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**Factors Hindering Oral Interactions in EFL Classes: A
Case of First Year Students at Mekelle University**

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July 2009
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**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis
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Abstract

This study aims at exploring the factors that hinder oral interactions in small groups in EFL classroom with particular reference to Mekelle University. Seventy-two first year students and 5 instructors were selected by drawing lots from the total population of 169 students and 9 instructors as data sources. Questionnaire, interview and observation were employed in data gathering. The questionnaire was prepared for students. Their main area of focus was close-ended and open-ended questions. The students' questionnaire was developed using two methods. Firstly, standardized scales formulated and utilized by different scholars in the previous related studies were adopted and used here and secondly, new scales whose base was the theoretical discussion in the literature review section were devised. In both forms of scales six characteristic items (whose average number of respondents was taken to determine their effect) were included with the assumption that it would enable the researcher to consider each variable as a real cause for the observed problem. Besides, the open-ended form was used to collect further information about the problem under investigation. A structured interview was also conducted with the subjects and 5 classroom observations were carried out. According to the result of the study there were different affecting variables that hindered students' small-group oral interaction during the communicative English Skills classes and they could be termed as internal learner variables (which included having undesirable level of self-esteem, the feeling of inhibition, lack of risk-taking behaviour, language problem, lack of communication strategies), and external learner variables (which included social class, task type, gender, grouping pattern and group size). Finally, it was recommended that a conducive classroom atmosphere should be created in order that students approach the process of language learning with high spirits. Besides it was suggested that instructors should provide students with the necessary language input with which students can sound off their thoughts with less difficulty.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

When learning or practicing the spoken language under the classroom setting, foreign/second language learners encounter different problems. To find out solutions to these hindering factors, different studies have been conducted especially from the 1950s onwards (Ellis, 1994). Most of these studies have been carried out giving special emphasis to a particular learner variable (internal or external variables).

In his study, Schwartz (1972), for instance, identifies the intrinsic learner variables (which include anxiety, need to achieve, self-concepts and aspirations) and extrinsic learner variables (which include socio-cultural factors and social reinforcers) that have an effect upon students' oral skills. Heyde (1979) also conducts a research about the effect of self-esteem on students' spoken production using a self-report questionnaire as his research instrument (cited in Ellis 1994). His result shows that self-esteem and oral production have a positive correlation. Besides, Ely (1986a) studies the relationship between risk taking and classroom participation through the use of self-report questionnaire as his research tool. He concludes that the two have positive relationship. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardners' (1972) work on the effect of anxiety on language learning, Busch's (1982) and Strong's (1983) studies about the effect of extroversion and introversion on language proficiency, Naiman et al's (1978) and Guiora et al's (1967) research studies about the effect of empathy on language proficiency and Guiora et al's (1972) work about the effect of inhibition on oral production are the main studies which have been carried out in the past and which have a lot of relevance for conducting further research in a related problem area (quoted in Ellis 1994).

Two local studies have also been conducted in relation to the factors that hinder oral interaction in the EFL classroom. Among which Birhanu's (2000) extensive research is the one. The main objective of this research is to investigate the extent to which students' oral participation is different and the causes for such differences, and to explore the factors that influence students' participatory behaviour. The research tools used to conduct this study was audio-video recordings

and different types of questionnaire. His result states “there was a huge difference among students in terms of their verbal participation in group discussion” Accordingly, the percentage of the extremely silent students and very high participators has been found to be the same, both 17.1%.

Likewise, Fissaha’s study is the other work which has been carried out regarding the factors that affect oral interaction in the classroom. The focus of Fissehs’s research is Jimma University Graduating Class’s whole class interaction. The research adopts questionnaire, interview and observation as its main data gathering instrument. Based on a single-item characteristic statement the researcher attempts to draw his conclusions. The result shows that there are different factors that affected students’ classroom oral interaction.

The studies which have been carried out internationally as well as locally so far have given an important insight into the method of investigating the problem of the current study.

1. 2 Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia the EFL classroom is theoretically considered as the only place where the English language achieves dominance over the students’ first language. In order to fully exploit students’ target language repertoire and bring about progress in their target language use, carrying out oral interaction effectively through the formation of small groups wins research support nowadays. Pica (1987) says “Classroom events now include discussion-oriented problem-solving activities, and students are asked to frequently work in groups or pairs rather than in the more traditional teacher-fronted arrangement” (p.17). Studies, however, suggest that students’ oral interaction is affected by different factors.

Chastain (quoted in Scovel, 1978: 130), reports that students confront with difficulties that obstruct their effective use of the target language at the time of small group discussion. In addition, Schwartz (1972:73) makes an attempt to identify the intrinsic and extrinsic variables that have an effect on students’ language use.

On the other hand, Birhanu’s (2000) and Fisseha’s (2006) studies have been conducted locally to address the same problem. Birhanu’s extensive work is on students’ participation behaviour and

the factors that attribute to the differences in participation with a special emphasis to first year students of Addis Ababa University. Through the use of questionnaire and video-recoding, he comes up with his results. Besides, Fisseha (2006) studies the factors that impede students' oral interaction in the classroom on the Graduating Class of Jimma University using questionnaire, interview and classroom observation as his research instruments.

To increase the amount of time each student requires for classroom oral interaction in English in EFL classes at Mekelle University, the current researcher - while working there - used to get his students grouped into three, four or five. From such repetitive experience it was learned that the students' involvement in the group activities at different times showed wide disparity. Those students who were vigorous on one occasion appeared to be submissive on another, for no apparent reason. Whenever new groups were formed different picture was observed. And again there were more often than not apathetic group members. This situation appeared to have bearing upon the overall results of the students at semester end.

This investigation is, therefore, set up to explore the salient communication-related barriers that deter students' effective small-group oral interactions particularly in Communicative English Skills classes at Mekelle University. The problem is worth investigation since the matter is against the general aim of English language curricula at large and the objectives of the course in particular.

This study is similar with those previously done studies (especially with Fisseha's, 2006) in that it uses questionnaire, observation and interview as its main data gathering tool.

This research is, however, different from the above two research studies in terms of its focus and methodology. The focal point of this research is an investigation of the factors that hinder small group oral interaction in the first year students of Mekelle University, which is different especially from Fisseha's study whose main concern is whole class interaction among the Graduating students' of Jimma University.

Moreover, the research procedures followed by Fisseha (2006) and the current researcher are dissimilar. Fisseha (2006) makes an attempt to draw conclusions about the effect of different variables upon students verbal whole class participation based on the responses given by the

sample participants to a single characteristic item for each hypothesized variable. It is believed, however, that a conclusion drawn on the basis of a single characteristic item results affects the reliability of the conclusion. Put differently, the result or conclusion made from a single-item question that address a construct seems to less reliable. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), McIver and Carmines (1981), and Spector (1992) point out the rationale behind employing more than one characteristic item instead of an individual item for measuring the effect of variables. According to them, individual items have significant random measurement error, which, as a result, tend to make the conclusion less reliable. As Nunnally and Bernstein (1994:67) explain, "Measurement error averages out when individual scores are summed to obtain a total score". In addition, a single item lacks scope. McIver and Carmines (1981: 15) point out "It is very unlikely that a single item can fully represent a complex theoretical concept or any specific attribute for that matter". They further comment:

The most fundamental problem with single item measures is not merely that they tend to be less valid, less accurate, and less reliable than their multiitem equivalents. It is rather, that the social scientist rarely has sufficient information to estimate their measurement properties. Thus their degree of validity, accuracy, and reliability is often unknowable. (p. 15).

Therefore, to avoid this assumed measurement error, different characteristic items have been developed and employed in this research and their mean result is taken to measure the effect of the variable. An attempt has also been made to fill the gap created in the research procedures, among other things, in the earlier studies through this research.

In conclusion, this research attempts to identify the problems that students may encounter at the time of small-group oral interaction in Communicative English Classes at Mekelle University. It also tries to fill the methodological gap observed in the previously done related research works. Following the main objectives of this study are presented.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to identify the factors that hinder first year students' oral interaction in EFL classroom at Mekelle University.

The study makes an attempt to answer the following three questions.

1. What are the factors that impede students' effective oral interaction in small-groups?
2. Are there mechanisms devised by instructors and the students to increase the success of small group interaction and to make students communicatively competent? If so, what are they?
3. In general, what should be done to make students beneficiaries out of the small-group interaction?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important in different ways. In the first place, it is significant for teachers/instructors in indicating them the areas that call for their effort in order to address their students' communicative needs and in order to succeed in their language teaching endeavours. Secondly, it is believed that the results of the study will make policy makers and material developers aware of the factors that inhibit students from taking part in small-group discussion so that they may consider them at the time policy formulation and material development. Last but not least, it may also be used as a stepping stone for further studies on a related topic in the future.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to one higher institution, i.e. Mekelle University and the subjects of the study were 72 students and 5 English instructors who were attending and offering the Communicative English Skills course respectively in the first year. Also, the central focus of the study was identifying the factors that hinder oral interactions in small groups.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings of the main concern of this study. It contains five main sub-sections which all deal with the different aspects of the subject as viewed by different researchers in the field of language teaching. It begins with the definition of the term 'interaction'. Then it presents the place given to oral interaction in the theories of foreign/second language acquisition. The significance of oral interaction has been investigated with particular reference to small-group discussion. Next, the roles teachers and students may play during the time of small-group oral interaction have been discussed. The last sub-section of this chapter deals with the variables which are identified by various researchers and which are thought to affect the behaviour of students during oral interactions which are carried out in EFL classrooms. Following comes the technical definition for the term 'interaction' as suggested by different authorities.

2.2 What is Interaction?

Different scholars in the field of language teaching have attempted to provide a definition for the term 'interaction' at different times. Rivers (1987: 4) states "Students achieve fluency in using the language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages (that is, messages that contain information of interest to speaker and listener in a situation of importance to both". For her this is called an interaction. Similarly, Wells (cited in Rivers, 1984) points out "Linguistic interaction is a collaborative activity" which involves "the establishment of a triangular relationship between the sender, the receiver and the context of situation whether the communication is in speech or writing." Rivers further says that interaction is a two-way, three-way or four-way process which involves exchange of ideas among a speaker and listeners. Bygate defines interaction as "the use of language for maintaining communication between participants" (1987:115). Allright's (1984:159) explanation is not conceptually far from the aforementioned ones. He says "Interaction, by definition and in practice, is a co-production. It is the product of the action of all the participants". In a similar vein, Celce-Murcia states "Human interaction is a process whereby two or more people engage in reciprocal action" (1984:25).

Therefore, in all of the definitions it can be possible to observe that an interaction is an activity which is performed by a speaker and a listener(s) collaboratively on a given situation to get across genuine message(s) which are of participants' interest. We can also discern that the interaction may be taken place through the oral or written medium. Our concern here, however, is merely the oral aspect of interaction which is carried out in cooperation between listeners and a speaker in small-group in the EFL classroom. What place does oral interaction have in foreign/second language acquisition research?

2.3 Oral Interaction and Foreign/Second Language Acquisition

Researchers in the field of foreign/second language teaching have been exerting their concerted effort to develop firm scientific approaches to language teaching and 'a sound theoretical framework' which safeguard the existence of the field as a professional enterprise. They also work towards developing scientific procedures that enable learners to approach foreign/second language learning in an easy and systematic manner (Stern, 1983:35). Among the assumptions (provided by these theoreticians) that have been met with a popular acclaim, the centrality of the concept of interaction in the process of language acquisition is the one and has highly been accentuated. Accordingly, it is asserted that students' oral proficiency can be fostered through a face-to-face interaction in the target language in the classroom contexts.

According to Breen and Candlin (1980:95), communication interaction is at the heart of the communicative curriculum and it is "likely to engage the abilities within the learners' developing competence in an arena of cooperative negotiation, joint interpretation, and the sharing of expression. The communicative classroom can serve as a forum characterized by the activation of these abilities upon the learner's new and developing knowledge." Krashen's second language acquisition hypothesis also considers acquisition as being resulted from meaningful and natural oral interaction in the target language. He argues "Fluency develops gradually as a result of communicative experience in the target language, with progress occurring when the learner is able to understand most of what is contained in the communication but when that communication also contains language material the learner needs and is ready to acquire" (quoted in Krahnke and Christison, 1983: 626). Likewise, Mclaughlin, (1987:20) holds that it is possible to acquire a

language in the classroom setting whenever the emphasis is upon communication – for example, through, role playing, dialogues and other types of meaningful interaction.

In addition, Taylor (1983:69) and Allwright and Bailey (1991:19) report that students acquire a second/foreign language if and only if they are exposed to and actively involved in real, meaningful oral interaction in that target language. Among the two basic components that provide opportunities for such communication to take place, one is an environment that gives learners encouragement to exercise their own initiative to involve in communication. The proponents of this claim argue that although there are learners who can master the grammar rules of the target language within short period of time, many of them often fail to use their knowledge communicatively. As a solution to such a problem, Littlewood (1981:46) also suggests “Classroom communication opens up a rich stimulus for communicative interaction, namely, the varied experiences, interests and opinions of the learners. These may be complemented by written or visual materials which bring further aspects of the outside world into the classroom.”

Generally, to achieve communicative competence, students should be assisted to acquire the language subconsciously through meaningful communication which is similar the process of child language acquisition. So students should be provided with opportunities that involve them in a full range of real situational settings and social contexts. Studies in foreign/second language acquisition suggest that oral interaction is beneficial in terms of creating favourable conditions to what Krashen calls ‘comprehensible input’ and to what Swain terms ‘pushed output’ (comprehensible output).

2. 3. 1 Comprehensible input

As discussed above a number of studies recommend that interaction should be at the centre of foreign or second language teaching programmes. In his ‘The Monitor Theory’ (a second language acquisition theory), Krashen (1980) strongly argues ‘Comprehensible Input’ (an input which is a bit beyond the current level of the students) is an essential element in fostering the second/foreign language acquisition. And again, Krashen and Terrel explain that speaking proficiency cannot be ‘taught’ directly but rather, it ‘emerges’ after the acquirer has bolstered competence by means of

comprehending the input (1983:32). Similarly, Long (1981) (in Ellis et al., 1994:450) reinforces this idea saying “When second language (L2) learners experience communication problems and have the opportunity to negotiate solutions to them, they are able to acquire new language”. In his interaction hypothesis (ibid) posits the following two core issues: the importance of comprehensible input for acquisition and modification of the conversation made to find out solution for the communication problems so that the input becomes comprehensible. In his argument Long emphasises the centrality of ‘negotiated interaction’. In addition, Long (1983a) (in Ellis et al 1994:450) presents the details of ‘the conversational modifications’ associated with negotiating meaning. According to Long, these include: “comprehension checks (speaker checks whether interlocutor has understood something), confirmation checks (speaker attempts to ascertain whether she has heard or understood something interlocutor said) and clarification requests (speaker requests help in understanding something interlocutor said)”. These devices provide learners with opportunities to resolve the comprehension difficulties they face and, therefore, make negotiation of meaning possible. Thus, according to interaction hypothesis theory, learners have to engage in the task of conversational modification to resolve their communication problems in order to acquire a second language.

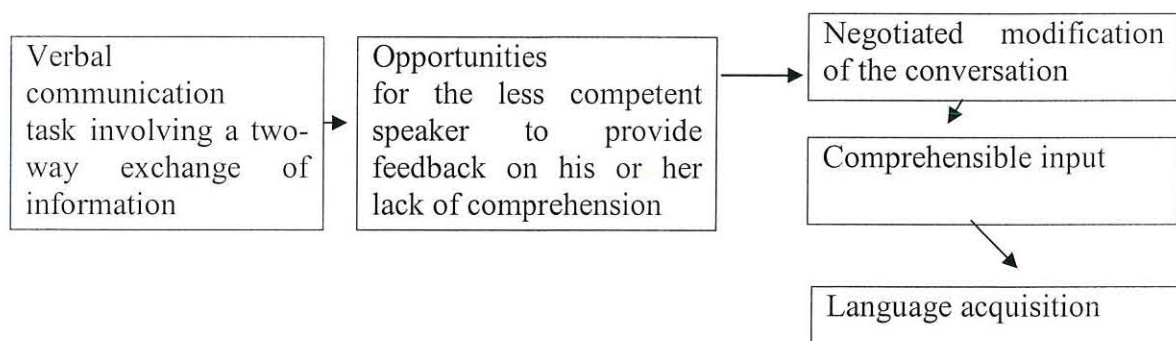


Figure - Model of the interactive hypothesis regards (Source: Ellis et al 1994:450)

Similarly, the research conducted by Pica et al (1987: 747) indicates that modifying conversation through negotiation results in better comprehension. However, this assumption has not been left unchallenged. Some scholars such as Derwing (1989) and Ehrlich et al (1989) (in Ellis et al 1994:453) report that expanded elaboration of meaning results in confusion and difficulty to



comprehension rather than assisting the interlocutors. Opposing this view, Ellis et al (1994) maintains "Abandoning the general claim that comprehension is essential for acquisition runs counter to intuition" (p.455). So the argument that regards acquisition as the direct result of comprehension is unconvincing and it remains an unrequited question. Consequently, Ellis (1991) (quoted in Ellis et al, 1994) formulates a 'weaker' version of interaction hypothesis. As he argues, "A weaker form of the interaction hypothesis can be maintained if it is accepted that (a) comprehension does not necessarily lead to acquisition and (b) that only some interaction modifications (those that cause learners to notice new material in the input) promote the kind of comprehension that fosters acquisition." The assumption in (a) is well-matched with Krashen's (1980) and Long (1983b) believe in that it views comprehensible input as a workable concept only if students are developmentally prepared to attend to the structures in the new language. The concept of comprehensible output is also the other point of argument in the second language acquisition continuum.

2.3.2 Comprehensible output

In addition to the 'comprehensible input', Swain (1985) argues that 'comprehensible output' is important since students may need access to 'pushed output' in order to advance to higher levels of grammatical proficiency. She further holds "One function of output is that it provides the opportunity for meaningful use of one's linguistic resource. Smith has argued that one learns to read by reading, and to write by writing. Similarly, it can be argued that one learns to speak by speaking" (1985: 248). She also comments that out put of the student have to be "pushed towards the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed precisely, coherently and appropriately. Being "pushed" in output ...is a concept that is parallel to that of the $i + 1$ and comprehensible input" (1985: 249).

Swain (1985) argues "Pressure to produce language that is concise and appropriate may help learners test hypotheses about the L2 and encourage them to engage in syntactic as opposed to semantic processing." (p.456). Gass and Varonis (in Long and Porter, 1985: 218) have also given explanation about the two key concepts (comprehensible input and comprehensible output) in relation to oral interaction in the classroom. They report that negotiation making use of the target is

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a constructive practice in that it allows the learners to manipulate input. When input is negotiated, they maintain, conversation can then be carried out with a minimum level of perplexity. In addition, the input will be more meaningful to the students because of their involvement in the negotiation process. Similarly, Krash (1987: 17) contends that learning takes place twice: when students learn vocabulary items and forms of the language that signify a traditional foreign culture, and when they make use of these items and structures to verbally interact with their fellows in the EFL classroom. Moreover, Allwright and Bailey (1991:19) further state “Our concern with the interaction is related to our three outcomes of learning: the input provided for learning, the practice opportunities that emerge, and the effects of all that happen on the receptivity of the learners.” Similarly, Rivers (1984) has identified the importance of interaction in language learning programmes. As she states, classroom interaction enables students to develop their ‘language store’ through listening to others and reading different authentic materials. In addition, she adds, it is a means through which students can exercise the language they have gained through varied means.

2.4 Oral Interaction in Small-Groups: Pron’s and Con’s

Researches in the field of foreign/second language acquisition argue in favour of as well as against the contributions of small-group interaction in EFL classes.

2.4.1 Line 1: Pron’s

Ellis (1994:598) maintains that small-group interaction is an area of considerable pedagogic interest in the second language research. It is important in terms of the total amount of time each student spends interacting with their partners (Harmer, 1991:245). For instance, Ur (1996: 232) asserts “Learners in class that are divided into five groups get five times as many opportunities to talk as in full-class organization.” Davis (1993) strengthens this idea by saying

Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process. ... regardless of the subject matter, students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes.



Similarly, Brumfit (1984:77) explains that small groups provide an increased degree of student involvement so the quality of language use becomes higher. The studies conducted on speech samples between teacher-fronted class and small-group interaction by Long Adams, McLean, and Castanos (1976) (cited in Long and Porter 1985:215) and of Allwright and Biley (1991:148) ascertain this assumption through their findings. In their report they contend that quality of speech (variety of student talk) and quantity of speech (number of student talk) are greater in small-groups than teacher-led classes. This is mainly because, the setting of a small-group seems to be more natural than that of whole class and the size of the group is similar to that of the common conversational groupings in real life situation. As the other repercussion of the setting, the stress level which is observed during 'public' performance in the whole-class context becomes minimal.

Brumfit further comments "Placing students in small groups assists individualization, for each group, being limited by its own capacities, determines its own appropriate level of working more precisely than can a class working in lock-step, with its larger members." Ur, (1996: 232) argues that it promotes student responsibility and autonomy and tends to increase motivation and it contributes to the development of students' sense of cooperativeness and warmth in the language class. Jolly and Early (1974) (in Brumfit, 1984: 77) describe the cooperation among students in the following manner:

Psychologically, group work increases the intellectual and emotional participation or involvement of the individual pupil in the task of learning a foreign language. Some pupils are more intelligent than others, while some ... are more gifted in learning languages, some pupils are outgoing, communicative, extrovert personalities, while others are shy, withdrawn introverts. In small groups, all these type of learners can meet and mix, compensating for one another's strong points and deficiencies as language learners.

Further Bygate (1987:96) says that students use up more time negotiating and checking on meanings in small-groups, and they do not seem to correct each other more or less than the teacher does in teacher-fronted situations. This, in turn, provides the group members the freedom to get across their thought interestingly.

In general, Long and Porter (1985:207) have summarised the pedagogic and psycholinguistic arguments for group work. According to them, the pedagogic significance include: increasing the opportunity of practicing the language, improving the quality of student talk (students are encouraged to use formal as well as informal language since it resembles the natural setting for conversation), assisting an individualization of instruction, encouraging positive atmosphere in terms of affect, and increasing students' motivation. The psycholinguistic significance includes creating an opportunity for gaining comprehensible input and output that foster acquisition.

2.4.2 Line 2: Con's

A number of researchers have maintained that small-group interaction fosters foreign/second language acquisition. Nonetheless, there has been an opposing view to this claim. According to the opponents, exposure to erroneous peer input may result in fossilization (Plann (1977) quoted in Foley et al, 2003: 165).

Two of Porter's studies, however, provide reason to such belief. In her report she states that when students corrected each other's errors, they did so wrongly only 0.3 per cent of the time and also that only 3 per cent of the errors the learners produced could be attributed to repetition of a fellow student's errors (in Ellis 1994:599). Kramsch holds "The fear that errors will be transferred from one student to the other if they are not immediately corrected by the teacher is an unwarranted behaviorist view of language" (1987:24).

Therefore, although some researchers suggest the limitations of small-group oral discussion, a considerable amount of them, however, favor its employment in EFL classes specifying the teachers and students roles.

2.5 Teacher's and Students' Roles in Small-group Interactions

Different researchers have proposed a definition to the term 'role' as it frequently used in the field of language teaching. Widdowson, (1987: 83) defines role as "a part that people play in the performance of social life." Write, (1987: 7) also says "Role is a complex grouping of factors which combine to produce certain types of social behaviour." According to the Oxford Advanced

Learners' Dictionary (2006) role refers to "the function or position that somebody has or is expected to have in an organization, in society or in a relationship." Thus, role can be defined as a part assigned to someone within a society or a certain social group to accomplish a certain social responsibility. In the classroom setting, the teacher and the students play their own role to attain the objectives of the course or programme.

2.5.1 Teacher's Role

Despite the fact that the teacher is not at the centre in the process of learning, they assume a big responsibility for the effectiveness of the activity. According to Rivers (1987), the teacher can play a key role in developing contexts and situations that create opportunities for students to involve in some kind of interaction. She further says that to create a genuine interaction, the teachers should be aside from the limelight so that students can have the authority to control over what they perform through the activities; they should receive any forms of opinion, and they should tolerate students' errors while they involve in communication (Rivers, 1987: 4). Bejarano, (1987:485) reveals "The teacher is no longer a lecturer or transmitter of material, but rather a facilitator of learning who focuses on the learning process by encouraging cooperation among the students". Further Breen and Candlin (1980: 99) point out that the teacher plays three key roles 'within the communicative methodology' which places interaction through group-formation in its centre: acting as facilitator, a participant, and an observer and learner. Besides, the role of the teacher in communicative activities include: providing advice, acting as a source of guidance and support, monitoring students' strengths and weaknesses and their use of the target language (Littlewood, 1981:19). About the involvement of the teacher in the small-group oral interaction sessions, Kramsch (1987: 26) states "The teacher goes from group to group without intervening, but taking mental or written notes of confusions, errors, or interesting insights." This guidance role is ongoing and largely unpredictable, so the teacher needs to share it with the other students. Generally, the teacher has the following roles: facilitator, manager, informant, social worker, monitor, model and counselor (Prodromou, 1992: 35).

2.5.2 Students' Role

Students are the principal actors during small-group oral interactions. They are even at the very heart of the classroom events. Bejarano (1987) states that the students' attention has been drawn towards learning actively through group formation from making an attempt to impress their teacher. One of the main roles of the students is negotiating meaning between themselves, their learning process, and they progressively explain the object of learning (Breen and Candlin, 1980:100). Similarly, Nunan (1989: 86) indicates "in small-group interaction tasks ... learners are required to put language to a range of uses, to use language which has been imperfectly mastered, to negotiate meaning, in short, to draw on their own resources rather than simply repeating and absorbing language." Therefore, the students' may play the roles which include: an encourager, a harmonizer, an expediter, a compromiser, an observer, and an evaluator in the EFL classroom (Nunan, 1988).

2.6 Factors Affecting Small-group Oral Interaction

There are different factors or variables that involve in effective classroom oral interaction. These variables, which can be called 'learner variables', may have a facilitating or debilitating effect upon the language learner depending on the situation in which they are in. The learner variables may originate either from within the learner (intrinsic learner variables) or outside (extrinsic learner variables) since students are generally motivated or demotivated either intrinsically or extrinsically (Chastain in Scovel, 1978:130).

Schwartz (1972) lists the intrinsic motivators as anxiety, need to achieve, self-concepts, and aspirations and the extrinsic motivators as sociocultural factors and social reinforcers (p.73). Similarly, Brown's (1994) discusses the cognitive, personality and social factors that affect human language learning process. Although the same classification procedure has not been adopted in this literature review section for the sake of clarity (since different authors classify the variables differently), the variables mentioned in Brown (1994) are grouped under two major sections - intrinsic learner variables and extrinsic learner variables. The intrinsic variables subsume self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion and introversion, motivation, and learning strategies. The extrinsic variables include culture, attitude, social distance, social class,

and gender and other group-related and task-related factors. Next, each of these variables will be discussed.

2.6.1 Intrinsic learner variables

The EFL classroom situation appears to cause an undesirable affective and emotional state of being in many students. As Dornyei (2001) states, it “is an inherently face-threatening environment with learners being expected to communicate using severely restricted language code” (p.91). A number of research studies largely attribute the success or failure of students’ foreign language learning to intrinsic (personality/affective/cognitive) factors. Shore (1976: 153) points out that intrinsic variables (personality factors) have a great effect upon classroom performance and language-learning outcomes. According to Brown (1994: 136), self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, motivation etc. are among the major intrinsic factors that affect the success or failure of foreign language learning.

2.6.1.1 Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to “a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself” (Coopersmith cited in Brown, 1994: 136). According to Ellis (1994: 518) self-esteem “refers to the degree to which individuals feel confident and believe themselves to be significant people.”

The development of individual’s personality involves the growth of the individual’s self-concept, self acceptance, and self-reflection at the time of interaction between ‘self and others’ (Brown, 1994:136). Self-esteem originates from the individuals’ experiences and assessment of their surroundings. Dornyei (2001: 90) also holds “Self-esteem and self-confidence are social products, which means that they are created and shaped by the people around us.” The three levels at which self-esteem is manifested are global (which is unchangeable at all times in a grown-up person), situational/specific (which refers to the self-assessment made in certain life situations, such as social interactions, work, education, home, or on certain relatively discretely defined traits – intelligence, communicative ability, athletic ability, personality traits like gregariousness, empathy,

and flexibility) and task-self esteem is related with the self-assessment regarding a specific process speaking or writing in a certain language class (Brown, 1994: 136).

The research which has been conducted using self-report questionnaire as its research instrument by Heyde (1979) comes up with the result that self-esteem positively correlates with the spoken production (cited in Ellis, 1994).

2.6.1.2 Inhibition

Inhibition and self-esteem are closely related terms. As that of self-esteem, inhibition affects oral interaction (Ur, 1996: 120). Brown (1994: 138) maintains “All human beings, in their understanding of themselves, build sets of defenses to protect the ego.” This defensive inhibition, he further argues, is developed in each stages of human development: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. People who have high ‘self-esteem and ego strength’ tend to be defensive. “Those with weaker self-esteem maintains walls of inhibition to protect what is self-perceived to be a weak fragile ego or lack of self-confidence in a situation or task” (Ibid).

A language ego that changes depending on the situation assists the student to lower the degree of inhibition which impedes their success in acquiring a foreign language. As many studies indicate, mistakes are good indicators of progress in the process of language learning. But some student’ ego is seriously affected as soon as they make mistakes. As a result, at each stage of learning the students become more critical of themselves to the extent that they cannot produce a word lest they make mistakes in discussion group. Ur (1996: 120) asserts “Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom: worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.”

Therefore, it is believed that lower level of inhibition should be created in a foreign language classes in order that students can approach the language learning situation with a sense of success than a threat. Meaningful communicative activities are, thus, identified as better solutions for lowering the level of students’ inhibition and enabling the student to take part in unfettered classroom interaction.

2.6.1.3 Risk-taking

It is assumed that optimum risk-taking is an important factor for success in foreign language learning. Ellis, (1994: 518) explains “Risk takers show less hesitancy, are more willing to use complex language, and are more tolerant of errors. They are less likely to rehearse before speaking”. In the classroom setting there are students who often keep silent for fear of making mistakes in their utterances. As Brown (1994:140) puts “When foolish mistakes are made, a person with high global self-esteem is not daunted by the possible consequences of being laughed at.” This indicates that risk-taking (one aspect of extraversion-introversion) and self-esteem are closely intertwined traits (Morris, 1979:41; Brown, 1994:140). The prominent study on the relationship between risk-taking and classroom participation has been made by Ely (1986a) who uses self-report questionnaire as his main research tool. According to the result of his study, risk-taking and classroom participation have a positive correlation (p.20) Hence, it should be noted that moderate level of risk-taking is a supportive factor for the reaching the desired proficiency level.

2.6.1.4 Anxiety

This variable is also closely linked with the above three variables: self-esteem, inhibition and risk-taking. According to Brown (1994: 141), it is difficult to define anxiety but it is related to “feelings, of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry.” Scovel, (1978:134) states that anxiety refers to “a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object.” Language anxiety is a worry and depressing emotional state aroused when one learns or uses a second language (MacIntyre quoted in Young,1999:27). Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994: 284) define language anxiety as the feeling of emotional strain and apprehension particularly related to second language situations that include learning, writing, and speaking. Several studies show, MacIntyre and Gardner further say, second language achievement and language anxiety are observed to have negative correlation: as the language anxiety score gets higher, lower the language performance score is observed. Krashen (1982) maintains that two conditions are necessary for acquisition to take place. First, learners need to have access to comprehensible input containing structures a bit beyond their current level of competence. Second, they need a low or weak affective filter, like anxiety, to allow the input into their second language

system (Krashen, 1982: 33). Likewise, MacIntyre (in Young, 1999:24) holds that anxiety can have an influence on both learning of a language and communication processes. Anxiety arises within ourselves due to different reasons.

Horwitz and associates (quoted in Young, 1999:27) argue that language anxiety grows out of three principal sources: communication apprehension, fear of criticism by members of the group, and test anxiety. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994: 285) state "Anxiety arousal is associated with distracting, self-related cognition such as excessive self evaluation, worry over potential failure, and concern over the opinions of others; therefore, the anxious person has his/her attention divided between task-related cognition and self-related cognition, making cognitive performance less efficient." Young, (1999: 241) also comes up with personal factors that are identified as sources of language anxiety. These include: low self-esteem, competitiveness, self-perceived low ability levels, communication apprehension, lack of FL/SL group members, learner's beliefs about language learning and learner's fear of being incorrect in front of their peers.

To conclude, a student who is highly anxious is less likely to orally interact. The research reveals that in classroom contexts anxious students may not interact in spoken tasks actively with their colleagues as anxiety influences their ability during the time of information processing. Those students that are relaxed tend to benefit more in gathering information since they are free from such kind of interfering variables (Horwitz, 1986, quoted in Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993).

2.6.1.5 Empathy

As Brown (1994) states empathy in simple terms is "the process of 'putting yourself into someone's else's shoes,' of reaching beyond the self and understanding and feeling what another person understanding and feeling" (P.43). For Stern (1983:381) the term refers to the compliance and capacity to consider oneself as similar to somebody else. Ellis has also defined the term in clearer manner – it "concerns the ability to put oneself in the position of another person in order to understand him/her better" (1994:518). It has been used in second language learning to refer to the ability of the student to act in accordance with the communicational attributes of the speakers of the target language.

The prominent studies in relation to empathy are Naiman et al's (1978) and Guiora's (1967) (cited in Ellis 1994: 518). In Naiman's study it is found that there is no relationship between empathy and proficiency. Although the study is not replicated in the subsequent studies, empathy and proficiency are positively correlated in Guiora's findings. Their measurement instrument includes Hogan Empathy Scale and Micro-Momentary Expression test. So as to carry out effective communication between the two persons - the speaker and the hearer - they should understand each other's affective as well as cognitive states. As Brown (1994: 144) maintains "Oral communication is a case in which, cognitively at least, it is easier to achieve empathetic communication since there is immediate feedback from the hearer. A misunderstood word, phrase, or idea can be questioned by the hearer, and then rephrased by the speaker until a clear message is interpreted."

2.6.1.6 Extroversion-introversion

Extroversion and introversion are the two significant factors that affect the process of foreign/second language acquisition. According to Brown (1994: 147):

Extroversion is the extent to which a person has a deep-seated need to receive ego enhancement, self-esteem, and a sense of wholeness from other people as opposed to receiving that affirmation within oneself. ... introversion, on the other hand, is the extent to which a person derives a sense of wholeness and fulfillment apart from a reflection of this self from other people.

In a classroom context, extrovert students are those learners that look for social situations. Students with extroverted type of personality get power from other individuals and they usually do not prefer to depart the party. Introverts, contrarily, are interested to be alone and prefer individual activities or gatherings with a few close classmates. Students with introverted type of personality are recognized as warier, more conformist and solemn than extroverts, who are more impulsive and want to take more risks (Ellis, 1994: 518; Brown, 1994: 147; Moris, 1979:41). Likewise, Chastain (1975:154) adds "Some students are so shy, so timid, and so unsure of themselves even in English that attempting to communicate in a second-language can be traumatic. The extroverts seem to be able to engage more freely in activities which may expose his linguistic inadequacies to his classmates".

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However, even if it is alleged stereotypically that extrovert students tend to succeed in foreign language learning than introverts students, the latter groups also thought to have 'an inner strength of character' that extroverts lack (Brown, 1994). According to Ely (1986:2), there are no studies so far which relate the stated assumption positively, negatively or with no relation. So there is no clear-cut solution that resolves the extroversion-introversion mysteries. Brown (1994: 147), however, comments that unlike listening, reading, and writing, extroversion can be a valuable asset in the development of general verbal communicative ability which involves face-to-face interaction.

Among from the research studies in anxiety Busch's (1982) and Strong's (1983) studies are quite famous ones. Through the use of Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), Busch fails to show the relationship between extroversion-introversion and proficiency. Strong (1983), however, employs classroom observation and Early School Personality Questionnaire to study the effect of the variables on 13 Spanish Speaking kindergarten Children. The study has found out that children with an extrovert personality learnt faster.

2.6.1.7 Motivation

Motivation refers to the degree to which an individual desires to learn the second language (Ely 1986: 3). Brown (1994: 152) also maintains that it is "an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action." Therefore, motivation - in language learning - is a psychological impulse that arouses a person to learn a new language.

According to Ellis, (1994), "motivation has an impact upon the degree to which the students want to continuously learn the second language, the type of learning behaviour they exhibit and their real performance (P.36). The highly influential research by Gardner and Lambert (1972) on learner's motivation comes up with the two forms of motivation that give explanation about how an individual can acquire a second language: instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to the assumption that a person can acquire a second language whenever they believe that the target language is useful for them. Integrative motivation, on the other hand, suggests that a person will acquire a second language when they feel that it is important for them to integrate themselves with the target language speaking community. They finally conclude that

integrative motivation is stronger motivating force than the instrumental one. However, findings indicate that the effect of these two motivational factors depends upon the context and situation of the learner. As Brown (1994: 154) indicates, many foreign language learning situations "involve a mixture of each type of motivation." Therefore, both of these forms of motivational orientations are responsible for the learners' participation in small-group oral interactions.

2.6.1.8 Strategy factors: communication strategies

Lack of communication strategies is one among from the factors that affect students' interaction behaviours in small-group (Brown, 1994: 118). Communication strategies which are relevant to the use of verbal or non-verbal means for the effective communication of information are essential in staying in communication. According to O'malley and Chamot (1990),

Communication strategies are an adaptation to the failure to realize a language production goal. They therefore serve an important role in negotiating meaning between individuals. Communication strategies are particularly important in negotiation meaning where either linguistic structure or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language (p.43).

Following are the communicative strategies that have been developed by Tarone (in Brown, 1994: 118).

A. Paraphrase

- i) approximation - this refers to the use of a word that share common semantic features and which have approximately similar meaning with the original word (e.g. pipe for water pipe)
- ii) word coinage - the student may form their own word which they think that it can express the intended meaning (e.g. air ball for balloon)
- iii) circumlocution - instead of naming a particular object or thing, the student may describe the characteristic features of the thing or the object.

B. Borrowing

- i) Literal translation – this refers to the act of translating ideas of the target language word for word (e.g. Saying 'He invites him to drink,' For 'they toast one another.')
- ii. Language switch – the student may use their own first language in stead of using the target

language to express their idea.

C. Appeal for assistance - the students ask the interlocutor to help him with the appropriate language

D. Mime – the students may use gesture when they fail to remember or use lexical items

F. Avoidance

i) Topic avoidance – the students simply jump the topic they feel they cannot use its correct words or structures.

ii) Message abandonment - The students starts to talk about a particular topic but stop in the middle of their talk.

Table 2.1 Classification of Communication Strategy

Thus, as Dornyei (2001: 95) suggests it is possible to teach students the communicative strategies that help them solve the communication breakdown during their talk as a result of lack of the L2 command.

2.6.2 Extrinsic Learner Variables

2.6.2.1 Social variables

Social variables have a profound impact upon second language proficiency though the influence may be indirect. Their consequence is mediated by several variables. Among these variables one is students' attitudes. Social variables play their own role in shaping students' attitudes which, consequently, determine learning outcomes. Social variables also determine L2 learning in an indirect manner by shaping the learning opportunities that each of the students experience. For instance, the students' socio-economic as well as ethnic background may have an effect upon the nature and the amount of the new language they are provided (Ellis, 1994:199). In this section, attitude, social distance, social class, and gender will be treated in relation to their effect on students' oral interaction in small-groups.

2.6.2.1.1 Attitude

The word 'attitudes' refers to the set of beliefs that the students have towards members of the target language speaking community and also towards their own cultural values (Brown, 1981 in Rahman, 2005). Gardner and Lambert (1972) also indicate that an 'attitude' is the persistence manifested by the student in struggling to achieve a particular goal (in Rahman, 2005). Furthermore, Ellis (1994: 207) states "The attitudes that learners hold towards the learning of a particular L2 reflect the intersection of their views about their own ethnic identity and those about the target language culture." The type of attitude the individual learner holds towards the target language speaking people and their cultural practices is a highly determinant factor in achieving foreign or second language acquisition. As Gardner and Lambert (1972) point out student' attitude toward the society or culture connected with the language being learned can strongly affect success in learning the language (cited in Krahnke and Christison, 1983: 625). According to Stern (1983: 376), there are three forms of attitudes in a situation of second language learning: "(a) Attitudes towards the community and people who speak the L2 (group specific attitudes), (b) Attitudes towards learning the language concerned; and (c) Attitude towards languages and language learning in general." Two main factors may influence these attitude types include: the students' personality (being ethnocentric or authoritarian) and the social context in which the process of language learning is carried out (Rahman, 2005).

2.6.2.1.2 Social distance

According to Brown (1994: 176), social distance "refers to the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures that come into contact within an individual." Schumann (1976:135) assumes that as the social distance between two groups gets wider, making an attempt to acquire the language of the target language group tends to be more challenging for the individual members of the two groups. In his Acculturation Model, Schumann tries to demonstrate the degree to which the language learner can conform themselves to new culture - which is a core factor in the model as culture and language are closely related entities - to acquire the second language. The model contains eight factors that have their own bearing on social distance of a group. Following is a brief treatment of the factors that attribute to social distance.

- A. Social dominance: refers to political, economical cultural, technological domination among the two groups.
- B. Cultural pattern: deals with the interest of the two groups (target language and language learner groups) to adopt assimilation in terms of culture.
- C. Enclosure: is concerned with the degree of interdependent between the two groups in varied social aspects (in terms of attending the same school, church etc)
- D. Cohesiveness: concerned with the degree of being intimate only to one's group.
- E. Size: as the size of the group becomes less in number there is a tendency of being assimilated to the group with larger number of population.
- F. Cultural similarity: refers to the extent to which the cultures of the two groups are similar
- G. Attitude: refers to whether the two groups have positive or negative attitude towards one another.
- H. Intended length of residence: concerned with the amount of time one of the groups wants to stay in the other group's area.

2.6.2.1.3 Social class

Ellis (1994: 205) points out that social class (in terms of income, level of education, and occupation) has its own bearing on succeeding in the attainment of a foreign language. According to Preston (in Ellis 1994:204) "There is a clear parallel between sociolinguistic phenomena associated with social class and language change and interlanguage development" As different studies indicate, learners who are from the upper middle class tend to outperform in foreign language classrooms learners from the lower class. The main reason for such disparity in achievement rests upon other factors related to the socio-economic situation. Ellis states "It is important to recognize, however, that it is not socio-economic class per se that produces these effects, but rather the experiences of the world which members of the different social classes are likely to have (Ellis, 1994). Similarly, Write (1987:12) reveals that among the initial contributions for having group activity one is the group members' views concerning attitudes and values and status and position.

2.6.2.1.4 Gender

Gender refers to the role given to male or female member of the society which determined by the society itself while sex refers to either of the two categories (male or female) into which most organisms are divided. According to (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet: 2003: 10) "Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do, something we perform....Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, where as gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Gender builds on biological sex; it exaggerates biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant."

Studies show that females are better than men at second language learning. The main reason suggested for such claim is "they are likely to be more open to new linguistic forms in the L2 input and they will be more likely to rid themselves of interlanguage forms that deviate from target-language norms" (Ellis 1994:202). In addition, their positive attitude towards learning the second language can be taken as the other attribute for their grater performance. Be that as it may, such natural predisposition appears to be influenced by the societal attitudes towards them (or rather gender influence). This particular behaviour can be observed in, for example, group discussion in EFL classrooms, in which men and women are mixed. As Birhanu, (2000: 55) states, "... male engage in more active task behaviour (e.g. giving opinions, or information) whereas females engage in more passive socio-emotional behaviour (e.g. agreeing, being friendly). Similarly, in his finding Goodwin (in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet: 2003:141) said "...boys engaged in a task-oriented activity both commanding ('gimme...') and seeking permission ('Can I ...')...the girls she observed in a similar activity with one another were far less likely to speak from either a commanding or a subordinate position." They more often framed directives as suggestions or proposals for joint action ('Let's...'), "Why don't we..."), rather than as commands." Both aspects are believed to be important in group discussion." He further comments, "in terms of rate of participation, men appear to be more willing to participate verbally in small-group discussion than women who seem reluctant to participate fully." (p.56). Tennen(1990) characterize women as most interested in promoting intimacy with others, in strengthening affilative bonds among people in promoting solidarity. Men, in contrast, are seen as most interested in establishing their independence from others, their autonomy (cited in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet: 2003:140).

Amanuel's (1996) finding, however, differs from these assumptions. According to his result, sex composition does not have a considerable effect upon students' oral performance or 'individual turns' in groups; the dominance of male students in number in the groups observed does not influence girls' verbal involvement (p. 30).

2.6.2.2 Situational Variables

There are situations under which the student feels discomfort and communicative stress which as a result affect their motivation to undertake verbal interaction. As Kent (1994b), and Hare and Davis (1994) point out, personality variable coupled with the situational factors have the capacity to impair students' behaviour in the EFL classroom (cited in Birhanu, 2000). Birhanu discusses the situational factors in terms of two variables: activity-related variables and group-related variables.

2.6.2.2.1 Task-related variables

The nature of the tasks is the other variable that determines small-group oral involvement. For Write (1987: 12) the teachers' as well as students' belief about the nature of the activities or tasks and the nature of students' and groups' involvement in the tasks can be considered as one of the preliminary contribution to effective group activity. Next the two main task-related factors for small-group oral interaction will be discussed.

2.6.2.2.1.1 Type of task

The activity types that are chosen to be worked upon by students in class should all have the capacity to involve them in some kind of oral interaction. Ur, (1996: 232) states "the success of group work depends ... on the selection of an interesting and stimulating task whose performance is well, effective and careful organization Other things being normal, ... nature of the activities have the power to let the students in the groups remain under the shadow of silence." According to Nunan (1989: 64), two-way information gap activities which can be performed in small-groups appear to be particularly suitable for arousing interactive language use.



Nunan further states that there are three general characteristics of activities. These are authenticity, being skill getting ('in which learners manipulate phonological and grammatical forms') or skill using (in which learners are meant to apply their newly acquired mastery of linguistic forms to the comprehension and production of communicative language) and accuracy focused or fluency focused. An effective small-group interaction can highly be determined by the kind of activities that employed in the group.

Different methodologists have proposed variety of activities that enable learners to engage in genuine face-to-face verbal interaction. Celce-Murcia (1984:28) presents "introducing variety into learning activities is a more external form of motivation. ...Variety can be introduced on many different levels." She further says that one is "to move as quickly as possible from manipulative drills to communicative activities; these communicative activities, in turn, a variety of tasks (problem solving, role-playing, values clarification, skills competition etc)".

Bygde (1987:67) has summarized the activities proposed by Littlewood (1981), Harmer (1983), Rivers and Temperley (1978) and Ur (1981). Littlewood (1981) proposes activities called 'functional communication activities' which consists of four of such kinds: sharing information with restricted co-operation (identifying one picture from a set; discovering identical pairs, discovering sequences or locations; discovering missing information; discovering missing features; discovering games), sharing information with unrestricted cooperation (communicating patterns and pictures, communication models, discovering differences, following directions); sharing and processing information (reconstructing story sequences, pooling information to solve a problem); processing information and social interaction activities such as using the classroom as a social context and simulation and role playing are also grouped as his second forms of activities.

Harmer's (1983) interaction activities include 'practice activities' and 'communicative activities'. Under the oral practice activities Harmer lists oral drills, information gap activities, games, personalization and localization and oral activities. Under the communicative activities, he groups reaching at consensus, relaying instructions, communication games, problem solving, interpersonal exchange, story construction, simulation and role play.

Similarly, Rivers and Temperley (1978) propose fourteen interaction activities from which teachers select those that suit their students. These include: establishing and maintaining social relations (telephoning, welcoming visitors etc), expressing reactions (situations requiring reactions to TV show etc), hiding one's intentions (students given a mission to carry out must not reveal it under and provocation), talking one's way out of trouble, seeking and giving information (interviews, surveys etc), learning or teaching how to make or do something (a sport, a dance etc), Conversing over the telephone problem solving (Alibis, Guilty Party etc), discussing ideas (arising from readings etc), playing with language (crossword puzzles, spelling games etc), acting out social roles, entertaining others (through radio-type programme etc) sharing leisure activities (participation in a typical national meals, festivities etc).

Ur (1981) also develops three types of interaction activities which contain a number of other subtypes: brainstorming activities (guessing games, finding connections, ideas from a central theme, implications and interpretations), organizing activities (comparisons, detecting differences, putting in order, priorities, choosing candidates, layout problems, combining versions) and compound activities (composing letters, debates, publicity campaigns, surveys, planning projects).

Nunan (1989: 66) also presents the activities developed by Prabhu (1987), Clark (1987) and Pattison (1987). Their interaction activities can be summarized as: information gap activity, reasoning-gap activity and opinion-gap activity, problem solving activity, reacting after viewing/reading a material, dialogues, role plays and forming stories from pictures.

2.6.2.2.1.2 Difficulty of the task

Different scholars have suggested that there are different factors that should be considered to determine the difficulty level of a task. Nunan (1989: 141) presents the factors that have been proposed by Brindly (1987), Brown and Yule (1983), Nunan (1985) and Anderson and Lynch (1988). For Brindly (1987), the learner (degree of confidence, motivation, learning experience, pace of learning, level language skill, cultural knowledge task and text factors will interact to determine task difficulty), the task (cognitive complexity, number of steps, degree of contextual clues, requirement of grammatical accuracy, amount of time) and the text (length, clarity, degree

of contextual clues, familiarity) have a decisive influence over the level of difficulty of a given task. Brown and Yule (1983) suggest factors which are associated with the speaker (number of speakers, attractiveness, syntax level of difficulty, vocabulary specificity, content familiarity contextual clues, availability of visual aids, and involvement of the learner), the listener, content, support and purpose will affect task difficulty. For Nunan (1985) “difficulty is determined by the type of the learner.

Easier	
Comprehension	Listen/read, no response Listen/read, non-verbal response Listen/read, verbal response
Production	Listen/read and repeat/copy Listen/read, carry out drill Listen/read, respond meaningfully
Interaction	Listen/read, rehearse Listen/read, role play Listen/read, solve problem/come to conclusion
More difficult	

Table 2.2 Factors in task difficulty (Nunan, 1985)

In addition, Anderson and Lynch (1988) identify information sequence, topic familiarity, explicitness, non-verbal support and item correspondence as determinant factors for the difficult level of a task.

Generally, the complex or difficult nature of a task may originate either from the task itself or it associated with the intelligence of individual who is accomplishing the task. A task may also be complex because a student has negative feelings towards the task itself, or its content, or their group members (Write, 1987: 35). Hence, as Nunan (1989) recommends, the tasks that are selected by the classroom teacher should be at the appropriate level of difficulty for the learner so that they can produce the intended result (136).

2.6.2.2.1.2 Group Variables

Group variables subsume group size and grouping pattern and cohesion.

2.6.2.2.1.2.1 Group-size

Currently, small-group interactions or collaborative learning have been foregrounded especially in EFL research studies (Brumfit, 1984; Long and Porter, 1985; Nunan, 1989; Ellis, 1997). Brumfit, (1984:72) defines a group as “a number of people who interact with one another, who are psychologically aware of one another, and who perceive themselves to be a group.” According to him, psychological groups may refer to the formal or informal groups. For the purpose EFL classroom interaction, however, informal groups which are formed during the time of interaction are preferred.

Before the small-group interaction, the size of the group should be determined. Byrne (1987: 75) states although there is no fixed rule that dictate the number of members in a group, four to eight would be recommendable. Harmer (1991: 246) suggests “It is probably safe to say that groups of more than seven students can be unmanageable. Since the amount of student participation obviously falls and the organization of the group itself may start to disintegrate.” As Bejarano (1987:485) admits “The class can be organized from two to six students so as to accomplish the learning task in a cooperative.” The learning task is based on interaction and reciprocal interdependence among the members of the group and requires mutual help.” Generally, “Groups of four or five members work best. Larger groups decrease each member's opportunity to participate actively. The less skillful the group members, the smaller the groups should be. The shorter amount of time available, the smaller the groups should be” (Davis, 1993).

2.6.2.2.1.2.2 Grouping pattern and cohesion

In any form of groupings, friendship patterns arise from, for instance, common interests, ‘mutual respect’, and shared background (Write 1987: 12). Different researchers have investigated the way groups can be organized for an effective group interaction in an EFL classroom. According to their results, sex differences, age of participants, language background and proficiency, ethnicity, familiarity of participants and verbal styles that learners adopt in the classroom tend to affect

students' performance. Accordingly, students may be assigned to get into groups to 'maximize their heterogeneity' – mixing males with females, active and passive students, 'cynical and the optimistic'. In some other occasions students will be allowed to form groups based on their interest (though it is feared that students tend to form exclusive groups or they 'will socialize too much and that students will self-segregate'). Also, the other option is that instructors themselves form the small-groups on the basis of students' academic achievement, 'levels of preparation', their habits towards work, gender, and ethnicity. The other variety is that well-prepared students can be grouped with the well-prepared students. Also, some instructors spread the 'well-prepared' students in each of the groups. As Ellis (1994) comments, "Mixed gender and mixed proficiency pairs may be optimal" (p.601). Walvoord (cited in Davis, 1993) advises instructors to give the chance for the students to choose with whom they prefer to work and then to make the assignments by themselves. Similarly, Write (1987:12) suggests "Existing pattern of friendship must be taken into account when the teacher sets up small-working group." Therefore, the grouping pattern should be given due consideration in order that students become beneficiaries out of the group interaction (Cameron and Epling, 1989: 393).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

The main objective of this study is identifying the factors that hinder students' oral interaction in small-groups in EFL class in the first year. To this end, an attempt has been made to describe the characteristics of the population by collecting survey data through the use of questionnaire, semi-structured interview and an observation checklist from the sample of that group.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 University

The institution that was selected to conduct the research was Mekelle University. It was chosen because of two main reasons. In the first place, it was the institution where the researcher believed to access the necessary data from the subjects easily since he had an acquaintance with members of the English Department. In the second place, the problem was initially observed there while the researcher was teaching the Communicative English Skills course some years ago.

3.2.2 Students

Students were the subjects of this study. All of the students who participated in the study were in the first year and from the English Department. First year students were selected because it was thought that they were easily challenged by different hindering factors when communicating with their peers and teacher in their freshman year. The kind of help that they get on the basis of the identified problems as soon as they start university education would, therefore, assist them in alleviating these challenges in the following years and make them succeed in their academic endeavours. Students of the English Department were chosen because it was believed that they were the groups who were expected to have good command of the language as they trained to professionals in the field and they were the groups on whom the problem was initially observed.

The total number of students in the department was 169 and they were distributed among 4 sections according to their alphabetical order. From the total number, therefore, 72 students (47 males and 25 females) who were attending in two of the sections (section 1 and 4) were selected by drawing lots. The sampling was thought to take students age, gender, educational background, academic capability, socio-economic status, L2 learning background and type of L2 instruction received into consideration so as to assure that the conclusion which has been drawn becomes strong in its representativeness of the total population.

3.2.3 Instructors

The other subjects of the study were instructors. During the time data gathering, the researcher was informed that there was only one teacher who taught the Communicative English Skills course for students of the English Department. The data gathered from only one person was assumed to affect the reliability of the study so other instructors who taught the same course to students of other departments were included in the study since they were believed to have the knowledge about the subjects of this study. From the total of 9 instructors who were offering the communicative English Skills course 5 were chosen by drawing lots. From among these 5 sample groups 4 of them were males and 1 was female.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire was one of the main data gathering instruments of this study. It was developed and administered to students to yield factual information (such as their socio-economic status), attitudinal information (such as their attitudes and beliefs) etc. as regards the communication-related barriers student's may encounter during small-group oral interaction in Communicative English Skills classes. Two methods were employed to develop the structured questionnaire; firstly, standardized scales formulated and utilized by different scholars were adapted and used here and secondly, new scales whose base was the theoretical discussion in the literature review section were devised.

The questionnaire contained the different aspects of 14 variables which were assumed to hinder students' oral participation. These variables included self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, introversion-extroversion, motivation, communicative strategies, social class, social distance, gender, group pattern, group size, task difficulty and task type.

To see the effect of a single variable, six closely related characteristic items were used in both forms of scales. As fully discussed in Chapter One under the Statement of the Problem section of this paper, this technique was employed to reduce the measurement error that may be resulted from the use a 'single item measures' which causes less reliable and less valid conclusion and a single item has very limited scope. To this end, multi-item measures were put to use in the Likert Scale.

The Likert scale (a scale of 1 to 5, for instance, with one being 'strongly agree' and 5 being 'strongly disagree') contains various positively and negatively worded characteristic statements. It was believed to be worth including both positively and negatively worded items in the questionnaire in order to avoid a response set in which the respondents label only one side of a rating scale. The questionnaire includes 6 items in relation to each of the 14 variables. These were about self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, motivation, communicative strategy use, gender group patter, group size take difficulty and task type.

Besides, there were open-ended questions that assumed to allow respondents to put down their thoughts about the items provided. The total number of open-ended questions was 3. The questions asked students to list the factors that impeded their small-group interaction and to identify the mechanisms they devised to free them from the hindering factors at a personal level, among others.

3.3.2 Interview

The second form of data gathering instrument was interview. Semi-structured interview was conducted with 10 students who were selected by drawing lots from the total sample group and 5 instructors. Each group was asked 10 questions that had direct association with the required pieces of data. The contents of the interview prepared for both groups were similar. They included: students' interest towards group discussion, the hindering factors students' may face when interacting orally, the teachers roles, the mechanisms both groups devised to solve the

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hypothesized problems. It was assumed that the interview questions would help interviewees express their views in detail as regards the problem and open up the opportunity to wide possible answer categories.

3.3.3 Observation

The other form of data gathering tool was classroom observation. The situation of the small-group interaction was observed 5 times by two individuals (the student researcher and an external observer) with the help of an observation checklist believing that it was a better tool in observing data about what was actually going on during the time of the group interaction and in cross-checking the information gathered through the questionnaire. The total number of items in the checklist was 12 and it comprised issues such as students' language use, male-female dominance, students' motivation, teacher's role, and nature of group formation.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The questionnaire was developed to 72 students who were attending in two of the four sections. Then piloting or testing out of the research instrument was undertaken in 15 people - who were of the main sample population but who were in the same level with the subjects from the remaining 2 sections - in order to establish their clarity. Based on the result of the pilot study, the content of the students' questionnaire was translated into Amharic by a professional from the Amharic Department (of Mekelle University since some items remained unanswered by many of the respondents may be due to the difficulty in understanding the language) assuming that all the students had good command of the Amharic language and that it avoided the gap in information created due to the shortage of the English language. Besides, some items were modified. After refining the instrument, an attempt was made to administer and gather the filled-out questionnaire from the participants of the study.

In addition, out of the 72 sample students, 10 randomly selected ones from both sections and their teachers were asked 10 questions. Primarily interview was preferred to be used as one form of data gathering tool because it was believed that it would give the opportunity to observe the non-verbal behaviour, to assess how many of the respondents' answers were valid and to listen to reasons

what the participants commented as regards the structured questions. It was also assumed that within a short period of time different unexpected data might be gathered.

Further, the data was gathered through the use of classroom observation. The students were observed 5 times when they were involving in small-group activity by the researcher and an external observer in order to maintain its reliability. The data obtained through an observation was mainly used to fill the space in the data gathered that was created during the time of questionnaire administering. The data that might be inaccessible through only questionnaire which included students' feelings, involvements, role sharing in speaking activities etc was gathered with the help of observation checklist which contained different behavioural or attitudinal characteristic items.

3.5 Data Organization and Analysis

After the questionnaire was administered and collected, it was analysed using the quantitative research paradigm. Each response option was assigned a number for scoring purpose (for example, strongly agree = 5, strongly disagree = 1). Then the selected response option could easily be coded numerically using percentage and mean and standard deviation (just to show the full picture of the data). The degree of the effect of each of the assumed variable was assessed making use of 6 characteristic items (with 3 positively worded and 3 negatively worded statements on the average mainly to avoid bias) addressing the same construct (variable). The data of the 5-point likert scale was categorized into three sections depending on their contents: Favourable Response, Neutral Response and Unfavourable Response. Whenever larger percentages were recorded under the Unfavourable Response category, the variable was considered as a factor hindering students' participation. Each of the items under each variable in the scale were analysed and interpreted and then their average score was taken to consider the variable as a real factor for the observed problem. The analysis did not include the data recorded under the Neutral Response category since it was thought that they do not clearly define the effect of each variable.

The other part of the questionnaire was the open-ended form which employed the qualitative research paradigm. It was primarily used to collect the pieces of information whose scope was beyond those that could be obtained through the close-ended ones. Possible answer categories were developed on the basis of the respondents' response and a table was used to present its result.

In addition, all the data obtained through interviews were transcribed from their original form, tape recording. The interview data gathered from the students and instructors were discussed separately and the analysis was made according to the order of the questions asked during the interview session. Besides, they were gone through repetitively to construct meaning and to condense them into themes. Whenever there was relation between and among items, they were treated together so that they could give complete meaning.

The data collected through the classroom observation using an observation checklist were also discussed. The results of each of the observations on 5 lessons were presented separately and the contents of the checklist were organized and discussed according to the relation between and among them. After each observation session, the reliability of the results of the observations by the two observers was measured using the confusion matrix to find out their degree of concordance (agreement).

The results of these three data gathering instruments were brought together whenever necessary to crosscheck their truthfulness. Then these results were discussed with the help of literature and research outcomes.

Generally, it was believed that the validity and reliability of the study would be maintained if triangulation technique was adopted. Thus, questionnaire, interview and observation were used as the basic forms of data gathering tools of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Data from the Students' Questionnaire

Key:
 5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree
 (N.B. the values may be reversed depending on the nature of the question – being positively or negatively worded)
 RA = Response Average

4.1.1 Self-esteem

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to gather data on what students report about their self-esteem. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.1: Students' Self-Esteem (SE)

Item	Respondents Having										Descriptive Statistics	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
SE1	7	25	32	44.4	3	4.2	21	16	37	51.4	2.8056	1.3803
SE2	3	8	11	15.2	1	1.4	38	22	60	83.3	2.0556	1.0732
SE3	18	28	46	63.8	4	5.6	20	2	22	30.6	3.5556	1.2206
SE4	1	8	9	12.5	4	5.6	44	15	59	81.9	2.1111	0.9124
SE5	7	25	32	44.4	2	2.8	24	13	37	51.4	2.8333	1.3427
SE6	8	18	32	44.4	13	18.1	30	3	33	45.8	2.9722	1.1380
RA	7.3	18.7	26	36.1	4.5	6.3	29.5	11.8	41.3	57.4	2.7222	1.1778

In item 1, students were asked whether they were sure of what they talk about when they discuss in English in small groups. As table 4.1 depicts, 51.4% of the students say that they are doubtful about their talk while 44.1% of them report that they are sure of themselves when using English.

This indicates that the students are uncertain about their oral skills which in turn affects their oral interaction in their groups.

Item 2 was designed to observe the value the students give for themselves in oral skills in comparison to their classmates. As the above table shows, 83.3% of the respondents agree that they consider their peers as better users of the English language than them. 15.2 % of them, however, reveal that they do not have the feeling that their peers are better than them in their oral performance. Based on the the data, it can be said that the students have the believe that they do not have the capacity to express themselves in English better than their classmates.

Item 3 dealt with weather the students had the feeling of self-consciousness (being excessively and uncomfortably conscious of their behavior) while using the English language. Accordingly, 63.8 % of them respond that they do not feel very self conscious while 30.6% of them admit that they do. Thus, it is possible to assume that the students are uncomfortable about their language use which, as a result, makes them to be less reactive in group discussions.

For item 4, which was about the place the students' give for themselves in the use of the English language in comparison with their classmates, 81.9% of them say that they consider other members of their class as better users. Contrarily, 12.5% of the respondents reveal that their peers can speak English with a better fluency than them. This indicates that the students consider themselves as poor English language users in small groups.

Item 5 focused on students' capability to express their ideas in small-groups with confidence. According to Table 4.1, 51.4% of the students report that they lack confidence whereas 44.4% of them agree that they can confidently say what they feel. It can be learned from these data that the students lack confidence in their oral skills. This feeling of inferiority can be an obstacle in their attempt to express themselves in groups.

The last item, item 6, dealt with weather the students were good users of the English language. In this regard, 45.8% of them admit that they are not among the good users while 44.4 % of them report that they are. This shows that the students do not convince themselves as good users of the language. So lack of confidence causes them to develop low self-esteem in the use of the English language.

As shown in Table 4.1 above, the degree of being sure about their ability in oral skills, the extent of being self-conscious when speaking, the degree of having the feeling of inferiority and the degree of being confident at the time of oral interaction were the central issues raised under the self-esteem scale. On the average, 57.4% of the respondents report that they have low self-esteem about their own speaking proficiency which, as a result, makes them to be less active during discussion sessions. On the contrary, 36.1% of them believe that their self-esteem does not affect their communicative performance in their respective small-groups.

As Heyde (1979) (cited in Ellis, 1994) suggests, self-esteem correlates either positively or negatively to the spoken production. Thus, it is possible to conclude from the above data that the degree to which the students feel about themselves in using the English language negatively correlates the small-group oral performance. Put differently, the students' spoken production got affected as a result of having low self-esteem towards their own language proficiency.

4.1.2 Inhibition

Students' level of inhibition was assessed through the use of six related items (see Appendix A). Table 4.2 below shows the data gathered from the students.

Table 4.2: Students' Inhibition (I)

Items	Respondents Having										Descriptive Statistics	
	Favourable Responses				Neutral Responses		Unfavourable Responses					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
I1	20	20	40	55.5	4	5.6	20	8	28	38.9	3.3333	1.4241
I2	9	14	23	31.9	3	4.2	32	14	46	63.9	2.6111	1.3380
I3	26	25	51	70.8	4	5.6	13	4	17	23.6	3.7778	1.2696
I4	20	23	43	59.7	5	6.9	18	6	24	33.3	3.4583	1.3525
I5	22	22	44	61.1	2	2.8	20	6	26	36.1	3.4722	1.3939
I6	20	19	39	54.2	6	8.3	21	6	27	37.5	3.361	1.376
RA	19.5	20.5	40	55.5	4	5.6	20.6	7.5	28.1	39	3.335	1.359

Item 1 was designed to assess students' degree of silence for fear of making mistakes. In this regard, 55.5% of the students say that they do not become silent so as to avoid making embarrassing mistakes in their respective groups whereas 38.9% of them report that they do not worry about making mistakes when they speak so they never tend to be silent. This indicates that students' group involvement is not affected with the assumption that they may commit mistakes when speaking. The data, however, do not match with the results of the classroom observation and instructor's interview.

The second item, item 2, dealt with whether the students make maximum care not to make mistakes when interacting orally in small groups. As the above table depicts, 63.9% of the respondents report that they take time and think in order not to make mistakes in their utterances while 31.9% of them point out that they do not worry about making mistakes. These data shows that majority of the students' think about what they before they speak since they do not want to make mistakes.

Item 3 was about the negative feeling the students had towards involving in oral interactions. Accordingly, 70.8% of them say that involving in groups does not make them to be worried whereas 23.6% of them say that they become anxious when participating in group discussions. This indicates that taking part in oral discussions in small groups has not affected the students' feelings negatively.

In item 4 students were asked whether their participation was affected thinking that they might make mistakes. As shown in Table 4.2, 59.7% of the students agree that making mistakes does not make them to be silent in small group discussion while 33.3% of them say that they tend to be quite. These data indicate that students do not keep quite for fear of making mistakes in group discussions. The data gathered from the classroom observation as well as students interview, however, do not support this result.

Item 5 was developed to ask students if they were afraid that the other students would laugh at them when they speak in English. In this regard, 61.1% of them report that they are not worried about being laughed at whereas 36.1% of them reveal that they were. This indicates that majority

of the students' verbal participation has never been affected by the negative feedback they get from their peers.

Item 6 was designed to ask whether the students were affected by the criticism they receive from their peers about their use of English. As shown in the above table, 54.2% of them admit that they do not become less active for fear of criticisms while 37.5% of them say that they tend to be silent in order not to be criticized by their friends about their English. It is possible to learn from these data that the students' oral participation has not been affected as a result of the criticisms they get from their peers.

On the average, the largest proportions of the respondents (55.5%) reveal that inhibition does not bear upon their small-group oral interaction. Contrarily, 39% of them report that they are worried about making mistakes at the time of putting across their thoughts so inhibition plays a debilitating role in their verbal performance. Although these data show that inhibition did not have an impact upon their small-group oral performance, the classroom observation and the instructors' interview did not support such a claim. From these data gathering tools it can be learnt that the students seem to be critical of themselves during the time of group discussion so inhibition may be a hindrance to their effective language production in small-groups. Ur (1996:120) also states that students' oral interaction may be affected due to the high level of inhibition developed within students themselves. Thus, in order that the students attend the language learning as an enjoyable activity rather than a frightening experience, the level of inhibition should be lowered.

4.1.3 Risk Taking

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were developed to collect information on what students report about their risk taking behaviour. Table 4.3 deals with the data gathered.

Table 4.3: Student's Risk Taking (RT)

Items	Respondents Having										Descriptive Statistics	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
RT1	9	18	27	37.5	8	11.1	28	9	37	51.4	2.8611	1.2816
RT2	11	11	22	30.5	14	19.4	30	6	36	50	2.8750	1.2326
RT3	12	15	27	37.5	12	16.7	26	7	33	45.8	2.9861	1.2836
RT4	3	13	16	22.2	7	9.7	28	21	49	68.1	2.2917	1.1920
RT5	10	17	27	37.5	10	13.9	26	9	35	48.6	2.9028	1.2909
RT6	2	7	9	12.5	8	11.1	32	23	55	76.4	2.0694	1.0390
RA	7.8	13.5	21.3	29.6	9.8	13.6	28.3	12.5	40.8	56.7	2.6643	1.2199

The first item, item 1, was designed to gather data about the students' courage to express complicated ideas in English in small groups. As shown in the above table, 51.4% of the students' report that they do not like to get across complex ideas while 37.5% of them hold that they do. This shows that the students do not want to take risks when expressing their thoughts for fear of constructing erroneous sentences in their speech.

In item 2 students were asked if they could express their ideas as soon as they came to their mind. Accordingly, 50% of the respondents say that they do not dare to forward their thoughts whenever they want to. On the other hand, 30.5% of them reveal that they can express their ideas immediately they come to their mind. These data indicate that the students do not dare to speak out sentences without making necessary corrections in their mind.

Item 3 also was about the students' interest to try out difficult sentences in English in their groups. From the total population, 45.8% of them admit that they do not prefer to use difficult sentences in their speech while 37.5% of them report that they do. This shows that the students do not have the interest to express ideas containing difficult sentences.

The fourth item, item 4, was about the time the students take to think of how a word can appropriately be used to express their ideas. According to the above table, 68.1% of the students report that they like to wait until they know the exact word to use whereas 22.2% of them point out that they simply use a word that they immediately remember. It can be said, therefore, that the students do not take risks when using the language in their small group discussions.

On the average, asked whether they were risk-takers in expressing complex ideas, getting across ideas as soon as they popped up into their mind without worrying about their grammatical details during small-group oral interactions, 56.7% of them admit that they are not; they do not prefer to put over difficult ideas. Instead they prefer to take time and think about what they say in grammatically correct, appropriate and acceptable manner. Out of the total percentage, 29.6% agree that they take risks in their utterances. Therefore, it can be concluded from the analysed data above that absence of risk taking behaviour is the other variable that hampers students' active involvement in group discussions. According to Ellis, (1994: 518) and Ely (1986a), good language learners take risks when using the target language orally devoid of worrying about making errors in their speech.

4.1.4 Anxiety

The six items included under this variable are presented to gather data about students' level of anxiety in relation to their group participation. Table 4.4 presents students' report.

Table 4.4: Student's Anxiety (AX)

Items	Respondents Having										Descriptive Statistics	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
AX1	20	26	46	63.9	6	8.3	13	7	20	27.8	3.5417	1.3315
AX2	8	12	20	27.8	7	9.7	24	21	45	62.5	2.4722	1.3632
AX3	14	24	38	52.8	11	15.3	20	3	23	31.9	3.3611	1.2022
AX4	18	22	40	55.6	12	16.7	19	1	20	27.8	3.5139	1.1748
AX5	7	15	22	30.6	12	16.7	19	19	38	52.8	2.6111	1.3380
AX6	15	23	38	52.8	12	16.7	14	8	22	30.6	3.3194	1.3090
RA	13.7	20.3	34	47.2	10	13.9	18.2	9.8	28	38.9	3.1365	1.2864

Item 1 was developed to see whether the students felt very nervous while participating in small groups containing new persons. As Table 4.4 depicts, 63.9% of them say that the presence of new student in their group does not make them to be anxious. Contrarily, 27.8% of the respondents reveal that they tend to be nervous whenever a new person joins their group. This shows that the presence of a new person in the groups does not create anxiety upon the other group members.

In the second item, students were asked if they could speak out acceptable English expressions whenever they are anxious. Table 4.3 depicts that 62.5% of the students admit that their language use is affected by the feelings they have at a particular moment while 27.8% of them say that they can use whatever they know regardless of the anxious feeling they have. This indicates that the feeling of anxiety and language use have direct relation and when students become nervous they face difficulty in making use of the language they know.

Item 3 was about the students' ability to use the English vocabulary that they knew as a result of being confident in small group oral interactions. Accordingly, 52.8% of the respondents point out that they can use the words in their speech since they are confident while 31.9% of them say that they cannot remember words due to having less confidence in small group discussions. From these



data it can be learnt that their confidence enable the students to make use of the vocabulary items they know in small group discussions. The result found out through the self-esteem scale about students' confidence does not agree with this one.

In the fourth item students were asked if they were free to express themselves in small groups. From the total population, 55.6% of them report that they can express themselves freely in groups having few members. However, 27.8% of them admit that they still do not feel freedom in small groups. This shows that the presence of few members in groups helps students to feel free and involve in activities.

Item 5 asked whether students were upset when they know how to communicate something in English but they cannot verbalize it. As shown in the table, 52.8% of them say that the situation makes them to be angry while 30.6% of the respondents say it does not affect their feeling. Thus, it can be said that whenever students fail to use the language correctly, they become discouraged and tend to keep quite.

In the last item, item 6, students were asked if they feel tense when they speak in English in small groups. In this regard, 52.8% of them report that they do not worry about speaking in English in small groups. On the other hand, 30.6% of the students say that they still feel tense. This shows that as the number of participants in the groups decreases the students feeling of anxiety lowers.

On the average, as can be seen from Table 4.4 above, 47.2% of the respondents report that they do not prefer to be silent as a result of being anxious. Getting into groups, being grouped with new acquaintance, and being unable to express the already known expressions of English do not let them to be apprehensive so it was not a brunt to their group oral participation. However, 38.9% of them agree that they fail to take part in discussions due to anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994: 284) hold that anxiety negatively correlates oral performance. Even if anxiety, as recognized by many studies, is a variable that slows down students' progress especially in oral skills in EFL classes, its influence was very minimal in groups where there were few number of participants (as compared to the size of class). According to Horwitz and associates (quoted in Young 1999:27), one of the sources of anxiety is the fear of criticism by members of the group; as the number of critics deceases, the students' fear of criticism also tends to ebb. Similarly, Bygate (1987:96)

maintains that the nature of the group by itself gives students a way to freedom since the amount of correction they receive from their peers is less than that of the teacher during teacher-fronted lessons or whole class discussions. Long and Porter (1985:207) also state that in small-groups there is a positive atmosphere in terms of affect. It does not, however, mean that the other two sources of anxiety such as excessive self evaluation and worry over potential failure have no consequence upon the students' level of anxiety but it is likely to be nominal as compared with the situation observed in larger groups or the whole class. The result of the students' questionnaire has also shown concordance with the result of the classroom observation and students' interview.

4.1.5 Extroversion-introversion

The items from 1-6 in the table below are used to gather information about students' extroversion-introversion behaviour in small group oral interactions. Table 4.5 depicts the data.

Table 4.5: Student's Extroverttness-Introverttness (EI)

Items	Respondents Having										Descriptive Analysis	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
EI1	5	17	22	30.6	9	12.5	32	9	41	56.9	2.6806	1.1728
EI2	15	22	37	51.4	14	19.4	17	4	21	29.2	3.3750	1.2154
EI3	13	18	31	43.1	12	16.7	20	9	29	40.3	3.0833	1.3295
EI4	13	31	44	61.1	11	15.3	11	6	17	23.6	3.4722	1.1983
EI5	11	22	33	45.8	11	15.3	20	8	28	38.9	3.1111	1.2843
EI6	24	11	35	48.6	14	19.4	11	2	12	16.7	3.7500	1.1598
RA	13.5	20.2	33.7	46.8	11.8	16.4	18.5	6.3	24.8	34.4	3.2453	1.2266

Item 1 was about students' preference to speak in small group interactions to listening. As shown in Table 4.5, 56.9% of students point out that they like to listen than to speak in small groups while 30.6% of them say that they are interested in speaking than listening. This indicates that majority of the students prefer to listen to what their peers say in the groups.

In the second item students were asked if they disliked oral interactions in small groups due to being shy. In this regard, 51.4% of the respondents agree that their shyness does not make them to dislike oral interactions while 29.2% of them state that they are not interested in small group discussions because of being shy. It is possible to say based on the data presented here that shyness can be an obstacle for students' group involvement

Item 3 was about the students' interest to stay long in the verbal interactions. As Table 4.5 shows, 43.1% report that they prefer to stay long in communication. In the contrary, 40.3% of the respondents admit that they do not. This indicates that the students are interested to have an oral interaction in their respective groups

In item 4, students were asked weather they liked to work individually or in group. Accordingly, 61.1% of the students say that they preferred group work to individual work while 23.6% of them point out that they are interested in working in groups than individually. This shows that working in groups is their preferred way of learning then working individually.

Item 5 was about the students' courage to talk about the topic presented for discussion. In this regard, 45.8% of the students report that they are courageous to talk about the topic they are well aware of. 38.9% of them, however, reveal that they lack the courage. It is possible to say, therefore, that the students have the courage to talk about the topic they are provided for discussion.

In item 6 asked students if they were happy to get into groups and involve in oral interactions. Accordingly, 48.6% of the respondents assert that they like to take part in discussions while 16.7% of them report that they do not. It can be learned from the above data that the students like to work forming groups.

As can be seen from Table 4.5 above, the students expressed their own degree of extrovertness and introvertness through the self-rating scale which consists of characteristic items such as the degree of preferring to speak, the quality of being shy, the desire to stay long in communication, the interest to work individually, and the courage to speak out what they already know. Therefore, on the average, large portion of the respondents (46.8%) report that they do not tend to be simply

listeners due to shyness, preferring silence and individual work to group work, and the lack of courage to speak in English in small-groups. On the other hand, 34.4% of them believe that they are introverts so they are not interested to involve in small-group discussions. The results of the observation, however, appear to be different from the data presented and analysed above. According to the result of the observations, the group discussions were almost monopolized by certain group members. It was only some members of the group that frequently got the opportunity to put over their ideas for the group members as learnt from the interview. Considering their negative self-image, undesirable degree of inhibition and low level of risk-taking behaviour, according to the earlier results, it appears that the students are introverts.

4.1.6. Motivation

Item 1-6 were asked to gather information as regards students' motivational orientation towards small group interaction.

Table 4.6: Students' Motivation (M)

Items	Respondents Having										Descriptive Statistics	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
M1	26	28	54	75	10	13.9	5	1	6	8.3	3.9583	1.0804
M2	24	26	50	69.4	7	9.7	10	5	15	20.3	3.7500	1.2532
M3	44	21	65	90.3	3	4.2	3	3	6	8.3	4.4444	.8703
M4	23	33	55	76.4	10	13.9	5	1	6	8.3	4.0000	.9345
M5	48	20	68	94.4	2	2.8	2	0	2	2.8	4.5833	.6869
M6	3	5	8	11.1	3	4.2	20	41	61	84.7	4.2639	1.1005
RA	28	22.2	50	69.4	5.8	8.1	7.5	8.5	16	22.2	4.1666	0.9876

Item 1 was presented to collect data about whether the students' thought about what they did orally in groups after class. From the total population, 75% of them say that they think of the points raised in the discussion while 8.3% report that they do not want to remember them at all. This

indicates that the students take the classroom practice as an important matter so they give it place in their mind even after class.

In second item, the students were asked if they tried to improve their oral skills through interactions in groups. According to Table 4.6, 69.4% of them say that make an attempt to develop their oral skills through interactions. Contrarily, 20.3% of them admit that they do not. This shows that the students have the motivation to develop their verbal skills through discussion practices.

The third item was designed to see if the students want to use English in wide variety of situations. As can be seen from the above table, 90.3% of them report that they would like to use the English language to accomplish different purposes while 8.3 of them say that they do not. It can be learned from the above data the students have understood the importance of learning the English language for accomplishing varied purposes so they have the interest to master it.

Item 4 was about weather the students gave priority to oral interaction in groups. In this regard, 76.4% of the students agree that they prioritize verbal interaction so as to develop their oral skills. On the other hand, 8.3% of then point out that they do not consider it as an important activity. It can be said based on the above data that since they have the interest to have the command of English, the students give prior attention to the oral skills.

In item 5 the students were asked if involving in small group interaction was valuable for them. The table shown above indicates that 94.4% of the respondents reveal that they consider taking part in oral interaction as an important practice while 2.8% of them assert that participating in group interaction is not valuable for them. This shows that almost all of the respondents believe that the oral interaction is essential for them.

Item 6, was about the students interest to attend remedial classes that aim at developing their oral skills. In this regard, 84.7% of the students admit that they do not prefer to join remedial classes where as 11.1% of them like to participate in supplementary classes. It is possible to learn from these data that the students have the motivation to attend even remedial classes in addition to their regular ones.

On the average, a sizeable proportion of the students (69.4%) admit that they have the motivation to engage in the small-group verbal interactions. They further comment positively towards the discussions they carried out in class, their interest to involve in group discussions to improve their English so that they can use it for various purposes, and towards the idea of arranging additional discussion sessions. However, 22.2% of them do not have a favourable response to these indicators of motivational orientations. Due to having low level of motivation, they are reluctant to participate in small-group oral interactions. Therefore, these data presented show that students' level of motivation towards involving into small-group discussions to foster their oral skills was not found to be an impediment. There was also a reasonable concordance among the data gathered through the interview held with the students and the students' questionnaire. As Gardner and Lambert (1972) state, motivation plays a key role in the success of foreign language learning. Having motivation to learn a language by itself, however, cannot be a panacea for carrying out a fruitful small-group discussion. If gaps are observed between the students' motivational orientation and their real performance, it means that there are some other factors that attribute to such a situation. Their inhibited behaviour and introvert personality, for instance, may prevent them from genuinely taking part in the discussion groups.

4.1.7 Communication Strategy

Item 1-6 are designed to assess the effect of communication strategies on students oral interaction in small groups. Table 4.7 presents the students' reports.

Table 4.7: Students' Strategy Use (SU)

Items	Respondents Having										Descriptive Statistics	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
SU1	2	19	21	29.2	7	9.7	29	15	44	61.1	3.500	1.174
SU2	14	31	45	62.5	5	6.9	13	9	21	29.2	2.611	1.327
SU3	4	13	17	23.6	9	12.5	38	8	46	63.9	3.458	1.086
SU4	2	7	9	12.5	7	9.7	35	21	56	77.8	3.916	1.017
SU5	6	9	15	20.8	8	11.1	23	26	49	68.1	3.750	1.297
SU6	5	11	16	22.2	10	13.9	32	14	46	63.9	3.541	1.174
RA	5.5	15	20.5	27.8	7.7	10.7	28.3	15.5	43.8	60.8	3.4626	1.1791

Item 1 was designed to assess students' knowledge of the communication strategies. Table 4.7 shows that 61% of the students say that they do not know fillers such as 'um', 'urh', well, 'you know', 'I see what you mean' etc to gain time when they need to think of what to say. Contrarily, 29.2% of the respondents admit that they do know them. It can be possible to observe that the students lack the knowledge of fillers that help them fill the gap created in their utterances due to shortage of words.

In item 2 students were asked whether they paused to let themselves have time to think and then continued the utterance from where they left off when they need to think of what to say. In this regard, 62.5% of them state that they do not pause in the middle of their utterances while 29.2% of them say they do. This shows that the students use mechanisms other than fillers to fill the gap created in their speech.

Item 3 was about asking for clarification when students did not understand others. Accordingly, 63.9% of the respondents report that they simply start expressing their thoughts without asking the speakers to make themselves clear. On the contrary, 23.6% of them ask for clarification. This

indicates that the students have lack of the language items that help them ask others to make their ideas clear.

The fourth item, item 4, dealt with the use of synonymous words whenever they did not remember the right words in their utterances. As depicted in the table above, 77.8% of the respondents admit that they do not use words with similar meaning to solve their language problems while 12.5% of them say they do. It can be learnt from these data that the students either have shortage of words that have similar meanings or the do not know if it is possible to use one word in place of another while having similar meaning.

In item 5 respondents were asked if they requested other speakers to confirm what they meant so as to help them clarify their meaning. In this regard, 68.1% of them point out that they have the difficulty to ask for clarification whereas 20.8% of them report that they first try to understand what others say. It is possible to say, therefore, that the students do not know that asking speakers to rephrase their ideas is one strategy to understand meanings of the utterances.

The sixth item was about the students' reaction whenever they fail to understand others in group discussions. According to the above table, 63.9% of them state that they listen quietly and hope that they can understand without having had to ask them to clarify themselves when they do not understand others. On the contrary, 22.2% of the respondents state that they do ask for clarification. This shows that the students lack the strategies that help them communicate well with speakers.

Generally, Table 4.7 deals with students' communication strategy use during small-group interaction. Accordingly, on the average, 60.8% of the respondents report that they are deficient of the communication strategies that could help them keep the smooth flow of their ideas. On the contrary, 27.8% of the students agree that they use different communication strategies fill their communication gaps. Therefore, as Brown (1994: 118) comments, lack of the knowledge of communication strategies, among other things, impairs students' interactional behaviours in small-groups. Consequently, students' inability to use these strategies casts a shadow over their smooth verbal language flow in small-groups.

4.1.8 Social Class

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to collect information on what students report about their social class. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.8: Students' Social Class (SC)

Items	Respondents Having										Descriptive Analysis	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
SC1	7	17	24	33.3	6	8.3	22	20	44	61.1	2.5694	1.3720
SC2	8	12	20	27.8	9	12.5	16	27	43	59.7	2.4167	1.4217
SC3	12	7	19	26.4	26	36.1	14	13	27	37.5	2.8750	1.2994
SC4	12	18	30	41.7	8	11.1	24	10	34	47.2	2.9722	1.3529
SC5	7	12	19	26.4	9	12.5	23	21	44	61.1	2.4583	1.3315
SC6	8	24	32	44.4	7	9.7	23	10	33	45.8	2.9583	1.2939
RA	9	15	24	33.3	10.8	15	20.3	16.8	37.1	51.5	2.7083	1.3452

Item 1 was developed to ask if students' involvement in group discussions was enhanced by their earlier exposure to the language through movies, magazines, papers etc. From the total population, 61.1% of them agree that they do not have access to these materials. On the other hand, 33.3% of the say that their access to the materials assists them to involve in group discussions. It can be said, therefore, that students who have a problem to access materials that assist their language development have limited exposure to language inputs.

Item 2 was about the students' parents' capability to provide them with the necessary materials that may help them improve their oral proficiency. Table 4.8 shows that 59.7% of the respondents report that their parents are incapable to provide them with the necessary materials while 27.8% of them reveal that their parents can supply their children with these facilities. This indicates that student's language input gets confined to the classroom lessons whenever they are from lower social class.

The third item dealt with whether the students actively involved in group oral activities in the way they watch people speaking in English on movies talk shows on different TV channels. In this regard, 37.5% of them point out that their involvement is not supported by movies, talk shows etc whereas 26.4% of the students assert that these facilities help them to involve actively in group discussions. It can be learnt, therefore, from these data that students cannot get other sources of language so that they can broaden their language repertoire which can be used during group discussions.

In item 4 students were asked if their background affected their ability to express themselves. As can be seen from the table above, 47.2% of the students state that they cannot talk about their thoughts due to poor English language background. On the other hand, 41.7% of them report that they can express themselves as a result of their good English language background. This shows that students face difficulty in expressing themselves as they have deficiency of language inputs.

Item 5 was designed to ask if students had language training opportunities that help them involve confidently in oral interactions in small groups. The larger proportions of the students (61.1%) say that they do not have access to language trainings opportunities that assists them to show active participation in oral discussions whereas 26.4% of them say that they show progress due to the trainings. Thus, it can be said that students do not get language training opportunities other than the classroom practice which limit the time they get for practicing the vocabulary items they know.

In item 6 students were asked if they could take part in group oral interactions as a result of being new to such situations. As shown in the above table, 45.8% of the students say that the group discussion is new experience for them while 44.4 admit that they involve in discussions as they used to practice in the earlier times. This indicates that students' earlier exposure to group oral interaction may have an impact on their current practice.

As can be seen from Table 4.8 above, students' social class becomes one of the variables that impeded their active group verbal participation in that it determined their access to various necessary language developing materials such as movies, magazines whose medium was English and different language training opportunities or the degree of exposure to good language learning

environments. On the average, out of the total percentage, 51% of the respondents report that their social class influence their involvement in small-group oral interactions. Contrarily, 33.3% of students agree that their social class enable them to fulfill the necessary conditions for fostering their oral skills and then they use the speaking opportunity in their small-groups. Therefore, from the data analysed above it can be concluded that the students' social class has been identified as a factor for their current passiveness in the amount of involvement in small-group discussions. The main reason for such inefficiency, as Ellis (1994) states, seems to be that the students cannot get the experience that open up the door of opportunity to the exposure of the English language speaking community and then learn the basic elements of the spoken language for their future use. Their language experience has been confined to the classroom lessons which are assumed to be inadequate to gain the necessary language inputs and sociolinguistic rules. Consequently, their attempt to display an active interactional involvement in small-groups gets hampered.

4.1.9 Social Distance

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to collect information on what students report about their social distance. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.9: Students' Social Distance (SD)

Items	Respondents having										Descriptive Analysis	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
SD1	17	23	40	55.6	12	16.7	12	8	20	27.8	3.4028	1.3179
SD2	2	8	10	13.9	8	11.1	25	29	54	75	3.9861	1.1069
SD3	11	19	30	41.7	28	38.9	11	3	14	19.4	3.3333	1.0481
SD4	11	52	63	87.5	4	5.6	3	2	5	6.9	4.4861	1.0208
SD5	22	23	45	62.5	14	19.4	10	3	13	18.1	3.7083	1.1681
SD6	54	12	66	91.7	3	4.2	2	1	3	4.2	4.6111	.8146
RA	18.2	14.5	32.7	45.4	11.5	16	11.8	16.2	28	38.9	3.9212	1.0794

In the first item, students were asked if the cultural difference between theirs and the English speaking people affected their involvement in small groups. From the total respondents, 55.6% of them say that this is not a challenge for them while 27.8% of the students hold that the cultural differences affect their group participation behaviour. This indicates that the cultural differences between theirs and the English speaking people do not affect their language learning.

Item 2 was about the effect of students' attitude towards the English speaking people upon their interest to use the language. Majority of the respondents (75%) report that their attitude towards the English speaking people has an effect upon their interest. Contrarily, 13.9% of them reveal that the picture they have about the English speaking people has no relation with their interest towards the language. This shows that the attitude students have about the English speaking people affects their interest.

Item 3 was about the effect of having positive attitude towards the English speaking people upon their oral involvement. As Table 4.9 depicts, 41.7% of them point out that they involve in group discussions since they have positive attitude towards the people while 19.4% of the students maintain their participation was not because of their attitude towards the people. It can be learnt from these data that the students have positive attitude towards the English speaking people so the situation increases their interest to learn their language.

The fourth item dealt with the students' interest to speak the way Americans and Britishers speak. The sizeable proportions of the students (87.5%) say that they are interested in speaking as Americans and Britishers do while 6.9% of them admit that they are not. This shows that the students' attitude towards the English speaking people is positive which in turn motivates them to learn the English language interestingly.

In item 5 students were asked whether the political picture of the United States and Britain affects their interest to learn English. As shown in Table 4.9, 62.5% of them report that it does not affect while 18.1% of them state that it really does. This indicates the students' interest to learn the English language is not affected by countries' political activities.

Item 6 asked students if they would like to improve their oral skills to closely work with foreigners. Most of the students (91.7%) assert that they have the interest to work closely with

foreigners whereas 4.2% of them admit that they are not interested in such relations. Thus, it can be said that the students' have a positive attitude towards the English speaking people so they like to learn and use their language.

Table 4.9 shows the effect of social distance upon students' behaviour of oral interaction. The degree of influence of the cultural differences observed between the students' and the English speaking people, their attitude towards the people and, their interest to work with the foreign language speaking people were part of the Social Distance Scale. In this regard, on the average, 45.4% of the respondents maintain that social distance can not be a variable that halt their small-group interactional endeavours. However, 38.9% of the respondents admit that the social distance affects their overall small-group oral performance.

Therefore, it is possible to generalize based on the above data that social distance has not been observed as a noticeable impingement upon the students' attempt to effective communication. This assertion appears to argue against Schumann's Acculturation Model (1976:135). The variables that attributes to the creation of social distance between two groups, according to this model, includes as discussed in the literature review (section 2.5.2.1.2), social dominance, cultural pattern, enclosure, cohesiveness, size, cultural similarity, attitude, and intended length of residence. Although these elements have the potential to either negatively or positively affect the degree of maximum attainment of a new language, the situations might not have a significant influence upon learning languages such as English as it currently becomes an international language or a lingua franca and a medium of instruction, in our case, whose advantages are well recognized by most if not all. So students' positive attitude and high level of motivation towards learning English may mitigate the effect of the other social distance variables though they still have their own impact. As a result, social distance may not dreadfully influence students' small-group verbal participation if other necessary conditions such as facilities and good language teachers in addition to students' positive attitude and desired level of motivation are well secured.

On the other hand, studies about the effect of gender on students' language performance are inconclusive: some argue that it negatively correlates to second/foreign language learning others refute such a stance.

4.1.10 Gender

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to collect information on what students report about their social distance. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.10 Students' Gender (G)

Items	Respondents having										Descriptive Statistics	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
G1	12	15	27	37.5	8	11.1	18	19	37	51.4	2.7639	1.4679
G2	27	23	50	69.4	8	11.1	10	4	14	19.4	3.8194	1.2371
G3	29	27	56	77.8	7	9.7	7	2	9	12.5	4.0278	1.0743
G4	21	25	46	63.9	10	13.9	11	5	16	22.2	3.6389	1.2482
G5	32	12	44	61.1	2	2.8	19	1	20	27.8	3.7639	1.3054
G6	2	15	17	23.6	17	23.6	20	18	38	52.8	3.5139	1.1627
RA	20.5	19.5	40	55.6	8.7	12.1	14.2	8.2	28.5	39.6	3.5879	1.2492

Item 1 was concerned with whether the students tended to speak more mixing with opposite sex than with same sex members. As Table 4.10 shows, 51% of the students say that they speak less whenever they are grouped with opposite sex members while 37.5% say that mixing with opposite sex members does not affect their speaking behaviour. This depicts that students' participation is affected whenever they are in mixed-sex groups.

The second item was about the effect of working with opposite sex members in small groups on the number of moves they may have. In this regard, 69.4% of the respondents agree that working in mixed-sex groups does not affect their degree of oral participation in the groups. On the other hand, 19.4% of them state that it has an impact upon the number of moves they have. This indicates that the students' oral involvement is not affected by being grouped with opposite sex members. This result, however, does not seem to agree with the one presented in Item 1 above.

In item 3 students were asked if they became shy when they grouped in mixed-sex groups. As indicated in the table above, 77.8% of the students say that working with opposite sex members does not make them to be shy while 12.5% of them report that they are affected by shyness when grouped with opposite sex members. This shows that mixed-sex groups do not have an influence on students' verbal participation.

Item 4 was about whether the students tended to be fearful when they were with the opposite sex members in their groups. According to Table 4.10, 63.9% of the respondents reveal that they are not afraid of working with students of the opposite sex while 22.2% of them state that they become anxious. It is possible to say based on the above data that students can work without fear in mixed-sex groups.

Item number 5 focused on the students' willingness to participate in groups containing both sexes. In this regard, 61.1% of the students state that they are interested to work in groups which contain both sexes. This indicates that students are interested in working with opposite sex group members.

In the last item, item 6, students were asked if they were courageous to interact orally with the opposite sex members of their group. As indicated in the table above, 52.8% of them report that they are courageous to participate in groups with opposite sex members whereas 23.6% of them say that they are not. This shows that students have the courage to work in groups where there are opposite sex members.

As can be seen from the above table, gender does not have an influence over the performance of the majority of the respondents. Accordingly, 55.6% of them agree that gender does not have a negative effect upon their oral participation in small-groups. Contrarily, 39.6% hold that gender can be regarded as one of the variables that weakens their verbal communication in small-groups. The result of the classroom observations and the student as well as instructors' interview, however, portrayed the other side of the situation. The presence of large number of male students in the class was observed to have its own influence upon the participation of female students in the groups. Many a time, male students appeared to take the greater amount of speaking opportunity in the discussion groups and the females were simply passive participants. In a similar vein, Birhanu, (2000: 55) maintains that males involve in expressing their opinion and feelings but females

involve in 'more passive socio-emotional behaviour' which include expressing agreement and being friendly. To improve the situation, instructors should closely monitor the groups containing female students and provide them with the necessary help - mainly encouragement and access to adequate speaking opportunity.

The other type of variable that is identified as an important determinant of the accomplishment of oral interaction in EFL classes is the size of the groups formed.

4.1.11 Group size

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to collect information on what students report about their social distance. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.11 Group Size (GS)

Items	Respondents having										Descriptive Analysis	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
GS1	8	14	22	30.6	4	5.6	31	15	46	63.9	3.4306	1.3197
GS2	5	11	16	22.2	6	8.3	33	17	50	69.4	3.6389	1.2022
GS3	4	9	13	18.1	9	12.5	32	18	50	69.4	3.7083	1.1437
GS4	12	34	46	63.9	11	15.3	12	3	15	20.8	3.5556	1.0863
GS5	8	27	35	48.6	9	12.5	24	4	28	38.9	3.1528	1.1708
GS6	1	10	11	15.3	9	12.5	29	23	52	72.2	3.8750	1.0607
RA	6.3	17.6	23.9	33.1	8	11.1	26.8	13.3	40.2	55.8	3.5602	1.1639

Item 1 was developed to assess students' preference to get into large groups to freely express their ideas. Majority of the students (69.4%) reports that large groups are not their favourite group size for oral interaction while 30.6% of them hold that in large groups they freely express their ideas. From these data it can be learned that students do not prefer large groups for conducting oral interaction.

The second item, item 2, was designed to assess students' courageousness to speak in groups with limited number of students. As the above table shows, 69.4% of the students admit that they still lack courage to speak in small groups. In the contrary, 22.2 of them state that they are courageous to speak in groups with few members. So it is possible to say that students lack courage to speak in small groups.

Item 3 was about students' cooperativeness in oral tasks in small groups. Accordingly, 69.4% of the students say that they are less cooperative in small group oral tasks while 18.1% of admit that they are helpful. This indicates that students are not ready to genuinely exchange ideas in the groups.

In item 4 students were asked if they got enough time to express their ideas in groups with few students. From the total number of students 63.9% of them hold that they get adequate time to say what they want in small groups. On the other hand, 20.8% of them state that they do not. The above data shows that students can get adequate time as a result of being grouped with less number of students.

It item 5, the students were asked weather they are affected by the size of the group in oral interactions. As indicated in Table 4.11, 48.6% of the respondents point out that group size does not affect their involvement whereas 38.9% of them assert that it has an effect upon their performance. This indicates that students' oral participation is not affected by the size of the group. This result, however, contradicts with the result found out through item 6 below and students' interview.

Item 6 was concerned with whether the students were freer to speak in small groups than in any other occasions. Larger percentage of the respondents (72.2%) reveal that they feel free to involve in small group discussions while 15.3% of then say their involvement is not affected by group size. These data show that small groups give relative freedom to students to express their ideas.

The effect of group size on students' oral involvement in group discussions was also assessed as shown in Table 4.11. The freedom to express their ideas, the degree of being courageous to speak, the degree of being cooperative and the adequacy of the amount of time they got for discussion

were raised to observe their effect in relation to the size of group in the Group Size-Output Scale. In this regard, 55.8% of the respondents admit that their group participation is affected by group size; 33.1% of them, however, agree that the size of the group does not change their effort in the group discussion. The data gathered through the other methods also support the above result. During the time of classroom observation it could be learnt that only some particular students in groups of six to eight students got the opportunity to speak and the others did not have the courage to suggest their own views. Although the size of the groups as compared to the total size of the class was small, and it improves students' level of anxiety, the total number of students in the groups was between six and eight which, on the contrary, lessens the amount of time each student may get to speak. Therefore, it is possible to conclude from the above data that the number of students within a group hinders the successful performance of individual members of that group and there would be a better degree of participation if the groups were between three and five.

As the other form of group variable, grouping pattern is also thought to be a factor for the students' negative or positive oral involvement in groups.

4.1.12 Group Pattern

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to collect data on what students report about their social distance. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.12: Group Pattern (GP)

Items	Respondents having										Descriptive statistics	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
GP1	5	1	6	8.3	2	2.8	34	30	64	88.9	4.2639	.9192
GP2	6	1	7	9.7	5	6.9	27	33	60	83.3	4.0972	.9518
GP3	3	4	7	9.7	9	12.5	22	34	56	77.8	3.9306	1.0525
GP4	17	12	29	29	8	11.1	9	26	35	48.6	3.0417	1.3368
GP5	5	3	8	40.3	10	13.9	17	37	57	79.2	3.8333	1.0070
GP6	14	9	23	31.9	10	13.9	14	25	39	54.2	3.2917	1.3262
RA	8.3	5	13.3	18.5	7.3	10.1	20.5	30.8	51.8	71.9	3.7430	1.0989

The first item was about students' interest to orally interact with their intimate friends (according to their interest). As shown in Table 4.12 above, 88.9% of them report that their interest declines if they are not grouped with persons they like while 8.3% of the students respond that does have change on their behaviour. This shows that grouping students based on their interest results in a change in their verbal behaviour.

In item 2 students were asked if getting grouped with active students in their class made them to speak well. Accordingly, 83.3% of the students say that when they are grouped with good speakers of English they also tend to interact better whereas 9.7% of them report that their performance is affected by the type of students in the group. This shows that students' participation is determined by the type of students they are grouped with.

Item 3 was developed to assess students' reaction when they get grouped with the opposite sex. 77.8% of the respondents say that grouping with opposite sex forces them to be silent while 9.7% of the reveal that they show no change in performance behaviour. It can be said based on the data presented here that getting grouped in mixed-sex group influences students' oral participation. The classroom observation also supports this claim.

Item 4 was designed to observe students' motivational behaviour to involve in discussion whenever they grouped with students with whom they have no intimacy. According to the above table, 77.8% of the students claim that they get demotivated to speak when they are not grouped with their intimate friends. On the other hand, 9.7% of them sate that their motivation remains the same. It is possible to say, therefore, that intimacy has its own impact on the students' group participation.

In item 5 students were asked if they were motivated to actively involve in the oral discussion when they got grouped with opposite sex. Accordingly, majority of the students (79.2) report that they do not become motivated while 40.3% of them admit that their participation still remains unchanged. It can be learned from these data that getting grouped in mixed-sex groups affects students' motivation to participate.

The last item, item number 6, asked students if the become less motivated to speak when they were grouped with passive speakers. Table 4.12 shows that 54.2% of the respondents state that their motivation becomes less when talking with passive students. In the contrary, 31.9% of the students say that their motivation is not affected by the type of students they are grouped with. This shows that students' interest to discuss is influenced by the type of students they are grouped with.

As shown in table 4.12, grouping pattern was reported to be a hindrance for the active participation of students in small-group oral interactions. On the average, 71.9% of the respondents reveal that getting grouped with their intimate or distant friends, active or passive students etc. has an impact upon their verbal performance. On the other hand, 18.5% of them agree that the grouping pattern make no difference on their group discussions. The data analysed above may lead us to the conclusion that being assigned randomly to form groups without considering grouping factors such as intimacy, classroom participation or behaviour etc results in a change in students' oral behaviour. Thus, Write (1987:12) comments that the students' prior level of intimacy with one another in the class should be considered when the instructor sets up small discussion-groups.

Furthermore, task-related variables have the potential to diminish the participation pattern of students in small-groups. Among which one is the level of difficulty of the task.

4.1.13 Task Difficulty

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to collect information on what students report about their social distance. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.13: Task Difficulty (TD)

Items	Respondents having										Descriptive Analysis	
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%	Mean	SD
TD1	11	38	49	68.1	10	13.9	10	1	11	15.3	3.6111	1.0421
TD2	13	20	33	45.8	21	29.2	14	4	18	25	3.3333	1.1506
TD3	15	36	51	70.8	10	13.9	11	0	11	15.3	3.7639	.9567
TD4	5	30	35	48.6	20	27.8	15	2	17	23.6	3.2917	.9705
TD5	9	36	45	62.5	16	22.2	10	0	10	13.9	3.8611	2.2285
TD6	6	40	46	63.9	12	16.7	13	0	13	23.6	3.5556	.8863
RA	9.8	33.3	43.2	60	14.8	20.6	12.2	1.3	13.3	18.5	3.5694	1.2057

Item 1 focused on the students' level of understanding of the tasks selected for discussion. As shown in Table 4.13, 68.1% of the students state that they are not in a difficult situation to understand what the tasks were require of them to do; 15.3% of them, however, respond that they are difficult for them to understand. This shows that the students do no have a problem to understand how the tasks should be done.

In item 2 students were asked if the oral tasks were developed considering their needs and interests. In this regard, 45.8% of them admit that their interests are taken into consideration when the tasks are developed while 25% of the responded negatively. This indicates that the tasks are designed according to the students' interest. However, this result seems to contradict with the data in the following section.

The third item, item 3, asked students if they found the oral tasks to be easy and motivating due to the contextual clues in them. Majority of the students (70.8%) reports that they find the tasks to be easy whereas 15.3% of them reveal that they were difficult. It can be said, therefore, that the students do not find the tasks to be difficult to manage.

Item 4 concerned with the students degree of participation due to their familiarity with the content of the tasks. As shown in Table 4.13, 48.6% of the students point out that the idea contained in the tasks is not new to them while 23.6% of them say that contents of the tasks hinder their participation. This shows that contents of the tasks are not the sources of students' problems in the group discussion.

In item 5 students were asked whether their motivation to speak was affected due to the difficult nature of the tasks. The larger percentage of the respondents (63.9) reveals that they do not have problem in the tasks difficulty. On the other hand, 23.6% of the students say that their motivation was affected because of the difficult nature of tasks. It is possible to say, therefore, that the current level of difficulty of the tasks does not demotivate students to speak.

The last item, item 6, dealt with whether the tasks were explicitly tell students how to involve in group oral interactions. As the above table depicts, 63.9% of the respondents state that the tasks are clearly worded while 23.6% of them admit that they lack clarity. This shows that the tasks are developed in a way that students can read and understand them.

Generally, majority of the respondents do not have a problem in relation to the level of difficulty of the tasks selected for small-group discussion. Accordingly, on the average, 60% of the respondents agree that they do not fail to communicate in their respective groups due to the difficult nature of the tasks; 18.5% of them, however, admit that their inactive participation is caused by the complexity of the task. Therefore, it can be concluded that even if the level of difficulty of the tasks can determine the behaviour of the group, it did not appear to be a source for student's silence in small-group oral interaction sessions in this particular case. Nunan (1989: 136) also advises that the tasks that are chosen by the classroom instructor should be at the acceptable level of complexity for the student so that they can produce the desired outcome.

4.1.14 Task Type

Items 1-6 (see Appendix A) were designed to collect information on what students report about their social distance. Table 4.1 below presents their reports.

Table 4.14: Type of Task (TT)

Items	Respondents having											
	Favourable Response				Neutral Response		Unfavourable Response					
	5	4	Σ	%	3	%	2	1	Σ	%		
TT1	1	9	10	13.9	18	25	27	17	44	61.1	3.6944	1.0159
TT2	0	10	10	13.9	16	22.2	28	18	46	63.9	3.7500	.9894
TT3	4	9	13	18.1	16	22.2	30	13	43	59.7	3.5417	1.0998
TT4	0	12	12	16.7	14	19.4	35	11	46	63.9	3.6250	.9410
TT5	1	14	15	20.8	15	20.8	24	18	42	58.3	3.6111	1.1077
TT6	4	14	18	25	14	19.4	32	8	40	55.6	3.3611	1.0917
RA	1.7	11.3	13	18.1	15.5	21.5	29.3	14.2	43.5	60.4	3.5972	1.0407

In item 1 students were asked whether the tasks they were provided for classroom discussion were more communicative and attractive. As shown in Table 4.14, 61.1% of the students report that they do not invite students to communicate and interact while 13.9% of them say that they do. It can be learnt from these data that the students are not attracted by the type of tasks chosen for the oral interaction session.

Item 2 was designed to see if the students were impressed by the variety of tasks selected for discussions. Majority of the students admits that they are not interested in the task types whereas 13.9% of them reveal that they like them. This shows that unattractiveness of the task types may be one cause for students less participation in small group discussions.

In item 3 students were asked if they became reluctant to speak due to the inauthentic and artificial nature of the tasks. From the total respondents, 59.7% of them point out that their participation in

the groups is affected since the tasks lack authenticity while 18.1% of them respond that the tasks do not affect their participation. This indicates that the students do not find the tasks to be the reflections of the real-life situation.

Item 4 was about the students' degree of participation due to the inspiring nature of the tasks. In this regard, 63.9% of the students say that the tasks do not inspire them to actively participate in the activities. On the other hand, 16.7% of the respondents report that the tasks make them to be interested to interact. This shows that the students' low participation can be attributed to the nature of the tasks.

Item 5 was concerned with whether the students generate ideas in the small group discussions due to the meaningfulness of the tasks. Accordingly, 58.3% of students say that they produce ideas not because of the tasks' inspiring nature. In the contrary, 20.8% of them agree that the tasks help them produce ideas in their groups. It is possible to say based on the data presented above that the tasks contribute less in helping students generate ideas in their respective groups.

In the last item, item 6, students were asked if the tasks were suitable for individual work than group work. Larger percentage of the students (55.6) says that the tasks are good enough for individual work than group work while 25% of the respondents say they are appropriate for group discussions. This indicates that the tasks lack suitability to small group discussion.

It is possible to observe from table 4.14 that the types of tasks chosen for oral interaction sessions have a determinant effect upon the students' verbal participation. The communicative and authentic nature of the tasks, the variety and meaningfulness of the tasks were the main issues raised under this Task-type Scale. In this regard, on the average, the sizeable proportions of the respondents (60.4%) admit that the types of tasks provided for the purpose of group discussion do not attract them. 18.1% of them, on the other hand, maintain that the types of tasks do not impede their verbal participation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the type of tasks that were selected for the group discussion might not consider students' interests and background. As a result, they could not allow them to stay in discussion and to effectively exchange ideas in English in their respective groups. According to the data gathered from the instructors' interview, the tasks that were employed in class were not well thought out; their potential to let students stay in

communication was not taken into account. However, as Ur, (1996) points out, the success of any small-group discussion largely relies upon the meaningfulness and stimulating nature of the tasks. As the tasks become more attractive and authentic, it is more likely that students get inspired to take part in the group discussions.

4.2 Data from the open-ended questions

In addition to the self-rating scale, the students were asked to provide answers to few open-ended questions. Each of the questions had a direct relation with the main objective of the study. If not all of the respondents, most of them (more than 50 %) gave appropriate responses to the questions they were asked. Accordingly, the first question required them to list, if any, five factors that impeded their small-group oral interaction in communicative English Skills classes. The most repeatedly identified variables by many of the respondents have been summarised in the following table:

Table 15: Factors affecting interaction

No	Variables	Specific Barriers
1	Personality Variables	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. shyness 2. lack of confidence 3. the feeling of making mistakes 4. fear of criticism 5. fear to speak 6. sense of inferiority 7. fear of the opposite sex
2	Teacher Variables	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. teachers' way of introducing the topic of discussion 9. less encouragement from the teacher 10. translating ideas to Amharic 11. teachers' arrogant behaviour
3	Background Variables	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. poor educational background of group members 13. lack of the English language (limited knowledge of vocabulary,

		grammar and communicative strategies to put across their thoughts) 14. varied levels proficiency among the group members 15. L1 interference
4	Task-related Variables	16. unattractiveness of the topic 17. unrelatedness of the time for discussion and the nature of the task
5	Social Variables	18. ethnicity 19. attitude towards the activity (considering oral interaction as a simple matter (i.e. negligence) and prioritizing listening to speaking)
6	Situational Variables	20. uncomfortable time of the day 21. group behaviour (lack of agreement among one another in the group or negative atmosphere within the group)

In addition, the respondents were asked to state the mechanisms they devised to free themselves from the hindering factors they encountered during small-group oral discussions at personal level and the things that should be done at an institution level. In this regard, at a personal level they commented the following: reading different materials, listening to different media, using the language out of class, and developing the feeling of courageousness and confidence. At an institution level adopting student centered system of teaching, arranging different practice session, providing necessary materials, creating a positive atmosphere within the classroom, arranging remedial classes and discussion sessions, establishing debate clubs, controlling the group discussions, assessing oral skills as one part of exam and employing efficient teachers, among other things, could be very essential measures for students betterment in their oral language use.

In sum, the respondents listed out the salient barriers that students experience during spoken production carried out at the time of small-group formation. In addition to those barriers confirmed through the use of close-ended questionnaire, there were also other communication-related barriers which were brought forth through the use of open-ended questionnaire.

4.3 Data from the Classroom Observation

Observation 1

Institution: Mekelle University
Department: English
Year: First
Section: One
Course title: Communicative English Skills II
Lesson topic: Expressing opinions
Date: March 5 2009
Time: 2:30 – 3:20

After the instructor greeted the students he invited us (the two observers) to enter into the class and then we sat at the two corners of the classroom. In the class there were 24 male and 12 female students and all appear to be of similar age (between 18 and 20). Then the instructor introduced the daily lesson which was about “Expressing Opinions” and ordered the students to form groups according to their sitting arrangement. For some time there was chaos in the class during the time of group formation and then the students got into groups of 6 to 8. In all of the 5 groups there were female students. Then the teacher wrote some statements on the board about the deadly disease HIV/AIDS and asked students to tell him about the disease. After selecting a secretary from each group, the teacher ordered the students to talk about the items written on the board.

It was observed that the students seemed to be reluctant to engage in the discussion. The secretary introduced the items which were designed for the discussion to their group members and then he invited them to suggest their views. The students did not have problems to understand how the tasks should be done. In their utterances the students were observed to pause many times due to lack of appropriate vocabulary items. They were also observed to rephrase their sentences stopping in the middle of their talk.

In addition, the students were observed to use their mother tongue. Whenever they could not produce the word they wanted they borrowed words and expressions from Amharic. The situation seems to lower the level of anxiety observed on the students.

In the discussion male students were observed to dominate in each of the groups. As a result, it was difficult to say that all members of the small groups equally participated in the oral interaction. Although there were some female students who had participation in the discussion, they did not involve as they should.

The instructor was observed to walk around the class and give the necessary assistance by interacting with some members of the groups. Some students were observed to ask him some questions softly which were not audible to the observers.

Observation 2

Institution: Mekelle University
Department: English
Year: First
Section: One
Course title: Communicative English Skills II
Lesson topic: Relative Clauses
Date: March 9 2009
Time 11: 30 – 12: 20

The observers took their seats after entering the class together with the students. The class was a bit hot. There were 37 students in the class: 23 males and 14 females. The instructor arrived and got into the class after 5 minutes. After greetings, he started to construct sentences containing relative clauses. Then he ordered the students to form small groups and discuss the questions about the relative clause. The small-groups were made on random basis. Those who were sitting around the same area were ordered to be together regardless of their sex, degree of participation, ethnicity etc. It was observed that the students were not ordered to sit with those students with whom they had intimate relationship.

The students were not interested in the topics they were provided. They were not observed to be reluctant to participate in a similar fashion in the grammar-focused discussion sessions as they did in the opinion gap activities. Their oral involvement seemed to be bound by the kind of task they were provided. They were observed to keep silent after sounding off few words about the issue under discussion.

As regards the level of difficulty of the tasks selected for discussion, it was learned that the students had no serious problem in understanding the ways the tasks should be done. In one occasion, however, the students sought clarification about how the task could be done from the instructor.

In relation to the teachers' assistance while the oral interaction was underway, the teacher went around the class but with no genuine sense of help. Due to this reason, some of the group members were observed to perform their own activities rather than engaging in the given task.

Only some members of the group were observed to dominantly take the speaking opportunity to the extent that the group discussion changed into a dialogue between two of the group members. Some students were seen to be silent during the entire time of discussion. Therefore, there was no equal degree of participation in the oral interactions in the groups.

From the observation it was learnt that the students switched their language use into their mother tongue to give their thoughts complete meaning. The main reason for such act of code switching may be attributed to deficiency of knowledge of vocabulary items and necessary expressions to get across their ideas could be the major one.

Observation 3

Institution: Mekelle University
Department: English
Year: First
Section: One
Course title: Communicative English Skills II
Lesson topic: Expressing Happiness
Date: March 17 2009
Time: 2:30 – 3:20

After entering the class we sat on both sides of the classroom. The classroom was hot since the period was during the afternoon session. Many students came to the class even after the instructor started teaching. In the class there were 35 students: 22 males and 13 females. Most of the girls sat around the middle and back side of the classroom. The instructor first greeted the class and then he wrote the topic of the daily lesson, "Expressing Happiness". The teacher first asked the

students if they had ever been happy. Some students raised their hands and told the class their experiences. He then ordered the students to form groups of four but the students formed groups containing 5-7 students in a group. The groups were formed randomly, according to their sitting arrangement and in each group there were both male and female students.

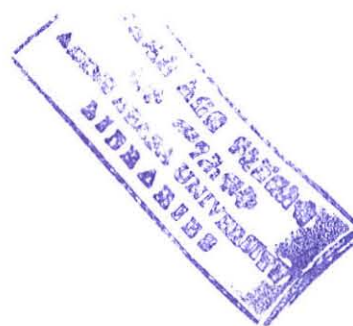
The students seemed to be bored. They did not form the groups fast and a lot of time was spent forming the groups. In the group discussion, it was only some of the group members who took the speaking opportunity and others were observed to do their own businesses. In addition, within a group different sub-groups were formed.

The students were not observed to use their mother tongue throughout the discussion period. On the average, three students in each group were taking part in the discussion groups. It seemed that they had better speaking skills. Therefore, it was difficult to say that every member of the group spoke turn by turn and all members of the group equally participated in the oral interactions.

During this classroom observation also the teacher was observed to walk around the class and join some group members to listen to what they said. He was not, however, observed speaking with the students in the groups and he did not seem to notice the number of students in each group.

Observation 4

Institution: Mekelle University
Department: English
Year: First
Section: Four
Course title: Communicative English Skills II
Lesson topic: Problem Solving
Date: April 7 2009
Time 2:30 – 3:20



After waiting the instructor for some time outside, we entered to the class together with him when he arrived. The topic of discussion was about a kind of problem solving activity. The instructor decided to carry out the activity by forming groups so that the observers can achieve their purposes. A group comprised 6-8 students.

The number of male students in the class was larger than females (with the approximate ratio of 26:10 in a class) and females were observed to be dominated by their male counter parts. Admittedly, most of the group discussions were led by male group members. Females usually observed to simply listen to what their male said. Their involvement in the discussions appeared to be determined by the goodwill of the male students in the groups.

Regarding the students skill of strategy use at the time of communication break-down, it was observed that they seriously lacked the strategies that could help them fill the gap in their speech. The students' speech was affected by lack of the use of appropriate vocabulary items and expressions to express specific ideas. As a result, they were observed to be confused and to interrupt their speech in the middle.

The students were seen to approach the group discussion with a sense of freedom. They were observed smiling while speaking and using Amharic when they came to a shortage of words and interrupting to ask while the other students in the group were speaking (and still there were shy and silent students). Unfriendly atmosphere was not observed in the discussion groups in most of the cases and the situation seemed to contribute to the observed kind of group behaviour.

The topic appeared to be new for the students because they were observed to talk each other about how it could be done.

Observation 5

Institution: Mekelle University
Department: English
Year: First
Section: One
Course title: Communicative English Skills II
Lesson topic: Case Analysis
Date: April 9 2009
Time 2:30 – 3:20

After greeting the students the instructors remind the student of the lesson they learnt in the previous period. In the class, there were 34 students: 23 males and 11 females. Since the lesson was prepared to develop students' oral skills, the teacher brought a case to the class for a discussion purpose which was done in groups of 5. The case was that somebody committed a crime and the court passed verdict after studying the case. The students were required to observe the case and pass their own verdict in their respective groups.

One student from each group was chosen to report the results of the discussion. The secretaries from each group read the case to their group members. Around the beginning of the discussion there was silence. The situation seemed to attract their interest because many of the group members were observed trying to get the chance to suggest their own views.

In this observation also males' students' dominancy was observed. Their number of male students in each of the groups was larger than females. Except in one group, males were chosen to be secretaries in 7 of the groups. Although students in the groups tried to speak turn by turn the time each student got was not proportional. Even some students were observed to keep quite for the rest of the time after speaking out a sentence.

During the discussion period some students were observed laughing while others were speaking. The students' language was observed to be obstructed by lack of vocabulary items and grammar knowledge. There were students who stopped their ideas whenever they fail to use appropriate language. There were also students who resumed their talk regardless of the shortage of language faced. Here, the teacher simply walked around the class but he was not observed assisting those who needed help.

In summary, after observing 5 lessons, the effect of some specific observable variables was determined with the help of the classroom observation checklist. Thus, the nature of the tasks, students' lack of communicative strategies and language input, grouping pattern, teachers' behaviour and group size were identified as affecting variables.

4.4 Data from the Interview

4.4.1 Students' Responses

4.4.1.1. Students' interest to oral interaction

- 1. Do you form small-groups and orally interact in your Communicative English Classes? If yes, how often?*
- 2. Are you interested to get into groups and orally interact with your group members? Why, or why not?*
- 3. Is the classroom setting motivating to accomplish the oral tasks?*

The first and the second questions of the interview were about whether the students formed small groups and they orally interacted and if they were interested in the discussions. In their response the interviewees said that they formed small-groups in majority of the oral tasks in communicative English classes and majority of them admitted that they were interested to take part in such oral activities as they were ways for developing their communicative ability and for being competent applicants in the market world after graduation. As the regards the classroom setting they commented they liked it.

4.4.1.2 Factors hindering oral interaction in small groups

- 4. Are there factors that hinder you during your small-group interaction? If yes, what are they?*

Majority of the students agreed that they did not have the confidence about their own English language proficiency. The negative self-image formed within the students' themselves about their own communicative ability and their tendency to view the other group members as fluent communicators, therefore, acted as drawbacks to their interactivenss in small-groups. In addition they said that they were shy to speak in front of their peers and they felt that their group members would laugh at them if they spoke in English. They further pointed out that they lacked the English vocabulary items to express what they knew about the topic of discussion. All of the respondents agreed that the students' socio-cultural background had an impact upon their involvement in the

group discussion. They further say that gender, task type and grouping pattern affect their participation.

4.4.1.3 Mechanisms devised by the students

5. Are there any mechanisms you have devised to free yourselves from these barriers? If yes, what are they?

The students were also asked to state the mechanisms they worked out for themselves in order to develop their English. They commented that they have to read different materials whose medium was English. Moreover, they said that they have to listen in to different media and learn language inputs and make themselves acquainted with English speaking people's pronunciation, using the language out of class, and developing the feeling of courageousness and confidence.

4.4. 1.4 Teacher's role

6. What is the role of the teacher during your small-group oral interaction?

7. In what ways does he/she assist you during the oral discussion session?

The students were also asked about the roles their instructors played during the discussion sessions. The interviewees reported that their teachers provided them with the necessary assistance during the small-group and they showed them the direction how to do the tasks; they controlled the groups' activity; they provided them with the necessary input and they encouraged to participate and created speaking opportunity. Although these activities were also manifested during the time of observation, they lacked genuineness and consistency.

4.4.1.5 Students' performance

8. How do you evaluate your participation and oral proficiency in comparison to your classmates? Do you think that there are differences in performance? If yes, what do you think are the causes for the differences?

The students also admitted that the degree of students' performance in a group was different as there were students with different behaviours in their respective groups: dominators, leaders, silent listeners, saboteurs, doers etc. They also admitted that there was no equal degree participation during the group discussions.

4.4.1.6 Student's opinion

9. In your opinion, what should be done to make students benefit out of the small-group oral interaction sessions?

The students suggested that teachers should make every effort to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom. Their assistance should be genuine and it should be aimed at improving the students' language proficiency.

4.4.2 Instructors' response

4.4.2.1 Students interest to oral interaction

1. Do you let your students form small groups and orally interact in your Communicative English Classes? If yes, how often?

2. Are the students interested to get into groups and orally interact with your group members? Why, or why not?

3. Is the classroom setting motivating to accomplish the oral tasks?

Regarding the formation of small groups and conducting oral interactions in Communicative English classes all of the instructors responded positively that they formed groups and encouraged their students to exchange ideas in English. They further said that there were students who had the motivation to actively take part while there were also other students who did not have the motivation in such practices mainly due to the language problem to communicate with their group members. They further commented that those students who participated in the group discussions had the interest to develop their speaking proficiency so they try to use the opportunity. The instructors also said they do not found the classroom to be demotivating.

4.4.2.2 Factors hindering oral interaction in small groups

4. Are there factors that impede students' oral interaction in small groups? If yes, what are they?

As regards the factors hindering oral interactions in small groups, majority of the instructors said that the students did not want to be exposed to criticism and unfavourable judgment about their oral skills. Similarly, since the students' involvement was affected by the feeling of inhibition, they did not dare to take risks when using the language in case of making mistakes. In this regard, most of the interviewees admitted that the students were not risk takers so they preferred to limit their degree of involvement in the discussions to the extent of being hushed. In addition, the instructors also reported that did not seem to influence their verbal participation. The main reason for the decline in the level students' anxiety may be attributed to the presence of small number of students in the groups. The limitedness of the number of group members, among other things, is thought to reduce the degree of worry and classroom anxiety. Most of the interviewees further admitted that the students seemed to fail to communicate effectively as a result of the lack of communication strategies. The situation was also observed through the classroom observation. It seemed that the students heard nothing about what communication strategies to use and how to use them efficiently in their speech devoid of facing interruption in the flow of their ideas.

4.4.2.3 Mechanisms devised by the teachers and students

5. Are there any mechanisms you have devised to free your students from these hindering factors? If yes, what are they?

Asked weather they devised mechanisms to assist their students in breaking them away from the hindering factors, instructors pointed out that providing language input (vocabulary and grammar) through remedial classes and positive reinforcement, creating a climate of trust among group members, preparing standardized teaching material, motivating students to express their ideas freely, boosting students confidence, and encouraging students to use the language out-side the class were thought to have an encouraging effect on the students' oral performance.

4.4.2.3 Teacher's role

6. What is your role during the small-group oral interaction?

7. In what ways do you assist your students during the oral discussion session?

In connection with their roles the instructors reported that they gave the necessary assistance to the students during the small-group discussion; they showed students the direction how to do the tasks; they controlled the groups' activity; they provided students with the necessary input and they encouraged to participate and created speaking opportunity. Although these activities were also manifested during the time of observation, they lacked genuineness and consistency.

4.4.2.4 Students' performance

8. How do you evaluate your students' participation and oral proficiency?

The interviewees also admitted that the degree of students' performance in a group was different as there were students with different behaviours: dominators, leaders, silent listeners, saboteurs, doers etc.

4.4.2.5 Instructor's opinion

9. In your opinion, what should be done to make your students benefit out of the small-group oral interaction sessions?

The instructors commented that to make the small-group oral interaction better there should be small number of students in one class so that the teacher can handle each of the tasks of the group activity, and material was an essential role to play. Besides, there should a teaching material the was prepared in a way that it attracted the students' interest and it contained the necessary language inputs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The practice of oral interaction within the classroom setting plays a significant role in developing student's oral fluency. As suggested by many scholars in the field of language teaching, arranging discussion sessions through the formation of small-groups is a better strategy for the occurrence of effective classroom interaction. Students' communication endeavours, however, get hampered as a result of different factors. In this study, therefore, the factors that hinder first year students' oral interaction in the Department of English at Mekelle University has been assessed through the use of three main data gathering tools: questionnaire, interview and observation. According to the result of study, there are different hindering factors that impeded students' effective small-group oral interaction in Communicative English Skills classes. The summary of the overall study has been dealt underneath.

5.2 General Summary

The aim of this research was to find out the factors hindering oral interaction in small-groups in EFL classes with a special reference to Mekelle University. The subjects of the study were both students and instructors. Through the use of questionnaire, interview and classroom observation it was attempted to attain the objectives of the study. According to the result of the study, the hindering factors can be grouped into two major categories: internal learner variables and external learner variables and it was found out that there were 14 major variables (which contained different sub-variables) that caused communication breakdown at the time of small-group oral interaction. The internal learner variables included self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, introversion and communication strategies and the external variables included social class, gender, group size, group pattern, task-related variables, background variables, social variables and situational variables. The study was carried out adopting the research procedure discussed below.

5.2.1 Procedure of the Study

The participants of the study were 72 students in the first year and 5 instructors who were selected randomly by drawing lots. The three data collection instruments employed in this study were questionnaire (containing close-ended and open-ended questions), interview and classroom observation. The close-ended questionnaire was developed in the form of self-rating scale (Five-Point Likert Scale with options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) and was administered after making the necessary improvements based on the pilot study. With the aim of avoiding single-item measurement error a multi-item measure was used in the study. Each of the items under each variable in the scale was analysed and interpreted and the average response was taken to determine the effect of each variable. The open-ended questions, on the other hand, were used mainly to gather data which were inaccessible through the close-ended ones. A semi-structured interview was also used to collect data from both 10 students and 5 instructors. The data were transcribed so as to give them meaning. In addition, classroom observations on 5 lessons were carried out making use of an observation checklist and each of the results of the observations were discussed separately. Generally, the main purpose of employing these three data gathering tools was to triangulate the reliability and validity of the data. The major findings of the study are presented in the next section.

5.2.2 Major Findings of the Study

According to the result of the study, students' oral interactions in small-groups in EFL classes were negatively influenced by different factors. These impingements emanate from within the students (internal learner variables) and the external environment (external learner variables). Following are the major findings of the study.

I. Internal learner variables

1. Lack of self-esteem (lack of confidence, sense of inferiority)
2. High level of inhibition (shyness, the feeling of making mistakes, fear of criticism)
3. Absence of risk-taking behaviour (lack of courage to use language as soon as they come to one's mind, fear of criticism)
4. Having an introversive behaviour (becoming silent, focusing on individual work)

II. External learner variables

5. Being from lower social class (lack of exposure to English language speaking community i.e. through movies, cinemas, talk shows etc, lack of necessary language materials and prior language training opportunities)
6. Gender (being shy in mixed-sex groups, males' dominant behaviour)
7. Group-size (having more than six students in a group)
8. Group pattern (forming groups without considering students' interest, intimation, etc)
9. Task-related variables (unattractiveness of the topic, unrelatedness of the time for discussion and the nature of the task)
10. Teacher variables (teachers' way of introducing the topic of discussion, less encouragement from the teacher, translating ideas to Amharic, teachers' arrogant behaviour)
11. Background variables (poor educational background of group members, lack of the English language or limited knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and communicative strategies to put across their thoughts), varied levels proficiency among the group members, L1 interference
12. Social variables (ethnicity, attitude towards the activity - considering oral interaction as a simple matter (i.e. negligence) and prioritizing listening to speaking)
13. Situational variables (uncomfortable time of the day, group behaviour or lack of agreement among one another in the group or negative atmosphere within the group)

Therefore, once the factors have already been identified, the next step should be about the concern of making a big professional as well as ethical commitment on the side of all stakeholders (instructors, parents, policy makers etc.) for the creation of conducive and motivating learning environment. It is assumed that a close examination into each of these affecting variables can lead one to come up with a number of possible remedies which could result in an encouraging outcome on the side of the learners. Next, the conclusion of the study has been presented.

5.3 Conclusions

The data gathered through the three research tools (questionnaire, interview as well as observation) show that there were varied factors that negatively affected students' effective small-group oral

interaction in Communicative English Skills classes. Based on the data presented, analysed and interpreted, conclusions have been drawn.

To start with, students were affected by the level of self-esteem they have towards their own language proficiency. They felt that they were not capable of using the language well to exchange ideas with their classmates effectively. Instead they believed that others had better language command than them. Due to this reason, they preferred to reduce their degree of involvement in small-groups.

In addition to having low self-esteem, inhibition was found to be the other impeding variable that hindered students' communicative behaviour. In their attempt to speak, they immediately thought about the mistakes they might make in their speech so they preferred to keep quite for the rest of the time. It may be because of being inhibited that majority of the students were not found to be risk-takers. They were not daring to use ideas as they immediately came to their mind and they worried about making mistakes. They also tended to rehearse what they would say to lessen the degree of errors they might commit.

In relation to anxiety and level of motivation, they were not found to be obstacles in the students' attempt to take part in small discussions. Anxiety was observed to have less effect upon students' degree of oral interaction. Many scholars, however, suggest that students with low self-esteem and inhibition are less likely to take risks and they tend to develop an anxious behaviour during group interaction. The effect of these variables, however, appeared to be minimized due to the presence of less number of students in the groups who have the potential to criticize the speakers in the groups which may in turn damage their feelings. Thus, being grouped with less number of students was observed to reduce the level of anxiety the students might experience. Besides, they had an acceptable motivational orientation towards small-group oral interaction. Since it is a way for succeeding in their academic career, they were interested to engage in meaningful oral interaction so they had the motivation to practice the language through group formation though their actual involvement was observed to be hampered due to some other factors such as language problem and task type, among others things.

On the other hand, students' communication strategy use, their social class and gender differences were found to be barriers to their oral performance in small-groups. Firstly, they appeared to be

poor in their use of communication strategies which help them sustain the course of a particular topic of discussion. Secondly, their social class affected their oral interaction in small groups. The kind of assistance they got from their parents or care takers was not directly related to developing their communication skills. Access to supporting materials that could contribute to the students' oral skills was bounded. However, social distance was not found to be a barrier to their oral interaction in small-groups. Thirdly, gender had an effect upon the fruitful accomplishments of verbal interactions. It was learnt that females were dominated by males and the degree of involvement of these two groups in the discussions exhibited differences.

Moreover, group size, grouping pattern and task type were also the variables whose influence were observed upon students oral performance in small-groups. As the size of the groups got larger the students' interest as well as opportunity to speak ebbed. Similarly, grouping pattern was also identified as a variable with debilitating effect upon students' oral performance. Whenever they are not grouped with students of their type, they became less active and interested to interact. The task types also significantly altered their interactional behaviour though their level of difficulty did not hamper their interactional effort.

In addition to the ones mentioned above, the factors hindering interaction in small groups include the following:

1. Background variables. These included poor educational background of group members, shortage of the English language or limited knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and communicative strategies to put across their thoughts, varied levels proficiency among the group members, L1 interference)
2. Teacher variables. These refer to teachers' way of introducing the topic of discussion, less encouragement from the teacher, translating ideas to Amharic and teachers' arrogant behaviour.
3. Situational variables. These subsume uncomfortable time of the day and unsympathetic group behaviour - lack of agreement among one another in the group or negative atmosphere within the group.

In addition, the mechanisms devised by the students to free themselves from the communication-related barriers included: reading different materials, listening to different media, using the

language out of class, and developing the feeling of courageousness and confidence. Besides, the instructors worked out the following measures to break their students away from their communicative deficiency: participating in intensive remedial teaching, supplying students with necessary language inputs (vocabulary and grammar), providing positive reinforcement, creating a climate of trust among group members, preparing standardized teaching material, motivating students to express their feelings freely, increasing students confidence, and encouraging students to use the language out-side the class.

In general, it is pedagogically important to form small-groups in EFL classes especially when the focus is on developing students' oral skills. The effectiveness of the small-group oral interaction however, depends to a large extent upon the multifacetedness of the communication-related barriers students may encounter. Through the concerted and unreserved efforts of all stockholders in the task of circumventing these obstructions and working in line with the recommendations listed below, it is possible to attain the desired goals.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions made above, the following recommendations have been forwarded.

1. Since low self-esteem in connection with English language use originates from the student's past experiences and their surroundings and it can be re-adjusted by the people near the students and their instructors should play a significant role in this regard. Teachers' continuous encouragement and unreserved assistance to their students seem to contribute, more than any other thing, to the formation of a positive self-image about themselves. Once each students' picture about themselves are positively shaped, the effects of inhibition and anxiety - the two enfeebling variables - can of course be trimmed down to a desirable level. This is because students who have "weaker self-esteem maintains walls of inhibition to protect what is self-perceived to be a weak fragile ego or lack of self-confidence in a situation or task" (Brown, 1994: 138).
2. In order to make students risk-takers, instructors should not focus on the errors committed by their students while speaking. Instead, any error that has been identified as an error should be recorded temporarily and be discussed at the end of the session. Hence, as risk-taking and oral

performance have a positive correlation, students should be encouraged to take-risks during the time of oral practice.

3. Although the small-groups can open up a way for greater opportunity to oral practice, the number of students within a classroom especially at higher institutions should be to a manageable size. Instructors should get adequate time to walk around the class and give necessary help to members of the groups. In classes where there is large number of students, it is so challenging for the teachers to be in a position to closely monitor the activities of the students in each of the small-groups.
4. Instead of ordering them to select just one captain who can jot down and report the salient points of the discussion to the rest of the class among them, all members of a group should be given responsibility to carry out while the discussion is underway. This may reduce the degree of reluctance students exhibit to commit themselves to genuine verbal participation.
5. Simply arranging small-groups and facilitating suitable ground for oral interactions cannot be an adequate precondition for developing students' oral fluency. Based on the result of this study, it is possible to say that students were found to be input-deficient; they extremely required vocabulary and grammar items apart from those they got from their peers during the discussion periods. Thus, they should be provided with the necessary language inputs that can help them express themselves in discussion groups and in real-life situations to fulfill their needs.
6. As an essential element of language learning, students should be supplied with the commonly used types of communication strategies so that they can strengthen their communication efficiency and possess a better language command.
7. The type of tasks that are chosen for the group interaction play a decisive role in the successful accomplishments of the small-group oral activity. Thus, there should be a standardized material that incorporates various meaningful tasks that are organized in an increasing order of difficulty.

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APPENDIX A

Addis Ababa University
Institute of Language Studies
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
Graduate Studies Programme

A questionnaire to be filled in by students

Dear students,

I first would like to thank you for your willingness to fill in this questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to gather information about the factors that hinder your small-group oral interaction in EFL classes. Any response in the questionnaire is used merely for the purpose mentioned. The pieces of information contained in the questionnaire remain confidential. Thus, the researcher kindly requests you to give an honest and a precise response.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Part I - General information

Circle your choice from the table or fill in the table.

Sex		Department	Year of enrolment	Year (currently) (I year, II year etc)			Section			
Male	Female		200__ / 200__ E.C./	I	II	III	1	2	3	4

Part II – The questionnaire

Instructions: This instrument is composed of different items which all are related to the main aim of the study. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neutral, (4) Disagree, or (5) Strongly Disagree with each statement by putting a tick () mark. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly; just record your first impression.

Key: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree N = Neutral DA = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree
(N.B. a minus sign indicates an item which is negative on the scale)

No	Characteristic Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
	<i>A) Self-esteem/self-image Scale (adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale – FLCAS)</i>					
1.	(-) I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak in English in small group discussions.					
2.	(-) I keep thinking that the other students are better at oral skill than I am.					
3.	(-) I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of my group members.					
4.	(+) I feel that I am better than other members of my group in spoken English.					
5.	(+) I feel that I am capable of expressing my ideas confidently in small-group discussions.					
6.	(+) I feel that I am one of the good users of the English language in my group.					
	<i>B) Inhibition Scale (developed based on the discussion in the Literature Review section)</i>					
1.	(-) I tend to be silent for fear of making embarrassing mistakes.					
2.	(-) I take maximum care not to make mistakes when interacting orally in small-groups.					
3.	(+) I do not worry about involving in oral interactions in groups.					
4.	(+) Making mistakes does not make me to be silent in small-group discussions.					
5.	(-) I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak in English language.					
6.	(-) I prefer to be less active in speaking sessions to avoid criticism from my group members about my English.					
	<i>C) Risk-taking Scale (adapted from Ely's, 1986a, Risk-Taking Scale)</i>					

1.	(-) At this point, I don't like trying to express complicated ideas in English in small-group discussions.					
2.	(+) I express my views as soon as they come to my mind.					
3.	(-) I don't like trying out a difficult sentence in my group.					
4.	(-) I like to wait until I know exactly how to use an English word before using it.					
5.	(+) I prefer to say what I want in English without worrying about the small details of grammar.					
6.	(-) In small-group, I prefer to say a sentence to myself before I speak it.					
<i>D) Anxiety Scale (adapted from MacIntyre's and Gardner's (1994) Output Anxiety Scale and McCroskey's (1978) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension - PRCA)</i>						
1	(-)While participating in small-group oral interaction with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.					
2.	(-) I may know the proper English expression but when I am nervous it just won't come out.					
3.	(+) I feel confident that I can easily use the English vocabulary that I know in small-group oral interaction.					
4.	(+) I have no fear about expressing myself in small-group.					
5.	(-) I get upset when I know how to communicate something in English but I just cannot verbalize it.					
6.	(+) I never feel tense when I have to speak in English in small-groups.					
<i>E) Extroversion-introversion Scale (adapted from Style Analysis Survey Scale)</i>						
1.	(+) I prefer speaking to listening to others in small-group interactions.					

2.	(-) I am so shy that I don't prefer oral interactions in small-groups					
3.	(+) I prefer to stay long in the small-group interaction.					
4.	(-) I like to work individually than to involve in oral group interactions.					
5.	(-) Although I know about the topic of discussion, I do not have the courage to speak it out.					
6.	(+) I am happy to get into groups and involve in oral interactions					
<i>F. Motivation-Output Scale (adapted from Strength of Motivation Scale, Ely, 1986a)</i>						
1.	(-) Outside of class, I almost never think about what I am doing orally in small-groups.					
2.	(-) Speaking realistically, I would say that I don't try very hard to improve my English through oral interactions in groups.					
3.	(+) I want to be able to use English in a wide variety of situations.					
4.	(-) Oral interaction in English in small-groups is not really a high priority for me at this point.					
5.	(-) I don't really feel that involving in small-group interaction in English is valuable to me.					
6.	(+) If possible, I would like to attend additional classes arranged for the purpose of small-group interactions in English.					
<i>G) Strategy-Output Scale (adapted from Lam's Strategy Questionnaire)</i>						
1.	(+) I use fillers such as 'um', 'urh', 'well', 'you know', 'I see what you mean', etc. to gain time when I need to think of what to say.					
2.	(-)When I need to think of what to say, I pause to let myself					

	have time to think and then continue the utterance from where I left off.					
3	(-)When I don't understand others, I continue to express my meaning rather than ask them to clarify themselves.					
4	(+)When I have difficulty in thinking of the right word(s), I use words or phrases with similar meaning to express myself.					
5	(+)When I don't understand what others mean, I ask them to confirm what they mean so as to help me clarify their meaning.					
6	(-)When I don't understand others, I listen quietly and hope that I can understand without having had to ask them to clarify themselves.					
<i>H) Social class-Output Scale(developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>						
1.	(+) My involvement in group discussions is enhanced by my earlier exposure to the language through movies, magazines, papers etc.					
2.	(-) My parents are incapable to provide me with the necessary materials that may help improve my oral proficiency.					
3.	(+) I actively involve in group oral activities in the way I watch people speaking in English on movies or talk shows on different TV channels.					
4.	(-) Being bound to poor English language background, I cannot express my self in small-groups.					
5.	(+) I had language trainings opportunities that assist me to confidently involve in oral interactions in groups.					
6.	(-) I cannot take part actively in small-group oral interactions as I am new to such classroom situations.					

	<i>I) Social distance-Output Scale (developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>					
1	(-) The cultural differences between mine and the English speaking people affect my active involvement in small-groups.					
2	(+) My attitude towards the English speaking people affects my interest to use their languages.					
3	(+) My active involvement in group oral interactions is due to my positive attitude towards the English speaking people.					
4	(-) I like to speak in the way the Americans or Britons speak.					
5	(-) The political picture of the United States and Britain affects my interest to learn English.					
6	(+) I like to improve my oral skills to closely work with foreigners.					
	<i>J) Gender-Output Scale (developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>					
1	(+) I tend to speak more with opposite sex members of my groups than with same sex members.					
2	(-) I feel that involving in oral interaction with opposite sex affects the number of moves I may have.					
3	(-) I become shy in a mixed-sex small group.					
4	(-) I tend to be fearful when I am with opposite sex in my group					
5	(+) I am willing to participate in groups containing both sexes.					
6	(+) I become courageous to interact orally with the opposite sex members of my group.					
	<i>K) Group size-Output Scale (developed based the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>					
1.	(-) I prefer to get into large-groups to freely express my ideas.					
2.	(+) I am courageous to speak in groups with limited number of					

	students					
3.	(-) I become less cooperative in oral tasks in small-groups.					
4.	(+) I get considerable amount of time to express my ideas in groups with a few students.					
5.	(+) I am not affected by the size of the group in oral interactions.					
6.	(-) I become freer to participant in small-group discussions than any other occasions.					
<i>L) Grouping pattern-Output Scale (developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>						
1.	(+) I orally participate interestingly in small-groups when I am with my intimate friends (according to my interest).					
2.	(+) Getting grouped with active students in my class makes me to speak well.					
3.	(-) I become silent when I get grouped with opposite sex for oral discussion.					
4.	(-) I tend to be demotivated to speak when I am grouped with students with whom I have not intimacy.					
5.	(+) I get motivated to actively involve in the oral discussion when I get grouped with opposite sex.					
6.	(-) Being grouped with passive speakers in my class makes me less motivated to speak in groups.					
<i>M) Task-difficulty-Output Scale (developed based on the literature review)</i>						
1.	(-) I am in a difficult situation to understand what the tasks require of me to do.					
2.	(+) The oral tasks are developed considering my needs and interests.					
3.	(+) I find the oral tasks to be easy and motivating due to the					

	contextual clues in them.					
4.	(+) I am an active participant in the group as I am familiar with the contents of the tasks.					
5.	(-) I do not have the motivation to speak due to the difficult nature of the tasks.					
6.	(-) The tasks do not explicitly tell me how to involve in group oral interactions.					
<i>N) Type of task-Output Scale (developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>						
1.	(+) I find the tasks to be more communicative and attractive.					
2.	(+) I am impressed by the variety of tasks selected for oral group discussion.					
3.	(-) I become reluctant to speak in the groups due to the inauthentic and artificial nature of the tasks.					
4.	(-) The tasks do not inspire me to participate actively in the group discussion.					
5.	(+) generate ideas in the small-group discussion due to the meaningfulness of the tasks.					
6.	(-)The tasks are suitable for individual work than small-group oral discussion.					

Part III: Personal opinion

Instructions: Would you please give appropriate responses to the following 2 questions?

1. Are there factors that affect your oral interaction in small-groups other than those mentioned in the questionnaire? If yes, please list 5 of them below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2. In your opinion, what should be done to free you from the communication-related barriers that you encounter during small-group oral discussions at personal and institutional levels?

a) At a personal level:

b) At a classroom or institutional level:

3. If you have any other additional comments as regards communication-related barriers, please state them below.

Thank you again!!

ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም
	<i>A) Self-esteem/self-image Scale (adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale - FLCAS)</i>					
1.	በአነስተኛ ቡድን (small-group) ውስጥ በእንግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ ስወያይ በራስ የመተማመን ስሜት አይሰማኝም።					
2.	ከኔ ይልቅ ሌሎች ተማሪዎች የተሻለ እንግሊዘኛ ችሎታ እንዳላቸው አስባለው።					
3.	በቡድኔ አባላት ፊት በእንግሊዘኛ መናገር በእጅጉ ስለራሴ ደስ የማይል ስሜት እንዲሰማኝ ያደርገኛል።					
4.	እንግሊዘኛ በመናገር እኔ ከሌሎች የቡድኔ አባላት የተሻልኩ እንደሆንኩ ይሰማኛል።					
5.	በአነስተኛ ቡድን ውይይት (small-group oral interaction) ውስጥ ሀሳቤን በራስ መተማመን መንፈስ የመግለፅ ስሜቴ ከፍተኛ ነው።					
6.	በቡድኔ ውስጥ ካሉት አባላት መካከል እኔ እንግሊዘኛን በጥሩ ሁኔታ ከሚጠቀሙት አመደባለሁ።					
	<i>B) Inhibition Scale (developed based on the discussion in the Literature Review section)</i>					
1.	የሚያሳፍር ስህተት ላለመስራት ስል በአነስተኛ ቡድን ውይይት ውስጥ ዝምታን እመርጣለሁ።					
2.	እንግሊዘኛ በምናገርበት ወቅት ስህተት ላለመፈፀም ከፍተኛ ጥንቃቄ አደርጋለሁ።					

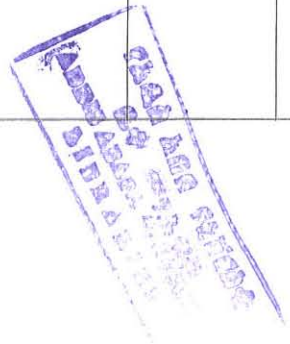
ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም
3	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ በሚካሄድ ውይይት መሳተፍ ፈፅሞ አያስፈራኝም።					
4	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ በእንግሊዘኛ ስወያይ ስህተት እንዳልሰራ በሚል ስሜት ዝም አልልም።					
5.	በቡድኔ ውስጥ እንግሊዘኛ ስናገር ሌሎች የቡድኔ አባላት ይስቁብኛል የሚል ስጋት አለኝ።					
6.	በእንግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ አጠቃቀሜ በቡድኔ አባላት ከሚደርስብኝ ትችት ለመዳን ስል ቀዝቀዝ ያለ ተሳትፎ እንዲኖረኝ እመርጣለሁ።					
<i>C) Risk-taking Scale (adapted from Ely's, 1986a, Risk-Taking Scale)</i>						
1.	አሁን ባለሁበት ደረጃ አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ወሰብሰብ ያሉ ሀሳቦችን በእንግሊዘኛ መግለፅ አልወድም።					
2.	በውይይት ወቅት ሀሳብ ልክ ወደ አእምሮዬ እንደመጣ ወዲያው እገልፀዋለሁ።					
3.	ለመግለፅ ከበድ የሚልን አረፍተ ነገር ለመናገር ጨርሶ አልደፍርም።					
4.	ከመናገሬ በፊት ትክክለኛው ቃል እስኪታወቅኝ ድረስ መጠበቅን እመርጣለሁ።					
5.	ስለ ዝርዝር የሰዋሰው (grammar) አጠቃቀም ሳልጨነቅ ለማለት የፈለኩትን ማለትን እመርጣለሁ።					
6.	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ስወያይ ከመናገሬ በፊት በቅድምያ አረፍተ ነገሩን ለራሴ እለዋለሁ።					

ተቀባይ ጥያቄዎች	ሰጠም	አላሰጠም	ሳይሆን	ሆኖ	ሰጠም
3 አካተት ሁኔታ ለመገኘት ወይንም ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
4 አካተት ሁኔታ ለመገኘት ወይንም ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
5. ሁኔታው ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
6. ተገቢ ሁኔታዎች ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
<p>(C) Risk-taking Scale (adapted from Ely's, 1986a, Risk-Taking Scale)</p>					
1. አሁን ለሁኔታው ደረጃ አካተት ሁኔታ ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
2. አገልግሎት ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
3. ሁኔታው ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
4. አገልግሎት ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
5. አገልግሎት ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					
6. አገልግሎት ለመገኘት ለመቻላቸው ይደረግባቸዋል::					

ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም
	<i>D) Anxiety Scale (adapted from MacIntyre's and Gardner's (1994) Output Anxiety Scale and McCroskey's (1978) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension – PRCA)</i>					
1.	በአነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ አዲስ ተወያይ ካለ መናገር እፈራለሁ።					
2.	ተገቢውን የእንግሊዘኛ አጠቃቀም የማውቅ እንኳ ቢሆን ስጨነቅ መግለፅ ያቅተኛል።					
3.	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ስወያይ በራስ የመተማመን መንፈስ ከፍተኛ ከመሆኑ የተነሳ የማውቀውን ቃል በንግግራ ውስጥ መጠቀም እችላለሁ።					
4.	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ስወያይ እራሴን (ሀሳቤን) መግለፅ አልፈራም።					
5.	በእንግሊዘኛ እንዴት ሀሳቤን መግለፅ እንዳለብኝ አውቄ ነገር ግን መግለፅ ሲያቅተኝ እበሳጫለሁ።					
6.	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ስወያይ በእንግሊዘኛ ሀሳቤን መግለፅ ያስጨነቀኛል።					
	<i>E) Extroversion-introversion Scale (adapted from Style Analysis Survey Scale)</i>					
1.	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ከማዳመጥ ይልቅ መናገርን እመርጣለሁ።					
2.	አይን አፋር ከመሆኔ የተነሳ አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርቶ መወያየትን አልመርጥም።					
3.	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ረዘም ላለ ጊዜ ወይይት ማካሄድን እመርጣለሁ።					

ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም
4	አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርቶ ከመወያየት ይልቅ ለብቻዬ መስራትን እመርጣለሁ።					
5.	ምንም እንኳን ስለ መወያየው ርዕሰ ጉዳይ እውቀት በኖረኝም ሀሳቤን ለመግለፅ ድፍረቱ የለኝም።					
6.	አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርቶ በእንግሊዘኛ መወያየት ያስደስተኛል።					
<i>F. Motivation-Output Scale (adapted from Strength of Motivation Scale, Ely, 1986a)</i>						
1.	ከክፍል እንደወጣሁ በክፍል ውስጥ ስላከናወንኩት የአነስተኛ ቡድን ውይይት ጨርሶ ማሰብ አልፏልግም።					
2	እንደ እውነቱ ከሆነ የእንግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ ችሎታዬን ለማሻሻል በውይይት ውስጥ በመሳተፍ የማደርገው ጥረት የለም።					
3.	እንግሊዘኛን በተለያዩ ሁኔታዎች ውስጥ ለመጠቀም እፈልጋለሁ።					
4	በአሁን ሰዓት አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርቶ መወያየት ቅድምያ የምሰጠው ጉዳይ አይደለም።					
5.	በአነስተኛ ቡድን ውይይት ሲካሄድ ተሳትፎ ማድረግ እንደሚጠቅመኝ ይሰማኛል።					
6.	የሚቻል ከሆነ አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርቶ መወያየትን አላማ ያደረጉ ተጨማሪ ክፍሎች በዘጋጁ ተሳታፊ መሆን እፈልጋለሁ።					

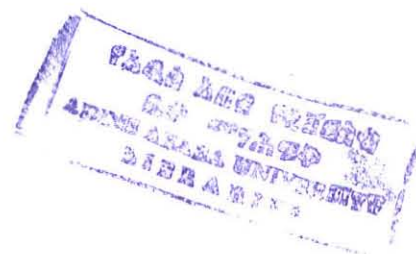
ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም አስማማለሁ	አስማማለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም
	<i>G) Strategy-Output Scale (adapted from Lam's Strategy Questionnaire)</i>					
1.	ለማለት ስለፈለኩት ነገር ሳስብ 'um', 'urh', 'well', 'you know', 'I see what you mean' ወዘተ የመሳሰሉትን የንግግር ክፍተት መሙያዎችን አጠቀማለሁ።					
2	በውይይት መሀል ንግግር ሲጠፋኝ በመሀል ቆም አልና የምናገረውን አስባለሁ።					
3	የሌሎችን ሀሳብ ለመረዳት ባልችልም እንዲያብራሩልኝ ከመጠየቅ ይልቅ ሀሳቤን ቀጥሎ እገልጻለሁ።					
4.	ሀሳቤን ለመግለፅ የሚረዳኝን ትክክለኛ ቃል ሳላውቅ ስቀር ተመሳሳይ ፍቺ ያላቸውን ቃላት አጠቀማለሁ።					
5.	የሌሎች ሀሳብ ካልገባኝ እንደሌሎች አይታለሁ።					
6.	ሌሎች ሲናገሩ ያልገባኝ እንደሆነ ንግግሩ ወደፊት ሲቀጥል እንደሚገባኝ ተስፋ በማድረግ እንዲያብራሩልኝ ሳልጠይቅ ዝም ብዬ አዳምጣቸዋለሁ።					
	<i>H) Social class-Output Scale(developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>					
1.	በእግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ የተጻፉ መጽሔቶችን፣ ጋዜጦችን ወዘተ የተሰሩ ፊልሞችን በቀላሉ አገኛለሁ።					
2.	ወላጆቼ የንግግር ክህሎቴን አሻሽል ዘንድ የሚረዱኝን አጋዥ መሳሪያዎች ሊያቀርቡልኝ አይችሉም።					



ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም እስማማለሁ	እስማማ ለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም
3.	በአነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ የተለያዩ የTV ቻናሎች የሚያከታተሉ ተማሪዎች ተሳትፎ ከፍ ያለ ነው።					
4.	ደክም ያለ በእንግሊዘኛ የመጠቀም የኋላ ታሪክ (background) ስላለኝ በአነስተኛ የቡድን ውይይት ሀሳቤን መግለፅ ያዳግተኛል።					
5.	ከዚህ በፊት የንግግር ክህሎትን ማዳበር ላይ ያተኮሩ የስልጠና አጋጣሚዎች ነበሩኝ።					
6.	አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርቶ ለመወያየት አዲስ በመሆኔ በንቃት መሳተፍ አልቻልኩም።					
<i>I) Social distance-Output Scale (developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>						
1	በእንግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ ተናጋሪ ህዝቦች ባህልና በኔ ባህል መሀከል ያለው ልዩነት በቡድን ተሳትፎ ላይ ተፅዕኖ አሳድሯል።					
2	ለእንግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ ተናጋሪ ህዝቦች ባለኝ አሉታዊ አመለካከት ሳቢያ ቋንቋውን ለመማር/ለመጠቀም ያለኝ ፍላጎት ቀንሷል።					
3	አነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ያለኝ ንቁ ተሳትፎ የሚመነጨው ለእንግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ ተናጋሪ ህዝቦች ባለኝ አወንታዊ አመለካከት የተነሳ ነው።					
4	ልክ እንደ አሜሪካውያን ወይም እንግሊዛውያን እንደሚናገሩት ብናገር እወዳለሁ።					
5	የአሜሪካና እንግሊዝ ፖለቲካዊ ተሳትፎ እንግሊዘኛ ቋንቋ የመማር/መጠቀም ፍላጎቴ ላይ አሉታዊ ተፅዕኖ አሳድሯል።					
6	ከውጪው ማህበረሰብ ጋር ተቀራርቦ ለመስራት የንግግር ክህሎቴን ማሻሻል አፈልጋለሁ።					

ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	እልስማማም	በጣም እልስማማም
6	ከማንኛውም ጊዜ ይልቅ በአነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ስወያይ ነፃ የመሆን ስሜት ይሰማኛል።					
	<i>L) Grouping pattern-Output Scale (developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>					
1.	ከቅርብ ጋር በአነስተኛ ቡድን ውስጥ ተመድቤ ስወያይ ፍላጎቴ ከፍ ይላል።					
2.	ከፈጣን ተማሪዎች ጋር ስመደብ በተሻለ ሁኔታ እንድናገር ያደርገኛል።					
3.	ከተቃራኒ የታ ጋር ስመደብ ዝም ማለትን እመርለሁ።					
4.	ቀረቤታ ከሌለኝ ተማሪዎች ጋር ስመደብ የመናገር ፍላጎቴ ይቀንሳል።					
5.	ከተቃራኒ የታ ጋር ስመደብ በውይይቱ ለመሳተፍ እነቃቃለሁ።					
6	በእንግሊዘኛ የመናገር ችሎታቸው ዝቅተኛ ከሆነ ተማሪዎች ጋር ስመደብ የመናገር ፍላጎቴ ይቀንሳል።					
	<i>M) Task-difficulty-Output Scale (developed based on the literature review)</i>					
1.	መልመጃዎቹን (tasks) በምን መልኩ መስራት እንዳለብኝ መረዳት እችላለሁ።					
2	የውይይት መልመጃዎቹ የተዘጋጁት ፍላጎቴንና ስሜቴን ባገናዘበ መልኩ ነው።					

ተቁ	ባህሪያዊ ጉዳዮች	በጣም አስማማለሁ	አስማማለሁ	መልስ የለኝም	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም
3	በሚሰጡት አውዳዊ ፍንጭ(contextual clue) ምክንያት የውይይት መልመጃዎቹ ቀላልና አነቃቂ ሆነው አግኝቻቸዋለሁ።					
4	ከመልመጃዎቹ ይዘት ጋር ትውውቅ ስላለኝ በቡድን ውይይቱ ውስጥ የነቃ ተሳትፎ አደርጋለሁ።					
5	መልመጃዎቹ ለኔ አዲስና ያልተለመዱ ዓይነት ስለሆኑ አያነቃቁኝም።					
6	መልመጃዎቹ በምን መልኩ በቡድን ውይይቱ ውስጥ መሳተፍ እንዳለብኝ በግልፅ አያሳዩም።					
<i>N) Type of task-Output Scale (developed based on the theoretical discussions in the literature review)</i>						
1	መልመጃዎቹ ማራኪና ለንግግር የሚጋብዙ ናቸው።					
2	ለቡድን ውይይቱ በሚቀርቡት የመልመጃ ዓይነቶች ተደስቻለሁ።					
3	መልመጃዎቹ ከእውነት የራቁ መሆናቸውና ተግባራዊ የሚደረጉ አለመሆናቸው የውይይት ተሳትፎዬን ቀንሰውታል።					
4	መልመጃዎቹ ከቡድን አባላቶቹ ጋር በንቃት እንድሳተፍ አይቀረጹኝም።					
5	መልመጃዎቹ ትርጉም ያላቸው በመሆናቸው በውይይቱ በንቃት አሳተፋለሁ።					
6	ከቡድናዊ ውይይት ይልቅ መልመጃዎቹ ለግላዊ ስራ የሚሰማሙ ናቸው።					



ክፍል III፣ ግላዊ አስተያየት

መመሪያ፣ ለሚከተሉት ሦስት ጥያቄዎች ተስማሚውን ምላሽ ስጡ።

1. አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርታችሁ ስትወያዩ ንግግራችሁን በፈለጋችሁት መንገድ እንዳታከናውኑ የሚያግዟችሁ ጉዳዮች አሉ? ካሉ አምስቱ ያህሉን ጥቀሱ።

- ሀ. _____
- ለ. _____
- ሐ. _____
- መ. _____
- ሠ. _____

2) በእናንተ አስተያየት በአነስተኛ ቡድን መስርታችሁ ስትወያዩ እንቅፋት የሚሆኑባችሁን ጉዳዮች ለማስወገድ በግለሰብ ወይም በተቋም ደረጃ መከናወን የሚገባቸው ተግባራት ምን ምን ሊሆኑ ይገባቸዋል።

ሀ) በግለሰብ ደረጃ፣

ለ) በተቋም ደረጃ፣

3) አነስተኛ ቡድን መስርታችሁ ስትወያዩ የሚገጥሟችሁን መሰናክሎች በተመለከተ ተጨማሪ አስተያየት ካላችሁ ከዚህ በታች አስፍሩ።

በድጋሚ አመሰግናለሁ!!

APPENDIX C

Addis Ababa University

Institute of Language Studies

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Graduate Studies Programme

Interview with students

The main aim of these questions is to supplement a study on the factors that hinder you during small-group oral interaction in EFL classes. Since the fruitfulness of the study depends upon the truthfulness of your responses, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions genuinely.

Questions

1. Do you form small-groups and orally interact in your Communicative English Classes? If yes, how often?
2. Are you interested to get into groups and orally interact with your group members? Why, or why not?
3. Is the classroom setting motivating to you?
4. Are there factors that hinder you during your small-group interaction? If yes, what are they?
5. Are there any mechanisms you have devised to free yourselves from these barriers? If yes, what are they?
6. What is the role of the teacher during your small-group oral interaction?
7. In what ways does he/she assist you during the oral discussion session?
8. How do you evaluate your participation and oral proficiency in comparison to your classmates? Do you think that there are differences in performance? If yes, what do you think are the causes for the differences?
9. In your opinion, what should be done to make students benefit out of the small-group oral interaction sessions?
10. Please tell me if you have any other comment?

Thank you!

APPENDIX D

Addis Ababa University

Institute of Language Studies

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Graduate Studies Programme

Interview with instructors

The main aim of these questions is to supplement a study on the factors that hinder your students during small-group their oral interaction in EFL classes. Since the fruitfulness of the study depends upon the truthfulness of your responses, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions genuinely.

Questions

1. Do you let your students form small-groups and orally interact in Communicative English Classes? If yes, how often?
2. Are the students interested to get into groups and orally interact with their group members? Why, or why not?
3. Is the classroom setting motivating to accomplish the oral tasks?
4. Are there factors that impede your students during their small-group interaction? If yes, what are they?
5. Are there any mechanisms you have devised to free your students from these barriers? If yes, what are they?
6. What is your role during the small-group oral interaction?
7. In what ways do you assist your students during the oral discussion session?
8. How do you evaluate your students' participation and oral proficiency? Do you think that there is disparity among one another in spoken performance? If yes, what do you think are the causes for such differences?
9. In your opinion, what should be done to make your students benefit out of the small-group oral interaction sessions?
10. Please tell me if you have any other comment?

Thank you!

APPENDIX D

Addis Ababa University

Institute of Language Studies

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Graduate Studies Programme

Interview with instructors

The main aim of these questions is to supplement a study on the factors that hinder your students during small-group their oral interaction in EFL classes. Since the fruitfulness of the study depends upon the truthfulness of your responses, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions genuinely.

Questions

1. Do you let your students form small-groups and orally interact in Communicative English Classes? If yes, how often?
2. Are the students interested to get into groups and orally interact with their group members? Why, or why not?
3. Is the classroom setting motivating to accomplish the oral tasks?
4. Are there factors that impede your students during their small-group interaction? If yes, what are they?
5. Are there any mechanisms you have devised to free your students from these barriers? If yes, what are they?
6. What is your role during the small-group oral interaction?
7. In what ways do you assist your students during the oral discussion session?
8. How do you evaluate your students' participation and oral proficiency? Do you think that there is disparity among one another in spoken performance? If yes, what do you think are the causes for such differences?
9. In your opinion, what should be done to make your students benefit out of the small-group oral interaction sessions?
10. Please tell me if you have any other comment?

Thank you!

APPENDIX E
Addis Ababa University
Institute of Language Studies
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
Graduate Studies Programme
 Observation checklist

Observer's name: _____ Course title: _____
 Institution: _____ Lesson topic: _____
 Department: _____ Section: _____
 Year: _____

No	Characteristic statements	Yes	No	Remark
1.	The students show interest in the tasks employed.			
2	The students pause many times during their speech.			
3	The students spent a lot of time trying to understand how the tasks should be done.			
4	The teacher assists students by walking around the class during the oral communication.			
5	Every member of the group speaks turn by turn.			
6	The students are working on the tasks assigned attentively.			
7	The students feel free in the discussion.			
8	The students are grouped taking their interest into account.			
9	Students use their mother tongue during oral interaction.			
10	Males are grouped together with females			
11	All members of the small-group equally participate in the oral interaction.			
12	Females are dominated by males.			

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name Joseph Galaiwot

Signature  _____

Date 06/07/2008