



Exploring teachers' lived experiences in grammar instruction for intermediate learners: Challenges, strategies, and pedagogical implications

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of intermediate teachers in teaching grammar, focusing on the challenges they encountered and the strategies they employed to support learners. Using a phenomenological research design, data were collected from fifteen (15) teacher-respondents through open-ended survey questions and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers face challenges such as students' difficulty in applying grammar rules in communication, differences in learners' proficiency levels, limited engagement during lessons, and instructional constraints. Despite these challenges, teachers used various strategies, including sentence-construction activities, short writing tasks, visual aids, contextualized instruction through reading passages, pair and group activities, drills, worksheets, and error-correction exercises. These strategies helped improve students' understanding and application of grammar. The study concludes that effective grammar instruction requires flexible, learner-centered, and interactive teaching approaches to address diverse learner needs and enhance language learning.

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Introduction

Grammar, as the framework of a language, plays a vital role in developing learners' communication skills by providing the structural foundation for constructing meaningful and accurate expressions in speaking, writing, listening, and reading (Frontiers, 2024). For intermediate learners, mastering grammar becomes increasingly important, as they are expected to express ideas clearly and accurately in both spoken and written communication, thereby enhancing their overall language proficiency (International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies, 2023).

However, pupils often struggle with complex grammar concepts, and teachers encounter various challenges in ensuring mastery of lessons due to the abstract nature of grammatical rules and diverse

learner needs in the classroom (International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 2025). For intermediate learners, mastering grammar becomes increasingly important as they are expected to express ideas clearly and accurately in both speaking and writing, and grammar provides the structural foundation necessary for meaningful communication and effective performance in real-world language use (Rahman et al., 2025).

In addition, grammar instruction remains challenging because learners often perceive grammatical rules as abstract and difficult to internalize, limiting their ability to apply them fluently in communicative contexts (Mamadiyorova & Rahmonqulova, 2025). Research indicates that intermediate learners struggle with specific grammar features such as tense usage, sentence structure, and accurate form use, where theoretical understanding of grammar does not always translate into fluent spoken or written use (Umarjonovich, 2025).

Teachers, therefore, encounter various pedagogical challenges in helping learners achieve mastery of grammar due to learners' difficulties and diverse proficiency levels within the same classroom, making pacing and differentiated instruction complex (George & Yaccob, 2025).

Moreover, many educators report that grammar teaching often competes with other curriculum demands and time constraints, which limit opportunities for extended practice and meaningful feedback necessary for mastery (Richards, 2015; Underwood, 2017; Li & Wu, 2020). These structural constraints are frequently linked to large class sizes, overloaded syllabi, and restricted instructional time, which reduce teachers' ability to provide focused grammar practice and corrective feedback (Underwood, 2017; Nassaji & Fotos, 2017). Some studies also highlight concerns among teachers regarding instructional adequacy and professional support, suggesting the need for more engaging, communicative, and context-based approaches to grammar instruction for intermediate learners (Borg, 2015; Farrell, 2018; Ellis, 2018).

Despite the growing body of literature on grammar instruction, several important gaps remain. First, many existing studies focus on secondary or tertiary learners, with limited attention given to intermediate learners in basic education, who are still developing foundational grammatical competence (Rod Ellis, 2018; Hossein Nassaji, 2018). Second, a large proportion of studies employ quantitative approaches, which often fail to capture the lived experiences, emotions, and adaptive practices of teachers in real classroom contexts (Simon Borg, 2017; Thomas S. C. Farrell, 2018). Third, previous research tends to examine either learner difficulties or instructional strategies in isolation, with few studies integrating both to show how they interact in actual teaching practice (Jack C. Richards & Farrell, 2018; Borg, 2017).

Furthermore, much of the available literature is situated in international contexts, with minimal focus on localized classroom realities in Philippine public schools, where factors such as large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and time constraints significantly influence grammar instruction (UNESCO, 2020; Department of Education Philippines, 2020). Lastly, there is insufficient discussion on how teachers' reflective practices shape their responses to instructional challenges (Farrell, 2018; Borg, 2017).

Review of related literature

This section reviews related literature and studies that provide the theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding grammar instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly the lived experiences of teachers instructing intermediate-level learners. It examines various approaches to grammar instruction, the challenges teachers and learners encounter, and innovative strategies used to improve teaching and learning. The review also considers how teachers' beliefs, professional development, and classroom experiences influence their instructional practices. By synthesizing relevant literature and previous studies, this section establishes the context of the present research and identifies the gaps it seeks to address.

Grammar instruction in ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts

Grammar instruction has long been recognized as a fundamental component of second-language education, as it provides learners with the necessary structure for producing meaningful and accurate communication (Richards & Renandya, 2002). However, its implementation continues to generate pedagogical debate among language educators and researchers, particularly regarding the effectiveness of explicit versus implicit instruction (Ellis, 2006). In ESL/EFL contexts, grammar teaching encompasses a range of approaches, from traditional form-focused instruction to communicative and meaning-oriented teaching, reflecting the evolving nature of language pedagogy (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). These approaches highlight the ongoing debate over whether grammar should be taught through direct rule-based explanation or acquired through authentic language use and interaction (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Furthermore, the choice of instructional approach significantly influences teachers' classroom practices and shapes how learners understand and apply grammatical structures in real-life communication (Borg, 2006).

In addition, research highlights the importance of adapting grammar instruction to learners' proficiency levels, as effective teaching requires flexibility in selecting strategies that align with students' needs and cognitive abilities (Huang, 2023). Alimardonova (2025) emphasizes that effective grammar teaching requires a variety of strategies, including guided discovery, deductive and inductive approaches, and contextualized learning activities. These strategies allow teachers to address the diverse learning needs of students while promoting a deeper understanding of grammatical concepts, as combining inductive and deductive approaches enhances learner engagement and supports knowledge retention (Male, 2018; Tsulaia, 2022). Furthermore, instructional approaches that integrate meaningful context and learner-centered activities help learners actively construct grammatical knowledge rather than passively receive rules (Mallia, 2014). Such instructional approaches are particularly relevant for intermediate learners who are transitioning from basic grammar knowledge to more complex language structures and communicative competence, as this stage requires both accuracy and the ability to use grammar in authentic communication (Ellis, 2006; Huang, 2023).

Challenges in teaching grammar to intermediate learners

Despite the recognized importance of grammar instruction, teachers frequently encounter significant challenges in facilitating effective grammar learning. Empirical studies indicate that learners often

struggle to understand and apply grammatical rules in real communicative contexts, as many students can understand rules in theory but find it difficult to transfer this knowledge to actual language use (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011; Ellis, 2006; Spada & Tomita, 2010). For instance, research in second language acquisition has shown that learners experience persistent difficulty in proceduralizing grammatical knowledge for spontaneous communication, even after explicit instruction, particularly when practice opportunities are limited or decontextualized (DeKeyser, 2007; Loewen, 2020). These difficulties are further intensified by instructional practices that rely heavily on repetitive drills and form-focused exercises without meaningful communicative integration, which limits learner engagement and real-world language use (Nassaji, 2018; Spada, 2011). Moreover, studies emphasize that grammar instruction becomes less effective when taught in isolation, whereas contextualized, meaning-focused, and communicative approaches significantly enhance learners' ability to internalize and apply grammatical structures in authentic communication (Ellis et al., 2019; Loewen & Sato, 2018).

Similarly, studies conducted in secondary education settings reveal that teachers themselves face difficulties in teaching grammar effectively. Soomro, Abbasi, and Kalhor (2023) and Munir, Ahmad, and Bhatti (2023) reported that many grammar teachers feel insufficiently prepared or lack the necessary motivation to deliver grammar lessons in engaging and meaningful ways. These findings are supported by earlier research indicating that teachers often experience limited pedagogical knowledge and confidence in grammar instruction, particularly when using communicative approaches (Borg, 2006). Factors such as limited professional training, inadequate instructional resources, and insufficient pedagogical support often contribute to these challenges (Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2011; Borg, 2006). As a result, grammar lessons may become overly focused on memorizing rules rather than on meaningful language use, thereby reducing opportunities for communicative practice (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

Furthermore, learners at the intermediate level encounter particular difficulties with more complex grammatical structures, including tense usage, sentence construction, and voice. Faudi and Muchsin (2025) noted that these linguistic complexities frequently hinder students' ability to express ideas accurately in written and spoken communication. This is consistent with findings that intermediate learners often struggle to apply grammatical knowledge in context, especially when dealing with more advanced structures (Ellis, 2006; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Consequently, teachers must continually adapt their instructional strategies to help learners overcome these difficulties while maintaining student engagement in the learning process, as flexible, learner-centered approaches are essential for effective grammar instruction (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Technological and innovative teaching strategies

In response to these challenges, recent literature highlights the importance of adopting innovative, technology-enhanced teaching strategies, as these approaches have been shown to significantly improve learners' motivation, engagement, and comprehension of grammatical concepts (Chapelle, 2003; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Creative instructional approaches have been shown to enhance language learning by making grammar instruction more interactive and meaningful, particularly through games, storytelling, music, and digital tools that promote active participation (Harmer, 2007; Tomlinson, 2011). Tamam (2024) reviewed several innovative grammar-teaching techniques, including games, storytelling,

music, and digital learning tools, and concluded that integrating creative methods into grammar instruction can make learning more interactive and meaningful for students.

Research supports the use of writing tasks to reinforce grammar learning through authentic communication, as productive tasks encourage learners to process and apply grammatical structures in meaningful contexts actively (Ellis, 2009; Storch, 2013). Similarly, recent scholarship highlights the effectiveness of integrating digital technologies, such as gamified learning environments and blended instruction, into language teaching. These approaches allow learners to interact with grammatical concepts in more engaging and meaningful ways while promoting collaboration and learner autonomy, which are essential components of effective language acquisition (Hamari et al., 2014; Hrastinski, 2019). Technology-supported instruction also provides opportunities for teachers to present grammar lessons through multimedia resources that enhance comprehension of complex linguistic structures and sustain learner engagement (Mayer & Moreno, 2003; Plass & Jones, 2005). Furthermore, digital tools and computer-assisted language learning environments facilitate immediate feedback, repeated practice, and individualized learning pathways, which contribute to improved grammar performance and learner independence (Stockwell, 2012; Godwin-Jones, 2018). Studies consistently show that technology-enhanced, interactive, and meaning-focused instruction improves both learner motivation and grammatical accuracy in second language classrooms.

These findings suggest that the integration of innovative strategies and digital tools can serve as practical solutions to some of the challenges teachers encounter in grammar instruction, particularly in maintaining learner engagement and facilitating deeper understanding of grammatical rules, as technology-enhanced and learner-centered approaches have been shown to increase motivation, interaction, and comprehension in language learning (Chapelle, 2003; Mayer, 2009; Hockly, 2018). Studies also emphasize that gamification, multimedia learning, and blended learning environments help sustain learner attention and promote active participation, which are essential for effective grammar acquisition (Deterding et al., 2011; Graham, 2006). Furthermore, research indicates that digital tools provide immediate feedback and contextualized practice, enabling learners to internalize grammatical structures more effectively and apply them in meaningful communication (Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Stockwell, 2012).

Teachers' beliefs, professional development, and lived experiences

Beyond instructional techniques, research also emphasizes the importance of teachers' beliefs, professional experiences, and reflective practices in shaping grammar instruction, as teacher cognition significantly influences classroom decisions and teaching approaches (Borg, 2006). Teachers' lived experiences in the classroom also play a crucial role in how they perceive challenges and respond to students' learning needs, particularly in grammar instruction, where decisions about form, meaning, and correction are constant (Borg, 2015). Castro (2026) documented the lived experiences of ESL teachers and found that grammar instruction often involves navigating issues such as student attitudes, error correction, and varying levels of learner motivation. These findings are consistent with studies showing that teachers frequently balance pedagogical goals with emotional and interpersonal demands in the classroom, making grammar teaching a complex professional practice (Golombek, 1998; Farrell, 2015). Such challenges demonstrate that teaching grammar involves not only technical knowledge but also

affective, reflective, and relational dimensions of teaching that shape instructional effectiveness (Richards, 2010).

Moreover, professional development plays a crucial role in enhancing teachers' competence and confidence in grammar instruction. Studies suggest that training programs and continuous professional learning opportunities can help teachers shift from traditional teacher-centered approaches to more learner-centered and communicative practices. According to Author et al. (2022), professional development initiatives that focus on reflective teaching practices encourage educators to consider learners' affective needs alongside linguistic objectives. Such developments contribute to more responsive and effective grammar instruction.

Overall, the reviewed literature highlights that grammar instruction is a complex and evolving aspect of language teaching that requires a balance between form-focused and communicative approaches (Jack C. Richards & Thomas S. C. Farrell, 2018). While numerous studies emphasize the effectiveness of interactive and contextualized strategies, there remains a limited understanding of how teachers navigate these approaches in real classroom settings, particularly at the intermediate level (Borg, 2017; Hossein Nassaji, 2018). Moreover, existing research often overlooks the interplay between learner-related challenges and teacher decision-making processes (Rod Ellis, 2018; Borg, 2017). Therefore, this study builds on previous findings by situating grammar instruction within teachers' lived experiences, offering deeper insights into how instructional challenges are addressed through reflective and adaptive practices (Farrell, 2018; Nassaji, 2018).

Statement of the problem

This study explored challenges and strategies faced by intermediate teachers. Specifically, the study answered the following research questions.

1. What challenges do intermediate teachers face in teaching grammar?
2. What strategies do intermediate teachers use in teaching grammar?

Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and data sources, including the study locale, population, and sampling; the data-gathering instrument; and the data analysis tool, as well as the ethical standards.

Research design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and understand teachers' lived experiences in teaching grammar to intermediate learners. Phenomenology focuses on describing and interpreting individuals' experiences of a particular phenomenon, including how they perceive, understand, and assign meaning to those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This design was appropriate because the study sought to examine the challenges teachers encountered, the strategies they employed, and the meanings they attached to their experiences in grammar instruction.

Rather than measuring variables or testing relationships, the study gathered detailed accounts of teachers' experiences, perceptions, and coping practices. These accounts were then analyzed to identify common themes and describe the essence of their shared experiences.

Research participants

The participants were 15 teachers from Sinait District who taught English or grammar to intermediate-level learners. They were selected because their direct experience in grammar instruction enabled them to offer relevant and meaningful insights into the challenges and practices of teaching grammar.

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected according to characteristics relevant to the research objectives. To be included in the study, participants had to be currently teaching or have prior experience teaching grammar to intermediate-level learners. Their experiences and responses served as the primary sources of data for understanding the challenges, strategies, and instructional practices involved in grammar teaching.

Research instrument

The primary data-gathering instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. It was designed to obtain detailed accounts of teachers' experiences, challenges, and strategies in teaching grammar to intermediate-level learners.

The open-ended format allowed participants to describe their thoughts, perspectives, and experiences in their own words. The questions focused on the challenges encountered in grammar instruction, the strategies used to address them, and the participants' suggestions for improving grammar instruction.

To ensure the instrument's clarity and relevance, experts in education and language teaching reviewed and validated the questionnaire. Their comments and recommendations were incorporated into the final version before it was administered to the participants.

Data gathering procedure

After the research instrument had been prepared and validated, the researcher proceeded with data collection. The questionnaire was converted into an online format using Google Forms to make the process accessible and convenient for the participants.

The Google Forms link was distributed to the selected participants through email and messaging applications. They were informed of the study's purpose and provided with clear instructions for completing the questionnaire.

Before answering the questions, participants received a brief explanation of the study's objectives and the voluntary nature of their participation. They were encouraged to provide honest responses based on their experiences teaching grammar to intermediate-level learners and were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire.

After submission, the responses were automatically recorded in Google Forms. The researcher subsequently reviewed, organized, and compiled the collected data in preparation for analysis.

Data analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to examine the qualitative data gathered from the participants. Thematic analysis is a systematic method of identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data.

The researcher first read and reviewed all responses several times to become familiar with the data and develop an overall understanding of the participants' experiences. Significant statements and key ideas related to grammar instruction were then identified, coded, and grouped by meaning.

The resulting codes were organized into broader themes representing teachers' common experiences, challenges, and instructional practices in teaching grammar to intermediate-level learners. The themes were presented in tables and supported by selected participant responses to provide context and deepen the interpretation of the findings.

Ethical considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of the participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of the study's purpose, objectives, procedures, and intended use of the data before completing the questionnaire.

Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were protected. The Google Form did not require names or other personally identifying information. All responses were treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes.

Participants were also informed of their right to decline to participate or withdraw before submitting their responses, without penalty or negative consequences. The researcher ensured that they were not exposed to harm, pressure, or coercion during the research process.

All collected data were securely stored and accessed only for purposes related to the study. Throughout data analysis and reporting, the researcher maintained honesty, transparency, accuracy, and respect for the participants' experiences.

Data presentation and analysis

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on grammar instruction by offering a phenomenological perspective on teachers' lived experiences. This perspective is often underrepresented in research on grammar teaching. Unlike prior studies that focus primarily on instructional techniques or learner outcomes, this research highlights how teachers navigate pedagogical, emotional, and contextual challenges in real classroom settings.

Problem 1: What are the challenges faced by intermediate teachers in teaching grammar?

Table 1. Challenges faced by intermediate teachers in teaching grammar

Theme	Particulars	Frequency
Difficulty applying grammar rules	Students understand rules but struggle to apply them in speaking and writing	6
Repeated grammatical errors	Learners frequently commit errors despite prior explanation	4
Confusion with grammar structures	Difficulty distinguishing tenses, prepositions, and sentence patterns	3
Limited vocabulary	Learners lack sufficient vocabulary to construct grammatically correct sentences	2
Reliance on mother tongue	Students depend on their first language when constructing sentences	1
Diverse learner proficiency	Students demonstrate different levels of grammar understanding	3
Low student engagement	Learners lose interest or avoid participation in grammar activities	2
Fear of making mistakes	Students hesitate to speak or write due to fear of grammatical errors	1
Time constraints	Limited class time for grammar practice and reinforcement	1

Note: Survey responses of intermediate teachers on adapting grammar teaching strategies in Sinait District, Division of Ilocos Sur.

The findings reveal that intermediate teachers often struggle to help learners apply grammar rules in real communication. The most frequently reported challenge was students' difficulty in applying grammar rules in speaking and writing ($f = 6$). Teachers explained that although learners may understand the rules during instruction, they often struggle to use them independently when forming sentences. One participant shared,

“Some students understand the grammar rule during the lesson but find it difficult to apply it when speaking or writing independently” (P6).

This observation aligns with research indicating that learners often experience difficulty transferring grammatical knowledge into communicative use (Mustakim, Jaya, & Jabri, 2025).

Another challenge reported by teachers was repeated grammatical errors ($f = 4$), even after explanations and exercises. Teachers noted that students frequently repeat mistakes in verb tenses, subject–verb agreement, and sentence structure. One teacher stated,

“Intermediate learners want to communicate freely, but they still make many grammatical errors” (P2).

Studies have shown that mastering grammatical structures requires continuous practice and feedback to strengthen learners' accuracy (Faudi & Muchsin, 2025).

Teachers also reported confusion with grammar structures (f = 3), particularly with tenses and prepositions. According to one respondent,

“Students sometimes become confused with the differences in verb tenses and sentence patterns” (P3).

Such difficulties highlight the complexity of grammar concepts and the need for structured and contextualized instruction. Research suggests that explicit explanations combined with practice activities help learners internalize grammatical patterns more effectively (Alimardonova, 2025).

In addition, teachers identified learner-related factors such as limited vocabulary (f = 2) and reliance on the mother tongue (f = 1), which affect sentence construction and grammatical accuracy. These findings support studies indicating that vocabulary knowledge and language exposure influence learners’ ability to apply grammatical rules effectively (Sudharshana, 2025).

Other challenges include diverse learner proficiency (f = 3), low engagement in grammar lessons (f = 2), fear of making mistakes (f = 1), and time constraints (f = 1). Teachers emphasized that differences in learners’ abilities make it difficult to pace lessons appropriately for all students. As one participant explained,

“Some students easily understand grammar lessons, while others need more explanation and practice” (P7).

These findings highlight the need for differentiated instruction and engaging activities to maintain learners’ interest and participation in grammar learning. Overall, the data indicate that teaching grammar to intermediate learners involves addressing both linguistic difficulties and classroom-related challenges. Teachers must balance explanation, practice, and engagement strategies to help students develop confidence and accuracy in grammar use.

Problem 2: What strategies do intermediate teachers use in teaching grammar?

Table 2. Strategies used by intermediate teachers in teaching grammar

Theme	Particulars	Frequency
Sentence construction activities	Students practice forming sentences using given words	3
Short writing activities	Learners apply grammar rules in their own written sentences	2
Visual aids	Charts, diagrams, and examples used to explain grammar rules	1
Contextualized grammar instruction	Integration of grammar with reading passages	1
Pair and group activities	Collaborative speaking activities to practice grammar	1

Guided discovery	Students identify grammar rules from examples	1
Drills and repetition	Repeated exercises to reinforce grammar patterns	2
Worksheets and exercises	Focused activities targeting specific grammar skills	1
Error correction activities	Students identify and correct grammatical errors	1
Sentence creation	Students create their own sentences using grammar rules	2

Note: Survey responses of intermediate teachers on adapting grammar teaching strategies in Sinait District, Division of Ilocos Sur.

The findings show that teachers employ various instructional strategies to help intermediate learners understand and apply grammar concepts. The most commonly used approach is sentence-construction activities ($f = 3$), in which students practice forming sentences using given words or grammar patterns. Teachers believe that such activities allow learners to apply grammar rules directly. One participant explained, “I use sentence construction activities where students practice forming correct sentences using given words” (P5). This strategy encourages learners to engage in language production, thereby actively improving grammatical accuracy.

Teachers also use short writing activities ($f = 2$) and sentence creation tasks ($f = 2$) to help learners apply grammar rules in meaningful contexts. Writing activities encourage students to practice grammar while expressing their own ideas. One teacher noted,

“I provide short writing activities so that students can apply grammar rules in their own sentences” (P4).

Research supports the use of writing tasks to reinforce grammar learning through authentic communication, as writing-based production tasks promote deeper grammatical processing and greater accuracy in second-language learning contexts (Storch, 2013; Ellis, 2018).

Visual aids ($f = 1$) and contextualized grammar instruction ($f = 1$) were also reported as useful strategies. Teachers explained that charts, diagrams, and reading passages help students understand grammar concepts more clearly. One participant shared,

“I use visual aids such as charts and diagrams to explain grammar rules clearly” (P7).

Studies have shown that visual representations support learners in understanding abstract grammar concepts by reducing cognitive load and enhancing dual coding processes, which improves comprehension and retention of language structures in multimedia-supported learning environments (Plass, Moreno, & Brünken, 2010; Mayer, 2017; Sweller, van Merriënboer, & Paas, 2019).

Collaborative learning strategies such as pair and group activities (f = 1) were also mentioned. Teachers encourage students to practice speaking using correct grammar during discussions and group tasks. According to one respondent,

“I conduct pair and group activities where students practice speaking using correct grammar” (P9).

These strategies promote active participation and help learners develop confidence in using grammar during communication.

Other strategies include guided discovery (f = 1), drills and repetition (f = 2), worksheets (f = 1), and error correction exercises (f = 1). Teachers emphasized that repeated practice and feedback help reinforce grammar rules and improve students’ understanding. One teacher stated,

“I ask students to correct sentences with grammatical errors to develop their analytical skills” (P10).

Such activities help learners recognize and correct mistakes, strengthening their grammar awareness. Overall, the findings indicate that teachers combine structured instruction, practice activities, and interactive strategies to support grammar learning. These approaches allow teachers to address learners’ difficulties while promoting engagement and active participation in grammar lessons.

Several studies support the effectiveness of the strategies identified in this research. For instance, recent work on form-focused instruction emphasizes that meaningful practice, such as sentence construction and contextualized grammar instruction, helps learners internalize grammatical structures more effectively when combined with communicative use (Hossein Nassaji & Sandra Fotos, 2017; Rod Ellis, 2018). Similarly, contemporary studies on grammar pedagogy highlight that guided discovery, structured practice, and repetition remain effective when embedded in meaningful communicative contexts rather than isolated drills (Jack C. Richards & Thomas S. C. Farrell, 2018).

In addition, research on communicative language teaching confirms that pair and group work, along with short writing tasks, significantly improve learners’ grammatical competence by promoting interaction and meaningful output (Diane Larsen-Freeman & Marti Anderson, 2018; Scott Thornbury, 2018). Furthermore, recent studies emphasize that visual aids, digital resources, and immediate corrective feedback enhance learners’ understanding and application of grammar rules, particularly when supported by multimodal instruction (Jack C. Richards, 2018; Hossein Nassaji, 2018). These studies collectively corroborate that a combination of interactive, contextualized, and practice-based strategies enhances grammar learning among intermediate learners in contemporary classroom settings.

This study makes several important contributions to theory and practice. First, it extends teacher cognition theory by demonstrating that teachers’ instructional decisions are shaped not only by beliefs but also by contextual constraints, such as time limitations, learner diversity, and classroom realities (Simon Borg, 2017; Jack C. Richards & Thomas S. C. Farrell, 2018). Second, it reinforces constructivist learning theory by showing that grammar learning is more effective when learners actively engage in meaningful, contextualized activities (Rod Ellis, 2018; Scott Thornbury, 2018).

In terms of practical implications, the findings suggest the need for policy support in teacher professional development, particularly in training teachers to use interactive, differentiated, and technology-supported grammar instruction strategies (UNESCO, 2020; Department of Education Philippines, 2020). Schools and educational leaders may also consider providing adequate instructional resources and time allocation for grammar instruction to enhance learning outcomes (Diane Larsen-Freeman & Hossein Nassaji, 2018). Additionally, curriculum planners may integrate more contextualized and communicative grammar activities to support intermediate learners better (Richards & Farrell, 2018; Nassaji, 2018).

Results and discussion

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on grammar instruction by providing a phenomenological understanding of teachers' lived experiences in teaching grammar to intermediate learners. While previous research has largely focused on instructional strategies, learner difficulties, and general teaching approaches, the present study advances knowledge by highlighting teachers' real classroom experiences, emotional responses, and adaptive decision-making processes in addressing challenges in grammar instruction.

In relation to teacher cognition theory, the findings reinforce the idea that teachers' beliefs and experiences significantly shape instructional practices. As emphasized by Borg (2017), teacher cognition plays a central role in classroom decision-making. However, this study further demonstrates that beliefs do not solely influence cognition but are also shaped by contextual realities, including daily classroom struggles, learner behavior, and instructional constraints. This suggests that grammar teaching is not merely a technical process but also a situational, emotional, and reflective practice.

The findings also support constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through interaction and meaningful engagement. Teachers in this study employed contextualized, interactive, and differentiated strategies that enabled learners to engage in grammar learning actively. These practices align with the view that grammar instruction becomes more effective when learners participate in meaningful tasks rather than passively receive rules (Ellis, 2018; Nassaji & Fotos, 2017).

Moreover, the study highlights the range of adaptive strategies teachers use to address learner difficulties. These include sentence-construction activities, short writing tasks, visual aids, contextualized instruction through reading passages, pair and group activities, drills, worksheets, and error-correction exercises. Such strategies reflect a balance between form-focused and communicative approaches, which have been shown to enhance both grammatical accuracy and meaningful language use (Larsen-Freeman, 2018; Nassaji & Fotos, 2017). The use of these varied approaches demonstrates teachers' efforts to respond to diverse learner needs while maintaining engagement in grammar instruction.

In addition, the findings emphasize the importance of creating a supportive and non-threatening learning environment. Teachers reported that learners' fear of making mistakes and low engagement can hinder participation in grammar activities. This supports previous research suggesting that affective factors significantly influence language learning, and that positive classroom environments encourage learners to take risks and actively participate (Borg, 2017; Farrell, 2018). Therefore, effective grammar

instruction requires not only pedagogical competence but also sensitivity to learners' emotional and motivational needs.

Furthermore, the study underscores the role of reflective practice in improving grammar instruction. Teachers continuously adapt their strategies based on classroom experiences, learner responses, and instructional challenges. Reflective teaching enables educators to evaluate their practices and make informed adjustments, thereby enhancing instructional effectiveness (Farrell, 2018; Richards & Farrell, 2018). This highlights the dynamic nature of grammar teaching, where flexibility and responsiveness are essential.

Overall, the findings suggest that effective grammar instruction goes beyond rule explanation and requires a combination of structured guidance and meaningful communication. Integrating grammar with reading, writing, and interactive activities enables learners to develop both accuracy and fluency, consistent with communicative and meaning-focused approaches in second-language pedagogy (Ellis, 2018; Larsen-Freeman, 2018).

In conclusion, this study reinforces the view that grammar learning is most effective when supported by learner-centered instruction, reflective teaching practices, and a collaborative classroom environment. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating meaningful learning experiences, while learners are encouraged to actively engage, practice consistently, and build confidence in using the language. Through this shared process, the challenges in grammar instruction can be gradually addressed, leading to improved language proficiency among intermediate learners.

Conclusion

Based on the responses of the fifteen teacher-respondents, the study concludes that teaching grammar to intermediate learners is both challenging and dynamic. While learners often demonstrate an initial understanding of grammatical rules, many continue to struggle to apply them accurately in speaking and writing. Common challenges include persistent grammatical errors, confusion in verb tenses and sentence structures, limited vocabulary, and varying levels of proficiency within the same classroom. These issues highlight the complexity of grammar instruction and the need for continuous instructional adjustment to address diverse learner needs.

In addition, affective factors such as low student engagement, hesitation to participate, and fear of making mistakes significantly hinder learners' active involvement in grammar activities. Time constraints further limit opportunities for meaningful practice, reinforcement, and immediate feedback, which are essential for developing grammatical competence. These findings emphasize that grammar instruction is not solely a cognitive process but is also influenced by emotional, behavioral, and contextual classroom conditions.

Despite these challenges, the study reveals that teachers demonstrate adaptability and resourcefulness in their instructional practices. By employing a range of strategies, such as contextualized activities, collaborative learning, and structured practice, teachers can support learners in improving their

understanding and application of grammar. This suggests that effective grammar instruction requires flexibility, creativity, and responsiveness to learners' needs.

Overall, the study highlights that grammar learning is most effective when instruction is learner-centered, interactive, and grounded in meaningful communication. A supportive classroom environment, combined with consistent practice and appropriate instructional strategies, enables learners to gradually develop confidence and accuracy in using grammatical structures.

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