

## **The inconsistency between the ideals and actuals of teaching EFL speaking skills: the case of upper primary school novice teachers in Ethiopia**

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### **Abstract**

Teaching skill is a cumulative result of principled education and practical experience. Thence, novice teachers encounter hurdles until they sharpen their knowledge obtained from the principled training and acquire new ones through experience. Despite the endeavors Ethiopia has been making at different hierarchies to promote teachers' skills and quality of education, various studies indicate that upper primary school EFL teachers lack adequate knowledge and skills on pedagogic teaching methods. This has been considered as the main factor for students' low English language proficiency and the problem worsens provided teachers' lack of experience. However, little research has been done in order to realize neophyte teachers' experiences in their daily activities. The focus of this study, then, is examining the methodological performances of upper primary school EFL novice teachers during speaking instructions. Three EFL novice teachers are selected through purposive sampling technique and data are collected through document analysis, observations, and interviews. The obtained data are organized and analyzed thematically and interpreted qualitatively. The results show that upper primary school EFL novice teachers use traditional teacher-centered methods and display poor pedagogic teaching skills due to lack of adequate knowledge from pre-service education and absence of in-service supports.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language; Teacher Education; Teaching EFL Speaking Skills; Novice Teachers; Upper Primary School

### **1. Introduction**

Recent transformations in knowledge-based developments necessitate gearing education system towards producing qualified work power. This, in turn, demands teachers to employ performance-oriented methods that allow students actively construct their own knowledge. Instructional effectiveness is fundamentally determined by the methods teachers use. Hence, teachers shoulder the main responsibility for students' learning, as they are the axis for alterations in the classroom practices (Borko, 2004).

In other words, students' failures in learning are often attributed to the instructional methods employed or the teacher (Freeman, 2002) and the textbook writer (Richards, 1971).

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The entire purpose of teacher's classroom actions is to enable students build their knowledge through maximized utilization of higher order thinking skills and active engagement in the instructional process. Teachers, then, should know how to enhance students' active involvement in the instructional process by selecting and implementing contemporary methods and assessing the outcomes. This allows the teacher to help the students build or reshape their knowledge based on existing schema and new information. In order to do this, teachers are expected to implement active learning methods, which are defined as methods in which students actively perform something by utilizing their critical thinking skills through targeted activities (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Carr, Plamer, & Hagel, 2015).

Essentially, a good teacher has detailed and wide-ranging knowledge of subject matter (Adams, Haute, & Ray, 2016), good classroom management and lesson designing skills (Harry & Rosemary, 1998), and knowledge of how to relate the content with methodology (Shulman, 1986; 1987). These are the sum of principled training and experiences obtained in capricious educational arenas. Hence, EFL teachers' competences in content and methodology play pivotal roles in enabling students build their own knowledge through enhanced active and cognitive involvement in the instructional process.

If teachers' knowledge and skills play a pivotal role in education system, their training attracts lots of attention. Whether in foreign or second language context, training programs must arm teachers with theoretical and practical tenets of learning and teaching (Richards, 1991). To this end, Ethiopia has been introducing policies and reforms to foster teachers' knowledge and capabilities in using pedagogic teaching methods so that they empower students with the ability to utilize their higher-order thinking skills for a meaningful learning (Ahmad, 2003).

According to the standards set for teaching speaking skills at upper primary school by Ethiopian Ministry of Education, EFL teachers are expected to display and explain various skills and knowledge on linguistic competence, performance, and pedagogy (FDRE, 2013a). The pedagogical dimension includes techniques for fostering students' speaking skills (how to run speaking activities in different organizing modes for controlled, guided, and free speaking purposes), instructional strategies that facilitate learning the language, and significance of collaborative language learning strategies, continuous assessment and testing, who students are, and the environment. Teachers are also expected to know and describe the effectiveness of the activities and tasks involved, which include oral guided repetitions, short dialogues, greetings, role-plays, and controlled and guided conversations, as well as use the target language effortlessly in different social contexts for describing, conversing, arguing, etc. (pp. 11-19). However, English language teachers are found to be among the least competent to teach their subjects of specialization (FDRE, 2018).

Whether experienced or novice, teachers shoulder the same teaching tasks though the novice ones often lack the demanded classroom management skills for effective instructional process (Jensen, Sandoval-

Hernandez, Knoll, & Gonzalez, 2012). Hence, adapting to the immediate instructional demands is a challenge for novice teachers (Cakmak, 2013), especially in using pedagogic teaching strategies (Gilbert, 2005; Shulman, 1986; 1987). Moreover, upper primary school is the stage at which students are prepared to use English language as medium of instruction in the next levels, and speaking is considered the most significant language skill (Ur, 1991). However, researches conducted on the classroom practices and challenges of English teachers of young learners are scarce (Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011). In her synthesis of twenty-five years of research, Meskerem (2017) also identified that primary school is neglected by researchers. Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore EFL novice teachers' methodological performances during speaking instructions in upper primary schools.

### 1.1. *Conceptual Framework*

According to cognitive theory/psychology, people process information using their complex mental phenomena rather than merely responding to external stimuli. Cognitive linguistics, which is based on cognitive theory, appreciates the interaction between language and cognition, the process of thought formation using language, and the analogous changes in language and mentality across time. Learning is knowledge and skills building and learner-dependent whereas language learning is usage-based. Instructional activities focus on teaching cognitive strategies to students (Littlemore, 2009).

Language teaching is the sum of *activities made to bring about language learning* (Stern 1983, 21). Hence, in this study, it is assumed that the essential categories in teaching skills comprise of planning lessons, managing classroom and instructional processes, and assessing the accomplishment of intentions (Doff, 1988). The planning (pre-lesson) skills necessitate understanding the learning activities and their aims, the content to be taught, and the principal procedures to be followed. Instructional and classroom management (while-lesson) skills demand knowledge of the language and skills such as the main process for presentation and practice, how to use instructional aids and resources, as well as the likely courses of interactions among classroom members. Post-lesson skills deal with knowledge of ways to ensure if the instructional process resulted in the intended destination or is indicative of learning.

Moreover, students learn and get motivated to learn more if they are allowed to converse in the target language (Nunan, 1991). This is more significant in EFL contexts where learners have less exposure to the target language outside the classroom. On the contrary, a language instruction which deprives students the opportunity to learn how to speak and practice through a thoroughly prepared communicative output activities such as role plays and discussions is demotivating. In order to reverse such situations, a teacher is expected to create a motivating atmosphere where students experiment with the language without any fear. Therefore, teachers play pivotal roles in making various decisions on how each student make the best use of his/her potential in a given context according to individual learning styles, strategies, and backgrounds.

Based on the most common categorizations among scholars, novice teachers, in this study, are those with less than four years of teaching experiences (Choy, Wong, Lim, & Chong, 2013; Curry, Webb, & Latham, 2016; Davis & Cearley-Key, 2016; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Irvine, 2019; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

### *1.2. Statement of the Problem*

Improving education quality depends on implementation (FDRE 2008) of the plans, which is to be realized at classroom level by the teacher through appropriate pedagogy/methodology. Teacher quality is, therefore, the leading factor that affects students' achievements (Guerrero, 2014; Hoy & Miskel 2002) and the entire quality of education (OECD, 2005). Hence, in order for teachers to be efficient and effective in teaching and ensure quality in education, they must obtain knowledge, skill, and attitude demanded in the subjects of study and the profession.

Despite the investments and reforms made by the Ethiopian government to bring about quality in education in general and English language teaching in particular, the gains have been questionable. It has been said, for example, that students display low English language proficiency corresponding to their levels (Tamene, 2000). Moreover, in the NLA (National Learning Assessment) of 2015/16, it was reported that 25% of students achieved below average at the end of grade 8 (FDRE, 2021, p. 18). It was also mentioned in this report that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not properly addressed in the assessment systems, since both NLAs and National Examinations use only multiple-choice questions, which do not allow the assessment of performance skills (p. 19).

Such low students' learning outcomes is related to, among other things, inadequate teacher training on new techniques (Ellis, 2012). To this end, it is said that English language teachers are found to be among the least competent to teach their subjects of specialization (FDRE, 2018). It has also been found that primary school EFL teachers lack methodological skills and subject matter knowledge (Dagne & Taye, 2017), have gaps in knowledge and skills to teach the language (Aliye, 2018) due to inadequate pre-service training and in-service supports (Eba, 2014). Moreover, Rijkhoek (2016) found that 'non-key' or inexperienced teachers do not have adequate and continuous training on ALM. Tinasho (2019) also concluded that EFL teachers have problems in applying appropriate methods during speaking lessons. Teachers are incompetent not only in teaching abilities, but also at English in all levels of the educational system in the country (Solomon, 2015).

It is essential, then, to investigate upper primary school EFL novice teachers' daily classroom performances before they acquire experiential knowledge to ensure quality in teacher education program in general and the quality of EFL teaching in particular. Consequently, the main concern of this study is to explore how upper primary school EFL novice teachers go about their everyday application of contemporary teaching methods during

speaking instructions in the light of pre-service education they received. In doing so, the following questions are asked:

- (1) What methodological skills do upper primary school EFL novice teachers display during speaking instructions?
- (2) What harmony exists between pre-service EFL teacher education and actual classroom demands for teaching speaking in upper primary schools?

The corresponding objectives of this study are:

- (1) To explore the methodological skills that upper primary school EFL novice teachers use during speaking instructions
- (2) To identify the harmony between pre-service upper primary school EFL teacher education and actual instructional demands during speaking lessons.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Design

In order to get deep insight into EFL novice teachers' methodological performances in upper primary schools during speaking instructions, qualitative approach is adopted. Qualitative approach can be used for both depth and breadth as well as for its design and data collection and analysis strategies (Patton, 2002). Moreover, case study design is used to get in-depth understanding of the research questions. Naturally, case study emphasizes definite groups or members and related files, attempts to dig out meaning, examines processes, and gives intuition and profound understanding of persons or issues (Ludico, Spaulding, & Voegtle 2006). It also allows collecting data from various sources and different angles as well as examining a social unit as a whole (Best & Khan, 1995). Likewise, the rich data from document analysis, observation, and guided interview, which characterize case study, allowed the researcher to describe, interpret and answer targeted questions and determine causality in vague associations.

### 2.2. The participants

The participants in this study are three EFL novice teachers with college diploma and one to three years of teaching experiences. They are from two different schools in Dukam Special Town of Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfinne, Ethiopia. Among four EFL novice teachers in the special town, a number greater than other sites in the special zone, one is excluded since she teaches at lower primary school, so purposive sampling is used to select both the site and the participants. It is believed that adequate data can be obtained from three teachers according to the lesson drawn from the pilot study. Besides, it is claimed that *qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single case (N=1), selected purposefully* (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

### 2.3. Data collection and processing

In this study, data are gathered through document analysis, observation, and interview. In order to obtain data on the education upper primary school EFL teachers receive during pre-service education for teaching speaking,

document analysis is conducted on the course modules. This is to identify the breadth and depth of the contents covered and the extent to which they are performance based. Document analysis is used for it does not necessarily require the researcher to approach respondents first hand and is invaluable methodological tool (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006).

Furthermore, frequent unstructured observations are conducted to obtain data from the novice teachers while they are teaching speaking. They are observed three times until it is realized that there is no new data obtained – saturation. To examine the participants' conceptions as EFL teachers and teacher trainees, semi-structured interview is used. It also helped to excavate unobservable, obscure, and sensitive information. The interviews are made in English, though they are allowed to switch codes whenever it seemed safer and productive and at the time and places they felt convenient. During the observations and interviews, audio recordings are made.

#### *2.4. Data analysis*

In order to analyze the data, first, the results from document analysis are organized and analyzed thematically. Then, the audio recordings from observations are transcribed and analyzed using open coding system to crack open the data. Next, the cracked data are categorized, related, and compared with each other using axial coding. Following this, selective coding is employed to decide the core themes. The results from these and interview are, then, discussed and interpreted qualitatively in line with the research questions and literature review. Finally, conclusions are made and recommendations proposed.

### **3. Findings**

The purpose of this study is to explore the methodological performances of upper primary school EFL novice teachers during speaking instructions in the light of pre-service education they received. Hence, their skills such as lesson planning, executing, and assessing as well as the harmony existing between pre-service education and actual instructional demands are discussed in the following sections.

#### *3.1. Methodological Skills*

Teaching comprises of pre-, while-, and post-lesson skills. The pre-lesson skills comprise lesson-planning, while-lesson skills deal with managerial skills, whereas post-lesson skills are mainly about assessing the outcomes. In other words, teaching is mainly about planning, executing, and assessing lessons. Regarding these, the data obtained are presented as follows.

##### *3.1.1. Pre-lesson Skills: Lesson Planning*

Planning lessons is significant for it is a blueprint where a teacher states the methods and procedures that are likely to be employed though not strictly followed. This proves to be more important for those without experience. In the schools observed, a lesson plan format is given to the teachers and the teachers are expected to check or put ticks (√) in the boxes

provided though the plan itself bears many problems. In the lesson plan format, most of the classroom procedures and tasks are expressed in terms of teacher’s activities. To illustrate, it is worth looking at the following:

Table 1  
*Ready-made lesson plan format for teachers*

	Teaching Activities			Student Activities	Teaching Aid
	Presentation Time	Stabilization Time	Evaluation Time		
Revise about _____	O.By discussion	O.Summarizing the given lesson in short and precise way	O.By asking question	O.Recalling the previous lesson	O.By table O.By map O.By picture
Introduce about _____	O.By asking question and answering	O.By repeating the main idea/points	O.By giving classwork homework	O.Listening attentively	O.By model O.By demonstration
	O.By demonstration	O.By repeating the main idea/points	O.By quiz	O.Answering question	Other.....
	O.By group working	O.By main idea/points	O.By quiz	Other.....	
	O.By individual activities	Other.....	Other.....		

From the format above, it can be seen that all of the classroom activities are expressed in terms of teacher’s activities while the students assumed passive roles. Some of the items included under each are even confusing and not self-expressing and hence may not be used by other teachers if ticked and given to them. Though the topics covered during the observations can lend themselves to using aids such as charts or pictures, none of the novice teachers used teaching aids during the observations. Actually, the ready-made lesson plan provided by the school is the main problem for teachers’ lack of extensive planning. The problems in the lesson plan format as they are, the novice teachers had no lesson plans throughout the observations. Surprisingly, this lesson plan format is used across all departments in the school.

### 3.1.2. While-lesson Skills: Managerial Skills

Data from classroom observations and interviews reveal that all upper primary school EFL novice teachers use similar instructional techniques and managerial skills that are discussed in the following sections.

#### 3.1.2.1. Instructional Techniques

The instructional techniques for presenting and formulating speaking lessons are loud reading, oral questioning, oral drilling, and lecturing.

##### 3.1.2.1.1. Loud Reading

Regardless of their varying experiences and topics of the speaking lessons, all novice teachers used loud reading as a solitary method to present lessons that required students to act out dialogues in turns with their partners and perform tasks thereafter. The tasks require students to

perform at least two of the following: create similar dialogue in pairs, create similar dialogues and act out, discuss the focus of the dialogue and the language items embedded (written in bold), ask and answer questions in pairs using the embedded language, and create oral reports.

Despite the instructions, the teachers select an average of five pairs to read the dialogues aloud without changing turns. This method is worsened by inadequate textbook in the classroom. In such classrooms where there are no adequate textbooks, teachers would rather use other techniques including charts or simulations to compensate for the shortage. During the readings, the rest of the students are passive listeners and those with textbooks are merely gazing at their texts. In fact, making those with textbooks to read aloud turns the speaking lesson to reading or listening.

Actually, T<sub>1</sub> ordered students to discuss during the second observation but without clear orientation on the time given, grouping mode, expected output, etc. No sooner had the teacher ordered them to discuss than he began giving grammatical explanations on the language embedded. This is confirmed during the interview where the teacher confessed allowing discussion for two minutes. However, the time given for the students to discuss is extremely inadequate provided the tasks they are to accomplish.

In fact, all of the respondents claimed usually using discussion during the speaking lessons though no witness is obtained during the observations. This indicates that what teachers say and actually do during instructions are different.

#### *3.1.2.1.2. Oral Questioning*

Oral questioning is the other method the novice teachers used to teach EFL speaking. After the students read the dialogues aloud, the novice teachers highly depended on question-and-answer technique to formulate the speaking lessons. The oral questions used for formulating the lessons are short and students are required to give short responses on linguistic items. During the oral questions, students are not given enough time to think about and refine the responses.

The novice teachers asked oral questions throughout the lessons, especially after loud reading and lecturing to seek for meanings and linguistic information embedded in the dialogues. During the oral questions, only those dominant students occasionally got the chance to respond. The questions are cascading, so it is difficult to focus one at a time. As a result, the instructions are dominated by the teachers asking and giving explanations to questions, leaving no room for students' participation.

#### *3.1.2.1.3. Oral Drilling*

Upper primary school novice teachers also used oral drilling occasionally but inappropriately. For example, T<sub>2</sub> made students to repeat the contracted forms of modal auxiliaries while T<sub>3</sub> made students to repeat words such as 'speaking, persons, characteristics', etc. Making students repeat these words is arbitrarily and is not related to the speaking lessons being taught. Since they are not teaching pronunciation or identified that the students had problems in pronouncing the words, mere repetition of the words had no any



pedagogical value. What makes the repetitions more untargeted is the fact that the novice teachers could not correctly pronounce the contractions and the words themselves. T<sub>3</sub> used oral drilling also while teaching /ə/ sound. In fact, it is likely technique but the problem is in the teacher's inability to model the sound. In short, novice teachers use oral drills during speaking lessons, but the manners and purposes for which they use are unsystematic and inaccurate.

#### *3.1.2.1.4. Lecturing*

Lecturing is a method dominantly used by upper primary school novice teachers. Once the students read the dialogues and oral questions asked, the novice teachers lecture facts about the language embedded. The facts provided are definition of speaking, grammatical names, forms, and structures such as S-V-O. In doing so, first they asked questions, and spontaneously gave definitions, forms, and structures. The definitions and explanations are so ambiguous that even more advanced students, leave alone primary school students, may not understand them. Consequently, the students are listening passively to the explanations and copying some sentences that the novice teachers' write on the blackboard. The novices did not make students to practice the language through the intended role-playing.

This is further confirmed by the teachers during the interviews in that they confessed usually using lecture during speaking instructions. According to the novice teachers, this method would help students, whom they considered to have low English language proficiency, to get deeper understanding.

#### *3.1.2.2. Managerial Skills*

Managerial skills include lesson and classroom management skills. Therefore, a teacher with good managerial skill knows the significance of task orientation and input, students' participation, creating conducive learning context, teaching with students' paces, providing feedback, and keeping smooth flow of lessons in an organized way. Nonetheless, the novice teachers had problem regarding these.

##### *3.1.2.2.1. Lesson Management Skills*

In order to enhance students' participation, providing task orientations and inputs play significant roles. However, none of the novice teachers gave orientations and inputs in to tasks. They merely made students to read aloud without any preconditions. Moreover, the novice teachers used most of the instructional times giving grammatical explanations on the language embedded, so most of the students' are silent and passive listeners. Actually, there are few instances where a few dominant students gave short answers to the questions posed. However, in foreign language contexts where students have no exposure to the language outside the classrooms, giving input, clear orientations, and practice opportunities enhance students' participation and understanding.

Providing appropriate feedback helps not only the students, but also the teachers in noticing mistakes from errors, enhancing students'

understanding, and keeping smooth flow of instructions. Nonetheless, all novice teachers had problems in organizing appropriate feedback. While the students are reading aloud, the teachers did not give feedback on problems such as mispronunciation and chunking. T<sub>2</sub> and T<sub>3</sub> occasionally intervened to give corrections themselves or sometimes opposed erred responses directly saying 'no' during loud reading and oral questioning phases. During the later phase, they did not either give appropriate feedback or the chance to self-correction but bypassed students' errors saying, "Another student." In contrast, T<sub>1</sub> is silent throughout the readings during the first observation, and sometimes said, "Ok, very good" while doing the questions following the dialogues in the textbook during the second. This novice did not ask questions of her own.

Most commonly, the novice teachers ignored, directly rejected, or used teacher corrections at once during EFL speaking instructions. Sometimes, they used identical clichés such as 'ok', 'very good', and/or 'good' regardless of whether the responses are correct or not, instead of providing feedback. Hence, it can be said that feedback organization is another point where great gap is seen during EFL speaking instructions among upper primary school EFL novice teachers.

Keeping in pace with students' backgrounds and curiosity is another aspect of good lesson management skills. This necessitates knowledge of who the students are. No matter how it seems difficult to address all students' interests in such large classrooms, using variety of instructional methods and changing paces help a lot. Nevertheless, the novice teachers used identical instructional methods, procedures, and paces to teach different topics of EFL speaking, with no disparity among them.

Motivating students is another significant point during instructions though the novice teachers did not use any motivating strategies to involve those quiet students. That is why the teachers and few students dominated the instructional time.

#### *3.1.2.2.2. Managing Students' Behavior*

In order for learning to take place, classrooms need to be encouraging and disciplined. Nonetheless, students are randomly changing seats, dragging desks or moving across desks to join those who had textbooks during the speaking instructions. As a result, the classrooms are chaotic and disordered, so they are impassable for the teachers to move in the classrooms and are not favorable. To this end, the novice teachers stated during the interview that lack of instructional resources and classroom infrastructure such as lack of doors and windows had great effect on managing tasks and students' behavior. Provided the reality about existence of these shortages, a resourceful teacher knows how to deal with the impacts but the novice teachers did not bother to settle the problem during the observations.

Actually, there are few textbooks in the classrooms where there are 60-70 students – making student-textbook ratio 1:10 (see 3.2.2. for problems related to class size and poor infrastructure). Because of these, most students are off-task, chatting, or doing something else and these caused the

classroom to become chaotic. The chaos is not caused only by shortage of textbooks, but also due to poor physical conditions of the classrooms such as lack of doors and windows. As a result, some students were entering or leaving classrooms during instructions, others were uttering with outsiders. In spite of these, the novice teachers did not take any measure to overcome the problems

### 3.1.3. Post-lesson Skills: Assessment

In order to check the accomplishment of the instructional objectives, how students respond to the activities, and success in overall instructional endeavor, a teacher is required to conduct assessment. However, all of the novice teachers neglected the issue of assessment. To exemplify, T<sub>1</sub> told students that it was time to stop and ordered them to re-read the dialogue at their homes and left the class during the observations. Likewise, T<sub>2</sub>, and T<sub>3</sub>, ended the lessons in the following ways:

T<sub>2</sub>: Observation 1: We continue tomorrow...we have finished from today.

Ok, write and come Monday, activity three, activity three, activity three. Eyyee, hojjedhaa kottaa... activity three.

Observation 2: Dubbisaa isa itti aanu. Interrogative baranna borimmoo.

Read and come tomorrow. The interrogative form, ok?

S: Ok! T<sub>2</sub>: Goodbye!

T<sub>3</sub>: Observation 1: T: Have you question? Ss: No! T: Thank you /tenko/

Observation 2: ... if you have question welcome. Are you clear? Ss: Yes!

T: Have you question? Ss: No! T: Ok, thank you!

From the above examples, it can be seen that none of the novice teachers tried to assess the outcome of the instructions. An indication is that upper primary school EFL novice teachers do not assess the achievement of intended outcomes at the ends of instructions.

## 3.2. The Harmony between Pre-Service Training and Actual Instructional Performances

The data on the harmony between pre-service education and actual instructional performances regarding the methodology for teaching EFL speaking at upper primary school are obtained through document analysis and interviews.

### 3.2.1. Results from Document Analysis

Documents are analyzed in terms of the contents covered and the methods used for training teachers on teaching EFL speaking at upper primary school level. In the current teacher training curriculum, the courses provided in colleges on the methodology for teaching EFL in primary schools are two: *English Language Teaching Methods I: Focus on Listening, Speaking, and Vocabulary* and *English Language Teaching Methods II: Focus on Reading, Writing, and Grammar* which have 3 credit hours each. In the first course where teaching speaking is included as a unit, the time allotted to teaching speaking is only 8 hours within a semester. In the unit, only role-play, games, interview, and pictures/paints are presented as the 'main techniques'. To make clear, it is summarized as follows:

Table 2  
Contents of the Skills for Teaching Speaking in the Teacher Education Course  
Module (FDRE, 2013b)

Major techniques in teaching speaking	Speaking at individual level Speaking in pairs and groups
Stages for teaching speaking	Pre-speaking While-speaking Post-speaking
Teaching Aids for Speaking Activities	Role-play Games Interview Pictures/Paints
Types of Activities in Role-Play	Performing Memorized Dialogue Contextualized Drill Cued Dialogue Cue and Information Debating and Discussion Sessions
Games	Games have objectives Games reduce teacher's control Games are challenging Games in nature are entertainments
Interviews and Pictures	-----
Peer-teaching	Prepare on a certain speaking topic and come with all the preparations as to how you could teach it in the classroom to your classmates. All the processes of the peer-teaching will be guided by your classroom teacher.

As can be seen in Table 2, the pre-service education teachers receive on methods/techniques for teaching speaking is inadequate compared to the abundance of options available and given the complexities in foreign language speaking instructions. Furthermore, the details presented under each are more of theoretical than practical demonstration of the techniques through various projects. The best evidence for this is the fact that for all of the topics discussed in the unit, there is one peer-teaching exercise given at the end. The methods used in teaching these techniques to the trainees are lecturing and discussions rather than modeling them so that the trainees grasp how they are actually used. That is, rather than merely telling about debates and discussions, trainees should be made to debate and discuss the merits and demerits with appropriate feedback given to them.

In addition, there is no correspondence between the topics and ideas presented under them. For example, modes of organization, not techniques, are presented under the major techniques in teaching speaking inadequately; under teaching aids, teaching techniques are included and are only four; debate and discussions are presented under types of activities in role-play. Moreover, the explanations made under each of the sub-topics are more about their importance than how to implement them in actual classrooms. Hence, it can be said that the methods teacher trainees are

introduced to during pre-service education for teaching speaking in upper primary school is inadequate, shallow, and more theoretical.

### *3.2.2. Novice Teachers' Views on Their Experiences as EFL Teacher Trainees and Teachers*

The data on document analysis discussed above are also confirmed by the novice teachers. They complained that the pre-service education regarding English language teaching methodology in general and teaching speaking in particular is inadequate and irrespective of the actual classroom situations. Most of their knowledge on teaching methods, according to the respondents, is obtained from the courses on general pedagogy provided by the department of education/pedagogics. Moreover, they said that the teaching methods differ from the actual instructional milieu mainly in terms of class size, resources, and infrastructure. According to the teachers, these contributed to problems in applying appropriate methodology during instructions.

The novice teachers also claimed that factors such as students' low proficiency levels, unfamiliarity to the methods and expectations, class size and infrastructure are among the major problems that hinder their methodological performances during speaking instructions. However, this seemed unpalatable because they could not mention some theories and methods for teaching language in general and speaking in particular during the interview even though they are prompted with examples. Besides, they are unable to mention the methods they usually use to teach EFL speaking and those they learned during pre-service training.

Finally, the respondents stated that no in-service training or support of any kind on teaching methodology or any other topic has been given to them ever since they began their teaching career. This is a real nuisance provided the inadequacy of the pre-service training that EFL teachers received on teaching speaking in upper primary schools.

It is important to notice here that the novice teachers claimed using discussions during the speaking instructions observed though they actually did not. They also attributed problems in implementing pedagogic teaching methods during EFL speaking totally to the pre-service training they received. However, teachers are required to employ role-play during the observations and that is given relatively better coverage in the course module. In spite of this, they did not implement it during the speaking instructions. An important indication here is that teachers usually attribute a problem to other factors other than to themselves.

## **4. Discussion**

Upper primary school EFL novice teachers had problems in the skills for teaching speaking – planning, executing, and assessing. To begin with, they did not plan lessons. Actually, the significance of lesson planning is undeniable provided teacher's lack of experience. Planning a lesson is considered as one of the components of quality teaching (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2000). It serves as a blueprint where teachers postulate possible routes leading to certain destination. However, upper primary school EFL novice teachers do not have lesson plan though there is ready-made format

in the schools, nor devised their own. The ready-made lesson plan format is expressed in terms of teachers' activities, lack details on standards of performance, methods, practice opportunities, etc.

Upper primary school EFL novice teachers had problems also in managerial skills. In reality, good instruction and classroom management skills pertain to maximizing students' talk-time, dealing with classroom events, and keeping lessons clear, smooth, and in pace with students' individual backgrounds (Guerriero, 2014). During the lessons observed, students are required to enact or role-play dialogues in pairs and in turns, discuss the focus and/or language, prepare report, reproduce similar dialogues, or freely exchange ideas. In fact, role-plays and discussions are claimed to bring about communicative outputs (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012) and guided practice helps students reproduce the language intended. Nunan also claims that speaking is taught to enhance students' reproductive or creative skills (2015). However, those novice teachers did not give students the opportunity to re-produce or freely produce the target language.

For learning to take place and a method to be active, students should accomplish activities of a kind using the new information. To this end, Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) state that learning occurs only when learners perform something using the gen data. In other words, they have to correlate new information to their prior knowledge, or typify or embody it and its structure. These are possible through employing methods that actively involve students in the teaching and learning process. However, the novice teachers used traditional teacher-centered methods, which did not involve students actively in the speaking lessons. These methods are loud reading, oral questioning, oral drilling, and lecturing for presenting and formulating the lessons. In fact, the novice teachers claimed using discussions though they actually did not. This concurs with Tinasho's (2019) and Rijkhoek's (2016) conclusion about inadequate students' participation during instructions as well as Aliye's (2018) conclusion about students' discontentment with classroom instructional process. Likewise, Dagne and Taye (2017) as well as Eba (2014) concluded that primary school EFL teachers' lack teaching knowledge and skills.

Upper primary school EFL novice teachers had also shown problems in giving orientations and inputs into the tasks. As soon as they entered classrooms, the teachers often began talking about the topics without providing orientations and inputs. However, orientations and inputs help the teacher to trigger learners' critical thinking abilities and backgrounds. To this end, Nunan (2004) stresses the necessity to activate students' background knowledge and pave the way for the smooth flow of lessons before diving into tasks. This seems particularly significant in foreign language contexts where teachers are usually the sole sources of input.

Furthermore, the entire focus of the novice teachers is language use than usage. Because of this, they used much of the instructional time by lecturing grammatical items rather than allowing students use the language in conversations. Even during focus-on-form times, they merely asked the names and forms of the language items instead of giving opportunities to practice and produce correct sentences. In similar fashion, Alemayehu

(2019) found that EFL teachers focus grammar and vocabulary during speaking activities and teacher-centeredness is the main problem in primary school speaking lessons.

Upper primary school EFL novice teachers also had problems in feedback organization. When students responded to questions erroneously, they ignored, directly rejected, or used teacher corrections at once instead of self or peer correction. Moreover, they did not use any motivating technique to energize students for participation.

The other problem that the novice teachers have is related to managing students' behavior. In all of the cases when students misbehaved, the novice teachers completely ignored, no matter how serious the problem is. The problem is aggravated by shortage of instructional materials and poor classroom infrastructure. In the same vein, Rijkhoek (2016) mentions the shortage of material resources and class size as barriers impeding teachers' methodological performances in Ethiopian primary schools. This is confirmed in Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) VI in that only 10% of primary schools are at the standards set for 2015-2020 (FDRE, 2021). Aliye (2018) also found that the classroom physical conditions and school facilities are among the challenges that contribute for students' lack of discipline in primary schools. Even if these have adverse effects on classroom management, the novice teachers did not bother when students randomly move in and out of the classrooms or/and across desks in search of textbooks. This implied that EFL novice teachers had problems in adapting classroom contexts to the existing realities and strategies for compensating shortages. However, the main reason for such chaos during the instructions is the methods used, with factors such as class size and infrastructure intensifying the problem.

Upper primary school EFL novice teachers had also problems in assessing the achievements of instructional objectives, or if the methods used and procedures followed resulted in the intended outcomes. In fact, teachers should assess the ways students respond to instructional activities and whether the apparent student responses are indicative of learning (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2000). No evidences of this are seen, though.

Lastly, the pre-service education that EFL teachers receive on teaching speaking in upper primary schools is inadequate. Throughout the three years' pre-service training, only 8 hours are allotted for teaching speaking. Still, the contents are theoretical than practical and very few techniques like role-play, games, interview, and pictures/paints are included. This coincides with novice teachers' views about the hypothetical nature of the training and more demanding actual classroom contexts, especially provided large class size and poor infrastructure, which they believed affected their performances. In the standards by FDRE (2013a), primary school EFL teachers are expected to know, describe, and effectively implement the methods for teaching speaking in various contexts, for different purposes, in different modes, etc. (2013). Unfortunately, these standards are not achieved according to the results from this study. This is also supported by the idea that novice teachers have problems especially in using pedagogic teaching strategies (Gilbert, 2005; Shulman, 1986; 1987) and the need to balance content with methods in teachers education.

In sum, upper primary school EFL novice teachers had problems in their methodological performances such as planning, executing and managing, and assessing during speaking instructions mainly due to lack of adequate knowledge from pre-service training and absence of in-service supports.

## **5. Conclusions**

Based on the discussions made so far, it is concluded that upper primary school EFL novice teachers do not have adequate knowledge and skills on planning, managing tasks and classrooms, and assessing speaking lessons. More specifically, upper primary school EFL novice teachers:

- do not plan lessons, so the instructions are disorganized, non-procedural, and devoid of a specified destination
- use traditional teacher-centered methods such as loud reading, oral questioning, and oral drilling to present and lecturing to formulate speaking lessons
- dominantly use lecturing during speaking instructions
- entirely focus form than usage during speaking instructions
- dominate the instructional time in their attempt to impart grammatical information, so students remain to be passive listeners throughout the lessons
- do not give orientations in to tasks
- do not give corrective feedback or identify on-task and off-task students
- ignore misbehavior
- do not use motivational strategies to enhance students' participation
- do not assess the accomplishment of intended outcomes at the ends of speaking lessons

Regarding the pre-service education on the methods for teaching speaking, it is concluded that upper primary school EFL novice teachers believe that the pre-service education on the methods for teaching EFL speaking in upper primary school is inadequate, theoretical, and ignores actual classroom contexts. This problem is intensified provided there has not been any in-service support/training given to the novice teachers ever since they began their professional career. Generally, upper primary school EFL novice teachers' employ the traditional teacher centered method and their performances are below the expected standards set by Ethiopian Ministry of Education.

## **6. Recommendations**

Based on the above conclusions, it is mainly recommended that the Ethiopian Ministry of Education should devise the curriculum for primary school EFL teacher training so that the program will be tuned on equipping trainees with ample knowledge in contemporary methods for teaching EFL.

English Language Departments in the regional colleges need to take the initiative to arm English language teachers with methods that allow them enable students to utilize their critical thinking abilities at the maximum potential. In doing so, they need to consider the course modules as mere guidance than prescriptions to be strictly followed.



Regional education bureaus, in collaboration with zone education offices, should design and enforce short in-service trainings on contemporary foreign language teaching methods for novice teachers. District education offices should also enforce experience exchange among schools and schools should establish firm mentorship among novice and experienced teachers. Most significantly, novice teachers ought personally to struggle the most to promote their teaching skills by making use of available resources and especially the internet.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that designing English language teaching and teacher training courses and curricula in a foreign language context must depend on results from researches in similar educational arena than super-imposing results from second language contexts. This helps to harmonize purposes for which English is taught, the curiosity and backgrounds of students, and the available facilities and resources to local contexts rather than trying to fit a cow in a goat's skin.

## 7. Future Research in the Area

In the future, researchers should not target English language teaching trends only at secondary and tertiary levels. Nevertheless, they should incorporate primary school level where children lay the foundation for using the language at the next levels. Furthermore, researches on teachers' educational practices had better include observation as data gathering tool since what teachers say and actually do differ in most circumstances.

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