

Teachers' Practice of Teaching Advanced Speech: The Case of Debre Markos University, Ethiopia

Author: Endalew Molla Tessera and Animaw Anteneh Kassa

Addis Ababa University; College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism, and Communications; Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

E-mail: menduca.m@gmail.com



Co-Author: Animaw Anteneh, Ph.D., Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Addis Ababa University

Abstract

Different studies have disclosed that most university students in Ethiopia lack communicative competence, and hence they cannot communicate effectively in English. This is caused by a number of factors, the major ones having to do with the curriculum, the process of teaching and learning, or the methods used in the assessment. This inquiry was made to look into the practice of teaching the Advanced Speech course. Forty-three students and six teachers were included in the study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observation. The data revealed that most of the teachers were assigned to teach the Advanced Speech course against their will. Moreover, the student class size and seating arrangement were not appropriate for spoken courses. Teachers were not creating a conducive environment for the students to use the target language in real-life communication. The teachers' main role was giving lectures; they were not supervising and guiding the students. Activities used to teach advanced speech were dull and

pitched at the wrong level. This implies that teachers' teaching practices were not effective to improve the students' skill.

Key words: Speaking Skills, Advanced Speech, Speaking Activities, Teaching Speaking, Class Size

1. Introduction

These days, English is the most widely used language in research, business, politics, and other areas of life in our contemporary world. The importance of English is unquestionable given that the language is among the few languages used internationally as a medium of communication in all forms of interaction (economic, political, etc.) between nations across countries and continents (Earl, 1989).

One of the main concerns of most language learners in the EFL context is how to improve their speaking skills. However, a common characteristic of many language classes, particularly in EFL contexts, is a heavy focus on the language system. It appears that teaching vocabulary and grammar receives more attention than teaching the skills necessary to apply this vocabulary and grammar. Naturally, skills are a crucial component of communicative competence; however, they are frequently not explicitly taught and are instead left for the language learners to acquire via practice and language use. The default position in most EFL contexts is that skills will just be acquired implicitly (Lightbrown & Spada, 1999).

Moreover, according to Nunan (1991), success in language learning is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. Thus, students may quickly lose motivation and interest in learning the language if they are unable to learn how to speak or if they

are not given the chance to speak in class. Language learners have fewer opportunities to speak English in EFL contexts, which is why this issue persists.

Moreover, according to Richards (2001), “A large percentage of the world’s language learners study English to develop proficiency in speaking.” Even though speaking is crucial for language learners, it is very challenging to teach and learn, especially if the language to be studied is a second or foreign language. In line with this, Brown & Yule (1983) noted that “... spoken language production, learning to talk in the foreign language, is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language learning.”

In Ethiopia, the teaching of foreign languages began a century ago. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, four foreign languages were introduced in primary schools. These languages were French, Arabic, Italian, and English, and they were taught starting from primary schools to produce Ethiopians who could communicate in the languages and look after foreign affairs (Heugh et al., 2007; Pankhurst, 1974).

Starting from that time, English courses were given at primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels. Even these days, English is given as a subject at the primary level. At the secondary level, the medium of instruction shifts to English, and the language becomes the primary medium of instruction at the tertiary level. Though the place of the English language in the country is to this level, it is paradoxically very common these days to find university graduates who cannot communicate using the language.

Ethiopia’s English proficiency level is low, and it is at a slightly lower level than what the previous data showed (Education First, 2022). In addition, most Ethiopian English language teachers agree that most of their students cannot communicate using the language (Animaw, 2011; Hailom & Woldu, 1998). While I was teaching at different universities, I observed the same

problem. It was this observation that triggered questions that I believe should be answered through research.

The problem of poor spoken English among graduates of English language and literature has led to a general feeling that there is a need to re-examine the teaching of spoken English courses in higher education institutions in Ethiopia. It is evident that students' oral communication skills are low, and the major reason for this failure lies in the curriculum and/or the delivery. Because of this, much research has been carried out on the teaching methodology for speaking skills. But to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has been conducted on the assessment of the spoken English course syllabus. Therefore, we need an evaluative inquiry to be able to improve the success of the program somewhere else, as suggested by Owen (2007). This study is intended to fill this research gap, and the following are its specific objectives:

- How are teachers selected to teach the Advanced Speech course?
- Are student class size and seating arrangements appropriate for the teaching of the Advanced Speech Course?
- What are the teachers' roles while teaching the Advanced Speech course?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speaking Skill

Different scholars have defined the term 'speaking' in different ways. Let us see some of the definitions. Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts" (Bygate). According to Brown (2000) and Burns (1998), speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Speaking is an essential component of teaching and learning a second language. Speaking instruction has long been underappreciated, and English

language teachers have continued to teach speaking primarily as drills or dialogue memorization, despite the importance of the skill. Today's world, however, demands that the purpose of teaching speaking should be to help students become more proficient communicators. Only then can students learn how to express themselves and adhere to the social and cultural norms that are appropriate in each communicative situation. For this reason, recent pedagogical research on teaching students to converse has offered some guidelines for creating goals and strategies.

Speaking has acquired great importance along with the history of English teaching since it is referred to as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Brown, 2000; Goh & Burns, 2012). English has become primordial worldwide, for it has become a lingua franca. Therefore, it is the main source for communicating in many fields. Richards (2001) stated that the mastery of speaking skills in English is seen as a priority for many EFL learners across the world. Furthermore, he continues, students frequently assess both the success of their language learning endeavors and the value of their English courses according to the degree to which they believe their spoken language abilities have improved. Brown (2000) stated that social contact in interactive language functions is a key in which it is not what you say that counts but how you say it, what you convey with body language, gestures, eye contact, and other non-verbal messages.

Language is primarily speech. Most of the languages in the world are only spoken orally and not in writing (Brown, 2004). Even in languages with writing systems, most languages use spoken forms more often than written ones. It is an agreed fact that language is learned by speaking it first after a lot of listening to the sounds, words, phrases, and sentences from the surroundings. Hence, there is a dire need for a paradigm shift in teaching and learning speaking skills through a

focus deviation towards oral orientation, training the teachers, and developing a suitable curriculum (Anuradha et al., 2014).

2.2. Principles of Teaching Speaking Skills

Many scholars use different kinds of principles for teaching speaking skills. Among these, the most frequently cited principles are those presented by Anuradha et al. (2014). According to these scholars, the students should be encouraged to speak from the very beginning. Teachers need to understand if some students just repeat what they have said and for the time being, they should accept it if a student responds to a question with just one word. The students should be given freedom to actively communicate in whatever English they know. Teachers should propose structures, phrases, and words and let the learners use them in different situations and drill as much as possible.

Moreover, to create longer sentences by combining more than ten sentences, teachers should encourage the use of tail-forwarding or back-chaining technique. Teachers are advised to arrange as many role-plays and pair projects as they can, and keep an eye on the students to make sure the passive ones are activated and the active ones are corrected. To do all these, lessons, tasks, and activities need to be planned well in advance. On the other hand, the students should be allowed to make mistakes. Frequent corrections and interruptions impair fluency and demoralize the student. Individual shortcomings ought to be considered, and the instructor ought to be understanding of the need for individualized attention.

2.3. Teachers' Role in Speaking Classes

To teach speaking effectively, some suggestions were given by Bygate (1987), Infante et al. (1993), Killipel (1992), and Brumfit & Johnson (1979) to English language teachers while teaching oral language. Accordingly, teachers need to ensure that students have as many

opportunities as possible to speak the target language by creating a rich environment that includes shared knowledge, authentic materials and tasks, and collaborative work. Reduce teacher speaking time in class while increasing student speaking time. Step back and observe the students. The problems of interaction in teaching could be reduced by minimizing teachers' involvement in their domination of classroom activities and changing the direction of the process of language use.

There must be an attempt to include every student in each speaking exercise. To do so, the students should play different roles and teachers should check whether every group member is participating or not. The amount of time spent by teacher's talk should be short and teachers should remain back and watch the students. When responding to a student's response, teachers are advised to give encouraging signals. Eliciting questions such as "What do you mean? How did you reach that conclusion?" should be asked by the teacher to prompt students to speak more.

In addition, teacher need to offer written comments such as "Your presentation was really great. It was a good job. I really appreciated your efforts in preparing the materials and the efficient use of your voice." As students are speaking, try not to correct their pronunciation errors too frequently. Corrections should not distract a student from his or her speech. Whatever method is chosen, the teacher should be careful not to correct students' errors too frequently. On the other hand, students need to engage themselves in speaking exercises both within and outside of the classroom; get in touch with parents and other support systems. Before the students engage in speaking activities, their teacher needs to give them the vocabulary they will need because it is necessary to know a certain amount of grammar and vocabulary before speaking. The students who struggle with self-expression in the target language should be given additional opportunities to practice speaking by diagnosing their issues. Lastly, teachers are recommended to circulate the

classroom to ensure that students are on the right track and see whether they need your help while they work in groups or pairs.

2.4. Activities to Promote Speaking in a Second Language

Traditional classroom speaking practice often takes the form of drills in which one person asks a question and the other answers. Many times, there is only one right, predefined response, and both the question and the response are structured and predictable. It is meant to serve as a demonstration of one's capacity for both questioning and responding. On the other hand, genuine communication aims to complete a task, like making a phone call, gathering data, or voicing a viewpoint. In real communication, participants must manage uncertainty about what the other person will say (Brown & Yule, 1983; Burns, 1998; Lightbrown & Spada, 1999).

There is an information gap in authentic communication; each party knows something that the other does not. Besides, to achieve their purpose, participants may have to clarify their meaning or ask for confirmation of their understanding. To create classroom speaking activities that will develop communicative competence, instructors need to incorporate a purpose and an information gap and allow for multiple forms of expression (Brown & Yule, 1983; Burns, 1998; Lightbrown & Spada, 1999).

Harmer and Bryson listed that there are different kinds of techniques and activity types that the teacher should use to teach speaking. These activities include brainstorming (where students can come up with any ideas in a short amount of time); interviews (where students can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people); role plays (where students participate in an activity); simulations (where students bring items to the classroom to create a realistic environment); storytelling (where students summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody or created by themselves); and picture narrating (where students are given a single picture and

asked to describe what it is in the picture) (Shrouf, 2012; Parrott, 1993); Harmer, 2001; Bryson, 2003). In addition, repetition of rhymes, look and say, oral composition, pronunciation drills, read-aloud, open-ended stories, narration, and description (of festivals, celebrations, and occasions) are important practices to improve speaking skills (Jyotsna and Rao).

2.5. Characteristics of a Successful Speaking Activity

According to Ur (1996), the following are the major characteristics of a successful speaking activity:

- Learners talk a lot. Learner talk takes up the majority of the allotted time during the activity. Although it might seem apparent, teacher chatter or pauses frequently occupy the majority of the time.
- Participation is even. Everyone has an opportunity to speak, and contributions are split fairly evenly, so no one person dominates class discussions.
- Motivation is high. Learners are eager to speak, either because they are interested in the topic and have something new to say about it or because they want to contribute to achieving a task objective.
- The language is at an acceptable level. Learners communicate in ways that are appropriate in terms of language accuracy, pertinent to one another, and easily understandable.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study followed a descriptive research design because its major purpose is a description of the state of affairs as it exists at present. The main characteristic of this research design is that the researcher has no control over the variables; he can only report what has happened or what is happening (Kothari, 2004). Moreover, descriptive research, according to Best and Kahn, is

concerned with: conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view, or attitudes that are held (Best & Kahn, 2006).

3.2. Sampling

To study the practice of teaching the Advanced Speech course in a detailed manner, only Debre Markos University was chosen purposefully. The major reason for choosing this university is the researcher's familiarity with the environment. Living near this town, whose culture the researcher knows, can enrich and validate the data that the study sought to gather (Balbi, 2008).

Forty-three second-year students who were taking the Advanced Speech course were included in the study. In addition, using the homogeneous sampling technique, six teachers who have given this course at different times were included in this study. Using the homogeneous sampling technique, a researcher selects from a particular sub-group those who share some important experience relevant to their study (Dorneyi, 2007). Hence, the total sample size is 49, and this small sample size enabled the researcher to investigate the issue in detail. A well-designed qualitative study usually requires a relatively small number of respondents to yield the saturated and rich data that is needed to understand even the subtle meanings of the phenomenon in focus (Dorneyi, 2007).

3.3. Instruments of the Study

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sample teachers and students. Data on how teachers share courses, the student class size and seating arrangements, the role of the teacher, and teachers' practice of using different teaching materials and activities was collected through this tool because face-to-face interviews are the best instruments to collect reliable data on the interviewees' beliefs, practices, and conceptions (Dorneyi, 2007). Six teachers and six

students were interviewed in depth. To do this, an interview guide was prepared in line with the objectives and the literature review of this study.

In addition, classroom observations and observation of facilities were conducted. By using this tool, the researcher observed the students' seating arrangement, the role of the teacher, and the teachers' practice of using different teaching materials and activities. Since people do not always do what they say they do, observation is an important instrument to get direct information about teachers and classroom events (Cohen et al., 2005). To do all this, an observation checklist was prepared in line with the literature review of this article and the basic principles of teaching speaking skills. Eight lessons were observed for this study.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

To gather the data, the researcher adhered to the following protocols. The Advanced Speech course syllabus was reviewed in advance of the classroom observations and interviews in order to evaluate how closely instructors adhered to the material. Then the researcher explained the purpose of the research to the participants. Classroom observations were done before the interview because teachers and students would not act artificially since they had no information on the focus of the research. An artificial classroom setting might be set up during the observation period if the interview was completed beforehand. Finally, observation of facilities was conducted. The observation was conducted six times until the researcher got enough information.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively. To do so, the researcher employed grounded theory. Grounded theory refers to a theory that is developed inductively from a corpus of data. If done correctly, this indicates that the result of the theory perfectly fits one dataset (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through grounded theory, one dataset was formed.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was requested from the participant teachers and their students. The researcher had an initial informal meeting with the teachers, where they signed the informed consent. The researcher assured teachers and students that the research results would be confidential and their identities would be kept anonymous.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Course Sharing Mechanism

Teachers were asked how they share courses in their department. This question aimed to check whether the Advanced Speech course was chosen by teachers based on their interests or not. The response of all teachers to this item is similar. Courses are shared randomly, and a draw or lottery is used to share the courses. Teachers also added that common courses are preferred by teachers every year because they think that common courses need little effort and preparation. Next to the common courses, block courses are highly preferred over other courses because a teacher can finish them within a very short time. Conversely, advanced courses are not wanted by all teachers because they are considered a burden. These teachers believe that advanced courses, including the Advanced Speech courses, are not preferred because they consume much energy and there are no reference books or materials to support them in their teaching. As a result, these teachers do not want to give the advanced speech course for successive years. Let us see sample explanations given by teachers.

...most of the time, we share the courses by lottery method. We do that because there should be a balance between the burdens of every teacher. There are courses like the common courses that require little effort to teach, and there are advanced courses that require much more effort. So, if advanced courses are given

only to a particular person, he will always be busy while other teachers are relaxed.

(Teacher 1)

...all teachers want to deliver common courses. Since these courses require little effort and preparation, they are needed by every teacher. In addition, reading skills and all block courses are highly needed by the teachers. On the contrary, some courses need a great deal of effort to be taught. Frankly speaking, I personally don't want to teach courses like Advanced Speech because I will lose my whole energy and I can't find enough reference books to teach the course. So, these courses are burdens, and every teacher should share the burden as we share the blessings. (Teacher 2)

The data shows that the Advanced Speech course is not preferred by the teachers. Instead, it is considered a burden. It seems that teachers are teaching this course without interest. A lack of interest in teaching a certain course will minimize the quality of education. draw

One of the issues that could minimize the quality of the teaching-learning process is course sharing. At Debre Markos University, teachers were assigned to teach courses randomly. In this case, a teacher who does not have any experience or skill could be assigned to teach the Advanced Speech course. If courses are given by a teacher who is an expert in that specific field of study, there will not be a major quality-related problem in the teaching-learning process. For example, it would be effective if spoken English courses were given by a teacher who did his/her Ph.D. in speaking skills since he/she specializes in that skill. But, as Manen (1999) said, pedagogy has been conceptualized in a smaller way, and as a result, there has been a lack of recognition of teacher knowledge and expertise.

The other feasible criterion is experience. Experience is one of many factors influencing the quality of teaching (Brandenburg et al., 2016; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Students will benefit if courses are given by experienced teachers. According to Crookes & Arakaki (1999), accumulated teaching experience was the most often cited source of teaching ideas; teachers talk about their teaching experiences as being personally unique and self-contained. Teachers believe that their experiences are unique, and thus their unique experiences are important to teach effectively.

4.2. Student Numbers and Seating Arrangement

A) Number of Students in a Class

Throughout the observation session, the students were learning in the same room. The size of the room was 64 m², and most of its windows were broken. Some parts of the ceiling were broken too, and the remaining parts were painted white. The walls were painted a light yellow. All the electric sockets were destroyed. There were white and green boards. There were many armchairs, but some of them were broken.

Different studies show that class size could determine class behavior and student performance. The number of students taking the Advanced Speech course was 43. Defining a large class is difficult because there seems to be no quantitative large-class indicator due to differences in contextual perception, whether that of teachers, administrators, or stakeholders, and, as we shall see, country (Hayes, 1997). Moreover, no single definition of what defines a large class exists in the literature, according to Bahanshal (2013), since educators, students, and material makers around the globe have diverse ideas about what defines small, large, and perfect classrooms. For instance, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) recommended 15 students in a class for second language learning. According to Hess (2001), a class is deemed large if it consists of 30 or more individuals.

These class sizes might work in developed nations. But in developing countries like Ethiopia, the principle does not work. In Ethiopia, there is no data on the ideal class size at any education level. One of the problems with the course syllabus and the harmonized curriculum is their inability to state the maximum number of students to be assigned in one classroom, especially for language classes. The observed class size at Debre Markos University is three times larger than the class size that is recommended by ACTFL. This makes the teaching-learning task very challenging. For instance, it was observed that the teacher could not manage the students. There were disturbances and side talk during the observation days. Especially the students who were sitting at the back of the class were chatting while the teacher was lecturing.

The other problem that resulted from this class size was a shortage of time to cover the course. All the interviewed teachers and students highlighted that there were not enough practical sessions because the majority of the course time was allocated to teaching the theoretical parts of the course. For instance, if the teacher gave a 5-minute individual presentation, 215 minutes would be needed for the whole class. Therefore, it would take two weeks to finish the presentation. Regarding this issue, one of the teachers said the following in the interview:

To speak frankly, it is very difficult to give individual presentations. As you have observed, there are around 45 students in the class. A minimum of 5 minutes should be given to every student to assess their speaking performance. So, this usually takes two weeks from the course time, and at the end, some theoretical concepts will not be covered (Teacher 5).

Researchers like Bahanshal found that a large class size affects the students' behavior and their achievement. Teaching in large classrooms is difficult, according to Bahanshal (2013), because of the need for teachers to take into account the goals of the course, the unique qualities

of each student, and the teaching styles of each student. The same conclusion was drawn from a study by Harmer (2001), which confirmed that large classes are challenging for both teachers and students. Because of the size of the class, teachers find it challenging to plan engaging and innovative lessons and pay attention to every student, especially those who prefer to hide in the back or do not make eye contact.

The problem of large class size is even worse for foreign or second language classes. Practicing the skills is the nucleus of any language learning. But if there are many students in the class, there will not be sufficient time to do so. It is argued that limited practice for the target language due to the large number of students hindered students from improving their level of oral English (Bahanshal, 2013). In addition, classes with a large number of students do not provide teachers with ample chances or time to give students feedback, either in oral or written form.

B) The Students' Seating Arrangement

The other factor that affects the students' behavior and achievement is their seating arrangement. Classroom seating arrangement significantly impacts student behavior, and there is evidence to suggest that it impacts achievement as well (Pace & Price, 2005). Different seating arrangements have their own strengths and weaknesses.

At Debre Markos University, most dominantly, the whole-class seating arrangement (sitting in rows) was employed every day. Since the majority of the course was covered using the lecture method, the students' seating arrangement was not changed. Wannarka (2008) underlined that the nature of the tasks given to the students dictates their seating arrangements. When group discussions were given, the teacher ordered the students to sit in groups. While the students tried to create a circular seating arrangement, the whole class was disturbed by the noise created by the movement of the chairs. After their discussions, the same disturbance was created when they

returned to the whole-class seating arrangement. No other seating arrangement was used except for these two.

According to Daniels (1998), the physical arrangement of the classroom has the potential to encourage desirable behavior or contribute to students' misbehavior. Moreover, Marx et al. (2000) found that the locations of students in the classroom normally determine the number of interactions they have with the teachers, and this will eventually improve their learning.

Circular seating arrangements were used during group discussions for a few days whenever group discussions were given. In addition, the large number of students assigned to a group resulted in ineffective group discussions. There were side talks among the group members instead of discussing the issue. In the circular seating arrangement, it was observed that some of the students were sitting facing an empty wall, which was opposite to the white board. Unless they turned back, there was no opportunity to see their teacher. To overcome this problem, semi-circle seating arrangements are recommended by scholars. Marx et al. (2000), for example, looked into the connection between ten-year-old students' question-asking habits and seating arrangements. They discovered that when students were seated in semicircles as opposed to rows, they asked their teacher noticeably more questions. When the desired behavior is interactive, like brainstorming (Rosenfield, 1985) or questioning the teacher (Marx et al., 2000), seating arrangements that facilitate interactions by proximity and position, such as clustered desks or semi-circles, should be utilized.

4.3. The Role of the Teacher

The first focus of classroom observation was the teacher's and the students' role to teach and learn the Advanced Speech course. Accordingly, the teacher didn't start each day's session by introducing the day's lesson objectives. On all observed days, the teacher started the lesson without

communicating the objectives. It seems that it is because of this trend that students showed hesitation while they were interviewed about the objectives of the course. Besides, the teacher did not create consistency between the course syllabus and the topics that he taught on all observation days. Sometimes he used the 'old' syllabus to teach some topics. The vocabulary and other language aspects were not provided beforehand that the students needed for speaking activities during all observation sessions.

On the other hand, the teacher presented the new language to the students systematically and meaningfully, to some extent. He presented new concepts like memorized and impromptu speeches in a meaningful manner by providing real-life examples. Other concepts raised on other observation days were presented using the usual lecture method.

Spoken tasks were not presented interestingly and enthusiastically. As mentioned in the analysis of the students' interview part, spoken tasks were considered a burden that was loaded on the students. Since the tasks were not given in a way that could capture the students' attention, they showed little interest in doing them. Students were not given equal chances to participate in speaking tasks. During their presentation session, it was observed that only group leaders presented the group work while other group members sat and listened to the presentations. Group marks were given based on the performance of the group leaders. Other group members were asked a few questions to check whether they had participated in the group work or not.

In spoken classes, it is advised that the teacher minimize his/her speaking time and increase the students' speaking time. Contrarily to this fact, the majority of each day's session was covered by the teacher's talk. As explained above, teachers preferred the lecture method to teach this course, and they used the whole class time to explain concepts. Usually, the students were silent listeners and note-takers.

Likewise, no oral or written feedback was given by the teacher while the students made errors in group work or presentations. Especially during the students' presentation day, the students made frequent pronunciation mistakes. However, their teacher did not give comments or feedback to any student, either in the middle or at the end of their presentation. This practice may lead the students to think that their presentation was perfect, with no pronunciation or other errors. Additionally, no eliciting questions like "What do you mean?" were asked by the teacher to prompt students to speak more. During the presentation time, the teacher's concern was finishing the assessment within the given time.

Generally, the teacher was not supervising and guiding the students while the students did their group work or pair discussions. As it has been stated so far, the teachers' main concern was covering the course within the given time. There are many theoretical concepts in the course syllabus. Therefore, the majority of the time was spent teaching the theoretical parts. As a result, only a few practical sessions were conducted in the classroom. And even those few practical activities observed were done and presented by group leaders only.

In communicative language teaching, as well as in the principles of teaching speaking skills, the teacher's task is to create conducive environments for students to use the target language in real-life-like communication. According to Hedge (2000), teachers should facilitate the practice of student activities to bring about effective results. They should be inspired to move beyond covering the curriculum. In addition to this, teachers should provide the maximum opportunity for students to speak the target language by providing a rich environment that encourages collaborative work, using authentic materials and tasks, and sharing knowledge (Bygate, 1987; Kllipel, 1992). While teachers give group work, they should involve each student in every speaking activity; to achieve this aim, they should practice different ways of student participation.

According to Infante et al. (1993), even though there are different roles for group members, there may be some students who act as silent sitters. So, teachers should check whether every group member is participating or not. Moreover, it is often believed that teachers delegate authority to their students in group work (Cohen, 1994).

4.4. Teaching Methods and Activities Used by the Teacher

“Teachers should use speaking activities which enable their students to use the language in real-life communications” (Rubin & Thompson, 1982). Teachers were interviewed to state the kinds of methods that they used to teach the Advanced Speech course. All of the teachers responded that they used different methods to teach the course. According to these teachers, different methods like a gapped lecture, pair discussions, group discussions, games, role plays, storytelling, picture narrations, debating, and questioning and answering were used in the classroom. Regarding this issue, two teachers stated the following:

... I have been applying different techniques, though the time is not sufficient. It is impossible to say that I have meaningfully applied the methodologies in the classroom. There are methodologies that I have used to teach in the classroom. I have been using games, role plays, storytelling, picture narrations, debating, discussions, and lots of other methods based on the situation and the course outline. (Teacher 4)

... Daily, different types of methods may be applied. As an advanced speech instructor, you give some kind of gapped lecture, and then you invite the students for pair discussions or group discussions. You ask some questions, and the students answer those questions. These are the common classroom routines that happen in the classroom. (Teacher 6)

Though teachers responded that they used many teaching methods, classroom observations were made to validate the data. Contrary to what is stated above, the whole teaching-learning process was dominated by the lecture method. Group discussions and group presentations were conducted to some extent. However, the teachers' further explanations of the above question contradicted what they had stated above. They said, "Different methods are applied each day," and after a while, they responded that time is a big constraint to applying different methodologies in the classroom. One of the above teachers also added: "The students are shown how they can communicate in the classroom, and the rest of the practical aspect is left for the students to practice outside of the classroom because of a shortage of time" (Teacher 5).

The data showed that a teacher-centered approach was employed in the teaching of the Advanced Speech course. This practice is against the principles of communicative language teaching and the principles of teaching speaking skills. As clearly stated by Safargalina (2018) and Macknish & Tomas (2018), teaching speaking as a foreign language holds several challenges for teachers; nevertheless, careful planning and the use of active learning activities can make teaching speaking possible. Thus, giving learners the chance to engage in conversation and negotiate meaning can influence their language skills (Braden, 2018).

Moreover, Hedge (2000, p. 93) pointed out that "Teachers should be inspired to move beyond covering the curriculum." He added that teachers should facilitate the practice of student activities to bring about effective results. They should guide a student in the performance of a task to achieve competence closer to expert performance in the way that athletic, dancing, and singing coaches work with their students.

In the middle of their lessons, teachers were using group discussions and group presentations. Group discussions are one of the methods used to teach the Advanced Speech

course. But the big question remains on how it was conducted. As it was noticed during the observation sessions, only group leaders were doing ‘everything’ whenever they were given group work. They were leaders, doers, secretaries, and reporters at the same time. The rest of the group members were sitting silently, and some others were doing ‘something’ on their mobile phones. The teacher himself was reading something after he gave group discussions to his students. Besides, the teacher was observed simply ordering students: “Get into groups and do the task!” This implies teachers did not check whether every student in the group participated equally or not. For instance, teachers in the context of this study did not assign students to specific roles like scribe, presenter, leader, or reader. The principle of collaboration, which includes elements of positive interdependence and individual accountability for students, is one of the most valuable benefits of interactive speaking tasks. This finding is consistent with the arguments made by Christison & Murray (2021) and Braden (2018), who value the role that each student plays in group discussions.

Furthermore, group presentations were given on memorized speeches. As usual, the group leaders did everything, and they were the only ones to present it to the whole class. Other group members were asked a few oral questions to check whether they had participated in the work or not. In the end, equal marks were given to all group members based on the group leader’s performance. The quality of education suffers as a result of such practices. While giving group work, teachers should give every group member a specific role. Otherwise, the whole task of the group will be loaded on the group leaders. It is often believed that teachers delegate authority to their students in group work (Cohen, 1994).

Conclusions

Generally, teachers were assigned to teach the Advanced Speech course against their will. Teachers believed that the course was tiresome. Moreover, student numbers and seating arrangements were not appropriate for spoken courses. Teachers were not creating a conducive environment for the students to use the target language in real-life-like communication. The teachers' main role was to give lectures. They were not supervising and guiding the students. On the other hand, the students were silent listeners. They were not sharing roles whenever group work was given. In addition, the lecture method was the dominant teaching method. Unsupervised group discussions were given. One individual and one group presentation were given. Activities used to teach advanced speech were boring and pitched at the wrong level. There were no activities on fluency, pronunciation, or vocabulary. As a result, the methods and activities used by teachers were not effective in improving the students' speaking skills.

Works Cited

- Animaw, Anteneh. *Oral Corrective Feedback: An Exploratory Case Study of the Interplay between Teachers' Beliefs, Classroom Practices, and Rationales*. Unpublished Dissertation, Addis Ababa University, 2011.
- Anuradha R. V., et al. *Methods of Teaching English*. Neelkamal Publications, 2014.
- Bahanshal, D. "The Effect of Large Classes on English Teaching and Learning in Saudi Secondary Schools." *English Language Teaching*, vol. Vol. 6, No. 11, 2013, pp. 49–59.
- Balbi, R. *Resources and Activities for Young Learners*. In Dereboy, N., Nagy, P., Garton, S., Willies, J., and Balbi, R. *Teaching Young Learners Module*. Aston University, 2008.
- Best, John W., and James V. Kahn. *Research in Education*. Pearson, 2006.
- Braden, S. *Teacher Preparation for Teaching Speaking to English Learners in K-12 Contexts*. The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching. John Wiley & Sons, 2018.
- Brandenburg, R., et al. *Teacher Education: Innovation, Intervention and Impact*. Springer, 2016.
- Brown, H. D. *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. Pearson Education, 2004.
- . *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Fifth Edition, Pearson Education, 2000.
- Brown, and Yule. *Teaching the Spoken Language*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Brumfit, C., and K. Johnson. *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Bryson, B. *Mother Tongue*. Harper Collins, 2003.

- Burns, A. "Teaching Speaking." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. Vol. 18, 1998, pp. 102–23.
- Bygate, M. *Speaking*. Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Christison, M., and D. Murray. *What English Language Teachers Need to Know*. Volume III. Routledge, 2021.
- Cohen, E. G. *Designing Group Work: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom*. Teachers College Press, 1994.
- Cohen, L., et al. *Research Methods in Education*. Fifth Edition, Routledge Falmer, 2005.
- Corbin, J., and A. Strauss. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Third Edition, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2008.
- Crookes, G., and L. Arakaki. "Teaching Idea Sources and Work Conditions in an ESL Program." *TESOL Journal*, vol. Vol. 8, No. 1, 1999, pp. 15–19.
- Daniels, V. I. "How to Manage Disruptive Behavior in Inclusive Classrooms." *Teaching Exceptional Children*, vol. Vol. 30, No. 4, 1998, pp. 26–31.
- Dorneyi, Z. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methodologies*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Earl, W. S. *Success with Foreign Languages*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1989.
- Education First. *English Proficiency Index*. 2022, <http://www.ef.com/epi>.
- Goh, C. M., and A. Burns. *Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Hailom, Banteyerga, and Michael Woldu. "Upgrading the English Language Communication Skills of TTI Instructors for the Primary Cycle. *Quality Education in Ethiopia: Vision for the 21st Century*." IER, Addis Ababa University Press, 1998.

Harmer, J. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Pearson Longman, 2001.

Hayes, D. “Helping Teachers to Cope with Large Classes.” *English Language Teaching Journal*, vol. Vol. 51, No. 2, 1997, pp. 106–16.

Hedge, T. *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Hess, N. *Teaching Large Multilevel Classes*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Heugh, K., et al. *A Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Ethiopia*. Ministry of Education, FDRE, 2007.

Infante, D. A., et al. *Building Communicative Theory*. 2nd Ed., Waveland Press, INC., 1993.

Jyotsna, M., and S. N. Rao. *Methods of Teaching English*. Sri Nagarjuna Publishers, 2009.

Klassen, R. M., and M. M. Chiu. “Effects on Teachers’ Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Teacher, Gender, Years of Experience and Job Stress.” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. Vol. 102, No. 3, 2010, pp. 741–56.

Kllipel, F. *Keep Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teaching*. 10th Ed., Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Kothari, C. R. *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. Second Edition, New Age International Ltd. Publishers, 2004.

Lightbrown, P., and N. Spada. *How Languages Are Learned?* Oxford University Press, 1999.

Macknish, C., and Z. Tomas. *Materials Development for Teaching Speaking*. The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching. John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Manen, M. Van. *The Language of Pedagogy and the Primacy of Student Experience*. In Loughran, J. (Ed) *Researching Teaching: Methodologies and Practices for Understanding Pedagogy*. Falmer Press, 1999.

Marx, A., et al. "Effects of Classroom Seating Arrangements on Children's Question-Asking."

Learning Environment Research, vol. Vol. 2, 2000, pp. 249–63.

Nunan, D. *Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers*. Prentice Hall, 1991.

Owen, J. M. *Program Evaluation: Forms and Approaches*. 3rd Edition. Guilford, 2007.

Pace, D., and M. Price. *Instructional Techniques to Facilitate Inclusive Education*. In D. Schwartz (Ed.), *Including Children with Special Needs*. Greenwood Press, 2005.

Pankhurst, Richard. "Education Language and History: An Historical Background to Post-War Ethiopia." *The Ethiopian Journal of Education*, vol. Vol. 7, No. 1, 1974, pp. 75–97.

Parrott, M. *Tasks for Language Teachers*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Richards, J. C. *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Rosenfield, P. "Desk Arrangement Effects on Pupil Classroom Behavior." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. Vol. 77, No. 1, 1985, pp. 101–08.

Rubin, J., and I. Thompson. *The Good Language Learner*. Heinle and Heinle, 1982.

Safargalina, A. *Teaching Speaking in EFL Environments*. The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching. John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Shrouf, D. *Teaching and Improving Speaking Skills*. Philadelphia University, 2012.

Ur, P. *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Wannarka, R. *Seating Arrangements That Promote Positive Academic and Behavioural Outcomes: A Review of Empirical Research*. Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Biodata

1. Corresponding Author

Endalew Molla is an assistant professor and a Ph.D. candidate at Addis Ababa University.

2. Co-Author

Animaw Anteneh (Ph.D.) is an assistant professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Addis Ababa University.