessment tools that the syllabus outlined including individual assignment (portfolio), group assignment, written tests, and oral presentations (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 2019).

In summary, the structured classroom observation demonstrated that the EFL instructors in this category used the lecture method, in light of their form-focused conception of grammar teaching.

The EFL instructors' were playing the role of being an authority, while their students were passive listeners. Communicative activities were missing from their classes; they mainly used sentence-level, form-based exercises. The structured observation revealed that there was no evidence suggesting that they used authentic materials to teach grammar lessons. Their assessment modalities were consistent with the form-focused teaching strategy they adopted; hence, they used sentence-level form-based exercises to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons.

#### **4.3.2.2. Meaning-focused Grammar Teaching**

The data from the structured lesson observation revealed that a few instructors (P5, P6 and P9) carried out many of the activities that characterised CLT and which were included in the structured version of the classroom observation checklist.

##### **A. The instructors' roles/activities in grammar lessons**

The instructors performed many of the expected roles: they participated independently in grammar-focused activities, organised pair and group work, facilitated and monitored the students' engagement in grammar lessons and used the target language throughout the instructional process. They used authentic teaching materials in the teaching-learning process, although there was a difference between individual instructors. Some of them used pictures and stories to contextualise the grammar lessons they were teaching. They also encouraged their students to experiment with English in the classroom situations. Contrary to the instructors who focused on form-based exercises, they did not give due attention to error correction. They rather encouraged the students themselves to self and peer correct. Most importantly, they attempted to make sure that all their students actively participated in the grammar lessons in the face of poor classroom conditions and large class size, thereby ensuring that no student was left behind in grammar activities.

##### **B. The students' roles/activities in grammar lessons**

Their students' roles in the grammar lessons were evidence of their adherence to CLT. Their students participated in pair and group work activities, provided feedback on their classmates' grammar exercises, and engaged in grammar-based problem-solving activities. The students also completed grammar-based, information-gap activities. The instructors also allowed their students

to do form-focused grammar exercises without having to rely heavily on grammatical explanations.

### **C. The instructional activities in grammar lessons**

The structured classroom observation also revealed that the instructional activities that the instructors used reflected their adherence to CLT in teaching grammar lessons. To varying degrees, the instructors used individual drills that focused on the forms of the grammar topic, dialogues, pair and group work, information gap activities and role-plays,.

### **D. The instructional materials and resources in use in grammar lessons**

The instructional materials they used in teaching grammar lessons are additional evidence of their adherence to CLT. To that effect, they used the textbook and supplemented it with exercises from different grammar books or references. They also used pictures, stories and newspapers, which constituted authentic materials.

### **E. The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons**

The instructors did not rely on formal assessment modalities to assess their students' progress in grammar lessons. The meaning-focused grammar exercises/identifying the meanings and functions of grammar items, problem-solving activities, information-gap activities, and form-focused exercises were part of their assessment modalities.

In general, despite differences between individual instructors, all of the EFL instructors created communicative contexts in the classrooms to teach grammar lessons. This can be explained by the time they allocated to communicative grammar activities, their students' active participation in these activities, their dependence on authentic teaching materials and the variety of their classroom organisation patterns.

#### **4.3.2.3. The Hybrid Approach to Grammar Teaching**

The instructors (P13, P14 and P17) combined the inductive and deductive approaches to teach grammar lessons. This was consistent with their conceptions as the interview data demonstrated. Aspects of the two approaches were observed in their grammar lessons. For instance, they

explained grammar rules to their students when they thought their students needed the explanation. They also engaged their students in communicative activities, and this involved allowing their students to do information-gap activities and role-plays. They used the textbook when the need arose. They also supplemented it with additional exercises from grammar books and the internet.

The roles of their students were also as varied as their teaching strategies. They required their students to listen to lectures on grammar rules and take lecture notes. Where they felt the students needed to understand grammar rules, they organised question-answer sessions. They also facilitate pair and group works to help their students do information-gap activities and play grammar-based games.

The instructors used both written tests and continuous assessment modalities to evaluate their students' performance in grammar lessons. For example, all their records showed that they used written tests to assess their students' understanding of the forms of the grammar topics in the syllabus. These tests were sentence-level grammar exercises. They also integrated the assessment in the grammar lessons and took records of how their students participated, especially in pair and group work activities. They were observed to be taking notes of the participation of individual and groups of students while they were doing communicative grammar activities.

In summary, the combination of the activities that the EFL instructors employed in the instructional process and the assessment modalities they blended revealed that they adopted the hybrid approach to teaching grammar lessons. Their practice is in line with their conception of CLT they reported in the semi-structured interview. In the post-observation session, they reported that students have different learning styles: some are auditory learning who like to listen to people speaking, while others enjoy being involved in interactive or communicative activities. Hence, the use of the hybrid approach can accommodate the differences in learning styles in classroom situations.

**TABLE 4.4.2: SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE STRUCTURED CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

<b>CLT principle</b>	<b>Observation site</b>	<b>Summary of observed activities</b>
<b>Role of the instructor</b>	<b>Classroom Observation I (Talking about the Future: Future</b>	Introducing the lesson topic; praising the students for their participation providing feedback on students' exercises; writing exercises and examples on the white-board; facilitating group work; providing lengthy explanation on how

	<b>Tenses)</b>	the future tenses were formed
<b>Role of the students</b>		Listening to the lecture and taking notes; copying notes from the white board; answering questions; doing form-based exercises
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>		Question and answer; sentence completion
<b>The instructional materials and resources used in grammar lessons</b>		Textbook; supplementary materials
<b>The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons</b>		Mainly written tests and exams
	<b>Classroom Observation II (Reported Indirect Speech)</b>	
<b>Role of the instructor</b>		Explaining the rules for turning direct speech into reported speech; telling the students to do form-based exercises; organising group work; providing feedback to whole class; using English throughout the instructional activities
<b>Role of the students</b>		Listening to the lecture; taking the lecture notes; doing form-based exercises; completing communicative exercises in group
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>		Recognising the rules for turning direct speech into reported speech
<b>The instructional materials and resources used in grammar lessons</b>		Textbook; lecture notes
<b>The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons</b>		Written tests
	<b>Classroom Observation III (Talking about what is happening now)</b>	
<b>Role of the instructor</b>		Facilitating pair work; acting as a role model; participating independently; providing input; using English throughout the instructional activities
<b>Role of the students</b>		Playing a role; providing feedback on their classmates' work; listening attentively to the instructor
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>		Demonstration/miming; describing pictures; sentence construction; describing what was happening in classroom situations
<b>The instructional materials and resources used in grammar lessons</b>		Flip chart; cue cards; textbook
<b>The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons</b>		Individual presentations; group work and presentations; written tests

	<b>Classroom Observation IV (Talking about what was happening)</b>	
<b>Role of the instructor</b>		Facilitating communicative context; explaining the formal aspects of the target language briefly; participating independently in group work ;facilitating pair and group work; assessing students' performance in grammar lessons; using English throughout the instructional activities
<b>Role of the students</b>		Listening actively; participating actively; providing feedback
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>		Outside-classroom visits and reporting what was happening; group discussion on an array of topics; question and answer; sentence construction; describing pictures; story-telling
<b>The instructional materials and resources used in grammar lessons</b>		Textbook; pictures; students
<b>The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons</b>		Individual and group presentations; written tests; projects; role-plays
	<b>Classroom Observation V (Simple Present Tense)</b>	
<b>Role of the instructor</b>		Explaining the formal aspect of the language; facilitating individual and group work; providing feedback; using the target language throughout the instructional activities
<b>Role of the students</b>		Listening actively; participating actively in pair work; providing feedback
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>		Question and answer; matching functions of the tense with example sentences; sentence construction; guessing exercise; guided writing exercises about weekday and weekend routines
<b>The instructional materials and resources used in grammar lessons</b>		Lecture notes; textbook
<b>The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons</b>		Written tests; individual presentations; group presentations
	<b>Classroom Observation VI (Talking about what is happening now)</b>	
<b>Role of the instructor</b>		Acting as an authority; facilitating pair and group work; providing feedback; using English throughout the instructional activities
<b>Role of the students</b>		Listening attentively to the instructor; taking the lecture notes; providing feedback on their classmates' work; participating in group work
<b>Instructional activities in grammar lessons</b>		Matching exercises; sentence construction; miming; describing pictures
<b>The instructional materials and resources</b>		Lecture notes; pictures; textbook

used in grammar lessons		
The assessment modalities used to assess the students' performance in grammar lessons		Written tests; report writing; oral presentations

#### 4.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed the interview and lesson observation data. The semi-structured interview was used to garner data on private university EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in the Ethiopian context. The 11 interview questions elicited several responses from the instructors on several aspects of CLT in general and the teaching of grammar lessons in particular. Table 4.2 was used to synthesise the main categories or themes which emerged from the analysed interview data.

The classroom observation was mainly used to gather data on private universities' EFL instructors' classroom practices. By so doing, it assisted in comparing the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices. The data from the classroom observation revealed that there were inconsistencies between the conceptions of the EFL instructors and their classroom practices: the majority of them expressed conceptions of teaching that favoured CLT, whereas they employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons.



## **CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS**

### **5.1.Introduction**

In line with the mixed-methods research approach and the sequential exploratory design the study employed, collecting quantitative data constituted the second phase of the study. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to garner quantitative data on private universities' EFL instructors' conceptions, their classroom practices and the challenges that they faced in implementing CLT while teaching grammar lessons. The quantitative questionnaire data was also used to corroborate the interview and lesson observation data. 25 EFL instructors in four private universities in Ethiopia completed the questionnaire. Hence, the response rate was 100%. Taking into account the main research question and the specific objectives of this study, the questionnaire was comprised of five sections: the first section was used to gather relevant data on the profile of the participants of the study; the second section was used to gauge EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT; the third section was utilised to measure their conceptions of the importance of grammar and its place in CLT; the fourth section was used to gauge the instructors' implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons, and the fifth section was used to gather data on the challenges of implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons.

The data garnered using the survey questionnaire were analysed quantitatively. Taking into consideration the Likert scale data collected using the questionnaire, the latest version of SPSS (Version 20) available during data analysis was used to analyse the quantitative data. In line with the recommendations of Harry and Deborah (2012), descriptive statistical tools constituting percentages, means and grand means were used to measure the EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons.

The data on the profile of the study participants was under 4.1: Profile of the Study Participants. Hence, the analysis underneath pertains to the remaining four sections of the questionnaire.

### **5.2. EFL Instructors' Conceptions of CLT**

This section of the questionnaire was designed to gather data on the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT. It comprised 19 items relating to various principles and theoretical assumptions of CLT. It requested the instructors to agree or disagree with the given statements on a scale of five points.

**TABLE 5.1: EFL INSTRUCTORS' CONCEPTION OF CLT**

No	Item	Always (5)		Often (4)		Sometimes (3)		Rarely (2)		Never (1)		Total no. participants (n)	Summation of frequencies ( $X=\sum v \times f$ )	Mean score $\frac{X=\sum v \times f}{N}$
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
	<b>Your conception of communicative language teaching (CLT)</b>													
Q1	The goal language teaching in CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence.	16	64	5	20	0	0	2	8	2	8	25	106	4.24
Q2	CLT has its own theoretical assumptions about teaching and learning.	14	56	11	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	114	4.56
Q3	CLT advocates for the use of the target language (English) for classroom communication/interaction	18	72	7	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	118	4.72
Q4	CLT places more emphasis on fluency over accuracy.	15	60	5	20	0	0	3	12	2	8	25	103	4.12
Q5	CLT places more emphasis on accuracy over fluency.	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	60	10	40	25	40	1.6
Q6	CLT strikes a balance between productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive (reading and listening) skills.	16	64	9	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	116	4.64
Q7	CLT demands that teachers should have high proficiency in English.	2	8	1	4	2	8	16	64	4	16	25	56	2.24
Q8	CLT requires that students should have high proficiency in English.	2	8	3	12	0	0	16	64	4	16	25	58	2.32
Q9	CLT assumes that teachers should have adequate knowledge of the target language culture.	2	4	4	16	0	0	13	56	6	24	25	58	2.32
Q10	Pair and group work arrangements are important classroom organisation patterns in communicative activities.	18	72	4	16	0	0	2	8	1	4	25	111	4.44
Q11	CLT is designed for English as a Second Language (ESL) approach, not as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach.	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	88	3	12	25	47	1.88
Q12	CLT advocates student-centred approaches.	23	92	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	123	4.92
Q13	CLT assumes that teachers should design their own teaching materials.	2	8	4	16	3	12	6	24	10	40	25	57	2.28
Q14	CLT uses advanced or sophisticated facilities such as language laboratories.	2	8	2	8	0	0	10	40	11	44	25	49	1.96
Q15	In CLT-based classes, the teacher's role is transmitting knowledge to students about language by explaining grammar	1	4	2	8	0	0	15	60	7	28	25	50	2

	items and other aspects of the target language.													
Q16	In CLT-based classes, the teacher's role is to facilitate student learning.	14	56	11	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	114	4.56
Q17	In CLT-based classes, the student's role is to actively participate in communicative activities.	15	60	10	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	115	4.6
Q18	CLT assumes that the focus of correction should be mainly on grammar mistakes.	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	72	7	28	25	43	1.72
Q19	CLT gives emphasis to students' motivation to learn.	16	64	9	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	116	4.64

**Scale: strongly agree (5); agree (4); neutral (3); disagree (2); strongly disagree (1)**

**Grand mean=3.35**

As the data in Table 5.1 above show, the EFL instructors' rating of the various aspects of CLT is generally a positive one. Additionally, the instructors rated nine items negatively. However, it should be noted that the items included in this section to cross-validate the other items elicited overall positive ratings. The items corroborated the findings of the interview concerning the instructors' conceptions of CLT. To this effect, the interview data showed that CLT-based classrooms are mainly learner-centred. In the same way, the instructors' rating of a similar item in the questionnaire, which has a mean score of 4.92, confirmed this finding. However, the findings of the self-reporting mechanisms are not generally consistent with the findings of the classroom observation. This is because two-thirds of the EFL instructors employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons contrary to the learner-centred conceptions of CLT they held.

Referring to individual items in the table above, it is evident that the EFL instructors conceived that the goal of language teaching in CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence. This can be explained by the 84% of the EFL instructors who expressed their agreement with the statement. This result corroborates the interview finding as the majority of the EFL instructors articulated that developing the communicative competence of the learners is the main goal of language teaching in CLT. Contrary to the same conception that the self-reporting mechanisms captured, the majority of the EFL instructors were pre-occupied with lecturing grammar rules to their students in classroom situations. In response to the question that CLT has its theoretical assumptions about teaching and learning, the instructors expressed their agreement in varying degrees. The mean score of 4.56 is evidence thereof. Another principle of CLT is the use of

English for much of class discussion. The majority of the instructors expressed their strong agreement and agreement to this item. Its mean score of 4.72 demonstrates that the EFL instructors believe that English should be used as a normal and expected communication tool and interaction in classroom situations.

Items 4 and 5 assessed the instructors' conception of whether CLT focuses on fluency or accuracy. On the one hand, 80% of the EFL instructors indicated that CLT emphasises fluency development. On the other hand, all the instructors expressed their disagreement with the statement that CLT focuses on accuracy development. Although the mean scores for the items- 4.12 and 1.6- are polarising figures, they reveal the same finding: that CLT gives more emphasis to fluency over accuracy, a finding which is consistent with what the EFL instructors reported during the interview.

Most of the instructors reported that in CLT-based classes, students are allowed to learn grammar items through the various interactions in which they engage, without having to listen to the teacher lecturing grammatical rules. However, they also highlighted that in instances where students have deficiencies with their grammar, especially in EFL contexts where academic success hinges on passing knowledge-oriented exams, the knowledge and use of correct grammar are compelling. The interview data confirmed this assertion.

In Item 6, the instructors rated the statement that CLT strikes a balance between receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). It is apparent from the above table that all the instructors agreed that CLT does so. The instructors believe that productive skills and receptive skills are treated equally in CLT-based classes. This result is in agreement with the interview finding regarding the integration of language skills in the teaching-learning process. The EFL instructors indicated that since CLT emulates the naturalistic approach, CLT-based classes present the skills in integration and in a balanced way. They further indicated that this allows EFL learners to practise communicative English in classroom situations and prepare them to use it in real-life.

The above table depicts that the overall responses to items 7 and 8 were negative. According to the instructors, CLT does not demand students and teachers to be highly proficient in English. Referring to each item, the mean value for item 6, which is 2.24, suggests that the instructors do not think that CLT demands teachers to be highly proficient in English. Besides, the mean value for item 7, which is, 2.32 suggests that the instructors did not feel that CLT demands students to

have high proficiency in the target language. The two findings are consistent with the finding of the interview. The interview data confirmed that CLT-based lessons help improve the learners' communicative English. Most instructors pronounced that communicative exercises can help improve the learners' language proficiency. They also reported that there is a need for language teachers to demonstrate a better command of the language to enable them to facilitate student learning and to serve as role models. There is an inconsistency between the questionnaire result and the interview finding regarding whether the teacher in CLT is expected to be proficient in English. This might be because the instructors think that they are proficient in English.

70% of the instructors who responded to Item 9 disagreed that CLT does not assume that teachers should have adequate knowledge of the target language culture. However, 24% of the instructors expressed their agreement with the same statement. This view is consistent with the instructors' conception of CLT's suitability in EFL contexts that they highlighted during the interview. They asserted that it is possible to implement CLT in EFL contexts. This implies that policy designers and practitioners should take into account various socio-cultural variables in syllabus design and the teaching-learning process. Although they did not express their opposition to the significance of having adequate knowledge of the target language culture, they highlighted that CLT can still be implemented in EFL contexts with their socio-cultural peculiarities.

In Item 10, the EFL instructors were requested to rate the statement that pair and group arrangements are important classroom organisation patterns in communicative activities. 12% of the instructors disagreed with this statement. The mean score of this item-4.44- shows that the majority of the instructors believe that pair and group work patterns are the most commonly employed classroom organisation patterns in CLT-based classrooms. This finding is in congruence with the findings of the interview and lesson observation. The interview data exemplified that the majority of the instructors their preference for organising their students in pairs and groups. Additionally, the classroom observation findings confirmed that the instructors employed these classroom organisation patterns regularly.

Responding to Item 11, all the instructors disagreed that CLT is designed for English as a Second Language (ESL) approach, not as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach. Its mean score is 1.88. Their view of the above statement is similar to their conception that CLT is appropriate in EFL contexts provided that socio-cultural variables are considered in its design and implementation.

All the EFL instructors agreed that CLT advocates learner-centred approaches. For the most part, this finding is in line with their conceptions of whether CLT is a learner-centred approach. However, the same finding contradicts the classroom practices of the majority of the EFL instructors since their learner-centred conceptions of CLT did not feature in their classroom practices. To that effect, the lesson observation data exemplified that the majority of the EFL instructors relied on the lecture method. The EFL instructors ascribed this divergence in their conceptions and classroom practices to context-specific variables such as large class size and their weekly teaching load.

In Item 12, the instructors rated the statement that CLT assumes that teachers should design their teaching materials. 12%, 24% and 64% of the instructors who responded to this item expressed their neutrality, agreement and disagreement respectively. Looking at the percentages individually, on the one hand, 64% of them did not believe that teachers should prepare or design their teaching materials in CLT-based syllabus/curriculum. The EFL instructors did not essentially oppose preparing teaching materials or supplementary exercises, as the findings of the interview and classroom observation confirmed. Their response to the questionnaire item might be explained by the assumption that there is another body responsible for preparing teaching materials. However, 24% of the instructors indicated that teachers should design their teaching materials in addition to their teaching duties and responsibilities.

The figures obtained in Item 12 suggest that there is a discrepancy in conceptions between the two groups about the responsibilities of teachers. While the first group includes instructors who believe that teachers should design their teaching materials, the second one involves those who believe that they should not. The findings of the interview demonstrated that preparing teaching materials or supplementary exercises is one of the facilitative roles of the teacher to student learning. The classroom practices of the EFL instructors were also consistent with the findings of the interview. Accordingly, the EFL instructors used their supplementary exercises or those from grammar books and the internet to teach grammar lessons. Other reasons responsible for this difference might be large class size, their weekly teaching loads and the demands of meeting grade submission deadlines and course coverage.

85% of the instructors expressed their disagreement with the statement that CLT uses advanced or sophisticated facilities such as language laboratories. This implies that it is possible to implement CLT without having to rely on advanced or sophisticated facilities such as language

laboratories. The EFL instructors' conception of the type and nature of the teaching materials and resources in CLT is similar to the view that the above item elicited. According to the interview data, the instructors reported that teachers and students are the major resources in CLT-based classrooms. However, they acknowledged that the availability of electronic and other resources can aid the teaching-learning process.

Items 15 and 16 were framed to measure the instructors' conception of what role the teacher plays in a CLT classroom. The instructors' responses to both items are descriptive of their stance on the subject. For instance, in Item 14, 88% of the instructors disagreed that in CLT-based classes, the teacher's role is not transmitting knowledge to students about language or explaining grammar items and other aspects of the target language. In Item 16, all the instructors expressed their agreement with the statement that the teacher in CLT classes facilitates student learning. This result is similar to the finding of the interview. In responding to the same item, all the EFL instructors indicated that the classroom teacher's role in CLT-based syllabus is to facilitate student learning. EFL instructors who adhered to the inductive approach and the hybrid approach (both the deductive and inductive approaches) highlighted that facilitating student learning involves engaging students in communicative activities and explaining grammar rules, depending on the needs of their students.

The mean score for Item 17 (4.66) shows that the EFL instructors conceive that the learner's role in CLT-based classes is to actively participate in communicative tasks. This finding is also in accord with the view that the instructors expressed in responding to the same item during the interview. All the instructors reported that learners in communicative classrooms should be active participants, autonomous, risk-takers and communicators. Furthermore, although the number of EFL instructors who implemented CLT in grammar lessons was three, the findings of the classroom observation demonstrated that their students were active participants in grammar lessons.

Item 18 gauged the instructors' conception of one of the principles of CLT: whether error correction should focus on grammar errors. All the instructors expressed their disagreement with this statement. According to the interview data, the instructors who adhered to the communicative approach stressed that too much error correction, especially of grammar errors discourages students from participating in the teaching-learning process. They ascertained that error correction should be done sparingly, without affecting student motivation to learn. They

also stated that the learners will learn to self-correct their grammar errors through the continuous communicative exercises they do and the interactions in which they engage. The findings of the classroom observation demonstrated that the EFL instructors who taught grammar lessons communicatively encouraged their students to peer correct grammar errors. This happened in instances where the EFL learners worked cooperatively and they had to report to their classmates the sentences they had constructed.

The last item of this section was used to assess the instructors' conception of the emphasis that CLT accords to students' motivation to learn. The mean score for this item is 4.64, portraying that the instructors are unanimous about the emphasis that CLT accords to the importance of students' motivation to learn.

In summary, it can be seen from the figures that the EFL instructors expressed their disagreement with almost half of the items in this section. The remaining items, which are over just half of the section, elicited positive ratings from the instructors. The grand mean of 3.35 indicates the balance of responses, especially the internal cross-check. Moreover, the individual mean scores and the grand mean for this section reveal that there is consistency between the findings of the self-reporting mechanisms: the instructors seem to have the requisite knowledge about CLT in general. This is because they are also consistent with what the literature on CLT says regarding the most important characteristics or principles of CLT.

### 5.3.EFL Instructors' Conceptions of the Importance of Grammar, and the Place for Grammar in CLT

This section was used to investigate the EFL instructors' conceptions of the importance of grammar in general and the place for grammar in CLT in particular. To this end, 10 items were used, to which the instructors were requested to express their agreement or disagreements on a scale of five points.

No	Item	Always (5)		Often (4)		Sometimes (3)		Rarely (2)		Never (1)	Total no. participants (n)	Summation of frequencies (X=∑v×)	Mean score $\frac{X=\sum v \times f}{N}$	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%					
Q1	Knowledge and use of correct grammar is indispensable for	12	48	8	32	0	0	2	8	3	12	25	99	3.96



	students' academic success.																
Q2	Knowledge and use of correct grammar facilitates students' communication with others in formal and informal contexts.	14	56	11	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	114	4.56			
Q3	Knowledge and use of correct grammar helps learners to win the attention of employers.	13	52	8	32	0	0	1	4	3	12	25	102	4.08			
Q4	CLT mainly encourages the explicit teaching of grammar.	2	8	1	4	0	0	16	64	6	24	25	52	2.08			
Q5	CLT mainly encourages the teaching of grammar deductively (i.e. beginning with rules of grammar and finishing with examples or exercises in context).	3	12	2	8	0	0	13	52	7	28	25	56	2.24			
Q6	CLT mainly encourages that grammar should be taught inductively (beginning with examples or contexts and then allowing students to work out grammar rules).	14	56	4	16	3	12	3	12	1	4	25	102	4.08			
Q7	CLT advocates that students should learn both the form and meaning of the target language.	13	52	7	28	3	12	1	4	4	16	25	108	4.32			
Q8	CLT advocates that students' understanding and use of grammar should be assessed using formal tests and examinations that focus on grammatical correctness.	2	8	1	4	2	8	16	64	4	16	25	56	2.24			
Q9	CLT advocates the use of continuous assessment modalities to measure students' performance in the target language.	17	68	4	16	0	0	1	4	3	12	25	106	4.24			
Q10	CLT encourages that the classroom teacher should correct all grammatical errors to avoid students' imperfect learning even when the focus is on meaning.	0	0	1	4	1	4	18	72	5	20	25	48	1.92			

**Scale: Strongly agree (5); agree (4); neutral (3); disagree (2); strongly disagree (1)**

**Grand mean=3.37**

The grand mean of 3.37 illustrates that grammar plays a positive role in the academic and non-academic lives of EFL students. Further, it exemplifies that the instructors' conception of the place of grammar in CLT is consistent with what the literature articulates about the same. The first three items of this section of the questionnaire assessed the instructors' conceptions of the role of grammar in general. The group mean of these items (which is 4.2) indicates that the instructors recognise that the knowledge and correct use of grammar instrumental in students' academic, non-academic and work-related lives. For example, the figure in Table 5.2 above

demonstrates that 70% of the instructors believe that knowledge and correct use of grammar has a positive contribution to students' academic success. This result is consistent with the finding of the interview. The majority of the instructors stressed that grammar is crucial for EFL learners in Ethiopia since it enables them to succeed academically as English is the instructional medium in higher education institutions.

The second item was about the importance of the knowledge and use of correct grammar in facilitating students' communication in various contexts. All the instructors agreed with this statement. The mean score for this item, which is 4.56, is a confirmation of the above view. Like Item 1, the interview finding is similar to the questionnaire result. The interview finding illustrated that the majority of the instructors felt that the knowledge and correct use of grammar play a crucial role in facilitating learners' communication in formal and informal contexts.

The third questionnaire item assessed the instructors' conception of the role of the knowledge and use of correct grammar in helping learners win the trust of their employers. The figure elucidates that 84% of the instructors agreed with this statement. This confirmed that grammar facilitates EFL learners' academic success and helps them win their employers' trust. The interview revealed the same finding: the instructors reported that grammar plays an indispensable role at workplaces since numerous work-related situations require the knowledge and correct use of grammar. They mentioned that the ability to compile and write company reports is one of the required skills in employment settings.

The remaining seven items of the questionnaire were used to investigate the instructors' conceptions of the place of grammar in CLT. Although Items 4 and 5 were worded differently, they were essentially used to assess the instructors' conception of whether grammar should be taught explicitly in CLT-based syllabuses, thereby cross-validating each other. Consequently, in Item 4 the instructors rated that grammar should not be taught explicitly. The mean value for this item is 2.08, implying that the instructors did not think that grammar should be taught explicitly in CLT-based classrooms. In Item 5, they were requested to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement that CLT encourages the teaching of grammar deductively (i.e. beginning with rules of grammar and finishing with examples or exercises in context). The majority of the instructors (80%) expressed their disagreement, implying that CLT does not mainly encourage the use of the deductive approach to teaching grammar lessons. Although their classroom practices were mainly deductive, the instructors reported that CLT encourages the

inductive teaching of grammar rules. According to the findings of the interview, the disparity between the instructors' conceptions and their classroom practices was due to the context-specific variables they reported: large class size, weekly teaching load and the demands of meeting deadlines.

Although Item 6 was used to gauge the instructors' conception of whether grammar should be taught inductively, it was also used to cross-validate the view that the instructors expressed to items 4 and 5. Accordingly, the mean score of this item (4.08) shows that the instructors think that CLT mainly favours the inductive teaching of grammar lessons. The individual figure suggests that 72% of the instructors expressed their agreement with this statement. Twelve per cent of them expressed their neutrality, while 16% of them expressed their disagreement. Although there is no factual data that can explain why they expressed their neutrality, it might well be due to their view that grammar should be taught both deductively and inductively. The findings of the interview revealed that a few EFL instructors (three EFL instructors) strongly argued for the deductive and inductive teaching of grammar lessons. The lesson observation data also confirmed the same finding: the same number of instructors used the hybrid approach to teach grammar lessons. The instructors' disagreement might also be due to the same reason mentioned above: that grammar should be taught both inductively and deductively.

Item 7 was designed to examine EFL instructors' conception regarding the assertion that students should learn both the form and meaning of the grammar of the target language in CLT. With their rating, 80 % of the instructors asserted that grammar lessons should allow students to learn both the form and meaning of the grammar of the target language. Regardless of whether the inductive or deductive approach should be employed to teach grammar lessons, the instructors confirmed that CLT-based grammar lessons should incorporate both the form and meaning of the grammar point. Twenty per cent of the instructors disagreed with this assumption of CLT, probably because they subscribe to one of these aspects in teaching grammar lessons.

The purpose of items 8 and 9 was to examine EFL instructors' conceptions of whether teachers should employ formal assessment modalities or informal assessment modalities to assess their students' understanding and use of grammar. On the one hand, the mean score of Item 8 (2.24) shows that the instructors did not subscribe to the assumption that teachers should use formal tests and examinations (that focus on grammatical correctness) to assess students' understanding and use of grammar. On the other hand, the mean score of Item 9 (4.24) demonstrates that the

EFL instructors felt that CLT subscribes to continuous assessment modalities to measure students' performance in the target language. Although the instructors' classroom practices and conceptions seemed to contradict concerning the assessment modalities, the finding of the interview and their ratings of Items 8 and 9 are the same: they reported that since continuous assessment is a tool for assessing students' performance progressively, it is essentially learner-centred in its approach. Therefore, EFL instructors should employ it to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons.

The last item of this section investigated EFL instructors' conception of how learners' grammar errors should be corrected. The majority of the instructors (92%) disagreed with the statement that CLT encourages that the classroom teacher should correct all grammatical errors to avoid students' imperfect learning, even when the focus is on meaning. The instructors' rating of this item is in line with their conception of what and how to correct learners' grammar errors in grammar lessons. They reported that students' grammar errors should be corrected by the teacher when the focus of the lesson is on the form of the target language. They also indicated that when the focus of grammar lessons is on meaning or communication, teachers should rather engage their students in the meaningful exchange of ideas.

In summary, this section of the questionnaire yielded notable results regarding the conceptions of EFL instructors on the role of grammar, the place for grammar in CLT and how to teach it and how to assess learners' grammar performance. Accordingly, grammar plays a vital role in the students' academic lives, in formal and informal contexts and at workplaces. Concerning the methods of teaching grammar in CLT classrooms, the quantitative results show that EFL teachers should mainly employ the inductive approach. The results further show that the majority of the EFL instructors understand that continuous assessment is the preferred mode of assessment in CLT since it is learner-centred in its approach.

#### **5.4. Techniques Employed by EFL Instructors in Teaching Grammar Lessons**

This section measured the extent to which the EFL instructors employed the suggested techniques in teaching grammar lessons. They indicated their frequency of use of the noted techniques on a scale of five points.

<b>TABLE 5.3: TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY EFL INSTRUCTORS IN TEACHING GRAMMAR LESSONS</b>									
No	Item	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Total number of	Summation of	Mean score

												participant -s	freque s s ( $X=\sum v \times$ )	$\frac{X=\sum v \times}{f}$ N	
	Techniques employed by EFL instructors in teaching grammar lessons	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		(n)		
Q1	I first explain grammar rules to my students and give them corresponding examples to imitate (for example, on how the present perfect tense is formed) and then ask students to do exercises.	12	48	10	40	3	12	0	0	0	0		25	109	4.36
Q2	In grammar lessons, I give more emphasis to the rules of the language than on how it is used in authentic contexts.	6	24	5	20	1	4	10	40	3	12		25	76	3.04
Q3	I write lecture notes on grammar items in class and ask learners to write them in their exercise books.	10	40	8	32	7	28	0	0	0	0		25	103	4.12
Q4	I employ teacher-led classroom discussion whenever grammar lessons are presented.	10	40	8	32	4	16	3	12	0	0		25	100	4.00
Q5	I use grammar exercises in the suggested textbook or module without having to supplement it from other sources.	5	20	14	56	6	24	0	0	0	0		25	99	3.96
Q6	I use reading texts and writing	2	8	4	16	5	20	8	32	6	24		25	63	2.52

	exercises to present and practice grammar items.													
Q7	I use newspapers, magazines, maps, pictures, etc. to present and practice grammar lessons.	2	8	1	4	11	44	5	20	6	24	25	63	2.52
Q8	I involve students in questioning and answering activities to teach grammar lessons and check their comprehension of the grammar topics being taught.	7	28	8	32	10	40	0	0	0	0	25	97	3.88
Q9	I involve all students in problem-solving activities in grammar lessons.	3	12	8	32	8	32	6	24	0	0	25	83	3.32
Q10	I involve learners in information-gap activities( for example, working out the differences and similarities between pictures)	2	8	3	12	14	56	5	20	1	4	25	75	3.00
Q11	I use different types of games (for example crossword puzzles)	1	4	4	16	16	64	4	16	0	0	25	77	3.08
Q12	I involve students in role- plays.	3	12	2	8	4	16	16	64	0	0	25	67	2.68
Q13	I involve students in pair or group work activities	18	72	3	12	4	16	0	0	0	0	25	114	4.56
Q14	I ask students to work alone before they get together to work in pairs or groups.	16	64	5	20	4	16	0	0	0	0	25	112	4.48
Q15	I encourage and balance all patterns of	2	8	6	24	13	52	4	16	0	0	25	81	3.24

	interaction(teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student)													
Q16	I ask learners to work in pairs and groups to give feedback and corrections on the works of their group members or those of other groups.	3	12	2	8	10	40	10	40	0	0	25	73	2.92
Q17	I give feedback to students' works in their respective groups.	3	12	8	32	14	56	0	0	0	0	25	89	3.56
Q18	I give feedback on students' group work activities as a whole class.	12	48	9	36	4	16	0	0	0	0	25	108	4.32
Q19	I participate in pair or groups work activities as an independent participant.	1	4	1	4	10	40	13	52	0	0	25	65	2.6
Q20	I prevent unbalanced or dominating participation in group activities in grammar lessons.	8	32	12	48	5	20	0	0	0	0	25	103	4.12
Q21	I use audio-visuals in the instructional process to facilitate student learning.	2	8	3	12	2	8	18	72	0	0	25	64	2.56
Q22	I rely on formal tests and examinations to assess my students' grammar performance.	16	64	3	12	6	24	0	0	0	0	25	110	4.4
Q23	I rely on informal assessment methods such as the pair and group work activities students do in	1	4	2	8	1	4	21	84	0	0	25	58	2.32

	class to assess their grammar performance.													
Q2 4	I use the target language (English) as the normal and expected means of classroom communication.	1 9	76	3	12	3	12	0	0	0	0	25	116	4.64

**Scale: Always (5); Often (4); Sometimes (3); Rarely (2); Never (1)**

**Grand mean=3.5**

The grand mean of 3.5 exemplifies the lecture-oriented techniques employed by the majority of the EFL instructors, which contradicts the findings from the interview because the majority of the instructors asserted that grammar lessons should be taught in context.

The first four items of this part of the questionnaire were designed to gauge the frequency with which the EFL instructors used the suggested techniques to teach grammar lessons. Although the items are worded differently, they all pertain to the use of the deductive method to teach grammar lessons (which means that the instructors devoted much class time to explain the rules of grammar to their students). The group mean of these items is 3.88, implying that the instructors relied on the deductive approach as the most common strategy for teaching grammar lessons. Although the frequency with which the majority of them employed the technique ranged from always to sometimes), they tended to employ the deductive method to teach grammar lessons. The above result is similar to the interview and observation findings. Accordingly, all the instructors indicated that grammar should be presented in context; however, classroom realities (large class size, for instance)) and their teaching load, including the demands of meeting deadlines, forced them to resort to the lecture method as the most preferred method of teaching grammar lessons.

Item 5 was used to determine the extent to which the EFL instructors relied on the textbook (also called course modules) to teach grammar lessons. The figure in the above table shows that all the instructors did so, although there were variations in the frequency with which they did this: 20% of them did this “always”, 56% “often” and 24% “sometimes”, indicating that using the textbook is a mandatory requirement which is part of their duties and responsibilities. All the instructors confirmed this during the interview, although some of them acknowledged that they supplemented the grammar exercises in the textbook with exercises they designed themselves or



extracted from other sources such as the internet. As the findings from the interview suggest, the reliance on the textbook also suggests that the EFL instructors were required to cover the contents in the textbook to help learners benefit from the exercises and prepare them for the centralized final examinations they had to sit for.

Items 6-12 were used to gauge the frequency with which the EFL instructors created meaningful contexts to teach grammar lessons. These items were also used to cross-validate the first four items of the questionnaire which elicited the finding that the lecture method is the most commonly employed teaching strategy. The figures in the above table portray that 56% of the instructors “rarely” and “never” use reading texts and writing exercises to present and practise grammar items. The table further shows that 20% and 24% of the instructors used reading texts and writing exercises “always” and “often” respectively. Overall, the percentages of the instructors who employed reading and writing exercises to present and practise grammar exercises depict that reading texts and writing exercises are not used by the instructors to contextualise grammar lessons.

Item 7 of this section of the questionnaire which is part of the use of meaningful context to teach grammar lessons elicited contradicting responses from the instructors. Accordingly, although the frequency with which they used them varied from “always” through “often” to “sometimes”, 56% of the instructors reported that they used newspapers, magazines, maps, pictures and other authentic materials to teach grammar lessons. The remaining 44% of the instructors indicated that they used these materials “rarely” and “never”.

The responses that the EFL instructors provided to Item 8 show that question and answer sessions are used in grammar lessons as a means to teach different grammar items and check students’ comprehension of the grammar topics being taught. The figures portray that 28%, 32% and 40% of the instructors employed this strategy “always”, “often” and “sometimes” respectively.

Concerning the use of problem-solving activities, 12% of the instructors reported using it “always”, while 32% and 32% of them did so “often” and “sometimes” respectively. The remaining 24% reported that they rarely used problem-solving activities in teaching grammar lessons. In responding to Item 10, 56% of the EFL instructors said that they used information-gap activities “sometimes”, whereas 12% of them said “often” and 8% “always”. The remaining 24% indicated that they used this strategy ‘rarely’ and ‘never’.

Item 11 gauged the EFL instructors' frequency of use of different types of games (for example, crossword puzzles) to teach grammar lessons. Accordingly, 84% of the instructors used this strategy, although the frequency with which they did so varied from "always" (4%), "often" (16%) and "sometimes" (64%). The remaining instructors (16%) indicated that they used this strategy 'rarely'.

Item 12 pertains to the use of role-plays to teach grammar lessons. The data illustrate that 64% of the instructors used this strategy "rarely", and the remaining 36 % employed it to varying degrees. For example, 12% indicated that they did so "always", 8 "often" and 16 % "sometimes".

Some of the above results, of items 6-12, seemed to contradict the classroom observation findings. For example, the classroom observation did not capture the use of authentic materials, games and role-plays, although some of the instructors reported that they "always" and "often" used such authentic materials as games, newspapers, maps, magazines, and role-plays.

Items 13-15 were used to gauge the extent to which the EFL instructors employed the suggested classroom organisation patterns. Accordingly, in Item 13, the EFL instructors rated the frequency with which they involved their students in pair or group work activities. The figures in the above table depict that 72% of the instructors do this "always", while those who do so "often" and "sometimes" constitute 12% and 16% respectively. Item 14 is about the degree with which the instructors allowed their students to work alone before organising them in pairs. The figures illustrate that 64% of the instructors do this "always", while 20% chose "often" and 16% "sometimes".

Item 15 of the questionnaire assessed the frequency with which the instructors' encouraged and balanced all patterns of interaction (student-teacher, teacher-student, and student-student). Accordingly, 8% of the instructors indicated they do so "always", 24% "often", 52% "sometimes" and 16% "rarely".

In general, the instructors' responses to the above items and the interview and classroom observation findings seem to concur. All the instructors indicated that their most preferred classroom organisation patterns in grammar-based activities were pair and group work. Although it cannot be conclusive to determine the frequency with which they employed pair and group work through the two-day classroom observation visits, the interview findings and their rating

above concur since they reported that they mainly relied on pair and group patterns to organise their students to do communicative grammar activities.

Items 16, 17 and 18 were used to assess the extent to which the EFL instructors implemented the suggested strategies to give feedback to their students in grammar-based lessons. For example, in responding to Item 16, 12% of the instructors said they “always” asked their students to work collectively to provide feedback and corrections on the works of their group members or those of other groups. Those who indicated that they did so “often” accounted for 8% of the instructors. The EFL instructors who employed this strategy “sometimes” and “rarely” constituted 40% each. Regarding whether the EFL instructors gave feedback on their students’ grammar exercises in their respective groups, 12%, 32% and 56% of did so “always”, “often” and “sometimes” respectively. The last item of this section was used to measure the extent to which the EFL instructors provided whole-class feedback to their students’ grammar exercises. The figures in the above table reveal that this method tended to be the most preferred strategy in giving feedback to students’ grammar exercises. This is because 48% of the instructors indicated they did so “always”, while 36% of them used this strategy “often”. Those who reported that they employed this strategy “sometimes” accounted for 16%. The instructors’ ratings show that the most preferred strategy for giving feedback on students’ grammar exercises is whole-class feedback, and the same finding was obtained through the classroom observation since all the instructors whose classes were observed provided whole-class feedback on students’ grammar exercises. One possible explanation for the adoption of this strategy might be large class size.

Items 19 and 20 assessed the EFL instructors’ two roles in grammar lessons. The frequency with which the instructors participated independently in grammar lessons was the focus of Item 19. Accordingly, instructors who reported that they did so “always” and “often” accounted for 4% each, while those who indicated that they did so “sometimes” and “rarely” constituted 40% and 52% respectively. The finding from the classroom observation attested the same finding: most of the observed instructors did not participate independently in grammar lessons, although it might be difficult to conclude that this is the case throughout the teaching-learning process.

Another role of the EFL instructors which constituted this section of the questionnaire was the extent to which they prevented unbalanced or dominating participation in grammar-based group work activities. The figures in the above table elucidate that the combined percentage of

instructors who did this “always” and “often” constituted 80%. Those who said that they discharged this responsibility “sometimes” accounted for 20% of the instructors.

The mean value for Item 21 (2.44) indicates that the EFL instructors’ use of audio-visuals in grammar lessons is limited. In this vein, 72% of the instructors reported they use audio-visuals “rarely”, whereas those who said that they did so “always”, “often” and “sometimes” make up 8%, 12% and 8% respectively. This finding is consistent with that of the classroom observation because most of the instructors were not observed to be using any audio-visuals in teaching grammar lessons.

Since assessment is a vital component of the instructional process, Items 22 and 23 were designed to examine the assessment strategies that the EFL instructors employed to assess their students’ performance in grammar lessons. Although the two items dealt with two different modalities of assessment, their inclusion was also done to cross-validate the instructors’ responses to each item. Item 22 was pertinent to the degree to which the EFL instructors used formal tests and examinations to assess their students’ performance in grammar lessons. The figures in the table above demonstrate that 64% of the instructors employ this strategy “always” and those who do so “often” and “sometimes” make up 12% and 24% respectively.

Item 23 was related to the degree to which the EFL instructors employed continuous assessment or informal assessment methods (such as pair and group work activities their students do) to assess their students’ performance in grammar lessons. The responses to these items illuminate that 4%, 8% and 4% of the instructors indicated that they did so “always” “often” and “sometimes” respectively, confirming their responses to Item 23 above. The results above are similar to the findings of the interview since the instructors reported that although they subscribed to continuous assessment modalities in principle, they mainly employed formal tests and examinations to assess their students’ performance in grammar lessons.

The last item of this section pertains to the extent to which the EFL instructors employed English as a normal and expected means of classroom communication. Seventy-six per cent of the instructors reported that they did this “always”, whereas those who said that they employed English as a normal and expected means of classroom communication “often” and “sometimes” accounted for 12% each.

In summary, the items in Table 5.3 above elicited different responses from the EFL instructors. The data highlight that the deductive approach is the most commonly used method of teaching

grammar and the textbook tended to be the most relied upon teaching material, which can be explained by its use being an institutional requirement, as the interview findings demonstrated. Although there were differences among the instructors, they tried to contextualise grammar lessons using reading and writing exercises, problem-solving activities, role-plays and games. The data further revealed that almost all the instructors organised their students in pairs and groups to allow them to do grammar exercises, although the frequency with which they did this varied among them. Whole-class feedback was commonly employed to give feedback to students' grammar exercises. According to the data obtained through this section of the questionnaire, formal written tests and exams were the major assessment mechanisms used by the instructors to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons.

### 5.5.Factors Affecting the Application of CLT in Teaching Grammar Lessons

This section assessed the practical challenges or difficulties the EFL instructors' faced in implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The instructors expressed their agreement or disagreement with the factors using a Likert Scale of five points.

TABLE 5.4: FACTORS AFFECTING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TEACHING GRAMMAR LESSONS															
Item		SA(5)		A(4)		N(3)		D(2)		SD(1)		Total number of participant-s		Summation of frequencies (X= $\sum v \times f$ )	Mean score $\frac{X=\sum v \times f}{N}$
No	Item Factors affecting the application of CLT principles in grammar lessons	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	(n)			
Q1	I am required to have better proficiency in the target language.	8	32	9	36	3	12	2	8	3	12	25	92	3.68	
Q2	I am expected to search for resources and prepare my own teaching materials, which is a time-consuming process.	1	4	2	8	0	0	14	56	8	32	25	49	1.96	
Q3	I have not got enough formal training on	1	4	1	4	2	8	15	60	6	24	25	51	2.04	

	communicative grammar and my understanding of communicative grammar is therefore limited.													
Q4	My weekly teaching loads discourage me from teaching grammar lessons communicatively.	13	52	8	32	0	0	2	8	2	8	25	103	4.12
Q5	Students resist active participation in communicative activities.	14	56	6	24	0	0	4	16	1	4	25	103	4.12
Q6	Students tend to use their mother tongue in pair and group work activities.	10	40	8	32	0	0	2	8	5	20	25	91	3.64
Q7	Students have traditional views that the teacher has to lecture for most of class time.	12	48	6	24	0	0	3	12	4	16	25	94	3.76
Q8	Students consider English courses as requirements and therefore are less motivated for communicative activities.	5	20	8	32	0	0	6	24	6	24	25	75	3.0
Q9	There is a major difference in learner's command of the language between those coming from private and public schools.	18	72	4	16	0	0	2	8	1	4	25	111	4.44
Q10	Students lack opportunities and real environments to use English outside the classroom.	18	72	7	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	118	4.72
Q11	There are a large number of students in one	19	76	4	16	0	0	2	8	0	0	25	115	4.6

	class, making it difficult to teach grammar lessons communicatively.													
Q12	The existing syllabus/teaching materials are unsuitable for CLT.	2	8	3	12	0	0	12	48	8	32	25	54	2.16
Q13	Language classrooms are well-equipped with required resources such as audio-visuals.	4	16	1	4	0	0	13	52	7	28	25	57	2.28
Q14	There is a mismatch between curriculum and assessment, hence making it difficult to implement CLT methodology in grammar lessons.	4	16	3	12	0	0	10	40	8	32	25	60	2.4
Q15	CLT is unsuitable for EFL (English as a foreign language) context as opposed to for an ESL (English as a second language) context.	1	4	1	4	0	0	14	56	9	36	25	46	1.84

**Scale: strongly agree (5); agree (4); neutral (3); disagree (2); strongly disagree (1)**

**Grand mean=3.25**

The grand mean of 3.25 suggests that the noted factors affected the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in an EFL context in Ethiopia.

The first four items of Table 5.4 constituted teacher-related factors. 68% of the instructors indicated that they are expected to have better proficiency in the target language to successfully teach the target language in general and communicative grammar in particular. The EFL instructors that constituted 12% expressed their neutrality maybe because they felt that other factors should also be considered in realising communicative grammar. The remaining 20% disagreed with the statement that they are not expected to have higher proficiency in the target language to be able to teach it communicatively.

In the second item, the majority of the instructors (88%) indicated that they are not expected to search for resources and prepare their teaching materials, which is regarded as a time-consuming process. As the findings of the interview confirmed, the presence of centralised teaching materials, modules or textbooks might explain their response. Notably, the interview findings showed that classroom teachers should supplement or prepare supplementary teaching materials to help their students develop the required language skills. The instructors do probably object to this practice although they expressed their disagreement with the above statement. Their tight work schedule, their weekly teaching load and the demands of meeting deadlines which they articulated during the interview might explain their response to the questionnaire item.

Concerning the relevance of training on teaching grammar communicatively, 84% of the instructors disagreed that the lack of CLT-related training in general or communicative grammar, in particular, was not a source of difficulty in the instructional process. This might have emanated from the CLT training had as college students or the on-the-job training or orientations that their universities had organised or the individual efforts that they exerted to update themselves regarding CLT. However, the interview data clarified that on-the-job training is useful in building their professional capacity to implement CLT and other learner-centred methodologies in classroom situations.

Asked whether their weekly load was a challenge to implementing CLT in grammar lessons, 84% of the instructors expressed their agreement. Those who disagreed with this statement constituted 16%. These were probably instructors who had administrative duties such as being the heads of their departments, which entails time protection or the reduction of their weekly teaching loads. Or, they could be instructors who did not feel that teaching loads may discourage teachers from teaching grammar communicatively. The interview findings or the profile of the participants of the EFL instructors presented under “4.1. Profile of the Study Participants” depicted that 96% of the EFL instructors had 18 and more hours of weekly teaching loads. Notably, the teaching loads were either institutionally imposed or self-imposed by the instructors themselves to generate more income. The findings of the interview established this.

Items 5-9 constituted the student-related factors that the EFL instructors rated as affecting the realisation of communicative grammar. The data in the above table illustrate that 80% of the instructors asserted that the implementation of CLT in grammar lessons is inhibited by the students’ resistance to active participation in communicative activities. In instances where



students participated in communicative activities, they resorted to their mother tongue. This was confirmed by 72% of EFL instructors. The figure in the above data depicts that the same percentage of EFL instructors agreed that their students had traditional views that the teacher has to lecture for most of the class time. In light of this finding, it is also noteworthy that previous studies found that there is an underlying theory in Ethiopia's education system, especially among many students and teachers in favour of the lecture method (Mihretu, 2016; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017).

In Item 8, 52% of the EFL instructors agreed that students consider English courses as requirements and are, therefore, less motivated for communicative exercises. The above table shows that the remaining 48% of them have the opposite view. Item 9 of the questionnaire was used to examine the conception of EFL instructors regarding the statement that there is a major difference in learners' command of the target language between those coming from private and public schools. The figure elucidates that the majority of the instructors acknowledged this problem. The interview findings confirmed this result: the EFL instructors reported that they found it difficult to engage their students in communicative activities, given the huge ability gap among the EFL learners in the same class.

One of the factors included in the questionnaire as affecting the implementation of CLT was students' lacking real environments and opportunities to use English beyond the confines of classroom situations. All the instructors expressed their agreement with this statement.

The mean value of Item 11 (4.6) demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of the EFL instructors felt that the unmanageable number of students was among the practical challenges of teaching grammar lessons communicatively. This result is similar to the interview finding. Most of the instructors underlined that large class size was the most common challenge that classroom teachers faced in implementing CLT. The profile of the EFL instructors presented under "4.1. Profile of the Study Participants" depicts that the majority of the instructors had to teach 41-60 or more students in one section.

Regarding whether the existing syllabus and teaching materials are unsuitable for CLT, 80% of the instructors expressed their disagreement. In other words, they agreed that the syllabus or teaching materials used to teach the English course in general and grammar lessons, in particular, are communicative. The interview captured the same view of the EFL instructors: they felt that the teaching materials or exercises in the teaching materials were communicative.

In response to Item 13, 80% of the instructors disagreed that language classrooms are well-equipped with the required resources such as audio-visuals. This implies that the absence or shortage of resources such as audio-visuals impacted their attempts to teach grammar lessons communicatively. However, the interview data showed that preparing teaching aids is the responsibility of teachers and, hence, teachers should not expect everything from their respective institutions. They also underlined that the lack of time was one of the factors that discouraged them from preparing teaching materials (modules and supplementary exercise) and teaching aids such as pictures and charts.

The instructors' response to Item 14 shows that 72% of them did not view that there was a mismatch between curriculum and assessment. It is 28% of the instructors who agreed that there was a mismatch between curriculum and assessment. This result is in line with the policies that the universities adopted since half of the assessment (50%) was done continuously, allowing for the implementation of learner-centred approaches, which CLT is a part of. The interview findings confirmed that context-specific factors such as large class were responsible for the EFL instructors resorting to teacher-fronted teaching strategies and formal written tests and exams, as opposed to the learner-centred and continuous assessment modalities that the universities adopted.

The last factor rated by the instructors was whether CLT is unsuitable for EFL contexts, as opposed to for ESL contexts. The data in the above table show that 92% of the instructors did not believe that CLT is unsuitable in EFL contexts. The interview revealed the same finding: the instructors agreed that if proper preparations were made, CLT could be implemented in EFL contexts successfully. These preparations included training teachers, designing relevant teaching materials and teaching grammar lessons communicatively.

In summary, the items in this section examined the EFL instructors' conceptions of the factors that affected the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The major factors that the instructors rated were teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, system-related factors and curriculum-related factors. According to the data, the teacher-related factors except teaching load elicited negative ratings, implying that they were not the major challenges in implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons, although part of this result contradicted the interview findings: some instructors emphasised that the instructors' lack of commitment was also one of the major factors that affected the implementation of CLT.

The figures in the above table further suggested that student-related factors elicited positive ratings, further suggesting that they were among the difficulties the instructors faced in the implementation of CLT in grammar lessons. Curriculum-related factors were not rated as the most serious factors hindering the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The data further showed that the absence or shortage of resources and equipment was among the impediments to communicative grammar.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

This chapter of the thesis analysed the quantitative data garnered through a questionnaire. In line with the sequential exploratory design (Creswell, 2009), quantitative data gathering constituted the second phase of data collection. It was, therefore, used to gather quantitative data on private universities' EFL instructors' conceptions, their classroom practices and their practical difficulties in implementing communicative grammar. It was also used to cross-validate the interview and lesson observation data. The data collected using the questionnaire revealed results that supported the interview findings. Hence, the majority of the EFL instructors held conceptions of teaching that favoured CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The questionnaire also illustrated that grammar plays an indispensable role not only in the academic but also in the non-academic lives of students, highlighting its roles in various formal and informal contexts. The questionnaire results further confirmed that the majority of the EFL instructors employed the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons. The questionnaire data also highlighted that teacher-related factors, student-related factors, curriculum-related factors, institutional factors and system-related factors were the major challenges in implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS**

### **6.1.Introduction**

The main aim of this study was to investigate EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in Ethiopian private universities. Hence, focusing on four private universities in Ethiopia, the study investigated EFL instructors' conceptions, their classroom practices, and the practical challenges they faced in teaching grammar lessons communicatively.

Data for this study was gathered from both qualitative and quantitative data sources to realise its main aim stated above. On the one hand, the qualitative data sources included a semi-structured interview and classroom observation. On the other hand, the quantitative data sources included questionnaires and structured classroom observation.

This chapter, therefore, presents the discussion of the qualitative and quantitative findings in light of the main aim of the study and the corresponding research questions, previous studies, and literature on CLT. The first sub-section of this chapter is concerned with the discussion of private universities' EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context. The second sub-section deals with private universities' English language instructors' current practices of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context. The third sub-section of the chapter discusses the relationship between the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices. The last section of the chapter discusses the factors affecting the applications of CLT in grammar lessons in classroom contexts.

### **6.2.EFL Instructors' Conceptions of CLT**

Empirical evidence suggests that the conceptions that teachers hold about teaching and learning shape their decisions of what should happen in classroom situations. An important feature of the teaching-learning process shaped by teachers' conceptions is their choice of specific teaching strategies (Kember, 1977; Kwan & Kember, 2000; Adinew, 2015). Given this, this study examined private universities' EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT in an EFL context in Ethiopia. To this end, data was gathered from the instructors using a semi-structured interview and questionnaire. The analysis of the data depicted that the conceptions of the EFL instructors on the most important aspects of CLT were the same. In addition, they were found to be

consistent with the CLT literature. The following sub-sections discuss these findings in light of previous studies and the CLT literature.

### **6.2.1. The Goal of Language Teaching in CLT**

The findings of the interview and the result of the questionnaire highlighted the development of learners' communicative competence as the major goal of language teaching in CLT. One illustration of this is that 84% of the EFL instructors reported that the development of learners' communicative competence is the major goal of language teaching in CLT. The finding from the interview also revealed that the goal of language teaching in the CLT-based curriculum is to enable learners to develop their communicative competence. However, the EFL instructors' description of communicative competence was not as comprehensive as what the literature articulates. One possible explanation might be the socio-cultural situations in which the Instructors work. In this regard, they underlined that EFL students have no real opportunities to implement the communicative strategies Richards (2006) outlined as constituting communicative competence. The EFL instructors also asserted that students who engage in communicative tasks develop their receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) as well as their vocabulary and grammar. They suggested that the major language skills including vocabulary and grammar should be presented in integration to develop the EFL learners' communicative competence.

The EFL instructors' assertion that the development of communicative competence is the major goal of language teaching has empirical support. Accordingly, there is a consensus among language theorists and researchers that the development of learners' communicative competence is the major goal of language teaching in CLT. According to Richards (2006), communicative competence incorporates several aspects of language knowledge:

*knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes; knowing how to use vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (i.e. knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication); knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts(e.g. narratives, reports, interviews, conversation); knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g. through using different kinds of communicative strategies)(p. 4).*

Several other scholars and writers share the above conception of communicative competence, implying that that language teaching programs based on CLT should strive to enable language

learners to use the above and other communicative strategies to accomplish various communicative purposes (Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 1997; Savignon, 1997).

Brown (1994), Littlejohn and Hicks (1987), Celce-Murcia (1997) and Richards (2006) and Littlewood (2014) also highlight that the major goal of CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence. Within this general framework, it is necessary to recognise the contextual variations of the goal of language teaching in CLT that the EFL instructors highlighted. Consequently, the instructors articulated that the goal of language teaching in EFL contexts is to help learners succeed in academic settings. They ascribed this to the fact that English is the instructional medium at the tertiary level in Ethiopia. This view of the EFL instructors is consistent with the formal aspects of communicative competence that Richards (2006) outlined. This is because EFL students have little or no real opportunities to use the target language in informal contexts outside classroom situations (Stern, 1983; Sullivan, 2009). Generally, this finding is consistent with what the literature on CLT articulates regarding the goal of language teaching. Theoretically, there is a consensus among writers and researchers that the development of learners' communicative competence is the major goal of CLT (Savignon, 2004; Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014).

Within the accuracy-fluency debate, the specific results of the questionnaire also support the above finding. To that effect, the answers that the instructors provided to individual items in the questionnaire reflected the instructors' belief concerning what constitutes communicative competence. For example, 80% of the EFL instructors expressed their agreement to varying degrees that CLT places more emphasis on fluency than on accuracy. The interview finding also showed that there was a consensus among the EFL instructors that the development of fluency is the main focus of CLT. Despite highlighting fluency development as the main focus of CLT, the EFL instructors also underlined that the focus on fluency development does not imply that accuracy development is forsaken altogether. This finding is better understood in terms of Savignon's (1997) description of the constituents of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, discussed in the literature review section. In addition, Cummins' distinction between BICS (*Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills*) and CALP (*Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*) highlight the accuracy-fluency debate evident in the views of the EFL instructors. BICS is more aligned to fluency development and the EFL instructors who favour fluency debate tend to give more emphasis to basic interpersonal communication skills, while those who adhere

to accuracy development are more concerned with the development of cognitive academic language proficiency. The findings of this study suggest that although the EFL instructors felt that fluency is emphasised in CLT, the realities in and outside EFL classroom contexts highlight the need for accuracy development as the use of English is limited mainly to academic settings.

This study generated findings that are consistent with those reported by a great deal of previous studies in this field. Notably, Hanan (2018) affirmed that the conception that the development of communicative competence is the major goal of language teaching in CLT. In the same vein, Butrago (2016), Huang (2016) as well as Asma and Tsenim (2017) asserted that CLT mainly aims at developing learner's communicative competence. More specifically, Butrago (2016) concluded that students improved their fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary due to their continuous exposure to communicative activities. In the same way, Kapurani (2016) showed that teachers had positive views of the practical benefits of CLT. The participants of the study, hence, confirmed that CLT facilitated learners' foreign language acquisition, and their performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which they described as important aspects of communicative competence in EFL contexts (Kapurani, 2016).

In contrast to earlier research into CLT in the Ethiopian context (Mihretu, 2016; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017; Moges, 2019), the current study captured four main CLT-related misconceptions of EFL instructors about what the goal of language teaching in CLT should be. The first two misconceptions are relevant to the goal of language teaching in CLT. The second two misconceptions relate to the place for grammar in CLT and the simplicity of applying CLT in classroom situations.

**Misconception 1:** CLT aims at developing speaking skills (the tendency to associate “communicative” with “speaking”). The instructors who reported that CLT aims at developing learners' speaking skills underlined that since their learners' speaking skills are low, CLT is an appropriate strategy to improve their speaking skills. On the one hand, it is not wrong to maintain that CLT can improve learners' speaking skills. On the other hand, the EFL instructors' conception that CLT is preoccupied with speaking skills stemmed from their misconception that CLT mainly deals with listening and speaking skills instead of writing and reading skills. Different writers suggest that the major language skills should be presented in integration in the instructional process (Brumfit, 1986). Although the emphasis placed on the major language skills

may vary from context to context, depending on the needs of learners, CLT treats them in a natural context in an integrated manner (Brumfit, 1986; Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014).

**Misconception 2:** CLT is a language teaching “method/methodology”. In line with this misconception, the EFL instructors reported that they usually employed pair and group work activities as their major strategies to teach listening and speaking skills. Contrary to the misconception held by the EFL instructors, language theorists and researchers concur that CLT is not a specific classroom strategy. Instead, it is an approach or a set of flexible principles informing the theories of language learning and teaching, the goal of language teaching, the design of a syllabus, the role of teachers and learners, the types of teaching materials, resources as well as instructional activities and modes of assessment (Richards, 2006). The word “method” refers to a combination of prescribed techniques that teachers use in classroom situations (Brown, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Richards, 2020).

**Misconception 3:** Because grammar topics are not the organising units in CLT-based syllabuses, some EFL instructors felt that CLT does not emphasise grammar. It is also noteworthy that they did not feel that CLT abandons grammar completely. This conception might be due to the instructors' knowledge gap. Hence, while structures may not be the organising units in the CLT-based syllabuses, they can still be the focus of the teaching-learning process, given the specific grammar needs of students (Bygate & Tornkyn, 1994; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Chen, 2003). The literature highlights that the disagreement among language theorists and researchers does not relate to why grammar should be taught but how it should be taught. Concerning the emphasis that grammar should receive Allen (2003), Celce-Murcia (2001), Thornbury (2008) and Ellis (2014) argue that since it is an integral component of communicative competence, teachers should allocate ample time to it in classroom situation depending on the needs of students.

**Misconception 4:** Some EFL instructors reported that CLT is an easier teaching “method/methodology” which can reduce teachers' workload and assign more responsibilities to students. This unexpected finding implies two specific misconceptions. The first one is that CLT is a teaching “method/methodology” (misconception #2). The second misconception is that since it is easy to implement CLT in classroom situations, it reduces teachers' workload. Various writers maintain that an approach is not a specific teaching strategy that teachers can readily employ in classroom situations. It is rather a set of principles outlining the goal of language teaching, the teacher's role, the learner's role, the types of teaching materials, and types of



instructional activities (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Savignon, 1997; Littlewood, 2014; Richards, 2020).

The interview findings validated that the above misconception is the result of another misconception that the EFL instructors had. Thus, if an approach is learner-centred, it assigns much classroom activity to the students, thereby reducing the workload of teachers. Given this misconception, the teacher's role of being a facilitator does not involve much in the way of providing inputs to students, facilitating pair and group work, assessing students' work and preparing and/or looking for appropriate teaching materials, which are all the roles of teachers in CLT-based syllabuses (Harmer, 1991; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016).

Contrary to the misconception held by the EFL instructors, the teacher in CLT classrooms is responsible for several activities that take place in and outside classroom situations. In situations where resources/teaching materials are scarce, it is the responsibility of the teacher to look for these resources or design his or her exercises (Richards, 2006). The teacher is also responsible for deciding how to organise his or her students to facilitate their learning, assess their performances, and provide additional guidance they require (Richards, 2006).

Some research into CLT in public schools and universities in the Ethiopian context assessed the extent of its implementation in classroom situations. All the same, they did not report any of the above misconceptions. Mihretu (2016) examined secondary-school teachers' beliefs and perceived difficulties in implementing CLT and concluded that teachers did not have any serious misconceptions about CLT although "their classroom practices are entangled with CLT implementing difficulties in their endeavor of developing students' communicative competence in the target language" (Mihretu, 2016, p. 118).

By contrast, some of the misconceptions that the current study found are comparable to those that the studies in other EFL contexts reported. Wang (2017) recorded four major misconceptions that teachers had regarding CLT. According to Wang (2017), (a) teachers perceived CLT as a specific teaching method (b) "communicate" is the same as "talk" (c) CLT pays little attention to language forms and (d) CLT ignores the teaching environment. There are similarities between the three misconceptions that the current study identified and those that Wang (2017) reported. First, CLT is a particular teaching strategy, instead of being an approach. Second, "communicate" equals "talk". Third, CLT gives little attention to forms since "structures" are not the organising units in the syllabus. The current study did not find any

misconception relating to CLT ignoring the teaching environment. Regarding this, on the one hand, the majority of EFL instructors indicated that EFL learners do not have real opportunities to use the language outside classroom situations. On the other hand, they argued that the lack of real opportunities can be compensated through exposing the EFL learners to various communicative activities. Although EFL students' exposure to a community that speaks the target language helps them to acquire the language naturally, it is arguable if the students' engagement in continuous classroom activities can substitute their exposure to a community that uses the target language as a mother tongue.

### **6.2.2. The Role of the Teacher in a CLT Classroom**

The current study found that the EFL instructors conceived the teacher's role in varied ways in the instructional process, depending on the nature of classroom activities. Accordingly, the majority of the EFL instructors felt that the teacher in CLT classrooms primarily plays the role of being a facilitator to student learning. The findings further revealed the specific contexts in which the teacher discharges this role: providing input for the learners, preparing teaching materials and supplementary exercises and determining the way students should be organised to do communicative activities (for example, through individual, pair, group or whole class discussions, participating independently in communicative activities). The EFL instructors' descriptions of the different roles played by the communicative language teacher included being a facilitator, an organiser, an independent participant, a coordinator, a manager, an authority figure, and a motivator.

There are similarities between the qualitative findings and the quantitative results regarding the teacher's role in CLT. To that effect, in response to the questionnaire item pertinent to the role of the teacher in CLT-based classes, all the EFL instructors agreed that the role of the teacher in a CLT-based classroom is to facilitate student learning. In the same way, the majority of the instructors (88%) disagreed that in CLT-based classes, the teacher's role is not just transmitting knowledge to students about language by explaining grammar items and other components of the target language, confirming the above finding. In addition, the finding from classroom observation further attested to the flexible roles that the teacher played. The EFL instructors whose classrooms emulated CLT played the roles of being a facilitator to student-learning. The group and pair work activities they organised, the roles they played as independent participants in communicative activities, and the communicative activities they designed and used in classroom situations were evidence of this reality.

The above findings support what the literature on CLT articulates regarding the teacher's role in CLT. In this regard, Hedge (2000) argues that the teacher's main role in a communicative classroom is to facilitate the teaching-learning process. This role implies that the communicative teacher is responsible for setting up activities, organising material resources, guiding students in group works, engaging contributions, monitoring activities, and diagnosing the further needs of students. Supporting this view, Breen and Candlin in Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 167) contend: "... [The communicative teacher] facilitates the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and text."

Contrary to the conceptions held by the EFL instructors concerning the facilitative role of the teacher, the lesson observation data exemplified that the majority of the EFL instructors mainly played the role of being an authority figure in grammar lessons. This mainly involved explaining grammar rules to students, providing accuracy-based corrections, and not allowing students to engage in communicative grammar activities incorporated in the textbook. While the teacher as an authority figure is supported by the literature (Hedge, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Fan, 2016), the EFL instructors' over-dependence on the lecture method is not consistent with the precepts of CLT. Although instructors might be forced to adopt the lecture method to teach grammar lessons due to course coverage and other socio-cultural variables discussed in subsequent sections, the use of the lecture method will not help the EFL learners to use the language for communicative purposes in and outside classroom situations.

### **6.2.3. The Role of the Learners in a CLT Classroom**

The CLT literature highlights that learners play flexible roles in the teaching-learning process, given the varying roles of teachers and the nature of communicative tasks used in classroom situations (Fan, 2016; Larsen-Freeman, 1996; Richards, 2006). The findings from the interview ascertained that learners play varied roles depending on the nature of communicative activities in which they are engaged. Concerning this, the majority of the EFL instructors indicated that learners in communicative classes should be independent participants, responsible learners, active participants and contributors, active citizens, independent human beings, autonomous learners, active communicators, and independent thinkers. The finding from the classroom observation also verified the above finding. Thus, the learners in classes that adhered to CLT mainly worked independently and cooperatively and contributed to the liveliness of classroom discussions. Overall, they participated actively in communicative grammar activities. It is interesting to see findings that confirm that CLT is implemented in EFL classes in the Ethiopian

context in the face of “a systematic failure to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning experiences,” in many classrooms across the nation (Tefera, Catherine & Robyn 2018, p. 75).

The findings of this study, regarding learners’ role in CLT, are consistent with the CLT literature. Hence, language learners in communicatively-oriented classes play various roles, given the nature of the communicative activities in which they are engaged and the varied roles that their teachers play: autonomous learners, active participants, critical thinkers, and independent thinkers (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016).

The above findings also validated what previous research established. Huang (2016), Majid (2016), Soozandehfar and Adeli (2016), Asma and Tsenim (2017) as well as Ndulia and Msuya (2017) reported that CLT encourages the development of learner autonomy or independence through the learners’ exposure to communicative and interactive activities. The specific roles that the current study highlighted are important components of learner autonomy or independence.

Notably, Ethiopia’s education and training policy adopted learner-centred approaches in general and CLT in particular. The active roles that students should play in the instructional process underpin this methodological orientation (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994, 2018, 2019).

In contrast to the learner-centred approaches that the Ministry of Education has adopted, language teachers are still pre-occupied with the lecture method. To that effect, Mebratu and Woldemariam (2017) reported that although EFL teachers had positive perceptions of the implementation of active learning methods in English classes, they dedicated much class time to discussing vocabulary and grammar items. Besides, their students remained passive listeners in the process. This finding also speaks to the underlying theory of education in Ethiopia, which favours the lecture method as the most dominant teaching strategy across disciplines (Moges, 2019). Supporting the findings of earlier studies, the current study also illustrated that in the majority of the EFL classes, the learners were hardly participating in the classroom discussions. They made little or no contribution to the discussions. They mainly listened to the teacher explaining grammar rules, took lecture notes, and did rule-based exercises. In general, in the majority of the observed lessons, there were no meaningful student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions.

#### **6.2.4. Classroom Activities or Tasks Used in a CLT Classroom**

The interview data explicated that jigsaw puzzles, dramatisation, debating, presentations, role-plays, information-gap activities, problem-solving activities, and form-based exercises are the major types of communicative activities that language teachers should use in communicative classrooms. The result of the questionnaire also confirmed the above finding. This is because the EFL instructors' ratings of the above communicative activities were positive. Contrary to the communicative activities they outlined, the majority of the EFL instructors used form-based exercises. They attributed this to large classes and the demands of covering course contents, among other variables. The structured classroom observation results revealed that a few instructors who adhered to CLT employed these classroom tasks to teach grammar lessons. The results further showed that one-third (six instructors) of the instructors used some of these communicative activities to teach grammar lessons: problem-solving activities, role-plays, information-gap activities, and form-based exercises. The results further showed that the instructors who used these activities were those who adhered to the inductive and the hybrid approaches to teach grammar lessons.

While the EFL instructors' conception of the types and nature of activities in CLT is in line with CLT literature, as stated above, there were differences among the instructors in their use of these activities in teaching grammar lessons. In addition to highlighting the above types of activities in CLT, the literature enunciates that the classroom activities in CLT-based syllabuses should be authentic, interactive, meaningful, relevant, and motivating (Clarke & Silberstein, 1977; Ellis, 2003). Moreover, based on their nature and purposes, these activities fall into one of the two categories. They are, therefore, either communicative (Ellis, 2003) or structural (Littlewood, 1981). The current study found that the majority of the activities in EFL classes in private universities in Ethiopia were mainly structural since they focussed on the formation of grammar rules (for example, the past tense, the present tense or the present perfect tense), with little or no regard for their meaningful use in real communication.

#### **6.2.5. The Teaching Materials and Resources Used in a CLT Classroom**

This study has shown that the teaching materials in CLT should meet several requirements. First, they should be appealing to students. They should also integrate the major language skills. The materials should engage students and address their communicative needs, which the EFL instructors associated with meeting their students' academic and non-academic needs. All the EFL instructors underlined that authentic teaching materials should be exploited to bring real-life

instances to classroom situations. Regarding this, they outlined that magazines, newspapers, pictures, and stories must be used in and outside classrooms to ensure that learners use the target language for real communication. The EFL instructors also indicated that different resources should be used as aids in the instructional process. They cited affordable electronic resources such as cell phones, textbooks, modules, as well as teachers and students as resources.

Although the literature and the findings from the interview evidence the use of authentic, appealing, interactive, and meaningful teaching materials in CLT-based classes, the classroom practices of two-thirds of the EFL instructors were otherwise. Since the EFL instructors relied on the lecture method, the characteristics of the teaching materials described above were missing from their lessons. Aspects of these characteristics of the teaching materials were observed among the classes of a few instructors (one-third of the EFL instructors) who adhered to the inductive and the hybrid approaches. The instructors used pictures, newspaper stories, the textbook and exercises from supplementary materials to allow their students to practise the grammar topics they presented in classroom situations.

The study has shown that the teaching materials and resources in CLT should create meaningful contexts for EFL learners to experiment with the target language in real communication. The literature also articulates the use of real objects and authentic teaching materials as a tool to create communicative contexts, at least in classroom situations. Students should be given authentic, life-like materials with which they can work because the major purpose of language learning is to enable them to function in life meaningfully (Littlewood, 2014). Supporting this view, Richards & Rodgers, (2001) argue that when authentic materials are used, students will have heightened motivation to involve in communicative tasks. Furthermore, they can see the link between classrooms and the outside world. They also argue that authentic materials encourage creativity among students (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This implies that when students are able to see the relevance of what they do in classroom situations and the link between what happens in classrooms and the external world, they will develop a sense of purpose for learning, thereby making the required efforts to learn the target language.

#### **6.2.6. The Role of Grammar in the Academic and Non-academic Lives of Students**

All the EFL instructors stressed that grammar plays an indispensable role in the students' academic and non-academic lives. They reported that in EFL contexts such as Ethiopia, where

English is the instructional language (especially in higher education institutions), students' academic success hinges on several factors, one of which is their command of English. The EFL instructors further pinpointed that students with better proficiency in English can be successful in making classroom presentations and producing formal term papers, assignments, and senior essays.

The findings of the self-reporting mechanisms and classroom observation demonstrated that accuracy and fluency development in school contexts is imperative for students' academic success. Ethiopia's education and training policy introduced in 1994 and revised subsequently supports the instructors' conception of the role of grammar. The policy underlines that the goal of language teaching should be to help learners communicate effectively both in writing and speaking. The policy further states that grammar should be a vital component of the teaching-learning process (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2001; 2018). This implies that the policymakers have recognised the role of grammar in students' academic and non-academic lives.

The findings of the study further demonstrated the crucial role that grammar plays in the lives of students outside classroom situations. The majority of the EFL instructors pointed out that the knowledge and correct use of grammar determines EFL students' success in real life. They mentioned that employers often require their employees to compile and write company reports, record minutes of meetings, and carry out such activities that require writing. To that effect, 70% of the EFL instructors reported that grammar knowledge and correct use of grammar has a positive contribution to students' success in real life. They confirmed this while responding to one of the questionnaire items about the importance of the knowledge and correct use of grammar in the success of students outside classroom situations.

Despite the EFL instructors' differences on the specific strategies they used in teaching grammar lessons, it is apparent from the semi-structured interview data, questionnaire and classroom observation that they accorded a prominent place to grammar, given the role that it plays in determining their students' success inside and outside classroom situations. The emphasis they placed on grammar in their discussion of its role in CLT and the time they allocated to it in classroom situations reflects the recognition it enjoys in CLT in EFL contexts.

One of the most notable findings to emerge from this study is the crucial place that grammar should occupy in the CLT syllabus and the instructional process. This is inconsistent with the

contention that even though CLT does not neglect grammar, it does not position it centrally. One of the criticisms levelled against CLT is the lack of explicit attention given to grammar in CLT. Seedhouse (1999) and Sheen (2003) argue that accuracy is given minimal attention. They further argue that grammar is equally an important aspect that students should be able to master to ensure successful communication in school as well as out-of-school situations. Supporting this, Swain (2005) underlines that a learning-by-doing approach advocated by CLT does not guarantee that students can develop their communicative competence without acquiring the requisite knowledge of grammar first. The views of the writers and the current study suggest that it is incumbent on classroom teachers to allocate sufficient time to grammar lessons, regardless of the differences among the participants of the current study about how grammar should be taught.

As stated above, all the EFL instructors reiterated that since English is the language of instruction at tertiary level in Ethiopia, their students' success in academic subjects is mainly related to how well they can exploit the target language in general and its grammar in particular. The EFL instructors exemplified that students are usually required to turn in assignments, term papers, and prepare and deliver formal speeches in the form of presentations. They also indicated that the students are required to answer essay questions in tests and end-of-semester examinations, all of which require a better command of the target language, an important aspect of which is the knowledge and correct use of grammar. Moreover, the continuous advice that the instructors provide to their students regarding the importance of grammar students' academic lives is additional evidence of the recognition that the instructors have given to the role of grammar.

Studies into the grammar-related problems of students in the Ethiopian context reported the crucial role that grammar plays in the lives of students. Of relevance to the above finding are Wubalem and Sarngi (2019) who argue grammar plays a decisive role in determining the success of students in academic settings, given that English is the instructional medium. Wubalem and Sarngi (2019) also reported that there is a general disappointment among several stakeholders that despite the critical role it plays in their school lives, many university students are still unable to construct grammatical and meaningful sentences.

While the majority of the EFL instructors embraced CLT, they also emphasised that there is a need to include more grammar lessons in EFL contexts to address the students' academic needs.



The EFL instructors question that: “Grammar was no longer the starting point in planning language courses within a communicative approach; new approaches to language teaching were needed” (Richards 2006, p. 9). The views of the majority of the EFL instructors are consistent with the role of grammar pronounced in Ethiopia’s education policy documents and English textbooks, underlining the centrality of grammar in CLT in Ethiopia. The current study, therefore, questions the assertion that grammar is no longer the organising unit in CLT. This result as well as the emphasis accorded to grammar in the training and education policy may be explained by several factors. The most salient ones that the EFL instructors pinpointed were the frequency of grammar topics in English textbooks, the amount of class time allocated to grammar lessons, and the students’ deficiency in the command of the grammar of the language that necessitates more teaching of grammar lessons.

Despite the claim that grammar was no longer the organising principle in CLT (Richards, 2006), there is empirical evidence supporting the findings of the current study. Thus, other proponents of CLT contend grammar should be an essential component of language teaching programmes in EFL contexts to address the academic needs of the students. Accordingly, Celce-Murcia (2001) stressed that linguistic competence [grammatical competence, which is among the constituents of communicative competence] is one of the requisites for the EFL students’ academic success. Sharing the above view regarding the place of grammar in CLT, Thompson (1996:11) argues: “It is now fully accepted that an appropriate amount of class time should be devoted to grammar, but this does not mean a simple return to traditional treatment of grammar rules.” On the one hand, Thompson (1996) emphasises the role that grammar plays in CLT classrooms; on the other hand, he articulates that the incorporation of grammar lessons in CLT-based syllabuses does not mean that the lessons should be taught through traditional methods, where the teacher offers lengthy explanations of the rules of grammar.

Concerning how grammar should be taught, Thompson (1996, p. 11) argues: “The view that grammar is too complex to be taught in that over-simplifying has had an influence, and the focus has now moved away from the teacher covering grammar to the learners discovering grammar.” Thompson’s (1996) argument has two implications: first, grammar should be given enough attention; second, it should be presented in context to help learners discover the rules for themselves, instead of lecturing them about the rules. Through such a process, the students are more likely to develop their accuracy and fluency in the target language (Thornbury, 2008).

In summary, it can be argued that grammar plays a pivotal role in the academic and non-academic lives of EFL students in Ethiopia. Academically, it is one of the areas that determines their success since English is the medium of instruction and since there are several instances in which the knowledge and correct use of grammar is required: classroom discussions, research and report writing, presentations and writing examinations. In non-academic contexts such as in employment settings, there are various contexts in which they are required to exhibit their knowledge and correct use of grammar; for example, in writing letters, memos, compiling reports and organising minutes of meetings.

### **6.2.7. The Place for Grammar in CLT**

This study generated results that corroborate the debates surrounding grammar: whether it should be taught and how it should be taught. Also, it yielded two contrasting findings regarding the place for grammar in CLT, thereby highlighting the accuracy-fluency debate. The first finding pronounced the central position that grammar occupies in CLT, whereas the second finding exemplified its peripheral position in CLT.

#### **6.2.7.1. Debates Surrounding Grammar**

The debates surrounding grammar have historical roots. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the grammar-translation method prescribed the deductive teaching of grammar. Teachers who employed this method taught grammar lessons explicitly by explaining grammar rules to their students. They heavily relied on translation exercises (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Subsequent to the introduction of CLT in the 1970s, the place of grammar began to be challenged. To that effect, various language theorists and researchers began to question why and how grammar should be taught and what role it plays in students' lives (Ellis, 2014).

Within the accuracy-fluency debate, this study highlighted the arguments for and against the explicit teaching of grammar. In this vein, it highlighted three strands of conception. First, the majority of the EFL instructors (12 out of 18 instructors) favoured the deductive teaching of grammar. They argued that the deductive approach can address their students' grammar-related problems. Second, a few EFL instructors (3 out of 18 instructors) favoured the implicit teaching of grammar. This group of instructors argued that the inductive approach helps their students to engage in meaningful interactions. This finding is consistent with the implicit teaching of grammar (the inductive approach) which advocates exposing students to context-based grammar

exercises, making possible the natural acquisition of the grammar of the target language (Ellis, 2014).

Third, a few EFL instructors (3 out of 18 instructors) had conceptions of teaching that favoured the hybrid approach. Their conception was consistent with their classroom practices since they balanced their explanation of grammar rules and their students' exposure to communicative activities. This conception is also consistent with the views of the proponents of the eclectic approach to teaching grammar. Consequently, Kumar (2013) and Thornbury (2008) assert that the use of eclectic methods helps address the inadequacies inherent in each of its constituents. Likewise, by highlighting the assumption behind the eclectic approach, Ellis (2006) argues that grammar is not only the formal aspect of the target language but also a tool to convey meanings in diverse communicative contexts (Ellis, 2006). Thus, classroom teachers should try to strike a balance between communicative and structural activities given their students' needs and learning styles.

#### **6.2.7.2. Grammar's Central Place in CLT**

The study highlighted the divergent views of the EFL instructors concerning the place for grammar in CLT. The EFL instructors who underlined the centrality of grammar in CLT indicated that accuracy should be given more emphasis than fluency. They claimed that grammar's role in CLT is central as it is a tool enabling communication. They further argued that it is difficult to think of CLT without grammar, especially in EFL contexts. Their conception of the central position of grammar in CLT in EFL contexts is similar to the finding discussed above concerning the role of grammar in the academic and non-academic lives of students. They stressed that the knowledge and correct use of grammar is one of the determinants of students' success in higher education institutions.

It seems possible that these findings are due to the students' grammar deficiencies. Given the interview data, the EFL instructors pinpointed that their students' command of the language in general and that of grammar, in particular, is alarmingly poor. Hence, the best way to address these deficiencies is by integrating it into the CLT curriculum and giving the students sufficient time to practise and use the target language.

According to Sultana (2017), grammar is one of the determinants of students' academic success in EFL contexts. Thus, it should be an integral part of CLT-based language teaching programmes in EFL contexts. This view is consistent with the conceptions of the EFL instructors captured by

this study and the arguments advanced by Thompson (1996) as well as Ji and Liu (2018) for the incorporation of grammar in the CLT-based curriculum in EFL contexts to facilitate EFL students' academic success.

By arguing for the integrated teaching of grammar in communicative contexts, various scholars accorded a central place for grammar in CLT. Atkins et al. (1995), Rodgers and Richards (2001) as well as Richards (2006) recommended that the grammar should be treated adequately in CLT-based syllabuses, especially in EFL contexts. They further recommended that communicative tasks should be used to assist learners in discovering the rules of the grammar of the target language by themselves. This suggests that grammar should be taught contextually, which is in line with the tenets of the inductive approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2015),

The views of the EFL instructors and the writers align with the “weak” version of CLT and the assumption behind Ethiopia's education and training policy with regard to language teaching. The weak version of CLT contends that the acquisition of language is made possible through using the language for different communicative purposes as part of a language teaching programme. It also argues that focus-on-form can be integrated into communicative tasks without interrupting the flow of communication (Coyle, 2008; Nunan, 2007). The country's education and training policy articulated that students should be exposed to both the form and meaning of the grammar of the target language mainly to meet their academic needs (FDRE, The Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2019). It is apparent that the needs of students might vary based on what they want to accomplish personally. In academic settings, they should be exposed to both the form and meaning of the grammar of the target language to be able to express their ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions correctly and meaningfully. This has implications for their success as tertiary-level students as English is the medium of instruction.

### **6.2.7.3. Grammar's Peripheral Place in CLT**

On the one hand, the study revealed that there were a few EFL instructors who held a conception propounding the centrality of grammar in CLT. On the other hand, it also showed that the majority of the EFL instructors held the view that grammar occupies a marginal position in CLT. While they further indicated that CLT does not abandon the teaching of grammar altogether, they questioned that grammar topics are not the organising principles in syllabus design. The terms they used illustrate the peripheral position they claimed that grammar occupies in CLT: “little emphasis”, “minimal emphases”, “limited attention”, “inadequate attention”, “light attention”,

“minor emphasis”, and “not enough attention”. Despite the peripheral position they believed grammar has in CLT, all the EFL instructors indicated that grammar is an essential aspect of language teaching, especially in EFL contexts, thereby highlighting that classroom teachers should allocate enough class time to the teaching of grammar lessons.

As discussed under *6.2 EFL Instructors’ Conceptions of CLT*, the views that the EFL instructors expressed above might as well be a misconception. This is because functions or notions, not grammar items, are the organising principles in CLT syllabus design and teaching materials preparation (Halliday, 1973; Brumfit, 1979; Yalden, 1983). However, this does not necessarily reduce the role that grammar plays in students' lives in general. Besides, grammar's prominence in classroom situations might vary based on the context or students' needs. Hence, the EFL instructors seemed to have formed their conception based on how grammar lessons are organised in the textbook. For instance, the findings from the interview confirmed that the textbook for *Communicative English Skills* used “functions” or “notions” to organise the contents of the course. Hence, the textbook writers used “Talking about the past” instead of “Past tenses”, “Talking about the future” instead of “Future tenses” and “Talking about the present/what is happening now” instead of “Present tenses”. This is along the lines of the notional-functional approach in CLT that highlights that all the major language skills including grammar are treated in integration in a communicative context (Richards, 2006). With regard to this, one notable finding from the classroom observation demonstrated that the EFL instructors who adhered to the deductive approach used “Past tenses”, “Future tenses”, and “Present tenses” to introduce grammar lessons. This might imply their traditional orientation to the teaching of grammar lessons.

### **6.3.EFL Instructors’ Current Classroom Practices in Grammar Lessons**

The current study has proved that the EFL instructors employed various strategies to teach grammar lessons: the deductive approach, the inductive approach, and the hybrid approach. The study has further revealed that while the conceptions and classroom practices of a few of the EFL instructors were consistent, this was not the case for the majority of the EFL instructors. Most importantly, the EFL instructors’ adherence to the deductive approach, the inductive approach, or the hybrid approach highlighted one of the debates surrounding the accuracy-fluency debate.

On the one hand, accuracy development suggests that teachers are preoccupied with the explicit teaching of grammar lessons, with little or no emphasis placed on the communicative aspect of

the language (Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014). The classroom observation data exemplified that the EFL instructors who used the deductive approach focused on accuracy development by teaching grammar lessons explicitly. They also focused on error correction.

On the other hand, fluency development suggests that teachers are mainly concerned with helping their students use the target language in meaningful communicative contexts (Littlewood, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). The EFL instructors who employed the inductive approach focused on fluency development. They mainly engaged their students in communicative activities and encouraged induction among their students. The third group of EFL instructors used the hybrid approach. They focused on the development of both accuracy and fluency. While teaching grammar lessons, not only did they explain the rules of grammar explicitly, but they also created meaningful opportunities for their students to use the rules of the grammar of the target language in communication.

### **6.3.1. The Use of the Deductive Approach**

The findings from the interview showed that over one-third of EFL instructors (7 out of the 18 EFL instructors) adhered to the inductive approach to teach grammar lessons. However, the findings from the classroom observation depicted that two-thirds of the instructors used the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. Hence, they allocated much class time to lecture how to form grammar rules; they gave form-focused exercises to their students and they focused on error correction. They extracted sentence-level, rule-based exercises from other grammar books, and they also prepared their grammar exercises.

The questionnaire results confirmed the findings of the classroom observation. Four items in the questionnaire elicited a response which was similar to the above finding: that the instructors explained the rules of grammar to their students; that they highlighted the rules of the language instead of allowing their students to employ English functionally; that they used rule-based exercises in the textbook, and that they wrote lecture notes on the whiteboard and required their students to write them in their exercise books. The group mean of these items was 3.88, implying that the instructors frequently employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. The findings of the lessons' observation and the results of the questionnaire are consistent with the tenets of the deductive approach, which places more emphasis on abstractions and verifying the correctness of the grammar rule using some examples (Cook, 2001; Littlewood, 2014). This finding highlights one of the typical manifestations of what grammar classes in EFL context in

Ethiopia looks like: form-based lectures of the grammar of English is pervasive in English classes. Students have little or no exposure to communicative activities.

### **6.3.2. The Use of the Inductive Approach**

The evidence from the classroom observation showed that a few EFL instructors (3 EFL instructors) employed the inductive approach in classroom situations. The evidence from the lesson observation further revealed that the instructors carried out various activities that are highlighted by CLT literature as constituting communicative classes. Thus, they facilitated student learning by organising their students to work in pairs and groups on meaning-based exercises; they briefly explained grammar rules to provide inputs to their students; they participated independently in pair and group work activities; they used writing and reading exercises, different authentic materials (such as pictures and newspaper stories) to create meaningful contexts for their students to practise the grammar rules. Various writers agree that the exercises and teaching materials listed above are among the most important ways of creating meaningful communicative contexts in classroom situations (Brown, 1972; Richards, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2015).

The findings further showed that the instructors' dependence on communicative grammar teaching manifested itself, primarily, through student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions and, secondarily, through teacher-to-student interaction. Peer correction was employed as a means to correct students' grammar errors. In general, student talking time was comparatively greater than teacher talking time, unlike for the instructors who used the lecture method. This finding depicts one of the principles of CLT highlighted by Littlewood (2014). Accordingly, the communication principle stipulates that authentic communication promotes learning. The interactions in which the students engage facilitate their learning. Likewise, Richards (2020) also argues that language is helpful to accomplish several communicative functions in and outside classroom situations and that the teaching-learning process should replicate this reality.

### **6.3.3. The Use of the Hybrid Approach**

The classroom observation data depicted that a few instructors (3 out of 18 EFL instructors) employed the hybrid approach to teach grammar lessons. The instructors combined important aspects of the inductive and deductive approaches to teach grammar lessons and to add variety to their teaching strategies. The lesson observation sessions captured aspects of the two approaches

in the teaching-learning processes. For instance, on the one hand, the instructors explained grammar rules to their students when they thought their students needed the explanation, which is typical of the deductive approach (Cook, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). On the other hand, they also engaged their students in different communicative activities, which involved doing information-gap activities and role-plays, which are among the classroom activities that create meaningful communicative contexts for the learners to use the target language (Brown, 1972; Richards, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). The EFL instructors used the textbook, while at the same time supplementing it from different sources such as grammar books and the internet.

The classroom observation data further revealed that both the EFL instructors and their students played flexible roles in the instructional process, given the nature of the exercises and the specific strategies that these exercises required. For example, the EFL instructors played the role of being an authority figure on the subject when they explained grammar rules to their students. Where they felt their students needed to understand grammar rules, they organised question-answer sessions. They also played the role of being a facilitator to their students' learning when they organised them in pairs and groups to do various communicative activities: information-gap activities and grammar-based games. Their students also had varied roles in the classroom situations, depending on the nature of the classroom activities and the patterns of interactions that the exercises required. When the instructors explained the grammar rules, the students had to listen and take lecture notes. The students participated actively in pair and group work activities. During the feedback sessions, the students acted as assessors of their classmates' written work.

The EFL instructors' adherence to the hybrid approach was subservient to their conception that students should be exposed to both the form and meaning of the grammar of the target language. The classroom practices of these instructors, therefore, reflected their conceptions. This finding is consistent with the precepts of the eclectic approach, which suggests that both the form and meaning of the target language should be taught in classroom situations to help learners acquire the theoretical knowledge and develop the practical skills in using the target language (Kumar, 2013; Khansir & Pakdel, 2016; Sultana, 2017; Ji & Liu, 2018). The integrated treatment of the form and meaning of the grammar of the target language is missing in most EFL classes since teachers are often pre-occupied course coverage which forces them to focus mainly on the rules of grammar.



#### **6.3.4. The Assessment Modalities Used by EFL Instructors**

Since assessment is an essential constituent of the instructional process (Sadler, 1998; Black & William, 2009), the study investigated the EFL instructors' conceptions of the types of assessment modalities that should be used in CLT and their corresponding applications of the assessment modalities in teaching grammar lessons. The findings revealed that the use of continuous assessment is the mode of assessment advocated by the universities selected as the study sites. This is in line with the learner-centred assessment methods that CLT advocates (Richards, 2006). Continuous assessment is a means of assessing students' performance progressively by integrating assessment modalities in the instructional process. Informal assessment tools such as pair and group discussions form an important part of the assessment in learner-centred classrooms. It is also used to aid the teaching-learning process, by helping students and teachers identify their weaknesses and strengths (Sadler, 1998; Black & William, 2009).

One of the findings of the study showed that there were consistencies between the instructors' teaching strategies and their assessment modalities. For example, the instructors who used the inductive approach relied more on continuous assessment: they employed pair and group work activities, role-plays, and presentations as their major assessment strategies. This also incorporated the sparing use of formal written tests.

The EFL instructors who relied on the lecture method or the deductive approach employed formal written tests to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. The post-observation session showed that the EFL instructors often used sentence-level formal tests to this effect. The specific question types they employed involved items that could be marked objectively: multiple-choice items, gap-fill exercises, matching items, and true/false items.

The findings of the study further showed that the instructors who employed the hybrid approach varied their assessment strategies accordingly. Consequently, they used both form-based exercises and learner-centred strategies. Although document analysis was not a data-collection tool for this study, all the EFL instructors' records showed that they used written tests to assess their students' understanding of the forms of the grammar topics they taught. The tests focused on sentence-level grammar exercises. They also integrated the assessment in the teaching-learning process and took records of how their students participated, especially in pair and group

work activities. They were observed to be taking notes on the participation of individual and groups of students while they were doing communicative grammar activities.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that like the incongruence between the findings from the interview and classroom observation about the instructors' teaching strategies, there seemed to be incongruence between the instructors' conceptions and the specific assessment modalities they used to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. According to the interview data, two-thirds of the EFL instructors (12 out of 18 EFL instructors) reported that continuous assessment should be used in communicative classrooms since it is a learner-centred approach. They also reported that it is a reliable tool that can identify the weaknesses in the teachers' classroom strategies and help take remedial actions in the instructional process. However, there is an inconsistency between what the instructors reported and what they employed in classroom situations. Thus, on the one hand, the interview data depicted that the instructors had conceptions of assessment that favoured continuous assessment. On the other hand, they assessed their students' grammar performance using highly structured written tests and examinations. This is also inconsistent with the learner-centred assessment approach that their respective universities have adopted.

#### **6.4. The Relationship between Instructors' Conceptions of CLT and Their Classroom Practices**

The findings of the study revealed consistencies and inconsistencies between EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices. The purpose of this section is to discuss the consistencies and inconsistencies in light of the data from the self-reporting mechanisms and lesson observation as well as the literature on CLT and previous research on teachers' conceptions and their classroom practices.

##### **6.4.1. Consistencies between EFL Instructors' Conceptions and Classroom Practices**

The goal of language teaching was one of the interview questions to which the EFL instructors responded. The self-reporting mechanisms verified that the development of communicative competence is the major goal of language teaching in CLT. This was confirmed by over two-thirds of the EFL instructors. The lesson observation data depicted that there was a consistency between the conception and classroom practices of three EFL instructors regarding the development of communicative competence as the major goal of CLT. This is contrary to the

views of the majority of the EFL instructors mentioned above. While teaching grammar lessons, the instructors involved their students in games, role-plays, information-gap and problem-solving activities. Besides, their students played various roles based on the nature and variety of communicative grammar activities. Thus, their students were individual participants, role-players, feedback providers, decision-makers, and problem-solvers. The instructors also had varied roles, including being input providers, independent participants, organisers, and authority figures. As stated above, the grammar exercises had communicative intents: information-gap activities, games, role-play and problem-solving exercises which the CLT literature advocates (Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2001; Ellis, 2003). This finding is inconsistent with studies conducted in EFL contexts in Africa. A notable one is Ndulia and Msuya (2017) who found that over 70% of the EFL instructors who participated in the study had positive perceptions and attitudes towards CLT. The study further found: “In most cases, teachers’ preferred teaching procedures and techniques were completely not or minimally reflected in the procedures and techniques which operate the CLT approach” (Ndulia & Msuya, 2017: 67).

It is also noteworthy that the consistency between conceptions and classroom practices applies to three more instructors who adhered to the hybrid approach (a combination of the deductive and inductive approaches). This is because certain characteristic aspects of CLT that they reported in the interview were also evident in their classrooms. The interview data depicted that the goal of CLT should be to develop students’ communicative competence. Illustrating this, they accentuated that the ability to express oneself in various communicative contexts and the knowledge and correct use of the grammar of the language [the development of fluency and accuracy] should be the focus of the teaching-learning process. Their classroom practices also reflected these conceptions. This can be explained by the exercises they allowed their students to do and the combination of the inductive and deductive strategies they used. Moreover, the varied roles they and their students played [all discussed in the previous sections] were consistent with the views they expressed in the interview regarding several aspects of CLT.

The interview data portrayed that approximately half of the interviewed instructors expressed their adherence to the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons. The deductive approach focuses on abstractions and verifying the correctness of a grammar item with the help of some examples (Cook, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). The EFL instructors reported that they mainly used the deductive approach to present the grammar lessons to their students. They indicated that they allocated much class time to explain grammatical rules. The feedback they provided to their

students focused on accuracy. In line with this approach, they told their students to do sentence-level rule-based exercises. The instructors used the rule-based exercises from the textbook and similar exercises they extracted from other grammar books and those they had designed.

The findings of the classroom observation for the EFL instructors who adhered to the deductive approach are consistent with their conceptions of the classroom strategies they reported they would employ to teach grammar lessons. Accordingly, teacher talking time was comparatively greater than student talking time. For example, the sample classroom lesson observations discussed in the previous chapter revealed that the instructors respectively used 67 and 58 minutes to explain the grammar topics: *Talking about the Future* and *Reported Speech*. The roles of their students were not as varied as that of the instructors who employed the inductive approach. The students were mainly passive listeners in the teaching-learning process and the exercises they did were form-based, instead of those with communicative intents, one of the pillars of the course syllabus and the textbook.

Another consistency between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices is pertinent to the assessment modalities they used to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. It must be noted that the instructors reportedly had to hold this perception due to their context-specific classroom realities discussed below. The findings depicted that the majority of the instructors (13 out of the 18) applied non-continuous assessment modalities (mainly written tests) to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. The records of the instructors and the post-observation discussions showed that they mainly relied on written tests to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. The tests they administered were mainly objective and comprised sentence-level form-based exercises, matching items, gap-fill items, and multiple-choice items.

The findings from the interview and classroom observation also showed consistencies in EFL instructors' use of continuous assessment modalities. As discussed in *Chapter Four*, three instructors used informal assessment modalities, including pair and group work and individual presentations to assess their students' knowledge and use of grammar.

A striking finding corresponding to the assessment methods is that almost all the EFL instructors had expressed their positive views on the importance of continuous assessment during the interview. However, they also reported that they mainly relied on highly structured assessment

methods. They attributed their decision to large class size, the demands of course coverage, and the demands of meeting grade submission deadlines.

Past and present research into the conceptions and the classroom practices of teachers revealed similar findings. To that effect, Kember, Kwan, and Ledesma (2001) discovered that teachers' orientations to teaching are directly related to the strategies they employ in the instructional process. On the one hand, they indicated that the majority of the university instructors they studied exhibited traditional conceptions of teaching. The instructors used the lecture method to deliver course content. According to Kember and Kwan (2000), the university instructors focused on imparting theoretical knowledge to their students, and their students remained passive recipients of this knowledge. On the other hand, Kember and Kwan (2000) found that the university instructors whose conceptions of teaching were aligned to learner-centred approach encouraged their "students to discover knowledge on their own, deal with the needs of individual students, employ a more flexible system of assessment, make a conscious attempt to remedy the weaknesses of their students, and respect and make good use of the students' experience in their teaching." (Kember & Kwan 2000, p. 486).

Trigwell and Prosser (1996) also reported similar findings. They found that there is a strong and positive relationship between the teachers' conceptions and their classroom practices. To that effect, the teachers who believed that teaching is helping students become independent learners adhered to learner-centred approaches, whereas those who believed that teaching is the transmission of information adhered to teacher-centered approaches. Similarly, Prosser and Trigwell (1997) discovered that teachers' orientations to teaching are directly related to the strategies they employ in the teaching-learning process. Other studies that reported consistencies between teachers' conceptions and classroom practices include Gow and Kember (1993), Kember, Kwan, and Ledesma (2001), Lindblom-Ylance et al. (2006), Parpala and Lindblom-Ylance (2007) as well as Varnava-Marouchou (2011).

Although recent local research reporting the consistencies between teachers' conceptions and classroom practices is scanty, mention can be made of Beishuizen, Zerihun, and Willem (2011) who examined university teachers' and students' conceptions of teaching. The study revealed that both the teachers and students held conceptions of teaching that favoured teacher-centered approaches. More specifically, the study demonstrated that the classroom practices of the

teachers who favoured teacher-fronted teaching strategies were accorded approval by their students (Beishuizen, Zerihun & Willem, 2011).

There is a plethora of research in other EFL contexts reporting the consistencies between teachers' conceptions and their classroom practices. Notably, Noor (2018) asserted that despite the challenges they faced in and outside classroom contexts, the participating EFL teachers had positive perceptions of CLT. The study further established that the positive perceptions that the teachers held of CLT were translated in their classrooms since they exploited several CLT-based activities to teach the major language skills (Noor, 2018).

Additional research reporting the consistencies between teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices include Huang (2016), Asma and Tsenim (2017), Abdullah (2018) and Hanan (2018). They demonstrated that the teachers involved in their respective studies had positive views of CLT. Their classroom realities also showed that the teachers incorporated and used communicative activities to teach the major language skills. They further confirmed that CLT was employed in the face of various challenges: large classroom size, low students' proficiency, low teacher's English proficiency, low students' motivation, the lack of authentic teaching materials and the lack of authentic communicative contexts outside classroom situations (Huang, 2016; Asma & Tsenim, 2017; Abdullah, 2018; Hanan, 2018).

In summary, the data from the self-reporting mechanisms and classroom observation have shown consistencies between EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classrooms. These findings are consistent with the tenets of CLT. However, they applied only to three EFL instructors. The following table presents a synthesis of the consistencies between the EFL instructors' conceptions and their classroom practices.

<b>TABLE 6.4.1: CONSISTENCIES BETWEEN EFL INSTRUCTORS' CONCEPTIONS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>CLT principle</b>	<b>Interview findings/Questionnaire results</b>	<b>Classroom observation findings</b>	<b>Remark</b>
1.	Goal of language teaching in CLT	→The development of communicative competence was reiterated by the majority of the EFL	→This pertains to a few observed EFL instructors who taught grammar	Although it applied to a few instructors, the instructors' conceptions and classroom practices were consistent.

		<p>instructors.</p> <p>→84% of the EFL instructors agreed that the development of learners' communicative competence is the major goal of language teaching in CLT.</p>	<p>communicatively.</p> <p>→The roles of the students were varied, including being active participants, role-players, feedback providers and problem solvers.</p> <p>→The EFL instructors used communicative grammar activities: information-gap activities, games, role-plays and problem-solving exercises.</p>	
2.	Specific teaching strategies	<p>→Close to half of the instructors (eight instructors) reported that they would adhere to the deductive approach.</p> <p>→A few EFL instructors (three instructors) reported that they would adhere to the hybrid approach.</p>	<p>→ Much of the EFL instructors' class time was allocated to explaining grammar rules.</p> <p>→The EFL instructors employed the hybrid approach.</p>	The conception of the EFL instructors and their classroom practices were consistent, regardless of whether their conceptions and classroom practices were consistent with CLT.
3.	Assessment methods	<p>→The majority of the EFL instructors (13 out of the 18) reported that they would rely mainly on written tests to assess their students' performance in</p>	<p>→The post-classroom observation sessions and the records of the instructors depicted that they relied</p>	Irrespective of whether that is consistent with the tenets of CLT, the EFL instructors adhered to knowledge-based

		<p>grammar lessons.</p> <p>→ A few instructors (three EFL instructors) reported that they would rely on continuous assessment modalities.</p> <p>→A few EFL instructors mixed formal and informal assessment methods.</p>	<p>more on formal written tests.</p> <p>→ They used more informal assessment modalities.</p> <p>→The instructors combined form-based written exercises and informal assessment modalities.</p>	<p>assessment modalities.</p>
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**6.4.2. Inconsistencies between EFL Instructors’ Conceptions and Classroom Practices**

The data from the self-reporting mechanisms and the classroom observation revealed inconsistencies between the instructors’ conceptions and classroom practices. The first inconsistency between the EFL instructors’ conception and classroom practices concerns the goal of language teaching in CLT. The second one pertains to their conceptions of how to teach grammar lessons and how they did so in classroom situations. This section discusses the inconsistencies in light of the existing literature and previous research.

The first discrepancy between the EFL instructors’ conceptions and their classroom practices involved the goal of language teaching in CLT. The findings of the interview showed that the development of communicative competence should be the major goal of language teaching in communicative syllabuses. The majority of the instructors articulated this view while responding to one of the interview questions. Various scholars also concur that developing learners’ communicative competence is the primary goal of CLT (Savignon, 1997; Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014).

Nevertheless, the lessons’ observation data depicted practices that were contrary to the instructors’ conceptions. Twelve out of the eighteen instructors allocated much class time to



explaining the grammar rules for their students. Students are very unlikely to develop their communicative competence when they remain passive listeners in the instructional process. The lesson observation results demonstrated that the instructors were mainly authoritarian, and their students were inactive; the majority of the exercises were form-based, in contrast to the meaning-based exercises the literature articulates (Littlewood, 2014; Larsen-Freeman 2015). The instructors either skipped over the communicative activities in the textbook or set them aside as homework or disregarded them altogether. The use of teaching aids was not evident while they were teaching grammar lessons. The feedback sessions focused on form-based error correction. Overall, teacher talking time was comparatively greater than student talking time.

The second discrepancy between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices involved over one-fourth of the instructors. They highlighted that it is imperative to present grammar lessons contextually to develop the learners' communicative competence. They expressed their preference for the inductive approach to teach grammar lessons. The specific classroom strategies they outlined they would use in classroom situations were typical of the inductive approach: creating meaningful communicative contexts, encourage their students to induce grammar rules, organising students in pairs or groups, using authentic materials such as magazines and newspapers, using teaching aids such as pictures and audio-video equipment in grammar lessons (Brown, 1972; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). However, the lesson observation exemplified that the instructors mainly relied on the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons. They allocated much time to explain grammar rules to their students, and they instructed their students to do sentence-level form-focused exercises. The feedback sessions focused on error correction or accuracy. The instructors assigned the communicative exercises in the textbook as homework although these exercises required the students to work cooperatively and report their answers to their classmates.

Previous research has also reported inconsistencies between teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices. To that effect, local studies by Diribsa (2006), Birhanu (2010), Adinew (2015) as well as Alamirew and Alazar (2015) are typical instances reporting the inconsistencies between the conceptions of teaching held by teachers or university instructors and their classroom realities. This is because although the teachers held positive views of active learning methods [including CLT], their classrooms were teacher-fronted. The students remained passive listeners in the teaching-learning process (Alamirew & Alazar, 2015).

Earlier studies with similar findings include Tirualem (2003), Diribsa (2006), Taye (2008) and Birhanu (2010). They examined teachers' classroom practices in terms of the conceptions they held of teaching. Their findings suggest that although the majority of the teachers held learner-centred conceptions of teaching (active learning), their classroom practices showed the opposite of their conceptions since the lecture method permeated the instructional process (Tirualem, 2003; Diribsa, 2006; Taye, 2008; Birhanu, 2010).

There is recent empirical evidence in Ethiopia that documented inconsistencies between teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices. Mebratu and Woldemariam (2017) studied EFL teachers' perceptions of active learning methods and the extent to which they implemented them in English classes. They reported that the majority of the teachers had a positive perception of active learning; however, their practice of the method was found to be low in classroom situations. The study further reported that large class sizes with fixed sitting arrangements, inadequate teacher training, and traditional views that favoured the lecture method were the major explanations for the inconsistencies between the teachers' perceptions and classroom practices. Other local studies reporting inconsistencies between teachers' positive perceptions of learner-centred approaches and their adherence to the lecture method in classroom situations include Mihretu (2016), Abiy (2017) and Moges (2019).

Research in other EFL contexts also reported inconsistencies between teachers' conceptions and their classroom practices. Accordingly, Emmanuel and Erasmus (2017) concluded that most Tanzanian EFL secondary school teachers had positive attitudes and perceptions towards CLT, but they employed traditional language teaching methods which did not replicate the favourable attitudes and perceptions they had. Other studies reporting inconsistencies between perceptions and practices were Nguyen (2016) and Abdullah (2018). They demonstrated that teachers held positive perceptions of CLT, but they denied their students the opportunity to experiment with the target language by employing specific teaching strategies that contradicted their positive perceptions (Nguyen, 2016; Abdullah, 2018).

Ghazi and Noor (2019) in the Afghan tertiary EFL context reported similar findings: whereas students and teachers welcomed CLT positively in the Afghan EFL context, classroom practices were contrary to their positive perceptions. The study reported that the grammar-translation method was the most dominant instructional strategy in classroom situations. The teachers used translation exercises to teach the target language. The study further reported that the discrepancy

between the students’ and teachers’ views and their classroom practices was due to large class size, teachers’ low proficiency, students’ low proficiency, and exam-oriented system (Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

Similar studies reporting the inconsistencies and, therefore, the difficulties of implementing CLT include Wei, Lin, and Litton (2018). According to Wei, Lin, and Litton (2018), the difficulties of implementing CLT emanated from the system that considered the “teacher as curriculum implementer” instead of the “teacher as curriculum maker”. They further ascertained that educational, cultural, economic, and social factors contributed to the unsuccessful implementation of CLT in the Asian context. Noor (2018) also reported the inconsistencies between teachers’ perceived challenges and their classroom practices and highlighted that teacher-related challenges, student-related challenges, and CLT-related challenges were the major challenges of implementing CLT, a finding which the current study shares.

In summary, it is interesting to note from the findings of the study that there are more inconsistencies than there are consistencies between the EFL instructors’ conceptions and their classroom practices. The following table synthesises the inconsistencies between the EFL instructors’ conceptions and their classroom practices.

<b>Item</b>	<b>CLT principle</b>	<b>Interview Findings/Questionnaire results</b>	<b>Classroom observation findings</b>	<b>Remark</b>
1.	The development of communicative competence as the major goal of language teaching in CLT	→The self-reporting mechanisms depicted that the most salient goal of language teaching in CLT should be to develop the learners’ communicative competence.	→ The instructors devoted much class time to explaining grammar rules and their students were left to be passive listeners.	→The interview findings/questionnaire results and that of the lesson observation are inconsistent.
2.	The use of context-based specific classroom strategies	→ A few EFL instructors expressed their preference for the inductive approach to teach grammar lessons.	→The instructors mainly used the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons.	→There is a discrepancy between the interview data and the lesson observation data.

### **6.5. Factors Affecting the Implementation of CLT in Grammar Lessons**

The findings from the interview ascertained the positive perception that most EFL instructors had concerning the suitability of CLT in an EFL context in Ethiopia. However, they pointed out that all the stakeholders in the education system should work cooperatively to ensure its effective implementation. In other words, according to the interview data, the EFL instructors did not subscribe to the proposition that CLT is an ESL approach, not an EFL one. More specifically, all the EFL instructors felt that CLT it is possible to implement CLT in the Ethiopian context successfully, given the extension of the necessary support from and the coordination among the stakeholders. They also emphasised the design and implementation of CL should that the socio-cultural peculiarities of the country should be considered in designing and implementing CLT-based syllabuses, one of the precepts of the socio-cultural theory (Pathan et al., 2018). The socio-cultural peculiarities articulated by the EFL instructors are discussed in the subsequent section:

The views expressed by the EFL instructors regarding the suitability of CLT in the Ethiopian context were also validated by the results of the questionnaire. This is because 92% of the instructors did not believe that CLT is unsuitable in EFL contexts (as opposed to ESL contexts). This result is consistent with that of the plethora of research coming from other EFL contexts (Nguyen, 2016; Asma & Tsenim, 2017; Ruffia & Mohammad, 2017; Wang, 2017; Ali & Samran, 2018; Hanan, 2018).

These studies concurred that if designed and implemented properly, students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders can benefit from CLT. Also, they underscored the fact that the socio-cultural context in which it is applied should be analysed before implementing it.

Regarding the advantage and, therefore, the suitability of CLT in EFL contexts, on the one hand, Hanan (2018) asserted: “In this era of practical language learning, communicative language teaching (CLT) appears to be the perfect teaching model.” On the other hand, she pointed out that the lack of intrinsic motivation among EFL students to communicate in the foreign language, the conflict between CLT and the structure of placement tests, the incompatibility of CLT with local cultures, and lack of adequate training and professional development for EFL teachers are among the major challenges in implementing CLT in EFL contexts. Hanan (2018) suggested that these challenges can be addressed if computer-mediated communication (CMC) is

put in place, analysis of learners' needs is conducted, ongoing teacher training is conducted, and teaching methods compatible with EFL contexts are planned and implemented.

Although various writers share the concerns articulated in several studies concerning the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts, they also argue that it can be applied in EFL contexts if it is designed and implemented properly (Richards, 1998; Hall, 2011). In support of this argument, Bax (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2006), and Carless (2007) recommended that context-specific variables should be considered by teachers and school administrators in their decision to execute CLT. Within the framework of the social-cultural theory, the next section presents the study's findings with respect to the practical challenges of implementing CLT in grammar lessons.

### **6.5.1. Factors Affecting the Implementation of CLT in Ethiopia**

The study found that several factors were affecting the successful implementation of CLT in an EFL context in Ethiopia. The factors highlighted the need to consider sociocultural contexts in designing and implementing CLT to ensure its successful implementation. The factors that the study has identified included teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors, and system-related factors.

#### **6.5.1.1. Teacher-related Factors**

Ghazi and Noor (2019) examined several studies conducted on the extent to which CLT was implemented in EFL contexts and synthesised the most notable challenges or factors in implementing CLT in classroom situations. Subsequently, teacher-related factors include the personal and professional attributes of teachers. Some of the most salient ones included their misconceptions of CLT, their lack of CLT knowledge, their low confidence in using CLT, the demands of using CLT, their new roles, their preferences for traditional methods, their low English proficiency, and their low income (Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

The interview data exemplified that the average weekly teaching load of the majority of the instructors (96%) was more than 18 hours. It must be noted that the private universities which were the study sites required their instructors to carry a minimum weekly teaching load of 15-18 hours. The majority of the instructors reported that their average teaching load was one of the reasons they resorted to the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. The instructors illustrated that the lecture method helped them to cover course content within a short period, and it also allowed them to take time off classes to rest physically and mentally. While the 15-18 hour

teaching load was sanctioned by the universities (hence, constituted institutional factors), the self-imposed additional teaching loads that the instructors carried also forced them to adopt the lecture method. The questionnaire results also exemplified that the teaching load was amongst the teacher-related factors that affected the implementation of communicative grammar. Thus, 84% of the instructors agreed that their weekly teaching load was a detriment to teaching grammar communicatively.

The interview data further revealed that the teaching load that several instructors had to handle per week was a self-imposed one. Highlighting this, the EFL instructors underlined that it was commonplace to observe several instructors who taught 60-80 hours per week. This implies that it is a luxury to expect such instructors to teach grammar lessons communicatively. Moreover, on a personal note, such instructors were notorious for missing classes. I was able to observe this as my capacity as the head of the department in my institution. For the last five years, the same instructors taught English courses in all the private universities, which were the study sites. It must be noted that the instructors who taught at almost every university participated in the study only at their home-base universities. One of the EFL instructors (P18) used the phrase “money mongers” to describe the unethical practices of the EFL instructors who had a weekly teaching load of 60-80 hours.

Notably, the high cost of living in the country has affected several civil servants in general and teachers in particular; however, a weekly teaching load of 60-80 hours seems to be unacceptable by any standards. The majority of the EFL instructors who participated in this study shared these concerns.

A further demonstration of the teacher-related factors affecting communicative grammar is the misconceptions that the EFL instructors held of CLT. Although the interview data portrayed four major misconceptions, two of them are relevant to teacher-related factors since they directly influenced the EFL instructors’ classroom practices.

One of the misconceptions was the consequence of conceptualising CLT as a specific teaching methodology, even though it is “a set of principles about language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom” (Richards 2006, p. 5). Whereas this did not affect the majority of the EFL instructors, a few EFL instructors reiterated that CLT is a set of specific teaching strategies that they can use readily in classroom situations. Given this misconception, the EFL

instructors reported that they regularly relied on pair and group work activities as the major teaching strategies for teaching listening and speaking skills. This entails that the EFL instructors did not use other important classroom strategies such as role-plays allowing the learners to actively participate in communicative tasks.

An additional misconception is that some EFL instructors reported that CLT aims at developing speaking skills. This misconception is the result of the association they drew between the terms “communicative” and “speaking”. There are two implications of this misconception. First, language instructors that subscribe to this assumption might emphasise listening and speaking skills, thereby ignoring reading and writing skills. Second, the instructors’ conception contradicts one of the principles of CLT which highlights the integration of the major language skills in the teaching-learning process, reflecting real communication (Littlewood, 2014).

Although local research into CLT is scanty, one of them reported inconsistent findings with that of the current study. Mihretu (2016) investigated secondary-school teachers’ beliefs and perceived difficulties in implementing CLT and concluded that teachers did not have any serious misconceptions of CLT. Despite this: “Their classroom practices are entangled with CLT implementing difficulties in their endeavor of developing students’ communicative competence in the target language (English)” (Mihretu 2016, p. 118).

Nonetheless, empirical evidence from other EFL contexts shares the misconceptions that this study identified. In this regard, Wang (2017) discovered that the participants of his study perceived CLT as a specific teaching strategy, instead of being a set of principles informing the role of students, the role of teachers, classroom strategies and teaching materials (Brown, 1994; Richards, 2020; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Wang (2017) also reported that the teachers gave due attention to speaking skills. Like the current study, the teachers founded their conceptions on the similarities they drew between the terms “communicative” and “speaking/talking” (Wang, 2017). The misconceptions might have stemmed from the teachers’ lack of exposure to the approach either through training or reading. The data from the current study indicated that the instructors (P8, P9, P13, and P15) with these misconceptions had more than ten years of teaching experience. The instructors reported that CLT did not form part of their university training, and the misconceptions might be the consequence of the lack of exposure to CLT either in the form of formal university education, or on-the-job training.

Consistent with the procedures in place to select EFL and other instructors in the private universities, the EFL instructors depicted themselves as being proficient in English. Therefore, the low proficiency in the language and confidence of using CLT did not seem to affect the teaching of grammar lessons. Additionally, my observation demonstrated that private universities have strict procedures for hiring qualified and experienced English instructors. This suggests that EFL the universities select instructors who have experience in teaching in higher education institutions and who are more proficient in English.

In response to the role of language proficiency in implementing CLT, the EFL instructors acknowledged its importance, although they did not think that this problem affected their classroom practices. This is in contrast to what other studies have reported (Ghazi & Noor, 2019). The EFL instructors reported that they did not have serious deficiencies in their command of the instructional language. However, they underlined that teachers who are proficient in English can serve as exemplars to their students. The result of the questionnaire substantiated this finding. This is because 68% of the instructors expressed their agreement in varying degrees to the statement that proficiency in the target language helps to implement CLT successfully.

Previous research has shown that several teacher-related factors affected the effective implementation of CLT. In this vein, Huang (2016), Wang (2017) as well as Ghazi and Noor (2019) asserted that it is challenging to teach English communicatively if classroom teachers have low proficiency and confidence in using CLT. They also reported that it is difficult to develop learners' communicative competence if teachers have a lack of CLT knowledge and if they have a preference for traditional methods. Raffia and Muhammad (2017) reported that the teachers' who participated in their study used their or their students' mother tongue to teach grammar lessons. They also employed the lecture method in classroom situations. Similarly, this study has shown that the majority of the EFL instructors favoured traditional methods to teach grammar lessons since the lecture method permeated almost all aspects of the instructional process. This contradicts the findings from the self-reporting mechanisms, which asserted that learner-centred, active learning methods should be used in EFL classrooms.

#### **6.5.1.2. Student-related Factors**

Student-related factors refer to the characteristics of EFL students in and outside classroom situations which shape what happens in the teaching-learning process. The major student-related factors affecting CLT include low motivation to learn the target language, perceiving that



learning the target language is a duty, assortment of learners with different levels of English proficiency, learners' preference for examination-oriented English instruction, their weak proficiency in English, inactivity in communicative activities, their fear of making mistakes and their new roles in communicative classes (Nitrenganya, 2015; Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

The interview data revealed that several student behaviours forced the instructors to abandon communicative grammar. First, the EFL students had little or no intrinsic motivation to learn and use the target language. The EFL instructors concurred that there is little or no opportunity for students to use English outside classroom situations. This is unlike the reality in ESL contexts where English is used widely in the community (Sullivan, 2009). The instructors stressed that this might discourage the EFL students from participating in classroom discussions.

The questionnaire data also confirmed that one of the challenges in CLT classrooms was the students' lacking opportunities and real environments to use English outside the classrooms. All the EFL instructors who completed the questionnaire agreed that the EFL students lacked opportunities and real environments to use English outside the classrooms. Even though the students' lacking opportunities and real environments is not necessarily a student-related factor, it is relevant in explaining the students' low motivation and their inattentiveness in English classes. As the interview and lesson observation data demonstrated, the EFL students remained inactive in grammar lessons. The lesson observation data further exemplified that some EFL students were reading course modules for other subjects, exchanging text messages, and doing assignments. Sharing this finding, Nitrenganya (2015) and Hanan (2018) demonstrated that the learners' lack of intrinsic motivation to communicate in the foreign language contributed to the dullness of the instructional process.

According to the interview data, the majority of the EFL students had traditional views of teaching. Concerning this, all the EFL instructors confirmed that their students were afraid of making mistakes, especially while working in pairs and groups, and they usually resorted to using their first language in classroom situations, where English was expected as the normal means of communication and interaction. The questionnaire data validated this finding. This is because 80% of the EFL instructors reported that the students resisted active participation in communicative activities. The evidence further demonstrated that the students used their mother tongue in communicative exercises. Similarly, Huang (2016), Majid (2016), Asma and Tsenim

(2017) as well as Ndulia and Msuya (2017) reported that EFL students often resorted to the use of their mother in pair or group work activities.

Concerning the traditional views that the EFL students held, the self-reporting mechanisms also confirmed that the EFL students had their definition of the “best” teachers. Thus, the “best” teachers can effectively lecture course content to their students. The students judged their teachers' abilities in terms of how well they can impress them. This view shaped the conceptions of the students regarding how grammar should be taught. The questionnaire result substantiated the above finding. Accordingly, 72% of EFL instructors agreed that their students had traditional views that the teacher had to lecture for much class time.

The learners' view of what constituted assessment was also another aspect of the student-related factors. The interview data depicted that since EFL students worried about course coverage and passing centrally prepared, knowledge-oriented examinations, they had no objection to their instructors' use of the lecture method, which enables course coverage. Illustrating this, one of the EFL instructors (P18) indicated that the students regularly complained about the lack of course coverage, as opposed to engaging in communicative grammar activities. This, in turn, forced many EFL teachers to adopt the lecture method to cover course content. P18's description of the traditional conceptions that the students had portrays how deep-rooted they are:

*Student beliefs of rule-based grammar learning and assessment, lack of appropriate teaching materials and activities, lack of student motivation or reluctance of students to participate actively in the teaching-learning process, students' fear of making mistakes, students' beliefs about the traditional role of teachers being changed now, classroom environment, especially the wide gap in students' communicative competence are some of the most common factors hindering the implementation of CLT in classroom situations. Many students expect their teachers to explain the rules of grammar instead of them engaging in communicative activities. The best teachers for the students are those who can lecture well. This also applies to other teachers who teach major-area subjects.*

The instructor's observation of the student-related factors, which the majority of the EFL instructors shared, have empirical support since there seems to be an underlying theory in the Ethiopian context as well as in other EFL contexts for the preference of the lecture method. Given the interview data, as stated above, one possible explanation for the students' resistance to participate in communicative grammar activities was the views they held about what constituted the teaching-learning process: the traditional view that teachers have to explain grammar rules and that students have to listen to the teacher lecturing the rules. Such a view seems to be

systemic in many EFL contexts (Adnew, 2015; Alamirew & Alazar, 2015; Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017; Noor, 2018; Wei, Lin & Litton, 2018; Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

The study also identified additional student-related factors affecting communicative grammar. One of the factors was the ability gaps among the students. The questionnaire data showed that 88% of the EFL instructors confirmed that there was a notable gap in the students' proficiency of the instructional language. This is especially so between those coming from private schools and those coming from public schools. The figure elucidates that the majority of the EFL instructors acknowledged this problem. The other student-related factor was the students' belief that English courses were offered only as requirements. This seemed to have reduced the prominence given to the instructional language and the efforts the students exerted in the instructional process. As the interview finding demonstrated, some of the EFL students were found reading lecture notes for other subjects while they were expected to do communicative grammar activities. Supporting this argument, 52% of the EFL instructors reported that their students did not pay attention to English courses and they were less motivated to do communicative grammar activities. The finding of the interview also confirmed that there were notable ability gaps among the EFL students. The majority of the EFL instructors reported that they found it difficult to engage their students in communicative grammar activities, given the apparent ability gaps among the students of the same section. This finding is consistent with the finding reported by Huang (2016:186) who highlighted that the "assortment of students of heterogeneous language skills into the same class" affected the successful implementation of CLT in EFL contexts.

In many private universities in Ethiopia, one of the challenges that EFL instructors daily face is the unbridgeable gap between the students in the classroom. Students who come from private schools have better proficiency in English as opposed to those who come from public schools, implying that those from private schools may have better chances of success in English and other courses since English is the medium of instruction.

### **6.5.1.3. Institutional Factors**

In the context of this thesis, institutional factors refer to the universities' lack of commitment to provide the necessary support to their respective staff in line with their vision, mission, and core values. Some of the most common institutional factors that the CLT literature highlighted are heavy teaching load, lack of resources and facilities, large class size, lack of administrative

support, lack of supervision, lack of on-the-job training, poor classroom conditions and shortage of teaching materials (Ghazi & Noor, 2019). Evidence from various EFL contexts confirmed that the lack of institutional commitment (Asma & Tsenim, 2017) is one of the manifestations of institutional factors that affect the effective implementation of CLT. Another aspect of institutional factors was the lack of physical facilities or equipment that facilitates the teaching-learning process (Ghazi & Noor, 2019). Large class size is probably the most commonly reported factor affecting the implementation of CLT in most EFL contexts (Soozandehfar & Adeli, 2016; Ndulia & Msuya 2017; Noor, 2018; Wei, Lin & Litton, 2018; Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

The current study identified various context-specific institutional factors. According to the interview data, the minimum teaching load that the private universities set was challenging for the majority of the EFL instructors. The EFL instructors reported that their universities required them to teach a minimum of 15-18 hours weekly. They further reported that when the universities' student population increased, they were usually expected to carry additional teaching loads. The instructors highlighted the disparity between private and public universities in terms of the minimum weekly teaching load. They confirmed that the minimum teaching load set by public universities is 12 hours. They also indicated that the number of students per section is reduced to 35 or 40 students for language courses, which suggests that the EFL instructors in public universities have institutional support to adopt communicative grammar.

The profile of the EFL instructors showed that the majority of the EFL instructors (24 out of 25) taught 18 or over 18 hours a week. They reported that the load was demanding mentally and physically. Due to the teaching overload, coupled with large class size, many EFL instructors were reportedly forced to resort to the use of the lecture method to save time. The result of the questionnaire also confirmed the above finding because 88% of the EFL instructors expressed their agreement, in varying degrees, that their weekly teaching loads discouraged them from teaching grammar lessons communicatively.

The finding of the interview also asserted that when instructors were required to teach more hours than they could, the quality of the teaching-learning process was likely to be compromised since they found mechanisms around the teaching overload.

An additional aspect of the institutional factors reported as posing challenges to implementing CLT was the lack of the necessary facilities or equipment that can aid the teaching-learning process. According to the interview data, although the EFL instructors concurred that the

textbook for *Communicative English Skills* was *communicative*, they felt that there was a need to supplement it with authentic materials such as newspapers, magazines, and audio-video recordings. The instructors further indicated that their respective universities should supply all the necessary teaching materials and equipment, implying that the equipment and materials were not at their disposal. Corroborating this, the questionnaire result illuminated that language classes were ill-equipped with required resources such as audio-visuals. This was reported by 80% of the EFL instructors. Thus, the lack of supportive teaching materials and equipment is what constituted the lack of institutional commitment, which the EFL instructors pointed out as one of the major challenges in implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons. Commenting on the lack of institutional commitment, one of the EFL instructors (P14) remarked that there was a disconnection between the academic staff and the management. The instructor highlighted that the management did not seem to understand the discouraging conditions in which that the EFL instructors had to work. He described the management's commitment level as "lip service" since they were more concerned with their student population than quality language teaching.

The above finding is shared by various studies conducted in the Ethiopian context. To that effect, Tedla and Sewasew (2016) assessed the practice and the determinant factors of active learning methods. The study confirmed that the lack of teachers' full access to resources and full administrative support were the two most common challenges that the teachers faced in implementing active learning methods in classroom situations (Tedal & Sewasew, 2016). Moges (2019) who researched the challenges of implementing student-centred approaches in higher education institutions in Ethiopia also reported a similar finding. The study found that learner-centred approaches were not implemented as expected, and it attributed its dismaying implementation to several factors, one of which was the lack of facilities and poor classroom conditions. The study also exemplified that the broader lack of administrative support contributed to the low implementation of learner-centred approaches (Moges, 2019).

The interview data also illustrated that additional institutional factors contributed to the widespread use of the lecture method, instead of CLT. The EFL instructors asserted that their respective universities made little or no effort to organise on-the-job training and professional development to build their capacity. Although the majority of the EFL instructors reported that they had better conceptions of CLT, they also suggested that their respective universities should fill the gaps in CLT knowledge and practice by organising on-the-job training on CLT and other aspects of innovative language teaching. Other local studies into the perceptions and practices of

EFL teachers concerning the implementation of active learning methods in English and other classes share this finding. The evidence from these studies demonstrated that inadequate teacher training on active learning methods and other important pedagogical aspects affected the effective implementation of active learning in English and other classes (Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2017; Moges, 2019).

In addition to the above institutional factors, the demands of course coverage and meeting assessment results' submission deadlines forced the majority of the EFL instructors to adopt the lecture method. The EFL instructors emphasised that they were required to cover course content and meet deadlines set by their respective universities to submit assessment results. They further underlined that the heads of their departments forced them to shift to the lecture method to meet the demands of their respective universities. This finding speaks to one of the student-related factors that highlighted that due to the traditional views that the EFL students held, course coverage and passing knowledge-oriented examinations were accorded prominence. Also, the interview data depicted that the management of the private universities were concerned about handling their students' complaints about course coverage, instead of facilitating the learning environment. A study conducted by Ghazi and Noor (2019) also reported that time constraint was among the serious challenges of implementing CLT since the students in EFL contexts need sufficient time to complete communicative exercises to develop their communicative English.

Although there is no consensus on the definition of "large class size", several studies have established that large class size is also one of the most common detriments to the implementation of learner-centred approaches in general and CLT in particular. Illuminating this, Ebissa and Bhavani (2017) reported that class size is one of the most recurrent challenges to implementing CLT in classroom situations. They stressed that due to large class size, classroom teachers were forced to resort to the lecture method to teach language skills and to cover course content. Mebratu and Woldemariam (2018) reported the same finding: Large class size was the most serious factor that affected the implementation of active learning methods in EFL classrooms in rural Ethiopia. Other studies reporting similar findings include Huang (2016), Asma and Tsenim (2017), Ndulia and Msuya (2017), Noor (2018) as well as Wei, Lin, and Litton (2018).

Even though research into this area in Ethiopia made passing references to class size as a challenging factor (Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018), the current study found that large class size was the most influential factor and that it had various implications in

the instructional process. The data from the profile of the EFL instructors depicted that 20 out of the 25 EFL instructors had to teach more than 40 students per section. More specifically, 13 of them had to teach 41-60 students, while 7 of them had to teach more than 60 students in one section, on average. The number of the students, in some cases, was equal to or exceeded 70 per section. In contrast, the number of students in public universities as reported by the EFL instructors was 30-40 for language classes, highlighting the difficulties that the EFL instructors in private universities were facing in teaching grammar lessons.

The questionnaire result confirmed the above finding: 92% of the EFL instructors indicated that large class size was a serious challenge to teaching grammar communicatively. An interesting finding from the interview and lesson observation that complemented the result of the questionnaire was that EFL instructors who adhered to the inductive approach or communicative grammar shared the same concern. This is because while they implemented CLT in teaching grammar lessons in classroom situations, the unmanageable number of their students did not allow them to do so as communicatively as they intended to.

The interview data exemplified that the influence of large class size was felt in various ways in teaching grammar lessons. First, the EFL instructors asserted that they were forced to adopt the lecture method because they were not able to cover course content through communicative grammar, which they described as allowing the students to use much class time. Second, the EFL instructors who adhered to communicative grammar expressed their worries that organising students to work in pairs and groups was in itself a time-taking process because of the unmanageable number of students per section, the poor classroom conditions and the lack of space to allow them to move around freely to facilitate the set-up. Third, the EFL instructors reported that planning continuous assessment, administering it, and providing feedback to students was time-taking. They indicated that this was practically impossible as a consequence of the excessive number of students per section and their weekly teaching load as well as the institutional demands of course coverage and meeting grade submission deadlines.

Although the severity and frequency of some of the factors affecting the implementation of active learning methods in general and CLT, in particular, may vary from context to context, large class size seemed to be a systemic one in most EFL contexts including Ethiopia. Local studies highlighted that large class size is the most common challenge affecting the implementation of learner-centred approaches. The adoption of low-level teaching strategies

such as the lecture method to cope with a large number of students and the demands of meeting grade submission deadlines is, thence, the option to which most classroom teachers resorted (Tedla & Sewasew, 2016; Abiy, 2017; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Moges, 2019). The current study also supports this finding since several EFL instructors had to resort to the lecture method in the face of the challenges they were facing in classroom situations, large class size being the most notable one.

#### **6.5.1.4. System-related Factors**

System-related factors include the beliefs and theories embedded in the education system of the country (Tefera, Catherine & Robyn, 2018). These beliefs and theories shape the perceptions and attitudes of those in the education sector, especially teachers and students. Recent empirical data from Ethiopia confirmed that the underlying theory of education favours the lecture method (Ebissa & Bhavani, 2017; Wondifraw, Alemayehu & Asrat, 2018; Moges, 2019). Ebissa and Bhavani (2017) argue that language classes were not interactive since there were underlying educational theories that favoured teacher-dominated teaching strategies. The findings of the above studies imply that teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the country's education system strongly believe that teachers should be the primary source of knowledge. This in turn suggests that the learners' role in the instructional process in general and classroom situations, in particular, was limited. This further suggests that it is difficult to implement the learner-centred approaches the Ministry of Education adopted to ensure that learners develop the required skills, knowledge, and attitude that prepare them for the challenges in real life (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2015; 2019).

The findings of the current study are consistent with the findings of several local and international studies. According to the interview data, the majority of the EFL instructors recognised that their students were unwilling to participate in communicative activities. This resulted in the limited achievement of course objectives. They attributed this lack of implementation to their students' strongly held views of the role of teachers and students and what constituted the instructional process. Consistent with the strongly held views of the teachers and students, this study highlighted that the lecture method was the most frequently executed teaching strategy in grammar lessons. Many of the EFL instructors shared this conception. For instance, one of the participants (P18) articulated this conception as follows: "Many students expect the teacher to explain the rules of grammar, instead of them engaged in communicative



activities. The best teachers for the students are those who can lecture well. This also applies to teachers who teach English and major-area subjects.”

The result of the questionnaire validated the EFL instructors' conception regarding the traditional views of their students. Hence, 72% of the EFL instructors reported that their students had traditional views that the teacher had to lecture for much class time. This is, therefore, an additional confirmation that the underlying theory of the country's educational system is still in favour of the lecture method. This contradicts the country's education and training policy that pronounces interactive, learner-centred approaches (FDRE, The Ministry of Education 1994; 2001; 2018)

A local study titled: “The Hidden Lacunae in the Ethiopian Higher Education Quality Imperatives: Stakeholders' Views and Commentaries” highlighted that there is “a systematic failure to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning experiences” (Tefera, Catherine & Robyn 2018, p. 75). By highlighting the underlying theory in the education system of the country, the study demonstrated the gaps between theory and practice, one of the motivations behind the current study.

The findings of the above study confirmed that the teaching-learning process is one of the areas affected by the underlying theory in the education system of the country (Tefera, Catherine & Robyn, 2018). The other aspect of the instructional process subservient to the underlying theory is the assessment of learners' performance. As the interview data portrayed, the majority of the EFL instructors employed form-based, knowledge-oriented written tests and examinations to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. The EFL instructors attributed their choice of this mode of assessment (instead of continuous assessment that the country's education policy document and their respective universities advocate) to various context-specific variables: overly crowded classrooms, the demands of course coverage, and the demands of meeting assessment submission deadlines.

Empirical evidence from other EFL contexts proved that the assessment system in many EFL classrooms is a reflection of the lecture-based teaching strategy adopted in the instructional process. In such contexts, the students and teachers favour knowledge-oriented examinations. Notably, Nuby et al. (2019) found that although the curriculum was straightforward in its adoption of CLT, knowledge-oriented examinations were predominant, implying that the teaching-learning process was also exam-oriented. The study further illustrated: “Classroom

activities are very much exam-oriented. The teachers often pointed out which lessons are important for the examination” (Nuby, et al. 2020, p. 626). The study also indicated that the glaring discrepancy between the course contents and the assessment system forced the classroom teachers and students to deviate from CLT norms and principles (Nuby, et al., 2020). It can be argued that the system-related factors seem to dictate the other factors since the system is a reflection of the general socio-cultural context in which the EFL instructors had to discharge their duties and responsibilities.

#### **6.5.1.5. Curriculum-related Factors**

The teaching materials used by the universities, the suitability of CLT in EFL contexts, the CLT-related misconceptions that EFL teachers held and the assessment modalities used in CLT constituted the most important aspects of the curriculum that determine the success or failure of a CLT-based language teaching programme (Ghazi & Noor, 2019; Nuby, et al., 2020).

Unlike the findings of other studies, that of the current study did not suggest that CLT-related factors had any serious impacts on implementing communicative grammar. One such study by Ghazi and Noor (2019) argues that CLT-related factors are the most serious difficulties of implementing CLT in the Afghan EFL contexts. The study confirmed that the low confidence of teachers in using CLT, the new teachers’ roles in CLT, and the work demands that CLT requires from EFL teachers were reportedly the major CLT-related challenges (Ghazi & Noor, 2019).

The current study confirmed that curriculum-related factors were not as serious as large class size, instructors’ conceptions of what constituted the instructional process, and teachers’ conception of how their students perceived the role of their teachers. The first aspect of the curriculum that the EFL instructors highlighted was how communicative the textbook was. The EFL instructors underlined that the textbook was communicative, and it incorporated communicative grammar activities that helped the learners to improve their academic English. The result of the questionnaire confirmed the above finding because 80% of the EFL instructors agreed that the existing textbook was suitable for CLT. Although the EFL instructors did not believe that the textbook was uncommunicative, they indicated that there was a need to supplement it with additional communicative grammar activities given the academic needs of the EFL students in higher education institutions.

Ghazi and Noor (2019) as well as Nuby et al. (2020) found that the teachers who participated in their respective studies perceived that they were the major knowledge source to their students.

They attributed this to the fact that their students had no real opportunities to use the target language outside classrooms. This finding highlights one of the debates surrounding CLT: whether it is an ESL or EFL approach. Unlike the above studies, the current study pinpointed that all the EFL instructors did not feel that CLT is an ESL approach, not an EFL approach. Contrary to this, they underlined that it is possible to implement CLT in EFL contexts such as Ethiopia with careful planning and implementation. Exemplifying this, they suggested that policy designers, curriculum experts, classroom teachers, teachers, and education institutions should work in collaboration. The result from the questionnaire showed that CLT-related factors were not serious challenges to its implementation in classroom situations. That is why 92% of the EFL instructors expressed their disagreement with the statement: “CLT is unsuitable for EFL (English as a foreign language) context as opposed to for an ESL (English as a second language) context.”

The second aspect of curriculum-related factor this study identified was the misconceptions held by the EFL instructors that CLT is a specific teaching method and that it mainly deals with speaking skills. The precepts of CLT propound that CLT is an approach or a set of principles about the goal of language teaching, the role of teachers and students as well as the types of teaching materials and activities, instead of being a specific classroom technique (Brown, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Richards, 2006). By contrast, the findings of this study illustrated that the EFL instructors felt that CLT is a teaching method that they can readily apply in classroom situations. The EFL instructors who subscribed to this conception relied mainly on pair and group work activities in classroom situations. Furthermore, they likened “communicative” to “speak” or “talk”, implying the emphasis they might place on listening and speaking skills, instead of presenting the language skills, vocabulary and grammar in integration.

Whereas the EFL instructors indicated that it is possible to apply CLT in EFL contexts, they were also cautious that the lack of real opportunities for students to use the target language was one of the challenges of implementing CLT in EFL contexts. Despite acknowledging that this factor contributed to the student’ deficient grammar, they suggested that teachers can fill the gap by exposing their students to more communicative grammar activities in classroom situations, self-study grammar books, and online resources. It must be noted that students’ exposure to a community that speaks English as a native language increases their chances of picking up the language in general and its grammar, in particular, relatively easily (Sullivan, 2009). Given this,

the EFL instructors’ lack of understanding of the importance of real opportunities for EFL students to practise the language might highlight their knowledge gap.

Unlike the current study, evidence from other EFL contexts showed that CLT-related factors posed serious challenges to teachers’ efforts to teach English communicatively. For example, Ghazi & Noor (2019, p. 1160) argued: “The major common challenge coming from CLT in EFL contexts is the lack of environment for EFL learners where the learners do not have access to communicative English as they learn the language instrumentally.” Noor (2018) as well as Wei, Lin and Litton (2018) also share the above finding and argue that EFL students have little or no access to English, especially outside classroom situations.

In summary, the study found several socio-cultural variables that posed difficulty in teaching grammar lessons communicatively in an EFL context in Ethiopia. The teacher-related factors, student-related factors, curriculum-related factors, and institutional factors are better understood in the socio-cultural context of the country. This is because the underlying theory of the country’s education system favours the use of the lecture method and that the classroom teacher, not the learner, is the centre of attention (Alamirew & Alazar, 2015; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Mihretu, 2016; Moges, 2019). Table 6.4.2 below synthesises the major factors affecting the implementation of CLT in Ethiopia in an EFL context.

<b>TABLE 6.5.1: SYNTHESIS OF THE MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLT IN ETHIOPIA IN AN EFL CONTEXT</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Factors affecting the implementation of CLT in Ethiopia in an EFL context</b>	<b>Remark/Relationships between conceptions and practice</b>
1.	<p><b>Teacher-related factors</b></p> <p><b>1.1. EFL instructors misconceptions of CLT</b></p> <p>A. Associating “communicative” with “talk” or “speaking “</p> <p>B. Conceiving CLT as a “method” instead of being as an “approach”</p> <p>C. CLT rejects grammar.</p> <p>D. CLT seen as being an easy-to-implement approach, emanating from mainly associating it with pair and group work activities.</p> <p><b>1.2. EFL instructors’ personal characteristics</b></p> <p>A. Weekly teaching loads: Instructors had a weekly teaching load of 40-60 hours or in excess thereof.</p> <p>B. Missing classes and not using class time</p>	<p>A. Emphasis on speaking skills in classroom situations</p> <p>B. Emphasis on pair and group work</p> <p>C. Explicit grammar teaching</p> <p>D. Emphasis on regularly working in pairs and pairs at the expense other classroom organisation patterns.</p> <p>A. Over-reliance on the lecture method to cover course content</p> <p>B. Overloading the students with more exercises</p>

	efficiently <b>1.3. EFL instructors' traditional views of how Teaching should be conducted</b>	A. Over-reliance on the lecture method
2.	<b>Student-related factors</b> A. Students' low intrinsic motivation due to the lack of real opportunities to use the target language outside classroom situations B. Students being afraid of making mistakes in pair and group work C. Students' traditional views of how teaching should be conducted D. Assortment of students with different ability levels in one section E. Students' conception that English courses being offered as requirements or "common" courses	A. Students' resistance to participate in communicative grammar activities B. Students resorting to their L1 C. Students expecting their instructors to provide explicit instructions of grammar D. Students with better proficiency in the target language dominating in communicative activities E. Students being inactive in classroom situations or found doing exercises for other courses
3.	<b>Institutional factors</b> A. Weekly teaching load: the EFL instructors being required to carry more teaching loads B. Lack of facilities or equipment and administrative support C. Lack of on-the-job training: imminent gaps in CLT knowledge and misconceptions of EFL instructors. D. Demands of course coverage and meeting grade submission deadlines E. Large class size: the majority of the EFL instructors being assigned to teach 41-60 students or in excess of that number of students.	A. EFL instructors resorting to the lecture method to circumvent the physical and psychological demands of their teaching loads B. Classroom conditions not being conducive to conduct interactive classes: teaching aids not made available for the EFL instructors. C. Gaps in the implementation of CLT in classroom situations D. EFL instructors resorting to the lecture method E. The EFL instructors resorting to the lecture method and highly objective assessment modalities.
4.	<b>System-related factors</b> A. The teaching-learning process being subservient to the lecture method as the underlying theory of education B. The assessment of learners' performance in grammar lessons, therefore, mirroring the underlying theory of education which favours the lecture method.	A. Classrooms being dominated by the instructors; students being impressed by teachers who could lecture "well". B. Rule-based, knowledge-oriented tests and exams being used to assess learners' performance in grammar lessons.
5.	<b>Curriculum-related factors</b>	

	<p>A. Despite describing the teaching materials as being communicative, there is a need to make them more communicative.</p> <p>B. Since English in Ethiopia is a foreign language, students have no real opportunities to use the language beyond the confines of classroom situations.</p>	<p>A. The EFL instructors according emphasis to the direct instructions of the grammar items in the textbook</p> <p>B. The EFL instructors being the major knowledge providers in classroom situations.</p>
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## 6.6.Synthesis of the Relationships between the Findings and Results from the Data Sources

The following table presents a synthesis of the findings and results of the data-gathering tools: the semi-structured interview, questionnaire, and classroom observation. The table assists in examining the relationship between the findings and the results and how they validated one another. This is in line with the mixed-method approach and the sequential exploratory design this study employed.

<b>TABLE 6.6: SYNTHESIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FINDINGS AND RESULTS FROM THE THREE DATA SOURCES</b>			
<b>Data source 1: Interview</b>	<b>Data source 2: questionnaire</b>	<b>Data source 3: classroom observation</b>	<b>Remark</b>
The goal of language teaching in CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence.	84% of the EFL instructors agreed that the development of communicative competence is the major goal of language teaching in CLT.	67% of the EFL instructors devoted much classroom time to explaining grammar rules to their students.	The result of the questionnaire supports the findings of the interview, but there is no relationship between either of them and the finding from the classroom observation.
The role of teachers in CLT classes is to facilitate student learning.	The teacher's role is to facilitate student learning.	EFL instructors were mainly authority figures.	Consistency between the finding of the self-reporting tools, which contradict the data from classroom observation
The role of learners in CLT classes is to be active participants.	The learner's role is to actively participate in communicative activities.	In most classrooms, the learners were inactive.	Consistency between the interview finding and the questionnaire result, but inconsistency with that of the classroom observation.
Jigsaw exercises, dramatisation, debating, presentations, role-plays, information-gap activities, problem-solving activities and form-based exercises being major instructional activities in CLT.	Limited evidence of the use of information-gap activities, games, jigsaw puzzles and role-plays to teach grammar lessons.	Limited evidence of the use information-gap activities, games, jigsaw puzzles and role-plays to teach grammar lessons.	The interview finding and the lesson observation data did not support each other since the major instructional activities reported in the interview were missing from the EFL instructors' classes.
The teaching materials and	Limited use of authentic	Limited use of authentic	There is no relationship

resources used in CLT should be appealing, authentic and motivating.	teaching materials	teaching materials.	between the result from the questionnaire and the findings from the classroom observation.
Grammar plays a vital role in the academic and non-academic lives of the EFL students.	80% of the EFL instructors agreed that knowledge and use of correct grammar ensures students' academic success and everyday communication.	The time allocated to grammar lessons was evidence that grammar is an indispensable part of students' academic and non-academic lives.	The finding from the interview and classroom observation and the result from the questionnaire confirmed and validated one another.
The place of grammar in CLT is not prominent.	80% of the EFL instructors agreed that CLT advocates that students should learn both the form and meaning of the target language.	The place of grammar is prominent from the time allocated to it in classroom situations.	Since grammar topics are not the organising principles in CLT, grammar is not prominent in CLT although it is presented in integration with the major language skills.
Learner-centred assessment modalities should be used in CLT.	CLT advocates the use of continuous assessment modalities	The use of non-communicative modes of assessment	The self-reporting mechanisms confirmed and validated each other, but the data from the classroom observation were not supportive of this finding.
Grammar should be taught inductively.	The use of the deductive approach	Grammar was taught deductively.	The findings from the self-reporting mechanisms were not supported by those from the classroom observation.
Socio-cultural and economic factors affected the implementation of CLT.	Large class size, weekly teaching loads, students' resistance of active participation, students' traditional favouring the lecture method, gaps in learner's language command	Large class size; teaching load; lack of resources and inconvenient classrooms; the over-reliance on the lecture method and inattentive students	The findings from the interview and the classroom observation and the result from the questionnaire confirmed and validated one another.

*Table 6.6* above assists in driving the argument about conceptions which is about what people think they know and believe and then what they do and what they know should be done, but due to circumstances, their actions are inconsistent with their beliefs. The interviews and questionnaires confirmed that the EFL instructors knew and understood CLT, but their classroom realities contradicted their conceptions.

Kember and Kwan (2000) reported that there is a positive relationship between teachers' conceptions and classroom practices. Consequently, teachers who held conceptions of teaching

that favoured the transfer of knowledge employed teacher-centred teaching strategies. In the same way, Varnava-Marouchou (2011) found that teachers who held learner-centred conceptions of teaching employed learner-centred strategies in classroom situations. However, even though teachers may have positive attitudes towards learner-centred conceptions of teaching, their classroom practices can be inconsistent with their conceptions due to several internal and external factors (Varnava-Marouchou, 2011; Adinew, 2015; Alamirew & Alazar, 2015). In light of the above findings, the majority of the EFL instructors held conceptions of CLT aligned to the CLT literature; however, they could not teach grammar lessons communicatively due to various socio-cultural and economic variables. The most notable variables included large class size, inattentive students, lack of facilities and resources, and the underlying theory of the country's education system that favours the lecture method.

### **6.7. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings of the self-reporting mechanisms and classroom observation in light of the basic research questions, CLT literature, and previous research. On the one hand, the discussion has shown that the majority of the EFL instructors had conceptions of CLT which are consistent with the CLT literature. On the other hand, the study identified various misconceptions relating to CLT, one of which was that CLT is a specific teaching method that classroom teachers can readily use to teach grammar lessons. Regarding classroom strategies for teaching grammar lessons, the study captured three strands of conception that corresponded to three groups of EFL instructors. The first group of the EFL instructors favoured the explicit teaching of grammar, while the second group of instructors favoured the implicit teaching of grammar. The third group instructors adhered to the hybrid approach. The study has also shown that the majority of the EFL instructors taught grammar lessons explicitly.

The study further demonstrated that the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and classroom practices were inconsistent. It also found several possible explanations for the lack of consistency between the EFL instructors' conceptions and their classroom practices. These were teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors, and system-related factors.



## **CHAPTER 7: SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This study set out to investigate EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in grammar lessons in Ethiopian private universities. The study employed the mixed-methods research approach, and both qualitative and quantitative data-gathering tools were employed to gather the data for the study. As part of the mixed-methods research approach, Creswell's (2009, 2012) sequential exploratory design was employed, and the data collection process was conducted in two phases. Phase I constituted the qualitative data collection, while Phase II constituted the quantitative data gathering. Accordingly, in Phase I, semi-structured interviews and classroom observation were employed to garner the qualitative data, and in Phase II, questionnaires were used to gather the quantitative data. The data sources were 25 EFL instructors teaching *Communicative English Skills* in four private universities in Ethiopia. The data garnered from the EFL instructors in the 2018/19 Academic Year were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative findings and quantitative results were discussed in light of the research questions, CLT literature, and previous research into CLT in EFL contexts.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter of the thesis, presents a synthesis of the major findings, implications for practice and recommendations arising from the findings. The major findings of the study are presented against the study's research questions:

- A. What are private universities' English language instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context?
- B. What are private universities' English language instructors' current practices of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context?
- C. What is the relationship between private universities' English language instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context and their classroom practices?
- D. What are the factors that affect the application of CLT in grammar lessons in classroom contexts?
- E. Based on the findings to the questions above, what guidelines should be employed for the effective use of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL university context?

## 7.2.Synthesis of Findings

### 7.2.1. Research question 1

*What are private universities' English language instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context?*

As a foundation to understanding the English language instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context, several aspects of CLT were drawn from the CLT literature and previous research. The major aspects that capture CLT in its entirety are, therefore, the goal of language teaching in CLT; the teacher's role in CLT classrooms; the learners' role in CLT classrooms; the activities or classroom tasks in CLT classrooms; the teaching materials and resources in CLT classrooms; the role of grammar in the academic and non-academic lives of the learners; the place for grammar in CLT and the assessment tools in CLT.

A vital aspect of CLT that constituted the EFL instructors' conception was the goal of language teaching, especially in EFL contexts. While the EFL instructors employed various terms to describe the goal of language teaching in CLT, the study confirmed that the goal of language teaching in CLT is to develop EFL learners' communicative competence which includes the ability to use the target language fluently and correctly. The most common terms the EFL instructors used to portray the goal of language teaching in CLT included *using language in communicative contexts, using language for real communication, and developing communication, interpersonal, negotiation and conflict-resolution skills*. The study further exemplified that CLT accords prominence to fluency development, while accuracy development is also evident in CLT, especially in EFL contexts where the requirement is to use English instrumentally in academic situations.

The other aspects of CLT that constituted the EFL instructors' conceptions were the roles of teachers and students. The study found that the role of teachers in CLT is to facilitate student learning. Within this bigger role, classroom teachers provide inputs to their students acting as authority figures, assess their students' performance, prepare teaching materials or supplementary exercises and participate independently in classroom discussions such as in role-plays. The EFL instructors described the teacher's role in CLT as being a facilitator, an organiser, an active participant, a coordinator, a manager, an authority figure and a motivator,. The roles that the EFL instructors reported are similar to those articulated in the CLT literature. For example, Richards (2006) emphasises that the main role of the teacher in CLT-based classes

is to facilitate student learning. In the same, Fan (2016) underlines that the teacher in communicative classes creates conducive situations for the students and engages them in meaningful communication. This is the facilitative role of the teacher. Breen and Candlin in Richards and Rodgers (2001) indicate that the teacher has multiple roles in communicative classrooms: active needs analyst, counsellor, and group-process manager.

Regarding the role of learners in CLT, the self-reporting mechanisms demonstrated that the learners play varied roles in classroom situations, depending on the changing roles of classroom teachers and the nature of communicative exercises they do. The EFL instructors, therefore, described comprehensively the roles of the student as being autonomous, active and independent participants, which further entail that they are responsible learners, active contributors, active citizens, independent human beings, active communicators and independent thinkers.

The conceptions of the EFL instructors pertaining to the teachers' and learners' roles are congruent with the literature. Accordingly, there is a consensus among various writers that the teacher's role is to facilitate student learning, while that of the learner is to participate actively in classroom situations and make decisions about his or her learning independently (Harmer, 1991; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016).

The EFL instructors' conception of the activities or classroom tasks in CLT was one of the items that elicited responses which are consistent with the CLT literature. The interview data revealed that role-plays, debating, dramatisation, presentation, jigsaw exercises, information-gap activities, problem-solving activities and form-based exercises are the most common types of classroom tasks that the classroom teacher can use to develop the EFL learners' communicative competence. The questionnaire result corroborated the above finding. The self-reporting mechanisms helped to capture the EFL instructors' conception of the types of classroom tasks in CLT which are in line with the literature because language theorists and researchers argue that it is possible to create meaningful communicative contexts in classroom situations using the above forms of communicative tasks (Ellis, 2003; Fan, 2016).

Concerning the teaching materials and resources used in CLT classrooms, several scholars argue that they should be authentic, interactive, engaging and appealing (Richards, 2006; Littlewood, 2014). Consistent with this, the study found two levels of description. The first level of description characterised the nature of the instructional materials and resources in CLT, while the second level outlined the most common instructional materials and resources in CLT.

Accordingly, the EFL instructors reported that the instructional materials and resources in CLT should be authentic, interactive, appealing, engaging and addressing students' communicative needs. They also outlined that teachers and students should exploit such authentic materials as pictures, magazines, newspapers and stories as well as resources such as cell phones, radio and video recordings.

The current study has shown that the EFL instructors had the same conception regarding the role that grammar should play in EFL students' academic and non-academic lives. In this vein, the development of both accuracy and fluency is the most notable advantage that students can get in school contexts due to learning grammar lessons in communicative contexts. The CLT literature supports this view and further underlines that depending on the needs of students, either fluency development or accuracy development or both should be the aim of grammar lessons in EFL contexts (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Littlewood, 2014; Richards, 2020). The finding implies that accuracy and fluency development is among the determinants of EFL learners' academic success since English is the instructional medium in higher education institutions in Ethiopia.

The study has further shown that in addition to helping the EFL learners succeed academically, grammar plays an indispensable role in their lives beyond the confines of the classroom. Hence, the knowledge and correct use of grammar helps the EFL students to engage in meaningful communications both in formal and informal situations. This is more so in business and employment settings. Highlighting the importance of the knowledge and correct use of grammar, the EFL instructors argued that language tests have become one of the mechanisms through which employers select their potential employees. This suggests that the EFL learners should develop their command of the language skills in general and grammar in particular. The study has also demonstrated that since grammar mainly facilitates communication in informal contexts, the EFL learners and teachers should focus on communicative activities that help the EFL learners to function in real-life situations meaningfully.

The findings above imply that there was a consensus among the EFL instructors regarding the role of grammar in the academic and non-academic lives of their students. However, there was a notable difference among them in their conceptions of how grammar should be taught. With respect to this, the study found three strands of conception. The first group of the EFL instructors adhered to the view that grammar should be taught explicitly so that EFL learners' grammar deficiencies can be addressed accordingly. The second group of the EFL instructors subscribed

to the view that grammar should be taught implicitly so that EFL learners will be able to use the grammar of the target language in meaningful communicative contexts. The third group of the EFL instructors held the view that grammar should be taught both explicitly and implicitly so that EFL learners are exposed to both the form and meaning of the grammar of the target language. This finding contributes to our understanding of the debate surrounding whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly or both explicitly and implicitly.

The place for grammar in CLT was one of the aspects of CLT which was used to examine the EFL instructors' conceptions. The study has found two contrasting conceptions regarding the place for grammar in CLT.

The first conception highlighted that grammar is integral to CLT even though grammar topics are not the organising units in communicative syllabuses and exercises. The EFL instructors who adhered to this conception underlined that CLT recognises the role of grammar in the academic and non-academic lives of EFL students and presents it in integration with other language skills. This implies that grammar is recognised in CLT and treated in context, instead of being an isolated topic treated in traditional grammar books. The views of the EFL instructors are in accord with what various writers articulated should be done in communicative classes: that grammar and the major language skills should be presented and practised contextually, and that grammar should be integrated with the major language skills to mirror real-life communication (Littlewood, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015; Richards, 2020).

The second conception accords a peripheral place for grammar in CLT. A possible explanation for this might be the EFL instructors' misconception of how communicative teaching materials are designed or prepared. Since grammar items are not the topics around which textbook chapters and sections are organised (Richards, 2006), they seemed to have formed the conception that grammar is not accorded prominence in communicative syllabuses. Another possible explanation for this misconception was that the textbook for *Communicative English Skills* treated grammar lessons functionally; that is, grammatical topics were not the organising principles of the exercises in the textbook. The textbook organised grammar lessons under functional topics such as "Talking about the Future", "Talking about the Past" and "Talking about the Present" are used to organise grammar items, in stead of "Future tenses", "Past tenses" and "Present tenses" respectively. Overall, the attention given to grammar lessons is evident

from the variety of communicative grammar exercises in the textbook, which encourage the integrated presentation and practice of language skills, vocabulary and grammar.

The last aspect of CLT which the study examined was the EFL instructors' conception of the assessment modalities that should be used to assess EFL students' performance in grammar lessons. Notably, regardless of whether the EFL instructors implemented continuous assessment tools, all of them argued in favour of continuous assessment or assessment for learning. There are two possible explanations for this. First, it is because it is a learner-centred approach like CLT which allows the classroom teacher to identify the weaknesses and strengths in the instructional process and take remedial actions. Second, their respective universities adopted continuous assessment as their main tool to assess their students' performance in all subjects.

While the study provided insight into the conceptions, it also highlighted four CLT-related misconceptions. Two of the misconceptions are pertinent to the goal of language teaching, and they seemed to have arisen from the term "communicative" in *Communicative Language Teaching*. The remaining two misconceptions may be accounted for by the lack of understanding or knowledge of the differences between the terms "approach" and "method/methodology". In the CLT literature, the term "approach" refers to a set of principles informing the theories of language learning and teaching, the goal of language teaching, the design of a syllabus, the role of teachers and learners, the types of teaching materials, resources and instructional activities and the modes of assessment, while the word "method" refers to a combination of prescribed techniques that teachers can use in classroom situations (Richards, 2020).

In light of the above finding, the first misconception was that CLT is aimed at developing speaking skills (likening "communicative" to "speaking"). The instructors who reported that CLT is aimed at developing speaking skills underlined that since students' speaking skills are low, CLT is an appropriate means to help them improve their speaking skills. Although it is not wrong to assume that CLT can improve students' speaking skills, their view that the speaking skills should be taught prominently emanated from their misconception that CLT mainly deals with teaching listening and speaking skills at the expense of the other skills (reading and writing). This is inconsistent with the integrated presentation and practice of the major language skills (Harmer, 2007; Littlewood, 2014).

The second misconception is that because grammar topics are not the organising units in CLT-based syllabuses, the EFL instructors felt that the prominence of grammar items is reduced in

CLT-based syllabuses even though they did not subscribe to the proposition that CLT abandons grammar altogether. This was due to the lack of understanding that whereas structures are not the organising units of course content, they can be emphasised in CLT-based syllabuses, given the specific grammar needs of the EFL students.

The third misconception was that CLT is a language teaching method; that is, it is a specific classroom strategy in the form of pair and group work. The EFL instructors who held this view reiterated that CLT is a set of specific teaching strategies that they can implement readily in classroom situations. In line with this misconception, these instructors reported that they mainly relied on pair and group work activities as their major teaching strategies to teach listening and speaking skills.

The fourth misconception that the current study found was that CLT is an easier teaching methodology [approach] since it reduces the teacher's work load and accords more responsibility to the learners. While it is true that learner-centred approaches assume that the learners should be more responsible for their own learning, it does not suggest that the teacher's role is significantly reduced (Tedla & Sewasew, 2016). Contrary to what the EFL instructors reported, the teacher's responsibility in learner-centred approaches, including CLT, is far from easy since the teacher is responsible for several activities that take place in and outside classroom situations: planning lessons, delivering lessons, maintaining discipline, counselling students, planning and administering assessment as well as looking for or designing teaching materials and resources (Tedla & Sewasew, 2016). The EFL instructors' view might be a consequence of another misconception that if an approach is learner-centred, it readily reduces the workload of the teacher. This implies that in CLT-based syllabuses, the teachers' role of being a facilitator does not involve much in the way of providing input to the learners, facilitating pair and group work, assessing students' work, preparing and/or looking for appropriate teaching materials, which are all the roles of the teacher (Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016).

### **7.2.2. Research question 2**

*What are private universities' English language instructors' current practices of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context?*

Based on the classroom observation data, the instructors' classroom practices were categorised into three groups. The first group comprised the EFL instructors who adhered to non-communicative grammar (the form-focused grammar lessons or the deductive approach). The

majority of the EFL instructors fell into this group (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P15, P16, and P18). The second group consisted of the EFL instructors that adhered to the communicative grammar of the inductive approach. This group included three EFL instructors (P5, P6, and P9). The third group constituted the EFL instructors who combined the inductive and deductive approaches to teaching grammar lessons. This also included three EFL instructors (P13, P14, and P17).

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the majority of the EFL instructors employed the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons. The findings from the classroom observation are consistent with the literature's description of the deductive approach. The deductive approach involves teaching abstract rules and verifying them or their correctness with the help of some examples (Dekeyser & Prieto, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Thus, the classroom observation data showed that the EFL instructors devoted much class time to explain grammatical rules to their students. This practice placed them at the centre of attention. The EFL learners were mainly listeners and note-takers. Contrary to the facilitative roles highlighted in the CLT literature (Harmer 1991; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016), the instructors played the role of being an authority figure for much class time, whereas the students remained passive listeners for much class time. The students participated actively when they did sentence-level, form-based exercises in pairs, and compared their answers to the exercises. Overall, one of the most telling aspects of the EFL instructors' classroom practices in this group was that teacher-to-student interaction pattern was predominant. This entails that the teacher talking time was comparatively higher than the student talking time.

The study further showed that a few EFL instructors (16% of the EFL instructors whose classrooms were observed) taught grammar lessons communicatively. The strategies that they employed in the classrooms are illustrative of this reality. The EFL instructors' role in the teaching-learning was one of being a facilitator to student learning. This involved providing inputs to students on the grammar topic; it also involved facilitating pair and group work; their exercises had communicative intents: role-plays, information-gap activities, guessing games and story-telling, and writing; they also participated independently in the communicative activities, thereby acting as role-models to their students.

The study also demonstrated that the EFL students also had varied roles corresponding to the varying roles of their instructors and the nature of the communicative activities that they had to



do. Hence, the students were playing the roles of being attentive listeners, role-players, authority figures, assessors and decision-makers. The classroom organisation patterns were mainly student-to-student although teacher-to-student-and student-to-teacher were also used observed sparingly. The student-to-student interaction pattern which was evident in the grammar lessons mirrored the learner-centred approaches that the EFL instructors reported. The specific classroom descriptions are consistent with the characteristics of the inductive approach to teaching grammar: grammar should be presented in context to help learners discover its rules by themselves (Harmer 1991; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Richards, 2006; Fan, 2016).

The findings from the classroom observation depicted that the EFL instructors who adhered to communicative grammar relied on the textbook and other teaching aids. As the findings from the interview confirmed even though the exercises combined structural and communicative tasks, the exercises were mainly communicative by nature, and the EFL instructors seemed to have exploited them to their students' advantage. Besides, the instructors introduced additional communicative exercises that had communicative intent: story-telling; sequencing events in a story; creating scenarios to help people in distress; imagining what was happening outside classroom situations, and related scenario-based activities.

The textbook, visual aids such as pictures, supplementary exercises from other sources, and cell phones were the teaching materials and resources which the EFL instructors used. This study did not find the creative use of cell phones in the teaching-learning process; however, some EFL instructors allowed their students to use them since the majority of the EFL students stored the soft copy of the textbook on their cell phones. The EFL instructors also allowed their students to check word meanings and access online resources at their disposal concerning the grammar lessons being taught. The EFL instructors monitored the students' use of cell phones to prevent them from using them for non-educational purposes. Another interesting observation was that the cell phones that some students were carrying were not smart, so these students had to rely on the hard copy of the textbook and work in collaboration with their classmates. Above all, the EFL instructors and students used themselves as vital resources in the instructional process, given the flexible roles and the variety of exercises they did in classroom situations. This supports the view that there is no limit to the types of resources that communicative language teachers can use to teach the target language (Richards, 2006).

As stated above, the research found that there is no limit to the teaching materials and resources that teachers can use in communicative classes provided that they assist in creating meaningful communicative contexts for learners. This finding is consistent with what the CLT literature advocates regarding the nature of teaching materials and resources that should be used in CLT classes: they should help language learners to engage in meaningful communication or ensure the development of learners' communicative competence (Richards, 2001; 2006; Littlewood, 2014; 2020) Teachers can, therefore, use textbooks, cell phones, real objects, TV and other audio-visuals. It emerged, however, that the majority of the EFL Instructors relied on the textbook as the main resource, particularly for exercises related to real-life contexts. This is especially telling even though they had to adhere to the prescribed textbook, the teachers were free to exploit other technological resources at their disposal, without compromising course objectives. This study, thus, highlighted that even though the EFL instructors reported that educational resources were scarce, the majority of them did not seem to exploit those at their disposal.

Another illuminating finding relating to educational resources was that even though Ethiopia is a developing country with technological challenges (Alemu, 2017), learners and teachers were experimenting with mobile learning technologies in the classroom. While the teachers reported that they used cell phones to provide the soft copy of the textbook and as reference for difficult vocabulary, it seems that mobile devices can present an opportunity for integrating language skills or bringing in the authentic world as they can help learners to take pictures and discuss them in class.

The study found that three EFL instructors (16%) used the hybrid approach to teach grammar lessons. The EFL instructors attempted to strike a balance between structural and communicative grammar exercises. The amount of time that the EFL instructors in this group allocated to the exercises is suggestive of the hybrid approach they adopted. Hence, their classrooms exhibited a combination of the characteristics of the deductive and inductive approaches to teaching grammar lessons. The findings from the classroom observation confirmed that the instructors explained grammar rules to their students. This stemmed from their conception that their students had limited knowledge and correct use of the grammar. They also engaged their students in communicative grammar exercises. This also emanated from their conception that their students should get opportunities to use the target language grammar in communicative contexts.

The findings further revealed that the EFL instructors who adhered to the hybrid approach played various roles in the teaching-learning process. They were authority figures when they explained the grammar rules to their students. They were facilitators to student learning when they organised their students to work cooperatively. They were assessors when they provided feedback on their students' work and corrected their students' grammar errors. They were independent participants when they participated in the communicative exercises and served as role-models to their students. The roles of their students were also varied with their varying roles. Hence, the students were active listeners, note-takers, active participants, assessors, input providers, and role-players.

The EFL instructors mainly used the textbook for the communicative grammar activities and grammar books for supplementary form-based grammar exercises. The classroom observation data displayed that the EFL instructors and the students exploited themselves as instructional resources in the grammar lessons. Their patterns of organisation mirrored the approaches they employed to teach grammar lessons. Hence, on the one hand, they predominantly used teacher-to-student interaction when they explained the rules of grammar to their students. On the other hand, they predominantly allowed student-to-student interaction when they organised their students to work cooperatively to do the form-based and communicatively-oriented grammar activities. They used student-to-teacher interaction sparingly when they allowed their students to ask and answer questions. Overall, the EFL instructors in this group struck a balance between the teacher-talking time and the student-talking time.

The results of this investigation showed that the assessment modalities that the EFL instructors used to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons were in line with the classroom strategies they adopted to teach grammar lessons. Consequently, the EFL instructors who adopted non-communicative grammar employed form-based assessment modalities to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons: sentence-level rule-based tests. The majority of these tests were objective by nature: multiple-choice, matching, and gap-fill exercises. The second group of the EFL instructors who implemented learner-centred approaches employed informal assessment strategies to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons: meaning-focused grammar exercises/identifying the meanings and functions of grammar items, problem-solving activities, information-gap activities, presentation, and form-focused exercises. This seems a step in the right direction, given the learner-centred approach in general and CLT in particular articulated in Ethiopia's education and training policy (FDRE, The Ministry of

Education, 1994; 2001; 2018; 2019). The last group of the EFL instructors who adhered to the hybrid approach combined structural and communicative activities to assess their students' grammar performance: sentence-level form-based items, role-plays, and individual presentations.

The CLT-related conceptions of the EFL instructors and their classroom practices highlighted one of the most recurring debates in language teaching: the accuracy-fluency debate. To that effect, the first group of instructors, who constituted the majority, emphasised accuracy development, giving more emphasis on the explicit teaching of grammar. The second group of the EFL instructors, who constituted the minority, aimed for fluency development. They placed more emphasis on engaging their students in communication-oriented activities. The third group of EFL instructors aimed for both accuracy and fluency development. Not only did they provide explicit instructions on the grammar of the target language, but they also facilitated pair and group work activities in which their students participated actively.

### **7.2.3. Research question 3**

*What is the relationship between private universities' English language instructors' conceptions of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context and their classroom practices?*

Examined in light of the CLT literature, the findings of the study have demonstrated that there were more inconsistencies than there were consistencies between the EFL instructors' conceptions and their classroom practices. While it applied to a few EFL instructors, one of the consistencies that the study found was between their conceptions of the development of communicative competence as the major goal of language teaching in CLT and their classroom practices. Thus, according to the interview data, the instructors reported that the main goal of language teaching in CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence. This view of the EFL instructors was mirrored through their classroom practices since they involved their students in communicative grammar activities. The roles of their students were varied: as individual participants, role-players, feedback providers, decision-makers and problem solvers. The roles of the instructors were also as varied, including being input providers, independent participants, organisers and motivators. The grammar exercises they used were mainly communicative: games, role-plays, information-gap activities, problem-solving exercises, and others. The varied roles of the EFL instructors and students as well as the types of instructional activities that the

EFL instructors used to teach grammar lessons were consistent with the precepts of CLT (Fan, 2016; Richards, 2020).

While the overuse of the deductive approach is not consistent with the CLT literature that advocates teaching grammar lessons in communicative contexts (Fan, 2016; Richards, 2020), the second consistency between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices was related to the EFL instructors who held the view that grammar should be taught explicitly and who did so. This applied to approximately half of the EFL instructors (8 out of 18 whose grammar lessons were observed). The findings from the classroom observation showed that they mainly employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. This is because they allocated much of their class time to explain grammar rules and then telling their students to do sentence level structural activities.

The interview data exemplified that a few of the EFL instructors (3 out of 18 whose classrooms were observed) adhered to the hybrid approach. The findings from the classroom observation proved that the EFL instructors combined the deductive and inductive approaches to teaching grammar lessons. This constituted the third consistency between the EFL instructors' conceptions and their classroom practices. As part of the hybrid approach, they explained grammar rules where they thought it was necessary and they also engaged their students in communicative exercises. Also, on the one hand, the EFL instructors varied their role, including being authority figures, facilitators, and independent participants. On the other hand, their students played the roles of being attentive listeners, note-takers, active participants, and assessors.

The fourth consistency was between the EFL instructors' conceptions of non-continuous assessment modalities and their classroom practices. Accordingly, the data from the self-reporting mechanisms indicated that the majority of the EFL instructors (13 out of 18) expressed their preference for formal, written tests and examinations to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. The post-classroom observation sessions and the records of the instructors depicted that they relied more on objective sentence-level multiple-choice, matching and gap-fill exercises tests and examinations to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons. This is inconsistent with the learner-centred assessment methods that CLT advocates (Richards, 2006).

As the finding from the interview revealed, a few EFL instructors (16%) expressed the view that continuous assessment method should be used to assess the EFL learners' performance in grammar lessons. The finding from the classroom observation corroborated this finding since the EFL instructors used informal assessment modalities such as pair and group work and individual presentations to assess their students' performance in grammar lessons.

Additional evidence of the consistency between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices was that a few instructors (16%) EFL reported that they would combine formal and informal assessment methods to assess their learners' grammar performance. Their classroom practices affirmed the above finding: the EFL instructors combined form-based written exercises and informal assessment modalities such as pair and group activities to assess their students' grammar performance.

The consistencies between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices should be understood by taking into account the contexts in which they were working. As discussed above, some of these consistencies are not in line with the tenets of CLT. For example, the close to half of the interviewed instructors reported that they would rely on the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons, and they did so in classroom situations. As the findings from the study asserted, these instructors were forced to adopt this method due to the context-specific factors surrounding their teaching environment: large class size, the demands of meeting deadlines, and the demands of course coverage, among others. However, given their positive perception of the use of the inductive approach, their conceptions and classroom practices were inconsistent. The consistency mirroring CLT was pertinent to a few EFL instructors who, through the self-reporting mechanisms, expressed their preference for communicative grammar, and who taught grammar lessons communicatively.

The study also found inconsistencies between the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT and their classroom practices. First, the self-reporting mechanisms highlighted that the major goal of language teaching in CLT should be to develop learners' communicative competence. Nevertheless, the lesson observation data showed practices that were contrary to the instructors' conceptions. Twelve out of the eighteen EFL instructors' classroom devoted much class time to explain the grammar rules for their students. It is very unlikely to develop communicative competence when learners are left to be passive listeners in the instructional process.

As part of the developing learners' communicative competence, over one-fourth of the instructors (that is, 4 out of the 18 EFL instructors who took part in the study and 4 out of the 7 instructors who favoured the inductive approach) indicated that grammar lessons should be taught in context. They were among the EFL instructors who favoured the inductive approach. The specific classroom strategies they suggested they would use in classroom situations were typical of the inductive approach: creating meaningful contexts for their students to use the language, organising their students in pairs or groups, using authentic materials such as newspapers and magazines, using teaching aids such as pictures and audio-video equipment in grammar lessons. This finding implies that by engaging students in such meaningful activities using such teaching materials, it is possible to encourage them to implicitly work out or discover the rules of the language or grammar. This finding is consistent with the characteristics of the inductive approach that Larsen-Freeman (2015, p. 5) highlighted: "A discovery learning approach would favour induction, with the added benefit that students learn how to figure out the rules on their own." However, the findings from the classroom observation revealed that these instructors mainly relied on the deductive approach to teach grammar lessons. They allocated much time to explaining grammar rules to their students, and they instructed their students to do sentence-level structural activities. This rather contradictory finding was due to large class size, EFL learners' resistance to participate in communicative tasks as well as the institutional demands of course coverage, and meeting grade submission deadlines.

#### **7.2.4. Research question 4**

*What are the factors that affect the applications of CLT in grammar lessons in classroom contexts?*

The current study identified five major factors affecting the implementation of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context in Ethiopia: teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors and system-related factors. They are discussed below in no particular order.

The teacher-related factors manifested themselves through the EFL instructors' strongly-held beliefs or conceptions, personal characteristics, and the socio-cultural contexts in which they were working. One of these characteristics is the misconceptions that surfaced during the interview. As discussed under *Research Question 1*, the study found four CLT-related misconceptions, the most relevant being conceptualising CLT as a specific classroom strategy,

instead of being as an approach. This finding contradicts with the conception of CLT in the CLT literature. Accordingly, the literature clearly indicates that CLT is a set of principles informing how the teaching-learning should be conducted, including an array of aspects: the role of the teacher, the role of the learners, the types of teaching materials and resources used in classroom situations and the types of instructional activities (Richards, 2020). The interview and classroom observation data further demonstrated that pair and group work were the most commonly used classroom organisation patterns among these instructors. The implication of this is twofold: first, the EFL instructors conceived CLT as a teaching method in the form of pair and group work which can be readily applied in classroom situations. Second, other important classroom strategies and classroom organisation patterns were sacrificed in classroom situations.

The second misconception identified by this study was that the EFL instructors drew an association between the terms “communicative” and “speaking”. This is inconsistent with the holistic nature of CLT: that it integrates the major language skills and presents them in meaningful contexts (Ellis, 2003; Richards, 2006). There are two implications of this: first, the EFL instructors might spend much of their class time on teaching speaking and probably listening skills; second, other major language skills such as reading and writing, including vocabulary and grammar might be forsaken in the teaching-learning process.

A third teacher-related characteristic that the study found was the self-imposed teaching load that they had to carry per week. The study found that the instructors had a weekly teaching load of 60-80 hours, which was described by other EFL instructors as being an unprofessional and unethical practice. The phrase used by one of the EFL instructors (money-mongers) captured the unprofessional and unethical practices that the study identified. Hence, the EFL instructors’ lack of commitment was among the teacher-related factors that affected the implementation of CLT in an EFL context in Ethiopia.

Student-related factors were also among the major factors that forced the EFL instructors to adopt the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. The major characteristic of EFL students reported by the EFL instructors included the students’ low-level motivation to learn English (as there are no real environments outside the classroom situation to use the target language). Additional students’ characteristics included the traditional belief that they held that the teacher had to lecture for much class time. Because of this conception, many students resisted active participation in communicative activities, were afraid of making mistakes, and resorted to using



their first language in grammar lessons. The teacher-centred conceptions held by the EFL students placed the EFL instructors at the centre of attention and they predominantly employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. This finding is comparable to the findings of previous research in Ethiopia into the challenges of implementing active learning methods in language and other classrooms (Adinew, 2015; Mihretu, 2016; Ebiessa & Bhavani, 2017).

There are additional student characteristics that the study identified. One of them was the ability gaps among the EFL students, which reportedly created challenges for classroom teachers to implement learner-centred approaches in teaching grammar lessons. The EFL students' perception that English language courses are offered as requirements reportedly reduced the attention and time they devoted to the courses and the efforts they had to exert in classroom situations. The interview finding showed that since the students had little or no real opportunities to use English beyond the confines of classrooms, they considered that the English courses were offered merely as requirements in higher education institutions. This suggests that they were less motivated to learn the courses in general and participate in communicative grammar activities in particular.

Institutional factors were the third major challenge that the current study found as affecting the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The most common institutional factor that the study participants reiterated was large class size. The results from the questionnaire revealed that more than half of the EFL instructors who took part in the current study were assigned to teach 41-60 students, while one-third of them reported that they were assigned to teach over 60 students per section. The findings of the classroom observation confirmed that large class size was a source of suffocation in class for both the students and instructors alike, given the lack of ventilation, the poorly-built seats, and the size of the rooms. One of the EFL instructors who had several years of teaching experience in public universities accentuated how serious the problem was by drawing comparisons between private and public universities in terms of the number of students per section in language classes. He indicated that the number of students in language classes in public universities was 30-40, unlike that of private universities. He further underlined that this provision applied mainly to language classes, showing the special attention given to developing the communicative skills of university students. Large class size is also one of the most commonly reported challenges in implementing learner-centered methods, as various local and international studies confirmed (Tedla & Sewasew, 2016; Wei, Lin & Litton, 2018; Ghazi & Noor, 2019; Moges, 2019).

More relevant institutional factors evident from the findings of this study included the institutional demands that the EFL instructors had to meet. These included course coverage and meeting grade submission deadlines. The findings further established that the EFL instructors worked in institutional environments where the necessary resources and equipment were in short supply. Moreover, the EFL instructors reported that although their respective universities knew the gaps in implementing learner-centred approaches, they made little or no effort to organise on-the-job training to fill these gaps. The majority of the EFL instructors underlined that their respective universities' lack of commitment was responsible for most of the institutional problems reported by this study.

The findings of the study demonstrated that system-related factors (one of the factors that the study identified) had implications for the other major factors discussed above. This is because the other factors are better understood in the socio-cultural setting in which the education and training policy of the country is implemented. The current study found that the lecture method was the most dominant strategy that the majority of the EFL instructors employed to teach grammar lessons in private universities. The widespread implementation of the lecture method is subservient to the underlying theory of education in the country which is founded on teacher-centred conceptions of teaching (Mihretu, 2016; Tedla & Sewasew, 2016; Moges, 2019).

Curriculum-related factors constituted the fifth major challenge that forced the EFL instructors to adopt non-communicative grammar. The curriculum-related factors included the need to make the textbook more communicative even though the interview data revealed that the textbook was communicative. An integral part of the curriculum-related factors constituted CLT-related challenges. The interview data highlighted two CLT-related challenges. First, the EFL students did not have real opportunities to use the target language outside classroom situations. Despite this, however, the majority of the EFL instructors did not feel that CLT is an ESL, not an EFL approach. Second, the EFL instructors had various CLT-related misconceptions: that CLT is a specific teaching method in the form of pair and group work, and that CLT emphasises speaking skills as a consequence of the association the EFL instructors drew between the terms “communicative” and “speaking”.

The following figure captures a summary of the major findings of the study: EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT in terms of the goal of language teaching, role of the learner, role of the teacher, role of grammar, instructional activities, teaching materials, assessment and CLT-related

misconceptions; it also highlights the corresponding practices in classroom situations at least implicitly.



**FIGURE 7.2: SYNTHESSES OF MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### 7.3. Significance of the Study

A considerable amount of literature has been published on CLT, especially in other EFL contexts. Researchers in Ethiopia have shown an increased interest in learner-centred approaches, subsequent to the introduction of the education and training policy that stipulated learner-centred approaches (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2015; 2018). Of relevance to the current study are the studies that examined the implementation of CLT. Recent evidence shows that there are some studies on students' and teachers' attitudes to CLT and factors affecting its implementation in classroom situations. The most notable ones are Ebissa (2014), Mihretu (2016) as well as Ebissa and Bhavani (2017). However, the research in Ethiopia to date has tended to focus exclusively on public higher education institutions, highlighting a dearth of research into the practices in private higher education institutions.

Empirical evidence further suggests that private higher education institutions are better disposed to rendering quality services to their customers (mainly students) by supplying the required

resources and extending the necessary support. This is in contrast to the under-resourced public universities which face several challenges in meeting the demands of their customers (Tekle, 2017). Contrary to the positive picture illuminating private schools and higher education institutions, our understanding of the practices in private higher education institutions is still incomplete. Hence, the rationale behind initiating this study was to fill this gap in our understanding of how EFL instructors in private universities conceived and applied CLT in teaching grammar lessons. Further, while much of the research up to now has treated the major language skills in a single study, the current study focused on grammar and examined EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching it.

In light of the rationale behind conducting this study, the present study can make several noteworthy contributions to various stakeholders. First, this work contributes to the existing knowledge of CLT by providing empirical evidence from Ethiopia. This is mainly beneficial for EFL instructors working in private as well as public higher education institutions. Its findings might help them to examine their conceptions and practices and align them with the country's education and training policy and university-wide learner-centred strategies. Second, this reflection may have a direct impact on their students because teachers play instrumental roles in shaping their students' lives. Third, the study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the gaps between policy and practice. Hence, curriculum designers and textbook writers may benefit from the empirically justified recommendations of the study and fill the gaps between policy and practice. Fourth, the findings of the study enhance private university administrators' understanding of the practices in their respective institutions. This can assist them to base the measures they may take on research findings. Fifth, this research has brought to light many questions in need of further investigation. Thus, it will serve as a base for future studies.

### **7.3.1. Methodological Contributions of the Study**

This study supports the notion of triangulation where self-reporting can be validated through observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2012). The study found that the self-reporting mechanisms (the interview and questionnaire) confirmed and validated each other. For that reason, the interview findings were supported by the questionnaire results concerning the EFL instructors' conceptions of the goal of language in CLT, the role of the teacher, the role of the learners, and the learner-centred orientation of CLT. Besides, the conceptions that the EFL instructors held regarding the challenges of implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons

were confirmed by the findings from the classroom observation: large class, inattentive students, the lack of instructional resources, and ill-equipped facilities. Even though the EFL instructors had positive perceptions of CLT, they reported in the interview that they did not implement it in classroom situations due to the above factors. The same finding was obtained from the classroom observation.

### **7.3.2. Theoretical Contributions of the Study: Guidelines for Implementing CLT in Grammar Lessons in EFL Contexts**

The guidelines are presented in light of the major factors identified as affecting the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in an EFL context in Ethiopia.

- **Teacher-related factors: Practicing Personal reflections and institutional-level strategies**

The teacher-related factors that the study identified refer to teachers' personal characteristics (unethical practices like missing classes and carrying a weekly teaching load of more than 40 hours), the misconceptions they had regarding CLT, and traditional views about how teaching should be conducted.

- On the one hand, the EFL instructors should examine their personal practices and plan reflection sessions for themselves where they can critically examine their weaknesses and strengths and align them with institutional objectives.

- On the other hand, the respective universities should implement workable supervision mechanisms which identify and rectify the unethical practices of the EFL instructors.

- The universities should organise experience-sharing forum and on-the-job training to address EFL instructors' CLT-related misconceptions and traditional views about teaching.

- **Student-related factors: classroom-real life nexus**

The student-related factors which were found by the study are the lack of intrinsic motivation to learn the target language, being afraid of making mistakes, resisting participation in communicative activities, using their mother tongue in classroom discussions, and traditional views about teaching.

•The students' lack of intrinsic motivation arises from the lack of real opportunities to use English outside classroom contexts; however, the success of students in academic contexts requires a good mastery of English. In addition, upon graduation students with good command of English have better employment opportunities. Hence, EFL instructors and the respective universities should find ways through which the students can see the link between classroom instruction and real life. Such classroom-real life nexus is impetus to motivate the students to take English courses seriously, participate in communicative activities without being afraid of making mistakes and realising that learning makes sense when they are more responsible for their own learning.

- **Institutional factors: institutional-level strategies**

The major institutional factor that this study identified is the lack of institutional commitment which is manifested through large class size, lack of resources and inconvenient classroom conditions.

•The respective universities' motto pertains to quality education and customer satisfaction. Consistent with this and the country's education and training policy, they have adopted learner-centred approaches. However, this is unlikely to materialise in the context of large classrooms that the EFL instructors cannot manage. Hence, the universities should assign a manageable number of students per section.

•The finding from the classroom observation revealed that cell phones were used in teaching grammar lessons. As such efforts are already in practice, institutional-level mechanisms should be sought to cascade this experience across the universities, thereby realising the creative use of cell phones to teach grammar lessons and other language skills.

•Other resource constraints reported by the EFL instructors should be addressed by the universities if their motto of quality education is to be realised. In addition, on-the-job training should be organised on how to use available resources (such as students and teachers) and to operate in creative ways in the absence of the necessary technology.

- **System-related factors: Continuous professional development training**

The study found that the underlying educational theory in Ethiopia favours the lecture method. Both the EFL instructors and their students held teacher-centred conceptions of teaching.

- The universities should work aggressively to familiarise their instructors with the learner-centred approach that they have adopted. They can materialise this by organising continuous professional training for their instructors. The universities should put in place strategies that ensure that learner-centred teaching methods are implemented in classroom situations through regular follow-up of the teaching-learning process.

- **Curriculum-related factors: empowering classroom teachers**

The study revealed that there was a need to make the textbook more communicative. In addition, the study found that the EFL students have limited opportunities to use the target language outside classroom situations since English is taught as a foreign language.

- The universities should exploit their EFL instructors and empower them to prepare in-house teaching materials to supplement the textbook prescribed by the Ministry of Education, without compromising its objectives.

- The universities should make sure that their EFL instructors use the time allocated to teach grammar lessons. Since the students have limited opportunities to practise the target language outside classroom situations, class time should be maximised for the benefit of the students.

The following diagram illustrates the major factors and how they link together to teach grammar lessons within CLT.



**FIGURE 7.3.2: UNDERSTANDING THE MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLT IN TEACHING GRAMMAR LESSONS IN AN EFL CONTEXT**

#### **7.4. Limitations of the Study**

Although the study has successfully demonstrated the CLT-related conceptions and practices of EFL instructors in private universities in Ethiopia, it has certain limitations. Geographically, the study was limited to the campuses of private universities in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Because of financial and time constraints, I could not afford to research the instructors in the branch campuses in the regional cities of Ethiopia. This being a doctoral study, which required focus and that I was self-funded, I needed to focus on the branch campuses of the private universities in Addis Ababa. Finally, I wanted to focus on a single area, and I plan on research that will cover other areas, using the principles learned from this study.



There are four private universities in the country. The headquarters of all of them are in the capital, with other branches in different regional cities of the country. It was believed that since policy and practical matters emanate from the headquarters of these universities, the realities in branch campuses outside the capital city might as well be captured through the data from the participants who were teaching in the major branch campuses in the capital city.

The study sought to include all the EFL instructors in the headquarters of the private universities in Ethiopia. Although 25 EFL instructors completed the questionnaire, seven of them were not willing to allow me to their classrooms for lesson observation. Their decision was respected in line with the consent form they had signed before the conduct of the study. Their inclusion might have contributed to the enrichment of the data from the lesson observation.

The number of classroom observations was planned to be a series of three sessions. However, given the unwillingness or the uneasiness of some EFL instructors and the findings from the interview and post-observation sessions, it was limited to two observations. More observations might have enriched the data. It is worth mentioning that the majority of EFL instructors reported during the interview and in the post-observation sessions that they mainly used the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. Given this finding, the two-session observation conducted helped to capture the most salient and recurring aspects of grammar lessons.

Although most EFL instructors were cooperative in providing data and allowing me to their classrooms, five of them were not willing to be audio-recorded. This was despite consenting to do so when they signed the consent form. Hence, I had to deal with the arduous task of taking notes. The audio-recording might have helped in capturing the lessons in their entirety, including the nuisances in classroom situations that might have added richness to the research data. To circumvent this challenge, additional classes were observed corresponding to the number of EFL instructors who participated in the interview. Although the initial intention was to interview twelve instructors (a number thought to be a saturation point for homogeneous interviewees in line with Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006), information saturation was reached when fifteen EFL instructors were interviewed. Three more EFL instructors were included to add richness to the interview data. Hence, the number of EFL instructors whose classrooms were observed was adjusted accordingly.

## **7.5. Recommendations**

The study produced contradictory findings. On the one hand, it demonstrated that various personal, social, institutional, and system-related factors affected the implementation of CLT in grammar lessons in an EFL context in Ethiopia. On the other hand, it also highlighted its successful implementation in the face of these challenges. Hence, based on the findings of the study and the ramifications of these findings, the following guidelines are suggested for the effective implementation of CLT in an EFL context in Ethiopia. The suggested guidelines arose from the major challenges affecting the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons (hence depicting the nexus between the practical challenges of the implementing CLT and the guidelines) and the classroom practices of the EFL instructors who implemented communicative grammar.

### **7.5.1. Policy Alignment with Practice**

The current study confirmed that there is a gap between policy and practice. Despite adopting learner-centred approaches nationally, teacher-centered approaches pervade classroom practices (Mihretu, 2016; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Moges, 2019). Hence, policymakers should ensure that there is a genuine nexus between policy and practice. Further, they need to consider the socio-economic and political contexts of the country in policy formulation. This exercise should involve all the stakeholders from private higher education institutions in policy design and evaluation.

### **7.5.2. Opportunities for Experience Sharing**

The study found that a few EFL instructors implemented CLT or taught grammar lessons communicatively. Hence, the respective universities can use their expertise to organise experience-sharing forum. This assists in facilitating the platform to share their classroom practices including the challenges of teaching grammar lessons communicatively.

### **7.5.3. Opportunities for Structured on-the-job Training**

While the majority of the EFL instructors reported that they had better conceptions of CLT, it is imperative to organise refresher training on CLT and other emerging aspects of language teaching. The universities can do this through experiential learning, coaching, skills development, and capacity building through workshops and structured mentorship and coaching programmes. This helps to address CLT-related knowledge gaps and misconceptions as well as ensures that the EFL instructors have the same theoretical understanding of CLT.

One of the most notable findings of the study was that the majority of the EFL instructors relied on the lecture method, thereby stressing accuracy development. A few EFL instructors who implemented CLT in teaching grammar lessons emphasised fluency development. It is also important to note that a few EFL instructors implemented classroom strategies that highlighted the development of both accuracy and fluency. Consistent with the methodological orientations of the private universities, the on-the-job training should address the debates surrounding accuracy-fluency development. Consequently, there is a need to incorporate in the on-the-job training the debates surrounding the concept of grammar, the reasons behind the teaching of grammar, and the methods of teaching grammar. This helps to create shared conceptions among the EFL instructors on the theoretical and practical issues surrounding grammar.

#### **7.5.4. Institutional-level Strategies**

The missions, visions, and values of the private universities indicated that they are committed to quality and excellence; however, the findings from the study showed practices that were contrary to these missions, visions, and values. Notably, most EFL instructors used the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. The findings further showed that EFL instructors struggled to implement CLT in classroom situations in the presence of a large number of students. Hence, private universities should ensure that classroom teachers deal with a manageable number of students.

One of the findings of the classroom observation was the poor classroom conditions in which the EFL instructors had to teach. The fixed chairs in the classrooms, the narrowness of the rooms with ensuing suffocation and the lack of institutional commitment (for example, in furnishing classrooms with required resources) discouraged the EFL instructors from teaching the target language as communicatively as possible. Any measure that is aimed at ensuring quality education should involve improving the classroom conditions.

The findings of the study further confirmed that EFL instructors did not have the necessary resources and equipment at their disposal. The universities should address resource constraints.

Teachers' characteristics affected the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons. The universities need to address the unethical practices of some of the EFL instructors. The study discovered that there were instructors who carried a weekly teaching load of more than 60 hours. This included the number of hours that they taught in their home universities and the number of hours that they taught elsewhere. Given this, the institutions should conduct a workload audit or workload policy revision.

### **7.5.5. EFL Instructors' Commitment**

Although the universities have a responsibility to ensure that their instructors are behaving professionally, the EFL instructors should reflect on their practices and take appropriate personal measures. This helps them to perform their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently. The findings from the interview revealed that EFL instructors taught up to or more than 60 hours per week, forcing them to resort to the lecture method and compromise the quality of grammar teaching.

The findings of the interview and classroom observation confirmed that the majority of the EFL instructors had to resort to the lecture method due to the unmanageable number of students per section. The findings also showed that a few EFL instructors taught grammar lessons communicatively. Thus, the universities should organise an experience-sharing forum to bring together all EFL instructors who have conflicting and complementary conceptions and practices.

### **7.5.6. Future Research**

The following recommendations are forwarded for future research.

- First, the study reported various gaps between conceptions and classroom practices. In this vein, first, one of the findings of the study regarding this relates to the EFL instructors' conceptions of CLT which is aligned with CLT literature; however, these conceptions were not materialised in classroom situation because the instructors relied on the lecture method to teach grammar lessons as a result of the context-specific challenges they had to face in and outside classroom situations. Second, some of the EFL instructors whose conceptions of CLT were aligned to CLT literature and whose class size was not practically manageable resorted to the lecture method as well. Further research is needed to account for the gaps between what is known and what is done.
- Second, since the private universities have several stakeholders, another possible area of future research concerning CLT should include their views. More specifically, because several institutional factors affected the implementation of CLT in teaching grammar lessons, there is a need for further study to investigate the views of the stakeholders.
- Third, students are one of the primary stakeholders in any education system. Future research should, therefore, consider their views to seek practical solutions.

- Fourth, the current study has only examined the conceptions and practices of the EFL instructors who were teaching on the campuses of the private universities in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Since the universities have branch campuses in other regional cities in the country, future research should include instructors, students, and administrators from the branch campuses to understand the implementation of CLT comprehensively.

## **7.6. Conclusion**

The study sought to investigate EFL instructors' conceptions and applications of CLT in teaching grammar lessons in private universities in Ethiopia in an EFL context. The data for the study were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and questionnaires. The data was then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Deductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The study highlighted that the majority of the EFL instructors in the private universities held conceptions of CLT that are consistent with the CLT literature and previous research. The conceptions of the EFL instructors' are also consistent with the country's education and training policy which adheres to learner-centred approaches in general and CLT in particular (FDRE, The Ministry of Education, 1994; 2002; 2015; 2018; 2019). The positive views that the EFL instructors expressed regarding CLT are fertile grounds to implement more learner-centred approaches in classroom situations. Private universities can, therefore, tap into this potential in their attempt to deliver quality education to their customers, one of the objectives they set out to achieve. However, the study also identified four CLT-related misconceptions. This implies that there are potential areas of improvement that the private universities can work on in their attempts to serve their customers in line with their motto of providing quality education.

The study also highlighted one of the hotly contested issues in English language teaching-the accuracy-fluency debate. The findings from the study demonstrated that there were EFL instructors who favoured fluency development in their conceptions and classroom practices. They underlined that meaningful communicative contexts should be created for EFL learners to practise and use the grammar of the target language. The EFL instructors who held this view engaged their students in communicative activities. Even though they devoted much class time to engage their students in communicative tasks, they provided inputs on the rules of the grammar of the target language to their students through brief occasional explanations. The EFL instructors who favoured accuracy-development were pre-occupied with explaining the rules of

grammar to their students. They employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons. The sentence-level exercises they used in the teaching-learning focused on error correction and, therefore, accuracy development. The accuracy-fluency debate has some implications for practice. First, the varying conceptions that the EFL instructors held regarding whether accuracy or fluency should dominate is one area that the respective institutions can work on to ensure that their instructors have the same theoretical understanding about the issue. Second, whether fluency, accuracy, or both should be the focus of classroom instruction is another potential area of concern for private universities.

One of the main findings that emerged from this study was all the EFL instructors' recognition of the role that grammar plays in the academic and non-academic lives of their students. This recognition on the part of the EFL instructors implies that they are expected to help their students to have both theoretical understanding and practical skills in using the grammar of the target language where and when they need it. However, the EFL instructors' pre-occupation with the lecture method is unlikely to help their students use the grammar in meaningful contexts. There is, thus, a need for the EFL instructors to examine their own classroom practices despite the challenges they faced, one of which was the EFL students' low motivation to learn the target language.

Although the majority of the EFL instructors were positively disposed to learner-centred approaches, which CLT is a part of, the lecture method is still the most dominant teaching strategy employed to teach grammar lessons. This practice contradicts the learner-centred approaches that private universities have adopted to provide quality education and become a centre of excellence. One of the explanations of the inconsistency between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices might be the underlying educational theory in the country's education system that encourages the use of teacher-fronted classroom strategies to teach different subjects (Mihretu, 2016; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Moges, 2019). This implies that there is a need for private universities to examine their instructional practices and understand what is happening in their respective environments before they take any measures. This will help them to align their pedagogical philosophy with classroom practices.

The positive dispositions that the EFL instructors had for CLT may also have implications for whether the EFL instructors are faced with real or superficial challenges in implementing CLT in teaching grammar lessons. This is because although their number was limited, a few EFL

instructors were teaching grammar communicatively in the face of the major challenges identified by this study. This may raise questions of whether all EFL instructors are equally committed to rendering better services to their customers.

It was reiterated in the preceding chapter and sections that the majority of the EFL instructors employed the lecture method to teach grammar lessons although their conceptions of CLT imply that they were more inclined to learner-centred approaches. This finding may have two implications. First, whereas the EFL instructors' had conceptions of CLT which are line with CLT literature, they were unable to teach grammar lessons communicatively due to the context-specific challenges they were faced with in classroom situations. Second, it may imply the underlying belief that the EFL instructors held in favour of the lecture method, which has been dominantly the preferred mode of teaching not only language courses but also other subjects throughout the country's system (Mihretu, 2016; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Moges, 2019).

Several studies have reported consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers' conceptions and their classroom practices (Huang, 2016; Asma & Tsenim, 2017; Abdullah, 2018; Hanan, 2018). On the one hand, although it applied to a few EFL instructors, the current study found consistencies between the EFL instructors who adhered to CLT and whose classroom practices portrayed the same. On the other hand, the study also found inconsistencies between the EFL instructors' conceptions and classroom practices. To that effect, the majority of the EFL instructors held conceptions of CLT which were comparable with the precepts of CLT, yet their classrooms demonstrated a return to traditional teaching methods. This disparity between conceptions and practices has several implications. First, although the country has adopted learner-centred approaches, the educational system is still subservient to the lecture method (Adinew, 2015; Alamirew & Adnew, 2015; Mihretu, 2016; Mebratu & Woldemariam, 2018; Moges, 2019). Hence, there is a need to examine the gaps between policy and practice. Second, some EFL instructors employed the lecture method despite the relatively smaller number of students they had in their respective sections. As discussed above, while the study determined that the majority of EFL instructors in private universities in Ethiopia had conceptions that are consistent with CLT literature, their conceptions and classroom practices were inconsistent. The findings of the study highlighted the need to understand the specific contexts in which the EFL instructors were working. The socio-cultural theory posits that the interactions that people have in their social, economic, and political environments influence their cognitions and practices (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Apel, 1994; Wertesch, 1994; Jordan, Carlile & Stack, 2000; Cross,

2010). In light of the socio-cultural theory, the teacher-related factors, student-related factors, institutional factors, curriculum-related factors, and system-related factors were responsible for shaping the conceptions and classroom practices of the EFL instructors. Hence, this study validated that social, cultural, political, and economic realities play an indispensable role in determining the conceptions and practices of classroom teachers and students.



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### **Appendix-A: Interview**

The purpose of this interview is to gather data on private universities' EFL (English as a Foreign Language instructors') conceptions and applications of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) principles in grammar lessons.

I would like to extend my gratitude to you for your willingness to participate in this study. It is believed that the information you provide will contribute to our understanding of how EFL instructors in private universities understand and apply CLT principles in grammar lessons. Your identity will be kept confidential and the answers you provide to the questions in this interview will be reported as aggregates.

This interview will take approximately 1.20 hours. Depending on your schedule, we can either have one session 80 minutes or two sessions of 40 minutes each.

I would like to hear your views on the following aspects of language teaching in general and communicative language teaching in particular.

1. What is the methodological assumption held by your university or department about how language teaching should be conducted?
2. What do you think are the goals of language teaching and learning in CLT?
3. What is the role of the teacher in a CLT classroom?
4. What do you think is the role of the learners in communicative language classrooms?
5. What do you think are the types of activities or classroom tasks used in CLT?
6. What do you think are the types of teaching materials and resources used in CLT-based classrooms?
7. What is the role of grammar in the academic and non-academic lives of students?
8. What do you think is the place of grammar in CLT?
9. What are the specific strategies you employ to teach grammar lessons?

10. What are the assessment modalities you employ to assess your students' performance in grammar lessons?
11. What do you think about the suitability of CLT in Ethiopian Context?
12. Any additional thoughts

I would like to extend my gratitude to you for spending your precious time discussing with me your views of these topics. I will contact you for further or any additional information if it is convenient for you.

### **Appendix B: Questionnaire**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data on private universities' EFL (English as a Foreign Language instructors') conceptions and applications of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) principles in grammar lessons.

I am grateful to you for your willingness to take part in this research project. I believe that the information you supply will contribute to our understanding of how EFL instructors in private universities understand and apply CLT principles in grammar lessons. Your identity will be kept confidential and the answers you provide to the questions in this questionnaire will be reported as aggregates.

This questionnaire will take approximately 35 minutes to complete. Please use a black pen to fill in the questionnaire and return it to me after completing it.

### **Section A: General information**

**Please, fill in this section with appropriate information about yourself. Use a tick (✓) mark against each item, where appropriate.**

1. Name of University\_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender\_\_\_\_\_
3. Your qualification
  - 3.1. MA\_\_\_\_\_
  - 3.2. BA\_\_\_\_\_

3.3. PhD\_\_\_\_\_

3.4. If other, please specify\_\_\_\_\_

4. Years of teaching experience\_\_\_\_\_

5. The courses you teach in this university\_\_\_\_\_

6. Your Age (If you do not mind)\_\_\_\_\_

7. Teaching load per week

8. Average number of students per class\_\_\_\_\_

### Section B: Your conception of communicative language teaching (CLT)

This section assesses your conception/understanding of communicative language teaching in general. Please, use the following scale to rate the given statements. Put a tick mark (√) in the appropriate box corresponding to each statement.

SA: Strongly Agree (5)

A: Agree (4)

N: Neutral (3)

D: Disagree (2)

SD: Strongly Disagree (1)

No	Your conception of communicative language teaching (CLT)	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	The goal of language teaching in CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence.					
2.	CLT has its own theoretical assumptions about teaching and learning.					
3.	CLT advocates for the use of the target language (English) for classroom communication/interaction.					
4.	CLT places more emphasis on fluency over accuracy.					

5.	CLT places more emphasis on accuracy over fluency.					
6.	CLT strikes a balance between productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (reading listening) skills.					
7.	CLT demands that teachers should have high proficiency in English.					
8.	CLT requires that students should have high proficiency in English.					
9.	CLT assumes that teachers should have adequate knowledge of the target language culture.					
10.	Pair and group work arrangements are important classroom organisation in communicative activities.					
11.	CLT is designed for English as a Second Language (ESL) approach, not as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach.					
12.	CLT advocates student-centred approaches.					
13.	CLT assumes that teachers should design their own teaching materials.					
14.	CLT uses advanced or sophisticated facilities such as language laboratories.					
15.	In CLT-based classes the role of teachers is transmitting knowledge to students about language by explaining grammar items and other aspects of the target language.					
16.	In CLT-based classes the teacher's role is to facilitate student learning.					
17.	In CLT-based classes the role of the student is to actively participate in communicative activities.					

18.	CLT assumes that the focus of correction should be mainly on grammar mistakes.					
19.	CLT gives emphasis to students' motivation to learn.					

**Section C: Your conception of the Importance of Grammar, and the place of grammar in communicative language teaching**

This section assesses your conceptions of the importance of grammar in general and the place of grammar in communicative language teaching. Please, use the rating scale below to respond to the given statements. Put a tick mark (✓) in the appropriate box corresponding to each statement.

SA: Strongly Agree (5)

A: Agree (4)

N: Neutral (3)

D: Disagree (2)

SD: Strongly Disagree (1)

No	The importance of grammar, and the place of grammar in CLT	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Knowledge and use of correct grammar is indispensable for students' academic success.					
2.	Knowledge and use of correct grammar facilitates students' communication with others in formal and informal contexts.					
3.	Knowledge and use of correct grammar helps learners to win the attention of employers.					
4.	CLT mainly encourages the explicit teaching of grammar.					
5.	CLT mainly encourages the teaching of grammar deductively (i.e. beginning with rules of grammar and finishing with examples or exercises in context.)					
6.	CLT mainly encourages that grammar should be taught inductively (beginning with examples or contexts and then allowing students to work out grammar rules).					
7.	CLT advocates that students should learn both the form and meaning of the target language.					
8.	CLT advocates that students' understanding and use of grammar should be assessed using formal tests and examinations that focus on grammatical correctness.					
9.	CLT advocates the use of continuous assessment modalities to measure students' performance in the target language.					
10.	CLT encourages that the classroom teacher should correct all grammatical errors to avoid students' imperfect learning even when the focus is on meaning.					

#### **Section D: Techniques you employ in teaching grammar lessons**

The following section assesses the extent to which you employ the suggested techniques in grammar lessons. Please, use the guideline suggested below to give your responses. Put a tick (✓) in the appropriate box next to each statement.

Always (5)

Often (4)

Sometimes (3)

Rarely (2)

Never (1)

No	Item	5	4	3	2	1
1.	I first explain grammar rules to my students and give them corresponding examples to imitate (for example, on how the present perfect tense is formed) and then ask students to do exercises.					
2.	In grammar lessons, I give more emphasis to the rules of the language than on how it is used in authentic contexts.					
3.	I write lecture notes on grammar items in class and ask learners to write them in their exercise books.					
4.	I employ teacher-led classroom discussion whenever grammar lessons are presented.					
5.	I use grammar exercises in the suggested textbook or module without having to supplement it from other sources.					
6.	I use reading texts and writing exercises to present and practice grammar items.					
7.	I use newspapers, magazines, maps, pictures, etc. to present and practice grammar lessons.					
8.	I involve students in questioning and answering activities to teach grammar lessons and check their comprehension of the grammar topics being taught.					

9.	I involve all students in problem-solving activities in grammar lessons.					
10.	I involve learners in information-gap activities( for example, working out the differences and similarities between pictures)					
11.	I use different types of games( for example crossword puzzles)					
12.	I involve students in role- plays.					
13.	I involve students in pair or group work activities.					
14.	I ask students to work alone before they get together to work in pairs or groups.					
15.	I encourage and balance all patterns of interaction(teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student)					
16.	I ask learners to work in pairs and groups to give feedback and corrections on the works of their group members or those of other groups.					
17.	I give feedback to students' works in their respective groups.					
18.	I give feedback on students' group work activities as a whole class.					
19.	I participate in pair or groups work activities an independent participant.					
20.	I prevent unbalanced or dominating participation in group activities in grammar lessons.					
21.	I use audio-visuals in the instructional process to facilitate student learning.					
22.	I rely on formal tests and examinations to assess my students' grammar performance.					



23.	I rely on informal assessment methods such as the pair and group work activities students do in class to assess their grammar performance.					
24.	I use the target language (English) as the normal and expected means of classroom communication.					

### Section E: Factors Affecting the Application of CLT in Grammar Lessons

This section assesses the factors that affect your application of CLT principles in teaching grammar lessons. Please, use the rating scale below to respond to the given statements. Put a tick mark (√) in the appropriate box corresponding to each statement.

SA: Strongly Agree (5)

A: Agree (4)

N: Neutral (3)

D: Disagree (2)

SD: Strongly Disagree (1)

No	Factors affecting the application of CLT principles in grammar lessons	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	I am required to have higher proficiency of the teacher about the target language.					
2.	I am expected to search for resources and prepare my own teaching materials, which is a time-consuming process.					
3.	I have not got enough formal training on communicative grammar and my understanding of communicative grammar is therefore limited.					
4.	My weekly teaching loads discourage me from teaching					

	grammar lessons communicatively.					
5.	Students resist active participation in communicative activities.					
6.	Students tend to use their mother tongue in pair and group work activities.					
7.	Students have traditional views that the teacher has to lecture for most of class time.					
8.	Students consider English courses as requirements and therefore are less motivated for communicative activities.					
9.	There is a major difference in learner's command of the language between those coming from private and public schools.					
10.	Students lack opportunities and real environments to use English outside the classroom.					
11.	There are a large number of students in one class, making it difficult to teach grammar lessons communicatively.					
12.	The existing syllabus/teaching materials are unsuitable for CLT.					
13.	Language classrooms are ill-equipped with required resources such as audio-visuals.					
14.	CLT is unsuitable for EFL (English as a foreign language) context as opposed to for an ESL (English as a second language) context.					
15.	There is mismatch between curriculum and assessment, hence making it difficult to implement CLT methodology in grammar lessons.					

**Appendix C: Classroom Observation Checklist**

**Appendix C (1): Classroom Observation Checklist (Semi-structured version)**

Name of University: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic rank of the Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson objective: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students in the classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration of session: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>N<sub>o</sub></b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description of each activity</b>	<b>Time spent on each activity</b>
1.	<b>Instructor's activities</b>		
2.	<b>Students' activities</b>		
3.	<b>Classroom resources (textbooks/books/audio-visuals/LCD, etc.)</b>		
4.	<b>Classroom conditions (seating arrangement, classroom size, space between seats, room ventilation, etc.)</b>		

**Appendix C (2): Classroom Observation Checklist (Structured version)**

Name of University: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic rank of the Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson objective: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students in the classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration of session: \_\_\_\_\_

No	Activity	Yes	No
1.	<b>Instructor's roles/Activities</b>		
	Participates independently in classroom activities		
	Gives clear instructions and concise examples to show students how classroom activities should be done.		
	Organizes pair or group work activities		
	Conducts lectures/Uses class time to discuss grammatical rules		
	Facilitates and monitors classroom activities		
	Uses target language throughout instructional activities		
	Uses authentic materials(for example newspapers, maps, pictures, etc.) for classroom discussion		
	Uses/Relies heavily on the textbook/course book/module throughout the assigned session		
	Ensures that students use the target language for classroom communication		
	Encourages students to ask and answer questions		
	Corrects learners' errors focusing on form		
	Ensures that students engage in peer correction activities		
	Ensures that modes of interaction are varied(student-teacher, teacher-student, student-student)		

	Ensures that no student is left behind in classroom activities		
	Maintains discipline		
	Uses assigned class time properly		
2.	<b>Student's roles/Activities</b>		
	Listens to lectures		
	Expects everything from the teacher		
	Takes lecture notes		
	Participates in pair or group work activities		
	Reports results of group discussion to the whole class		
	Gives feedback on classmate's/peer's activities		
	Asks and answers questions		
	Problem solves		
	Engages in role plays		
	Engages in games		
	Engages in information-gap activities		
	Determines content of lesson		
	Does individual activities/drills		
	Uses target language in instructional activities		
3.	<b>Instructional activities</b>		
	Individual drills		
	Pair work		
	Group work		

	Role plays		
	Information-gap		
	Crossword puzzles		
	Dialogues		
	Simulation		
	Drama		
4.	<b>Instructional materials in use</b>		
	Textbook/modules		
	Duplicated materials from books/references		
	Audio-visuals		
	Authentic materials (magazines, newspapers, maps, pictures, novels, poems, etc.)		
5.	<b>Classroom conditions</b>		
	Space between chairs		
	Ventilation		
	Classroom size as compared to the number of students		
6.	<b>Other aspects of the teaching-learning process</b>		

#### Appendix D: Ethical Clearance Certificate

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 20 March 2019

Dear Mr Tadesse,

Ref #:  
**2019\_CHS\_64070875\_DEPT**  
Name of applicant: A K TADESSE  
Student #: 64070875  
Staff #: N/A

**Decision: Ethics Approval from 01  
April 2019 – 31 December 2022**

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**Name:** Mr A K Tadesse

**Proposal:** English as a Foreign Language Instructors' Conception and Application of Communicative Language Teaching in Grammar Lessons: The Case of Four Private Universities in Ethiopia.

**Qualification:** Postgraduate degree: MA

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This **Low-Risk application** was reviewed and expedited by the **Chair of the Departmental Chair of Research Ethics in English Studies** in **February 2019** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provision that:

- 1) The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of English Studies.
- 3) The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.

- 4) Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report
- 5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013, Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003
- 6) Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
- 7) No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (01 April 2020). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

**Note:**

*The reference number **2019\_CHS\_64070875\_DEPT** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



Ms Claudia C J Fratini  
Department of English Studies  
TvW, Floor 6, Room 6-18  
Tel: 012 429 3241;  
email: [fraticci@unisa.ac.za](mailto:fraticci@unisa.ac.za)



