

An Exploration of the Strategies ESL Teachers Use in Teaching English Grammar in Selected Rural Ghanaian Junior High Schools

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Abstract

The persistent difficulty of learners in rural Ghanaian junior high schools (JHS) in mastering English grammar raises important questions about the instructional strategies employed by teachers. This study explored the strategies that ESL teachers adopt in teaching English grammar in selected rural JHS in Ghana, specifically Nkwanta North context. Anchored in Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding, the study adopted a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of grammar teaching practices within these environments. Ten English language teachers were purposively selected from public JHS. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, and analyzed thematically using Saldaña's (2021) in vivo and pattern coding methods. Findings revealed that teachers employed group discussions, role-play, storytelling, sentence correction, and construction to foster grammatical competence. Despite the absence of adequate instructional materials, teachers exhibited remarkable pedagogical adaptability through the use of improvised teaching aids to support grammar instruction. The study concludes that effective grammar teaching in rural Ghanaian classrooms is sustained by context-responsive scaffolding, collaborative learning, and creative resource utilization. It recommends that stakeholders should strengthen regular in-service training, focused on interactive grammar pedagogy, and contextual adaptation of teaching aids to enhance learner outcomes in resource-constrained settings.

1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar forms the bedrock of linguistic competence and plays a pivotal role in learners' ability to communicate accurately and fluently (Soomro et al., 2023). In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), especially in rural Ghanaian junior high schools, effective grammar instruction becomes even more critical. Learners must not only acquire grammatical forms but also develop the ability to use them meaningfully in various communicative situations (Thornbury, 1999). Yet, teaching grammar in such contexts presents a unique set of challenges, including limited instructional resources, linguistic diversity, and contextual barriers.

As the researchers observed, ESL teachers in rural settings like the Nkwanta North District often teach under constrained conditions, and this reality influences their pedagogical choices. Despite these constraints, they are expected to adopt effective strategies to scaffold learning and facilitate grammatical development (Nunan, 1991). The success of grammar instruction, therefore, depends largely on the ability of teachers to select and implement strategies that are not only contextually appropriate but also learner-centered.

This study focuses on understanding the strategies that teachers use to teach English grammar in selected junior high schools in the Nkwanta North district. Such insights can inform targeted professional development programs and curriculum reforms aimed at improving grammar teaching and learning outcomes in rural ESL classrooms across Ghana.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The persistent struggle of learners in rural Ghanaian junior high schools to master English grammar raises critical concerns about the instructional strategies employed by teachers (Kumayas & Lengkoan, 2023; Nagamine, 2018). Despite the pivotal role of grammar in language competence, existing approaches appear inadequate, as reflected in consistently low BECE performance. While global studies (Shemuda, 2018; Souisa & Yanuarius, 2020) and local studies (e.g. Hamza, 2018; Appiagyei, 2022; Anani, 2017) have examined various grammar teaching approaches and strategies, these have predominantly focused on senior high schools or urban contexts, leaving a significant gap at the junior high school level in rural Ghana. Moreover, previous research has tended to emphasize teaching methodologies rather than context-specific strategies that ESL teachers adopt to address linguistic diversity and resource constraints. This study argues that without a deep understanding of the strategies rural teachers use, efforts to improve grammar instruction will remain superficial. The study, therefore, seeks to explore these strategies to inform policy, pedagogy, and teacher professional development.

1.2. Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that ESL teachers in Ghanaian junior high schools adopt in teaching English grammar, particularly within the rural context of Nkwanta North. Specifically, the study sought to answer the question: *What strategies do teachers adopt in teaching English grammar in junior high schools in rural communities of Ghana?* This question directly addresses the problem of learners' persistent grammatical difficulties by uncovering how teachers in rural educational contexts adapt their strategies to enhance grammar learning outcomes.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, specifically the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, which offer a robust lens for exploring the instructional strategies employed by ESL teachers in rural Ghanaian junior high schools. Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD emphasizes the cognitive space between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guided support. In the context of grammar instruction, this implies that teachers must strategically structure learning experiences that extend learners' grammatical abilities beyond their current level through guided participation and interaction.

Scaffolding, as an instructional counterpart to the ZPD, enables educators to provide tailored, temporary support that adjusts to learners' evolving competence. Within the rural context of Nkwanta North, where learners often bring diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds,

scaffolding becomes a practical strategy for delivering context-responsive grammar instruction. This framework allowed the researchers to critically examine how teachers adapt their methods to support learners' gradual mastery of grammar concepts, while also accounting for sociocultural influences on instruction. By applying these theoretical tools, the study explores not only the strategies teachers adopt but also how and why these strategies emerge in response to learners' needs and contextual realities.

2.1. Teaching Strategies

The implementation of effective teaching strategies remains central to achieving meaningful learning outcomes in the teaching of grammar where abstract linguistic rules must be internalized through practice and application. Richards and Rodgers (2014) provide a useful framework for distinguishing among approaches, methods, and strategies in language teaching. According to them, a teaching approach reflects the theoretical beliefs and principles about the nature of language and language learning, for instance, whether one views language as a system of rules or a means of communication. A teaching method operationalizes these principles into a systematic plan for instruction, defining roles of teachers, learners, and instructional materials. A teaching strategy, on the other hand, refers to the specific techniques or classroom procedures that teachers employ within a method to achieve desired learning outcomes. Thus, while the approach provides the philosophical foundation and the method offers the structural design, the strategy embodies the teacher's practical classroom decision-making.

Across these approaches and methods, several key strategies have emerged as effective in grammar and language instruction. Within the Grammar-Translation Method, strategies such as explicit explanation, rule memorization, and translation exercises emphasize accuracy and form-focused learning. Though often criticized for their limited communicative scope, these strategies can strengthen learners' metalinguistic awareness when supplemented with communicative tasks (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). Conversely, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes meaning-making and learner interaction. Strategies associated with CLT—like role plays, information-gap activities, and dialogue reconstruction—enable learners to internalize grammar through contextualized use (Ellis, 2020). Similarly, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) employs strategies such as problem-solving tasks, project work, and collaborative writing that integrate form and meaning, allowing learners to “notice” grammatical structures in authentic communication (Willis & Willis, 2013).

Active learning strategies are equally pivotal. Prince (2004) and Hattie (2008) emphasize that approaches such as problem-based learning, peer collaboration, and cooperative learning enhance comprehension, retention, and critical thinking. In language classrooms, these strategies translate into peer editing, group sentence construction, and communicative drills that promote learner autonomy and engagement. The inductive strategy, where learners derive grammatical rules from examples, aligns with discovery-based approaches that foster deep cognitive engagement (Thornbury, 1999). Conversely, deductive strategies, which present rules before practice, are more effective for beginners who require explicit scaffolding (Ellis, 2020).

Differentiated instruction, as Tomlinson (2014) advocates, also functions as a strategic adaptation across methods. Teachers can modify tasks, groupings, or outputs to accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds—a necessity in multilingual Ghanaian classrooms. Likewise, integrating technology through the TPACK framework (Koehler & Mishra, 2009) enriches grammar teaching with interactive exercises, online quizzes, and digital writing feedback, though its success depends on teacher digital competence and infrastructural availability.

Finally, formative assessment and feedback strategies (Black & Wiliam, 1998) reinforce the learning cycle by allowing teachers to monitor progress and tailor instruction. When combined with a growth mindset orientation (Dweck, 2006), these strategies motivate learners to view grammatical mastery as a process of continual improvement rather than fixed ability

2.2.English Grammar Teaching and Second Language Acquisition

The intersection of grammar teaching and second language acquisition (SLA) remains a significant focus in language education research. Scholars like Ellis (2016) emphasize that grammar instruction, when meaningfully integrated, enhances learners' accuracy and fluency by promoting the internalization of grammatical rules. Explicit grammar teaching provides learners with a structural framework that facilitates systematic language use (DeKeyser, 2020). However, to avoid abstraction, such instruction must be situated within communicative contexts that demonstrate the functional application of rules. In contrast, Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis posits that implicit learning through comprehensible input—language slightly above the learner's current level ($i+1$)—is more effective, especially when grammar is embedded within authentic communicative tasks, as supported by Ellis and Shintani (2013). Corrective feedback further enhances grammatical competence. According to Bitchener and Ferris (2012), both explicit and implicit feedback strategies (whether immediate or delayed) can significantly improve learners' accuracy. The rise of educational technology has also expanded grammar instruction possibilities. Tools such as language learning apps and automated feedback systems support both explicit and implicit instruction, enabling learners to correct errors independently (Chapelle & Voss, 2008; Reinders & Benson, 2017). Overall, a balanced, contextually grounded approach to grammar teaching remains central to effective SLA.

2.3.Strategies Used in Teaching English Grammar

Empirical studies on grammar teaching have revealed diverse strategies shaped by theoretical orientations and contextual realities. Zhao and Ellis (2022), using an experimental design, demonstrated that explicit grammar instruction significantly enhances learners' grammatical accuracy, especially among older and advanced students. However, their findings also revealed that without meaningful communicative practice, the acquired knowledge tends to be short-lived—echoing Borg's (2015) observation that the sustainability of grammatical competence requires contextualized usage. In contrast, Savignon (2018), through classroom-based research grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), found that emphasizing authentic communication promotes fluency and interactional competence, though some learners struggle with complex grammatical forms that require more focused attention.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as examined by Nunan (2014) through qualitative classroom observations, integrates grammar instruction within real-world tasks, enhancing learners' engagement, retention, and accuracy when supplemented with formative feedback. Similarly, Marsaulina (2020), through quasi-experimental research, confirmed that technology-supported grammar learning (CALL) improves motivation and grammatical proficiency, contingent upon adequate digital literacy. Marsaulina's (2015) subsequent work on blended learning corroborated this, revealing that combining online and face-to-face grammar instruction reinforces retention and learner autonomy.

Collaborative and peer-supported strategies, as Dobao (2012) found, foster active negotiation of meaning and grammatical awareness. In low-resource contexts, Tu (2022) and Ng'ambi and Bozalek (2016) highlighted teachers' adaptive innovations, including improvised materials and community-based resources. These findings resonate with the present study, which equally reveals rural teachers' creativity and reliance on context-sensitive scaffolding. Ultimately, as

Saleem et al. (2021) argue, professional development remains indispensable for sustaining such adaptive and reflective grammar pedagogy.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the strategies that ESL teachers adopt in teaching English grammar in specific rural Ghanaian junior high schools. The qualitative design facilitated a nuanced understanding of the instructional realities of teachers, allowing the researchers to delve deeply into the socio-cultural and pedagogical contexts that shape grammar teaching practices. Unlike quantitative methods, this approach captured the complexities of teachers' lived experiences and instructional strategies.

A case study design was employed to investigate the specific strategies that ESL Teachers adopt in teaching English grammar in rural Ghanaian junior high schools. As Cohen et al. (2000) posit, case study research is action-oriented and often serves as a foundation for practical educational improvements.

The study centered on English language teachers in rural Ghanaian communities, specifically Nkwanta North District of Ghana. Through purposive sampling, ten teachers from public junior high schools were selected based on their direct engagement in grammar teaching. Private school teachers were excluded due to a lack of formal training. Semi-structured interview guides and observation checklist were used to collect the data for the study. Although the researchers encountered challenges such as participant attrition and accessibility issues, necessary adjustments were made to ensure methodological integrity and the credibility of findings within rural Ghanaian contexts.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The present study employed a qualitative thematic analysis framework to explore the strategies adopted by ESL teachers in teaching English grammar in rural junior high schools in Ghana. Using Saldaña (2021) coding methods, interview data were transcribed verbatim and subjected to both first-cycle (in vivo) and second-cycle (pattern) coding. The study examined strategies teachers adopt in teaching English grammar in selected junior high schools in rural communities of Ghana. In vivo coding is a method that emphasizes the use of participants' own words as codes (Saldaña, 2021). This approach was well-suited to the study, as it allowed the researchers to remain grounded in the participants' lived experiences ensuring that the teachers' voices were prominently featured in the analysis. Pattern coding, on the other hand, involves reviewing the in vivo codes and identifying relationships, similarities, and recurring ideas among them. This method was essential in organizing and synthesizing the vast array of in vivo codes generated during the first cycle. This rigorous process enabled the researchers to distil emerging themes that reflected teachers' instructional strategies, contextual influences, and pedagogical challenges. Observation data was also systematically analyzed using a structured thematic approach guided by an observation checklist. This allowed for the identification of consistent classroom practices, teacher-learner interactions, and the practical limitations that shape grammar instruction. The researchers' direct engagement with the data ensured a critical and context-sensitive interpretation of findings.

4.1.Data Analysis

To address the research question, the interview data have been analyzed using thematic analysis, facilitated by in vivo and pattern coding methods. This process resulted in the

identification of two primary themes pertinent to the research question. To develop themes from the in vivo and the pattern codes, the researchers followed a systematic process that involved categorizing the in vivo codes, identifying patterns among them, and synthesizing these patterns into broader themes. The table below presents an analysis of data derived from the interview transcripts, demonstrating how in vivo codes are categorized to develop pattern codes, and the how pattern codes were further used to develop themes for the study (See Table 1). The first column presents excerpts from the interview transcripts. The second column also lists the in vivo codes from the interview transcripts. The third column contains pattern codes, which were developed from merging similar in vivo codes together. The final column displays the themes that are developed from the pattern codes. To keep the identity of the participants hidden, pseudonyms (e.g. P001) have been used in the discussion to represent the utterances of each of the ten teachers that were involved in this study. This structured approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the strategies employed by teachers in teaching English grammar.

Table 1 Coding of data and development of themes

Excerpts from interview transcripts	In vivo codes	Pattern codes	Themes
"I rely heavily on interactive methods such as group discussions and role-playing"(P002). "We also have storytelling sessions where students must use correct grammar"(P006).	"group discussions" "role-playing" "storytelling sessions" "interactive methods"	Interactive Teaching Strategies	Utilization of Diverse Teaching Strategies
"I use direct instruction and repetition to explain grammar rules"(P001) "We engage in extensive repetition to reinforce learning"(P007)	"direct instruction" "heavy on repetition" "extensive repetition"	Direct Instruction and Repetition	
"One activity I use is sentence construction exercises where students create sentences following specific grammar rules"(P010) "Another activity involves group work where students create short paragraphs"(P004) "I often create simple stories where students can identify and correct grammar mistakes. We also do sentence construction exercises and use everyday situations to teach grammar"(P005)	"sentence construction" "sentence correction" "practical exercises" " create sentences " "create sentences" "group work" "create simple stories"	Practical Grammar Exercises	
"Given the lack of resources, I use the chalkboard to write examples and explain grammar rules"(P003) "I often make my own materials or	"using the chalkboard" "lack of resources" "everyday items"	Resource Utilization	

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use everyday items as teaching aids" (P008)	"create materials" "lack of resources"		
"Many of my students come from homes where English is not the primary language, so I use contextual examples and simple, relatable language"(P005) "I adapt my lessons to meet the different levels of student ability"(P009)	"contextual examples" "relatable language" "engaging lessons" "relatable grammar" "student understanding"	Contextual and Relatable Learning	
"I adapt my lessons to meet the different levels of student ability"(P04) "For students who struggle, I provide additional support and simpler explanations"(P004)	"adapt my lessons" "tailor strategies" "simpler explanations" "additional support"	Adaptation and Flexibility	
"Group work and peer teaching are particularly effective because they encourage students to learn from each other"(P001) "I use interactive strategies such as group work and peer teaching to make lessons more engaging"(P007)	"peer teaching" "group work" "collaborative learning" "interactive strategies" "peer teaching"	Peer Learning and Collaboration	Student Engagement and Support
"Occasionally, I use my personal mobile phone to show educational videos or access online resources"(P009) "Unfortunately, we do not have access to ICT tools or electricity"(P006)	"personal mobile" "educational videos" "access to ICT tools or electricity" "access online resources"	Technology and Media Use	

The table above reveals a coherent logic linking raw interview excerpts to higher-order themes that substantiate the study's central argument: rural teachers enact multifaceted, context-responsive grammar pedagogy. In vivo codes (e.g., "group discussions," "chalkboard," "personal mobile") distill concrete classroom practices, while pattern codes (e.g., Interactive Teaching Strategies; Resource Utilization) abstract recurring pedagogical actions. Together these produce themes that confirm teachers' dual reliance on social interaction and explicit instruction. Crucially, the table exposes tensions: enthusiastic aspirations to use educational media are curtailed by infrastructural deficits ("no ICT or electricity"), and communicative techniques risk accuracy without complementary direct instruction. From a theoretical standpoint, the coding trajectory maps neatly onto Vygotskian scaffolding: teachers create proximal supports through peers, materials, and tailored explanations. Methodologically, the table demonstrates analytic transparency and theoretical fit, enabling the researchers to argue that teacher agency, not technology, drives grammar learning in context.

In order to understand what junior high school teachers in rural Ghanaian communities actually do in their grammar lessons, data from the observation were collected using an observation

checklist. These data from the observation have been analyzed to support the data from the interview. Table 2 presents an analysis of the observation data in support of the interview-related findings in addressing the research question.

The observation data in Table 2 below reveal a dual reality of pedagogical competence amid material deprivation. The “Yes” indicators illustrate teachers’ consistent use of interactive, drill-based, and example-driven strategies, demonstrating professional ingenuity and a commitment to learner-centered grammar instruction. Teachers effectively engaged students, differentiated instruction, and used available teaching materials creatively, confirming their ability to scaffold learning within Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. Conversely, the “No” indicators also expose systemic shortcomings—an absence of technology, textbooks, and supplementary resources such as worksheets or audio-visual aids. The lack of computer-based activities, projectors, and smartboards suggests that digital pedagogy remains aspirational rather than practical. These deficiencies constrain teachers’ ability to diversify instruction and limit students’ exposure to multimodal grammar input. Thus, while the “Yes” indicators affirm strong pedagogical agency, the “No” indicators highlight structural neglect. The findings from the data therefore argue for targeted policy interventions that match teachers’ pedagogical commitment with the necessary instructional infrastructure and technological support.

Table 2 Observation data from the participants

CRITERION	OBSERVATION	
	Yes	No
Teaching strategies		
Use of diverse instructional strategies	All the participants used interactive activities, drills, role-play, and question techniques in their lessons. Participants <i>P001</i> , <i>P008</i> , and <i>P010</i> included group discussions in their grammar lessons.	
Use of interactive activities for grammar instruction	All the participants used interactive activities in their grammar lessons.	
Inclusion of group work or pair activities	Participants <i>P002</i> , <i>P003</i> , <i>P006</i> , <i>P007</i> , <i>P009</i> and <i>P010</i> included group work or pair activities in their grammar lessons.	Participants <i>P001</i> , <i>P004</i> , <i>P005</i> , and <i>P008</i> did not include group work or pair activities in their grammar lessons.
Effective use of examples to explain grammar concepts	All the participants used different examples to explain grammatical concepts to learners.	
Implementation of drilling techniques where appropriate	All the participants used drilling techniques in their grammar lessons.	
Use of computer-based activities		None of the participants used computer-based activities in their grammar lessons.

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Integration of audio-visual aids in the lesson	None of the participants integrated audio-visual aids in their grammar lessons.
Technology effectively enhances grammar learning	None of the participants used technology in their grammar lessons.
Use of differentiation strategies to address diverse needs	All the participants modified their strategies to address learners' different needs.
Textbooks and workbooks available for all students	None of the students had textbooks during grammar lessons.
Effective use of teaching materials during the lesson	All the participants used their teaching materials well in the grammar lesson.
Supplementary materials (e.g., worksheets, online resources) used	None of the participants used any online resources in their grammar lessons.
Availability and use of projectors and smart boards	None of the participants had projectors and smart boards available for them to use in their grammar lessons.
Effective management of student engagement throughout the lesson	All the participants consistently engaged their learners throughout their grammar lessons.

The data from the observations indicates that all the participants employed a variety of teaching strategies, which include interactive activities, drills, and role-play, to enhance grammar instruction in their lessons. While the integration of group work and pair activities was prominent among some participants, there was a notable absence of technology-based resources such as audio-visual aids, projectors, and smart boards. This suggests that although traditional teaching strategies were well-utilized, the lack of technological integration may limit the potential for a more dynamic, differentiated approach to meet diverse learner needs.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This discussion is based on the analysis of the data above, which focuses on exploring the strategies that teachers employ in teaching English grammar. The discussion focuses on the two major themes identified in the analysis: Utilization of diverse teaching strategies and student engagement and support. The teaching of English grammar in the selected rural Ghanaian junior high schools showcases a diverse range of strategies that reflect both the practical realities of the classroom and the theoretical underpinnings of pedagogical approaches. This discussion delves into these strategies, structured around major themes while aligning the analysis with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding theoretical lens.

5.1.Utilization of Diverse Teaching Strategies

The adoption of various teaching strategies to teach grammar in rural Ghanaian junior high schools was influenced by multiple pedagogical strategies and classroom realities. In rural Ghanaian junior high schools, teachers employed a range of interactive, direct, and practical strategies to address the diverse needs of their students, aligning with Vygotsky's concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. This multiplicity of strategies reflected the teachers' awareness that no single strategy can adequately cater for the linguistic diversity and varying proficiency levels within their classrooms. It also revealed an adaptive professionalism that responds to the contextual realities of rural education in Ghana, an area where pedagogical ingenuity often compensates for material scarcity.

One of the cluster of strategies identified in the study is the use of interactive teaching strategies. The excerpts from teachers indicate a strong preference for *"group discussions," "role-playing,"* and *"storytelling sessions"* as effective means to engage students in grammar learning. As participant P002 noted, *"I rely heavily on interactive methods such as group discussions and role-playing"*. Participant P006 also cited, *"We also have storytelling sessions where students must use correct grammar"*. Data from classroom observations also indicated that all the participants used diverse instructional strategies such as interactive activities, role-plays, question techniques, and group work in their grammar lessons. These strategies align with Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction as a crucial component of cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). From a theoretical standpoint, this finding is significant because it demonstrates how social interaction serves as a pedagogical tool for mediating knowledge, even in the absence of sophisticated technological aids. The teachers' adoption of peer discussions and role-plays effectively transforms the classroom into a collaborative learning community, where knowledge is co-constructed rather than transmitted. This resonates with Vygotsky's notion that learning is a socially mediated process that thrives through guided participation and shared meaning-making.

These interactive strategies do not only make learning more engaging but also allow for immediate feedback and peer correction, thereby reinforcing grammatical concepts in a meaningful context. However, while interactive strategies have their merits, they may not always ensure complete grammatical accuracy, particularly for complex structures. Savignon (2018) supports the use of communicative language teaching (CLT) for its ability to enhance students' communicative competence, but also acknowledges that it may fall short in ensuring precise grammatical knowledge. For instance, data from classroom observations indicated that despite the teachers' use of interactive strategies, some learners still had challenges using the grammatical concepts in communication. This tension between engagement and accuracy reflects the broader debate in language pedagogy about the balance between fluency and correctness. This finding affirms the need for a balanced methodology that situates communicative competence within a framework of grammatical awareness. The Ghanaian rural context provides a clear example of how teachers strive to strike this equilibrium by blending communicative interaction with explicit grammar teaching. Thus, while the study confirms Savignon's (2018) caution, it also extends the discourse by showing how CLT principles can be locally adapted through guided interaction and contextualized feedback.

Another key strategy identified from the analysis of the data is direct instruction combined with extensive repetition. Teachers mentioned using *"direct instruction"* and being *"heavy on repetition"* as fundamental strategies. Participant P001 stated, *"I use direct instruction and repetition to explain grammar rules"*. Classroom observations revealed that all the participants employed drill techniques in their grammar teaching. The use of this strategy aligns with findings by Zhao and Ellis (2022), who argue that explicit grammar instruction can lead to significant improvements in grammatical accuracy. The repetitive nature of this strategy

ensures that students have multiple opportunities to practice and internalize grammatical rules, thus fostering long-term retention. However, critics like Borg (2015) argue that while direct instruction can produce immediate gains, these benefits are often not sustained over time without meaningful application. The data from classroom observations highlighted that some learners find it very challenging to repeat the grammatical concepts learned. This affirms the importance of moving beyond rote repetition to meaningful repetition embedded in authentic language use. The persistence of repetition in these classrooms suggests not an uncritical adherence to traditional pedagogy, but rather a pragmatic response to learners' linguistic needs and curricular demands. In resource-constrained environments where exposure to English is limited outside school, teachers' reliance on repetition serves as an adaptive scaffolding technique that reinforces retention through familiarity and practice.

Practical grammar exercises, such as *"sentence construction"* and *"sentence correction,"* were also widely used by the teachers. These exercises provided students with hands-on opportunities to apply grammatical rules in constructing and correcting sentences. For instance, participant P010 mentioned, *"One activity I use is sentence construction exercises where students create sentences following specific grammar rules"*. Participant P005 also noted, *"I often create simple stories where students can identify and correct grammar mistakes. We also do sentence construction exercises and use everyday situations to teach grammar"*. Data from classroom observations indicated that participants employed sentence construction strategies in their grammar instructions. This strategy is supported by Nunan (2014), who found that task-based language teaching (TBLT) fosters greater engagement and motivation among students by involving them in real-world scenarios that are relevant to their lives. The success of these practical exercises hinges on their design and implementation. Tasks need to be carefully crafted to ensure they are challenging yet achievable, thereby operating within students' ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). This strategy not only aids in grammatical accuracy but also enhances students' problem-solving skills and linguistic creativity. In the context of this study, such exercises reflect an implicit understanding among teachers of the cognitive scaffolding process, where controlled practice gradually transitions into autonomous performance.

The study revealed that the lack of resources in many rural junior high schools necessitated creative solutions from teachers. Strategies such as *"using the chalkboard"* and *"creating materials"* are common, reflecting the ingenuity of teachers in resource-limited environments. Participant P003 highlighted, *"Given the lack of resources, I use the chalkboard to write examples and explain grammar rules"*. Another participant with code P008 mentioned, *"I often make my own materials or use everyday items as teaching aids"*. Data from classroom observations revealed that all the participants wrote almost everything they taught in their grammar lessons on the chalkboard. This scenario emphasizes the resilience and adaptability of teachers who strive to provide quality education despite significant challenges. The literature on resource utilization in language teaching suggests that while ICT tools and other modern resources can enhance learning, their absence does not preclude effective teaching. Marsaulina (2020) found that computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tools provide immediate feedback and individualized learning paths, yet their efficacy is contingent on students' digital literacy. In contexts where such tools are unavailable, traditional methods like chalkboard teaching remain vital. The reliance on the chalkboard in this study, therefore, does not represent pedagogical backwardness but contextual wisdom. Teachers employed what is available to sustain visual scaffolding, a core mechanism of Vygotskian mediation.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of making learning contextual and relatable. Using *"contextual examples"* and *"relatable language"* helped bridge the gap between abstract grammatical rules and students' everyday experiences. As participant P005 observed, *"Many of my students come from homes where English is not the primary language, so I use contextual examples and simple, relatable language"*. Data from classroom observations indicated that

participants related the grammatical concepts they taught to learners' everyday experiences. This strategy aligns with the sociocultural theory of learning, which posits that learning is most effective when it is relevant to the learner's social context (Vygotsky, 1978). The integration of cultural contexts into grammar teaching, as advocated by Baleghizadeh and Amiri (2020), further supports this strategy. Their study suggests that teaching grammar through cultural content not only enhances grammatical accuracy but also fosters cultural awareness and sensitivity. This makes learning more engaging and meaningful. The teachers' strategy in this study contributes to addressing the research gap identified earlier, which is the limited understanding of how sociocultural theories can be pragmatically enacted in resource-poor environments. When instructions were grounded in students' lived experiences, teachers in Nkwanta North effectively operationalized sociocultural learning principles. This demonstrates that meaningful learning can flourish outside the technologically equipped classroom.

Findings from the data further indicated that adapting lessons to meet the diverse needs of students was another crucial strategy used by teachers in these communities. Teachers mentioned the need to *"adapt lessons"* and *"tailor strategies"* to cater to different levels of student ability. For instance, participant P004 noted, *"For students who struggle, I provide additional support and simpler explanations"*. The classroom observation revealed that participants adapted their grammar lessons to meet the specific needs of their learners in each of the two lessons that the researchers observed. This adaptive strategy is essential for scaffolding, where teachers provide support structures to help students achieve higher levels of understanding and skill (Littlewood, 2014). The adaptability of teachers in modifying their strategies to fit the varying needs of students is crucial for effective grammar instruction. This flexibility ensures that all students, regardless of their proficiency levels, can benefit from the lessons. This promotes equitable learning opportunities. This finding is significant because it reinforces the argument that teacher agency (not technological provision) is the decisive factor in effective pedagogy in rural Ghana. It was through such adaptive practices that teachers in rural communities transformed theoretical scaffolding into lived pedagogical action.

Findings revealed that in environments where resources were scarce, teachers often took the initiative to develop and create their own teaching materials. The excerpts *"make my own materials"* and *"use everyday items"* reflect a common practice among educators in rural Ghanaian communities. Participant P001 mentioned, *"I often make my own materials or use everyday items as teaching aids"*. Classroom observations indicated that these teachers developed their own teaching and learning materials to help learners understand grammatical concepts during the lessons. This strategy is supported by Ng'ambi and Bozalek (2016), who found that teachers creatively utilize available resources to enhance grammar instruction even in resource-constrained settings. By using everyday items and creating their own materials, teachers were able to tailor their lessons to the specific needs and contexts of their students. This practice not only reflects pedagogical ingenuity but also challenges deficit-oriented views of rural education by highlighting the agency and professional creativity of teachers.

Findings revealed that despite the limited access to technological resources, English language teachers in these rural communities occasionally leveraged their personal mobile phones to show educational videos and access online resources. The excerpts *"use my personal mobile phone"* and *"show educational videos"* illustrate this adaptive strategy. As participant P010 noted, *"Occasionally, I use my personal mobile phone to show educational videos or access online resources"*. However, classroom observations revealed that none of the teachers was found either using their phones or other personal technology tools to help learners understand grammar concepts.

Tu (2022) emphasizes the importance of low-tech solutions in navigating technological challenges, suggesting that even minimal technological access can significantly enhance

instructional quality. By incorporating videos and online materials, teachers can introduce diverse and engaging content that might otherwise be unavailable. This use of technology, albeit limited, is a form of scaffolding that provides students with additional resources to aid their learning. Vygotsky's ZPD highlights the importance of tools and signs in the learning process, and in this case, personal mobile phones serve as vital educational tools that bridge the gap between students' current abilities and potential understanding. While the observed use was minimal, the intention reflects a growing pedagogical awareness of digital mediation as part of modern grammar instruction.

The study revealed that teachers continuously adapted their strategies to align with the varying proficiency levels and needs of their students. The excerpts *"consider the students' understanding levels"* and *"tailor my strategies"* reflect this adaptive strategy. Participant P002 stated, *"I consider the students' understanding levels, their interests, and the specific grammar topics we need to cover."* Data from classroom observations indicated that some of the teachers used group discussions while others also used peer teaching. The data also revealed that some teachers used several everyday examples and prompt feedback to help learners understand concepts taught. Heng (2014) argues that educators' ability to adjust their pedagogical methods in response to students' needs is a hallmark of effective teaching. By tailoring their strategies, teachers can ensure that each student receives the appropriate level of support and challenge. This adaptability is central to Vygotsky's theory, which posits that learning occurs most effectively within the ZPD, where students can achieve more with guidance than they could independently. By considering students' understanding levels and interests, teachers create a more personalized learning experience that aligns with Vygotsky's principles of scaffolded instruction. The significance of this finding lies in its challenge to the assumption that effective grammar teaching depends on resource abundance; rather, it demonstrates that reflective, context-sensitive pedagogy grounded in sociocultural theory can yield meaningful learning outcomes even under severe material constraints.

5.2. Student Engagement and Support

Engaging students through peer learning and collaboration is another effective strategy. Teachers highlighted the use of *"peer teaching"* and *"group work"* to enhance student engagement. Participant P001 remarked, *"Group work and peer teaching are particularly effective because they encourage students to learn from each other"* Data from classroom observations showed that some teachers put their learners in groups where learners were engaged in activities. Classroom observations also revealed that some teachers use peer teaching in their grammar lessons. These collaborative learning strategies are supported by Dobao (2012), who found that peer interaction leads to greater grammatical accuracy and fluency. Collaborative learning also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as students must negotiate meaning and correct each other's errors.

This study's findings go beyond merely restating Dobao's (2012) claim: they revealed how and why peer-based strategies function in this particular rural Ghanaian context. In classrooms where teacher-led exposure to English outside school is limited, peer teaching becomes both an instructional resource and a sociolinguistic space in which learners co-construct grammatical knowledge. Our observations show that peer correction often functions as formative assessment in situations where students give immediate, locally meaningful feedback that echoes Vygotskian mediation. Thus, the efficacy of peer teaching here is not accidental; it is the product of sustained teacher orchestration that aligns group tasks to learners' proximal developmental needs. These observations address the problem statement's identified gap concerning the paucity of context-specific evidence on collaborative strategies in resource-poor settings. It also demonstrates that collaboration is not a generic "best practice"

transplanted from urban or tech-supported contexts but a contextually emergent practice with distinct affordances for rural learners.

The use of technology, albeit limited, also played a role in engaging students. Participant P009 noted, *"Occasionally, I use my personal mobile phone to show educational videos or access online resources"*. While the lack of ICT tools and electricity presented challenges, teachers' efforts to incorporate technology reflected their commitment to enhancing student engagement and providing diverse instructional methods.

The findings suggest a pedagogical aspiration toward digital mediation since observations show that structural constraints may hinder the realization of the use of ICT tools in the research context. The study reveals that teachers' intention alone cannot be a substitute for their systemic support in the classroom. Marsaulina (2020) argues that technology provides immediate feedback and personalized learning; but our data nuanced that claim by showing that in rural Ghanaian communities, the potential benefits of technology remain partially unrealized because of infrastructural deficits.

The data revealed a diverse array of strategies that English language teachers in rural Ghanaian communities employed to teach grammar, emphasizing interactive strategies, direct instruction, and practical exercises. These strategies align with theoretical frameworks such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding, showcasing the teachers' adaptability and resourcefulness in overcoming classroom challenges. Despite limited resources, the teachers' commitment to student engagement and tailored support highlights their dedication to fostering effective grammar learning.

This study goes further than documenting strategy variety, but it explicates the mechanisms by which engagement and support translate into learning gains. Peer teaching and group work created affordances for dialogue and corrective feedback; direct instruction and repetition supply the explicit rule-based scaffolding learners need; practical exercises embed grammar in meaningful tasks. By mapping these mechanisms onto Vygotsky's ZPD, the study shows that teachers are not simply applying techniques, but they are engineering learning trajectories that move students from assisted performance toward independence. This theoretical linkage responds directly to the gap noted in the problem statement about insufficient theoretically-grounded, empirically-derived models of grammar instruction in rural Ghanaian schools.

Providing extra support to struggling students is a critical strategy for addressing the diverse needs within a classroom. The excerpts *"give them extra attention"* and *"provide additional exercises"* indicate the personalized support teachers offered to ensure all students grasp the material. A participant with code P004 mentioned, *"I give them extra attention, use simpler explanations, and provide additional exercises tailored to their needs"*. Data from classroom observations revealed that some teachers used some of their students as teaching assistants to assist their colleagues during the grammar lessons. The data also revealed teachers provided individualized assistance to learners who needed it. The data again revealed that some teachers also provided their learners with collaborative learning opportunities to enhance their understanding of grammar concepts. Saleem et al. (2021) highlight the significance of continuous professional development in equipping teachers with strategies to offer such tailored support. This additional attention helps bridge the gap for students who may need more time or simpler explanations to understand grammatical concepts.

The personalized support observed in Nkwanta North is not merely remedial, but it is also strategic scaffolding. By deploying stronger students as peer tutors and by designing incremental exercises, teachers are able to craft zones of assistance precisely calibrated to learner readiness. This practice supports the claim of Saleem et al. (2021) by showing how continuous professional development (CPD) could be targeted. CPD should not only introduce

new teaching strategies but should cultivate teacher skill in diagnosing learner needs and organizing scaffolded peer support. The implication is clear—policy and training interventions should prioritize formative diagnostic skills and low-cost methods for organizing peer scaffolds.

These strategies are direct application of Vygotsky's scaffolding, where teachers provide targeted support to help students progress through their ZPD. By offering extra exercises and simpler explanations, teachers scaffold students' learning experiences, enabling them to achieve higher levels of proficiency.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has provided an in-depth exploration of the strategies employed by English language teachers in specific rural Ghanaian junior high schools for teaching grammar. The findings clarify a dynamic blend of pedagogical creativity and contextual adaptation that reinforces the relevance of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, specifically the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding, in resource-limited educational environments. Teachers' use of interactive and participatory strategies such as group discussions, storytelling, role-playing and guided correction demonstrates that effective scaffolding can progress even in the absence of technological or material abundance. The findings affirm that meaningful learning occurs when teachers position themselves as facilitators who mediate students' understanding through dialogue, peer collaboration, and contextual examples drawn from learners' lived experiences.

Theoretically, this research extends Vygotskian principles into under-resourced rural classrooms, showing that social interaction and collaborative learning can serve as compensatory mechanisms for material scarcity. It suggests that pedagogical ingenuity, rooted in culturally relevant practices and interpersonal engagement, can bridge the gap between ideal theoretical models and the realities of rural schooling. Thus, the study contributes to the growing body of evidence that sociocultural theory is not confined to technologically advanced or urban educational settings but can be powerfully enacted in low-resource contexts.

Practically, the findings call for a renewed focus in Ghana's language education policy and teacher professional development. The Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ministry of Education should strengthen regular in-service training focused on interactive grammar strategies, low-cost instructional innovation, and contextual adaptation of teaching aids. Teacher education curricula should also integrate practical modules on implementing Vygotskian approaches, including scaffolding, peer-assisted learning and formative feedback in multilingual and resource-constrained rural Ghanaian settings.

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Anthony Adawu and Joshua Kwabena Nbiba Bintul contributed equally to the conception, design, data analysis, and writing of this research paper. These authors contributed equally to this work.

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