



## Aligning Continuous Professional Development with Teachers' Needs: Language Competence and Delivery Mode Preferences in Focus

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to analyze areas of language skills teachers need continuous professional development to address and delivery mode preferences. A sequential mixed data collection method was employed to carry out this study. The study was conducted in Ethiopia, West Shewa Zone, Ambo Administrative Town, and the Ambo district. 32 teachers were selected using a simple random sampling technique for the study. Questionnaire, observation, and interview were employed for data collection. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 25, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic analysis. The study results reveal that vocabulary, grammar, and speaking are most needed for language skills. The study indicates teachers showed a high degree of preference for both in-person and online CPD delivery modes. It was also revealed that urban teachers need in-person training, whereas rural teachers need online professional development. On the other hand, teaching experience had no significant influence on teachers' preferences for CPD delivery format. Ultimately, the study recommends that designing CPD programs based on teachers' specific needs and incorporating blended delivery modes can significantly enhance the quality of English teaching in Ethiopia.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Continuous professional development package is critical for improving teachers' competence in the teaching and learning process, particularly for English language teachers who constantly need to update their language competence (Guskey, 2002; Hammond et al., 2017; Sudarwati et al., 2007). As a result, language teachers' continuous professional development has received more attention than ever (Mekie & Gezahegn, 2023). For instance, Johns and Sosibo (2019) stated that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is considered key to teachers acquiring language skills needed for the 21st -

-century. Guskey (2002) mentioned that need-based and effective continuous professional development is a principal constituent in almost every single current proposal for advancing teachers' language and pedagogical competence. Therefore, according to Desimone and Garet (2015), all teachers are expected to take part in needs-based professional development so that they can improve their classroom practices and increase student learning.

## Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia, continuing professional development (CPD) has increasingly come to be considered an important component of teachers' development. The education and training policy of Ethiopia developed an in-service CPD program for teachers aimed at producing competent and effective teachers all over the country (MoE, 2018). However, the reality on the ground indicates that the existing professional development program could not solve the difficulties that middle school English language teachers experience inside the classroom.

Some studies conducted in Ethiopia show that middle school English language teachers in many parts of the country still regularly face several difficulties concerning the changing nature of language teaching (Mijena, 2013; Tirussew et al, 2018). In addition, according to MOE (2018), there is a growing concern that the current professional development program fails to address the specific needs of middle school English language learners in terms of language and skills.

The MoE (2018) also indicates that teachers' lack of competence in language teaching is due to a lack of need-based professional development in the country. According to the report, there is an absence of a need assessment of teachers' learning needs. Hence, identifying teachers' specific needs seems to be the central focus for designing an effective and needs-based continuous professional development program in Ethiopia. To stay with the current language teaching methodologies, middle school English language teachers need to improve their linguistic competence in key areas of CPD, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the integration of language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Westgate & Hughes, 2013). This disparity between teacher needs and the contents of the CPD program can bring about a lack of engagement and limited influence on teaching practices.

Despite various aspects of professional teaching development, teachers' needs for language competence and their delivery modes have not yet

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., April. –June, 2025, 14(2), 154-166* been extensively explored. Thus, this study aims to investigate middle school English language teachers' needs for language competence and their preferences for the delivery modes of CPD. This study is set to answer the following questions.

1. What areas of language skills do middle school English language teachers need the continuous professional development program to address?
2. What are the preferred modes of professional development delivery among middle school English language teachers?
3. Do variables such as teaching setting and teaching experience influence teachers' preferences for the mode of delivery of the continuous professional development?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a sequential mixed methods design to analyze middle school English language teachers' needs for continuous professional development. In the first step, a questionnaire was administered to sample teachers to collect comprehensive data on areas of language competence they need CPD to address and teachers' preferred delivery modes. Second, classroom observation was conducted to get a real understanding of middle school teachers' language competence during teaching practices. Ultimately, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a purposively selected sample of teachers based on designs identified in the former stages. The interview was intended to discover the realities behind the observed performance and questionnaire responses. Therefore, the sequential method permitted the researcher to shape from general trend to detailed, appropriate descriptions, confirming a comprehensive analysis of the issue (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Stadtländer, 2009).

### Participants

Thirty-two English language teachers who were teaching English in grades 7 and 8 at the time of the data collection were chosen to complete the study's questionnaire. In addition, 14 out of the 32 participants who completed the questionnaire were men, and 18 were women. Nineteen of the

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participants were selected from Ambo Administrative Town, whereas thirteen of them were from Ambo District. Concerning their teaching experience, it ranges from five years to over twenty years. Every participant was engaging in English language instruction and had exposure to CPD before that, making the participants proper informants for the study's objectives.

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

A simple random sampling technique was employed to select the participants of this study. The rationale for selecting the simple random sampling technique was to give every member of the total population an equal chance and an independent chance of being included in the sample. This, in turn, can increase the representativeness of the results and minimize selection bias. The other reason why the researcher selected simple random was simple random sampling techniques considering both practical and cost effective for this study. Hence, to get the sample, first, a complete list of grade 7 and 8 English teachers was compiled from Ambo Administrative Town and Ambo District; then, 32 teachers were randomly selected using a lottery method.

### Instruments

Different data gathering instruments, namely, a questionnaire, classroom observation, and an interview, were used in the present study. First, questionnaires were prepared in English with the assumption that teachers can understand the language. The questionnaire items were prepared to

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., April. –June, 2025, 14(2), 154-166* answer research questions 1 and 2 outlined under the introduction part. Observation was another data-gathering instrument for this study. To check the linguistic competence, six teachers were selected for the classroom observation. Each teacher was observed three times, and eighteen classroom observations were conducted based on the checklist prepared in advance. A mini video camera was used especially to record prominent episodes of instruction. In this study, post-classroom observation interviews were also held with the six selected teachers for the classroom observation. The interview enabled the researcher to capture English teachers' responses about areas middle school English language teachers need CPD and their preferences for CPD delivery mode.

### Data Collection Procedure

The researcher made actual contact in person with the focal person in the schools with a view to consensus access. Then, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the sample participants. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential data analysis methods. For descriptive analysis tables, frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used, whereas the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to determine any significant link between teaching experience and level of teaching, and the preferences of CPD delivery mode. Classroom observation was conducted soon after the questionnaire data was collected, and then post post-observation interview was carried out to analyze what teachers perceived against the actual classroom practices (Table 1).

**Table 1**

#### *Reliability of Questionnaire*

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Language competence	7	.875
Face-to-face preferences of CPD delivery Mode	4	.954
Online preferences for the CPD delivery Mode	4	.992
Distance education preferences of the CPD delivery Mode	4	.798

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Results**

**Areas Teachers Need for Continuous Professional Development**

The first research question was “In what areas of teaching English do middle school teachers need professional development programs/activities?” To answer this research question, the teachers were given a list of different areas for continuous professional development and asked to indicate their degree of need for each area on a five-point Likert scale. In addition, observation and post

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 observation interviews were held to validate the data obtained through the questionnaire.

Regarding this, middle school English language teachers were asked to rate the degree to which they need continuous professional development to improve their language competence. Then, the researcher analyzed the questionnaire results using the mean score, the standard deviation, the rank, and the grand mean. In addition to the questionnaire, the researchers analyzed the data generated from observation and interviews to validate the results of the questionnaire.

**Table 2**

*Prioritized Language Skills Needs among Respondents*

S.No	Item	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Speaking skills	4.00	1.136	3
2	Listening skills	3.53	1.164	6
3	Pronunciation	3.94	1.076	4
4	Writing skills	3.28	1.301	7
5	Reading skills	3.69	1.256	5
6	Grammar	4.03	1.150	2
7	Vocabulary	4.22	1.128	1
Grand Mean				3.823

*Note: M = mean, SD = Standard Deviation*

As shown in Table 2, the teachers were given a list of different areas for language knowledge and continuous professional development and asked to indicate the level of their need for each area on a five-point scale where 1 indicated “no need at present” and 5 indicated “very high level of need.” The total scores for each area were also calculated to identify the area in which the level of need is the highest and the lowest.

Table 2 portrays that vocabulary with the mean value (M = 4.22) is found in the area where the level of need is the highest among the four skills and the two sub-skills. The results indicate that teachers’ competence in English language teaching is not effective, partly due to the teachers’ limited vocabulary knowledge. To substantiate the questionnaire data, the researcher evaluated teachers’ vocabulary competence using the checklists of the domains of the national standards

for English language teachers by the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia. Hence, the data generated from the classroom observations reveal that teachers’ ability to use vocabulary for teaching purposes was not good enough for the grade level they were teaching. The results of the classroom observation also confirmed that there were consistently low levels of language competence demonstration across the lessons. For instance, some of the observed teachers could not use appropriate words while they were teaching speaking and writing skills.

During the interview, teachers stated that most of the time they felt difficulty in finding the meanings of new words when they teach their students. They said that the vocabulary they acquired at the pre-service education was insufficient. They also stated that they were not given any continuous professional development

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training that would improve their knowledge of vocabulary teaching.

One of the interviewed teachers (Teacher 2) said,

*For me, teaching vocabulary is a relatively difficult task. I don't think there is any rule for teachers to teach vocabulary at the elementary level. So, it is a difficult task to hold the ability to teach vocabulary in grade six. I usually feel uncomfortable when I enter the classroom because my ability to teach vocabulary is not good.*

The other teacher (Teacher1) said,

*Most of the time, I could not understand, and I am not able to pronounce vocabulary correctly and use it constructively in speaking and writing. For example, some letters are silent in pronunciation, but I don't know when and how letters are dropped. I think teachers must be given training to develop their knowledge in this regard.*

According to [Table 2](#), grammar and speaking are areas of language skills where middle school English language teachers need to improve next, after vocabulary. The respondents of the survey rated grammar with the mean value ( $M = 4.03$ ) as the second and speaking with the mean value ( $M = 4.00$ ) as the third highest language skills areas they want to improve. Sample teachers were also observed while they were teaching grammar and speaking. The results of the observation show that teachers in the study area have no skills in basic and intermediate grammar rules that help them use appropriate grammar to convey ideas in the communicative English language approach.

The results of the interview show that teachers' concern was their limited ability to teach grammar communicatively. For instance, Teacher 3 stated that grammar is not an easy task to teach. He explained he has taught English language elements based on the knowledge he gained in the pre-service education program, which he thought was not enough to acquire the ability he is expected to have. In addition to this, Teachers 1 and 2 commented that they were not given any training opportunities

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., April. –June, 2025, 14(2), 154-166* under any circumstances to improve their teaching competence.

[Table 2](#) also shows that teachers' needs for reading, listening, and writing skills were moderate level of need. [Table 2](#) also shows that writing is relatively the lowest language skills area where teachers need improvement in the classroom. However, observation data show that teachers were unable to select and use appropriate words in their writings. Moreover, teachers observed that they rarely teach listening skills. The researcher asked the teachers in the post observation interview session why they skipped the teaching of listening skills. For instance, T3 stated it as follows:

*Nowadays, listening is a neglected skill. The English language education of the pre-service was not encouraging. Hence, I do not like teaching listening skills when I teach students. Of course, listening is the first receptive skill anybody pays attention to; however, because of a lot of problems, I cannot teach listening skills. I think listening skills need special knowledge to teach learners, so I want to improve my knowledge of this skill if I get the chance to participate in any continuous professional development.*

### **Professional Development Needs of Language Sub-skills**

The results of [Table 3](#) showed a substantial perceived need among Ethiopian middle school English language teachers for continuous professional development in specific areas of linguistic ability. The overall grand mean score of 4.3, which shows a high-level need for continuous professional development to address their language competence. The improvement on specific vocabulary teaching competence ( $M= 4.65$ ,  $SD=.570$ ) was found area of the highest need, followed by the need for language skills in writing paragraph organization ( $M=4.39$ ,  $SD=.719$ ) and the skill to analyze reading texts to identify linguistic features and teaching points ( $M= 4.34$ ,  $SD= .541$ ).



**Table 3**

*Teachers’ Responses about Language Sub-Skills CPD Needs*

S.No	Sub-Skills	M	SD
1	Linguistic competence to comprehend various accents	4.06	.246
2	Skills to select and utilize effective listening materials for language teaching	4.20	.678
3	Language competence to improve pronunciation skills	4.09	.296
4	Language competence for promoting classroom interaction	4.25	.694
5	Skills to analyze reading texts to identify linguistic features and teaching points	4.34	.541
6	Language skills in writing sentence structure	4.14	.729
7	Language skills in writing paragraph organization	4.39	.719
8	Improvement in specific vocabulary teaching competence	4.65	.570
Grand Mean		4.3	

*Note: M = mean, SD = Standard Deviation*

From these results, it is possible to conclude that middle school English language teachers showed a need to improve their ability to broaden their knowledge of word power and to handle paragraph writing skills and the ability to analyze texts successfully in the classroom.

Similarly, the standard deviations across all items, ranging from 0.246 to 0.729, suggest teachers had a high level of agreement regarding their CPD needs. Ultimately, the findings of this study reveal that middle school English language teachers wanted CPD programs that target their practical language skills. This supports the call for designing CPD initiatives that are responsive to these explicit skill-based demands.

**Teachers’ preferences for the mode of delivery of CPD**

Middle school teachers were asked to rate the degree of agreement and disagreement towards face-to-face CPD delivery mode. As indicated in [Table 4](#), teachers' preferences were found between agree and strongly agree. The grand mean of the four items (M=4.5) indicates that most middle school English teachers prefer to get their professional development training face-to-face rather than online or at a distance. According to the interview participants’ responses, teachers believed that face-to-face learning was one of the most suitable ways of attending any CPD activities.

**Table 4**

*Teachers’ Preferences for Face-to-Face CPD Delivery Mode*

S.No	Item	M	SD
1	I prefer attending face-to-face seminars/workshops for CPD	4.75	.508
2	I prefer face-to-face interaction with trainers and peers to improve my teaching skills	4.78	.439
3	I prefer participating in discussions and asking questions in a face-to-face setting.	4.72	.420
4	I prefer face-to-face CPD sessions because they are more effective in improving practical teaching skills	4.75	.456
Grand Mean		4.5	

*Note: M = mean, SD = Standard Deviation*

The study analyzed the middle school English teachers' preferences for online continuous professional development activities. The

descriptive statistics of [Table 5](#) indicated a strong overall preference for online professional development among the respondents. The grand

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mean across all related items was 4.33, indicating a high level of agreement on the online platform among the participants in this study. Specifically, teachers strongly agreed with the statement "Online

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 CPD programs are more suitable and accessible for me" (M= 4.38, SD= .553) and "I prefer online CPD activities since they offer flexibility in terms of time and location" (M = 4.37, SD = .553).

**Table 5**

*Teachers' Preferences for Online CPD Delivery Mode*

S.No	Item	M	SD
1	I prefer online CPD activities since they offer flexibility in terms of time and location	4.37	.553
2	Online CPD programs are more suitable and accessible for me	4.38	.553
3	I find online platforms attractive and effective for professional development	4.28	.522
4	Online CPD programs give me opportunities for collaboration and interaction with other teachers	4.28	.522
Grand Mean		4.33	

*Note: M = mean, SD = Standard Deviation*

Moreover, teachers stated an affirmative outlook on the effectiveness and collaborative potential of online platforms. The item "I find online platforms attractive and effective for professional development" received a mean score of 4.28 (SD = .522), while "Online CPD programs give me

opportunities for collaboration and interaction with other teachers" also had a mean of 4.28 (SD = .522).

The results of the interview show that because of the enhancement of technology today, teachers are using online professional development learning than ever before.

**Table 6**

*Teachers' Preferences for Distance Education CPD Delivery Mode*

S.No	Item	M	SD
1	I prefer learning through printed materials or correspondence for CPD because of limited access to online resources	3.34	1.003
2	Distance education allows me to learn at my own pace and manage my time effectively	3.28	.924
3	I prefer distance education because it is more attractive compared to face-to-face or online modes	3.22	.974
4	I prefer distance education because it is an effective way to acquire practical teaching skills	3.22	.974
Grand Mean		3.23	

*Note: mean, SD: standard deviation*

Table 6 indicates that middle school teachers have a moderate level of agreement towards the need for distance education, with a grand mean of 3.23. Among the items, the statement "I prefer learning through printed materials or correspondence for CPD because of limited access to online resources" received the highest mean score (M = 3.34, SD = 1.003), indicating that access issues might still play

a role in determining CPD preferences. The item "Distance education allows me to learn at my own pace and manage my time effectively" was also moderately recognized (M = 3.28, SD = .924), suggesting some credit for the flexibility associated with the distance education format.

However, insights into distance education as an attractive or highly effective method for gaining

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practical teaching skills seemed less strong. The statements "I prefer distance education because it is more attractive compared to face-to-face or online modes" and "I prefer distance education because it is an effective way to acquire practical teaching skills" both received lower but equal mean scores ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .974$ ). These findings indicate that while distance education is valued for its accessibility and flexibility, it might be perceived as less attractive or practical when compared to face-to-face and online CPD formats.

During the interview, teachers reported that distance education was not a popular way of learning; they prefer it as a professional development delivery mode.

### **The Influence of Teaching setting and Teaching Experience on teachers' preferences for CPD delivery mode**

**Table 7**

*Comparison of CPD Delivery Mode Preferences between Urban and Rural Teachers*

Face-to-face	Group	N	U-Test	Z	r	Sig.
	Urban	19	46.500	-3.403	.601	.001
	Rural	13				
	Total	32				
Online	Urban	19	.000	-5.324	0.941	.000
	Rural	13				
	Total	32				
Distance Education	Urban	19	79.000	-2.186	.333	.067
	Rural	13				
	Total	32				

Regarding online CPD delivery mode preference, [Table 7](#) portrayed that there is also a significant difference between the ratings of the two groups,  $U = .000$ ,  $N1 = 16$ ,  $N2 = 16$ ,  $Z = -5.324$ ,  $P = .000$ , with a very large effect size,  $r = .0.941$ . This implies that teachers who were teaching in the countryside have higher preferences for online professional development than teachers who were teaching in urban areas.

To compare the differences between urban and rural teachers in the preferences for distance education delivery mode, a Mann-Whitney U-test was conducted, as shown in [Table 7](#). The test

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A Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to compare whether there are significant differences or not in the preferences for face-to-face, online, and distance education CPD delivery modes between middle school teachers who were teaching in urban and rural areas and between experienced teachers and less experienced teachers.

### **Differences in CPD Delivery Mode Preferences Based on Teaching Environment**

According to [Table 7](#), Mann-Whitney U-test revealed a significant difference between middle English language teachers who were teaching in urban and rural area regarding face-to-face CPD delivery mode,  $U=46.500$ ,  $N1= 16$ ,  $N2=16$ ,  $Z= -3.403$ ,  $P= .001$  with the large of effect size,  $r= .60$ . The results suggest that teachers in the urban areas has significantly higher preferences for face-to-face CPD delivery mode than teachers in rural areas.

revealed no significant difference in the preferences for distance learning CPD delivery mode between the two groups,  $U=79,000$ ,  $N1=16$ ,  $N2=16$ ,  $Z=-2.186$ ,  $r=.333$ ,  $P=.067$ .

### **Differences in CPD Delivery Mode Preferences Based on Teaching Experience**

According to [Table 8](#), a Mann-Whitney test produced a U value of 80.500, with an equivalent Z score of -1.983 and a p-value of .073. The effect size ( $r = .350$ ) indicates a moderate effect according to Cohen's criteria (Cohen, 1988). The results



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indicate that there is no significant difference in the need for face-to-face CPD delivery mode between more experienced and less experienced teachers. However, experienced teachers likely show a stronger preference toward the face-to-face delivery mode than less experienced teachers.

Table 8 also presents the result of the Mann-Whitney U-test comparing less experienced and

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., April. –June, 2025, 14(2), 154-166* experienced groups depending on their rankings of measured variables. The Mann-Whitney U-test generated a U value of 128.00 with a z-score of 0.000 and a p-value of 1.00, suggesting there is no statistically significant difference between the groups of teachers. The effect size ( $r = 0$ ) additionally confirms the absence of a significant difference.

**Table 8**

*Comparison of CPD Delivery Mode Preferences between Less Experienced and Experienced Teachers*

Face-to-face	Group	N	U-Test	Z	r	Sig.
	Less Experienced	12	80.500	-1.983	.350	.073
	Experienced	20				
	Total	32				
Online	Less Experienced	12	128.000	.000	0	1.000
	Experienced	20				
	Total	32				
Distance Education	Less Experienced	12	95.500	-1.450	.256	.224
	Experienced	20				
	Total	32				

The findings of Table 8 again revealed that less experienced teachers had a greater mean rank (18.53), while more experienced teachers had a mean rank of 14.47. The results indicated that less experienced teachers had a slightly more favorable view of distance education CPD. This difference was not statistically significant ( $U=95.500$ ,  $Z=-1.450$ ,  $p=0.224$ ). Both less experienced and more experienced teachers shared the same median score (2.000), showing similar central tendencies in their retorts. The small effect size ( $r=0.256$ ) emphasizes that experience level had only a negligible impact on perceptions.

**DISCUSSIONS**

The findings of this study emphasize a critical and persistent gap in the language competence of middle school English teachers in Ethiopia, specifically in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, and speaking. Vocabulary, which is identified as the most pressing area of need, followed by grammar and speaking skills, shows the misalignment between the existing CPD delivery

and the actual linguistic demands of classroom instruction. These results are consistent with classroom observation and interviews, which showed that most middle school teachers were struggling to use exact and contextually suitable vocabulary and grammatical structures during instruction. Hence, these problems not only damage teachers’ effectiveness but also hinder learners’ language acquisition and classroom commitment.

Regarding language competence, the findings of this study align with Woldemariam and Hailu’s (2023) study in similar situations where inadequate pre-service education left major gaps in teachers’ vocabulary competence and grammatical abilities. Richards and Renandya (2018) also stated that vocabulary development is critical for communicative competence and directly impacts competence in the four language skills. Similarly, Ayalew and Hailemariam (2024) found that many high school English teachers in Ethiopia have no competence in vocabulary instruction. The study by them supports the current study’s interview findings that teachers felt inadequately ready to

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teach vocabulary and were unaware of techniques to improve vocabulary acquisition in learners. Moreover, scholars argue that vocabulary needs to be an essential component in teacher training. For instance, [Schmitt \(2014\)](#) supported the idea and suggested that vocabulary and grammar should be given priority in teacher training because, for instance, vocabulary is the building block for all linguistic functions.

The results of this study further indicated that writing, listening, and reading skills were not being given sufficient attention in classrooms. The respondents confirmed that they had no confidence and suitable teaching strategies for the teaching of these skills. This left out the key language skills like writing, listening, and reading that could hinder learners' comprehensive language improvement, even if these areas are vital for promoting both receptive and productive linguistic abilities. [Tessema and Mohammed's \(2022\)](#) research supported the current study that a lot of Ethiopian teachers felt difficulty in teaching writing and listening because teachers underrate the difficulty of these skills. [Vandergrift and Goh \(2021\)](#) claim that listening remains one of the most ignored language skills in CPD contexts because of its perceived intangibility, despite being essential to communicative competence.

The results of language sub-skills also advocate a resilient need for CPD that stresses both content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Regarding this, [Shulman \(1987\)](#) suggests the amalgamation of language competence and teaching approach. Teachers' lack of ability to teach pronunciation and organize coherent writing tasks supports the study by [Walker \(2020\)](#), who identified that many teachers regularly struggle with significant features of pronunciation and written discourse organization because of a shortage of in-service training.

Regarding delivery preferences, urban teachers had a strong preference for face-to-face, continuous professional development delivery mode. The results of this study are supported by [Ramia et al \(2023\)](#), which shows that in developed countries, urban teachers choose the online delivery mode.

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The results showed that rural teachers prefer online professional development training.

The findings of this study also revealed the influence of the area where teachers teach (urban and rural and their experience on CPD preferences. The results indicate that urban teachers showed a significantly greater preference for in-person CPD, whereas teachers who teach in the countryside prefer online CPD. [UNESCO \(2020\)](#) suggested the reason why the difference between face-to-face and online preferences of CPD can happen. According to UNESCO, this might be connected to infrastructural facts. Teachers in urban areas have more access to settings and professional collaboration for face-to-face education, while rural teachers are more possibly to profit from online options. The findings of this study also show that the experience of teachers did not significantly influence CPD mode preferences. This implies that both beginner and experienced teachers are equally exposed to various delivery methods provided that the content is relevant and appropriate.

Finally, the findings of this study come up with the following significances. First, the study provides empirical support for CPD designers, policy makers, and education planners through identifying the critical linguistic gaps middle school teachers have in vocabulary and grammar, and speaking skills. Second, the study shows that in-service and pre-service training fail to provide teachers with the required language skills. Therefore, based on the results, this study recommends that curriculum designers revise and enhance CPD programs that can address the immediate teachers' CPD needs. Finally, this study recommends that need and context-based CPD is required in Ethiopia.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals the most important ways in which the CPD programs for English language teachers in middle schools in Ethiopia can be improved. There is a great need for teachers' attention in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills, which are necessary for language teaching. The study proposes that the available

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continuing professional development programs should adopt a more focused approach in addressing these specific issues through focused training designed to improve teachers' ability to teach these components of language effectively.

As far as CPD is concerned, face-to-face delivery remains the most popular means, although the recent trend of online learning also indicates the possibility of adopting blended approaches to instructional systems. When formulating new CPD plans and activities, these preferences must be considered so that teachers, whether in rural or urban areas, will find it appropriate and worth their time.

So, essentially, the study concludes that a need-based CPD framework and flexible delivery modes that address the specific linguistic and pedagogical gaps among middle school English teachers can contribute significantly to improving the quality of English language teaching in Ethiopia.

## Recommendations

1. The programs for continuing professional development should move from theoretical to practical models by integrating classroom-based activities.
2. Prioritizing intensive in-service training on language skills such as vocabulary, communicative grammar, and speaking fluency using approaches like communicative language teaching.
3. Schools must renovate their infrastructure and provide ongoing instruction in educational technology tools, digital resource creation, and blended learning strategies to close the technological skills gap.
4. Structural adjustments like flexible delivery format and focused outreach to rural teachers should be addressed to achieve teaching setting similarity in CPD participation.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Motuma Begna:** Writing—Original Draft, Writing—Review & Editing, **Tamene Kiltila:**

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Resources, Data Curation, visualization, **Madanu Shanthassor:** Formal analysis, Investigation

## Declaration of competing interests

The author has no conflict of interest.

## Ethical approval

This study was conducted according to the ethical standards of Ambo University. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Before data collection, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

## Data availability statement

Data will be made available on request.

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