

English language teachers' self-efficacy and teaching practice in Ethiopian secondary schools: A mixed-method study design of language teaching skills and instructional strategies

Shewa Basizew Baguko ^{1*} , Bekalu Atnafu Taye ¹ 

¹ Kotebe University of Education, ETHIOPIA

*Corresponding Author: shewabasizew1975@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine level of self-efficacy, teaching practices, and relationships, focusing on language teaching skills and instructional strategies. A total of 186 English teachers were identified in the study where 123 English language teachers completed a validated questionnaire on self-efficacy and teaching practice. Explanatory sequential mixed design with a cross-sectional design for quantitative data and a phenomenological design for qualitative data were employed. Structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview and classroom observation were conducted to obtain quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. Thus, descriptive statistics (frequency and mean) and inferential statistics (correlation, two ways ANOVA and regression analysis) were used to analyze quantitative data, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative one. In the end, the quantitative result indicated that EFL teachers perceived high level of self-efficacy and utilization of communicative language teaching approach whereas the qualitative result indicated that EFL teachers had poor teaching practice in teaching language skills and utilization of instructional strategy. The qualitative result also showed that EFL teachers usually use non-communicative language teaching approach. This shows there is discrepancy between quantitative and qualitative reports. Further, the findings indicated that the correlation analysis showed moderate association between (language teaching skill and instructional strategy). The regression model had a significant explanatory potential for predicting secondary school EFL teachers' teaching practice. Both language teaching skill and instructional strategy were a significant positive predictor of teaching practice. Ultimately, it is recommended that there is a need to work on providing professional development-oriented language training to fill in the observed gaps. Additionally, this study will serve as a springboard for potential researchers who wish to investigate further issues related to teaching English in Ethiopian school contexts at different levels.

Keywords: self-efficacy, teaching practice, language teaching skills, and instructional strategy

INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy is a concept affecting behavior and outcomes in language teaching (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Zulkosky, 2009). Highlighting this, Julius (2022), Chacon (2005), Eslami and Fatahi (2008) extended the concept of self-efficacy relating to language proficiency which operates as an additional and distinct character among non-native EFL teachers, mediating the relationship between beliefs and actual classroom practice. This indicates teacher self-efficacy has been widely conceptualized in relation to language teaching, reflecting its central role in shaping instructional behavior and outcomes. Bray-Clark and Bates (2003), Channawar and Jha (2024) argued that self-efficacy represents teachers' perception of their capability to carry out the necessary actions to achieve desired outcomes. Further, Bandura (1977) conceptualized self-efficacy as perceived ability in carrying out specific tasks.

Building on this foundation, self-efficacy has been consistently associated with key educational outcomes. It is indicated as one's level of confidence that enables successful task performance in classroom contexts (Ahmad & Safaria, 2013). Empirical studies demonstrate that self-efficacy is closely related to persistence, achievement, and learning behaviors (Khan et al., 2015). Moreover, teacher self-efficacy has been shown to be strongly linked to instructional behavior, commitment, motivation, and student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Above indicated constructs indicated that self-efficacy matters. Unequivocally, it has an attachment with the inner parts of EFL teachers and their ability of doing specific task in teaching English. Besides, self-efficacy enables to study whether EFL teachers' self-reported results match with externally observable behaviors.

Thus, this study is highly significant to find out the discrepancy or the alliance of findings in relation to showing self-efficacy and teaching practice.

Accordingly, EFL teachers' self-efficacy plays a significant role in shaping effective language teaching practice. Thus, EFL teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are more capable of executing classroom activities and supporting students' learning using context-based instructional strategies. This implies that EFL teachers with strong self-belief are more likely to sustain effort, demonstrate enthusiasm, and positively influence the teaching practice through influencing student learning outcomes. With regards to this, Gibson and Dembo (1984) noted that highly self-efficacious EFL teachers could bring positive changes in students' learning. Zee et al. (2016) found out that EFL teachers who perceived higher levels of self-efficacy have pro-social behavior toward students learning. This implies that EFL teachers' beliefs about their competence directly influence their instructional interactions and classroom practice. In line with this, research indicates that self-efficacy positively influences EFL teachers' teaching practice and student learning outcomes (Wen & Lie 2024). It is also considered a critical construct shaping EFL teachers' instructional behavior and emotional engagement (Han, 2021). Consequently, EFL teachers are encouraged to continuously improve their language teaching skills to achieve learning objectives effectively (Pham, 2022).

In the same manner, the current study, EFL teachers teaching practice represents a core component in examining instructional effectiveness. Laizer et al. (2022), Choi and Lee (2017), Chacon (2025), Eslami and Fatahi (2008) found out EFL teachers' self-efficacy perceptions significantly correlated with their teaching practices. EFL teachers' teaching practice encompasses their ability to apply pedagogical knowledge and instructional strategies in real classroom settings. Kumaravadivelu (2003) argued that teachers need a holistic understanding of classroom dynamics to shape effective teaching practices. This requires not only pedagogical knowledge but also awareness of students' learning processes. Similarly, Tomlinson (2011) emphasized that communicative competence is essential in teaching practice, as it enables teachers to facilitate both linguistic and sociolinguistic learning. Thus, effective teaching practice in EFL contexts depends on teachers' ability to integrate language skills with appropriate instructional strategies. Furthermore, teaching practice is recognized as a fundamental component of teacher training that requires adequate time, human capacity, and material resources (Rembe et al., 2016). It involves the practical application of teaching skills, instructional planning, and classroom interaction, all of which are essential for achieving desired learning outcomes.

Despite these insights, the relationship between self-efficacy and teaching practice remains complex and context dependent. In the current study, self-efficacy is associated with secondary school EFL teachers' ability to teach both macro and micro language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing mechanics. It also encompasses the extent to which teachers utilize instructional strategies aligned with students' learning outcomes. Teaching practice, in turn, is operationalized based on teachers' beliefs and actual classroom implementation of language teaching, particularly their use of communicative versus non-communicative approaches. Previous studies indicate that self-efficacious teachers tend to favor communicative language teaching approaches, which promote independent learning and improved student outcomes.

Supporting this perspective, Talebi et al. (2023) emphasized that teacher educators and policymakers should recognize the importance of aligning self-efficacy with effective teaching practice to enhance student achievement. Similarly, Begum and Hamzah (2018) noted that well-developed self-efficacy enables teachers to improve language teaching skills and design more effective learning activities. Zakeri and Alavi (2011) further argued that teachers' effectiveness should be evaluated based on their knowledge and practical application of language teaching skills. Nevertheless, teachers often encounter challenges in translating their beliefs into practice. Various contextual factors may hinder the effective implementation of teaching strategies, thereby creating a gap between perceived self-efficacy and actual classroom practices. This suggests that self-efficacy alone may not guarantee effective teaching practice without adequate support and conducive learning environments.

Finally, considering the research gaps the researcher constructed the following research questions a) what is the level of EFL teachers' self-efficacy regarding language teaching skills and instructional strategies? (b) How do these constructs manifested in observed classroom practice? (c) How do the quantitative and qualitative findings relate to each other?

METHODOLOGY

Research Designs

The methodology section employed an explanatory sequential mixed design with a cross-sectional design for quantitative data and a phenomenological design for qualitative data, adopting both positivist and post-positivist paradigms. In relation with these constructs, numerous findings showed that positivism is predicated on the idea that reality is quantifiable, objective and subject to statistical analysis and empirical observation. It aligns with the quantitative cross-sectional design in which relationships are examined, and data is gathered at a specific point in time. In supporting these constructs, Bryman (2016), Rehman and Alharthi (2016), Cohen et al. (2018), Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) argued on the concepts of positivism paradigm and objective knowledge that can be gathered using quantitative facts. Post-positivism acknowledges subjective reality, context-bound and human experience. This fits well with phenomenological qualitative design and lived experiences of participants. In connection with this concept, Taylor and Medina (2013), Creswell and Creswell (2018), Dawadi et al. (2021), Cohen et al. (2017), Rehman and Alhathi (2016), Grix (2004) and Scotland (2012) reported that post-positivism paradigm is a milder form of positivism and they believe qualitative data can be collected from the interaction between the researcher and study participants.

Thus, pragmatism has allowed for epistemic consistency in the application of both paradigms: Then, the researchers believed that positivist assumption was supported by employing structured questionnaire which is believed to establish empirical trends whereas post-positivist assumption was employed to interpret human experience. The phenomenological design seeks to

understand participants lived experiences and the meanings they assign to the phenomenon under study (Gill, 2020; Oluka, 2025; Pathak, 2017). Following this, interview and classroom observation were used to further substantiate the quantitative results. Various research findings reported that combining positivist and post-positivist philosophical paradigms satisfies methodological presumptions. This suggests that the alignment of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (QUAN → QUAL) favors philosophical thought of explanatory sequential design.

Sample Size Determination and Sampling Technique

The study comprised 186 secondary school EFL teachers in secondary schools in Assosa and Metekel zones, Benishangul Gumuz region. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} = \frac{186}{1 + 186(0.05^2)} = \frac{186}{1.465} \approx 127$$

Where n represents the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision. Using a population of 186 teachers and a 5% margin of error, the calculated sample size was 127 respondents. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select 127 EFL teachers and out of which 123 teachers responded to the entire questionnaire (response rate = 96.9%). The questionnaire was adapted from Tschannen-Moran (2011), and Choi and Lee (2017) based on three domains of self-efficacy and teaching practice.

As a result, the instrument was proved to be reliable to examine EFL teachers' self-efficacy and teaching practices. Meanwhile, interview and classroom observation were employed to collect qualitative data. Then, sixteen (16) EFL teachers were selected purposively and interviewed whereas eighteen (18) classes were observed while classroom teachers were delivering their actual classroom teaching. When the researchers reached the sixteenth interviewee and the eighteenth classroom observation with eighteenth different EFL teachers, they noticed that the qualitative data had achieved data saturation. And this falls under the recommended sample size (5–25 participants) for phenomenological qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to triangulate the results with the quantitative data, the two qualitative data sets were gathered. Lastly, codes such as the first EFL teacher, second EFL teacher, third EFL teacher, etc. were used to code the interview results. Ultimately, thematic analysis was used to present the qualitative results.

Data Collection Instruments, Validity and Reliability Measures

Questionnaire: questionnaire is an important instrument in research studies to assist the researcher collect relevant data (Das, 2024). Questionnaire is effective tool for collecting primary data. Dörnyei (2010) also suggested that most notably, many researchers use questionnaire over other data collection methods; because it assisted researchers to measure and meet standard research criteria. Besides, Taherdoost (2021) exhibited primary data could be gathered through questionnaire in line with the purpose of study. A questionnaire is an important instrument in a research study to help the researcher collect relevant data regarding the research topic. Further, Cohen et al. (2018) found out the researchers must ensure the validity and reliability of data collection tools when planning to conduct the study.

Despite this, two independent scales and two-dimensional structures were considered in the questionnaire. This is because the questionnaire includes two broadly presented study variables: self-efficacy and teaching practice. In order to examine EFL teachers' self-efficacy, which is thought to measure their belief in their abilities of language teaching skills and utilization of instructional strategies various items were designed separately to the teaching practice. The teaching practice's items were also adopted and modified to evaluate how EFL teachers behaved in the classroom. Hence, the researchers used two dimensional scales as well as two independent scales. Ain and He (2019) reported that dimension is often known as scale, is crucial, as various scales yield varying outcomes for the same occurrence. Then, various findings may be achieved when an object is seen using different scales. For most practical problems, two scales are sufficient. According to Brody and Dietz (1997), the combined answers to the content and intensity questions typically do not form a one-dimensional scale, and content and intensity are occasionally confused with the two dimensioned structure questions. Therefore, in the present study, structure questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data to examine EFL teachers' level of self-efficacy and teaching practice.

Interview: interview is one of the most popular techniques for gaining a deeper knowledge of human experience (Bearman, 2019). Kvale, (1996) cited in Cohen et al. (2018) argued that a shift from viewing data as something external to human subjects as something manipulable is signified using interviews in research. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews and classroom observation that contains checklists were employed to collect qualitative data to triangulate the quantitative data.

Classroom observation: Observation is widely regarded as an effective method for assessing teachers' behaviors and the learning environment, which plays a crucial role in supporting positive classroom functioning (Dignath & Veenman, 2020; Granström et al., 2023; Rowe et al., 2021; Simpson & Tuson, 2018; Vidhiasi, 2019). Therefore, semi-structured observation checklist was adopted from Michael et al. (2024) and made emphasized on EFL teachers' ability of language teaching skills and utilization of instructional strategies. Consequently, data saturation served as an indicator for the validity of the instruments used to gather qualitative data. The school directors and supervisors have contribution in assisting to identify EFL teachers to be observed.

Number of Items per Construct: Data on teaching language skills and instructional strategies were gathered using eight (8) items and fifteen (15) items, respectively. Teaching practice was also measured using a structured set of Likert-scale items.

Sample Items: The items were designed to measure EFL teachers' self-efficacy and instructional strategies. They included statements related to teachers' ability to teach language skills and their use of instructional strategies in classroom settings, rated on a Likert scale.

Adaptation Procedure: The instruments were adapted to align with the study objectives, focusing on EFL teachers' self-efficacy in teaching language skills and the utilization of instructional strategies. Additionally, a semi-structured observation checklist was adopted from Michael et al. (2024) and contextualized to fit the Ethiopian secondary school setting.

Expert Review / Content Validation: Prior to data collection, the validity of the instruments was checked by sharing the questionnaire to experienced experts: Berket G/Selasise(phd) in Addis Ababa University, Tadesse Hirpa (Phd) in Gilgelbeles College and Dereje Mosisa (Associate professor in Assosa. Then, the feedback and comments were included in fitting the study objectives that ensured the content, construct and face validity of data collection tool appropriately against self-efficacy and teaching practice variables. As a result, content validity was established through careful review of the items in relation to the study objectives.

Pilot Testing: Reliability testing was conducted before the main data collection begins. The results indicated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.92$ for self-efficacy items and $\alpha = 0.848$ for teaching practice items, confirming that the instruments were reliable for the study.

Scoring Procedure: The questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale: self-efficacy items: (*1 = not at all confident to 5 = extremely confident*) and the teaching practice items were measured using again: (*1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree*). Subsequently, higher scores indicated greater levels of perceived self-efficacy and stronger alignment with effective teaching practices.

Observation Indicators: Observation was employed to examine EFL teachers' behaviours and classroom practices. The semi-structured observation checklist focused on teachers' ability to teach language skills, use of instructional strategies and classroom interaction and learning environment. In connection to this construct, observation is widely regarded as an effective method for evaluating teaching behavior and classroom dynamics (Dignath & Veenman, 2020; Granström et al., 2023; Simpson & Tuson, 2018; Vidhiasi, 2019).

Interview Protocol Themes: Qualitative data were collected through interviews and classroom observations. Sixteen (16) EFL teachers were purposively selected for interviews, and eighteen (18) classroom observations were conducted. The interview protocol basically focused on teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy teaching practices in actual classrooms and challenges they encountered and factors affecting utilization of instructional strategies and language teaching. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, consistent with recommended sample sizes for phenomenological studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interview responses were coded as (e.g., first EFL teacher, second EFL teacher, etc.), and thematic analysis was undertaken to present qualitative findings.

Assumptions Tested: Before conducting inferential statistical analyses, key assumptions underlying parametric tests were considered. First, internal consistency reliability was verified using Cronbach's alpha, confirming that the items within each construct measured the same underlying concept. Second, the use of Likert-scale composite scores assumed approximate normality and interval-level measurement, which is widely accepted when multiple items are combined into a scale. Third, given that correlation and regression analyses were employed, assumptions of linearity, independence of observations, and absence of multicollinearity were considered. The acceptable variance inflation factor (VIF) values reported in the regression analysis further confirmed that multicollinearity was not a concern. Ultimately, the checks ensured that the data met the minimum requirements for valid statistical inference.

Missing Data Handling: the inferential statistics result analysis shows only one data is missing.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Strands: An explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach was employed to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative data were analyzed first to identify general patterns in teachers' self-efficacy and teaching practices. Subsequently, qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations were used to explain, validate, and enrich the quantitative results. Besides, integration occurred at the interpretation stage through triangulation, where findings from both strands were compared. For instance, while quantitative results indicated high levels of self-efficacy, qualitative evidence revealed limitations in actual classroom practice, highlighting a discrepancy between perception and implementation. Thus, the qualitative findings provided deeper contextual insights into the quantitative results, strengthening the overall validity of the study and offering a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Study Limitation: Assosa, Kemash, and Metekel are the three widely recognized zones in Benishangul Gumuz, along with the Mao and Komo special district. Nevertheless, the study was limited to the Assosa and Metekel zones, with 186 EFL teachers serving as the study's population. We believe that this group did not represent all the EFL teachers in the region. As a result, the sample size might be relatively small. Consequently, this would limit the research output and could affect the quality of findings that are currently being reported. Additionally, because of the continuous violence across the region, EFL teachers in the designated study area were denied access to a range of training programs, such as language-focused training and continuous professional development. This would further limit the current findings on both the observed behavior and the perceived self-efficacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the results demonstrates participant demographics findings. Accordingly, the sample comprised 123 EFL teachers and primarily male account for (69.9%) and females (30.1%). The findings revealed that (1.6%) diploma, (60.2%) first degree holders, (38.2%) masters degree holders. The study also showed (67.5%) of participants were aged between 30–40. The teaching experience was relatively balanced (30.1%) who had 11–15 years of experience, followed by (26.8%) who had 16–20 years. Further, (24.4%) had 5–10 years, (30.1%) 11–15 years, (26.8%) 16–20 years, and (18.7%) 21–25 years of experience.

Table 1. EFL teachers' self-efficacy and language teaching skills

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Variance
Ability of teaching speaking skill	123	3	5	4.40	.569	.324
Ability of teaching writing skill	123	3	5	4.27	.690	.477
Ability of teaching listening skill	123	3	5	4.34	.584	.341
Ability of teaching reading skill	123	3	5	4.35	.689	.475
Ability of teaching grammar	123	4	5	4.47	.501	.251
Ability of teaching pronunciation of words and phrases	123	3	5	4.26	.722	.522
Ability of teaching vocabulary contextually	123	2	5	3.50	.772	.596
Ability of teaching mechanics in writing skills	123	2	5	3.50	.772	.596
Valid N (listwise)	123					

EFL Teachers Self-efficacy and Language Teaching Skill

In the present study EFL teachers' ability of language teaching skills is one of the independent variables for examining self-efficacy levels. As **Table 1** shows, EFL teachers' level of self-efficacy and their ability of teaching speaking found to be ($M = 4.40$ and $SD = 0.57$), for writing skills, ($M = 4.27$ and $SD = 0.69$), and for listening skills, ($M = 4.34$ and $SD = 0.58$). Teachers had high self-efficacy in teaching reading skills ($M = 4.35$ and $SD = 0.69$), and grammar ($M = 4.47$ and $SD = 0.50$). Additionally, the findings revealed that EFL teachers showed high levels of self-efficacy with regards to the teaching of pronunciation, ($M = 4.26$ and $SD = 0.72$). Furthermore, the findings indicated that EFL teachers had moderate level of self-efficacy in teaching vocabulary contextually ($M = 3.50$ and $SD = 0.77$) and writing mechanics ($M = 3.50$ and $SD = 0.77$).

Self-efficacy levels were interpreted using Choi and Lee (2017) criteria: 3.00–3.50 (moderate), 3.51–4.00 (high), above 4.00 (very high), and below 3.00 (low). Therefore, EFL teachers showed moderate level of self-efficacy in vocabulary and writing mechanics but they had higher level of self-efficacy in teaching in speaking, writing, listening, reading, grammar, and pronunciation.

Begum and Hamzah (2018) suggested that well managed teachers' self-efficacy would increase their ability of teaching language skills. Additionally, Mills et al. (2007) reported that high level of perceived self-efficacy contributes a lot in executing teaching tasks, effectively. In similar manner, Wen and Liu (2024), Atasoy (2021), Alibakhshi et al. (2020), Guerra and Wubbena (2017) also found out that there was significantly positive relationship between teachers perceived self-efficacy and ability of teaching language skills. Despite the fact that there is a discrepancy between perceived self-efficacy and actual teaching practices in the current study, various research results supported that the positive relationship between perceived beliefs and actual teaching practices. This demonstrates that a higher perceived level of knowledge about certain tasks could possibly assist to perform it easily.

The qualitative findings stood in sharp contrast with the quantitative findings. The interview and classroom observation results presented below suggested that EFL teachers had poor teaching practice in language teaching skills with notable exception of teaching reading skill and grammar. In connection with this issue, two EFL teachers addressed the following statement.

The first EFL teacher said

I prefer to teach grammar to teaching writing, speaking and listening skill. Teaching grammar is much easier than teaching language skills. While I was teaching grammar, I wrote notes on the blackboard and students were also busy of writing notes on their note books. Teaching grammar doesn't require much confrontation with students. It doesn't require many resource. They attend the class in a better way. Besides, students would like to give more attention when they learn grammar than language skills.

The second EFL teacher also said

I always focus on teaching grammar and reading skill. These two skills did not require much effort and resources when compared to teaching, speaking, writing and listening skills. These three language skills require practical session so as to assist students.

Although the participants' self-rated responses about their perception of language teaching skills, indicated the highest level of self-efficacy, the interview and classroom observation results revealed that EFL teachers had poor practice of language teaching skills. Following this, the discrepancy between perceived self-efficacy and observed practice was reported. Perhaps this could have occurred as a result of unfulfilled expectations between one's own self-perception and the activities that were practiced in the actual classroom.

In supporting the above analysis, EFL teachers observed practical teaching language skills did not fully align with their self-assessment results. In relation to this construct, various findings pointed out the discrepancy between EFL teachers' belief on communicative language teaching approach and the actual teaching practice: observed practice. For instance, Jagdish and Joshi (2023) found out that teachers generally believe that they implemented communicative language teaching approach (CLT) through inductive grammar instruction; but the observed practices showed that they employed non-communicative language teaching approach using deductive approaches. In line with this point, Mekasha (2024) also found out differences in EFL teachers' beliefs and observed practices in teaching grammar. Results show that there was gap between EFL teachers' perception and actual practice on teaching grammar. Furthermore, Sena (2025) indicated limited familiarity between perception and the teaching practice occurs largely due to resource shortages, insufficiency of teacher training related programs and weak curriculum support.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on EFL teachers' self-efficacy in the ability of using instructional strategies

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD.	Variance
Ability of providing students explanation when students are getting confused	123	4	5	4.48	.502	.252
Ability of communicating specific learning objectives and out comes to the students	123	4	5	4.49	.502	.252
Ability of adjusting activities based on students' needs	123	4	5	4.67	.470	.221
Ability of delivering content knowledge to the students in the class	123	3	5	4.24	.793	.629
Ability of using variety of assessment strategies	123	3	5	4.35	.640	.410
Ability of providing feed back to the students in the class	123	4	5	4.47	.501	.251
Ability of soliciting good questions throughout the lesson in the class	123	3	5	4.26	.722	.522
Ability of implementing different language teaching methods to accommodate individual difference in the class	123	3	5	4.48	.619	.383
Ability of paying attention to individual students	123	4	5	4.47	0.501	0.251
Ability of preparing lesson plan for each English classes	123	4	5	4.47	0.501	0.251
Ability of setting pair and group works in English class	123	3	5	4.26	0.722	0.522
Ability of teaching students on how to learn various English lessons	123	3	5	4.08	0.720	0.518
Ability of motivating students for better achievement in English lesson	123	3	5	4.24	0.793	0.629
Ability of enhancing students' autonomous learning	123	3	5	4.24	0.793	0.629
Ability of using various testing strategies in teaching English lessons	123	3	5	4.24	0.793	0.629
Valid N (listwise)	123					

However, Raikhapoor (2019) suggested that English teachers' beliefs about their ability of teaching grammar could sometimes align with their actual teaching practice. Amalia (2025) also noted EFL teachers' perception could meet teaching practices in teaching vocabulary and grammar. The indicated finding suggested that this could be done when teachers correctly identified the language hurdles their students encountered. This helped to predict that there would be opportunities through which EFL teachers' language teaching belief and observed practices would be aligned. Consequently, it appeared that limited teaching resources, problems with large class sizes and issues with EFL teachers' level of self-efficacy in teaching English could be impediment to meeting opportunities between perceived self-efficacy and actual classroom teaching practice.

EFL Teachers' Self-efficacy in the ability of Utilizing Instructional Strategies in Language Teaching Class

Table 2 shows descriptive data analysis results regarding secondary school EFL teachers' utilization of instructional strategies in language teaching classes. The table displays the mean scores and standard deviations (SD) for each item, indicating the extent to which teachers use different instructional strategies in English language instruction. Consistent with the analytical approach applied to EFL teachers' ability of language teaching skill, this section also depends on Choi and Lee (2017) to explore the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to effectively use instructional strategies. As could be seen in the table, EFL teachers' ability of utilizing instructional strategies was assessed by using fifteen (15) items. And the items were representing about teachers' efficacy in using specific instructional strategies in English class.

Numerous findings reported different findings related to EFL teachers' level of self-efficacy and their ability to utilize instructional strategies in teaching English. For instant, Hayati et al. (2021) exhibited that a teacher is required to utilize effective pedagogy, instructional strategy, and teaching methods to deliver effective contents while teaching English. Ajoke (2017) and Shi (2024) found out instructional strategies would support teachers' teaching practice by enhancing students' learning performance in classroom in self-evaluation strategy. As a result, it verifies that students who were not instructed using effective instructional strategies seemed to do poorly. Complemented to this statement, Ajaj et al. (2023) pointed out that interactive instructional strategies could maximize the positive effect of English teachers while teaching English as a second language. Additionally, Octavia et al. (2023) reported that one of the ways to achieve the aims of teaching is through the utilization and implementation of effective instructional strategies in the class.

On the other hand, Fuchs et al. (2021) found that there was a weak correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and their ability of utilizing instructional strategies in teaching English. According to Mustika and Wardah (2021) there could be some instructional strategies employed by the teacher and there would be some variables that affect the strategies used in the classroom. Despite this, Ahmed and Abdullah (2024) found that EFL teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy could show better teaching practice using various instructional strategies. Besides, Hayati et al. (2021) also exhibited that EFL teachers' ability of utilizing various instructional strategies such as using direct instruction, arranging students for discussion, organizing small-groups, and role play would facilitate the teaching practice effectively in the class. According to the research findings, teachers employed those instructional strategies aiming to make students more actively engage in the classroom activities. Moreover, the study revealed that instructional strategies would make learning process more attractive in making students learn together and share their knowledge and skills one to each other.

In similar manner, the current study reported that EFL teachers perceived high level of self-efficacy in the abilities of providing clear explanations when students faced confusion ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.502$), communicating learning objectives and expected outcomes ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.502$), adapting instructional activities to accommodate students' diverse needs ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.470$), and delivering content knowledge (CK) effectively ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.793$). The findings remarkably appeared to indicate that EFL teachers believed that they utilized well-developed instructional strategies which were essential for facilitating effective language teaching in the class.

The study also revealed that EFL teachers had high levels of self-efficacy in the ability to implement different language teaching methods to accommodate individual difference in the class ($M = 4.48$, $SD=0.619$). Similarly, they believed that they have higher

level of self-efficacy in attending to individual students' needs ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.501$), ability of preparing lesson plans for English classes ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.501$) and also, they believed that they have higher level of self-self-efficacy in possessing ability of organizing pair and group work activities in the classroom. Further, the quantitative results indicate that EFL teachers believe that they have high level of self-efficacy in implementing different language teaching strategies in addressing individual learner differences ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.62$). Therefore, it could be possible to suggest that EFL teachers believe that they have strong self-efficacy on accommodating students' individual difference, focusing on students learning needs, preparing lesson plans, organizing pair and group work and implementing various language teaching instructional strategies.

The findings indicated that EFL teachers showed higher self-efficacy in utilizing instructional strategies focusing on students' learning preferences. In relation with this constructs, the results revealed that EFL teachers perceived high levels of self-efficacy in teaching various English lessons ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.72$), motivating students for better achievement in English lesson ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.79$), enhancing students' autonomous learning ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.79$), and EFL teachers' ability of using various testing strategies in teaching English ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.79$). This appears to indicate that EFL teachers believe that they have strong self-efficacy on utilizing various teaching strategies in the class, enhancing students autonomous ways of learning and using various testing strategies.

Furthermore, EFL teachers' ability to utilize instructional strategies had a significant impact ($\beta=0.138$, $t=2.301$) on the teaching practice. This implied that EFL teachers' ability of utilizing instructional strategies accounted for 13% in their overall teaching practice. The ($t = 2.301$) value indicates that the predictor has a considerable impact on EFL teachers' teaching practices in reflecting self-efficacy in teaching English. However, the qualitative findings showed contrasted implications on EFL teachers' practice of utilizing various instructional strategies. Therefore, the qualitative results indicated poor practices on EFL teachers' ability of utilizing instructional strategies in language classes.

With regards to utilizing instructional strategy, one of the EFL teacher participants said

Personally, I have had limited experience in creating various instructional strategies for teaching my students speaking, listening and writing effectively.

The second EFL teacher t said

Most of my colleagues and I did not use a variety of instructional strategies to help students develop the ability to speak, listen, and write freely. I lacked knowledge and expertise in teaching my learners the four language skills and other fundamental linguistic components utilizing instructional techniques that would ensure students learnt more successfully.

Besides, the classroom observation implied that secondary school classrooms did not offer opportunities to effectively utilize various types of instructional strategies. Large class sizes and an inappropriate classroom setting were not comfortable to use different language teaching instructional strategies. For instant, in line with "strategies of explaining some concepts" classroom observation result showed only few EFL teachers had practice on writing "reading topics" on the blackboard and asking students for predicting the contents of the whole reading passage. Similarly, an interview conducted with some of the respondents indicated that only few EFL teachers had the practice on actual procedures on making students familiar with the "reading topic".

In relation to this point, one of the EFL teachers said

I used to focus on the contents rather than the strategies of teaching reading skills. I always write the topic of the reading passage and give the chances for the interested students one by one. Finally, I completed my class in reading the passage by self in summarizing the overall ideas of the reading passage.

However, the interview and the classroom observation data indicated that only few EFL teachers had practice on extensive and intensive reading strategies. According to the findings, few EFL teachers were doing this to explore the surface and hidden meanings of the reading passage. Further, few EFL teachers were using pre-reading, while reading and posting reading stages as instructional strategies in teaching reading skills. Besides, scanning and skimming strategies were effectively employed as part of instructional strategies. Thus, searching for meanings of specific words or phrases and grasping general messages was conveyed in the passage provided.

Despite this, the classroom observation and interview result analysis found that only very few EFL had practice on employing different instructional strategies in teaching writing skills. Various instructional strategies were used in teaching controlled and guided types of writing. Accordingly, only few EFL teachers were giving "hints and guiding clues" in teaching controlled and guided types of writing in the class. This implied that most EFL teachers were not practically teaching writing in this way. Rather the majority of EFL teachers were teaching features of effective writing instead of teaching writing in its practice: Practically. This implied that secondary school EFL teachers were not teaching effective sentences, paragraphs and essays as part of teaching writing skill.

Additionally, interviews and classroom observation revealed that most EFL teachers were writing meanings of words and phrases on the blackboard in creating columns along the sides of new words and phrases extracted on the teaching textbook. According to the interview respondents they used these instructional strategies to reduce confusion on students learning new words and phrases. The quantitative findings revealed that EFL teachers perceived high level self-efficacy on writing the specific objectives of the daily lessons they teach. The qualitative data also complemented with quantitative findings and implies that EFL teachers have good practice in preparing lesson plans writing SMART objectives.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on EFL teachers' teaching practice

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Teaching Practice	123	3.43	4.93	4.1870	.41241	.170
Valid N (listwise)	123					

Table 4. Correlation result analysis

		Teaching Language Skill	Instructional Strategies
Teaching Language Skill	Pearson Correlation	1	.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	123	123
Instructional Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.385**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	123	123

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In connection with this notion of the interview participant said that

In for every lesson I teach from grades 9 to 12, I always prepare a lesson plans that include lesson topics, specific learning objectives, and teaching strategies. The lesson plan helped me deliver the topic successfully within the allowed time.

The respondents also stated that the planned topic, the learning objectives and instructional strategies were clearly presented in the students' textbooks. According to the participants, this would provide good opportunities for EFL teachers to utilize instructional strategies on their own and assist them in becoming familiar with the concepts of instructional strategies. Moreover, the qualitative data indicated that most of EFL teachers were employing non-communicative teaching approach. And this would not support them to plan and teach activities in line with students' learning needs and preference. Additionally, the interview results reported that EFL teachers did not have ample content knowledge (CK) of the subject and use various instructional strategies that would accommodate students' learning preferences. Finally, the participants addressed that they had poor practice in using communicative approaches of language teaching.

Finally, the quantitative data analysis revealed that secondary school EFL teachers perceived a high level of self-efficacy in utilizing instructional strategies. Regardless, the qualitative evidence contradicts these findings. Meanwhile, the qualitative findings are further confirmed by quantitative findings, demonstrating that EFL teachers prepare and use instructional strategies effectively.

EFL Teachers' Teaching Practices

Table 3 illustrates EFL teachers' teaching practices. Mean values, standard deviations, and variances were used to reflect the level of teachers' teaching practice. Subsequently, teaching practice was taken as one of study dependent variables. There were totally fourteen items, seven of which dealt with communicative language teaching practices and seven of which dealt with non-communicative language teaching practices. This shows that both communicative language teaching approach and non-communicative language teaching are conceptually different. The items were adopted from Choi and Lee (2017) with limited modification of concepts on a few items. Then the items were found to be confirmed standard using reliability statistics of Cronbach Alpha ($\alpha = 0.848$). Therefore, under the teaching practice, two subsections of the same questionnaire contained the items for the two methods. As a result, when examining EFL teachers' ability of practicing methods of instruction, the study reported that they had high level of self-efficacy in their ability to use communicative language teaching over non-language teaching approach ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.412$). However, the qualitative findings suggested that the majority of EFL teachers were using non-communicative language teaching approach over communicative

Inferential Statistical Analysis

Assumptions of inferential statistical analysis

Prior to conducting inferential statistical analyses, including Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA, key statistical assumptions were examined to ensure the validity and robustness of the results.

Linearity: The assumption of linearity requires that the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables are linear. The Pearson correlation results show significant positive relationships between Teaching Practice and Teaching Language Skill ($r = 0.524$, $p < 0.001$) and Instructional Strategies ($r = 0.703$, $p < 0.001$) (**Table 4**). These moderate to strong correlations indicates that linear relationships exist among the variables, justifying the application of linear regression analysis.

Normality of Residuals: Normality assumes that the residuals of the regression model are normally distributed. Examination of standardized residuals shows that values range between -2.639 and 2.179, which falls within the acceptable threshold of ± 3 . This suggests that extreme outliers are absent and the residuals approximate a normal distribution. Furthermore, the sample size ($N = 123$) supports the assumption of normality based on the Central Limit Theorem.

Table 5 presents the residuals statistics for the regression model with ($N = 123$). The predicted values ranged from minimum value (3.63) to maximum value (4.72) with ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.31$). This result is indicating a relatively narrow and consistent range of model predictions. And the mean residual was showing 0.000 ($SD = 0.27$), confirming that the regression model is unbiased, with errors evenly distributed around zero.

Table 5. Residuals statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	3.6341	4.7161	4.1870	.31138	123
Residual	-.71966	.59418	.00000	.27042	123
Std. Predicted Value	-1.776	1.699	.000	1.000	123
Std. Residual	-2.639	2.179	.000	.992	123

a. Dependent Variable: Teaching Practice

Table 6. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.755 ^a	.570	.563	.27266	.570	79.556	2	120	.000	1.937

The standardized predicted values ranged from minimum value (-1.776) to maximum value (1.699). The standardized residuals also ranged from minimum value (-2.639) to maximum (2.179), with a mean of (0.000) and a standard deviation of (0.992), which is approximately 1. Therefore, this indicates that the residuals are normally distributed and meet the assumptions of linear regression. Notably, no standardized residual exceeded the threshold of ± 3.0 , suggesting the absence of significant outliers that could distort the model's accuracy.

Overall, these residual statistics confirm that the regression model demonstrates a good fit, with residuals that are small, unbiased, and normally distributed, thereby satisfying the key assumptions required for valid regression analysis.

Homoscedasticity: Homoscedasticity assumes constant variance of residuals across all levels of the independent variables. The residual statistics show a mean residual of zero and a relatively small standard deviation (SD = 0.27042) (Table 5), indicating stable variance

Multicollinearity: Multicollinearity refers to high intercorrelation among independent variables. The correlation between Teaching Language Skill and Instructional Strategies is moderate ($r = 0.385$, $p < 0.001$), which is below the critical threshold ($r > 0.80$). This indicates that the independent variables are sufficiently distinct, and multicollinearity is not a concern. Moreover, the tolerance for all independent variables is less than (1) and variance inflation factor (VIF) for the independent factor is less than the limited value (10) as a result there is no multicollinearity problem in the model between independent variables. Therefore, the regression model used in this study was fit.

Independence of Errors: The independence of errors assumption was tested using the Durbin-Watson statistic. The obtained value (DW = 1.937) (Table 6) falls within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5, indicating that residuals are independent and there is no evidence of autocorrelation.

Absence of Outliers: Outliers can significantly distort regression results. The standardized residual values range from -2.639 to 2.179 (Table 5), which are within the acceptable range (± 3). This indicates that no extreme outliers are present in the dataset.

Model Fitness and Overall Significance: The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(2,120) = 79.556$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the independent variables jointly explain variation in the dependent variable. The model summary further indicates a strong explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.570$) (Table 6), meaning that 57% of the variance in Teaching Practice is explained by Teaching Language Skill and Instructional Strategies.

Relationship among study variables

Pearson correlation showed a moderate positive correlation between language teaching skill and instructional strategy ($r = 0.385$, $p < 0.01$). This implied that there was moderate positive relationship between the two study variables and the growth of either of the two has moderate effect over the second one in teaching English. And also, it indicates that there was statistically significant difference ($P < 0.01$, $\text{Sig} = 0.001$) between EFL teachers' language teaching skills and instructional strategy. Various studies showed the relationship between instructional strategies and teaching language skills. In support of this notion, Citing Rajmes (1983), Annisa and Yunita (2025) reported that teachers' writing strategies should involve various classroom practices and activities that facilitate the development of writing skills. Shapaka (2024) found out there is direct relationship between the teachers' instructional strategies and the teaching of reading comprehension, and Annisa and Yunita (2025) reported that establishing a clear objective, showing and explaining the lesson, integrating prior knowledge are better instructional strategies of teaching speaking skills. However, Felicity (2018) pointed out teachers' poor teaching listening instructional strategies are found to be the main causes of the poor levels of language acquisition in English classes.

According to Sarstedt and Mooi (2014), the R^2 (R square) or coefficient of determination reveals how well the model explains the observed variation in the dependent variable relative to the mean. Sarstedt and Mooi (2014) found out that the coefficient of determination (R^2) is also used to assess the model's predictive precision. In the current study, the model indicated under (Table 6) shows a strong positive relationship between the independent variables of the study such as instructional strategies and teaching language skill) and the dependent variable: teaching practice. The model was employed with a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.755. This indicates the strong association between independent and dependent variables. Whereas R Square value of 0.570 indicates that 57.0% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model and the Adjusted R Square is 0.563, meaning that 56.3% of the variance is still explained, which suggests that the model provides a reasonably good fit and is not overly influenced by the number of predictors.

Table 7. Model coefficient

No	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		.248	.326		.760	.449		
TeachingLanguageSkill		.339	.074	$\beta = 0.298$	4.588	<.001	.851	1.174
Instructional Strategies		.571	.063	$\beta = 0.589$	9.074	<.001	.851	1.174

a. Dependent Variable: Teaching Practice

Table 8. ANOVA result analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	11.829	2	5.914	79.556	<.001
Residual	8.921	120	.074		
Total	20.750	122			

a Dependent variable: Teaching practice

b Predictors: (Constant), instructional strategies, teaching language skills

The standard error of the estimate is 0.27266, indicating a moderate level of prediction error, meaning that the model's predicted values are close to the observed values. Overall, the model demonstrates strong explanatory power, good predictive accuracy, and meets key regression assumptions.

Model Coefficient

Table 7 shows the model coefficients for the regression analysis. The model had a significant explanatory potential for predicting secondary school EFL teachers' teaching practice. Both language teaching skill and instructional strategy were a significant positive predictors of teaching practice ($2, 122 = 79.55, p < 0.001$) $\beta = 0.298, t = 4.588, p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.589, t = 9.074, p < .001$, respectively).

In supporting the above analysis, Ascetta and Harn (2022) explored that EFL teachers' language teaching skills, particularly receptive language skills can positively affect teaching practice. Pradhani (2025) noted that when teachers employ the four language skills in integrated ways, it positively affects teaching practice and Marlina and Roby (2018) reported that teaching language skills are often the key focus that adds values to teachers' teaching practice. Moreover, Ezekwe (2025) found out instructional strategies like discussions and students' collaboration has positive and significant effect on teachers teaching practices and on students learning performance. Furthermore, Oluwagbemiekwe (2024) demonstrates EFL teachers' could utilize a variety of adaptive instructional strategies to close the gaps in their teaching practice. In conclusion, EFL teachers' language teaching skills, language competence, and instructional strategies could predict their teaching practice and account for an increase in their self-efficacy in teaching English, despite the fact that the degree of explanation differs.

ANOVA Result Analysis

Table 8 shows the ANOVA results for the regression analysis. And the ANOVA results demonstrate that the regression model is significantly predicted the teaching practice, $F(2, 122) = 79.55, p < 0.001$. This indicates teaching language skills and instructional strategy provide a strong and meaningful prediction of teaching practice between EFL teachers.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings demonstrate a significant discrepancy between secondary school EFL teachers' perceived self-efficacy and their observed teaching practices. While quantitative data indicated high levels of self-reported efficacy in language teaching skills and instructional strategies, qualitative evidence revealed that these competencies were not consistently reflected in actual classroom implementation. This discrepancy highlights a critical perception–practice gap, suggesting that EFL teachers' higher level of perceived self-efficacy was not inherently translated into effective pedagogical performance.

Notably, alignment between perceived efficacy and classroom practice was only evident in the domains of reading instruction and grammar teaching, where both data analysis results confirmed relatively stronger performance. However, in broader instructional approaches, particularly communicative language teaching (CLT), teachers' self-perceptions were incongruent with observed behaviors. Despite claims of employing CLT, classroom practices remained predominantly teacher-centered and non-communicative, indicating limited operationalization of CLT principles.

Overall, the study underscores the necessity for targeted, practice-oriented professional development interventions that extend beyond enhancing teachers' self-efficacy to fostering tangible pedagogical competence. Such initiatives should involve coordinated efforts among regional, zonal, and district education leaders, alongside active engagement from school leadership. Strengthening this institutional collaboration is essential to aligning teachers' perceived capabilities with effective teaching practice and ultimately narrowing the identified perception–practice gap. Further, this study will serve as a springboard for potential researchers who wish to investigate further issues related to teaching English in Ethiopian school contexts at different levels.

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AI statement: The authors stated that, during the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used AI-powered tools for basic grammar/spell-check to improve the clarity and readability of the text. Otherwise, all work presented here is the original creation of the authors and the authors take full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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